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Bommastandi of Alexandra Township

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2012-02-10
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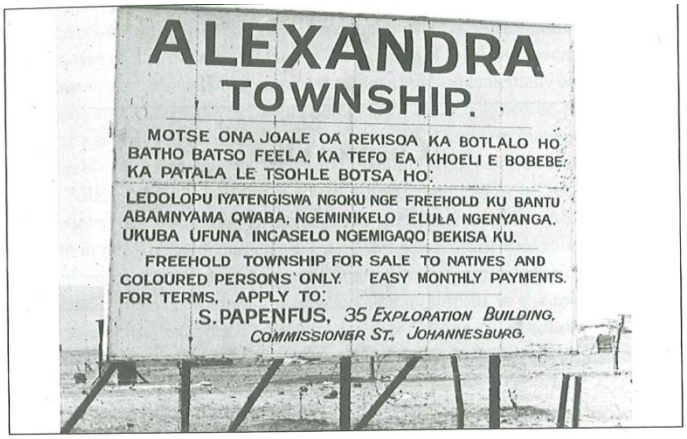
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Chapter 1

BOMMASTANDI OF ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP

1.1. **Background**

In 1912 the following billboard written in Sotho, Zulu and English appeared in Alexandra Township advertising freehold properties.



Establishment of Alexandra as a freehold township (Source: Museum Africa).

First, this advert points to the obvious; Africans were already engaging in private property at the turn of the 20th century. This township was subdivided into 2,500 stands which were sold to individuals. Title deeds were given to the individuals once payment was concluded. Second, it indicates that Africans were acquiring private property away from a 'traditional village' where access to property is said to be communal. A closer look at the acquisition processes of such properties unsettles the notion of private property as individual. It becomes increasingly clear in the study that in spite of the naming of an individual in the titled deed it was not uncommon for family resources to be pooled during acquisition of the said property and hence a shared ownership among members of extended families would be understood. The following conversations attest to some of these experiences.

Mme Mihloti explains how her parents and her siblings purchased their properties.

Ko 15th o ka re ke nako e abuti a bereka le mosu ausi, ke bona ba neng ba thusa mokgalabe. ..... Bona ke itse ba berekile ba thusa, ba ntshitse chelete ausi le abuti, ena Lucas. …….[1]

(It seemes like when my brother and sister were working, they are the ones who helped the old man with purchasing the property at 15th Avenue. I do know that they contributed some money helping our father in acquiring the properties……

Another example is drawn from mme Hunadi's family. Her parents bought two properties and her brother contributed towards the third property. Later her brother bought two properties.

A tlo joyina ke abuti wa ka hee..... ba be ba reka e nngwe ko 3rd, ko 135.....Ke ge a tlo bula shopo ya ko 6th. then e be e le gore ga a ntse a prosper, a reka di property tse two; ge a ya Daveyton ke ge rente e kolekiwa ka mo gae, e berekisiwa ke batswadi ba ka. For the three properties, le tse tsa gagwe tse two[2].

(My father was joined by my brother at a later stage (This was his only son) and they bought another property at 3rd Avenue at no.135.....then he (the brother) opened a shop at 6th Avenue. As he was prospering he bought two more properties. When he left for Daveyton, the rent was collected and used by my parents. That is for the three properties: my parent's and the two that belonged to my brother).

Although in both these cases there is a suggestion that these properties belonged to specific family members the benefits from rent and from expropriation were apparently shared by the larger family. In this thesis I argue that while the notion of property ownership regimes is useful as a historical tool to explain how social property relations evolved in the west, it fails to encapsulate the specificity and difference of social relationships and practices in some other societies. This argument is further developed in later in this chapter. A closer look at the acquisition processes of properties of bommastandi unsettles the notion of a neat subdivision of property relationships into regimes such as private and communal. Such subdivisions tend to obscure understandings of other modalities of relationships, and suppress other related associations to people that emerged or led to specific property relations. A specific example

[1] Interview with Tsakani and mama Mihloti, Alexandra, September 16, 2003
[2] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra.n September 2, 2003.

is the understanding of a myriad of relationships that Africans have with their properties, which can neither be compartmentalized, nor categorised.

My contention is that the private/communal binary is not useful since it masks other possibilities of understanding property ownership that may operate between and within the two 'regimes'. Finally, such properties were being acquired while the native land question was being debated in parliament. This appears to suggest the futility of the native land acquisition exercise at the time since this Act was to be the beginning of a long struggle for access to land which is still being fought at present. Nonetheless these properties were meant for exclusive ownership of Natives and Coloured. In spite of this experience and many similar others[3], representation of private property owners such as *bommastandi* in areas that lay outside the reserves in South Africa is limited in the academy. This means that their voices are not sufficiently heard in academic discourse, if at all.

Nonetheless the story of Alexandra has been told repeatedly and academic work has highlighted the plight of Alexandra residents (Tourikis 1981; Swift 1983; Sarakinsky 1984; Raymer 1989; Nauright 1992; Bozzoli 1991, 2004; Jochelson 1991; Carter 1991; Mayekiso 1996; Lucas 1995, 1996; Marume 1995; Bonner & Nieftagodien 2008). It was also told through print media such as *Alexandra News*, *Dark City Report*, *Izwi lase Township*, *The World*, *The Mail*, *Sowetan*, *the Rand Daily Mail*, *The Star*, *Sunday Times*, *City Press*, *Tounship News* and other international media such as The *New York Times*. Such sources have covered the different struggles for survival that Alexandra residents faced (Nauright 1992).The story also covered the plight of Alexandra in the post-1994 period (Sinwell 2005; Lange 2006). However, this story speaks to private property ownership only to the extent that it provides a background explanation to the plight of Alexandra residents.

In this thesis I explore private property ownership in Alexandra Township by centralising the significance of the concept of mmastandi as an analytical tool (Brubaker & Cooper 2000). The term was used to denote African property owners from the early 20th century onwards in Johannesburg.[4] I use the concept mmastandi in order to understand the social standing that bommastandi attained through the activity of owning a stand. Bommastandi is plural of mmastandi, a property owner. I further examine it as a term that denotes a virtual identity (Jenkins 1996), since it outlived bommastandi*'s* status of owning private property in that when their families lost their ownership rights and became government tenants in the same properties, their nominal identity (Jenkins 1996) remained.

[3] As stated in this chapter there were other townships where Africans bought their properties freehold
[4] The origin of general use elsewhere is currently unknown to the author.

The aim of this study is therefore also to better understand the identities of the residents of Alexandra and the urban African residents of South Africa.

In the following section I explain why Alexandra is important as a site for understanding and centralizing the concept mmastandi as a unit of analysis.

1.2 . Alexandra Township - An Exceptional Space

The combination of Alexandra Township's geographic location, that is, its proximity to South Africa's fastest growing urban area at the time, it's unusual "window of opportunity" for black residents as property owners, and the fact the state would not take direct responsibility for its administration until the late 1950s makes Alexandra Township enormously significant as an area of study.

The specific conditions of the second proclamation of Alexandra, in 1912, set private property acquisition and ownership in the township apart. This story is told first to show how legislation that was promulgated to control access and conditions of the stay of Africans in Johannesburg in general and the particular temporal and spatial dimensions of Alexandra's second beginning reveal a particular private property owning experience. Second, to show how the "native" property owners also carved out a life for themselves in this legalized space that was both in and not in Johannesburg as well as how their independent strategies of dealing with challenges they faced in the surrounds of Johannesburg of the early 20th century impacted on their experience of private property ownership.

The birth of Alexandra freehold is exceptional in that Alexandra was established as a solution to a "native" problem in Johannesburg. During this time there was a demand for the acquisition of land by Natives and Coloured in Johannesburg (A letter of March 14, 1913 by the Alexandra Township Committee to the Minister of Native Affairs). This solution was provided by the Alexandra Township Company (ATC) which reproclaimed a white township established in 1905, and then a "native and coloured" township in 1912. The motivation for its reproclamation as pronounced by the ATC was that "in view of the demand which existed, and still exists, for the acquisition of land by Natives and coloured persons … (who) wish to reside with their families within a reasonable distance from Johannesburg, my board decided, during the month of January 1912 to dispose of the township in question in freehold to Native

and coloured persons only".[5] The view expressed by the then Minister of Native Affairs, was that Alexandra was meant for the "respectable natives" who wanted to lead decent lives with their families. In his speech, which was cited by the ATC, "He urged upon them the necessity for providing some decent and respectable location **where these people** (own emphasis) could live in a decent and respectable way, and abide by their families. There seemed to be a prejudice against this in Johannesburg."[6] This second proclamation of Alexandra occupies a confluence of several significant moments in the life of a "native" in South Africa. For instance Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008:17) contend that "the majority of new immigrants who initially bought land in Alexandra were formerly relatively prosperous sharecroppers and labour tenants squeezed out of white South Africa's farms". The proclamation was also a response to the "sanitation syndrome" of South African urban areas which occurred between 1900 and 1940. In Johannesburg, this phase took the form of a huge clearance of shelters including slums, backyards and shantytowns (Parnell 1993; Beavon 2004).

Second, the 1912 proclamation also occurred at the time of a parliamentary debate on the Native Land Bill that, if enacted (as it was in 1913), would impact negatively on African lives in a fundamental way. The subsequent Act became so decisive in land and property relationships for South African "natives" that its impacts are still being grappled with today and have made Alexandra's "paradoxical" existence exceptional. Although this bill was momentous in its own right, there was already in place, a "Gold Law" Act No 35 which was passed in 1898, that provided for prohibition of all "non-whites" such as Africans, Indians, Malay, Chinese and people of mixed race from owning property on mining land.[7] These two pieces of spatial legislation simultaneously threatened, enabled and redefined access to property by "natives".

Third, Alexandra came to be referred to as "nobody's baby", an outcast of the Johannesburg town since it fell outside its municipal borders. Most research on Alexandra picks up on this, including Lucas (1995). This was because Alexandra was one of the few places in the Johannesburg magisterial district which was established for exclusive black private property ownership. However, there was a significant group of Indian traders in the

[5] A letter dated March 14, 1913, written to the Minister of Native Affairs by the ATC, which raised concerns about the parliamentary debates on the Land Bill, provides a background to the second proclamation of Alexandra.

[6] The ATC, quoting the speech in parliament which was presented by the Minister of Native Affairs, Mr. H Burton in a letter dated March 14, 1913.

[7] http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/town&c/villages/gauteng/johannesburg/01_background.htm accessed 10/05/2006. Beavon (2004:115) also makes reference to Prospect township which was also established on mining land and therefore affected by the provisions of the Gold law which prohibited African occupation both as property owners and tenants.

township as well. This administrative exclusion however, presented an opportunity for the establishment of a "native" run governance structure outside reserves, the Village Management Board.

Furthermore, Alexandra was extraordinary because women could own property, not only through inheriting it from their husbands and or parents, but they could purchase it for themselves. Such an experience challenges the notion that the African culture which disallows women from accessing land independently of men spread to urban areas as well. However, in later years African women were disallowed by the state from acquiring property on their own.

The exceptional nature of Alexandra also lies in the fact that its rental accommodation was affordable and also came without the hindrance of the restrictive racial legislation that governed African access to urban areas. Additionally, while – most commonly – Africans in other urban freehold townships such as District Six, Lady Selborne and Sophiatown in Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg respectively, were removed at expropriation and resettled elsewhere, some Alexandra freeholders remained in Alexandra. In some instances such freeholders remained in their erstwhile properties. Additionally, even though there have been numerous attempts to remove it or at least reinvent it, Alexandra was steadfast in its insistence to remain a black township, in its current location. More importantly, similar townships such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg and Lady Selborne in Pretoria changed names and racial composition. They were subsequently set aside for white occupation and the names changed from Sophiatown and Lady Selborne to Triomf and Suiderberg respectively. However, Alexandra remained a black township that did not change its name[8].

Due to the fact that Alexandra was conceived in and subjected to racial segregationist legislation, its history also connects more generally with other urban townships in which there was no provision for private ownership by Africans in the rest of the city. It also joined other black residential parts of Johannesburg when it became part of the city's municipal area in the 1970s.

Although at the time of its establishment mixed townships such as Lady Selborne and the Fingo village[9] were more comparable to Alexandra the story of Alexandra is more remarkable since it shows some salient features which distinguishes it from the rest. Lady Selborne, which was initially meant for "coloured" occupation, grew into a mixed suburb with "natives" and a few white people coming in. Additionally, while Lady Selborne was

[8] Triomf and Suiderberg have reverted to the names Sophiatown and Lady Selborne respectively.
[9] Lady Selborne is in Pretoria while the Fingo Village lies just outside Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape.

initially governed by a Health Committee, the first governing body in Alexandra was a Village Management Board. However, seven years after its establishment Lady Selborne was incorporated into the then newly constituted Innesdale Town Council (Carruthers n.d.) whereas Alexandra was only incorporated into a Town Council after the change in property ownership regime in the 1970s.

Even closer to Alexandra's experience of private property ownership is Fingo village in that both of them were not removed and resettled.[10] The history of Fingo village also illustrates "how property is enacted in a locally specific way and yet simultaneously indicating how lived experiences and practices associated with it are complex" (Blomley 2004: 655). In their socio-economic study of the Fingo village, Roux and St. Leger (1971) highlight that land in Fingo village was granted to the Fingos in recognition of their service in the "Kaffir" wars, the two frontier wars of 1864 and 1850-1853. The Fingos, who comprised break-aways and remnants from Natal tribes, fled to the Eastern Cape in the 1800s. At the time of the land grant, plots cost £1 each and individuals were not allowed to hold more than one plot. Sir George Grey, the then governor and commissioner, issued titles in 1855. Unlike other mixed South African freehold townships, such as Sophiatown and Lady Selborne, Fingo village was originally established for "Fingos and not for other 'native foreigners' of whom there were many" (Roux & St. Leger 1971: 4). Moreover, unlike Alexandra, Fingo village was not a private township. As indicated later in this chapter, the Alexandra register of titles to property was held by ATC, a private company. Interestingly, the effects of Group Areas Act of 1950 were different for the Fingo Village. As a historically exclusively Fingo village it was declared a "coloured" area with small Indian and Chinese sections (Roux and St. Leger 1971 : 4), while Alexandra, initially a township for "coloured" and African people, was proclaimed a single hostel city for Africans.

The spatial and temporal exceptionality surrounding the second proclamation of Alexandra, as well as later wrangling over the legality of its existence, created a complex spatial relationship that impacted on ways of life of its residents which in turn had an impact on how private property ownership came to be understood and appreciated.

[10] Fingo village was selected for illustrative purposes only. As such the study does not claim that it is the only other place that was not removed and resettled. This should be distinguished from the Fingo Village, a heritage site in Mafikeng, North West Province. This "Old Fingo Village", or "Makwateng," was the first native settlement or "location" for black people before the building of Montshioia "location" (currently spelled Montshiwa). http://www.tourismnorthwest.co.za/mafikeng/sites_of_interest2.html accessed 14/03/2009.

1.3. Purpose and Aims of the Study

The limited representation of "natives" who owned private property in areas that lay outside the reserves in South Africa meant that an opportunity to understand other aspects of private property was lost. Reserves referred to geographic areas that were identified and set aside for Africans in South Africa as per the Native Land Act, No. 27 of 1913. Situated within socio-anthropological perspectives, this study draws from the history, politics and geographies of Alexandra township both recorded and not, to contribute to understandings of African urban private property ownership. The work draws from property-focused life stories of 33 people who grew up and or were born in Alexandra Township and had lived in the township for most of their lives. Such respondents were born into private property owning families and thus their experiences, while not statistically representative of Alexandra private property owning experience in general, contribute immensely to understanding what owning private property in this exceptional place and at such an exceptional moment in the land history of South Africa means. The property experiences of families of this small group emphasise the South African urban land question.

The thesis also offers a critical analysis of African urban identities that are couched in private property ownership and calls for understanding of the urban land question in general. Thus it challenges the notion of essentialising African identity that tends to attach to both their biology and place of origin in the reserves, either real or imagined. It articulates modes of differently constructed human subjects and highlights how African identities have been constructed and deconstructed. It underscores how constructivist approaches to African identities in particular are often redolent with essentialist understandings of it. This is done by rooting it in rural spaces in spite of other African experiences that occur outside rural areas (Nyamende 1996; Mbembe 2001; Mbembe & Nuttall 2004; Simone 2004; Simone & Abouhani 2005). Although I do not claim to resolve the dilemma of the constructivist approach to an African identity, I investigate some insights that may open up possibilities for unraveling this paradox even further.

1. 4. Research Question

This research explores the idea of mmastandi in Alexandra. It discusses the lived experiences and practices of the bommastandi and their families, and considers how their perceptions of private property ownership evolved over time.'It also attempts to answer questions such as

who are bommastandi of Alexandra? What did it mean for families of bommastandi to acquire private property in Alexandra Township starting from 1912? What were the political dynamics of the physical location of Alexandra and how did this affect the understanding of private property ownership by families of bommastandi?

I aim to illustrate that the concept of mmastandi is a useful lens through which the heartfelt and lived experience of being modern, African and permanent in an urban area, can be analysed. The interrogation of this concept and how its history and meaning are played out in the property life stories of bommastandi raises the fundamental question of legalities of space and the time during which such spatial legislation occurred. In other words these experiences are useful in examining the legislation that governed space and time. Such interrogation also provides a window through which one can investigate the social and physical topography of Alexandra. Additionally I intend to highlight that other concepts such as *sekgoweng* and or *makgoweng* and *magaeng* are foundational in understanding contradictions in the spatial dichotomization policies of the South African government. Although Peter Delius (1990) refers to *makgoweng* to indicate this dichotomy, he does not dwell into analytical details of the use of this concept by his subjects.

The concept mmastandi situates the study at a nexus of several bodies of literature and theories. Engaging the metaphor of "palimpsest" the study highlights a series of layers in property relationships through which the past is rendered visible in the present. These layers cannot be entirely effaced by policy changes. Families of bommastandi purchased private property in an area that was increasingly becoming urban in South Africa. At the time South Africa was creating a white enclave by passing legislation that expelled Africans.

Although Alexandra is one of the most researched places in South Africa, none of this research engaged the urban land question directly. The research that engaged with the land question approached it from the perspectives of dispossession, removal and resettlement. Thus engagement with the notion of private property by Africans in Alexandra explained the historical conditions of life in Alexandra and how these related to the socio-political developments in Alexandra over time. In this study I centralise the urban land question and interrogate the impact of the legal landscape on how private property owners perceived, understood and indeed enacted this ordinarily Western legal concept.

I emphasise that class analysis is a useful tool, but not the only tool, in unraveling life in Alexandra. I argued that the group of bommastandi are not an economic class in the conventional Marxist sense, they cohere only to an extent that they own property. Domestic workers and other menial workers owned property in Alexandra, as did professiona1s such as

as teachers, clerks and nurses, and business people such as shop owners, butchers, coal merchants, cinema owners and bus owners. There is clearly a need for an explanation as to how it was possible for a person living on a meager domestic work wage to be able to own a private property.

1.5 The Notion of Mmastandi

Morphologically, the term mmastandi is constituted by two words stand and mma. The origin of the usage of the English part, stand, is captured by Beavon (2004) who traces it to Johannesburg mining history. Citing Haswell (1979), Beavon (2004) claims that it was initially used for land portions delineated on proclaimed ground under the "Gold Laws". Additionally, even though the term "stand" spread and was adapted to non-mining sectors such as residential developments that typically occurred in Johannesburg, Mandy (1984) also links its origins to mining. Although the South African form of urban development of the 19th century was referred to as "Erf Township" Johannesburg developed differently. An "erf township" comprised "not only dwelling places but also commonages belonging to the municipality, on which townspeople and visiting farmers would graze their stock" (Mandy 1984: 3). However, there were also "stand townships" that emerged under the Transvaal Gold Law. Referring to the Eastern Transvaal Mandy (1984) maintains that this law decreed that in addition to his "claim" a digger/miner would also need a "stand" on which he would pitch his tent. This was based on the assumption that the mining activity would be temporary.

When gold was discovered in Johannesburg this development trend was already in place, but similarly it was believed that the gold ore would soon be depleted since the discovery of gold was seen as a "proverbial nine-day wonder" (Beavon 2004: 44). At the time buyers mostly held what was called preferent rights, that is, they could use them for anything legal. More importantly, in Johannesburg the development of an "erf township" was not possible since the land adjacent to the spot where gold was first discovered in Johannesburg was already privately owned farmland (Mandy 1984; Beavon 2004). For this reason the expansion of this mining concept to residential properties other than mines where pieces of land were bought under freehold did not spread to other South African towns. Instead the terms "erf" or "plot" are applied (Beavon 2004: 303).

Most African languages of South Africa apply the prefix mma to denote "mother" or "of female gender". But the prefix also denotes possessing or owning.[11] In this context mma represents "the place of the mother" or "a place belonging to the mother". It is, however, worth noting that in spite of the high prominence that is accorded to patriarchal tradition in an African family, mmastandi/mmastene rather than rrastandi/rrastene is used. This draws on expressions such as motse o lapeng[12] a Setswana saying which when loosely translated means "women take care of or are in charge of the home". Thus a home is traditionally the mother's enclave and mmastandi invokes an African identity which is derived from African traditions that epitomize "home". It is this insertion of "belonging" in a deeply entrenched cultural sense that invokes the need to closely interrogate not only the concept of mmastandi, but questions arising in the wake of its application.[13]

Furthermore conjoining mma and "stand" results in convergence of meanings that ordinarily attach to traditionality and modernity respectively. There is ordinarily a cultural meaning in the prefix that is attached to naming mma on the one hand. On the other, the concept of "stand" attaches to the activity of acquiring property in a way that is ordinarily linked to modernity. In this instance it invokes legal meanings – in the "Western sense" – as it precludes or underplays the significance of any other legal systems in its analysis. Acquisition of private property as represented by purchasing a stand presupposes ownership that is individual and titled (Bromley 2001; Mitchell 2002; Harris 1996; Widlok 2000).Therefore, the concept of mmastandi rather than just property owner is specifically emphasised since it denotes more than just a name qualifying "possessing a property". Owning property, though a "Western legal concept" in the first instance, is saturated with history and cultural understandings and practices that make complex the task of analysing and understanding the experience of coming to Alexandra, living in, acquiring, losing and fighting to regain private property in the township. Thus theorising Alexandra mmastandi is necessarily an attempt to understand private property ownership by drawing on several bodies of literature and theory as well as on experiences of families of bommastandi.

[11] For example, a shopkeeper may be termed *mmalebenkele* (or *ralebenkele* for a male owner), which arises out of the process of "owning" a shop. "*Mmalebenkele/ralebenkele"* is derived from a corruption of an Afrikaans term for shop "winkel".

[12] The equivalent in Sepedi would be "lapa le dira ke mosadi" (A brief telephonic conversation with Phina Letswalo, a lecturer at the University of Limpopo Polokwane, and a Mopedi by birth, which means women are cornerstones of homes. This discussion occurred on October 26 2005.

[13] Even so, in spite of this cultural practice owning of property was not exclusively monopolized by men. There were cases most certainly in the earlier Alexandra where women did not own property due to inheritance but did actually purchase them.

However, even though in the beginning the term suggested the temporary nature of the property relationship, this notion shifted, as it was only transferred from mining to residential property when it was established that the area had large deposits of gold ores in 1890. When pieces of land were purchased freehold for residential purposes they were named "stands". The elusive nature of this constant shift is explored later.

As pointed out above, I refer to the temporary nature of a *stand* in its origins in earlier years of Johannesburg as a mining camp (Mandy 1984; Beavon 2004) and how the concept was later adopted in residential townships (Beavon 2004). In Alexandra, the cycle did not end here. Through reinforcement of the spatial legislation that emphasized the notion of Reserves and later homelands, the permanent notion of the "stand" was removed, only to be reintroduced in a different form, the 99-year leasehold in the 1980s and freehold in the post-1994 period.

1.6 Bommastandi Now

Where are bommastandi now? The life stories of bommastandi reveal complex interrelationships among people who had rights to a piece of land and how they constructed these both within and outside the legislation. An imprint of disparate access systems on the same piece of land at different times resulted in more confusion when the restitution route is followed. While quite clearly bommastandi lived together with all the other Alexandra residents in the 1990s, was it possible to identify them as a different group from any other person who lived in Alexandra at the time?

After expropriation all residents of Alexandra were paying rent to the city council. The rent amounted to R7 to R9 per room per month. When the discount benefit scheme "which enabled tenants to purchase rented units at historic cost" (Royston and Ambert 2002: 265) were introduced in other townships, bommastandi could not claim the discount.[14] The erstwhile bommastandi became tenants to the government. At the same time the former tenants of the erstwhile bommastandi also became government tenants. In other words bommastandi and their tenants both became government tenants. Consequently bommastandi of the 1990s found themselves increasingly integrated with other Alexandra residents. Describing Alexandra at the time Bill Keller stated:

[14] Royston and Ambert (2002) discuss the Discount Benefit Scheme within the debates of housing subsidy options for secure tenure in Soweto, Gauteng South Africa.

> Twentieth Avenue, which runs along the west bank of the Jukskei River in this black township abutting Johannesburg, is a seething camp of crude brick huts and plywood shacks. Viewed from the other side of the Jukskei's sluggish trickle, it calls to mind the slums of Calcutta. Springbok Crescent, which runs above the river on the east bank, is a narrow lane of trim bungalows on tiny, manicured plots. Viewed from the other side, it calls to mind the starter homes of Levittown (*New York Times*, August 5, 1992.)

People occupying these shacks included bommastandi families as well as other Alexandra residents, both new arrivals and old residents. However, some property owners were left in shacks due to fiscal problems that the government was faced with, and hence some of the families who were supposed to be accommodated in successor townships were never moved. Families such as those belonging to mama Zodwa and mme Mmapula are cases in point. After the property of mama Zodwa's parents was expropriated she was taken to the Roman Catholic Church land where she has been living since 1988. She explains that she was put there by council but it was the army that provided tents for her family to live in temporarily:

> *La mazozo ba hlaliswe e council, nga figa la 1988 nga hlala e matendene nga bekwa a masoja, e council ba nzwela ba mboleka a matende*...[15]
> (We were accommodated by council in these shacks. I came here in 1988. I was given tents by the army, they felt sorry for me and gave me tents…)

Mme Mmapula shares a similar experience. Her father had two properties. She and her husband and children lived in one. Her husband died the year before I interviewed her and her children have moved from home. She lives alone and while she is waiting for the restitution process, there is no promise that she will move from the little shack any time soon. These families were removed and their properties were used to build a school and the private developer homes respectively. These families were still living in shacks at the time of the interview. They were never provided with alternative accommodation, neither could they get houses in successor townships.
Explaining how she came to occupy this little shack she said:

[15] Interview with mama Zodwa, Alexandra, September 4, 2003

Mo (address of the property withheld) ba ntshitse batho ka gobane ba ne ba batla go aga dintlo tse tsa bone, bo phase 1, bo phase 2. Ke mo phase 2. Ba agile ntlo e kgolo jwang. Why nna ba sa nkagele, ba sa re, e re re agele wena…. Ba tsenya motho yo montsho jaaka nna mo teng maar nna ba ntatlhetse ko ntle.[16]
(At number (number of the property withheld), they evicted people because they wanted to build these houses of theirs. Phase 1, 2. Yes it is Phase 2. They built such a big house. Why don't they build a house for me? Why don't they just say let us build you a house? They put in a black person just like me but they threw me out.)

Many more shacks appeared as a result of the influx of people from other parts of the country, due to the scrapping of the influx control measures as well as the call for "ungovernability", as mentioned in chapter 6. Finally, more shacks appeared in the 1990s due to lack of accommodation for people who fled their homes due to violence. While some people fled Alexandra, others remained. Some also came back when restitution was announced. Such shacks would be a beacon of hope for families who were hoping to rebuild their lives in Alexandra.

However, shacks were not the only structures that loomed large in the Alexandra of the 1990s. Other housing projects were also introduced in Alexandra. Like the private developer-built houses of the 1980s, such housing schemes were not meant for exclusive occupation by bommastandi families. Instead they were meant to address the broader urban housing shortage for everybody who lived in Alexandra and could satisfy the requirements stipulated for occupation of these houses.

Such housing schemes include the housing village on the Far East Bank.[17] This scheme which is managed by SEMAG, was named Tsutsumani, which means "run" in Xitsonga. The area acquired this name because it was built in order to house athletes participating in the All Africa Games of 1999. [18]So far people who qualify to occupy Tsutsumani housing are supposed to pay for services only.

There is a low cost housing scheme in an area called River Park which is operated by City Housing. This section lies to the immediate west of the N3, a main route that connects

[16] Interview with mme Mmapula,Alexandra,October 3, 2003.
[17] This area lies on the east bank of the Jukskei River.
[18] Telephone conversation with an official of SEMAG, a Housing Corporation that was responsible for housing that was built to house the All Africa games that were held in South Africa in 1999. The name SEMAG is "games" spelt backwards.

Pretoria in the north to the eastern part of Johannesburg in the south. This low cost housing scheme comprises houses that are supposed be occupied subject to a lease agreement which is rental with intent to purchase.[19]

Finally, there are original freehold houses, the private developer-built houses which appeared in the 1980s and houses which were built by council after demolition of expropriated homes as well as flats. The first group is found all over Alexandra while the last two are situated between 4th and 8th; 8th and 11th and 13 and 22nd Avenues.

When the Restitution of Land Rights Act No. 22 was passed in 1994, bommastandi saw an opportunity, or so they believed, for them to claim or reinstate their parents' properties. In this way, for the first time in many years of strife and struggle for their urban and South African land they were presented with an enabling legal instrument to regain their land in the form of this Act. But what did it mean?

1.6.1 The Restitution of Land Rights Act No. 22 of 1994

One of the stipulations of the Act as set out in Section 3A was that:

> A person shall be entitled to claim title in land if such a claimant or his or her or its antecedent was prevented from obtaining or retaining title to the claimed land because of a law which would have been inconsistent with the prohibition of racial discrimination contained in section 8(2) of the constitution had that subsection been in operation at the relevant time. (Antecedent or fore bearer is narrowed down to "direct descendant."

Further clarifying this, a land claims official explained:

> *...Hence ho phasiwa this Restitution Act. Act e na le \\ e buwa ka gore the people ba leng entitled ke the dispossessed owners, ha ba \\ if they passed away ke didirect descendents tsa bona. The spouse is included mo definition ya direct descendent.* [20]
> (...Hence the passing of this Restitution Act. The Act states that people who are entitled (to restitution) are the dispossessed owners, if they passed away...their direct descendents... The spouse is included in the definition of direct descendent.)

[19] Ibid.
[20] Interview with a Land Claims official, Pretoria November, 17, 2003.

Thus one of the aims of this Act was to determine who qualified for restitution of land dispossessed as a result of the 1913 Native Land Act and other subsequent acts related to loss of property.[21] This was critical for bommastandi as this cut-off point coincided with the period of Alexandra's Second Proclamation. However, this was not to be.

Another challenge of restitution lies in the fact that the Act stipulates that for a restitution claim to be valid not only does the claimant have to be a direct descendent of the original owner[22] but the burden of proof lies with him/her. In instances where property owners did not have children at the time of their death, members of the extended family are legally barred from staking a claim on these properties. This was not always consistent with the expectations of the family members as it seemed to interfere with the way inheritance rules were determined by the family concerned. For example while some properties were titled and members of a family understood that the property was registered in one person's name, in instances where there was pooling of resources among siblings such siblings would expect to play a role in deciding who should inherit the property. This would be more pertinent, where the titled owner died without a will or a "direct descendent".

This resonates with baba Temba's experience and illustrates another side to practices of bommastandi pertaining to acquisition of property and inheritance. This experience reflects challenges that arise out of a legalistic approach to restitution. His argument is based on the fact that members of the extended family, his grandparents, his father and his uncle paid for the property of his other uncle, Madoda, who paid a deposit of £10 and left the country never to return. The property was treated as part of the extended family estate. It was during compensation after expropriation and more recently during restitution that the family had to deal with the implications of the discord between the legal and the social approaches to family resources. They were made to understand that since Madoda does not have any known direct descendents the family could not claim the rights to this property. Also, even though baba Temba incurred costs looking for him he cannot get access the property[23].

Another case in hand is that of tata Andile, a son and hence a direct descendant of a former mmastandi. Interestingly, in spite of this relationship to the properties, restitution of all of his parents' properties was not assured. He expected to recover both his parents' properties as he felt that his family qualified as "wrongfully dispossessed people". These

[21] These would include other subsequent acts that called for spatial reordering of people such as the Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950.
[22] Interview with a land claims commissioner Pretoria November 2004. See footnote 20
[23] Such a case was illustrated in an interview with baba Temba , Alexandra, September 26, 2003.

properties lie side by side but a claim for the one he is occupying was ratified while the second one, which lies next to it, was not.

The argument advanced is that restitution can only be feasible if it does not cause any "social disorder" – in other words, where the area is fully developed, existing buildings will not be evacuated and destroyed. Instead there would be financial compensation. This is captured by the land claims official who explained:

> *...le na le options tse yi-two; ke financial compensation le alternative land. And we had an agreement le local council hore motho o ka reng o batla alternative land, ba tla mo fa priority…*[24]
> (...you have two options: financial compensation and alternative land. And we had an agreement with the local Council that people who opt for alternative land, should be given priority…)

This argument does not make sense to tata Andile. He was told that his family could not take possession of the second property as they had abandoned it. First, they were forced out of the properties with no hope of ever being allowed back without a fight. Second, one of his sons has been living as a tenant of local government, like everybody else, in this adjacent property. Thus he does not understand the kind of social disorder they would be causing by getting their property back. To him this property is similar to all the other properties in Alexandra, including the one he recovered. They had owners and there were tenants, after dispossession council took over all tenants, some properties were subdivided and in some instances new tenants moved in. Whichever way one looks at it, once families of bommastandi ask tenants to leave their properties, there would be social disorder in Alexandra therefore, the family was not interested in the alternative options referred to above.

The legalistic nature of the process of restitution exposed the tensions between the legal and extra-legal property-related social relations. The former is based on written testaments, and codified laws, while the latter is based on uncodified social arrangements, some of which might be culture-based.[25] This, as illustrated in the cases of baba Temba and tata Andile, is seen as problematic by some of the members of bommastandi families.

A similar case which shows the ways council and families of bommastandi work is evident in mme Nthabiseng's experience. Her attempt to claim the rights to remain on her

[24] Ibid.
[25] The two are not necessarily always completely unrelated.

property in line with the Land Restitution Act of 1994 was unsuccessful. In this instance, she was told that, due to the location of her property, she could not be granted this opportunity since part of her property was included in the plans for a new road. Even though she understands this new development, what are her expectations? In other words what would she regard as reasonable compensation? At the time of the interview, she was still waiting for alternative accommodation. Her concern was that at her age, 80 years of age she could not afford a home as big as the one she used to live in. Further, if the home on offer was an RDP house she was going to have problems with her furniture which would not fit into it.[26]

The financial option mentioned by the land claims official above amounted to R50 000. Although the commissioner specified that this amount was to be awarded to people who could not go back to their parents' properties, the amount seems to be a source of anxiety for bommastandi, more particularly those whose interest lies in continuing to live in Alexandra. In spite of the explanation which was offered by the land claims official, who qualified for the R50 000 did not seem clear to all bommastandi who were interviewed. Some believed that the amount was awarded in lieu of the properties while others believed that it was given in addition to properties in instances where families wanted their properties to be reinstated.

Ntate Thapelo, who repurchased his aunt's property in which he started living in the 1930s, presents a noteworthy case. He is not a son to an Alexandra mmastandi. The owner of this property, his maternal aunt, had two daughters who are both married and living in Soweto. However, when the Land Claims Commission offered compensation for the property there was no contest; the R50 000 went directly to his cousins. Clarifying his stance on this he says:

> *Well R50 000 e e ka mokgwa o mo jaana // e re ke go tlhalosetse pele ka yona R50 000. e ka mokgwa o; the property owners bao e neng e le di property tsa bona, they can apply for this R50 000 ka tsela e you know. My two cousins, ba mmangwane, those two girls can apply for this R50 000, but I cannot, because I am not a direct descendent*.[27]
>
> (Well R50 000 operates like this, let me first explain to you about the R50 000. It is like this; the property owners, those who owned these properties, they can apply for

[26] RDP is the acronym for Reconstruction and Development Programme, and now connotes state provided housingt. This is a government housing project meant for people with low incomes. The houses are small, starter homes comprising a single bedroom.

[27] Ntate Thapelo is an 89 year-old who came to live with his mother's younger sister in Alexandra at the end of the 1930s. He subsequently purchased his aunt's former home, where he was interviewed on September 8 2003.

this R50 000 in this way you know. My two cousins, my aunt's children, those two girls can apply for this R50 000, but I cannot, because I am not a direct descendent.)

While he links his purchase of the property to being a nephew to the former property owner, it is probable that council sold him the property because there was no contest from his cousins or other people who occupied the property.

1.6.2 The forgotten mmastandi: The humiliation of loss

Losing a home for the former bommastandi families manifested differently. Some lost it during expropriation where they were moved and settled in other townships. Others were settled elsewhere in the township "temporarily". However, to some, this "temporary", became permanent as conditions changed. Some were waiting to be accommodated in Soweto or the East Rand when the state ran out of money to build them homes in these areas. Such cases include mme Mapula and mama Zodwa who were never provided with alternative homes.

> Mme Mmapula was born in Alexandra Township and her father had two properties. She and her husband and children lived in one. Referring to her father's second property mme Mmapula said: *O tle o bone, ba ganne gore we must buy that and other people they are allowed to rebuy*.[28] (Just look at this, they did not allow us to buy that while other people were allowed to rebuy.)

One family property could not be repurchased as there are housing developments from the 99-year leases of the 1980s where it was. This is where Phase 2 was built. They were also not allowed to repurchase her father's second property even though other people in the township were accorded an opportunity to repurchase their parents' homes. Currently she lives on Roman Catholic Church property, in a section that was allocated by the church to accommodate its teaching staff. This is a very small two-roomed house. This is where she has

[28] Interview with mme Mmapula, Alexandra, October 3, 2003

been living ever since she left her father's house, waiting to be accommodated in Soweto or the East Rand.

Mama Zodwa explained that she was put by council at the current place (the Roman Catholic land), where she lives with some of her children and grandchildren. They live in tin houses that the family subsequently built. Even though she is aware that her parents' stand was used to build a school she said she was fighting for her parents' title deed. This would mean that she would produce it as proof that her parents owned freehold property in Alexandra and this would then qualify her for the financial compensation.

The other group of forgotten bommastandi are those who fled their homes during the violence of the 1990s and were at the time of the interview still living in council offices. Mme Mosidi, ma Elise and Mokgadi also fled their homes.[29] They all lived in Beirut[30] when the violence erupted and they all moved to public spaces – in their case the old Alexandra council buildings since then? At the time of the interview, Mokgadi had been allocated a house in River Park, a new housing development close to the N3, a freeway that connects Johannesburg to Pretoria that lies to the east of Alexandra. However, mme Mosidi and ma Elise were still living in council offices at the time of the interview.

Describing the pain of losing a home to violence Mokgadi said of mme Mosidi:

> *Mmane o tswile ko Beirut a bona; hona jwanong she is semi-blind. O mo nageng, o mo nageng, o hlokafaletswe ke first born ya gagwe mo nageng. Hona jwanong two weeks ago she was sick sick. A kula mo nageng…*[31]
> (When aunty left her home in Beirut she could still see; right now she is semi-blind. She is just in the veld. Her first born died right here in the veld, just two weeks ago she was very very sick right here.)

Her choice of the phrase *mo nageng* – literally meaning "a bush" or a veld – is telling, and serves to emphasise that mme Mosidi did not have a place that she could call home. At the time of the interview, their homes were still occupied. Unlike Mokgadi, mme Mosidi and ma Elise were reluctant to go to River Park. First, they were unwilling to pay rent in River Park,

[29] These three women were interviewed at the council offices where they have been living ever since they fled their homes at the time of violence at the hostels. They are all children of the former bommastandi.
[30] According to the respondents, this was a section of Alexandra near the hostels, which was more violent than all the others
[31] Interview with Mokgadi, mme Mmaphefo, mme Mosidi and ma Elise, Alexandra, March 26, 2004.

while their homes were occupied by other people for free. Further, they felt that River Park was very far from all conveniences that the old Alexandra has to offer.
Besides the obvious material loss that accompanied expropriation, which is illustrated in chapter 7 according to my interviewees the loss of their property was no ordinary loss. First, this was not a single loss, but for many an echo of previous losses. Many respondents referred to prior losses that manifested in removals and resettlements, some of which predated the Alexandra one. From these, I came to appreciate the cumulative pain and how the Alexandra expropriation exacerbated and reincarnated it. Nonetheless as Field succinctly captures the sentiment "losing a home and a community is about a loss of security, stability, autonomy and even a sense of family, friendships and self" (Field 2001: 98)

1.7. The Past in the Present

I contend in this thesis that residues from the past in the current Alexandra are not only discernible in its physical landscape. For example, there is evidence of expropriation in the lives of women whose properties were expropriated and yet they still live in shacks. But also, hostels which pioneered the hostel city notion are still standing. Evidence of the violent period of the early 1990s is still discernible in the lives of women who were left without homes, and are still living in office buildings, while the private developer homes of the 1980s are also noticeable. In addition to all these historical structures there are new developments and new housing areas such as River Park, Tsutsumani, and East Bank among others.[32] The past of Alexandra is traceable in the present.

I also examine how the restitution that bommastandi are currently grappling with affected the memories of pain that attach to their property life stories in general. From conversations with families of bommastandi, it is evident that not only was restitution money inadequate but it does not translate into any significant change both in the lives of bommastandi and correction of spatial inequities (Ramutsindela, 2007; and Mgxitama ud). More importantly, the different experiences that bommastandi encountered living in Alexandra and their memories of what they lost through expropriation and dispossession indicate that that loss of property goes beyond material loss. This then means that any form of compensation or restitution, however well-intentioned, cannot undo the damage done. The two examples below illustrate this point.

[32] Currently there is a shopping mall as well

Khensani returned to Alexandra in 1989 to check on the property when his uncle was sick. At the time former bommastandi were offered an opportunity to repurchase their former properties. He had to say this about his life and their properties:

> My wish is not to stay at this property... We as a family don't want the R50 000 until the issue of repurchasing is clarified...We want it (the property) back. I stay in this property because I do not have money, but, I did convince them (family)… My wish is it should be a family thing, a business. If we get it back… whoever lives here should pay rent. We will make it a business. We want to construct a bed and breakfast which will be a closed corporation. We have agreed that we need this property to use for a family business.[33]

Nhlanhla clearly has plans for his parents' property should the family get it back:

> *If I get the property? Well I want to build a hotel, because there is a need ya accommodation…there is no hotel, we don't have a hotel in Alex for di-tourists, for people; ga go na le mesebetsi, go na le mafu, people o ka ya ko moletelong o dule maybe for six or four hours, ka dinako tse itseng o ye ko hoteleng o robala. I mean it's no longer feasible for us gore o ye ko moletelong, maybe…. the whole night ke dutse and goa bata and I'm from Rustenburg. Or ke zame ho crusher somewhere ke kereye pleke ya go robala. You know these our tradistions tsa gore we must always attend meletelo for mafu or whatever. But if there is a place like that, it's going to be very attractive to people*[34]".
>
> (If I get the property? Well I want to build a hotel, because there is a need for accommodation…there is no hotel, we don't have a hotel in Alex for di-tourists, for people; when there are occasions, funerals, people want to attend wakes and stay there for six or four hours, at certain times they would need to go to such hotels and sleep. I mean it's no longer feasible for us to go to a wake maybe... the whole night… I am sitting and its cold and I maybe from Rustenburg. Or try to sleep somewhere and get a place to sleep. You know these our traditions that we must always attend wakes for funerals or whatever. But if there is a place like that, it's going to be very attractive to people.)

[33] Interview with Khensani, Alexandra. August 20, 2003.
[34] Interview with Nhlanhla, Wynberg, October 10, 2003.

Interestingly, this business plan indicates continuities between the traditional and the modern. It includes servicing people who would be in Alexandra for other reasons rather than touring. He cites an example of *moletelo* – a wake which usually takes place the night before the funeral. People attending this will stay for long hours sometimes overnight at the home of the bereft.

1.8 Methodological Considerations

The life stories of the mmastandi of Alexandra are in many ways exceptional, as this section will illustrate. The study is aimed at utilising the life stories of the mmastandi of Alexandra to illuminate the African experience of private property ownership in South Africa. While this study is aimed at pursuing information that may not be on official records, the purpose of using such material alongside life stories was not primarily to validate information from the sources. Nonetheless cross-referencing between documents and oral history reveal crucial convergences of information from these sources.

This study highlights the importance of investigating respondents across languages and cultures by illustrating the challenges that occur during interviews when issues of translations and or translatability of the everyday spoken language arise. Hence interviews were conducted in the choice of language of the respondents and the analysis was based on their self-expression in order to reduce the loss of the original meaning.[35]

Nonetheless, some of the Alexandra studies draw their evidence from documentary sources such as newspaper clippings and archival material (Tourikis 1981; Sarakinsky 1984; Bozzoli 1991; Jochelson 1991; Nauright 1992; Lucas 1995, 1996). However, Sarakinsky (1984), Bozzoli (1991), Sinwell (2005) and Lange (2006) also draw on the social history tradition as well. Some of their interviewees were selected from a variety of backgrounds such as government officials, experts and practitioners as well as community leaders (Sarakinsky 1984, Sinwell 2006 & Lange 2006). Bozzoli's study goes further by following a life story methodology in which ordinary people were interviewed. Bozzoli's most significant contribution is that she investigated familial networks that expanded her study to include Phokeng, a rural village. Mongane (1989) and Modise (ud), both Alexandra residents, who belonged to property owning families, provide insights that are based on their "personal"

[35] For this I drew from my translation experiences and my understanding of African languages. I was involved in a number of English-Setswana translation projects.

experiences. Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008) conduct in-depth interviews among the residents of Alexandra[36].

In this section, I reflect first on my positionality as a researcher and my understanding of myself as a geographer. These shaped both the theme and the focus of the thesis, as well as the approach I took. Second, I outline the research design I adopted for this study. Here I locate the study in a wider methodological tradition, as well as provide a more detailed description of the research methods used and choices made. I also describe methods by which data was analysed and interpreted.

1.8.1 Positionality[37] as a Researcher: Writing From Within

In their three essays, entitled "Personal and political", "Difference and Place" and "Movement and Encounter", Chouinard (2006), McDowell (2006) and Knopp (2006) each show how their personal experiences impacted on their way of doing geography. Chouinard, Knopp and McDowell highlight how their everyday life experiences – as women in the case of Chouinard and McDowell, as someone who is crippled in the case of Chouinard, and as a gay man in the case of Knopp – have informed their philosophical and theoretical choices when doing geography. As a child, and later a university student and a professor, Chouinard questioned how her world was constructed. Referring to the stringent boundaries and frameworks that informed how her family life was organized, the way knowledge was constructed in the different geography departments in which she studied and worked and her later struggles as a disabled academic, Chouinard shows how such experiences affected her ways of understanding geography and the manner in which she appropriated theories and philosophies of explanation and interpretation.

In a similar way, McDowell also used her experiences as a woman, a wife and a mother to highlight how such identities were interconnected with her professional identity. She then uses her experience of this connectivity to deconstruct the structural-constructivist approach to women's identities that is based on a separation between the worlds of work and home. Knopp, on the other hand, discredits an analysis that focuses on his gayness as the major way of reading his identity, since he feels that his other identity experiences

[36] Some of the respondents in this thesis were also interviewed by Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008).

[37] Crang (2003) Comments on the insider/outsider He draws from Skelton 2001, Mohammad 2001 and Valentine 2002 to indicate that each researcher will experience and be experienced by the respondents differently and hence it is important for them to identify what "the real issues are". Similarly the way respondents reacted to me was different. Even though I share race and most of the history with my respondents in some instances prospective respondents world consent to an interview only to turn me down on arrival.

"demonstrate quite clearly that human subjectivities are multiple, fluid and fractured" (Knopp 2006: 221).

Although Chouinard, McDowell and Knopp (2006) responded somewhat differently to the challenge regarding their positionality, for both their involvement in feminist studies in the one case and in queer studies in the other was about more than playing the role of a "a social analyst" who comments and interprets other people's actions. They drew from their "humanly authored worlds" (Tuan, cited by Entrikin & Tipple 2006: 30) – that is, their phenomenological understandings of the world – not only to inform their understandings and knowledge (Warf 2005: 232-235) but also to challenge and contribute to some of the debates on women and gay identities. In as much as Chouinard and McDowell are white, educated women, which perhaps bestows some privileges in their lives, they still took on the challenge to speak out and raise consciousness for particular feminist issues, some of which are shared by other groups of women who may occupy different race and class positions.

My position as a social analyst is characterized by my "outsider status". This means that I was coming at my research subjects as an outsider, a non-urban and non-property owning interlocutor, and therefore could be seen as someone who did not understand urban ways, least of all the kind of space they lived in and how they shared it. Yet I was an insider too, because, as an African, my life was like that of "property owners", regulated and policed too, and consequently my identity was constructed along similar lines as those of bommastandi.

Ley (2006) observes on field work that, "As I have frequently discovered – the empirical world has no shortage of surprises" (Ley 2006: 17). Nonetheless, this did not circumvent the surprises in my encounter with Alexandra. I went to Alexandra for fieldwork in July, 2003 with an understanding of Alexandra as it was presented in the South African media of the 1980s; a place marked by the influx of black people from other places. This influx physically presented itself as a vast sea of shacks, unregulated and unmanageable. This was one of the places that presented a headache for the apartheid government. It was occupied by the "problem" urban black person who seemed to refuse to accept his/her status as an outsider in the South African urban landscape. For me, Alexandra held the same fascination that I had with most things that were defined as abnormal by apartheid government policy.

Perhaps it was this depiction of Alexandra that created my interest in the topic of my thesis. I have always been intrigued by what I term "the paradoxical foreign native". This concept refers to the contradiction of having natives declared foreign in South Africa. In

Chapter 5 I refer to Budlender's definition an "Alien" as per Aliens Act No. 1 of 1937. This concept is later followed through with the National Citizenship Act 26 of 1970. This is a "native" who, somewhere along a legal-geographical and temporal genealogy, had her/his "native" status expunged and redefined to that of a foreigner in some geographic parts of a place, South Africa, where he has been a native ("*nativing*") all along. Historically there have been a number of naming conventions for South Africans of indigenous descent. For example, Mandy states that "Blacks were originally called Kaffirs, next Natives and then Bantus …" (1984: 86). He goes on to explain how such name changes were also reflected in the names of the related government departments. Given the legal redefinition of this "native", I wanted to know what happened in the life of this erstwhile "native" who was threatening and sometimes not threatening the policies and legislation that demanded her/his compliance.[38]

I set out in search of this particular "problem black person", a mmastandi in Alexandra Township. However, not unlike like Chouinard, McDowell and Knopp, I was working from a dual position because I am a South African woman who was born in a rural area and therefore experienced earlier urban life as an outsider, and yet I shared with bommastandi families the world of being black, an experience which includes being discriminated against and a history of dispossession. In my case, this is a collective memory of dispossession, given that my history does not particularly include a private property ownership narrative. This dual position for me presented an opportunity to recognize bommastandi as humanist subjects, but not in a way that fixed them as subjects in a tradition that is "Eurocentric, masculinist, racist and associated with a hegemony that actively hides difference and silences the voices of the culturally less powerful and oppressed" (Entrikin & Tipple 2006: 35).

In their critique of identity studies, Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 2005) point out the failure of these studies to distinguish analytically between "identity as everyday social experience developed and deployed by social actors" on the one hand, and the "experience-distant category used by social analysts" on the other (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 4). Nonetheless, such a dualism in practice is untenable, since we can never be completely neutral observers of identity, even if we do make use of a more rigorous framework as they suggest. This is so simply because our own identities are always present and "leak" into

[38] Bonner, P, Delius, P & Posel, D. (Eds.) (1993) provide a fuller analysis of apartheid. Posel argues that policies directed at natives were inconsistent and fragmented. This is evidenced in the constant changes in legislation governing the native and in the recurrent name changes of departments that administered his/her affairs.

academic practice in ways that are of vital importance to the production of knowledge. In other words, this "leaking" should not be seen as a weakness but as a strength. Concerns about this duality have also been raised by Crang (2003: 496). Hence, acknowledging that the construction of knowledge as well as research are subjective projects, in my study I drew on the simultaneity of my "outsider" and "insider" status to get a sense of how property owners used their personal experiences and understanding of this place on which meaning has always been very layered to make sense of this experience – and perhaps even to challenge some of the commentaries made by more objective and outsider counterparts. Of course the idea of objectivity has been thoroughly critiqued. My point here derives from a discussion of Kierkegaard's view of objectivity as a myth (Warf 2006: 233).

1.8.2 Research Design

In this thesis I adopt a qualitative approach with an ethnographic or phenomenological element as a strategy of inquiry (Creswell 2002: 8). The following section offers a review of the research methods adopted in this study. These were chosen in consideration to the established view that "it is the goal of qualitative research to represent the personal meanings, experiences and perspectives of individual informants" (Atkinson 2005). In view of the above, the section also details how the field was entered and contact made with respondents. Some of the difficulties associated with the research methods encountered in the field are also discussed.

1.8.2.1 Qualitative approach

Drawing from the argument in Terre Blanche & Durrheim (Eds.) (1999), this i-nquiry is an attempt to provide new insights into the meaning attached to private property ownership based on individual experiences of property-owners in Alexandra Township. A qualitative approach was employed. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of who the property owners of Alexandra Township were and how they negotiated challenges facing them during the various phases of property relationships in their township over the years. Also, a qualitative approach is preferable for this kind of study since it helps to "give voice to the socially excluded" (Creswell 2002, citing Bertaux 1996: 8). It also "allows room to be innovative" as well as to undertake exploratory research which is suited to this project (Creswell 2002: 23, 30). This study, which explores the phenomenological understanding of private property

ownership by the families of the erstwhile private property owners provides a platform for exploring how the experiences of such families shaped understanding of private property ownership and how such an understanding is simultaneously shaped by the notion of owning property privately. Hence I relied on the interviewees' interpretation and personal understandings of their experiences as well as the hidden and unspoken information in their narratives since it sort to understand the "meanings" attached to property ownership by families of the erstwhile Alexandra property owners.

I explore how "subjective understandings and experiences of individuals fit into the larger socio-political discourses" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999: 148) of Alexandra. It does so in a manner that takes account of the injunction that we "cannot apprehend human experience without understanding the social, linguistic and historical features which give it shape" (Kelly 1999: 398). The central point of departure is therefore that we need to accept that "these meanings are varied and multiple" and that researchers have "to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell 2002: 8).

The research identifies the "essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon" (Creswell 2002: 15, citing Moustakas 1994). In this instance, the phenomenon is private property. Participants described private property and their understanding of related lived experiences. Creswell explains that phenomenology can be adopted as a philosophy as well as a method of the procedure (since) it involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning" (Creswell, citing Moustakas 1994: 15). However, in this case, while a small number of subjects were studied this was not done as extensively as I would have liked. Due to financial and time constraints, formal conversations with the subjects took an hour to two hours. However, in some instances there were either additional telephonic conversations or other informal discussions at Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA) offices and meetings.

The qualitative approach employed in this study has also been informed by the considerations associated with the hermeneutical tradition, as interpreted by Habermas in his critique of the objectivation of meaning in both language and transverbal level of actions (Habermas 1972: 165). This caveat is essential, since this study is concerned with making sense of human experience rather than discovering universal law-like patterns of human behaviour (Kelly 1999: 398).

1.8.2.2 Research Methods

In this study, I adopted a combination of research tools and sources. These include documented and oral evidence. A variety of archival materials were consulted. Among these were official and newspaper reports. In addition, the study draws on life histories with a special focus on the property ownership narratives of the bommastandi families.

1.8.2.3 Documentary and archival records

As the first port of call, records of Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA) were consulted. ALPOA is an organization that claims to represent former property owners in Alexandra in various issues pertaining to their properties. It is currently assisting former property owners in Alexandra with the process of land claims and restitution of properties that were wrongfully expropriated. Since families that are claiming their properties back work together closely with this organization, I was able to obtain from ALPOA the latest contact details of family members who I wanted to interview for my property life stories.

Second, I used documentary material from the National Archives in Pretoria to try and piece together the ways of life of Alexandra residents – in particular property-owners – especially in the period that predated the lives of my respondents. The archives provided various sources of information such as letters between government officials, as well as between government officials and various committees, organizations and individuals. Also included were minutes from meetings and petitions.

Third, I sourced information from other archives, including, at the University of the Witwatersrand, the William Cullen library, the University of South Africa library archives, the Johannesburg city library as well as the Pretoria State Library. Here I accessed information on legislation, and government policy on Alexandra Township, as well as on governance and various moments of resistance which were recorded. I also retrieved information on the lives of some Alexandra residents. From these centres, I accessed news clips from newspapers such as *Dark City Report*, *Izwi lase Township*, *Libertas*, *Sowetan*, *the Rand Daily Mail*, the main paper and the *Extra* Editions, *The Star* and *Sunday Times* which were powerful tools which presented discussions held at the time they occurred. I also used articles from websites.

Finally, I used other secondary material, especially on Alexandra, such as theses (Tourikis, 1981; Sarakinsky, 1984; Jochelson, 1991; Carter, 1991; Nauright, 1992 and Lucas, 1995) and other printed material such as scholarly on Alexandra, for example, Lucas, (1996) and Bozzoli (1991, 2004), Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008), Nieftagodien (2011).[39]

There are two more issues I want to address in relation to the documentary evidence used in this study. The first relates to the challenges of using such sources in a place like South Africa. The second concerns the way in which such sources merge (or do not merge) with the property life histories conducted for this study.

The use of public archives in South Africa presents a challenge "due to South Africa's racialised and divided history" (Peterson 2002: 30). Peterson (2002: 29-38) outlines two challenges in particular which he cautions researchers using them to bear in mind. First, some knowledge and records that might have been deemed "inconsequential" and "inappropriate" were excluded from archival holdings. Second, Peterson argues that "South African public archives particularly have been monolingual in that they have embodied and voiced only the experiences and discourses of the successive oligarchies that have governed throughout the twentieth century" (Peterson 2002: 30-31). For that reason other experiences and insights "were generally either ignored or criminalised" (Peterson 2002: 30-31). The imperative to supplement and expand the reach of the documentary record by conducting property life histories was informed by these debates about the construction and storage of archival material. The interview materials present Alexandra properties as homes that were subsequently wrenched away from bommastandi by government through various means. However, information from the archives mostly presented them as a problem linked to the township.

On the other hand, while this study is aimed at pursuing information that may not be on official records, it simultaneously took cognisance of the fact that oral interviews may not yield some of the information due to the inaccessibility of other potential interviewees. Peterson (2002: 31) refers to the "challenge of finding, assembling, cataloguing and elucidating as much as possible the black experiential archive which is claimed to be everywhere and to bring it into play in the public or institutional orbit". Even though the purpose of using such material alongside life stories was not primarily to validate information from the sources, cross-referencing between documents and oral history revealed interesting convergences of information from these sources. For example, some respondents would

[39] The last two have written extensively on Alexandra.

mention an event which is documented in the archives as something they have read about or heard about from their parents. However, what is significant for this study is how such events documented or not, would have been captured in the life experiences of these families. Such articulations were also necessitated by the project's intention to reveal parts of history that do not represent the official perspective on Alexandra Township.

Although the bias of written records has been widely documented (Neuman 1997), it was interesting to note that some materials, although recorded within the official discourse of the time that exposed the undesirability of some African behaviour in towns, nonetheless accorded me an opportunity to rethink them using a newly emerging understanding of urban African life. This is an understanding that has not been recorded until recently (Mbembe & Nuttall 2004; Simone 2004 and 2005; Simone A & Abouhani A. (Eds) 2004).This point was taken up earlier in this chapter.

1.8.2.4 Life stories as a strategy of the qualitative approach

Life stories in general, shed light on "hidden historical processes". Thus, through them one can move beyond the limits and biases of the written record and broaden the framework for understanding experiences of interviewees (Grele 1985; Hofmeyr 1993). For example, in the introduction to her book, *We Spend our years as a Tale that is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom*, Isabel Hofmeyr (1993), raises a concern with the gap in scholarship in what she terms "popular understandings of history itself"(Hofmeyr 1993: 9). Although she acknowledges the appearance of work that is based on oral history, in Southern Africa in the past 20 years, citing Paul La Hausse, she laments a dearth of attention to "forms of interpretation and intellectual traditions that inform facts of oral history" (Hofmeyr 1993: 9).

This point is best illustrated in the works of Passerini (1986) and Gittins (1998), which shed light on the relationship between interviewees' experiences and "historiography". For example, Passerini (1986) argues that not only should one consider the silences of interviewees in relation to the "discourse of historiography" but one should bear in mind that "historiography" also tends to remain "silent on issues of great relevance for the lives of individual people" (Passerini 1986: 187). Therefore, I did not use the interviews primarily to confirm or counter-check information recorded as history. However, there were points of convergence between the two sources. Additionally, Gittins (1998) suggests that silences are not necessarily coincidental since they are "created consciously, unconsciously and at a

number of levels, not just within individuals but among collectives generally" (Gittins 1998:46). As indicated in some interviews, these silences seemed both conscious and unconscious as they, in some instances, occurred where and when a highly emotive event was recalled. They appeared as if respondents paused to try to collect themselves or observe a moment of silence in respect of people referred to who most probably died.

But property life stories also reveal the significance of memory in presentation of a story. Memory played a very significant role because of the many changes that these families experienced in their relationships to the property. Field (2001:63) contends that "While apartheid's social engineering physically destroyed District Six, it did not succeed in erasing the place from popular memory". This means that destroying their homes and resettling the district Six people did not take away from them their lived experiences that have most invariable left an indelible mark in their memories. With Alexandra the memory of loss is reinforced by the constant interaction with their homes and their township and in some instances members of the community who they have known all their lives.

Typically the shift in the notion of "stand as a temporary place", which is referred to in the beginning of this chapter, was revealed, in that these families experienced this shift in multiple ways. First, they acquired their stands as freehold, which inferred permanence. Then, at expropriation, the impermanence set in, but then again in 1988, permanence was suggested by the offer to repurchase. However, this proved to be complex as this occurred at the time when Africans were offered 99-year leasehold in urban places. While at first bommastandi seem to have embraced this process of repurchase as a chance to reinstate their parents' properties, they soon discovered that council did not share this view.

I used property acquisition and dispossession "life stories" of 21 Alexandra Township families. This was done through 21 conversations with 33 members of these families of the former free holding families. Additional information was also sought through telephonic conversations and in some instances visits and brief chats both at ALPOA offices and ALPOA meetings. The main participants were both women and men depending on who was available in the family. However, in some instances other members of the family such as spouses or partners[40] and in one instance a child would comment as and when the need arose. The age of the participants varied between 48 and 89. Although I would have loved to have had access to the original owners of the properties this was not possible, thus I interviewed the second generation of property owners. This refers to children of property owners. Only in

[40] Partner specifically refers to a non-married relationship, without cohabitation in this instance.

one or two instances did I interview third generation family members, that is, grandchildren of property owners. I drew my respondents from the free holding families who, except for two,[41] remained in their homes after expropriation, because it was possible to locate and find them in Alexandra.

But most importantly, this group would, through their memories of continued life in Alexandra, help provide understanding of how changing property ownership regimes produced a certain kind of relationship to property due to the continued occupation of their homes long after they were expropriated. These families who never left their homes provide an understanding of property relationships which contemporaneously encapsulates the legal and the socio-cultural understanding of their lives.

This convergence is illustrated in their title deeds and the undocumented memories which emerged during interviews respectively. I started with their current relationships with their properties, which in some cases is settled in that they managed to repurchase them while in some it is heavily charged with tormented anxiety as they go through the process of land claims in order to regain their parents' properties, or if this is not possible, move to alternative homes. I traced back these relationships to the time the properties were purchased freehold, in all cases by the parents or grandparents of the respondents.[42] Although it might have been valuable to have input from non-free holding members of the Alexandra population as well, due to the transitory nature of most of its residents over the years, it was not possible to access and hold a continued interaction with such families.

1.8.3 Entering the Field

In this section I describe how I met bommastandi. I seek to answer the question of who they are and how I related to them. I also describe the conditions that led to my attending Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA) meetings, an exercise that enriched my understanding of what was at stake and how the present was linked to the past in the case of bommastandi families. Finally, I describe the process through which I selected my respondents and how attending the meetings fast-tracked it.

[41] Mama Zodwa and mme Mmapula are living in shacks on Roman Catholic Church land. Although they were promised alternative houses this never happened. Their parents' properties are occupied by a school and new housing developments respectively.

[42] There were two respondents who bought properties directly, one from the former freeholders in 1988 when former property owners were offered a chance to repurchase properties, while the other one who also bought in the 1980s purchased a house that was on offer through the 99-year leasehold system.

1.8.3.1 ALPOA

My starting point was the offices of the Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA). This is a group of former property owners who claim to represent the interests of families of bommastandi in many different ways, such as attending to issues regarding land claims and compensation for their properties among others. However, Sinwell (2009) disagrees with this assertion and goes on to illustrate that ALPOA's self acclaim as representative of former property owners is problematic since they represent some and not all property owners. He argues that ALPOA "represents a sustained invented participatory space which challenges authority, and must be viewed, in its own right, as a social movement." (Sinwell 2009: 301). I met ALPOA committee members at the organisation's offices who worked there on a voluntary basis. After introducing myself I was – after a few meetings with bommastandi who preferred to be interviewed at the offices – invited to attend ALPOA meetings. I attended only three of these meetings since I chose not to attend the ones whose agenda dealt with much more private issues. Furthermore, the detailed deliberations of these meetings were not going to be part of this work.

Interestingly, ALPOA was at the time of my fieldwork housed in 2nd Avenue, a stand that is the home to the old Alexandra Health Committee (AHC), a double-storeyed house that was built in 1916.[43] The Alexandra Health Committee played a very significant role in championing the interest of Alexandra bommastandi. In addition to this imposing structure, there is a house that was apparently used by the Medical Officer of Health, and offices that were used as holding cells by the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board in later years. Except for the latter, which are used for ALPOA business, these buildings were at the time occupied by households.

Through ALPOA meetings as well as through contacts made at the ALPOA offices and through other networks, I obtained access to the respondents. I would introduce myself privately at these meetings, and strike up conversations that were non-threatening, given that this was in a space where solidarity was enforced. In this way I managed to secure more appointments with prospective respondents. I would follow up with phone calls and personal visits before we could start an interview. However, in some cases my first visit would culminate in an interview. Some interviews took place at the respondents' homes, others at the ALPOA offices. From here I used a snowball approach to gain access to other

[43] In 2002/2003 ALPOA was housed in an office at PAN, short for Pan African a name given to the old the bus and taxi terminal of Alexandra Township.

bommastandi families. I realised at this stage how close-knit these families were, as it became easier to talk to them once a known family is used as a point of reference. Most interestingly, at these meetings I would be asked, more often than not, whose child I was, so as to be linked to a particular family of property owners, I suppose.

From attending these meetings I learned about who bommastandi were and how they understood and experienced private property ownership. Interestingly, the issues raised at these meetings highlighted the way in which respondents understood their relationships to their families' properties – an understanding that was intimate and personal. This contributed tremendously to my understanding of the experiences that were reflected in documentary and archival registers. The meetings were conducted in any South African language of choice by the speaker. These most commonly included Isizulu, Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi, Xitsonga, and English, but also there was a lot of the township lingua franca.[44]

Although in general people who agreed to see me would end up being interviewed, I experienced a few challenges. In a few cases, I would make an appointment only to have it postponed the day before the interview date. In two instances I was refused flat out. In the first instance the prospective respondent had agreed telephonically to see me, but as soon as I arrived she excused herself. Although I was disappointed, I also understood her case, as the family had just recently lost and buried their father. In the second instance, one of my respondents took me to the home of the prospective respondent who expressed interest in seeing me and an appointment was set. However, on arrival she had changed her mind. The last and perhaps most interesting case was a woman who had been interviewed in the print media in the 1980s, who was also referred to me by one respondent. In this instance the respondent also took me personally to her. I started to set up my interview, tape and notes when she changed her mind.

The last two cases seem to suggest interview burn-out since in most cases I was made aware of the many people before me who had interviewed these women. This was a limitation since it meant that I lost an opportunity to include experiences of some key members of bommastandi families, more so because these were older people. However, in general, the fact that Alexandra residents seemed to be used to being interviewed both for academic and media research, made it relatively easy for me to gain access to the respondents.

[44] This is a language with a smattering of different languages most commonly spoken in South Africa.

Focusing on the property itself – interviews would include the governance of Alexandra, renting out properties and relations with tenants, the issue of hostels, and the experience of expropriation and dispossession. However, once in the field, instead of asking questions, I introduced myself and asked the respondents to tell me about their parents' property/ies. I asked how these were acquired and what happened to them. I basically encouraged respondents to tell me about themselves, and their lives in Alexandra from the time they remembered being in Alexandra to the present day. I used an interview schedule. However, I did not always need to refer to it. It is remarkable that, due to the processes of land restitution at the time and the active role played by ALPOA particularly in assisting the former property owners on issues pertaining to their properties such as restitution and claims, the stories told were about the present. Through the lens of the present, the past was resurrected. Interestingly people, both dead and alive, who were linked to these properties, came to life through the memories and reminiscences of the respondents.

I had with me a letter of introduction from the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, outlining who I was and what I was doing in Alexandra, as well as a consent form for the use of a tape recorder and a consent form where prospective respondents were advised of their rights (see Appendices 1 to 5). These entailed the right to decline being interviewed by me, as well as the right to stop the interview at any time and let me know if there was particular information which they did not want me to record as I was using both a tape recorder and a note pad in the interviews.

1.8.3.2 Selection of respondents

Since this study is not concerned with statistical accuracy, selection of respondents was based on availability and access, especially because the area of study has experienced large-scale mobility due to expropriations and resettlement. Furthermore, since this research is an attempt at reading and being aware of the multilayered and multifaceted forces at play in the private property ownership debate, the depth and theoretical relevance of the interview rather than the numbers of interviewees is of crucial significance (Terre blanche & Durrheim 1999-: 168). Thus interviews were not an end in themselves but served as "arenas within which particular linguistic patterns can come to the fore", also, meanings arrived at from the interview will be viewed as "products of a larger social system for which these individuals act as relays" (Terre blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 153).

The purpose of my selection of participants was to identify a population that would afford me an opportunity for an in-depth study of how property-owners lived. Further, the way I posed my research question called for selection of families that would provide rich information in this regard (Neuman 1997; Wengraf 2001). Alexandra would provide understandings of both continuities and discontinuities of a legally exceptional space in urban South Africa. Alexandra survived as a predominantly African township, but there was a shift in property ownership from private to sovereign regime, as properties which initially belonged to individuals became government property. For this reason, I limited my selection to family members of former property owners who never left Alexandra in order to understand their experiences of living in the township right through the changing property ownership regimes.

Although I initially aimed to select families that have lived in Alexandra Township from the earliest possible period, that is as close to 1912 as possible, I ended up speaking to family members who were available and accessible as in some instances, families had moved while in other instances, families were reluctant to speak to me. In spite of this, the experiences of the family members I interviewed jointly shed light on how the occurrence of the different property regimes in Alexandra Township have impacted on the social construction of property ownership by bommastandi. Further, the cumulative effects of various disruptions and dispossessions that were experienced by these families provide today – albeit with hindsight – a rich memory and sense of how these families understand themselves, their origins, in particular their link with Alexandra and in some instances, with other places.

I further intended to interview families who are as multigenerational as possible. These families would highlight issues of succession and inheritance as well as reflect how gendered – if at all –property acquisition and dispossession was. I hoped that the multigenerational families would afford me an opportunity to "cross-reference" as well as access differing views of similar experiences which are generation based (Wengraf 2001). I was interested in what happened to the property in cases where the parents divorced or died. Through discussions with available family members some of these concerns were addressed. Talking about themselves and their relationships to the property the respondents often provided a wealth of information on family networks both in Alexandra and elsewhere and

how these family members were linked to the property.[45] These networks would reveal how resources were contributed and or shared in acquisition and use of property.

Before going to the field I assumed that the profiles of these families included experiences of various property regimes. My point of departure was that the respondents would all have had a communal property ownership background as well as possible familial links with it. This view was informed by land restitution debates that present Africans property relations as necessarily communal (Cousins 2002; Kariuki 2004). Cousins (2002) refers to private property ownership as "UnAfrican" This view that African property ownership is communal is critiqued by Widlok (2000), Mitchell (2002), and Berry (2002).

I also presumed that I would in my interviews get different pockets of respondents from various property ownership regime backgrounds such as communal, sovereign and possibly private, who would then jointly provide a whole which would comprise traceable sources of their regime of origin. But also, I assumed that there would be definitive boundaries between freeholders and tenants. Finally, I also assumed that property ownership impacted on a family's social economic class, with a high likelihood for the economically well off living in freehold. This influence is from my readings on urban Africans which largely use poor material condition of Africans in rural South Africa as a major factor when explaining their presence in urban areas. However, I found a much more complex situation.

Families who bought property came from multiple property relationship backgrounds. Some had been tenants both in farms and non-farm urban properties. Others owned urban properties in places such as Sophiatown while others owned farms. Some came from communally owned villages. Most importantly, memories of these previous places were not necessarily immediate to all the respondents. Some of it was lived through stories told by parents and grandparents (Nyamende 1996: 193-196). Also, the boundaries between the owners and non-owning families were blurred. First, even though a property would on paper belong to a family – in that a member of that particular nuclear family held title to the property – purchasing that property and access to it in some cases might have been a joint effort among extended family members. Second, living or staying in that property was not only limited exclusively to the family members of the title-holder and their tenants. There were various arrangements where extended family members would live in the property

[45] This network proves to remain important even at the time of writing. A survey(2007) conducted by Sara Charlton of the Department of Town & regional Planning at the University of Witwatersrand and myself for the Alexandra Renewal Project is looking at families in Alexandra who view elsewhere as home and how this served to inform housing provision for them in as far as tenurial rights were concerned.

without necessarily paying rent. These arrangements were determined by conditions of familial agreements which were not necessarily written.

1.8.4 Analysis of Data

1.8.4.1 Content analysis

I used content analysis. From the interview transcripts, newspaper clippings, archival material, official documents, website articles a videotape and other secondary material that I identified, I focused on content such as words and their meanings. It was for this reason that the original transcriptions were not translated into English. Although the interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the respondent, most of the time they were mixed, that is, a mixture of African languages and a smattering of English. This was important for my work as I did not want to lose expressions that were originally used, which would signify something significant for this work. For example, the use of term mmastandi or *mmastene,* raised significant questions for me.

I coded the information through reading the material from the data sources and selecting themes and patterns that were revealed. As expected, there were differences but I focused on common features to try and understand collectively the ways of life of bommastandi. Through the use of this method I relied on observable data to get to the invisible, the said often to try and understand the unsaid and the plausible. I acknowledge that other themes and patterns may have been lost in the texts.

Finally, the material was not only organized thematically, periodisation was also crucial as various time periods indicated some significant key moments in the property life stories of Alexandra Township.

1.8.4.2 Limitations and ethical consideration

The timing of my field work was problematic since it was the time when families of bommastandi were caught up in the land claims process. Their full attention was thus focused on challenges of restitution, such as what it meant in terms of full ownership rights to their parents' properties that the compensation money implied. Since the lives of these families were generally not documented a lot of information was lost. The shifts from being tenants to mmastandi and vice versa and the selling and purchasing of different properties in Alexandra

was difficult to track down as such detailed information was mostly stored in the memories of the respondents and thus some of the finer details were lost and/or confused over time. All these make the study difficult but important. However, opportunities also arose out of this limitation. Since the restitution process took place at the time of the study, the present and the past of these families were compressed and this presented an opportunity to examine the past since it was seen and reflected in the present.

The question of memory also played a significant role. In some conversations the respondents would not remember details of the properties that their families lived in. This made it difficult to trace properties that are linked to the families. For instance, one might remember that their parents started living with family or as tenants before purchasing their home, but might not remember addresses where they lived. In some cases they would remember that there were properties in the family that were sold but could not remember details such as why property was sold and why the family moved. Thus it becomes challenging to try and link a particular family to all the properties that they ever had contact with.

Respondents were assured of anonymity. As a result a naming system was derived to protect their identity. Further only parts of their addresses were used in some of the tables. For example, instead of a house number only the name (number) of the Avenue on which the property was situated, was used.

Detailing information which indicates how intertwined different ethnic groupings were, the multigenerational nature of the respondents as well as their different occupations is intended to emphasise that the social construction of private property ownership was informed by many and varied permutations. This provides a rich backdrop against which social construction of private property ownership in Alexandra should be understood.

Finally, there was a lot of distrust as the issue of non-family members who resided in the properties seemed not to have been resolved in a satisfactory manner. There were questions of where these families were supposed to go whose responsibility it was to move them if at all, but, there was also understanding among some members of bommastandi families that some families who lived in their parents' properties had, over the years made a life in Alexandra and they equally did not have anywhere else to go or chose not to move due to the locational advantage of Alexandra vis- a-vis job opportunities be they imagined or real.

1.9 Characteristics of participants

1.9.1 Race and ethnicity

In this section two issues are raised, ethnicity and race. These two issues were important for this study in that the proclamation of this township which was meant for Africans and "coloured" people predated the apartheid project of racial classification. The fact that the population comprised these two racial groups and a variety of ethnic groupings presented a challenge for the apartheid legislation which was based upon separating people of different races. Arguably, the races and ethnic groupings of the respondents are intertwined and thus difficult to unravel. The following section describes how I dealt with them.

1.9.2 Different ethnic groupings which were identified among the respondents

The pie chart below indicates the number of respondents who could be traced to the different ethnic groupings and races. Although no particular question was asked on the race or ethnic grouping of the respondents, in their stories they highlighted their race and ethnic origins through discussions of who they were, where their families came from, if such information was known, and who they married. The largest proportion of respondents was Basotho with ten, while "coloured" and Amaxhosa respondents were few with only two from each group. The proportion of Batswana respondents was five, while there were four Bapedi and Amaswati each and there were three each for Amazulu and Amashangaan.

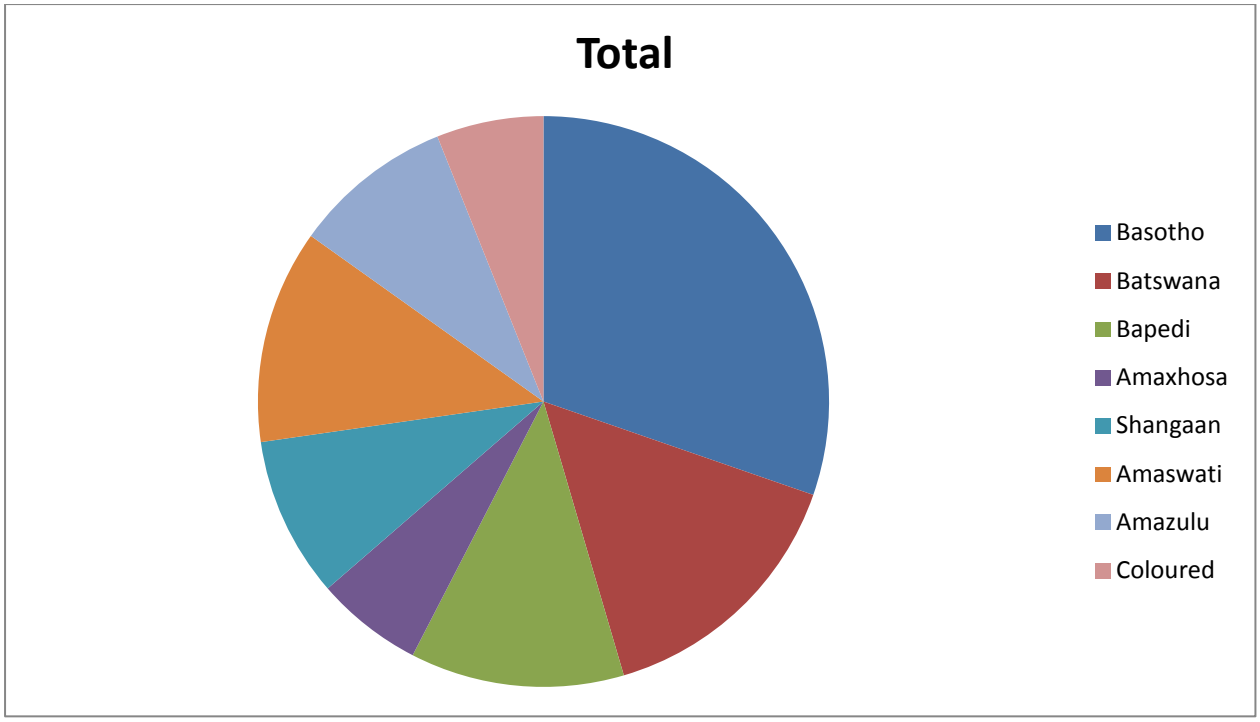


Figure 1 Traceable ethnic groupings and races of the respondent

I found that even though Alexandra was proclaimed for both "coloured" people and Africans, these were not neat social categories. Before the group Areas Act and the Population Registration Acts of 1950 these two groups were not racially separated. Additionally, hidden in these categories that may commonly be identified by names and languages are interesting racial and ethnic links that are not obvious.

Table 1 indicates ethnic groupings of members of bommastandi families who were the primary respondents during interviews. However, because the respondents were assured that their identities would be protected I devised a naming system. The noms de plume so derived were dependent on given last names which were indicative of the respondent's racial and or ethnic grouping.[46] In addition, respondents provided such information in their demographic form which they were requested to fill even though this was done voluntarily. Further, some respondents would give such information during the interview. For example, if a respondent has a Xitsonga name or is born of a Vatsonga family – whether married or not – I would use a Xitsonga first name.

[46] I acknowledge the problems that lie in using names for ethnic identity since some names are used across different ethnic groupings. However, using the last name as a guideline, I adhered where possible to names that would most commonly be associated with the different groupings. Don Materra among others, has written about such histories of moving across racial borders.

Table 1 Ethnic grouping of the respondents

Family	Names of[47] respondents	Ethnic grouping
1	Nthabiseng	Mosotho/married to a Mopedi
	Tshepo	Mosotho
	Thabang	Mother is a Mosotho father was a Mopedi
2	Mihloti	Motsonga married to a Mosotho
	Tsakani	Motsonga
3	Temba	Mswati
4	Andile	Xhosa
	Nomvula	Xhosa
	*Bontle	Sotho
5	Mandla	Zulu
6	Mmapula	Tswana
7	Palesa	Sotho
	Mogau	Sotho
	Tebogo	Sotho
	Vuyo	Zulu(?)
8	Zodwa	Swazi
	*Mfana	Swazi?
9	Thapelo	Tswana
	*Lesibana	Pedi married to Tswana
10	Khensani	Shangaan
11	Moipone	Tswana
	*Tiisetso	Sotho? A partner to Moipone
12	Sechaba	Sotho
13	Rapula	Tswana
14	Hunadi	Pedi
15	Leanne	"Coloured"
16	Nhlanhla	Swazi
17	Musa	Zulu
	*Puseletso	Sotho?
18	Mmaphefo	Sotho
19	Mosidi	Tswana

[47] Asterisks in Column 2, are used to specify family members who participated intermittently, in the interviews.

Family	Names of respondents	Ethnic grouping
20	Elise	"Coloured"
21	Mokgadi	Pedi
21 Families	33 Respondents	

Column 3, Table 1, highlights the shared ethnic identities among same families. For example, mama Mihloti is Tsonga. However, she was married to a Mosotho man, while ntate Thapelo, a Motswana, is married to a Mopedi woman. This points to the apparent futility of identifying bommastandi or even pinpointing their practices as rooted in a particular ethnic grouping. However, this offers possibilities and opportunities to appreciate the complexity and multiplicity of identities and practices of an Alexandra mmastandi. Unsurprisingly, almost all of the respondents spoke several languages, as they have spent most of their lives in Alexandra and have had interaction with people from different linguistic backgrounds.

Four families in particular need special reference in this regard, particularly because the removal plan for Alexandra was intended to follow the Group Areas Act provision in terms of which Africans and "coloured" people would be removed to separate townships.[48] Ma Leanne's family uses an African surname; however, they identified themselves as "coloured". Ma Leanne's mother was a "coloured" woman from the Cape while her father, who originated from outside South Africa, was of Indian extraction. However, he changed his surname and adopted an African one while en route to South Africa. Even then it would appear that the family name change did not necessarily mean abandonment of the "coloured" identity that the family assumed since some of ma Leanne's siblings moved to Eldorado Park and Rabie Ridge, both "coloured" townships, after expropriation. Therefore, it is plausible that the family opted to use an African name because it was expedient at the time. Ma Elise's family uses a non-African surname, however, while in conversation with her she spoke Sesotho and there was no mention of a "coloured" identity. Mama Zodwa's family is interesting in that, while she used an African surname, she clarified that there were two branches in her family, namely Swazi and "coloured".[49] At expropriation her "coloured" children, that is, those who used a non-African surname, moved to Rabie Ridge, a township that was built for "coloured" people while her Swazi ones either live with her or have found rental homes in Alexandra. These three families originated from outside South Africa. The

[48] The Group Areas Act No 41 which provided for racial differentiation of occupation of urban space was passed in 1950.
[49] Children took surnames of their fathers who belonged to different races (original name withheld).

fourth family is that of mme Mmapula who also uses a non-Tswana surname. She explained that she was married to a "coloured" man whose family originated in the Cape, while hers originated in the Free State.

I took the ethnic and racial differentiation further, albeit in a limited way. For example, a Motswana, Mosotho or Mopedi female respondent is addressed as mme, while the ones from Nguni and "coloured" groups are referred to as mama and ma respectively. In the case of male respondents tata, baba and ntate were used for respondents from the Xhosa, Zulu/Swazi and Sotho/Setswana/Sepedi groups respectively. This mode of address was exclusively used for older respondents, that is, those who are not in the same age group as myself.

1.9.3 The limits of this naming system

The main shortcoming of this system is that some names can be used across different languages, for example, names given to people belonging to the main groups such as Nguni or Sotho may be common across groups.[50] For example, Moipone may be used by a Sotho or Tswana family. Second, full exploration of multi-ethnic diversity of these families was dependent on available information in that a respondent would provide information on the part of the family that they knew well and had information on. For example a married woman might have scanty information on the husband's family. Therefore the bulk of information provided would be based on the wife's side of the family. However, even though using names in trying to identify and depict the racial or ethnic groupings of bommastandi is a complex exercise. However, its main purpose of highlighting the multiplicity of groups and languages that were found among the interviewed bommastandi of Alexandra is still served.

1.9.4 Age and gender of the main respondents

The stacked cylinder figure below illustrates the age and gender of the primary respondents. Of the 25 interviewees, thirteen were females and twelve were males.

[50] Sotho will include Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana; while Nguni will include Isixhosa, Isizulu, IsiSwati. I therefore tried where possible to stick to very typical names that would not be confusing.

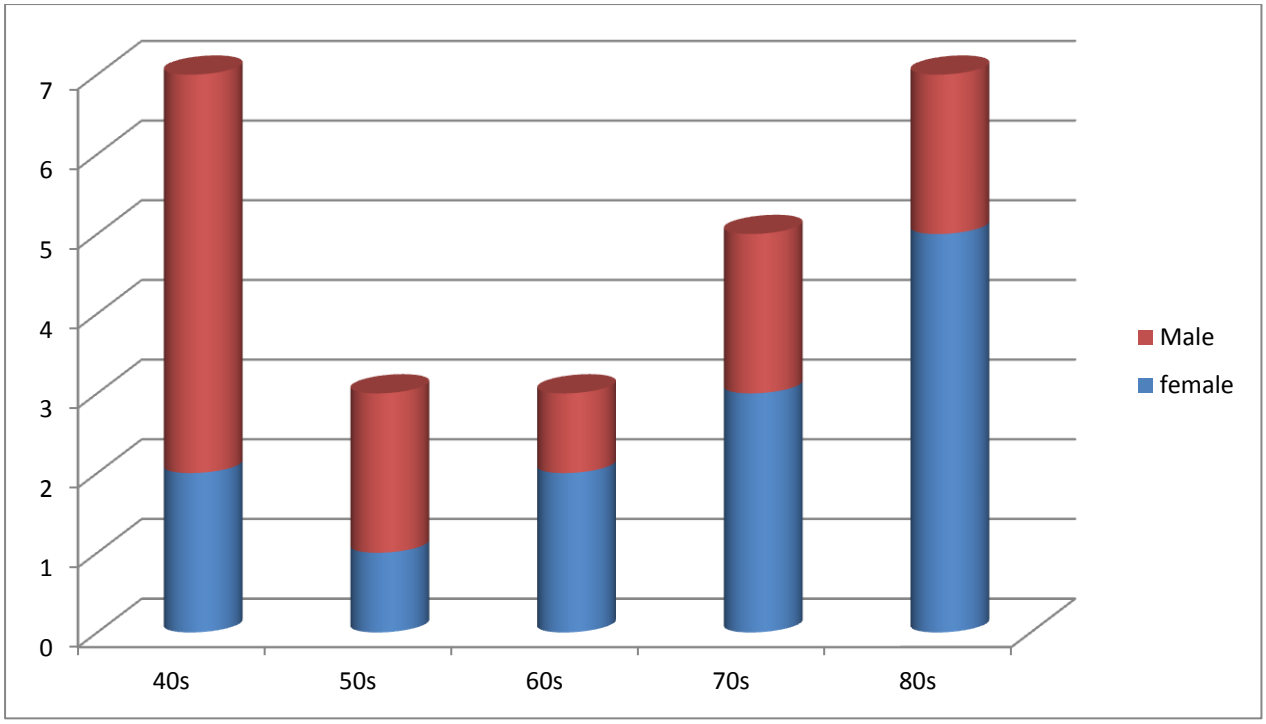


Figure 2 Age and gender of the main respondents

Seven respondents were in their 80s. Of these five were female while two were male. They were all children of bommastandi except for one who is a nephew of mmastandi. Among the five who were in their seventies, three were female, while two were male. There were three each in the 60s and 50s age brackets with the gender spread of one male, two female and two male and one female respectively. Of the seven who were in their forties, four were children while three were grandchildren. This group comprised two females and four males. The parents of two of these grandchildren lived in Alexandra but did not purchase properties, while the third one occupies the interesting position of both grandchild and child to mmastandi. His mother, who is the daughter of a mmastandi, got married and purchased a property thus becoming a mmastandi in her own right.

The oldest group, which comprised respondents who were in their 80s, was the sought after group as they were the closest possible in age to the property owners. I therefore assumed that they would provide more information of the earlier Alexandra. Interestingly, the ability to provide more details on property acquisition did not necessarily depend on the age of the respondents. The level of detail provided was directly linked to participation of the respondents in property matters such as expropriation, repurchase and now recently restitution.

1.9.5 Points of origin

The diagram below indicates points of origin of families of the respondents.[51] These points of origin are grouped according to the old South African provinces which do not tally with the current ones. For example, points of origin of families that came from the Cape are now in the Western and Eastern Cape provinces while the ones from the Transvaal (Gauteng) are now from four different provinces. Table 2 provides further details of these points of origin.

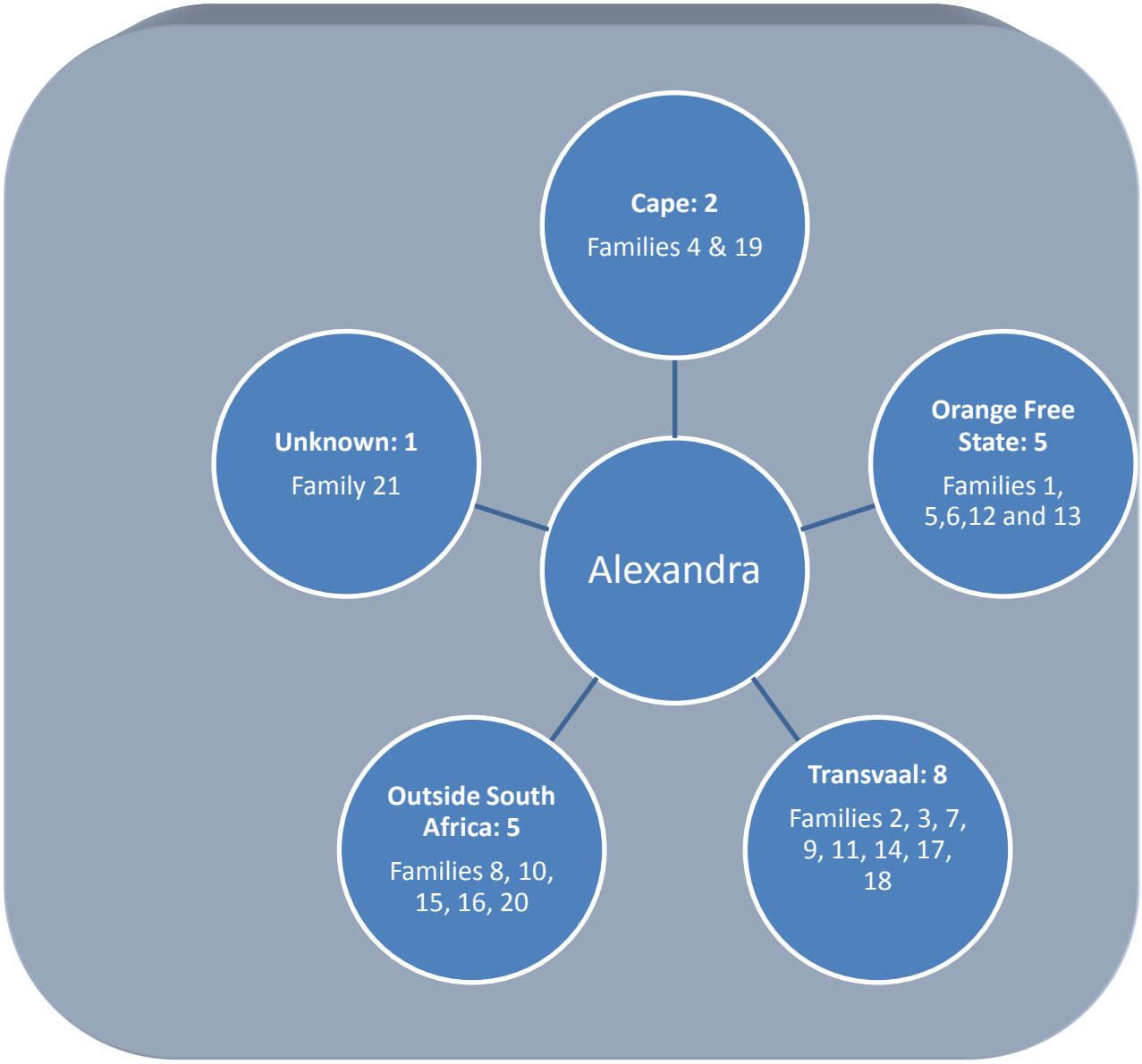


Figure 3 Points of origin of the respondents

[51] Point of origin here denotes the place from where the respondents indicated that their journey to Alexandra started.

Table 2 provides further details on the points of origin of bommastandi. It indicates these families also came from various geographical backgrounds. These included white farms, urban areas, and rural villages as well as beyond the borders of South Africa. Some respondents described how their families were affected by the 1913 Land Act where they were expected to either work for the white farmers or leave the farms. They were not allowed to buy or rent land from the white farmers. Before this they could be *"bywoners"* or *"sharecroppers"* which enabled them to work a piece of land and pay the farm owner with a percentage of their produce.[52] Those who came from urban areas were mostly from other parts of Johannesburg. They left due to removals or attraction to Alexandra by the opportunity to purchase their own property. Those who came from rural villages also came in different ways. Some started off working in Johannesburg and went to Alexandra as opportunities to purchase private property became available. Among these there were those whose villages of origin still exist while the others' villages were removed and resettled elsewhere. Others traced their route to places outside South Africa. These places included Swaziland, Mozambique and Malawi. Interestingly, where families acknowledged their origins as being outside the borders of South Africa questions of citizenship were never raised.[53]

Table 2 Details of points of origin of the respondents

Family	Respondents	Details of points of origin
1	Nthabiseng	Mme Nthabiseng's parents were originally from Heidelberg but, they have lived in Johannesburg since 1922
	Tshepo	
	Thabang	
2	Mihloti	No rural link kept. Mama Mihloti remembers her parents living in Kensington near Alexandra
	Tsakani	
3	Temba	The family came from Ermelo and has links with Swaziland. Baba Temba's grandfather was a priest who was called upon by the church to serve in Alexandra in 1934
4	Andile	Tata Andile's family originated from the Cape but he remembers his parents

[52] See Beavon 2004 (endnote 121 on page 307) where he draws a distinction between the two which was racialised.
[53] This is remarkable in view of media debates about xenophobia in South Africa, more particularly among black South Africans.

Family	Respondents	Details of points of origin
	Nomvula	working in Rietfontein farms near Johannesburg
5	Mandla	Mandla's parents came from Vrede Free State
6	Mmapula	From a village Meroto, Excelsior, near Thabanchu Free State
7	Palesa	Father was working in Randjieslaagte, close to the current Midrand as a long distance truck driver
	Mohau	
	Teboho	
	Vuyo	
8	Zodwa	They are Swazi but it is not clear if the family originated from Swaziland
9	Thapelo	He remembers living in and leaving a farm in Heidelberg. But he knows that his father originally came from Wolhuterskop, a small village near Brits a small town in the north West province. When the family left Heidelberg they bought a farm near Lichtenburg also a town in the North West province
10	Khensani	He traces his family from Mozambique through Letaba, and Burghersfort in Limpopo province to Alexandra
11	Moipone	The father was from Rustenburg in the North West while the mother was from Queenstown in the Eastern Cape
12	Sechaba	Parents came from Heidelberg in the Free State
13	Rapula	Great grandfather left a village, Thabanchu in the Free state and settled in Francistown, Botswana. His paternal grandmother left Botswana and bought a stand in Alexandra
14	Hunadi	Father was from Limpopo but worked in Johannesburg as a domestic worker then bought stands in Alexandra
15	Leanne	Paternal great grandparents came from St Helena went to Zimbabwe then father went to Pretoria, Doornfontein then bought two stands in Alexandra
16	Nhlanhla	Great grandparents were from Swaziland. They ended up in the Free State after the Anglo Boer war in which the great grandfather served as a blacksmith. The father followed the aunt to Alexandra
17	Musa	Parents originated in Trichardt which was moved and resettled in Secunda then they moved to Alexandra
18	Mmaphefo	Parents lived in Alexandra then moved to Moletsane township, Soweto, in the 1950s. She married a son to a mmastandi and moved back to Alexandra in the 1960s
19	Mosidi	Parents were from the Eastern Cape, they came to Johannesburg and lived in Prospect Township then bought stands in Alexandra
20	Elise	She remembers Malawi being mentioned by her father

Family	Respondents	Details of points of origin
21	Mokgadi	Even though speakers of her home language are clustered in the Limpopo province, she does not remember conversations at home that linked them to any other place

1.9.6 Relationship of primary respondents to bommastandi

Table 3 indicates the primary and secondary respondents. The latter refer to family members who participated in the interviews intermittently.

Table 3 Relationship of Primary Respondents to Bommastandi

Family	Primary respondents	Secondary respondents	Relationships among respondents	Relationship of respondents to mmastandi
1	Nthabiseng		Sister to Tshepo and mother to Thabang	Daughter got married and became mmastandi
	Tshepo		Brother to Nthabiseng and uncle to Thabang	Son
	Thabang		Son to Nthabiseng and nephew to Tshepo	Grandson also son to a mmastandi since he is Nthabiseng's child
2	Mihloti		Aunt to Tsakani	Daughter
	Tsakani		Nephew to Mihloti	Grandson
3	Temba			Son
4	Andile	Bontle	Cousin to Nomvula (fathers were brothers) and Bontle is second wife to Andile, who was widowed	Son and daughter-in-law
	Nomvula		Cousin to Andile	Daughter
5	Mandla			son
6	Mmapula		Daughter	Daughter
7	Palesa	Mogau	Palesa and Mogau are siblings while Tebogo is	Palesa, Mogau and Tebogo are children
		Tebogo		

Family	Primary respondents	Secondary respondents	Relationships among respondents	Relationship of respondents to mmastandi
		Vuyo	their half sister and Vuyo is her husband	of mmastandi while Vuyo is a son-in-law
8	Zodwa	Mfana	Zodwa is Mfana's mother	Zodwa is a daughter and Mfana a grandson.
9	Thapelo	Lesibana	Thapelo is Lesibana's husband	Thapelo is a nephew while Lesibana is a niece through marriage to the former mmastandi
10	Khensani			Grandson
11	Moipone	Tiisetso	Moipone is Tiisetso's partner	Moipone is a daughter
12	Sechaba			Son
13	Rapula			Grandson
14	Hunadi			Daughter
15	Leanne			Daughter
16	Nhlanhla			Son
17	Musa	Puseletso	Musa is Puseletso's husband	Son and daughter-in-law
18	Mmaphefo			Daughter –in-law
19	Mosidi			Daughter
20	Elise			Daughter
21	Mokgadi			Daughter

Column 4 depicts relationships among primary and secondary respondents interviewed. It further indicates the kinds of family relationships that exist, if indeed they do exist, among the respondents. Column 5 shows the relationship of respondents to the property owner. These relationships played a significant role in the kind of information that was given to the interviewer. For example, details provided by mme Nthabiseng and ntate Tshepo, both of Family 1, are linked as they refer to the same property. But mme Nthabiseng was more

knowledgeable about the property as she is the older sibling. However, in the case of the second property that is closely linked to mme Nthabiseng, who is the wife of the property owner, Thabang, her son, could not comment about questions on acquisition. Further, details on the history of the family are those of mme Nthabiseng's parents rather than her husband's family as she does not know much about them.

There were thirteen families from which only one person was interviewed. Among these, members of families 19, 20 and 21 were interviewed together. These families were forced out of their homes between the 1980s early 1990s, a period of violence in the township. They also shared the common experience of living in council offices since their homes are still occupied and they had not yet been allocated alternative accommodation.

Eight families had more than one member participating in the interview, a1beit intermittently. Out of these, participation of two families has to be singled out because their interviews were handled differently. Although three members of Family 1 participated, they were interviewed separately because two, a mother and son, lived in the same house while the brother/uncle lived in a different one. With Family 4, the same happened and participants, who are cousins, were interviewed separately in their homes. However, tata Andile's wife, mama Bontle, occasionally participated.

1.9.7 Number and date of purchase of properties which were owned by families of the respondents

Column 3 of table 4 indicates the total number of properties that members of the extended family of the respondents who lived in Alexandra were linked to, while column 4 indicates the locations of some of these properties where the respondents could still remember them. These include both those that they owned, rented or just lived in. For example, Family 4 had eight properties. However, the father to the respondent tata Andile, had three while the additional properties belonged to his uncles, including mama Nomvula's father.

Table 4 Number and date of purchase of properties which were owned by families of the respondents

Family	Names of respondents	Number of properties ever linked to the family	Location where remembered	Date of purchase
1	Nthabiseng	2	16th and 7th	1953
	Tshepo			
	Thabang			
2	Mihloti	3	The first plot was at 15th Avenue sold2 at 4th and 2nd Currently remaining with the one on 2nd	1915 Unknown
	Tsakani			
3	Temba	3	13th, 19th 16 check and confirm the first	1930s
4	Andile	8*	3 at 3rd one was orchard The 3rd brother bought 2 at 4th	
	Nomvula		The 4th and youngest brother 3rd	
	Bontle			
5	Mandla	1	9th	1940s
6	Mmapula	2	19th,4th	1924, 1945
7	Palesa	3	3rd 11th 4th was bought for parents. 11th was later sold	1947
	Mogau			
	Tebogo			
	Vuyo			
8	Zodwa	1	10th	Unknown
	Mfana			

Family	Names of respondents	Number of properties ever linked to the family	Location where remembered	Date of purchase
9	Thapelo Lesibana	1	18th	Unknown
10	Khensani	9 *	6th, 4th ,14th	1930s
11	Moipone Tiisetso	1	3rd	1955
12	Sechaba	3	19th, 14th, and 3rd	1930s
13	Rapula	1		
14	Hunadi	5	2 in 5th , 2nd , 3rd.	1920s
15	Leanne	3	3 at 2nd	Unknown (stating 1905 when Alexandra was still white)
16	Nhlanhla	2	11th, 19th	1926
17	Musa Puseletso	2	16th then 6th	First property date unknown and second 1953
18	Mmaphefo	1	3rd	Unknown
19	Mosidi	3	Mother lived in 3rd Father lived in 4th the husband, was a tenant at 3rd	To check
20	Elise	1	3rd	1932
21	Mokgadi	1		Is not sure

*Means the total number of properties was higher than the number whose location could be provided. In the case of Khensani, the total number provided is linked to the larger extended family and not just his grandfather.

Column 5 indicates, where known, periods during which properties were purchased by the 21 families. The earliest property bought among the 21 families interviewed, was in 1915, while the last one was bought in 1955. A high percentage did not know the year of purchase and unfortunately most of them did not have copies of title deeds at hand to verify. It is

noteworthy that the purchase date does not necessarily coincide with the date of family arrival in Alexandra. For example, mme Moipone's parents lived in Alexandra as tenants before the 1950s. However they only purchased property from the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board, which governed Alexandra from the 1950s. Furthermore, the date of purchase of a property in Alexandra is also not always the same as the date of arrival in Johannesburg. The experience of mme Nthabiseng's family provides an interesting example. Her father arrived in Johannesburg in 1922, but they only moved to and purchased property in Alexandra in the 1950s.

1.9.8 Occupations of bommastandi families

Table 5 shows that families that bought property in Alexandra came from various socio-economic backgrounds. The fact that they managed to purchase property does not necessarily mean that they were all better resourced materially, rather that some of them were resourceful and creative. Their creative strategies would include pooling together resources by family members such as siblings and parents and in some cases would families would jointly purchase property. For example, this happened in the families of tata Andile, mama Mihloti and mama Zodwa. Interestingly in two cases, resources from rural areas were used to purchase property. Ntate Sechaba, whose father was a building contractor, refers to livestock which the family owned before coming to Alexandra. Ntate Sechaba explains that when his community was forcefully removed from the rural lands that they occupied they were forced to move and work in white owned farms. In these farms there were restrictions on the numbers of livestock that their families could keep; as a result they sold a large number of their stock. The second case is interesting in that Rapula explains how his grandmother, a domestic worker, managed to purchase her property for £80 in cash. Rapula states that it was through money from his great grandfather's sale of cattle that the money was raised.

Table 5 Occupations of Bommastandi families

Family	**Names of respondents**	**Occupation of parents where known**	**Occupation of respondents**
Family 1	Nthabiseng	Unknown	Retired nursing sister
	Tshepo	Unknown	Retired lab technician
	Thabang	Mother is a retired nursing	Self employed, trailer

Family	Names of respondents	Occupation of parents where known	Occupation of respondents
		sister; father owned a motor mechanic business	making business
Family 2	Mihloti	Farm labourer	The husband was a painter
	Tsakani	Driver for a soft drinks company Pepsi, owner of several shops	Driver at the Johannesburg City council emergency services
Family 3	Temba	Labourer	Worked for PUTCO bus company as a conductor, also a professional boxer
Family 4	Andile	Worked for a Mining House	Worked as an ambulance driver for AHC
	Nomvula	Worked for a mining House	Retired factory worker
	*Bontle	Unknown	Unknown
Family 5	Mandla	Father ran a motor mechanics business	Self employed
Family 6	Mmapula	Father was a hawker who ran a donkey cart transport business	Unknown but Husband was a professional musician
Family 7	Palesa	Drove for a furniture company distributing across several Southern African countries	Does art work
	Mogau		
	Tebogo		
	Vuyo		
Family 8	Zodwa	Unknown	Unknown
	*Mfana		
Family 9	Thapelo	Unknown	Hawker of ear rings, bracelets, a retired WW2 veteran (soldier)
	*Lesibana		A private teacher and later a domestic work
Family 10	Khensani	Unknown but grandfather	A handy man

Family	Names of respondents	Occupation of parents where known	Occupation of respondents
		owned business such as shops and a butchery	
Family 11	Moipone	Father was a sports organizer, mother a nurse	She is a retired nursing sister
	*Tiisetso		
Family 12	Sechaba	Father co-owned a building contract and ran a shop as well	A retired teacher
Family 13	Rapula	Grandmother was a domestic worker	Handyman
Family 14	Hunadi	Father was a domestic worker who later owned businesses including shops and he was a coal merchant	Retired teacher
Family 15	Leanne	Father owned a bicycle shop and her mother was a teacher	Retired factory worker
Family 16	Nhlanhla	Father was a black smith	Runs a plumbing business
Family 17	Musa	Co-owned a building contract business	Building and brick making
	*Puseletso		
Family 18	Mmaphefo	Unknown	Retired factory worker
Family 19	Mosidi	Unknown	Used to do art work
Family 20	Elise	Unknown	Retired factory worker
Family 21	Mokgadi	Unknown	Hawker
21 Families	33 Respondents		

The information above not only highlights that being a property owner in Alexandra may not necessarily always be equated being landed in the Western sense as such as people were not a cohesive socio-economic group. Rather, it indicates that the "private property" owned by some of bommastandi there were a myriad of access rights which were based on contribution of resources for purchase of such properties.

1.10. Chapter outline

Chapter 1

This chapter argues that with a limited representation of the life experiences of bommastandi in academia an opportunity of understanding other facets of private property ownership is lost. Adopting a methodological approach that helps to pries open bommastandi's understanding of private property opens up such an opportunity.

Chapter 2

In this chapter I introduce the concept of mmastandi and link it to owning freehold property in Alexandra and other Johannesburg Townships where Africans could purchase property. I also introduce issues of identity and practices of bommastandi (property owners). Using the present to look at the past reveals the complexities of being part of a cohort of Africans who owned private property which are more particularly emphasised by the current processes of land claims and restitution.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 2 I argued that categorisation of property ownership into private, communal and sovereign regimes is not very useful analytically. I asserted that the regimes approach propagates the essentialist view of identity which is problematic. In this chapter I further complicated and contested the essentialist understandings of African identities as fixed. I argued that the settlement of bommastandi in a place that was geographically outside the reserves (later named homelands) threatened the state's desired separation of Africans into ethnic groupings. The settlement resulted in a socio-cultural infusion among such groups of people including other non African groupings such as Indian, "coloured" and white people and this led to construction of new ways of life. This challenges and further complicates the notion of a fixed African identity as rural, communal and not urbanising.

I also highlighted the contradictions of racial dichotomisation of space which are illustrated in the spatial, temporal and racial histories of Alexandra. I argued that despite the strong legalised approach to space and race the illegitimacy of such legislation still resulted in the rupture in the governance of the disenchanted. However, such contradictions were used to define the identity of bommastandi.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4 I illustrated how the presentation of Alexandra as the highest priority problem township captured succinctly the notion of legal – spatial discontinuity that Alexandra represented. Most importantly I illustrated how the spatial dichotomisation of Alexandra had unintended results. I argued that the peculiarity of Alexandra's spatial location was increasingly exacerbated by the government adoption of policies and spatial legislation that promoted its immunity. Instead of alleviating the challenges that government faced due to the peculiarity of Alexandra Township, these policies entrenched this very anomaly and validated the freehold position of Alexandra bommastandi in a settlement that was non-rural and non-prescribed while simultaneously not falling under any municipal control.

Chapter 5

In this chapter I examined the implications of the introduction of the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board (PUAHB) in Alexandra and how this impacted on the private property ownership regime that thus far had been operational in Alexandra. I illustrated how influx control and related policies linked Alexandra to other places such as Soweto and the homelands which became receptacles of some of the people who were removed from it and how these impacted on the life of bommastandi in Alexandra. In this chapter I also examined the introduction of the idea of the hostel city, building hostels and the response to occupation of hostels by both Alexandra residents and other interested parties and the impact of these developments on private property ownership. The chapter focused on the formation of the Alexandra Liaison Committee (ALC), which acted as the mouthpiece of Alexandrans in fighting expropriations both during execution of the hostel city plans and beyond.

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6 I explored several key moments in the 1970s and 1980s, a period during which the government was under enormous pressure to change its apartheid policies due to intensive political resistance. I argued that this was also one of the most complex periods in the history of Alexandra. It was the period of the save Alexandra campaign and the reprieve of Alexandra, the third proclamation and two urban renewal plans (1980 and 1986). But it was

also a period of rent boycotts in urban areas, the ANC's call for "ungovernability", the political reforms which were inadequate as there was a call for a total political change, the scrapping of influx control among others, the civics movement. I also illustrated that this was a property ownership turnaround period when an announcement was made in 1988, that properties were available for sale in Alexandra. In this section I explored challenges that resulted from what I referred to as a "period of repurchasing".

Chapter 7

In this chapter I provided a general outline of developments in Alexandra from 1990 to 2004. The earlier part of this period was characterised by violence and I specifically linked it to the effects it had on property rights. Significantly, this is a period in which new ways of relating to property by both former bommastandi and their erstwhile tenants were evident. I illustrated that residues of developments from the past in the current Alexandra are not only discernible in its physical landscape. For example, there is evidence of expropriation in the lives of women who were moved from their properties but were never provided with alternative accommodation since they still lived in shacks at the time of the interviews.

Evidence of the violent period of the early 1990s is still discernible in the lives of women who were left without homes, and were still living in office buildings. But also, hostels which pioneered the hostel city notion are still standing, while the private developer homes of the 1980s are also noticeable. In addition to all these historical structures there are new developments and new housing areas such as River Park, Tsutsumani, and East Bank among others. The past of Alexandra is traceable in the present. Also I examined how the restitution that bommastandi are currently grappling with affected the memories of pain that attach to their property life stories in general.

I also highlighted how the adoption of mmastandi as an analytical tool implores us to rethink not only private property ownership but what it meant to live in an urban area and own property in the space that was increasingly shrinking for Africans. I also highlight the significance of the moment of establishment of Alexandra Township as a black freehold when the two Boer republics and the two British colonies were merged into one but more significantly the implication of the passing of the Native Land Act.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the exceptional history and geography of Alexandra makes it a crucial area of study. It is such experiences of families of property owners who lived in this exceptional space that played a significant role in shaping the understanding of private property ownership. The chapter underlines how the spatial legislation simultaneously threatened, enabled and redefined access to property by "natives" in Alexandra. It further highlights that although Alexandra shares some experiences with other South African urban freehold townships its peculiar history sets it apart from them.

I also introduce in the chapter the concept of mmastandi and explore how it can be used as a lens to understand private property ownership. The concept is linked to owning freehold property in Alexandra and other Johannesburg Townships where Africans could purchase property. But this section also introduces issues of identity and practices of bommastandi (property owners). Using the present to look at the past reveals the complexities of being part of a cohort of Africans who owned private property which are more particularly emphasised by the current processes of land claims and restitution.

Chapter 2
RETHINKING ALEXANDRA

2.1 Introduction

Since 1994, South Africa, just like any former colony after attainment of political independence has been engrossed in righting the wrongs of its past. Included in this process, and central to the project of post-apartheid reform has been land restitution, which raises important questions about contestation around space and place. Such contestation has manifested in debates about change of place names and access to space and housing – particularly in urban areas. The latter two form part of broader questions on urban planning, land use and service provision with which the urbanists including sociologists, geographers, and urban planners amongst others are grappling with. However, these debates, all challenge processes aimed at unmasking the silencing of people who lived in those spaces. One of the vital issues arising out of these debates in the post-apartheid context is understanding how private property ownership was and continues to be socially constructed.

I support the assertion that while owning property became increasingly valuable for the "natives" it was similarly becoming more problematic for the government (Plaatjie, 1916; Goodhew, 2004). I contend in this thesis that it is within this context that social construction of property ownership in Alexandra may be understood. Owning private property in Alexandra Township was a multi-pronged process which comprised government legislation and policies on the one hand and the residents' response through negotiation and protest among others on the other. The interaction between these processes resulted in invention and reinvention of rules whose implementation led to social processes and relationships that exist among people who share in many ways the Alexandra Township space. In an attempt to centralise the views of people who have lived in Alexandra, this project emphasises the notion of mmastandi as a means to understanding these processes and relationships. This is done by focusing on families of some property owners who purchased property in Alexandra Township at the turn of the previous century.

To understand theoretical debates of private property that are within social and economic contexts as well as the law-geography nexus I examine several bodies of literature. Such literature in many ways draws – albeit indirectly in some cases – on the understanding

of social property relationships that are broadly categorized into regimes. I argue in this thesis that while the notion of property ownership regimes is useful as a historical tool to explain how social property relations evolved in the west it fails to encapsulate the specificity and difference of social relationships and practices in other societies.

The geographies of the law-space nexus are captured by Blomley (2004), who draws on the English literature to illustrate private property as an individual, bounded and exclusive space. However, in this thesis I highlight how the experiences of bommastandi have indicated that the very notion of a bounded and exclusive space can be adopted as a tool of resistance against the politics of exclusion by the state rather than as a tool to exclude the non-owners. South African legislation is used to provide a background to developments in the private property environment of Alexandra mmastandi. But the thesis also engages legislation to illustrate how it worked for bommastandi and how it did not. It therefore indicates that the notion of private property as such is not necessarily "un-African", But that it was withdrawn from Africans in order in order to promote the dichotomization of South Africa into black and white spaces. In the thesis I also analyse legislation and its enactment by government to expunge South African Africans from what was increasingly being labeled "white South Africa".

The deployment of some of the legal terminology interestingly shows the contradictions in the use of South African space. For example, I argue that the withdrawal of the concept of "native" to refer to Africans should not be treated lightly in the political discourse. The term "native" suggests acknowledgement of Africans as indigenous to South Africa by government and therefore if they were to be relegated to the "independent black states" and be expunged from what came to be referred to as South Africa then "native" would be a contradiction, hence my coining and adoption of a phrase "the paradoxical foreign native". It is within this frame of reference that private property ownership in Alexandra needs to be understood. Developments of 1913 mark the cornerstone of the most powerful way in which the geography law-nexus (Blomley 1994) was played out. Most significantly, it shows complex relationships between people and land that emerge due to the constant threat that loomed large above private property owners. However, the way property ownership was socially constructed in Alexandra equally elucidates the challenges of attempting to unravel the geography law nexus through the enactment of the Restitution Act of 1994.

Finally, I want to emphasise that this study is not about analyzing an African city, nor is it about engaging the kind of city that Johannesburg is. Also, it is not about understanding current African urbanization or urbanizing Africans. Rather, it is about understanding

Africans who have lived in urban areas for quite some time, and bommastandi families have lived in urban areas for close to a hundred years. Thus this research is an attempt to understand urban Africans "who have long made lives that have worked" (Simone 2005: 1). Therefore the thesis drew upon urban literatures to the extent that they speak to the African urban presence rather than their initial migration to cities.

In the following section I examine literature on Alexandra with a view to showing how scholarship on Alexandra links to and informs this work. I also locate the key theoretical debates as well as indicate the argument that is made in this thesis. Central to this research is the fact that adopting private property as a lens through which to examine Alexandra Township creates a relatively rare prismatic view for exploring other facets of life such as identity and space. This perspective further illustrates that the physical location and the time of the establishment of Alexandra mean that private property ownership by Africans in Alexandra became highly politicized; hence the geographies of property and law are critical in understanding private property ownership in Alexandra. I further examine the concept of identity and how it is linked to access to space, through property ownership and associated practices. I use the term mmastandi to understand and to reveal a complex link between property ownership and identity. I argue that interrogating the concept mmastandi further complicates the complex socio-political and economic history of property relationships and identity of Africans who lived in urban South Africa in general but in Alexandra in particular.

2.2 The Many Faces/Phases of Alexandra?

In reviewing the existing literature on Alexandra (Jochelson 1991; Carter 1991; Mayekiso 1996; Raymer 1989; Lucas 1995, 1996; Marume 1995; Sinwell 2005; Lange 2006; Tourikis 1981; Sarakinsky 1984; Nauright 1992; Bozzoli 1991, 2004; Swift1983; Bonner & Nieftagodien 2008), the following points become evident. First although such literature highlights the impact of Alexandra's freehold status on its history, analytically they pay little attention to the contribution of the experiences of bommastandi families to the understanding of private property ownership since it only raises the land and property questions indirectly.

Secondly, since little- if at all- is known about mmastandi as a "category of analysis" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 1) I contend that adopting a mmastandi framework will create space analytically and conceptually of knowing Alexandra and reading it differently. Thirdly, linked to this fact is the tendency for this literature to underplay the social, spatial and cultural manifestations of private property ownership in Alexandra. I contend that this

tendency has far-reaching consequences in our appreciation of the significant role private property ownership in Alexandra has played and continues to play in understanding the South African land question in general and the urban one in particular. As a result an opportunity to interrogate how the experiences of acquiring, holding, losing and reclaiming property by families of bommastandi in Alexandra in particular and in South Africa in general is lost. Fourth, the focus of research on Alexandra tends to be on Alexandra residents in general while in this thesis I centralise a specific social category, namely bommastandi, the private property owners of Alexandra, in order to illuminate other aspects of social construction of private property ownership. Finally, I argue that dominant understandings of Alexandra have tended to highlight social class as the master identity, at the expense of other identities. Employing the concept mmastandi my research shows that social class forms but one of the multiple and fluid identities (Ballard 2002; Knopp 2005).

I adopt the metaphor of palimpsest, in this study to trace the appropriation and occupation of space and how different legislations and policies impact on representation, understandings, memories and relations to this piece of land. The metaphor is also used to elucidate how the interconnectedness of the geographies of law, politics and economy are played out socially and how the experiences of a group of people who settled in Alexandra have contributed towards understanding of the social construction of private property ownership. The study asks questions about the taken-for-granted-experiences of property owners of Alexandra by examining how families of property owners who – in spite of dispossession, resettlement and forced removals never left Alexandra Township – understand this property ownership history. It further shows how – even though they are part of a larger African population in general and part of an urban African population in particular – Alexandra property owners had challenges that they had to deal with because of their complex position that was exacerbated by government changes and resultant legislation.

Thus the metaphor of palimpsest better captures their story of resilience and their story of specificity of their relationship to their properties which is spatial, social and legal. This metaphor informs the analyst of the continuities and discontinuities of such relationships to their properties over the years. In other words, the relationship to their properties of bommastandi who remained in those properties after expropriation show a complex continued occupation of space whose legal context changes from freehold to repossession and or expropriation. The story reveals bommastandi as ordinary human beings trying to make their lives work under difficult socio-political circumstances, but it also displays them as extraordinary people who fought the dislocation in their properties to the bitter end. Thus the

story of the mmastandi of Alexandra is about a specific group but it is also about broader questions of African urban identities since such identities attach to African land more particularly in urban South Africa.

Dominant approaches in Alexandra research promote histories of the subaltern, and they have made a significant contribution to understand lives of ordinary people. Nonetheless, they did not write about bommastandi and their lived experiences as private property owners. The valuable contribution of this study is adopting mmastandi as a core concept. Such an approach focuses on mmastandi as a humanist subject which draws (Entrikin & Tipple 2006: 35). They argue against a eurocentric humanist subject, which silences the voices of the oppressed. Bommastandi's voices are invoked to represent a group of property owners in Alexandra, in particular.

Straddling the various genres are works of (Jochelson 1990; Lucas 1995, 1996 & Carter 1991). Such work relies methodologically on other sources, such as archives and other publications. In his examination of the rise of the youth congress in Alexandra in the 1980's, (Carter 1991) presents Alexandra Township's uncertain existence. He states that "Alexandra ... has led a precarious and uncertain existence, due to the initial failure of central government and local authorities to recognize its existence, as well as subsequent attempts by municipal and other authorities to expropriate and remove the township" (Carter 1991: 199). Property owners, as a distinct group, are not central in this work. They are alluded to as part of a larger Alexandra community. Hence their particular experience and identity are concealed, more particularly because priority was given to broader racial politics.

Tourikis' (1981) recognizes that his subjects played an active role in building their lives in Alexandra against all odds, but he does not overtly acknowledge their agency status, a point raised by Nauright (1992). Tourikis (1981) examines in detail the inner workings of class divisions in Alexandra, and uses property ownership as one of the criteria for classifying the Alexandra Township classes. An interesting question that he poses is whether these classes were "squashed together" as a homogenous group, or if indeed they experienced continuous class struggles. Tourikis shows how the dialectical relationship of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie operates in Alexandra. However, he does not situate this within the history of social class configuration that occurred amongst Africans in Johannesburg (Crankshaw 2005). Owen Crankshaw asks questions regarding social class configuration among black people in Johannesburg. Though his main focus is on Soweto, his explanations serve to unravel significant debates about compression of black classes through the use of undifferentiated housing. He argues that before the 1940s, the absence of

government regulation over black housing led to varied housing conditions, such as squatter settlements, slums, council housing and freehold homes. The advent of apartheid, with it's regulation of housing for black people, tended to compress social classes, as they all occupied government-built houses. But in Alexandra, the segregation policies were applied differently. The Alexandra of the mid-1940s was characterized by housing differentiation that was based on ability to secure a mortgage bond by property owners. Therefore the suppression of classes evidenced through housing elsewhere in Johannesburg most probably did not happen in Alexandra, particularly during this period.

Sarakinsky (1984) explores social life in Alexandra from 1905 up to 1983. However, he does not provide much of Alexandra's earlier history (Nauright 1992). He focuses on particularly two moments in the history of Alexandra, namely the hostel city of 1963 and the reprieve of 1979 – including the return to development of Alexandra as a residential area for family units. He situates the conditions prevailing in Alexandra within the broader South African developments, by illustrating how apartheid legislation was deployed to unsettle the residents and how in Alexandra the very legislation corrupted the dual groupings of owners and non-owners even further. The legislation of the 1970s and 1980s led to the end of freehold, marking a significant shift in the notion of the concept of "stand" from permanent to temporary as all Alexandra residents became government tenants.

Although Sarakinsky claims to represent the voice of Alexandra residents we don't get to meet them since he presents their voices from secondary sources such as newspapers. The only voices that we get to hear directly are those of a few government officials. In addition to *Alexandra I love you* (Swift 1983); a book produced when Alexandra celebrated its 70th anniversary, more recently an extensive history of Alexandra was produced by Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008). This book contributes substantially to the social history of Alexandra. It provides an extensive socio-political history of the township, covering its history from 1912 to 2008. It thus closes the knowledge gap lamented by Nauright, who in 1992 called for a history of the township that addressed the earlier period.

Covering an extensive history of Alexandra, Bonner and Nieftagodien's (2008) work really provides a lens to understanding the black freehold history in South Africa which predates the 1948 apartheid government. This government set its mind to geospatial segregation, particularly through the Group Areas Act of 1950, which further fragmented townships such as Alexandra and other similar freehold townships. According to this Act, Coloureds and Africans were to live in separate residential areas.The book highlights the need to research the peri-urban which, like the African freehold, is also neglected by the

academic community. The peri-urban and freehold townships located geographically like Alexandra, played a significant role in the life of an African, who would be regarded ordinarily as illegal in Johannesburg, but could access Johannesburg easily by residing in such areas. This book touches on a wide spectrum of issues on the life of Alexandra, from health issues, bus boycotts, resistance to attempted removals , to renewal plans and the return of the exiles in the 1990s. It also highlights the significance of Alexandra's persistence-resilience through all of this.

Most significantly for this thesis, the book discusses property as a means to "independence, self worth and respectability" (Bonner & Nieftagodien 2008: 5). It also highlights the mixed race composition of freeholds, and touches on the failed attempt by the government to remove Alexandra and replace it with a single largest hostel city in Johannesburg. This failed attempt is peculiar to Alexandra. Work such as the research alluded to above, like all the other research on Alexandra, talks to the general population of Alexandra. These analysts are looking at the challenges faced by Alexandra residents over the years fighting for survival in a place that was rejecting them due to its physical location and time of existence. This thesis on the other hand provides a social history of Alexandra property owners who are humanist subjects that are in charge of who they are. Such subjects represent voices of the silenced and the subjugated. Without discarding Marxist explanations bommastandi as humanist subjects were called upon not only to tell their stories but to interpret them. Cited by Entrikin and Tepple (2005: 33) David Lowenthal (1961) points out that "materialist orientations tended to retard development of interpretive traditions". I agree that interpretive traditions are important if we claim to give our subject a voice; hence I refer to structuration later in this chapter. I am well aware of a critique against structuration that argues that more often "actions studied have to do with routine and less to do with meaningful or intentional actions" (Lowenthal 1961, cited by Entrikin & Tepple 2005: 34).

The spatial approach adopted by Bozzoli is conceptually linked to community and identity but it also operates at a macro level in that she presents a geography of resources that straddles the urban and rural areas. Bozzoli (1991) illustrates how community ties that exist between groups of people residing in the rural and urban spaces translates to the migration of such resources between these two areas. Tracing the lives of Women of Phokeng to and from Alexandra and Phokeng, a rural village outside Rustenburg in the current North West Province, Bozzoli (1991) points out the existence of strong familial networks among Alexandra residents as well as the lives of both these groups in Alexandra and in Phokeng.

These networks provide a support system for these women more particularly in Alexandra where they supported one another.

However, she also privileges the state power as playing a very decisive role in the constitution of the Alexandra space and the community occupying it and thus underplays the agency role that the residents played, an argument that is picked up by Nauright (1992). It is only in her latest writing that Bozzoli reflects the engagement of the community with the state (Bozzoli 2004). She raises questions regarding the relationship between space and community resistance, which she locates within the work of radical geographers and sociologists. Deploying the metaphor of the theatre she argues that "it (the theatre) is an approach which allows us to move beyond discussions of how and why movements are formed and what their ideological and other resources are into the discussion of the power a movement can acquire in the course of its growth and development" (Bozzoli 2004: 11).

Bozzoli's (1991) spatial analysis, which highlights the existence of networks between different places as a result of familial links, is significant for this thesis. She provides insights into ways of life of these women and their families, by illuminating how intertwined their livelihoods in both spaces were. Nevertheless Bozzoli misses the opportunity to show that the flow of resources is not only urban-rural. Bommastandi indicate that there is also a rural-urban migration of family resources. Additionally, even though such networks form a very significant contribution to this thesis Bozzoli's concern is about Alexandra residents in general rather than property owners exclusively. Her later writing underscores the agency role of the Alexandra residents. In this case her methodological innovation lies in her approach to court records which in addition to her testifying in court cases she invokes in her evidence (Bozzoli 2004).

Also within the spatial approach Lucas views space as socially and economically constructed. She contends that attempts to construct spatial order by the elite, is based on property rights. Approaching the spatial analysis of Alexandra at a micro level Lucas (1995 & 1996) illustrates how the socio-economic differences among the Alexandra residents manifest in the different housing types within Alexandra. Lucas illustrates the internal strife of Alexandra residents through alliances and disagreements of various actors. This tension is based on existing and growing informal settlements. Lucas (1995) focuses on the politics regarding and perceptions of informal housing in Alexandra Township. Her emphasis is thus on the threat of squatting to the spatial orderliness of Alexandra Township. She presents tensions that occurred between residents of formal housing and the squatters in the 1980s. The former comprised mostly professionals, who were property-owners of the old stand-

holding middle class of the freehold era, while the latter are seen as invaders who moved uninvited into yards without paying rent. This distinction between Alexandra residents is further analysed by Nieftagodien (2011) who explicates concepts such as 'bonafides' and 'amagoduka'. While the threat to ownership interests which comprise some use privileges and some control powers are assumed in this analysis, they are however not the focus of Lucas' thesis.

Bozzoli's study on the other hand goes a step further by following a life story methodology in which ordinary Alexandra residents were interviewed. The motivation for using vernacular in Bozzoli's work was that the "initial decision (for) interviews with rural people, often barely literate and certainly unfamiliar with the English language, needed to be undertaken in the vernacular, preferably without the presence of a translator or other intervening party (Bozzoli 1991: 5). Although very similar as indeed the concept of property life stories was adapted from Bozzoli's life history approach, the motivation for adhering to the languages of the respondent was different. For this thesis, the aim was to avoid losing expressions used by the respondents in their original form and subsequently the meanings they carried. Almost all the respondents spoke their vernacular mixed with other African languages and English.[54] More importantly, Bozzoli's contribution is that she additionally looked at familial networks that expanded her study to include Phokeng, a rural village, where her respondents lived while they stayed and worked in Alexandra. Such studies also relate to Alexandra residents and reduce their fragmented experiences of space to a structurally determined experience.

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, even though the name "mmastandi" is not new - at least among people who lived in or crossed paths with the 20th century black Johannesburgers – no academic work has so far engaged and interrogated it. Hence, the term has thus far been used, albeit in a limited way, as a 'category of practice' (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 1) since it has been deployed by social actors to distinguish property owning from non owning families. This study asserts that to freeholders the term does not only have a nominal connotation attached to it but it denotes a social standing as well. This social standing comes with particular practices which are manifestly linked to the nominal identity.

Writing on urban blacks, Brandel-Syrier (1971: 18) who defines urban elitism as a "position in the social structure and not to any particular behaviour patterns or domestic

[54] This is where I found concepts such as "goduka", "originals" used by a Tsonga man and "to be bona fide" as they cropped up in several interviews. These terms were used to distinguish the "real" Alexandra people from everyone else living in the township. Nieftagodien (2011) elaborates on this debate further

habits, social styles or moral values" argues that this group of people was not necessarily similar. Syrier argues that the "earliest urban elite" who were 'stand owners' were not necessarily the wealthiest, the best educated or those holding jobs of highest status and authority (Brandel – Syrier's 1971: 18). Her account of this fragmentation among free holders in the Reeftown was that 'the township consisted of people who (were) hardly yet freed from the traditional bondage of a kinship dominated, custom bound society" Brandel-Syrier 1971: 61). Although she explains it in terms of coexistence of traditionality and modernity, I am advancing an argument that the disparate socio economic backgrounds that the different families came from and in some instances the continued rural-urban networks exacerbated this fragmentation further.

For a possible explanation of the identity of bommastandi of Alexandra, we could look to Weber's approach to status, but because of the shifting nature of property ownership, such a classification falls short of explaining their identity. For instance, after expropriation the status of bommastandi was apparently reduced, in that the erstwhile tenants and other people who shared bommastandi's former properties did not respect them as property owners.

Bommastandi share "owning property" status but, there are among them domestic workers and people who did other menial jobs, people who would not ordinarily be regarded as people with status among their community. Coupled with these there were business people such as shop owners, butchers, coal merchants, cinema owners and bus owners, as well as professionals like musicians, boxers, teachers, clerks and nurses. Although Tourikis (1981) acknowledges this fragmentation, he gives it cursory attention.

This thesis is a move from the structural understandings of African which tends to silence other modes of African life and living (experience) .This is done by centralizing the overt agency role of "Bommastandi" in their struggle to stay on in Alexandra a place that created a problem for the South African government in that it refused to comply with the legal compartmentalization of the country. The experiences of "bommastandi" of Alexandra were selected particularly because they form a microcosm of challenges that Africans faced within the increasing legislation that dichotomized South African space.

2.3 Other Ways of Reading Alexandra

As stated in the previous chapter, this research explores social construction of property ownership by focusing on the story told by property owners of Alexandra Township. I contend that adopting the mmastandi lens highlights other ways of conceptualizing and

theorizing private property ownership. Such conceptualization invokes the need to closely interrogate not only the concept of mmastandi, but questions arising in the wake of its application. I contend that adopting the concept as a unit of analysis urges us to examine the link between identity and property ownership precisely because the latter invokes a distinct way in which space is appropriated. The adoption of the concept mmastandi situates this study at a nexus of several bodies of literature. Mmastandi's appropriation of space through private property acquisition implores us to conceptually draw from the history, politics and geographies of access to property in Alexandra both recorded and not. This conceptual framework in turn allows us conceptually to draw from bodies of literature that are in some ways linked to the meaning of the concept mmastandi. Such meaning connects property ownership, land question in broad and urbanity to identity. Methodologically this research draws from documented and oral evidence. The former includes a variety of archival materials as well as official and newspaper reports while the latter focused on life histories with a particular bias on the property ownership narratives of the bommastandi families.

The following section will proffer a few theoretical perspectives pertaining to property ownership.

2.3.1 Property Ownership

The concept of property ownership, is part of a broader land tenure theory (Payne, 1997) Payne further defines broader land tenure as "the mode by which land is held or owned, or the set of relationships among people concerning the use of land and its product" (Payne, 1997: 1). The concept, property ownership is drawn from a wide spectrum of theoretical approaches, including political and social theories, and those propounded by jurists, economists, and historians (Macpherson 1978).

Research conducted by Payne 1997; McAuslan 2005; Blomley 1994; Mitchell 2002; Widlok 2000; Berry 2002; Mabogunje 1990; Klug 1995; Claassens 1991;) highlight complexities in the history of social property relationships. However, none of it illustrates the particularly intriguing attributes which the life stories of families of bommastandi of Alexandra reveal. This is because even though research on the history of urban property ownership in Africa can be traced and linked to complexities which resulted from the colonial era and beyond (Rakodi and Leduka (2003); MDjire (2007); Gayiiya (2004); Kironde (2004); Kinyungu and Obala (2004); Musyoka (2004); Ikejiofor (2004); Kalabamu and Morolong (2004); and Nkurunziza (2004)) none of these portray some of the processes in the social

construction of property ownership that are revealed in the life stories of the families of bommastandi of Alexandra.

More recently, Nicholas Blomley, a critical geographer, has drawn our attention to the significance of the inclusion of the geography-law nexus in our analysis and understanding of property (Blomley 1994). This means that in our analysis of property relationships, we need to understand the link between space and law, and how the latter governs space. In South Africa, as in other parts of Africa, the focus has always been on communal property ownership by Africans (Cousins 2002), which is necessarily rural (Cousins, 2002). In this document Cousins contends that private property ownership is 'Un-African'. We thereore miss an opportunity to understand how urban Africans construct private property. Furthermore, Geoffrey Payne emphasises that "Despite a long-standing recognition of its importance, little was published on urban land tenure in developing countries before the 1980s" (Payne 2001: 415). As Mabogunje (1990) points out, the late attention to urban land tenure might be ascribed to the assumption that "Colonial interests defined the city as essentially a European abode to which Africans were admitted on sufferance and, if possible, only temporarily" (Mabogunje 1990: 18). This proposition is further supported by Comby's study of French-speaking African countries south of the Sahara. In this study, Comby (2007) revealed that there is an assumption that "In most African cities, the majority of the population does not have any rights to the property it lives on and land it works on, according to theoretically operational laws" (Comby 2007: 1). Contrary to this assertion this research shows that in instances such as Alexandra township people initially had legal rights to their properties.

Furthermore, I contend that the Western notion of private property ownership regime as "un-African" (Cousins, 2002), needs to be unpacked. This notion, in effect, silences other ways of relating to property among Africans. Through the experiences of bommastandi this study indicated that Africans did and could participate in private property ownership. However, their socio-political conditions illustrate the limits of property ownership regimes as a theoretical framework. This thesis further showed that the political and legal constraints that were faced by bommastandi in Alexandra led to their being creative in adhering to "private property" while they simultaneously adapted it to their living circumstances and practices. This highlighted other ways of engaging in and understanding private property ownership.

I borrow an analogy used by Blomley (ud) to illustrate a western legal understanding of property ownership.

2.3.1.1 There are many ways of skinning a cat: The Peter Rabbit Analogy

Peter, one of Mrs. Rabbit's four little children disobeyed their mother who asked them not to go into Mr. McGregor's garden. Warning them about the fate that befell their father who ended up in the McGregor's pie, Mrs. Rabbit strongly advised them to stay away from McGregor's garden. Of course while the other children took heed of this warning/request Peter did not and he ended up losing some of his fur when McGregor discovered him eating away at his vegetables in the garden. Nicholas Blomley provides a fascinating analogy of how property is constructed and lived through this children's story, the Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter (1866-1943).The point Blomley is highlighting here is McGregor's garden as an embodiment of the concept of a property with boundaries.

The analogy of the Rabbit family presents a particular way in which private property can be configured, that is, the Western traditional view. In this analogy, the notion of property ownership is most commonly presented as a set of social relationships that are based on a relationship to a particular property (Macpherson 1978; Harris 1996; Lund 1998; Bromley 2001; Bruce 1982). Further, property ownership includes an ownership range which comprises some rights of use and control (Harris 1996). The ownership interests are most commonly governed by acknowledgement and recognition of rules regulating trespassing. In this way an individual is not only afforded the use of some resources by society but she/he also holds power over others. But significantly, property often assumes an enclosed space, which is legally delimited and further understood and acknowledged by both owners and non-owners. Thus the right to alienate and the right to exclude seem to be conceptually entrenched in the notion of property (Harris, 1996). Bromley (2001) points out that those relationships to a particular property are categorized into regimes, while MacPherson uses the term typologies to describe such relationships. Such regimes are broadly categorised into private, common and sovereign property regimes (Macpherson 1978; Bromley 2001). Private property refers to "investiture of exclusive rights over objects in a single legal entity, which may be an individual or corporate. In the sovereign property regime "the state is the repository of sovereign rights and their assertion is akin to a form of private property rights as the state acquires all the rights over a given resource when it asserts direct ownership of the same" (O'Neil 2001: 652). With common property, exclusive rights reside in a cooperative but none of the individuals has sole alienation rights to this property (Marchack, cited by Macpherson 1978; Klug 1995; O'Neil 2001).

However, the life experiences of bommastandi of Alexandra implore us to unpack social relations to property. Such experiences highlight that adopting regimes to understand property ownership silences other ways of understanding the complex social relations that attach to property ownership. Thus this thesis draws from the life stories of some families of *bommastandi* to highlight other ways in which private property can be enacted. Although on the surface these two ways of knowing and understanding private property appear disparate the thesis acknowledges that there are similarities as well. Nonetheless, Blomley's (2005: 655) caution that even though "property ….. may be enacted in locally specific ways…….. there is no particular reason to suppose that the lived experiences and practices associated with property elsewhere are not similarly nuanced and complex" is taken into consideration. In order to highlight this other way of understanding private property, the concept mmastandi was described in Chapter 1 to show how it relates to owning property.

Aligning myself with the scholars who deny the usefulness of regimes as analytical tools for understanding social construction of property ownership, I concur that regimes are couched in the principle of universality of rules of property (Bromley 2001, Klug 1996). Bromley (2001) asserts that the principle of universality presupposes that freehold, for example, should be titled and that the owner should have absolute rights to dispose of his/her property. He further argues that one other drawback of this principle is that it ignores the fact that "just as there is no right culture, there is no right property regime. (Rather, there are) property regimes responding to and indeed reflecting manifold interests and priorities" (Bromley 2001: 3). Such scholars also argue that property relationships are space-specific. In other words, for one to understand property relationships and rights one should explore them within their spatial context – a point further illustrated by the experiences of bommastandi. Life stories of families of bommastandi illustrate that there are other ways of knowing and understanding private property ownership. However, I argue that although on the surface these ways of knowing and understanding private property ownership might appear disparate there are similarities as well.

The following section examines experiences pertaining to the urban land question in some African cities to illustrate how access to property was constructed.

2.3.1.2 Access to Urban Land; Examples from Africa

In Africa in particular access to urban land is characterized by informality. The explanation of these informal systems is linked to experiences such as colonization and indirect rule

among others (Klug 1996). However, the significance of the historical background offered by these experiences to the social construction of property ownership cannot be sufficiently emphasized. Patrick McAuslan (2005), who uses the notion of legal monism to explain land tenure systems in developing countries, argues that modernizing land tenure which is by and large still prescribed by governments and external organizations such as the World Bank assumes that there are benefits in adopting legal monism. However, he suggests that these organizations need to acknowledge that legal pluralism in relation to land more particularly in Africa exists. Even then he suggests that this acknowledgement should not assume that there is a hierarchical ranking of laws by the states. Instead he argues that "in fact there is only one legal system with two coequal sets of legal rules operating within that system; one system is not subordinate to the other" (McAuslan 2005: 2).

In support of this stance Payne (1997: 2) claims that "it is clear that the ways in which a society allocates title and rights to land is an important indicator of that society, since rights to land can be held to reflect rights in other areas of public life". There is a body of literature that points out that the failure to include other areas of life, specifically in the developing areas contributes to the contestation of space. Such literature which includes among others Sara Berry (2002), Daniel Bromley (2001), Tim Mitchell (2002) and Thomas Widlok (2000), argues that the frame of reference for arbitrating rights to property have been insensitive to societies' other areas of life, given that it is based on laws which derive from the principle of universality. Patrick McAuslan (2005) also gives an outline of how customary law was judged using the common law lens. I contend that the particularity of access to land by bommastandi of Alexandra is silenced by the very principle of universality referred to. The singular experience of the history of Alexandra that evolved the way it did suggests that there is a case for applying general rules while simultaneously being conscious of the temporal and special specificities.

Writing on formalization of land tenure in some African cities, Durand-Lasserve has co-produced a wealth of information on how property was socially constructed in such places. Such work illustrates how customary land tenure was displaced legislatively in such countries as Tanzania and Kenya. Kinyungu, Obala and Durand-Lasserve (2004) show how colonization introduced different tenure systems and how these impacted on property social relations. For example, in Kenya historically, land which was rural was increasingly encompassed by urban areas due to urban expansion. This led to such formerly rural lands being commodified. However, such commodification meant inclusion of different kinds of tenure systems such as customary, private and public in such areas.

The Tanzanian study reveals how introduction of state owned land by colonial powers excluded customary rights. Kironde and Durand-Lasserve (2004) cite Shivji (1998) who pointed out that during the colonial era customary rights were automatically lost once an area was declared a planning area. This study argues that such an assumption presumably became the basis of the administrative policy underlying Government Circular No 4 of 1953 (Tanganyika Government 1953), which stated paragraph 12: 3.

> It is the intention that in a township all the land should be "alienated" from tribal tenure and that Africans should obey the same laws of the territory with regard to their occupation as members of any other race. The disposition of land in a township has become largely a matter of town planning but administrative action does lie with the District Commissioner in the case of expanding townships, for which new and wider boundaries are proclaimed by the Governor, in dealing with the question of rights of Africans living in accordance with African customary law on land which it becomes necessary to include within a township. (Shivji, 1998, cited by Kironde and Durand-Lasserve 2004: 4).

The Minister of Lands, Settlements and Water Development reaffirmed principles underlying the 1953 circular (June 1971) when stating that "Native laws and customs were inapplicable in urban areas and were only applicable in tribal areas" (Kironde & Durand-Lasserve 2004: 3, citing Finbo 1992: 69).

Although both these studies indicate similarities in historical processes which led to comparable land tenure systems in cities of both countries, the studies highlight interesting specificities and complexities which characterise the experiences of property ownership in each country. For example in Kenya land buying companies who share ownership of property emerged. This means that land which was bought jointly by companies, co-operatives and or societies belongs to all parties in common "often in one block registered title" (Kinyungu, Obala & Durand-Lasserve 2004: 3). In such cases individuals share certificates which indicate the amount of shares owned in proportion to other owners. These are very significant contributions in that they connect access to property to the socio spatial aspects of these countries. In the case of bommastandi, the regime adopted officially was private; however, the enactment thereof illustrates a particular agency role adapted by bommastandi families to make life that could work for them.

2.3.1.3 Other Ways of Seeing Property Ownership in Africa: Structuration

Structuration theory proffers one way of understanding property ownership. Instead of adopting a universal lens to interrogate property ownership the following study of six African cities' provides an important view. The six cities study illustrates that an analysis that adopts as the dominant the western model of understanding property ownership is flawed. Rakodi and Leduka (2004: 23) provide a broader conceptual framework for social construction of property ownership in Africa. The six studies examine land delivery processes and access to land by the poor in greater Gaborone, Kampala, Maseru, Eldoret, Egugu, and Lusaka in Botswana, Uganda, Lesotho, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia respectively. Rakodi and Leduka argue that "Much existing research in Africa analyses urban development in terms of compliance with formal state rules … (as such there is a) tendency to elevate formal rules over other rules that human beings may draw upon to justify action" (Rakodi & Leduka 2004: 23). While the shortcoming of this approach is elucidated in these studies, they go a step further in attempting to offer an alternative conceptually to understanding African property ownership analysis, albeit narrowed down to urban areas.

They distinguish three main "conceptual frameworks that have been used in the past to analyse and explain social institutions governing informal land delivery systems and transactions in African cities" (Rakodi & Leduka 2004: 23). These are: structure agency theory as embodied more particularly in Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, Institutional analysis (IA) and non-compliance. The structuration theory which was engaged in the 1980s claimed to incorporate structure and agency. However, as pointed out by Herod (2006: 295) "while human agency was important, humans were at the same time not free agents in the world since they were constrained by the economic, political and cultural structure that limited the possibilities for choice and action". Challenging Althusser and Balibar's Marxism Herod argues that "humans are a little more than automatons whose actions were determined by deep economic structures" (Herod 2006: 295) which then means he acknowledges their agency without rejecting the structural constraints under which they operate.

Nonetheless, a criticism that is often leveled against structuration is that although it "emphasizes ways in which actions and practices interacted with structural constraints to both transform and reproduce social structures … actions studied had to do with routine and less to do with meaningful or intentional actions" (Entrikin & Tepple 2006: 34). In spite of this, Dyck and Kearn (2006) indicate the usefulness of structuration. In their study of "health and illness management by immigrant women" (they found that) "traditional healing" and

"biomedical knowledge" were not used to replace each other, instead as Dyck argues, the use of both traditional and biomedical strategies did not appear to cause conflict for the women, who often had faith in the ability of white doctors to treat them (Dyck 1995: 251).This argument posits a strong case for bommastandi's adaptation of their lifes in a new place. They bought private property, but their enactment of it was adjusted to respond to the challenges they faced at the time.

This work highlighted how a human agent can negotiate and make the structure work even in new places. But most importantly, citing Dyck and McLaren (2000) and McLaren and Dyck (2000), Dyck and Kearn (2006) argue that their subjects "negotiate not only the taken-for-granted knowledge they bring from their countries of origin, but also the unfamiliar 'ways of doing' things they encounter in Canada" (Dyck & Kearn 2006: 96).

Dyck and Kearn (2006: 96) further argue that "non-compliance (which) brings into share relief the various ways in which 'quite', often taken-for-granted every day survival strategies by people who often find themselves marginalized by formal institutions might work to challenge and transform such institutions in their favour". While "Through their impact on transaction costs and information, institutions can either facilitate or retard land delivery systems while societal non-compliance gives agency to disadvantaged members of society (Dyck & Kearn 2006: 96. On the strength of these observations they propose a framework which combines elements of each of these perspectives.

Although the six cities study focuses on urban land markets, it contributes conceptually to knowledge of processes central to understanding land tenure in African cities. The analogy between the study and bommastandi is the fact that they both focus on informal arrangements. Such arrangements occurred between bommastandi and their tenants. These informal arrangements are revealed specifically during the process of land restitution, which is formal and legalistic.

Further, although these case studies explicate in their backgrounds, the fact that informal access to land is by the poor who are also African, the racialised nature of this access is covert. However, this study highlights the relationship between the legislation and race in developments in Alexandra which led to the complexities of the social construction of property ownership in Alexandra, a theme which is covered at length in chapters 3 to 6. Finally, this study's focus is not on land markets per se but it focuses on how owning property by Africans in an urban setting at the turn of the last century contributes to understanding of persisting land questions/debates. The following section reflects on property relations in South Africa.

2.3.1.4 Positioning South African Property Relations

Erroneous understanding of property relationships that stems from the failure to contextualize space socially through the principle of universalisation of law is portrayed by Klug (1995) with specific reference to the communal property ownership regime which is ordinarily viewed as characteristically African (Kariuki 2004; Roodt 2001; Cousins 2002). Citing the South African case of Hermansberg Mission Society versus the Commissioner of Native Affairs and Chief Darius Mogale, Klug (1995: 4) demonstrated "how a particular, possibly flawed, construction of indigenous law became geographically extended and imposed as legal authority for a universalised notion of customary tenure". Klug (1995) raises the need to confront the question of land tenure and indirect rule. Indirect rule was based on a premise of timeless custom, but the chiefs, elders and others who were presumed to "know custom" often told conflicting stories. "Custom" itself was imagined, simultaneously, as an enduring body of constitutional principles and an on-going practice of historical interpretation and debate (Berry, 2001 and 2002).

Klug (1995: 4) argues that "customary tenure in South Africa was shaped by its construction in a context dominated by particular culturally specific legal notions of property ownership". In this way an opportunity was lost to understand how relationships based on property use and ownership were shaped outside the known and understood "Western legal system". This point is supported by "the fact that official customary law is dominated by the assumption that true ownership is equivalent to freehold title", which is further explained by the "entrapment" of property rights of individuals, family groups and communities within the indigenous land tenure systems (Klug 1995: 7).

To further conflate the misunderstandings of property relations among indigenous populations Claassens (1991: 47) argues that "as long ago as the 1800s the right of black people to own land was severely restricted by the different governments then operating …". In this way the possibility to understand various property relationships among the South African indigenous populations was reduced. In spite of this there were still indications of such differences as presented by experiences of the Moutse community of the erstwhile Eastern Transvaal. When they resisted incorporation into a KwaNdebele homeland in the 1980s, the Bapedi group of this community raised cultural differences as one of their major concerns. They referred to their land ownership system which was different from that of AmaNdebele, stating that "Whereas in traditional Nguni society, land ownership is largely

communal, the North Sotho, on the other hand, have a long tradition of land ownership by families" (Dugard, 1988). This indicates a compression of various property relationships among the various indigenous groups through the use of the term "communal". In this way property rights as understood in the western legal system were lost to indigenous communities.

Even though such experiences are rural-based, they are important entry points to understanding how such views are further perpetrated in urban areas. Most certainly the experience of Alexandra bommastandi highlight that the property relationships and practices defy the boundaries of frameworks that are based on universal principles. Presenting them as private but tainted with the African history of communality precludes other possible explanations such as survival strategies necessitated by exclusions which were motivated by racist policies. These policies would include among others restricted urban access, urban wealth creation through policies that governed access to urban areas and job reservation among others. Bommastandi accessed freehold properties under difficult circumstances and their experiences indicate how they held on to their properties under difficult economic and political circumstances.

Further, the focus on land and property relationships among Africans in South Africa has mostly been on their removal (Platzky & Walker 1985; Letsoalo 1987; Fourie ud; Claassens 1990; Cross 1988; Carrim 1990; Murray & O'Regan 1990; De Jong 1995). It was only after attainment of political independence and at the end of the 1990s that South African land tenure debates started focusing on issues of entitlement for the urban poor in particular (Kingwill, Cousins, Cousins, Hornby, Royston & Smit 2006; Kihato & Berrisford 2005). However, even though such studies include the history of urban land tenure by Africans such history serves mostly as background information since their focus is on urban land markets. Therefore even though they link the present to the past because of their focus on the **urbanising Africans**, they lose the opportunity to reflect on the **urbanised Africans** and how their persisting pasts in their present continue to impact on the understanding of private property ownership.

In fact some of the property owners of Alexandra not only remained in the township, but they continued to live in their former properties. The fact that the relationships of bommastandi to their erstwhile properties continued even though reconfigured differently since they were most commonly converted to use rights, makes Alexandra Township an important site in which to study, revisit and rethink private property ownership by Africans. In as much as some African families were moved to African townships, mostly in Soweto,

some “coloured” families were moved to newly established “coloured” townships such Eldorado Park and later Rabie Ridge, however, some members of families from both racial groups remained in Alexandra. In this thesis_I assert that the experiences of families of property owners who lived in Alexandra through the different phases of property ownership in Alexandra play a significant role in shaping the understanding of private property ownership.

In the post-1994 South Africa debates on urban land restitution and land tenure are becoming increasingly significant. Such debates reveal new questions, or old questions that need to be asked differently, about the mode of appropriation of space in urban areas in general and in Alexandra in particular through freehold land acquisition. This concept of mmastandi and how “being a mmastandi” was experienced challenges the assumption that space that is legally owned through a titled “mode” of access implies exclusion of rights to it by non- owners. At the core of the concept mmastandi is the fact that the relationships to a stand were defined by a myriad of arrangements and agreements that were not necessarily codified. Also tracing the lives and practices of Alexandra property owners provides a significant starting point for understanding identity in Alexandra. Nonetheless, it would have been ideal to talk to property owners, but at the time the research was conducted they had died, thus their children who ranged in age from their late forties to their mid-eighties were interviewed. It is however, noteworthy that these children not only presented their immediate experiences but they also presented stories of their parents and in some instances grandparents, as they remembered them. However, the important contribution of this study lies in listening to the stories told by families of bommastandi, how they tell them and perhaps why they tell them the way they do. Thus there is incorporation of the new and the old in their stories, the histories of how their parents came to Alexandra and how they adjusted to the new ways of living in new spaces. In this way, through the experience of property acquisition by bommastandi of Alexandra some new insights emerge.

a) Property Owners of Alexandra: Bommastandi

Adopting the mmastandi lens to understand private property ownership highlights significant aspects of lives of bommastandi and how they view themselves. For example, their experience of dispossession not only implied losing a source of livelihood from first growing

their own vegetables and later renting out rooms, but it also impacted on their identities and ways of life. Their choices were limited by their inability to use what used to be their land in any way the deemed fit. Therefore while acknowledging that dispossession impacted negatively on bommastandi it is important to note that their loss was not merely material loss.[55]

I do not in any way claim that mmastandi is a new concept neither do I purport to have discovered it. Nevertheless, since no academic work done particularly on Alexandra, has engaged and interrogated the concept mmastandi, in adopting the term in this thesis I emphasize the notion of mmastandi as a prism through which the historical and cultural perspective in the social construction of private property ownership can be understood. Through life stories of some families of bommastandi the heartfelt and lived experience of being modern, African and permanent in an urban area, is revealed. This status of owning private property in an urban area is saturated with meaning in that it made families of bommastandi proud to be African and urban, and to be so in a way that defied the boundaries of urban spatial legislation that governed the conditions of black urban living in South Africa at the time.

The life stories of bommastandi reveal complex interrelationships among people who had rights to a piece of land and how they constructed these both within and outside the legislation. The latter point refers to extra-legally rather than illegally. An imprint of disparate access systems on the same piece of land at different times resulted in more confusion when restitution was introduced. Rather than provide a solution, the Restitution of Land Rights Act No 22 of 1994 elucidates that the question of attempting to correct the wrongs of the past by attempting to undo or reverse history is very complex on its own. This is further exacerbated by instances where multiple layering has occurred over time and space and then these layers of rights, which may be both legitimate and legal, become highly contestable and emotionally charged. As stated in Chapter 2, according to the Restitution of Land Rights Act No 22 of 1994, for a claim to be valid the claimant has to be a direct descendent of the original owner. (Interview with a land claims commissioner 2004).

This Act is in effect a legal instrument that aimed at enabling the former bommastandi families to access their lost properties. However, this expectation was thwarted by the complex history of Alexandra and the very legalistic nature of the Act (Kariuki 2004). For example, given that several homes were built on a property that may have belonged to one

[55] Their discontent with the way "offer to repurchase" and restitution is dealt with in chapter 6.

mmastandi family, the important question of the rights to that piece of land during restitution arose. Other questions that came to light were: How will the rights to reinstatement be determined under these circumstances? Who has the right to reclaim Alexandra? Of course to bommastandi, more particularly those who had repurchased their parents' properties in the 1980s, their rights should be viewed as of a higher priority than those of any other occupants of the properties. Additionally, if the Land Restitution Act was using 1913 as an entry point for determining dispossession, then bommastandi whose parents purchased their properties in 1912 expected to be vindicated.

This thesis argues that bommastandi are urban with urban and modern practices and this experience highlights the significant process of property relationships which need to be understood in their own context.

b) South African Urban Spaces

As stated above, the focus on land and property relationships among Africans in South Africa has mostly been on their removal (Platzky & Walker 1985; Letsoalo 1987; Fourie ud; Claassens 1990; Cross 1988; Carrim 1990; Murray & O'Regan 1990; De Jong 1995). These scholarly writings question the idea of a dichotomized South African space, which comprised reserves occupied communally by Africans, and white areas which were constituted by farmlands and urban areas where land and property could be privately owned. The 1913 Land Act played a significant role in dichotomising space after the Union of South Africa was promulgated in 1910, but it does not mark the beginning of this dichotomy which can be traced to the 1800s. Tim Keegan (1996) provides a detailed history of the earlier period of South Africa. This would include the Gold Law as well. In this dichotomy, urban areas were presented as places which did not belong to Africans as well as places where they did not belong. Such racialisation of urban spaces resulted in little if any attention, being devoted to how African people in urban areas understood and defined their relationship to the properties and land which they occupied.

Since "the issue of "race" in South Africa is fundamentally a "spatial issue" (Ballard 2002: 13), it is not surprising that property ownership is similarly racialised. Characteristically the non-Western spaces are claimed to be empty "… in ways that legitimized colonial and imperial intervention in the name of proper stewardship of people and land, thus there is a connection between exclusive possession of territory and exclusivist conceptions of cultural identity ... authentic and essentialist conceptions of identity are often

associated with exclusivist claims to territory, and simple notions of colonizer and space" (Barnett 2006: 153).

In Johannesburg in particular, the systematic racialisation of space intensified from 1933(Morris 1981). Thirty-five years after passing of the Gold Law (Act No 35 of 1898) all of Johannesburg – except for Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare, racially mixed freehold settlements – was declared white (Morris 1981:27). This was in terms of the Native Urban Areas Act No. 21 of 1923 but the declaration was made "after years of disagreement between the central government and the urban council" (Morris 1981:27). This time the motivation for the segregation of Johannesburg was different. This decree for segregation in 1933 was not aimed at barring people from the possibility of acquiring land with gold deposits but probably to try and reinforce and strengthen the spatial dichotomy of reserve/non reserve differentiation. Also, influx control measures of the 1920s were tightened. Platzky and Walker (1985: ix) define these as "the network of legislation and regulations which controls African access to the urban-industrial centres situated in what is claimed to be white South Africa". Essentially all black people in Johannesburg who did not live under government sanctioned places such as municipality townships, hostels as well as freehold settlements became "illegal". The pass legislation was however not new since it started as far back as 1797 by the Earl Macartney in an attempt to exclude all natives from the Cape Colony[56] .

This is linked to what I refer to as reservisation/homelandisation of space and foreignisation of natives in South Africa. Hence the use of the terms "native", "non-European" and "non-white" is deliberate as it indicates the different names, both official and unofficial that were used to refer to Africans. More importantly, although the term "native" has been highly politicized in the South African socio-linguistic sense, it is used in this document in its ordinary sense to depict "indigenous" thus showing how paradoxical the expunging of Africans from any part of South Africa was, since the very system that needed to obliterate their presence in South Africa seemed to have initially acknowledged them as natives of South Africa. Chapter 2 refers to the spatial dichotomization of South Africa in which South Africa was split racially to exclude Africans from areas which were not part of reserves and later homelands. It is in this sense that the contradictory term "foreign native" is used. However, Alexandra was not affected at the time precisely because in official discourse it was viewed as different since it was proclaimed for "the respectables".

[56] **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Macartney,_1st_Earl_Macartney** accessed 18/10/ 2011

A comparable place is Pretoria where De Jong (1995: 61) presents a case for a layered occupation of space. In this chapter he provides an explanatory survey of the urbanization of Africans in Pretoria, with particular emphasis on the townships that were removed and resettled elsewhere. Although he writes about Pretoria he situates it within the wider urbanization process in South Africa. Describing how residents of races other than white were "rubbed off" the map of Pretoria, he highlights how these residents nonetheless still formed part of the developmental history of the city. In Alexandra, however, the presence of bommastandi was not erased but only their status was redefined.

In his two-volume series, Charles van Onselen (1982), one of the leading South African social historians, provides a wealth of information on what he refers to as the "proletarianisation" of Africans, which largely resulted from the discovery of diamonds and gold in Kimberley and Johannesburg in 1867 and 1886 respectively. He emphasises that his work is "an extended and thematically linked exercise in historical materialism which seeks to set experience of the selected groups of ordinary people in Johannesburg within the wider context of the industrial revolution that engulfed the Witwatersrand …" Van Onselen (1982: xvi). Van Onselen's works set the scene for subsequent writings on the presence of Africans in Johannesburg more particularly. Additionally, in later writings about early Johannesburg Nigel Mandy (1984) and Beavon (2004) describe the beginnings of Johannesburg along the same lines. For example, Mandy (1984: xv) portrays the beginnings of this city as part of a "tradition-bound pastoral state" on which modern economic activities were superimposed". On the other hand, Beavon (2004), who describes his work as "a set of long essays" which are intended to "help readers to understand where contemporary Johannesburg 'has come from", provides a rich palimpsestic view of Johannesburg, which pries open its current economic, social and physical layers to take us to its beginnings as a mining camp. He provides a geographic view that covers 118 years of Johannesburg from the time it was an "insignificant" left over piece of ground which was physically disinteresting for farming activity. Farms were most commonly centered around natural resources such as a source of water hence most farms would carry names that attach landscapes such as fontein, spruit to them (Beavon, 2004: 18-19). This approach, which renders the beginnings of Johannesburg as farmlands, simply ignores other representations of history which deviate from the mainstream one which has been so far been given prominence in official records. Currently, there is a process in place which is aimed at correcting the misrepresentation of history where experiences of other groups other than white people are being under represented (Kometsi, 2008). Consequently it tends to mask earlier histories of Johannesburg that precede the

establishment of farms but more importantly it also silences other explanations of the occupation of the city – albeit unintended – in that it expunges other forms of settlement.

Nonetheless, there are reports that locate the Bafurutshe part of the Batswana tribe in the present day Sandton even though none of these link this evidence of the past African presence in the city to the current one in any way. Recently there were cases of graves that were dug in the Dainfurn area where the remains were reburied in Mamelodi Township without the consent of the families who subsequently took up the issue with the relevant authorities.(History of Sandton, 2005)The tendency is to present this history as if with the introduction of legislation such as that of 1876 that decreed African reserves, this layer of spatial occupation was completely effaced and we subsequently had pockets of land neatly occupied by Africans and white people separately.

A concern about this silencing of other possible explanations for African presence in South African cities in general, but in Johannesburg in particular, is raised by Mbembe and Nuttall (2004). Although their writing is based on the current Johannesburg, the analysis raises pertinent questions for the history of African presence in the current cityscapes. In their piece "Writing the World from an African Metropolis", Mbembe and Nuttall critique the representation found in some scholarly work of the African in Johannesburg in particular as a proletarian who is spatially dislocated and whose presence in the city is thus necessarily temporary. They challenge the tendency of scholarship on Africa to assume what they refer to as an "epistemological abyss", in that it (Africa) is an "encounter with what we cannot yet determine because it has not yet become or will never be definite" (Mbembe & Nuttall 2004: 349). I use this understanding to assert that such a disposition that tends to offer no other possible modes of African urban presence may be denying us the possibility of new understandings of our urban history. This view is supported by Kearney (2003: 25), who comments on how writers' recreation of particular events or historical phases may have led them to some awareness of the gap between the actual and an ideal.

This status of an African in urban centres tends to be reinforced by depicting him/her as so insipid that terms of his/her acceptance in such spaces would be based on "the process of assimilation to the urban environment and to assess the various ways in which the relationship between the individual and the community is corrupted, reinvented or maintained" (Mbembe & Nuttall 2004: 353). Hence Simone (2005: 2) argues that while representing Africans as "outsiders" in urban centres is still endemic today, this stance precludes us from understanding better, urban Africans "who have long made lives that have worked" (Simone 2005: 1).

However, Doug Hindson (1987) and later Sue Parnell (1993) detail the way the state attempted to control African urban access and conditions of urban residence by legislating their movement, and tying it to employment. In his study of pass controls, Hindson (1987) refers to the use of pass systems even in the late 19th century where labour was tied to an employer. Hindson (1987) traced the unsettling of African societies first through slavery and later through forms of control in which passes played a very important role in controlling the movement of labour. His assertion that "... a growing number of Africans were permanently committed to the cities and without rural ties forced city managers to confront the problem of how to treat an African population that lived in town" (Hindson 1987: 68) suggests the likelihood of the existence of settled black urban families. He contends that influx control measures "were based upon the differentiation within the African working class between the settled and temporary migrant sections" (Hindson 1987: xi). The issues of settled or permanent African urban families was also raised by Mayer (1961), who suggests that bringing a wife to town in earlier times might have been the beginning of decisions by Africans who were working in town to be permanently in town.

Sue Parnell (1993) takes matters a step further and challenges a representation of Johannesburg that masked the unconventional by examining how, in spite of the legislation that was framed to control urban spaces as enclaves of white people, there were still pockets of "non-whites" who lived in those spaces. She documents numerous places in Johannesburg where, at the turn of the 20th century, "natives" were living with their families under different legal or illegal conditions as there was no co-ordinated housing for them. These places included slums, backyards and shanty towns. Parnell (1993: iii) gives a detailed explication of where various black families lived in Johannesburg.

Like Hindson, Parnell critiques "the temporary sojourner status of Africans in urban areas" which was brought about by the Transvaal Commission. They argue that this view is legalistic and tends to assume that there cannot be any ingenuity in dealing with challenges of life that may fall outside the framework that is dictated by law. However, Simone (2004) makes an argument for resourcefulness and creativity that Africans often engage in, when negotiating the challenges they face in cities. One of the arguments he is making is that "urban residents act as connections among disparate uses and users" (Simone 2004: 4). The point here is that they often find uses for objects that go beyond their normal everyday use.

Writings about the African presence in Johannesburg referred to above and Hindson and Parnell's approaches – though not quite disparate – necessitate spatial representation of discontinuities of African life which resulted from incessant moves to and from legally

defined spaces that were meant to exclude them, expunge their presence and reintroduce this presence under different conditions. Hence the useful observation by Mbembe and Nuttall – albeit about Africa in general – that "one of the more potent ways of disrupting and 'jamming' the dominant imaginings of Africa is therefore to concern ourselves anew with spaces and discontinuities, to revisit our topographical imagination when it comes to this vast geographical landmass made up of a multiplicity of social forms and interlaced boundaries that, though only partially connected, are nevertheless entangled in myriad of ways" (Mbembe & Nuttall 2004: 352). This revisit will help broaden our views in the search for possible explanations and understandings of African urban presences.

More recently Bank whose research is mostly based in Duncan village, Eastern Cape introduces other insights in understanding of Africans in urban spaces. In his discussion of the rhythms of the yards Bank (2011) captures the significant role played by yards in understanding the city. He highlights the significant role played by backyard housing rental market more recently in South Africa. Bank draws from Allen (1999) to highlight the significant role played by "a social order and character which is embedded in the 'social rules, repetitions and regularities that govern everyday social life'" (Bank 2011: 191). Bank also draws from Amin and Thrift (2002) to talk about rhythms of the home as part of city life.

On Alexandra yards in particular he cites Mayekiso (1996) who talks about a yard as an organized unit which gained prominence as one of the significant building blocks in the struggle politics of the 1980s. It would appear though that in Alex the yard has failed to cohere as a unit that would include the former mmastadi, since the offer to purchase of 1988 and the repurchasing that occurred post 1994 the erstwhile landlord families feel alienated and threatened by occupants of their yard who do not pay rent to the property owners. The continuities and discontinuities of bommastandi families as owners and tenants of government have similarly led to discontinuities of tenancy of non owners who are currently occupying their yards. For example, in Chapter 7 ntate Thapelo explains his family's disgruntlement with what goes on in their yard. The fact that they repurchased their property and yet they share space with non family members from the old tenant group as well as those who came into their yard in the 1980s with neither rent nor ratification of their presence in this family space is worth pursuing and understanding.

c) Naming As Contestation of Space

More recently, an attempt to correct such silencing, a process of land restitution, which is central to the project of post-apartheid reform, was introduced. However, this process raises interesting questions about contestation of space.

Scholarly work on South African land restitution raises concern over its legalistic approach (Hendricks 2001; Kariuki 2004; Roodt 2001). Although they applaud its rights based stance, they critique the protracted nature of this process (Roodt 2001), while Kariuki (2004) insists that the program lacks the necessary understanding of rural communities. Roodt acknowledges that the compensation approach to restitution is lacking in that it can never equal the amount of pain that the dispossessed suffered when they lost their properties as well as being moved, often to distant and strange places. Such work is useful for this research to the extent that it provides framework for understanding land restitution processes however, the specificities of what happens in the case of urban areas still need to be closely examined.

Attempts at restitution need to appreciate what it is that the dispossessed are trying to regain or restore, by claiming their properties back. More recently the debate has taken a turn into changing the names of places, which is in essence a different side to the same coin, since both processes silencing the presence of people who used to or lived in those spaces. Contestation around such changes takes different forms with bitter resistance for some and little in others, for example, Tshwane, Potchefstroom on the one hand and of Gauteng, Polokwane, Limpopo, Mpumalanga on the other respectively. Name changes indicate a limitation in the land reform debates. They indicate the social and legal aspects of space. In the former they indicate how places may in some instances have carried more than one name over the years and how this name is linked to a socio-cultural practice or a historical event that a group might have experienced in that place. In the latter, which is closely linked to the first a place may have legally used a different name in that it was registered and used formally. For instance contestations over some place names that are currently being debated in South Africa are not necessarily about introduction of new names but they are about contestation of legal recording of names that have been coexisting with the current ones. For example, Tshwane, and Tlokwe for Pretoria and Potchefstroom respectively have been in concurrent but non-frictional use since the beginning. Additionally, there are other places whose names might or might not come into contestation for which there are what I will refer to as parallel names: for example Klerksdorp, Lydenburg and Rustenburg which are

Matlosane, Mashishing, and Tlhabane respectively. These examples are place names for what came to be urban spaces. There is, however, no record of a state disapproval of such use. Hence the question arises; is the name change debate for such places about contestation for places that became urban or do they have a bearing on understandings of African presence in them? In other words is the source for contestation for such names a historical legal issue? Could it be that since, over the years, South African urban places were legally defined as white enclaves, acknowledgement of African names for such places most significantly is not only challenging the history of such places that is writ large in the South African history books, but it is invoking new understandings of the ownership model of land question on which land restitution principles are based.

These questions need to be pursued further, as this is not only a legal question but a cultural one as well. They highlight the significance of naming as a strong tool of silencing other histories that are linked to the place named. Most importantly, names which are silenced bear cultural significance which gets lost. Darian-Smith, Gunner & Nuttall (1996) emphasise the cultural significance of such questions when they present significance of a link between naming and cultural meanings. Writing about experiences of South Africa and Australia, the essays in this collection show the way space has been used in very complex ways to dominate. This is illustrated by ways in which the land is possessed and named (Darian-Smith et al 1996: 3). For example, conventional wisdom states that the name Tlokwe derives from the fact that this place was occupied by the Batlokwa tribe under the leadership of kgosi Tshwaane.[57] It would be interesting to pursue and understand the cultural implications – if any – of the continued use of the name Tlokwe among other Africans, in spite of the official name "Potchefstroom". For example, if persistence of this name over the years invoked keeping alive the memory of occupation of this place by the Batlokwa, then there is a need to revisit, listen to and understand more closely the story that is being told by adhering to its use, albeit "unofficially." The term "unofficially" here, refers to the fact that in spite its use, the name does not appear on state records Through this lens one may need to re-examine more closely the stories that persistence of such names are telling and understand the impact of the selection of Western model of "knowing" on the cultural identity that such stories are intended to persistently preserve.

The following section seeks highlight how the mmastandi lens can be used to provide other understandings of Alexandra Township.

[57] This derives from oral history of this sub-group of the Batswana tribe which is found in the North West province and some parts of Botswana and the many conversations with my father ntate K Matlapeng.

2.3.2 Reading Alexandra Township: A Mmastandi Lens

This story explores the ways of life on bommastandi, in order to highlight how they were identified in the community, and how they identified themselves in relation to their positions as private property owners. I argue that first, sharing a similar identity does not necessarily imply sharing a similar experience of it. The ways families of bommastandi experienced dispossession, resettlement and removals are in some instances as disparate as the ways in which they acquired their properties.

2.3.2.1 The Identity of Mmastandi

While some people acquired property in urban areas they were still legally by and large associated with the reserves. In other words, the two 'lifestyles' have always been connected to this existence. Faced with this dilemma, I had to try – in my study of Alexandra private property owners – to understand this humanist subject. In this endeavour I used the term mmastandi rather than "property owner". Fortunately, the view that Africans are temporarily in urban areas has been challenged recently: more particularly in identity debates which focus on African cities. Critiquing the tendency for "large sectors of the international development community to refer to Africans as urban residents, who are not truly urbanized" Simone (2004: 2) asks questions such as "… what does the purported absence of urbanization mean?" (ibid). Although South Africa already recognized the phenomenon of urban blacks in the 1920s (Hindson 1987[58], Parnell 1993) identity debates still relegate them by and large to rural areas. This has been an on-going tension mostly in state policies which up till the 1970s was still embracing the notion of black independent states. This was decreed by the National Citizenship Act 26 of 1970. This question calls to task the claim in this instance by constructivists to have shifted "from a definitive description of the self (and) introduces new ways of talking about identity as "non-essential", "discursively constructed", "contingent", "fluid", "hybrid"," multiple", "decentered", "fragmented", "subjective" and "post-Cartesian" (Ballard 2002: 27). According to this claim, social constructivists reject the notion that identity is either predetermined by people's biology or the environment in which they live. In other words, they argue that such essentialist approaches to identity inscribe physical landscape and biology as constants in determining people's identities. However, "we often

[58] Although Posel (1991:17) also acknowledges the phenomenon of urban blacks, in her critique of Hindson (1987) she talks of his flawed analysis of workers as "passive victims of the system"

find an uneasy amalgam of constructivist language and essentialist argumentation" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 6). These authors argue that this tendency is an indication of "a tension between the constructivist language that is required by academic correctness and the foundationalist or essentialist message that is required if appeals to identity are to be effective in practice" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 6).

Most important for this study is Brubaker and Cooper's critique of the "multifarious nature of identity on the basis that if it is viewed as fluid and multiple" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 1), then conceptually there is a problem because then it becomes a "catch all" phrase … (that) "tends to mean too much ... too little ... or nothing at all" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 1). They raise concerns about the failure to distinguish in usage between "identity as a category of practice and as a category of analysis" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 1). These refer to identity as an "everyday social experience developed and deployed by social actors" on the one hand, and the "experience-distant category used by social analysts" respectively (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 4). Is mmastandi a catch all phrase? I argue that mmastandi is specific since it is meant to refer to a particular individual who holds title to his/her property. Therefore there is no contradiction as to who mmastandi in Alexandra is. However, it has been used as a "category of practice" although this research emphasises its usability as an analytical tool. This means that the concept has been used to denote a group of people who shared the practice of owning property. I call for the need to analyse it conceptually and theoretically.

Mmastandi's appropriation of space through private property acquisition means that her/his identity draws from a nexus of time and space. This calls for a closer examination of how and when mmastandi families came to occupy space as private property owners at the time when legislation was being passed to outlaw property ownership by Africans. Therefore this thesis invokes important spatial legislation to the extent that it impact on property acquisition by bommastandi of Alexandra. In this thesis I highlight the specificity of the detail, the nuance that specifically highlights bommastandi's experience of space. But property acquisition invokes the legalities of that space as well as its social contextualization. The former looks at the fact that the name derives from the activity of legally acquiring a "stand" which was titled, while the latter looks at the social meaning that attached to the stand, which incorporates economic aspects as well, among others. Drawing from the personal and lived experiences of people who - "saw it all", so to speak, opens up an opportunity for us to explore at a micro level the time-space nexus in examining identities of bommastandi. They have lived through the "changing property ownership regimes" and yet

the name mmastandi remained. This explains to us a legal occupation of space that is infused with the everyday (Blomley 1994). In other words we observe the continuities in their occupation of space and discontinuities in that the terms of that occupation change.

I introduce the concept of mmastandi and link it to owning freehold property in Alexandra and other Johannesburg Townships where Africans could purchase property to interrogate property ownership as one of the identifiers of these natives who started living in Alexandra Township, a non reserve place from 1912. The name mmastandi, which is a corruption of *stand* and the process of owning it, links a stand or a property to identity in a particular way. I argue that adopting the concept as a unit of analysis invokes the need to examine the link between identity and property ownership precisely because the latter invokes a distinct way in which space is appropriated.

The morphology and root of the concept – at least according to its recorded history which places its origin in Johannesburg (Mandy 1984; Beavon 2004) – require us to include in its examination questions of land and/or property and identity. This is because, during the exploration of experiences of bommastandi, it became evident that enactment of private property ownership in Alexandra implicated other concepts. In addition to the two major ones above other concepts such as how being African at the time of its second proclamation resulted in the need to re- think Alexandra by investigating more than the political struggles experienced by its residents. Instead this approach called for re-interrogation of the subjective experiences of families of bommastandi as a separate group in order to understand them as agents who experienced Alexandra in the midst of and in spite of changing geographies of space and law. Thus it necessarily had to invoke the politics of space as determined by the legislatively dichotomised space. It had to draw upon the creative ways bommastandi had to resort to make such life work (Simone 2004) in a new place that was increasingly rejecting them.

2.3.2.2 Alexandra Revisited

Other genres of research conducted on Alexandra have missed an opportunity to focus on property ownership as one of the important identities found in Alexandra township (Tourikis 1981, Sarakinsky 1984, Bozzoli 1991&2004, Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008, Sinwell 2009).

This research contends that the concept mmastandi espouses an important identity which needs to be interrogated so as to understand other aspects of life in Alexandra.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) confront and challenge debates on identity in the academic community. They pit the "constructivist" against the "essentialist" approaches that are used to analyse identity. They assert that since the "soft constructivist approach" views the concept as "malleable and multifarious, social scientists should be careful not to conceptualise all everyday experiences and unity as "identity". (They caution that). "Soft constructivist positions combined with failure to distinguish clearly between identity as "an analytical tool" and as "a category of practice", burden the concept of "identity". (By using it to refer to many disparate things,) its meaning is rendered so obscure that it becomes unable to serve as an analytical tool in any significant way" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 1). While they acknowledge the importance of the concept of identity in social science analysis they still argue that "specifying that identity is multiple, fluid, constantly renegotiated and so on – does not solve the Orwellian problem of entrapment in a word" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 34). However, they do not provide any pointers as to how the weaknesses thus far identified can be resolved. Can we then have an analysis of identity that is completely non-essentialist? Does the constructivist approach offer us an alternative that closely captures the identity of our subjects - In this instant bommastandi?

Perhaps one of Jenkins' (1996) major contributions to identity studies is examination of the relationship between individual and collective identities. He points out that the flaw in identity studies is the assumption that the difference between individual and collective identities is self-evident. With our analysis of identities for our subjects we need to acknowledge that they are "individuals" who simultaneously belong to "subgroups" and thus also act collectively in some instances. Thus it will be useful to adopt an analytical approach that will not only include both identities, but that will treat them equally in that they are closely linked to one another. Such a relationship is also acknowledged by Keith and Pile (1995) who assert that "Self is constructed in dialectic with others or another; one cannot see oneself in the absence of projections from the world around one" (Keith & Pile 1995: 195). Therefore there is an ongoing conversation of how an individual views himself and how the society perceives him in identity formation.

Additionally, group similarities are perceived by both people outside the group and the group members themselves. Thus Jenkins (1996) draws on Marxist class analysis, by using the phrases "class in itself" and "class for itself" to explicate this. This means that it is the others who look at shared attributes that produce the group but also it is individual

members of the group who identify common attributes that are shared by the group respectively. Jenkins (1996) highlights the fact that the two are not necessarily congruent. In other words what group members see as shared attributes will not necessarily be seen as such by people outside the group. Therefore individual identity is a constant reference to individual view and a view of the collective in that it is an assertion that "constantly seeks authentication from the collective". Hence there is a constant negotiation between how the self views itself as shaped by the society in which one is, and how the very society views one. Although Jenkins' argument most certainly helps explicate individual and group identities, it is not explicit regarding time and place, which are significant in geographic studies.

Nonetheless, such an approach is useful for this study, which presents the identity of bommastandi as individual, belonging to sub-groups and as a collective. Calling upon an analytical approach that will not only include both identities, but that will treat them equally in that they are entangled one with the other, Jenkins (1996) argues that processes that "produce, reproduce and change" them are alike.

A seminal work on South African identity studies was undertaken by Moodie (1994:28). Moodie combines "Schutz's active ingredients, Foucault's notion of power, Marx's historical and practical continuity and Goffman's social elements" to reject the theories that had been used to analyse black miners' identities and posits an alternative mode of understanding them. To explain Marx's historical and practical continuity, Moodie cites Marx,(1852) who states that "human actors 'make their own history, but not from their own freewill; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances….'"(Moodie 1994:273-274). Moodie's examination of a theory of "bifurcated identities" which presents black miners as men of two worlds or people with two self-identities is a critique of essentialised identity. Moodie rejects the bifurcated theory because his empirical evidence shows a much more complex identity of his subjects. First, Moodie deconstructs the structural approach to identity that privileges the role of institutions in identity construction of mineworkers. He rejects the assumption that black miners were "locked into a total system in which they are a little more than puppets of management" (Moodie 1994: 11), thus questioning the tendency to privilege the role of compounds in shaping the identity of black miners.

Interestingly, Moodie's study still privileges communality as inherently African. For instance in his critique of Alverson's study of Batswana workers Moodie argues that such work failed to depict the alienating aspects of *mmereko* while it simultaneously over-individualised the Batswana who were communal. Such a critique tends to assume that the

communal identity of these men is intractable. Further, even though Moodie claims to reject the two-self theory his linking *mmereko* and *tiro* to particular places shows that his explanation still adhered to it (the two-self theory) to a certain degree. Moodie's contribution to this study lies in the presentation of the identity of black miners as very complex, a characteristic shared by bommastandi of Alexandra. The empirical evidence presented in the life stories of bommastandi showed that their ways of life revealed relationships that were too complex to be compartmentalized into either communal or individual. This questions a simplistic view of communal as symmetrically opposed to individual.

Further, an analysis that adopts a place binary such as depicted by *mmereko* and *tiro* is analytically inadequate (Mohanty 1995). Borrowing from a long held feminist perspective McDowell rejects this perspective by pointing out that "the separation of work from home, the urban from the economic or daily life from working life is analytically unsatisfactory, challenged by the evident connections that are held in place in the main by women's domestic labour" (McDowell 2006: 205). Although postcolonial perspective does not necessarily resolve this it points out to the continuities and perhaps even discontinuities in people's experiences that contribute toward their identity formation. "The discursive strategies of post-colonial and queer theory have criticized the ways in which dominant discourses have helped to construct a number of binary oppositions that reinforced the presumed superiority of "Western" or "heterosexual" lifestyles" (Stevenson 2003: 26), even then they do not seem able to successfully do so themselves, in that they still use the very binaries to argue their cases out.

In an attempt to address the problem of binaries a citizenship approach may be adopted. However as indicated in the following section such an approach also has some constraints.

2.3.4 The Citizenship Approach

The "citizenship approach" is another attempt aimed at addressing the problem of binaries that constructionist approaches, such as post-colonialist, feminist and queer studies intended to dismantle. This approach is seen as inclusive and not discriminatory (Stevenson 2003). However, it is also fraught with analytical problems. For example, Stevenson (2003: 26)

argues that "citizenship (is) an attempt to mask and normalize cultural difference (in that it) impose(s) unitary identities and thereby imposes a normalised social order". In the case of bommastandi becoming recognized as South African citizens after 1994 seems to have done just that, namely imposed unitary identities.

Being recognized as South Africans who were dispossessed as a result of apartheid does not seem to address the loss of property by bommastandi. In other words their urban status appears merely to exacerbate their problem. Restitution is too reductionist and legalistic, hence bommastandi initially had to contend with restitution policies that did not seem to cater for them. In Chapter 1 I dealt with restitution challenges that families of bommastandi faced.

One other proposition is to appeal to "cultural citizenship" to redeem the notion of an "inclusive, non-discriminatory identity". However, the approach is also critiqued for its failure to address the problem of suppressing the differences in identity. Hence Butler (1990) who argues that "any attempt to base a politics upon an assumed unitary identity is necessarily exclusionary" (Butler cited in Stevenson 2003: 26) seems to suggest that construction of a group identity is problematic in that its "claims to identity are always caught up in the construction of an inside and outside … it is the cultural production of the abject and the marginal that enforces processes of cultural and symbolic exclusion" (Butler cited in Stevenson 2003: 26). The history of South Africa was more about an attempt to regroup people who were fragmented over the years to start with. Attempting to group together people into ethnic groupings simply because they shared a common language after many years of moving from one area to the next and more particularly after engaging in an urban economy is analytically counterproductive.

Given the above debates perhaps the resultant dilemma is whether identity should be adopted as a mode of explanation in our attempt to understand who bommastandi are.

In her PhD thesis, Kihato (2009) refers to her experience of negotiating urban and rural identities. On being asked where she was from she would ultimately engage in what she refers to as "indulging all in what I understood as communal deception, where the correct answer was, as I saw it, the wrong one" (Kihato 2009: 14). That was because the "correct answer", which the adults anticipated, was the "wrong one" in that she really did not come from the rural village where her father was born and bred. Kihato was born and bred in Nairobi and thus she was urban. Kihato's experience succinctly captures the structural

dilemma faced in understanding African identities. In this instance her family is the structure that predetermines her "correct" identity. As she clearly illustrates, to please her family, she had to give the acceptable answer, albeit the wrong one.

In the case of mmastandi the dilemma presents differently. Mama Mihloti, a woman of 80, talks about her origins in the following terms:

> *Ke tswaletswe ko X Avenue gona mo Alexandra. Go tloga moo ntate o ne ntse a bereka gona mo sekgoweng. Jaanong a tloga, makgowa ba mo raa ba re ba tshwantse ba ye Kensington, mo dithabeng tse le. Gwa fitlha gore jaanong, makgowa waitse ba re mosotho a tswe mo diplekeng tsa bona a ikele mo diplekeng tsa batho jaana ka Alexandra.* (Interview with mama Mihloti and Tsakani.[59]
>
> (I was born in X Avenue right here in Alexandra. My father was working right here in Sekgoweng (urban area). His employers advised him togo to Alexandra where Blacks were supposed to go and live)

Referring to her home Alexandra, the only home she knows as *Sekgoweng* is significant because sekgoweng and or *Makgoweng* means a place of the white man while on the other hand a rural home will be referred to as *Magaeng*. Simultaneously home translates to *gae* or *legae.* This is in Sotho group of languages spoken in South Africa.

If we view being in urban areas of bommastandi within the legally prescribed framework we fail to take note of some aspects of their stories which constitute who they are. In this study I insist that revisiting the African presence in Johannesburg on its own terms, will not only shed light on the identities and practices of Alexandra bommastandi, but in so doing, it will help broaden our views in the search for possible explanations of African presence in Johannesburg.

In this study I explore the concept of mmastandi, which refers to an individual family that owned property in Johannesburg in general. Although Bozzoli (1991) adopts 'life stories methodology' she does not draw a distinction between property owners and non-owners in Alexandra Township. Drawing from these various sources is valuable for piecing together what is missing or silenced in recorded information. Although this study is based on experiences of land and property acquisition and dispossession by Alexandra property

[59] Interview with Tsakani and mama Mihloti, Alexandra, September 16, 2003

owners, it also serves as a window on the broader land question in South Africa. Hence Alexandra became a place with meaning for the property owners who like all the Africans in 1912 were facing uncertain future in South Africa due to the then impending the Native Land Bill.

2.4 Alexandra as Place

Highlighting how meaning is implicated in spatial debates, Sack (1980) points out that meanings of space and place depend on the interrelationships among physical and human activities located in the context of space and place (Sack 1980: 3). Harvey (1996: 141) explicates this further "that as flesh and blood, humans occupy space but as creatures of the symbol we transform that space into place". However, the experience of bommastandi seems to be underplayed in the transformation of Alexandra space into place. The legal definition of Alexandra space is given priority and this approach fails to highlight that there were many families who were left out in the cold. This refers to the changing faces and phases of Alexandra where the state expropriated property, thus transforming private property to state-owned property. Instead of being relocated to successor townships such as Meadowlands and Diepkloof as it was planned, some families were left in temporary accommodation.[60] Hence the observation by Cohen (2002: 274) that "place is also produced through the shorter journeys, routes, and activities of everyday life" becomes significant.

Second, in some instances occupation of spaces and representation thereof highlights certain narratives while not others. This thesis draws attention to the implications of statements such as *phansi ngo ma-standi, phambili ngo mkhukhu*[61] (Down with mmastandi and forward with shacks). These most commonly represent the voice of Alexandra residents. However, little attention if any at all, is paid to the implication of such pronouncements for bommastandi or people who were hoping to regain their properties. The severity of such a pronouncement to property owners and the fact that "Property owners have been killed in this Alexandra over their properties[62]" is thus not reflected. In other words in spite of the larger public good that the slogan hoped to gain not only for Alexandra, but for the whole country

[60] *Mme* Mapula is currently living in a small two-roomed mud house on the land that belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and *mama* Zodwa is also occupying church land containing tents provided by the army. She subsequently built a tin shack for her family.
[61] Interview with ntate Tshepo,Alexandra, September 14, 2003.
[62] Interview with ntate Thapelo, Alexandra, September 8, 2003

Phambili ngo mkhukhu still essentially meant invasion of the very properties that bommastandi were hoping to regain possession of.

Therefore if place is a social construct (Pile 1996; Keith & Pile Muir 1997; Entrikin 1994, Harvey 1996; Agnew & Duncan 1989; Cross & Keith 1993) and "it creates and it is created as well as transformed by individuals" (Agnew & Duncan 1989: 157) there is a need to revisit who we include in the concept "social" and to rethink fragmentation of spatial representation that would include in this case bommastandi as well.

Furthermore, if we are to take seriously Sack (1980) who speaks of "changing of meanings of place which results from different perceptions and descriptions of spatial relations which are situational" (Sack 1980: 5) then such perceptions should be more inclusive. For example even though a lot has been written about violence in Alexandra, such writings are silent on violence that was specifically targeting property owners. As ntate Thapelo points out:

> *"Ke gopola one of the property owners, mme (name withheld) died of heart attack; a evicta all the tenants mo propating ya gagwe; and these tenants ba re ga re tswe ... And she is not the only one, many died. Le ba bangwe ba re se nang record ya bona; property owners."*[63]
>
> (I remember one of the property owners, mme (name withheld) died of a heart attack; she evicted all tenants from her property; but these tenants said that they were not moving … And she is not the only one, many have died. There are many others whose records we do not have.)

Massey (1993, 1996), Keith and Pile (1993), Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine (2004) reveal the importance of how "being a place" is about impressing of the self into a particular space. This argues for the simultaneous construction of place and identity. Additionally, Doreen Massey highlights the significance of time where she claims that "Space is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global. What makes a particular view of these social relations specifically spatial is their simultaneity" (Massey 1993: 156). Nevertheless, while most geographers agree on the "social constructedness" of place, Nicholas Blomley, calls for the inclusion of the "geography-law nexus", as indeed place is invariably legalized space. He

[63] Ibid

thus calls for a theory that acknowledges the "interconnectedness" that exists between law and space. He explains how law draws from and reconstitutes the society. Citing Gordon, Blomley states "as law is structured by context it structures context (Blomley 1994: 34). This takes us back to who the subject is and thus the relationship between the law maker and the subject for whom the law is made becomes crucial. The law that dichotomized South African space was racist and typically in line with the apartheid policy, it was made for and not by bommastandi. Thus the law context relationship described by Blomley does not refer to bommastandi and does not represent their interests.

Mitchell (1994) on the other hand, focuses on the significance of a landscape which he describes as vigourous, in that it serves to "create and naturalise the histories and identities inscribed upon it". Darian-Smith et al who draw from the same source argue that he also portrays it as simultaneously hiding and revealing social and historical formations. "… It is through the cultural processes of imagining, seeing, historicizing and remembering that space is transformed into place and geographical territory into a culturally defined landscape" (Darian-Smith et al 1996: 3). Mmastandi is not only about identity but it is about appropriation of space through acquisition of private property. But, acquisition of property invokes the legalities of that space as well as its social contextualization.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the concept of mmastandi is a useful lens through which the heartfelt and lived experience of being modern, African and permanent in an urban area can be analysed. Engaging the metaphor of "palimpsest" the study emphasises a series of layers in property relationships through which the past is rendered visible in the present. These layers cannot be entirely effaced by policy changes.

The concept of mmastandi situates the study at the nexus of several bodies of literature. Families of bommastandi purchased private property in an area that was increasingly becoming urban in South Africa that at the time was legislatively expunging the presence of Africans parts of the country that were progressively becoming enclaves of white people. Research on Alexandra raises debates on class analysis of Alexandra residents, the history of Alexandra, the agency role of Alexandra residents, Alexandra residents as a community and the housing debates that are situated within the broader politics of dispossession, removal and resettlements.

Research that engaged with the land question approached it from the perspectives of dispossession, removal and resettlement. However, in this study I centralise the urban land question and interrogate how the legal landscape of South Africa impacted on how private property owners perceived and understood and indeed enacted this ordinarily Western legal concept. I emphasised that while class analysis is a useful tool in unravelling life in Alexandra, the fact that it is situated within the historical materialist approach needs to be interrogated further. I argued that except for the act of owning property the group of property owners did not really cohere as a "social class".

In the next chapter, I discuss the early history of the mmastandi of Alexandra, showing in greater detail how this history led to its present situation.

Chapter 3
ALEXANDRA'S EARLY MMASTANDI 1912 -1940

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I first explore the rare "window of opportunity" that a black freehold area such as Alexandra presented from 1912. This is done through examination of the legal framework which governed Johannesburg at the time, in particular how this was spatially manifested in Alexandra. I argue that being a mmastandi in Alexandra resulted in the construction of new ways of life and a particular sense of place for them. The "second" proclamation of Alexandra as an exclusively black township appears to have presented challenges to the spatial legislation of government at the time. I argue that Alexandra was both a part of Johannesburg and not part of it, since it lay just at the border of the Johannesburg municipality at the time it was proclaimed a township for Africans and "coloured people".[64]. However, it was part of Johannesburg, in that it relied mainly on it for economic survival. Furthermore, it was within the magisterial district of Johannesburg (Tourikis 1981: 8). But more importantly, as Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008:5) contend, "Alexandra's history also draws attention to another phenomenon on the margins of the South African society, the peri-urban."

Secondly, I show that racial law was spatially manifest in Johannesburg and its surrounding area through first the Gold Law of 1898 and later in the Union of South Africa through the 1913 Native Land Act. For example I contend that, although technically Alexandra was outside the municipality of Johannesburg, it would appear that it was close enough to be affected by the racist nature of the Gold Law Act No 35 of 1898. This law prohibited all 'non-whites' such as Africans, Indians, Malay, Chinese and people of mixed race from owning property on mining land. (Parnell 1993; Beavon 2004; Badenhorst 1971; Lange 1998). This chapter further situates the Alexandra mmastandi within the broader debates of the land question for Africans as legislated by the 1913 Native Land Act, which was passed a year after the Second Proclamation of Alexandra. The Land Act seems to present the beginnings of uncertainties and wrangling over Alexandra space. The legal framework describing Alexandra's space impacted on it in different ways. For example, the

[64] One-and-a-half miles (approximately two kilometres) beyond the municipal boundary of Johannesburg, according to Tourikis (1981:7)

Native Land Act No 27 of 1913 bars natives from purchasing land, but Section S1 allows the exemption of townships such as Alexandra from this stipulation. This contradiction created challenges for the government.

The chapter shows how this Act marked the beginning of the legal wrangling by different actors, over Alexandra. Most importantly, it shows the origin of Alexandra bommastandi participation in this wrangling, and how they adapted to circumstances. This chapter reveals different ways of reading appropriation of South African urban space by Africans, through the experience of the Alexandra bommastandi. Such an understanding invokes Lefebvre (1991:12) who contends that**"**when we invoke space we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does it."

Next, I illustrate how these two pieces of legislation affected the shaping of Alexandra space in different ways, since it simultaneously threatened, enabled and redefined access to space by bommastandi. I further indicate how the Alexandra bommastandi started making a life for themselves in this legalized space.

Furthermore, I expand on the redefined access to space available to bommastandi of Alexandra, through being exempt from the Native Land Act of 1913. I discuss the experiences of bommastandi who belonged to the city and in the city, by spatially appropriating part of it in a specific way, which not only established it as a place they belonged to, but a place that belonged to them as well. I explore the disputes that began in the earlier years of Alexandra Township as a result of the ambivalence of the spatial, temporal and racial histories of Alexandra. I also explore the appropriation of Alexandra as home, and the simultaneous "othering" of it, which are closely linked to the legislation that defines Africans as temporary in urban space, as well as the concomitant intensification of racially discriminatory legislation as it affects Alexandra.

Alexandra was established:

> "In view of the demand which existed, and still exists, for the acquisition of land by Natives and Coloured persons, who by reason of their occupation as domestic servants and otherwise, wish to reside with their families within reasonable distance from Johannesburg."[65]

[65] Letter from ATC to the Minister of Native Affairs dated March 14 1913.

Alexandra also presents an opportunity to explore how, at the turn of the century, a small sector of the African community he engaged in private property., in a property ownership regime that is most commonly viewed as characteristically "un-African" (Cousins 2002). Cousins argues:

> Titling is seen to be based on Western notions of ownership, which assume that property rights are absolute and exclusive... in contrast, African systems of land tenure are based on the principle that everyone within the community of origin has rights to land, but that individual rights are balanced against their obligations to the social group. Rights are thus shared and relative. Systems tend to be inclusive, not exclusive, and rights and obligations are held at a number of levels of social organization, from the neighbourhood to the village to the larger community.
> (Cousins, 2002)

The experiences of bommastandi complicate Cousins' argument that "African systems of land tenure are based on the principle that everyone within the community of origin has rights to land, but that individual rights are balanced against their obligations to the social group" Cousins (2002). Mitchell (2002) and Widlok (2000.), among others, argue that this assertion arises out of a misunderstanding of how property relations operate in an African community, as well as an attempt to universalise the Western notion of ownership regimes without critically examining spatial differences of places where the ownership regimes are used as tools of analysis. Instead, they present a trajectory of complex property ownership relationships, which showed that property ownership regimes originate from a very complicated socio-legal history.

The African experience is much more complex, as indicated by Pile and Thrift (1993) who, drawing from Paul Gilroy, argue that "… of late metaphors of mobility, trans-acculturation and diaspora have become current. These metaphors are intended to capture possibilities of hybrid identities which are not essentialist but which can still empower people and communities by producing in them new capacities for action (Pile & Thrift 1993: 10).

Therefore, the experience of the admittedly few bommastandi (the plural of mmastandi) of Alexandra, bears testimony to the fact that "these Africans" not only engaged

in private property ownership at the time, but also understood that, to access private property, they had to transact in money and get titles to their properties (Sikakane 1977).[66]

Alexandra residents bought property and received title deeds, and their acquisition was recorded in the register of the Alexandra Township Company (ATC). An example is given in the table below:

Table 6 An example of information kept in the ATC property register source

Stand	Date	Size	Transferred from	Transferred to	Amount pd
51	12/1/1916	895? sq roods[67] 165 sq ft	T ship owner	Seymour John William (Native)	£40.0

Source: National Archives, Pretoria, [Name of collection?] File T341 Rak[68]1022 Alexandra 1 – 203, 1916 – 1942 .

Mr Seymour, a "native" Alexandra stand owner four years after the township was proclaimed, most probably understood that he had to pay for his piece of land and get a piece of paper, that gave him rights to the land. The announcement of sale of property in Alexandra in the Billboard in 1912 (Swift 1983: 16) also stipulated conditions of payment for such acquisition. In line with these stipulations, Mr Seymour initially paid a deposit of £2 (there's no evidence of this in the register above), and subsequently paid monthly instalments. Records from this register also show different ways in which such acquired property could be disposed of.

Finally, I investigate other legislation and regulations that were concerned with defining spatial dichotomisation of South Africa into "prescribed" and "non-prescribed" areas. I also explore commissions of inquiry, whose briefs affected decisions regarding the spatial location of Alexandra, as well as the conditions of bommastandi in it. I further research how the ATC and the AHC negotiated for different terms, as a result of legislation in the period from 1922 to 1939. Finally, in this chapter I consider how bommastandi lived in Alexandra during this period.

[66] Pretoria National Archives File T 341 has registers containing details of who bought which stand, when and for how much.
[67] Approximately a quarter of an acre.
[68] RAK is an Afrikaans word for Shelf.

3.2 Alexandra and Johannesburg

The land question is important for the study of property ownership in Alexandra, since property meant ownership rights to a piece of land. The municipal townships provided housing that was initially rented, then leased to occupants. In South Africa, where houses belonged to government, they were regarded as rental stock. However, in the case of leasehold, government would only own the land while occupants of that land could build their houses and occupy the land first on a 30-year leasehold and later a 99-year leasehold. Lebelo (1981) indicates such differentiation by the state when providing housing to freeholders and tenants in successor townships. The history of property ownership in Alexandra appears to be subsumed in the broader history of removals, expropriations – sometimes with resettlements, sometimes without. Thus to understand property ownership in Alexandra, it is imperative to know how Alexandra was established as an African urban freehold settlement, and how it had "become almost synonymous with the resilience of resistance to Apartheid" due to its attainment of "almost mythical historical status in the minds of the many black South Africans, perhaps eclipsed by only Sophiatown and District Six" (Nauright 1992: 1). Subsequently, Nauright (1992) argues that its survival was vital, not only among property owners of Alexandra, but among the larger black society.

The passing of the Gold Law in 1898 led to the "speculative nature of land ownership in Johannesburg" (Lange 1998: 120). As mining houses acquired large properties in the surrounding areas (Parnell 1993), people of colour were barred by the Gold Law from owning land in virtually the whole of Johannesburg.[69] Some of the land bought by speculators was subsequently sold for residential and business purposes (Beavon 2004). Beavon continues to explain that, in order for speculators to sell their land in portions, they were required to have it proclaimed as townships. It would appear that it was from such transactions mainly that most of Johannesburg townships evolved. Parnell (1993), who provides a detailed explication of where various black families lived in Johannesburg, argues that black citizens of early Johannesburg were found in numerous places, where they lived under different legal or illegal conditions, as there was no co-ordinated housing for them. She contends that these places included slums, backyards and shantytowns.

[69]Law No 15 1898 chapter 2 Section 364 clarifies the categories included in "coloured" persons and these were African, "Asiatic Native" or "coloured American person" " coolie" or "chinamen"

It was only in the 1900s, when freehold settlements appeared, that Africans gained access to some of them. These included Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale. Hellman (1952) gives the example of Newclare, a freehold township proclaimed in 1904, where different races could purchase private property. Additionally, municipal townships meant for Africans were established, such as Klipspruit, Pimville in 1903, and Western Native Township1912. . People who moved to these non-freehold townships came from different areas including slums. Most commonly, the government would have declared such slums health hazards, and subsequently called for their destruction, and the removal of their occupants (Parnell 1993).

3.3 Alexandra: First Proclamation

In 1905, a portion of a quitrent farm– Cyferfontein No. 2, – in the district of Johannesburg , which was registered to Labuschagne in 1875, was transferred to a limited company, the Alexandra Township Company (ATC),[70] under the directorship of Herbert Boshoff Papenfus, and Mrs. L Campbell as the secretary. It would appear that most farms during this time were paying fixed rent to the government. This piece of land, which extended over 415 by 479 square roods, lay just outside the north-eastern border of the Johannesburg municipal area, and about 16 km from the old downtown Johannesburg (Carter 1991; Gish 2000). This size translates to approximately 2 sq km or 358 ha.

On March 8 and June 16, 1905, the ATC registered this property as a private township, and named it after the wife of the director of the company, Alexandra (Carter 1991).[71] In the same year, the surveyor-general approved the township plan, which comprised 338 stands.[72] The ATC set these stands aside for white occupation. The year 1905 is significant in the earlier history of property ownership in Alexandra Township, in that the Township Ordinance No. 19 was passed and enacted. This ordinance provided for laying out of townships on private land. For example, Section 5 of the ordinance specified that fifteen *erven* should to be laid out on a farm or a portion thereof. However, since Alexander was approved and registered on March 8 and June 16, 1905,[73] and the ordinance was only passed and enacted in September of the same year, Alexandra Township was exempted from its

[70] See Pretoria National Archives File N 736/1875 deed of Transfer 31/3/ 1875.
[71] The origin of this name is contested as some sources argue that Alexandra was named after the queen of England, while others state that Alexandra was the name of Papenfus' daughter.
[72] See Pretoria National Archives File GNLB 418 85/2.
[73] See Pretoria National Archives File T341 Rak 2546.

provisions.[74] Hence, according to plan SG No A 955/06 signed by Surveyor TW Bell on August 1905, Alexandra Township had 338 *erven*.

The newly established township did not attract white people, not only due to its distance from the then downtown Johannesburg (Tourikis 1981, Sarakinsky 1984, Carter 1991, Nauright 1992), but also because

> Johannesburg barely spread beyond Judith's Paarl, and the areas of real growth were Mayfair, Doornfontein and Langlaagte…..With reduced land prices and Johannesburg not being prepared to control the area, basic infrastructure such as electricity, waterborne sewerage, water reticulation, and proper roads and storm water were generally ignored.
> (Alex Urban Renewal Proposal September/86)

Sophiatown was proclaimed a month before Alexandra Township. This place was four kilometres west of the then downtown Johannesburg. Herman Tobiansky had purchased a 90 hectare portion of Waterval Farm No. 79 in 1897. After trying unsuccessfully to sell it, he decided – in line with the requirements explained by Beavon (2004) – to have it registered on February 1905 as a township. He named it Sophiatown after his wife Sophia (Sikakane 1977, Goodhew 2004). Later, when Africans were removed to Soweto, it was occupied exclusively by white people and renamed Triomf. However the name recently reverted to Sophiatown. The township had 1 694 lots, which extended to 17.4 by 17.4 metres each, and were sold to individuals.[75] Beavon (2004) contends that, although the government did standardise the Johannesburg stand sizes, most speculators used the government standard size of 50 by 50 feet. Initially, Sophiatown was also meant for white people. However, they lost interest in it, due to the establishment of a huge sewage system and the Western Native Township close by. Subsequently, plots were sold to other races, including Africans (Sikakane 1977).

Like other Johannesburg townships proclaimed in the same year – such as Brixton and Westdene – Alexandra and Sophiatown were initially meant for white occupation. There are important similarities in the histories of Alexandra and Sophiatown. Like most townships that were proclaimed in Johannesburg and its surrounds, both townships were laid out on portions of farms. Alexandra lay in Cyferfontein No 2, while Sophiatown was on Waterval Farm No 79. Both were named after wives; in the case of Alexandra of director of Township

[74] See Pretoria Police Museum Leyds Archives 941.
[75] Pretoria National Archives File T 341 Rak1028. .

Company Herbert Papenfus and in the case of Sophiatown the owner, Herman Tobiansky. However, in both cases the plan was abandoned when white people lost interest in them, which points to the existence of segregation policies in Johannesburg. You're right: black people would have been forced to go there. But was it a matter of policy at the time, or just a tendency to pander to the whims of white people, which later informed policy?

There is an important difference between the early histories of Sophiatown and that of Alexandra. When the idea of selling stands to white people became commercially unviable, stands in Sophiatown were sold to other races including Africans (Sikakane 1977). But Alexandra was reproclaimed an exclusively black Township – for Africans and "coloured people" – in 1912. Tourikis' (1981) explication that Alexandra was not a camp, a location or temporary settlement emphasizes the peculiarity of Alexandra at Second Proclamation .The following section focuses on Alexandra from the time it was proclaimed an exclusive freehold township for Africans and "coloured people".

3.4 Black Alexandra: The Second Proclamation

Alexandra was not just another Johannesburg freehold area such as Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale where black people resided as either property owners or tenants; (Goodhew, 2004, Sikakane 1977, Parnell 1993, Carruthers ud)[76] it was an exclusively black freehold area.[77] Furthermore, when the ATC applied to have the status of Alexandra redefined, they saw themselves as responding to a felt need that was expressed by the then Minister of Native Affairs, Mr. H Burton (Tourikis 1981). As pointed out by Parnell (1993), there was a shortage of housing in Johannesburg. The demolition of slums, coupled with policies discouraging indiscriminate provision of accommodation for Africans made this shortage even more acute for black people.

A letter to the Minister of Native Affairs by the ATC on March 14, 1913, which raised concerns about the parliamentary debates on the Land Bill, provides a background to the Second Proclamation of Alexandra. It stated:

> In view of the demand which existed and still exists, for the acquisition of land by Natives and Coloured persons…wish to reside with their families within a reasonable

[76] See Pretoria National Archives File T 341 for registrations of property owners in Sophiatown and Alexandra Township.
[77] Several letters of the first decade of Alex as a black Township between the ATC and NAD state this.

> distance from Johannesburg. My board decided, during the month of January 1912 to dispose of the township in question in freehold to Native and Coloured persons only.

Moreover, the ATC argued that Mr. Burton, the Minister of Native Affairs at the time, had stated in Parliament that:

> A great deal towards an improved condition of things could be achieved if the Municipal Authorities did their duty better. He urged upon them the necessity for providing some decent and respectable location where these people could live in a decent and respectable way, and abide by their families. There seemed to be a prejudice against this in Johannesburg.[78]

Alexandra was proclaimed at a historical moment that straddled transition from provincial to national governance. Thus, transition from provincial to national legislation presented an opportunity for its establishment as a "non-white freehold area" in the surrounding area of Johannesburg.

The Minister's pronouncement shows his concern for family life, decency and respectability for "these people". Respectability here refers to the so-called "better class" African (Nauright 1992: 44). In fact the very establishment of Alexandra as a black township was a response to this concern. In a letter to the Minister of Native Affairs – dated May 7 1913 – a superintendent of Witwatersrand Native Mission, Mr. Bottile, had this to say about Alexandra property owners:

> My experience is that the better class Native and Coloured person prefers to live in an area set aside for the exclusive occupation of Natives and Coloured persons…evidenced from the fact that a considerable number of Natives and Coloured persons have availed themselves of the opportunity of purchasing some land on terms indicated, and have erected tenements for their occupation, and they are now living there contentedly.
> Bottile 7/5/1913

[78] By "these people" the Minister meant Africans.

This presumed tendency was still referred to in the 1940s. A letter signed by Nts'ala and Maeger, members of the Alexandra Health Committee (AHC) still referred to the respectability of Alexandra "Natives".

Alexandra was resurveyed between December 1911 and February 1912, and the newly amended plan comprised 2 308 lots, three squares extending over 22 891.3 sq m, 52 703.9 sq m, 24009.9 sq m respectively as well as one reserve (a piece of land set aside without being allocated as a property) (Tourikis 1981). This amendment was in terms of Section 14 of Act 25, 1909. However, most of the reserve was taken up by the Jukskei River.[79] This time Alexandra was proclaimed specifically for Africans and "coloured people", hence a billboard advertising the sale of property in Alexandra appeared in Sotho, Zulu and English (Swift 1983: 16).

3.4.1 Who were the property owners?

There seem to be contestations and inconclusive evidence on who occupied what space and when in South Africa. However, Platzky & Walker (1985) (as quoted by de Jong 1995) place some Africans settlements in places where urban settlements[80] were subsequently established. The Matebele (Ndebele), Batswana (Tswana) and Bapedi (Northern Sotho) were living mostly around the Pretoria area.[81] However, De Jong (1995) argues that the first urban settlements in the Transvaal "more often" did not interfere with local chiefdoms, though in 1844 there was a legislative attempt to halt the African urbanization by the Transvaal Volksraad at Potchefstroom as they were not in favour of it. For example de Jong (1995) contends that, by 1880 there were African settlements around today's Boom Street and Chief Tshwane's tribe particularly was around the present Pretoria Zoo.

The table below indicates the establishment of the earliest urban centres in the Transvaal in the 1800s. Transvaal was one of the two Boer republics. The name was also retained to refer to one of the four South African provinces after proclamation of the Union of South Africa and the republic.

[79] Report of the committee appointed by the Transvaal Administrator to consider the future of Alexandra Township and the control of the "native" Townships and settlements near Pretoria, among others, 1949.
[80] In this instance urban settlements refer to what came to be called white towns.
[81] In 2003 there are debates on renaming Pretoria Tshwane. This relates to this earlier history which identifies the present Pretoria Zoo as a site for the old Ndebele settlement of Chief Tshwane while other African settlements were also generally around Boom Street.

Table 7 Dates of white arrival from the Cape in various erstwhile Transvaal towns

Town	Establishment Date
Potchefstroom	1838
Klerksdorp	1838
Zoutpansbergdorp (Schoemansdal)	1848
Lydenburg	1849
Rustenburg	1851
Middelburg	1852
Pretoria	1855
Wakkerstroom	1859
Nylstroom	1866

(Adapted from De Jong 1995: 17-80)

Similar accounts of the Johannesburg history are difficult to get hold of. Most of the academic history of the earlier Johannesburg appears to privilege farmers as earlier occupants (Mandy 1984, Beavon 2004). However, some sources record the occupation of Bafurutshe in the 19th century around Sandton, which was later called Zandfontein (Station 15 Volunteers 200). Also there is evidence in the burial records to suggest that as early as 1899 Africans were being buried in the Braamfontein cemetery.[82] Even though from the interviews conducted on bommastandi families for this project, it is difficult to trace where Alexandra property owners came from there is reason to believe that the presence of some of them might be traced to this history. However Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008:17) draw our attention to the fact that "the majority of new immigrants who initially bought land in Alexandra were formerly relatively prosperous sharecroppers and labour tenants squeezed out of white South Africa's farms".

Nonetheless, before the Second Proclamation of Alexandra in 1912 there were Africans who lived in different parts of Johannesburg under various conditions (Parnell 1993, Van Onselen 1982, Sikakane 1977). However, Nauright's explanation is that some of the African property owners were "christianised migrants from better-off peasant and sharecropping areas of the Transvaal and the Free State (who) often moved to the freehold townships of Alexandra and Sophiatown between 1912 and the early 1930s" (Nauright 1992:

[82] The researcher visited the Braamfontein grave yard on May 24, and 25, 2005 in search of information on earliest burial dates of Africans in Johannesburg

45). He argues that most of them often left their homes to work for the price of a bride or to build houses in rural areas. The interviews conducted among members of former property owning families suggest that some of them came from various parts of South Africa as well as neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Swaziland among others. For example, mme Mmapula, an 80 year-old woman whose father arrived in Alexandra in 1924 from a village Meroto, (Excelsior), near ThabaNchu, Free State, was born in Alexandra and married a "coloured" man. They continued to live in Alexandra on one of her father's two stands, and she traces her father's origin to Meroto (Excelsior) in the Free State, while Nhlanhla's family originally was from Swaziland, even though they subsequently settled in the Free State after the Anglo Boer war. Khensani on the other hand, traces his ancestry to Mozambique – his father's family travelled through Limpopo province to Alexandra where they bought several properties – while on the other hand mama Mihloti and her nephew Tsakani trace their family to the foot of the Kensington hills in Johannesburg.[83]

Families who bought property came to be called bommastandi. The term mmastandi which literally means "mother of the stand" was used to refer to single property-owning families in Alexandra and other freehold townships.[84] Owning property came with pride and invoked a sense of permanence. For example:

> To a Sophiatown family it (Sophiatown) was a symbol of permanency, racial equality and elegance to live in a property owned suburb unlike living with the squatters of the shantytown or council-owned labour depots – the locations.
> (Sikakane 1977: 15)

3.4.2 What did buying property in Alexandra mean?

Written accounts of African property relationship in South Africa are most commonly subsumed in debates on issues such as dispossession, forced removals, resettlements, housing and squatter settlements. These provide insightful information explaining where the dispossessed, resettled people were being moved from. Platzky & Walker (1985) (quoted by

[83] This information is from interviews conducted among bommastandi family members between 2003 and 2004.
[84] In the interviews referred to above the term stand was used and not plot or erf and bommastandi was used to refer to property owning families. The interviewees' use varied between Sotho version called *mmastene* and the corrupted Zulu mmastandi. The term was also captured in a separate interview on January 28 2003 with the late Prof. Mphahlele and the late Mrs. Mphahlele who was a daughter to a former mmastandi in Sophiatown.

de Jong (1995) locate the start of African dispossession to shortly after the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape in 1652.

> It started already in 1655, when a group of Khoi were requested by the white colonists "to go a little further away", just after they had erected their huts in the vicinity of the Fort at the Cape settlements.
> (Smit et al. 1985, cited by de Jong, 1995: 31)

This presents a history of African dispossession that spans about 400 years. However, written records of urban dispossession, resettlements and removals only emerge in South Africa 200 years later in the second half of the 19th century (Sikakani 1977: 11). It would appear that "land tenure in white eyes was a matter of monetary transaction and therefore it became a necessity for Africans to buy land or be regarded as squatters" (ibid). Hence for Africans to secure rights to land they had of necessity to participate in private property acquisition. But this was also difficult and done inconsistently depending on the location of the place and the period during which the purchases were made (Platzky and Walker 1985: 74). For example, they cite farms owned by the Barolong farmers in the Free State. They also refer to the purchase of farms in the then Eastern Transvaal by an African Farmers Association under the leadership of an internationally qualified barrister Pixley ka Seme. Mary Benson (1985) also refers to this.

Thus the specific conditions of the Second Proclamation of Alexandra make private property acquisition and ownership different. This story will be told to show how legislation that was promulgated to control the access and conditions of the stay of Africans in Johannesburg in general and the particular temporal and spatial dimensions of Alexandra's second beginning. This will reveal a particular private property owning experience.

On August 17, 1912 the office of the Minister of Native Affairs in Pretoria received a letter introducing the Alexandra Village Management Board. This letter was addressed directly to the Minister and was from Messrs. A. Fortuin and F.B. Bezuidenhout as chairman and secretary of the board respectively.[85]

The letter stated:

[85] Another letter of the same date was sent but it was signed by all the members of the Management Board. These included J.M. Makhothe, (Treasurer) J.J. Teefo, I. Krajoz, W. Idutwa, Masondo (who made a cross), and Teffo.

> We the undersigned chairman and secretary of the newly formed association in the Alexandra Township beg to inform you that a village Management Board has been established as from the 5th instant for the purpose of regulating the management of the village and we hope the government will cooperate sympathetically with us in this endeavour to ameliorate the condition and regulate the movements and behaviour of our people.[86]

Alexandra was not unknown in government circles as the ATC had before this held discussions with government on the establishment of the township. This was more so because Alexandra was the only township of its kind. Unlike other Johannesburg freehold settlements which were "mixed" in that they included Africans, Alexandra was proclaimed specifically for Africans and "coloured people".

The Fortuin-Bezuidenhout letter of introduction seems to have made real and visible the population that had so far been a topic of discussion between the ATC and the government. This encounter seemed to have shaken the government into confronting the question of how this piece of land fitted into the spatial legislation and the politics of the larger black South Africa. The letter seemed to emphasize the peculiarity of Alexandra and at the same time it seemed to present challenges to government. It seemed to have shaken the government into confronting questions of how this piece of land fitted into the legal geographies of Johannesburg. How does a piece of land in the area surrounding Johannesburg become proclaimed black freehold area? What happens to governance of a place that was politically outside Johannesburg and yet depended mostly on it economically and socially? The letter seems to require not only acknowledgement of a governance vacuum but a suggested way of filling it.

Reacting to this letter, the secretary of the Native Affairs Department (NAD) wrote to the Director of Native Labour on August 21 1912 requesting a response to Fortuin and Bezuidenhout's letter. The Secretary stated that he did not know any authority under which the management board would be able to frame regulations and control of the township. He also stated that "It would seem that a considerable number of natives and coloured persons are already settled upon the land; on this point I shall be glad to be favoured with a brief report."[87]

The secretary referred to authority which would provide a framework for operation for such a management structure. It would appear there was no such structure. This response

[86] Pretoria National Archives File NA, NTS 4234 File 80/313 Vol. 1.Para 5 of the letter of introduction from Messrs A. Fortuin and F.B. Bezuidenhout to the office of the Minister of Native Affairs.
[87] A Pretoria National Archives File NA, NTS 4234 File 80/313 Vol. 1 response to Para 5 of the letter above

illustrates a challenge facing government presented by the peculiarity of Alexandra. First, there was no legislation because of its difference. There was no point of reference for it in the politics and legalities of space in South Africa in general and in Johannesburg in particular. It would appear that this was only the beginning of the challenges that would face the Union and provincial governments' spatial legislation in general and policies that resulted from the peculiarity of Alexandra.

3.4.3 The 1913 Land Act: How did Alexandra become an exception to the rule?

In Chapter 1 I indicated that Alexandra Township was an exceptional place. Nonetheless, to understand how the Act impacted on Alexandra one needs to understand what was happening to Africans not only in a broader context but particularly in urban areas, at the turn of the century. It would appear that purchasing property by Africans in Alexandra Township was in line with the general developments, which were influenced by the shortage of accommodation on the Reef. This accommodation shortage appears to have been connected to the racial politics of space which were based on the Gold Law (Sikakane 1977, Morris 1981, Parnell 1993, Lange 1998).

Alexandra was re-proclaimed a black township two years after South Africa was declared a Union in 1910. The significance of this particular date for Alexandra is that this unification implied amalgamation of the Boer republics and the British colonies. This had significant ramifications as the amalgamation meant one of the first instances where legal and political frameworks governing property ownership of the four former governments were brought together. Discussions leading to the drawing up of the constitution of the Union and the African responses to these are the key to understanding the particular temporal and spatial dimensions of Alexandra's second beginning in relation to private property ownership.

The newly established Union inherited fragmented and different legislation and policies –including those governing property ownership and dispossession – from the republics and the colonies (Mayer 1959, Hindson 1987). Thus the Union had to adjust legislation and policies to meet its "new social circumstances" (Mayer 1959: 73). However, the challenge facing the new Union while "…reworking the various elements of the policy of segregation to meet the new social circumstances" (ibid) was how to deal with the competing interests and differing heritages of these regions, more particularly because both the colonies and the republics had by this time already enforced a segregation policy. For example, on the

land question the Orange Free State prohibited "natives" from acquiring land. However, in the Cape Colony, which had relatively liberal policies, this was not the case. As Mayer (1959) points out, some concessions regarding land acquisition by "natives" were made in the Glen Grey area of the Cape Colony. A uniform policy for regulating the settlement of Africans was recommended. Plaatje (1916: 26-46) provides details of how the amalgamation of the republics and Natal and Cape unfolded in relation to policies that governed "natives". However, this policy was not new as it was adapted from "the segregation blueprint for future South African land policy that was already drawn by the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1905" (Grobler 1988: 41).

When the Native Land Bill was prepared its policy pertaining to the land question for "natives" (Grobler 1988) leaned heavily on the former Free State republic in that it prohibited black people from purchasing and renting land (Plaatjie 1916: 60). This included both rural and urban land. Even then, the parliamentary debates on the Bill illustrated tensions and differences in approach to segregation policy details in general and land policy in particular, which were a culmination of the amalgamation of different governments already alluded to. There were disputes on having a blanket policy for all the "natives" or making exceptions based on criteria that parliament could come up with. For instance, questions of what to do with property owning, educated "natives," arose. For example J.X. Merriman (1913), the MP for Victoria West, raised concern about the impact of sending "civilised natives" to the reserves as in his mind they were an "asset of strength to the country". He was quite clearly for the notion of treating acculturated "natives" differently. Hence he felt that there was a need for the Bill to take cognisance of the distinction between "ordinary raw barbarians" and "natives" who tried to educate themselves (The Union Hansard of 1913)

The Bill made it a crime for any African to live on a white farm unless he was employed by that farmer, thus curtailing all existing freedoms that living on a farm in exchange for minor services rendered to the farm owner entailed (Plaatjie 1916: 79). This criminalised any African who departed from this stipulation (Plaatjie 1916, Grobler 1988).

Dissatisfaction among Africans led to deputations to parliament and even to England to appeal against signing the Bill into law, but to no avail. Grobler (1988: 41) states that a deputation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) which comprised Plaatjie, Dube, Mapikela and Tsewu went to meet the Minister of Native affairs, Henry Burton, in the Cape:

> They explained to the minister that they were against the bill because it excluded Africans from residence on private property, where a large percentage of them were living at that stage, as the so-called native reserves were not big enough to accommodate the whole African population.
> (Grobler 1988: 41)

However, this deputation achieved no positive results as the Act was passed. As mentioned elsewhere a blueprint for segregation was already in place and thus the Minister could or would not oppose a set policy.

While the debates on the Bill were following this course at a national level in Alexandra, the experience was different. In the section below how the Land Bill impacted differently in Alexandra is briefly examined. Mayer (1959) draws our attention to various segregation elements that were to be adjusted to suit the interests of the Union while Bundy (1990) reveals the spatial implication of the Bill (Act) in that "it had been preceded by a vast number of land laws in the British colonies and the Boer Republics before 1910" (Bundy 1990: 5). First, universalising laws of various provinces at a national level exposed the complex situation facing the national government; that of having a land law that governed rural and urban as well as reserve/non-reserve spaces. Alexandra did not fit neatly into this categorisation of space.

Then, subsumed in these arguments for Alexandra are issues of its racial composition, which was to be a problem more particularly 38 years later when the Group Areas Act was passed. Even at that time the Native Land Bill had implications regarding who was a "native" and who was not. It would appear that details of racial categorization of "coloured people" and "natives" were different in various provinces and this also varied in time and according to the purpose for which the categorization was needed. For example, under Act No. 8 of 1893 in the Free State "coloured" would include members of any native tribe in South Africa (Hindson 1987), while the Natives Location Amendment Act No. 30 of 1899 and the Private Locations Act No.32 of 1909 included Griquas, Hottentots and Bushmen as well as other "natives" of south or central Africa in their category of "native".[88] In the Cape Province, the definition of a "Cape Coloured" excluded "natives" (Mandy 1984). But The Native Land Act No 27 of 1913 defines a "native" as "any person, male or female, who is a member of an

[88] Pretoria National Archives File File 4144. List of legislative enactments in which reference is made to races and their classification (including definitions where such exists) as furnished by the legal adviser to the group areas board under cover of his minutes # 32/3 8 & 22 /1/1958

aboriginal race or tribe of Africa; and shall further include any company or any other body of persons, corporate or unicorporate if the persons who have a controlling interest therein are natives".[89]

The Native Land Bill brought about negotiations between government and different actors. The ATC, which had a major holding interest in Alexandra at the time, were not in favour of the Bill, particularly since it proposed a limitation of Africans' transactions in land to the reserves. The legal political debates of Alexandra appear to have laid a foundation for the disputes that characterised Alexandra's existence until it was expropriated.

Out of the ATC's 2308 stands in Alexandra only 167 had already been sold to "natives" and "coloured people" and not all of them were occupied as only families are recorded to have been living in the township[90] at that stage.

For example, The ATC conveyancer (Rooth 1913), who was also its board member, wrote a letter to the Native Affairs Department:

> It needs to be pointed out that the Company (ATC) are very anxious to know as soon as possible whether Government intend introducing legislation which will have the effect of confiscating their property , as in this case they will have to endeavour to protect their interest.

Another concern came from church communities. In his letter to the Minister of the Department of Native Affairs, a Methodist minister wrote:

> In my capacity as ...Minister for the Witwatersrand Wesleyan Native Mission I wish to lay the following facts before you: I am advised that it is your intention to introduce in the legislature a Bill prohibiting the sale of land to Natives, and as possibly the peculiar circumstances of Alexandra may not have been brought fully to your notice, I am taking the liberty of sending you this communication and emphasizing how very adverse to the interests of the better class native of the Witwatersrand area it would be, if they were precluded from acquiring their own property, and living in this purely Native area.
>
> (Bottile 1913)

[89] Ibid.

[90] Pretoria National Archives file (GNLB 4181): the report by the Native Sub-commissioner on Alexandra Township in 1913.

In addition to these a petition was sent by Alexandra property owners to the Minister of Native Affairs explaining their concern over the implications of the Land Bill for them May 1913. The property owners raised issues of potential loss, should the Land Bill become law as it was. This would disallow them not only from living where they lived as freeholders but their status as property owners would be criminalised.

> Ngogutobeka sikubonisa ukuba nxa umzi wase Alexandra ungena kukutshwa emguyeni alomteto, siya kulahlekelwa kabi, ngoguba sitenge kumzi owabantu bodwa, ukuba ukukula komzi kungavalelwa umhlaba wetu awuyikuba nexabiso.[91]
> (Your petitioners would humbly point out that if the Township of Alexandra be not excluded from the provision of this Bill, your petitioners will suffer heavy loss, in as much as they bought land in a purely Native township, and if the growth of this township be strangled, their property will become valueless.)

The petitioners made a direct request to the Minister to present their case in parliament on their behalf, as they could not do it themselves.

> Ngoko ke ngositoba siyatandaza ukuti yiba nomusa nkosi uyicele I palamente iwukupe lomzi wase Alexandra emagunyeni alomteto tina abaceli bako ngokusitoba siyakumana sicela. [92]
> (Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that it may please your honour to make a request to parliament excluding the Township of Alexandra from the provisions of the intended law, and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever humbly pray).

Even though at first the Secretary of Native Affairs had told the ATC that they could not be given any assurances[93], after discussions including the meeting between two board members of the ATC, H.B. Papenfus and E. Rooth, and the Minister of Native Affairs Mr. J.W. Sauer, positive results for Alexandra were yielded. Ultimately on May 12, 1913 a draft was proposed:

> Prohibiting the acquisition by natives from any person whatever of land or interests in land in townships established prior to the commencement of this Act or in townships

[91] Pretoria National Archives NA File NTS 4234 80/313 Para 6 of a petition which was sent by Alexandra property owners to the Minister of Native Affairs pertaining to their concern over the implications of the Land Bill for them May 1913
[92] Ibid. Para 6.
[93] Letter from Secretary for Native Affairs to The Minister dated March 27 1913.

> which, though established thereafter, have been approved by the statutory authority for approving townships: Provided that in the case of every township it is a condition of the acquisition of land therein that the same shall not be transferred except to a native or a person of colour.[94]

However, discussions that ensued between Mr. Rooth and E.L. Matthews[95] of the Department of Justice show that there was concern regarding the implications of the amendment that accommodated Alexandra would "raise objections on various grounds". Mr. Rooth (1913) felt that in view of the fact that;

> A strong feeling exists in certain quarters of the House against the acquisition by natives of land, it has struck me that it may be advisable to make the clause as restrictive as possible, hence in the clause drafted by myself (and of which Papenfus has approved) all reference to future Townships has been eliminated.

Therefore, cumulatively the events referred to above might have led to keenness in embracing an opportunity to own property in a place such as Alexandra Township which was at the time one of the places which produced an unusual and rare "window of opportunity" for Africans to become property owners.

These were land-hungry people, who were faced with unwelcome and ever increasing legislation whose intent was increasingly being understood – to remove freehold rights and substitute them with communal ownership, divide South Africa into reserves and non-reserves where black people can claim some rights to property in the former and white people in the latter. These were impinging on their freedom of choice. Therefore in spite of Sikakane's presentation of freeholders as the moneyed, the rich, I believe this hunger was felt by all. Therefore, all kinds of people regardless of their social status worked hard and sacrificed to acquire titled freehold properties.

The conditions set out above suggest that the difficulty of finding a place of their own, the ever present threatening cloud that hung over their heads regarding a place to live, probably meant that wherever they could legally find a place of their own, Africans would want to settle. But they were also denied freehold which:

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[94] Letter from Secretary for Native Affairs to The Minister dated March 27 1913.

[95] The two offices essentially phrased the new clause that was to be inserted in the bill with the view of accommodating Alexandra Township.

> ... (is) was one of the most cherished rights of the African and one of his most insistent demands for the future. It (represents) represented to him – as to others in a capitalist economy – security.
> (Hellman 1952)

In what way does the passing of the Land Act challenge the peculiarity of Alexandra, an African freehold settlement established not far from Johannesburg? Even though Johannesburg was segregated before 1910, the 1913 Land Act concretized this racialisation under the new government of the Union. It also seemed to present the beginning of uncertainties and disputes over Alexandra space.

The Bill culminated in the Land Act No 27 of 1913 – which was passed a year after the Second Proclamation of Alexandra. This Act was one of first pieces of legislation that laid the foundation for control of space at a national level (Grobler 1988 Benson 1985).[96] This Act was the beginning of a process that would delineate regions for separate races to occupy and limit Africans' transactions in land to the reserves (Benson 1985, Brookes 1924). Establishment of Alexandra was against the legal principles of racialised and privately owned space for Africans in Johannesburg. Africans could buy private property in freehold townships such as Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale which were racially mixed, but Alexandra was not racially mixed. Furthermore, these freehold townships were under the governance of the Johannesburg municipality while Alexandra was not. Nonetheless, the ATC saw its sale of property in Alexandra as heeding a call by government concerning the provision of accommodation for Africans.

Indications of an overall threat of the Act to Africans in general became evident in experiences such as the examination of the countryside by S.T. Plaatjie (1916: 58) immediately after the Act was passed:

> We left Kimberley by the early morning train during the first week in July ... and we arrived at Bloemhof, in the Transvaal, at about noon. On the river diggings there were no actual cases representing the effects of the Act, but traces of these effects were everywhere manifest. Some fugitives of the Native Land Act had crossed the river in full flight. The fact that they reached the diggings a fortnight before our visit would

[96] See The Free State Ordinance No. 5 of 1876 and the Location Acts of 1869, 1876 and 1884 passed by the Cape Assembly http://www.nlc.co.za/pamphlets/lrlaws.htm

> seem to show that while the debates were proceeding in parliament some farmers already viewed with eager eyes the impending opportunity for at once making slaves of their tenants and appropriating stock, for acting on the powers conferred on them by an Act signed by Lord Gladstone … The natives would decide to leave the farm rather than make the landlord a present of all their life's savings...

Plaatjie was also a founder member of the African National Congress (ANC) which started as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC). This describes the state of panic, uncertainty and insecurity regarding land ownership that prevailed among Africans. This state of panic was not surprising as the Africans had been following the parliamentary debates of the Land Act with "the keenest interest" (ibid: 51). This was where limitations to accessing private property for black people in the Union began.

Some of the Alexandra families have had a direct impact on the Land Act. The experience of ntate Thapelo, a World War II veteran in his mid-eighties, describes a process of moving which probably predates the Land Act and thus maps out a historical foundation of the impact of the Land Act on his family.[97] He came to Alexandra Township to look for work 1939 and lived with his aunt, his mother's sister. His father left his village, Wolhuterskop, a village just outside Brits, a small town in the North West province, seeking independence from communally owned land because he planned to have as much livestock as he could manage to rear. His father ended up living possibly as a "sharecropper" on a white farm in Heidelberg. This term has an interesting history. Sharecroppers, it would appear, referred to people who in exchange for their labour would be allowed by the farmer to work a piece of land on the farm. However, Beavon (2004) emphasises that a term sharecropper was most commonly used to refer to black and white people while an almost similar category, 'bywoner', would refer exclusively to white people who were seen not only as serving a commercial purpose but were part of an assistance programme offered by white farmers exclusively to poor white people (Beavon 2004: 307). Platzky & Walker (1985: 74) also provide an interesting distinction between a sharecropper and a cash tenant. Both terms in this instance used to refer to Africans. The amount of time spent on this farm, the raising of

[97] Ntate Thapelo's parents lived in rural areas. He came to Alexandra and lived with his aunt and ultimately made his life in Alexandra. His aunt did not have a son, and as her daughters are married and living in Soweto he is the one occupying the home. His experience is interesting since he experiences resettlement from a white farm before coming to Alexandra in 1939 where he – together with his aunt's family – was dispossessed of the Alexandra property.

children on this farm, rearing livestock, in short creating a life there, reveals the uprooting effects of the Land Act.

The circumstances under which he left this farm reveal yet another side to this unsettling phenomenon. His father left the farm as a result of a law – presumably the Land Act – according to which Africans were forbidden from buying land outside the reserves. The law dictated that an African was not supposed to have leruo (livestock) on such farms and under such conditions. This move unsettled his plans for a future of "independence" from both communally owned land and working for a white farmer, he was to become nothing more than a labourer as the Land Act prescribed.

> No, re goletse kwa, ntate wa ka o goletse ko maburung...Ee ele gore le gae la gagwe ke kwa, maar o goletse maburung and re belegetswe maburung. Re gudugile mo maburung. Jaanong ge maburu ba dira molao o ka 1928; Hertzog a dira molao oo, ya be e le gore batho ba a phatlalla. [98]
> (No, we grew up yonder; my father grew up at the Boers (meaning farms that belonged to "Boers")…Yes his home was there (Bloederskop) but he grew up on the farms and we were born on the farms. Now the Boers made this law in 1928. Hertzog made that law and then people scattered.)

Bloederskop is the corrupted version of Wolhuterskop a village in the North West province The respondent talks of phatlalla to scatter from farms as a result of the Laws. The term Phatlalla indicates the "unplanned" way in which people moved. Just like the observation made by Plaatjie (1916), people seemed to hope to find a piece of land which was not impacted upon by the conditions of the Land Act. Plaatjie also went on to state that it was not possible for those who could afford it to buy land as the Land Act forbade it.

We remember the name of the farm, but not having been in this neighbourhood since infancy, we could not tell its whereabouts, nor could we say whether the present owner was a Dutchman, his lawyer, or a Hebrew merchant; one thing that we do know, however, it is that even if we had the money and the owner was willing to sell the spot upon which we first saw the light of day and breathed the pure air of heaven the sale would be followed with a fine of one hundred pounds. The law of the country forbids the sale of land to a Native. (Staffrider, 1982: 33).

[98] Interview with ntate Thapelo, Alexandra. September 8, 2003.

Thus the scattering above seems to stem from a history of systematic denial of access to land which restricted choice of place to live. In this way the term *phatlalla* was apt to describe a history of constant movement; movement that was not necessarily planned. Nonetheless, the history of this family reveals an intention to own freehold property away from a village – where land was communally owned.

> *No, ntate wa ka o ne a batla go reka his own farm. Jaanong ko Bloederskop o tsena ko moreneng. Jaanong o ne a sa batle jaalo, o ne a ipatlela e e leng ya gagwe hobane o ne a ruile. O ne a kganna makgomo le dinku le dipitse. O kile wa bona monna a na le dipitse tse ten.* [99]
> (No my father wanted to buy his own farm. Now in Wolhuterskop you had to go to the chief. He did not want it that way; he wanted his own farm because he had lots of livestock. He was driving cattle, sheep and horses. Have you ever seen a man with 10 horses?)

Go tsena ko moreneng is an expression used traditionally to refer to a system of accessing a piece of land from a village. The chief and his councillors are consulted when a new family or a family of a grown son in the community desires to build his own home.[100] The reason ntate Thapelo's father was reluctant to go to a village was because as a member of a village community his lifestock would have to graze in communal grazing areas and due to his large number of lifestock he did not want this. Nonetheless, in spite of restrictions on land sales to Africans ntate Thapelo's father managed to find and buy a farm in Lichtenburg.

> *Ra nna nna. Ya be e le hore ho na le diplase tse di leng vacant tsa maburu. Maburu gape ga ba rate go nna mo pele ga Batswana. Ya be e le gore re reka plase eo*[101].
> (We stayed for a bit. And then there were vacant farms that belonged to the "Boers". The "Boers" did not like living close to the "Batswana". And then we bought that farm.)

Asked who they bought the farm from ntate Thapelo explains that they bought it from a Dutch man.

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[99] Ibid
[100] This includes even family members who may be returning from where they had moved to.
[101] Interview with ntate Thapelo, Alexandra, on September 8, 2003.

The Township was exempted from the provisions of the Native Land Act of 1913 as per Section S1 (I) (Jochelson 1988). This was permissible precisely because the land was sold to "natives" and "coloured persons".

3.5 Alexandra's future threatened

Owning property in Alexandra Township became increasingly valuable for the "natives" while it was similarly problematic for the government (Plaatjie 1916, Goodhew 2004). Unsurprisingly these two contradicting views of Alexandra Township as a black freehold residential area by government and bommastandi led to concerns about the wisdom of the continued existence of such townships since the subsequent legislation seemed to increasingly discourage it (Bundy 1991). He contends that in South Africa the state played a significant role in dispossession; a battery of legislation was employed to systematically remove and resettle massive numbers of people.

In the beginning of the 1920s, urban developments were predicated upon the assumption that the African was a temporary sojourner in the urban area. An Interdepartmental Committee on the Native Pass Laws was set up to look into "native" laws in the urban areas and their environs in 1920. This committee was chaired by Godley. The resultant Godley report, though not focused specifically on the question of "native" urbanisation subsumed gradual assimilation of "natives" in the urban areas (Hindson 1987). He recommended revoking "of all existing pass laws and the establishment of a national system of pass controls" (Hindson, 1987: 35).

By 1921 there was concern that "Africans were not only spilling over the confines of their 1913 land allocation; they were being forced out of the reserves by taxation, the deterioration in African agriculture and the process of economic development" (Walshe, 1987: 135). Hence there was a need to evolve ways of checking this. The 1913 Land Act seems to have not only redefined the legal status of the "natives" in the Union, but it assumed that they either left or both ignited or reignited – whatever was applicable – links with a rural-reserve area. By contrast, my contention is that there were people, however few, among black urban freeholders particularly, who either did not or could not make such linkages at the time for several reasons. Some did not have a rural village to link up with due to migrations resulting from dispossessions and economic expediency, among others, but most significantly they might not have seen a need since they were legal subjects of the non-reserve South Africa, however limited and precarious their statuses were.

Several commissions of inquiry were appointed to look into the issue of spatial legislation. These included among others the Stallard Commission of 1922, the Young Committee of 1928-1929, the Native Economic Commission which sat between 1930 and 1932, the Feetham Commission of 1936-1937, and the Urbanised Areas Administration Commission or Thornton Commission of 1938-1939. These commissions investigated local government and governance of Alexandra Township, albeit not exclusively, by the AHC under the Local Government ordinance, abolition of the then existing "native" townships, the boundaries of certain settlements in the environs of Johannesburg and non-reserve areas that were becoming urbanised.

3.5.1 Transvaal Local Government Commission of 1922

Two years later the Transvaal Local Government Commission– also known as the Stallard Commission – was appointed to look into local government. However, in its report the commission included the issue of "native" urbanisation (Hindson, 1987: 35). Since its crucial mandate was "to resolve the urban housing crisis… Its logic was to reduce to the minimum the number of Africans to be provided with accommodation, and to ensure that that those who were housed were in a position to pay rent and service charges" (Hindson 1987: 38). The commission report included the "native" urbanisation question. To ensure the temporary status of Africans in urban areas Stallard recommended creation of separate locations for them (Hindson, 1987). The Stallard report (1922) succinctly captures the recommended conditions for African urban presence:

> The Native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas which are essentially a white man's creation when he is willing to enter and administer to the needs of the white man and should depart there from when he ceases to minister.[102]

The two reports informed the Native Urban Areas Act No 21 of 1923. Godley's contribution was on passes. However, the fundamental difference between the two reports was the status of Africans in urban areas. Godley recommended their gradual assimilation while Stallard did not concede their permanence in urban areas.

[102] Paragraph 267 of the 1922 Transvaal Local Government Commission report.

Contrary to the policy of unsettling Africans in urban areas that the government subsequently followed, mining houses embarked upon their own system. This system created settled urban African communities by providing family accommodation in married quarters for skilled workers such as clerks and other semi-skilled labourers instead of rooms in compounds. The mines could not afford to lose specialised labour as there was no certainty that they would go back to the same employer. Further, it was not cost effective to train new groups all the time, as government invoked migrant worker policies implied short contracts for workers who would leave at the end of each contract and reapply on return, if at all (Hindson 1987). Thus there was fragmentation in African urban settlement, based on racial politics and economics.

All these developments in urban policy had implications for Alexandra bommastandi as the 1913 Native Land Act had already recognised their freehold status. Would they be affected by the racial politics of economics? As a private township motivated by finances among others it would appear that the ATC would just like mining houses argue for and rationalise continued settlement of bommastandi in Alexandra. When the Urban Areas Bill was discussed in parliament, the ATC raised concerns about its implications for Alexandra Township. In response to this, the company director, Papenfus, received a letter, most probably from government, which advised:

> I have gone carefully into the position of Alexandra township, in relation to the natives (Urban Areas) Bill, and am of the opinion that, since it falls outside the area of the Johannesburg Municipality it is unaffected by the provision of that Bill.[103]

Should the bill have included Alexandra the ATC would most likely have lost financially as they only made their land available to black people when it failed to attract white people to start with.

The Native Urban Areas Act (NUAA) No. 21 was passed in 1923. The Act provided for earmarking land for black people in urban areas. Additionally, according to this Act housing in municipal "native locations" was to be provided by authorities (SAIRR: 4, Mashile 1981, Morris 1980).

This means that "natives" could be accommodated on state owned urban land as tenants in government built rental housing. This comprised family homes and single hostels.

[103] Letter from government to Papenfus dated January 20, 1923.

Thus rental housing was provided until 1949, when there was a policy change. This meant an introduction of leasehold where families could lease government land for 30 years and build their own homes according to government standards and stipulations. They could be removed from their homes should they contravene any urban law. Conditions for this accommodation did not include freehold rights. In subsequent years, the legislation and politics of space somehow discouraged the continued existence of Alexandra Township and other similar black urban areas.

Furthermore, the Act provided for control and regulation of Africans in towns (Hindson 1987). This control was enforced through promulgation of permit regulations in 1925.[104] These permits specified place, time and conditions of stay for Africans in urban areas. They were to play a pivotal role in Alexandra Township in that they were used to determine who qualified to stay in Alexandra Township in later years. The NUAA reinforced the Land Act in the spatial dichotomisation of South Africa in that it "divided (the country) into prescribed (urban) and non-prescribed (reserves) areas, (and) movement between the two (was) being strictly controlled" (Horrell 1978: 2-3).

This Act reinforced and encouraged management of "native affairs" by a separate body, Native Advisory Boards.[105] These boards were preceded by a provision in the Native Affairs Act of 1920 for "natives" to be consulted on legislation that affected them. The boards were part of a national system of administrative structures that had power to control influx of Africans into urban areas as well as remove "surplus" people from "prescribed" areas. Surplus people referred to Africans who lived in an urban area but were not employed there (Platzky & Walker 1985: xxii). At this stage Alexandra already had a ten-member advisory board, established in 1921. In terms of its mandate, the Alexandra board, however, was not charged with influx control as the NUAA did not apply to Alexandra. Instead it was to keep the police and the Transvaal Provincial Administration informed of matters pertaining to law and order in the Township.

Being free from the restrictions of NUAA meant other challenges for Alexandra. It was a "non-white" township, which made it a Section 3(1) of Act 9 of 1908 residential area. However its non-municipal status made it a Section 37 Ordinance 58 of 1903 residential area. This section provides for municipalities to lay out "native" locations and to make regulations

[104] Pretoria National Archives File PG 802 N 94.

[105] This was a countrywide system of tribally based, but government appointed, district councils which were to be consulted on issues affecting black people (SAIRR Topical briefing PD 6/86 39/5/06 by P Franks & P Morris (1986) Urban Black government and policy SAIRR Topical Briefing Reg No 05/10068/08.

for their supervision. Alexandra could not be treated either any one of these legal instruments because of its governance position. It was governed by a Health committee which was unusual for a black residential area at the time. Secondly it did not fall under any municipality. Additionally, the dual ownership of Alexandra complicated its position. Stands in Alexandra were owned by the ATC as bommastandi only owned the ones already purchased.

These contradictions meant that Alexandra's terms vis-à-vis spatial dichotomisation legislation and policies had to be handled separately. For example, when Alexandra requested the provincial executive to have its status raised to village council they were refused on the grounds of absence of the appropriate legal framework enabling the executive to do so. At the time the legislation they could refer to, the Local Government Ordinance of 1912, had a "Europeans"-only franchise qualification (Nauright 1992: 98). This status would have enabled Alexandra to raise property taxes. Alexandra was proclaimed as a black ownership township but at this stage it was both black and white owned.

However, these challenges presented possibilities and opportunities for Alexandra bommastandi. The ATC and the AHC negotiated conditions that were deemed suitable for Alexandra. That is conditions that would be suited to the company as it still owned properties and to bommastandi, who were increasingly buying property. This precarious situation of Alexandra meant that there could not be any decisive policy decision on it. Once more Alexandra was exempted from the implications of the NUAA.

However, this exemption was problematic, particularly as Alexandra was "located too close to areas where whites were settling in greater numbers" (Nauright 1992: 101). Hence, even though it was a place legally sanctioned for occupation by Africans and "coloured" people and accordingly segregated, the fact that it was outside the legal control machinery of Johannesburg municipality created problems for application of urban segregation policies through the local government framework.

Alexandra bommastandi continued to buy property and build their own homes under freehold rights. By 1924 there were 2 640 people in the Township (Tourikis 1981: 6). The responsibilities of the AHC were increased "under extended powers conferred by the Local Government Ordinance 16 of 1912 as amended by ordinance 16 of 1925" (Nauright 1992: 83). This ordinance allowed the AHC to issue trade licenses in 1925. By the following year the powers of the Health Committee were increased under Administrator's Notice No. 341 of 1926. Even then, since the main source of revenue was still from sanitary charges. Administration of the Township under the health committee remained difficult.

"By 1924 the population of Alexandra was estimated at 4 000 to 5 000" (Nauright 1992: 98). However, the majority of these residents were lodgers.[106] The rising population numbers of Alexandra was of concern to the Johannesburg municipality as arguments about increasing crime, poor sanitation as well as protection of Africans against urban vice and immorality, as justification for urban segregation that resulted from the NUAA would not apply to Alexandra (Nauright 1992).

Even though by 1926 "regulations (have) had been amplified from time to time until it may be said that there (are) were few matters requiring regulation with which the Health committee (is) was unable to deal under its powers" (Admin Notice No 341 27/7/1926: 4) the AHC was said to have poor financial resources. By June 30 it was reported that the AHC's financial resources amounted to R2 200, while the budget amount needed totalled R2 326.

The AHC, which was increasingly becoming a mouthpiece for Alexandra residents on the one hand and a "nuisance" to government on the other, became a focus. There was a complaint in 1926 about their incompetence. Dr W.A. Murray of the Union Department of Public Health, who was also assistant medical officer of the AHC investigated a smallpox scare in Alexandra. He declared the AHC unfit to deal with Alexandra problems and recommended an external body to do so (Nauright 1992: 99). He stated that "they (AHC) did (do) not have the personality or mental equipment necessary for effective carrying out of duties" (Murray 1926).

Furthermore, the chair of the AHC, Major Cooke, who was also Chief Native Commissioner of Johannesburg, had complained of a large number of "natives" in the committee, more particularly because they did not listen to "the wise counsel" of "European" members (Nauright 1992: 71).[107]

Since 1921 the AHC had eight elected "non-European" members while there were only three "European" members. Hence, they could overrule any unfavourable decision made by the white constituency of the committee as they outnumbered white members.

However, at the same time Cooke acknowledged that Alexandra also had good "natives" who were "self respecting and living in the township in an orderly and respectable manner" Goodhew (2004). This phrase was adopted in government to describe "natives" who were deemed to lead Christian lives as they lived with their wives and children in town, discriminative legislation which forbade them to do so notwithstanding. Furthermore, the

[106] Letter from Director of Native Labour to secretary of Native Affairs dated February 19, 1926.
[107] Also from a letter from the Director of Native Labour sent to the Secretary of the Department of Native Affairs on March 31, 1926.

sanitary conditions of Alexandra were good.[108] This had been acknowledged by the Native Affairs Department (NAD) and the police, among others (Nauright 1992).

As the ATC continued to sell property in Alexandra and the population numbers continued to rise, government became concerned with "detribalisation which resulted from the unfortunate drift of African families to towns (which) challenged the viability of a total territorial segregation" (Parnell 1993: 69). The Native Administration Bill, which seemed to have raised hopes to solve the legal spatial challenge that Alexandra posed for government, was tabled.

The first concern was Alexandra Native Administrative Area. Para 25 of the Native Administration Bill defined a "Native Administrative Area" as:

> Any urban settlement which is not within any urban area under Act 21 of 1923 and to which the provision of any provincial ordinance relating to local government cannot be applied, the majority of the occupiers of which are natives.[109]

The second concern raised related to issues of tax contained in Section 27 of the Bill. Tax would have to be increased in order to cover costs of the local government that came with the section so mentioned. Due to meagre earnings these newly proposed taxes would not be possible for Alexandra bommastandi. Alexandra was not a "native" Administrative area. It had a "native" majority but the local government ordinance had been applied to it.[110]

Gathorne, the Director of Native Labour who was also Chair of the AHC, put forward two propositions. The first was the dissolution of the AHC since it comprised a larger number of African members. He felt that "the Township requires good practical administration under direct "European" control and with funds available for necessary services."[111] This could be achieved through incorporation of Alexandra into the Johannesburg municipality. This would solve the financial and poor administration problems that the AHC was said to be experiencing. Gathorne (1926) also argued that moving the administration of the Township to Johannesburg was an ideal solution as most of bommastandi family members were in any case employed in Johannesburg.

[108] Letter to Cooke dated 8/3 1926.
[109] Letter from Director of Native Labour to Secretary for Native Affairs 19/2/ 1926.
[110] See Under extended powers conferred by the Local Government Ordinance 16 of 1912 as amended by Ordinance 16 of 1925.
[111] Ibid.

But he also stated:

> The interests of the Johannesburg municipality are most intimately affected by the growth of this native and Coloured Township on its borders, and it would seem that the most natural solution of the problem would be the extension of the boundaries of this town to embrace the Township.[112]

The ATC, however, saw moving the administration of Alexandra to the Johannesburg municipality as problematic. They claimed the move would exacerbate the colour problem that was prevalent in Johannesburg.[113] Alexandra was meant for exclusive "non- European" occupation and its physical locality was away from Johannesburg and therefore the municipality did not have to grapple with racial questions that arose in places such as Sophiatown and other mixed townships.

Also, the manager of the Johannesburg municipality did not think de-establishment of Alexandra and possibly the dissolution of the AHC was a good idea since "the accommodation scarcity for Africans in Johannesburg meant that townships such as Alexandra provided relief in that they absorbed some of the people in need of accommodation".[114]

The second proposition by Gathorne was excision of some of the remaining ATC properties. He suggested that 645 of the 1 025 lots that belonged to the ATC be taken over and the space be used to build a "native" township that would fall under the NUAA.[115] This township would provide accommodation comprising either government rental stock or self-built homes on leased land.

If Alexandra was to be administered as a "native" area the interest of the ATC would be at issue as they still owned part of it. The ATC was concerned about its position particularly if Section 27 of the Native Administrative Act was to be applied in Alexandra.[116] As a white company they owned property in a black area. If Alexandra property was taxed then it meant the ATC would have had to pay property tax for all the unsold properties. This

[112] Letter from Director of Native Labour to Secretary for Native Affairs dated February 19, 1926.
[113] This refers to racialised spatial differentiation of Johannesburg. Alexandra was for black people and outside the borders of Johannesburg.
[114] The manager of the municipality (Mr. Ballenden) as quoted in a letter from Gathorne to Herbst dated September 2 1927.
[115] Letter from Director of Native Labour to Secretary for Native Affairs dated February 19, 1926.
[116] Letter from Secretary for Native Affairs Department J.F. Herbst to Director of Native Labour, Gathorne, dated June 1, 1927.

discussion is reflected on a letter of April 20, 1927 which was written by the ATC addressed to the secretary for Native Affairs.

As at present worded the provision of this section can also be construed as applying to the Alexandra Township Ltd. Viz. the government seeks the right to tax the company on its unsold land…….The passing of the subsection as stated would mean that the government would have the right to tax a land owning company of European shareholders by regulation and for an unlimited amount. [117]

Gathorne apparently pushed for dissolution of the AHC and disestablishment of Alexandra. He proposed to Herbst that the Administration Bill should include a clause stating that, should the AHC fail in its administrative job, then they should be dissolved.[118] He argued that Alexandra "is de jure within the operation of Native Urban Areas Act and de facto owing to the character of the population".[119]

The AHC was faced with a challenge. Not only did they have to deal with poor resources but they were criticized for incompetence. Moreover, there was no specific legal framework providing for establishment of a health committee that had black members in it. This is disclosed by Herbst, who stated that "the position as I understand it is that AHC is not based upon any provision of law, and is thus liable to challenge".[120] These discussions probably marked a significant shift in official stance towards the impact Alexandra's physical location had on spatial dichotomisation policies.

On September 1st 1927 the Native Administration Act No 38 was passed. This Act paved the way for removals and resettlement of "natives" in that it gave the president and the Minister of Native Affairs power to remove black people from any area to another (Claassens 1990: 32-33). Further, the passing of this Act seems to have been in agreement with the initial intent of the 1913 Land Act – that of ultimately moving the "natives" to the reserves. The Minister was as illustrated below, given with discretionary powers:

Section 5(1) (b) stated that

[117] Letter from the ATC to the Secretary for Native Affairs 20/4/ 1927.
[118] Letter from Gathorne to the Secretary, Native Affairs Department, 2/9/ 1927.
[119] Letter from Gathorne to the Secretary Native Affairs Department, 5/ 5 1927.
[120] Letter from Secretary of Native Affairs Department J.F. Herbst dated 1/6/27 to the Labour section of the Department.

> Whenever he deemed it expedient in the public interest, the minister might, without prior notice to any persons concerned, order any tribe, portion thereof, or individual black person, to move from one place to another within the Republic of South Africa. (Horrell 1978: 204)

At the time South Africa was not yet a republic, so this probably arose out of updating terminology used at the time of publication, which was 17 years after South Africa became a republic. Beinart, (1994) asserts that the attempt of the Native Administration Act to "retribalise" the African implied removing Africans to rural areas where they were to exercise property ownership rights once their reserves attained independence. The step was also meant to "defuse national political organisation" (Beinart 1993: 107), by dividing Africans along ethnic lines. The situation of Alexandra bommastandi was problematic. They lived with their families and hence it would appear that they spent most of their time away from rural settings with which they would be expected to develop sustainable allegiances. Nonetheless, this increased the insecurity of bommastandi as it meant these officials were given the right to decide their fate once appropriate legislation was passed. The NAD proposed that the Transvaal Provincial Administration disestablish the AHC by the beginning of 1928.[121]

3.5.2 The Young Committee

The Young Committee of 1928-1929 was appointed to investigate, among others, the governance of Alexandra Township by the AHC under the Local Government ordinance.[122] The committee examined the history and development of Alexandra under Local Government Ordinance. Chapter 9 of the Local Government Ordinance of 1912 provided for the establishment of a governance structure, such as a health committee for places that fell outside a municipality. This included service delivery and financial management by the AHC.

The committee discovered that until 1926 governance was satisfactory. They stated that unfavourable comments and suggestions to abolish the AHC re-energised their performance. Opposition to employment of white officials previously shown by African and "coloured" committee members had gone. For example, Dr. I. Carpell, who was appointed

[121] See NA file 80/3131.
[122] See Minutes of the committee appointed by the administrator in executive committee to consider, among other things, the future of Alexandra Township and the control of the native townships and settlements near Pretoria, 1949.

MOH on Dec 1, 1927, claimed that he was not experiencing problems in the execution of his duties. The committee also noted improvement in night soil removal and sanitary conditions and protection of wells against contamination, which resulted in reduction of the epidemics of enteric fever.

However, Nauright (1992: 153) argues that Carpell, the first MOH of Alexandra and a resident of the neighbouring Norwood, contradicted Carpell's 1926 report to show that he was good at his work. Interestingly, Nauright (1992: 154) continues to refer to the testimony to the Young Committee by Decottens, a medical doctor who supported Carpell by attributing the positive health conditions in Alexandra to large stands, open spaces and availability of fresh vegetables from small gardens kept by most stand holders.[123] An implication arising out of Nauright's assertion is that it would have been foolhardy for Carpell to do this since he would have been jeopardizing his health and that of his family as he was living close to Alexandra.

The Young Committee recommended that even though the establishment of the health committee was initially an experiment, it had proven to be justified and thus should be continued. However, the chair was supposed to be a "European" who should preferably be appointed by an administrator. Also, the chair was not supposed to be a government official. They further recommended that constitution of the AHC membership should remain at two nominated by the ATC, one by the Administrator and six Africans and two "coloured" people elected by residents as per Proclamation No 23 of 21 March 1922. They recommended that the criteria that were used to determine the electorate be changed from any male resident in Alexandra who was 21 years and above, and had resided in Alexandra for three months and longer, to property owners or occupiers of houses who had lived in Alexandra for six months and longer.

The chairperson should have the right to refer resolutions of the committee to the approval of the Administrator and these would not be effected until such an approval had been granted. The committee also felt that the AHC needed to take steps to provide pure and permanent water as well as do something about construction of road expenditure which stood at £226.10.3 in 1928. This would help avoid erosion, which was prevalent. They also recommended that the AHC install lighting, but this was problematic as the AHC revenue was inadequate at the time. Thus they recommended that additional revenue be raised through imposition of an erf tax on all stands. Those still paying the ATC should also pay such taxes.

[123] Minutes of evidence before the Young committee cited by Nauright (1992: 246).

The amount suggested was 10 shillings per annum per stand regardless of whether stands had buildings on it or not.

In as far as the impact of Township Act No 23 of 1907 was concerned, since Alexandra was laid out before this Act, there was no land reserved for public or municipal purposes except for three squares and a strip of land east of the Jukskei (Yokeskei) River. Also, the AHC was not yet ready to receive the additional powers and privileges of a body corporate. However, local governments of the AHC type were catered for in the policy of the Union government. In spite of the government's increasing attempt to stringently control access to urban space, by 1929 signs of settling were still evident in Alexandra. First, the number of houses was 1 200 out of which 636 stands were fully paid. Second, the ATC, which still owned property in Alexandra, continued to improve the Township by planting a thousand trees. This was probably to put it on par with other residential areas by trying to make it aesthetically pleasing. They also repaired part of Rooth Street up to 10th Avenue, the whole of Rooseveldt and Selborne Main Streets as well as 3rd Avenue.

The committee recommended that in view of this increase a full-time MOH with increased remuneration be appointed. They noted shortfalls such as a need for additional plants for night soil removal, the inadequate sanitary depositing site, and the need for a garbage removal service as well as a need to curb overcrowding on some stands.

In sum, the committee pronounced that not only was establishment of the Health Committee justified but it was impossible to abolish the Township [124] (Tourikis 1981: 11). The Young report was suppressed, probably because it did not support the inclusion of Alexandra under provisions of the NUAA.

A report in *Abantu/Batho* of March 14, 1929 referred to Alexandra Township as:

> The only township in the Transvaal or the union that (has) had a properly constituted machinery for the management of its affairs which for the past 12 years (has) had been carried out successfully.

Abantu/Batho is the name of a newspaper that was launched by Seme for the South African National Native Council (SANNC) with financial assistance from the Queen of Swaziland. The newspaper was printed in Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and English and circulated nationwide.

[124] See Annexure A of the report of the conference that was held in Pretoria in 1938.

The dispute regarding the status of Alexandra Township which started in the late 1920s continued through the 1930s. The increasing racialisation of the cities in the 1930s was embodied in the amendments of the NUAA, the provisions of which allowed the government to progressively tighten restrictions on African entry to town.[125] (Parnell 1993: 76)

The 1930s also mark the emergence of the organised tenants' movements. Although renting property to tenants seems to be as old as the Township itself, tenants were in the minority in the beginning. However, during the 1930s tenants had outnumbered bommastandi families. John Nauright asserts that although they were allowed to participate in the AHC elections before 1933, it was only in 1938 that the record of a tenant association, the Alexandra Tenants Association (ATA) appeared (Nauright 1992: 323). He provides a detailed discussion of tenants' movements and fragmentation in the Alexandra community. In some instances a tenant-property owner divide was maintained, in others there was unity between the two groups.

3.5.3 Native Economic Commission

The Native Economic Commission sat between 1930 and 1932. The brief of the commission was basically to investigate the abolition of the "native" townships. It was mandated to investigate the economic and social conditions of "natives" in urban areas, especially in larger towns of the Union. They also had to probe the economic and social effects of the residence of "natives" in urban areas on white and "coloured" people and recommend measures, if any, to deal with the surplus of "natives" and prevent "native" migration.

Finally, the commission was briefed to consider the revenue contributed by "natives" both directly and indirectly and what part of the expenditure was necessitated by "native" urban presence. The occupation of Alexandra, albeit legally sanctioned, was a challenge to the last two points of this brief in particular. The brief appears to assume that "coloured" people and "natives" were to be treated as separate racial groups whose terms and conditions of access and stay in urban areas were different. However, access to property in Alexandra did not make this distinction.

The commission felt that it was not practicable to remove places such as Alexandra as it would be difficult to settle "natives" elsewhere. There would also be opposition from the "natives" to this move. Why did they anticipate this opposition? Did this in any way relate to

[125] The NUAA was also amended in 1937.

the history of removal from communal land which would be difficult to defend under the circumstances of a privately owned titled property ownership regime?

Thus they recommended that sales of land by white people to "natives" be restricted to existing townships. Further tariffs charged on such townships should be on land rather than buildings so that white owned land in such areas could be taxed as well. In Alexandra public purpose ground was to be provided by Township owners since the only open spaces in Alexandra were three squares and a strip of land east of the Jukskei (Yokeskei) River. They recommended that since privately established townships thus far had not been successful such townships should not be established in future. The government policy at this time was one of controlled African presence in urban areas. Such townships would be in contradiction to this objective as per provisions of the NUAA, which was viewed as "good" in some quarters.

While these debates were raging on, life in Alexandra seems to have been normal as the community still engaged government on issues affecting them. For example, in 1933 the community raised the issue of the constitution of the AHC residents' representatives whereby the representatives were nominated by the Minister of Native Affairs instead of being voted in. The previous year the AHC was disestablished as it was said to have failed in executing its administrative duties. But, at the beginning of 1933 the AHC was reconstituted to include four white people, two "natives" and one "coloured" person, all nominated. It would appear that this was contrary to convention. The local government ordinance clearly stipulated various progressive stages that a local government had to follow. After nomination of the health committee, the second stage was to be a partly nominated partly elected membership after which a fully nominated village council was to follow. Therefore 1933 seemed to mark a step backwards in the development of a governance structure in Alexandra (Tourikis 1981: 9). Interestingly, while Tourikis argues that this setback in the expected progression of Alexandra local governance was due to the concerns raised by A.L.M Falwasser, township manager and chair of the Alexandra Health Committee in the 1940s. Nauright (1992: 98) suggests that the village council had a "European" only franchise.

In 1933, 35 years after passing of the "Gold Laws", all of Johannesburg – except for Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare, which were racially mixed freehold settlements – was declared white (Morris 1981). This time the motivation for the segregation of Johannesburg was different. This decree for segregation in 1933 was not to bar people from acquiring land with gold deposits but probably to try and reinforce and strengthen the spatial dichotomy of reserve-non-reserve differentiation. Further, the influx control measures of the 1920s were

tightened these are defined by Platzky and Walker (1985: ix) as the network of legislation and regulations which controls African access to the urban – industrial centres situated in what is claimed to be white South Africa. Essentially all black people in Johannesburg who did not live in government-sanctioned places such as municipal townships, hostels and freehold settlements became "illegal".

Mme Nthabiseng is an eighty-year-old retired nurse whose father left teaching in Heidelberg and moved to Johannesburg when she was two years old. They stayed in several places in Johannesburg including Jeppestown and Orlando East before settling in Sophiatown from where they moved to Alexandra in 1953. She married a garage owner who had a panel beating business as well. Perhaps she captured the spatial relocation that resulted from the 1933 declaration of Johannesburg to be "white". She stated:

> We went to Jeppe to stay at Jeppe, at that time Jeppe was a mixed community you know there were Indians, Chinese, Whites and Blacks staying, and then I think there I went to primary school and in 1933… There was a certain councillor called Mr. Ballinger according to what I understood because people even made a song ka yena,(about him) Mr. Ballingerne who said blacks should be moved out of shacks, and when we were moved out of shacks I think I was 13 years, I think I was still in the, no I wasn't like std 3 ke (it was) higher primary, (It is) ke lower primary and then when we left be reya ko (and then we went to) Orlando East because that's where people we been moved, we stayed in Orlando East but later my father suggest that we should go and stayed in Sophiatown, and then we stayed in Sophiatown.[126]

The family of this woman moved around and lived in a few places in Johannesburg as tenants. However, they purchased property in Sophiatown and ultimately in Alexandra in the 1950s.

In addition to the 1933 policy of restricting the urban space to Africans, the Slums Act was passed in 1934. This Act which provided for the removal of residential areas that were declared slums enforced the demolition of slums and expropriation with the ultimate aim of segregation. The Act could also not be applied in Alexandra. Hence in the same year, the Native Affairs Department approached Johannesburg municipality with a "view of the Township being brought within the area of jurisdiction of that body Rand Daily Mail

[126] Interview with mme Nthabiseng, Alexandra,July 30, 2003.

9/5/1939As part of the municipality Alexandra would be controlled under the NUAA. While efforts such as these, which were making urban space restrictive to Africans, were in progress, other families were newly arriving in Alexandra.

Baba Temba, a 72-year-old man, was born in Ermelo. His grandfather – a church minister of the Ethiopia church of South Africa was transferred to Alexandra in 1934. Baba Temba's father and two uncles decided to buy three properties. His two uncles and grandfather paid for his uncle's property. His uncle left for England and never returned. Baba Temba relates:

> Nna I'm born in Ermelo we are Swazis. And then ntatemogolo wa ka (My grandfather) was a Minister of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa; was stationed in Ermelo and that is where I grew up in my early years. And then I came to Alexandra in 1934 with my grandfather because he was now transferred into Alexandra.[127]

On February 3, 1935, The Association of Waverly North Rate Payers (AWNRP) made it clear to the Johannesburg municipality that they did not want black neighbours. Just like the Wynberg community before them, they used petty stealing and drunkenness of Alexandra residents as a reason they wanted the Township to be removed. For example, Nauright (1992: 253) quotes the accusation levelled against Alexandra as a haven of illicit liquor brewing. However, Nauright continues, the accusation was based on an experience of a white resident, one Julian Saaler, whose servant returned drunk to his to his premises.

In addition, the AWNRP used the NUAA discourse and quoted crime and diseases, among others, as reasons for wanting Alexandra removed. However, Nauright (1992: 259) argues that white people saw Alexandra as an impediment to their property interests as it blocked expansion of Johannesburg to the north. It would appear that they believed that the removal of Alexandra would release land that they could access. The argument of diseases was most commonly used where large numbers of people were said to be living in "unsanitary conditions". However, as Alexandra was exempt from the Urban Areas Act influx control measures administered in municipal townships, this removal could not be legally endorsed.

Alexandra Township became one of the attractive sites for the "illegals" who were removed from other non-freehold areas of Johannesburg. Hence the Manager of Native

[127] Interview with baba Temba, Alexandra, September 26, 2003.

Affairs in Johannesburg Mr. Ballenden commented in 1936 that 500 people who left Johannesburg as a result of a slum clearance programme went to Alexandra Township.[128]

The Trust Land Act No. 18 of 1936, which provided for the release of additional land for African ownership and occupation, did not allow for further establishment of freehold black urban townships. However, while the Act gave full recognition to rights and privileges of existing "native townships", it did not guarantee the continued existence of townships such as Alexandra (Tourikis 1981: 4). It restricted the possibility of private property ownership in white areas as privately owned places were declared "black spots". Nonetheless, the 1936 census reflected an increase in the total population of Alexandra as 16 763.[129] Interestingly, while segregation policies were becoming increasingly stringent in Johannesburg, the breakdown of these population numbers reveals the existence of ten people classified as "European" (Tourikis 1981: 6).

3.5.4 The Feetham Commission

The Feetham Commission of 1936-1937[130] was required to investigate the boundaries of certain settlements in the environs of Johannesburg and Germiston and the possibility of incorporating such settlements into the municipalities of these towns. This came about due to the need to provide sanitation and public health to such areas, which fell outside municipal boundaries.

The commission noted the successes of the AHC, which were achieved under very difficult circumstances. The improvements that needed to be made, such as repairing street lights, streets, water supply and provision of medical and nursing facilities, would be difficult as the community would not be able to provide the tax base necessary to attain this. The commission was particularly concerned about health. They referred to a report produced by Dr. Fourie of the Department of Health in 1935. This report pointed out that conditions in Alexandra were not conducive to the prevention of enteric fever.

However, this committee also agreed with the recommendations of the Young committee of 1928/29 that Alexandra should not be removed. However, while the

[128] *Izwi la se Township* 4, 1982 p. 8 (The Voice of the People, founded in 1897). See also the open letter from the AHC to the citizens of Johannesburg. National Library (CR) 911.5909682 Alexandra: An Open Letter to the Citizens of Johannesburg on the Future of Alexandra Township Health Committee

[129] Source: Urban Areas Census of Natives 1936.

[130] The commission cited not only the costs, destruction of homes and jurisdiction making it difficult for the Johannesburg City Council to remove Alexandra as it was under the Provincial Administration (see report of Township conference held in Committee Room 1, Old Government. Buildings, Pretoria, on 27/6/1938.

recommendation of the Young committee was based on reasonable governance of Alexandra in particular, this commission based its recommendation on the status and the development of Alexandra over 25 years. They argued that the Township tended to "attract natives of good class".[131]

The Commission stated:

> The proposal that the whole Township be expropriated and its Native and Coloured inhabitants removed elsewhere, is in my opinion a proposal which it is quite impossible to justify from any point of view, and which must be regarded as completely outside the range of practical politics. [132]

It appears that the Feetham Commission felt that Alexandra was treated unfairly as reasons for its removal were based on problems that could be solved. For example, they held the view that suppression of the Young report as well as the Transvaal Provincial Administration's failure to appreciate the difficult position of the AHC vis-à-vis running Alexandra was responsible for problems encountered in Alexandra. They suggested that training of the AHC members before they assumed office would have helped.

The Johannesburg City Council seemed to take up some of the recommendations of the Feetham Commission at their meeting held on March 24 1936. For example, they suggested that a water main to Alexandra be constructed and water sold to the AHC subject to Rand Water Board consent. The recommendation was that this water be sold in bulk and at the lowest possible figure needed to cover charges. The city council was willing to bear the initial costs which were estimated at £4000 by the city engineer Dr. Hamlin. This amount was to be repayable over a stipulated time by the AHC. The conference further suggested that the AHC secure a loan from the Union government. Finally all departments of the Johannesburg city Council were supposed to provide advice to the AHC.

On May 7, 1936, Mr. E.W. Lowe, a Native Commissioner for Johannesburg produced a report wherein he suggested that it was time the NAD placed an assistant "native" commissioner in Alexandra to deal with problems regarding lawlessness and crime. He was of the opinion that "many respectable natives prefer to suffer violence and interference at the

[131] Submission for removal of "non-Europeans" from Alexandra Township by the North Eastern District Protection League (1940: 3).
[132] Paragraph 101 of the report of the Feetham Commission of 1936-1937.

hands of the lawless section rather than lose time which (is now) was then involved in the busy courts of Johannesburg" (Commission Report 1949: 42).

The report did not recommend inclusion of Alexandra into the Johannesburg municipality. Unlike the Waverley community a year earlier which wanted Alexandra removed the representatives of the Lyndhurst and District Association (LDA) made it clear that their inclusion with other adjoining areas was contingent upon inclusion of Alexandra.

While the wrangling about Alexandra's space continued, once more the concerns of the residents pertaining to the AHC were addressed as if things were normal in Alexandra. Even though the "native" constituency of the AHC remained at three, the residents were once more given the vote in 1937. This was per Proclamation No 154 of 17 August 1937. At this point Alexandra population was recorded as 21 833.

Perhaps the dilemma facing the authorities vis-á-vis the position of Alexandra was captured in *the Rand Daily Mail* report (1939), which quoted Para 101 of the Feetham Commission report:

> The strongest reason that has been advanced against abolition was (is) the moral right of Africans in Alexandra Township to retain the homes which they purchased in the belief that this area was to provide a permanent township for African residents.

However, the commission also cited the exorbitant costs of removals as reason not to move Alexandra.

3.5.5 The Urbanised Areas Administration or Thornton Commission

The Urbanised Areas Administration Commission, chaired by Sir E.N. Thornton, sat in 1938 and 1939. The Union government was concerned with the impact of its legislation on provincial administration. They were concerned with the kind of difficulties that members of provincial administrations were experiencing when carrying out Union legislation. At the time the Union was also aware of problems experienced by municipalities regarding delineation of their boundaries.

The commission's brief was to look into areas in different provinces that were not in reserves and were becoming urbanised and recommend steps that would be necessary to secure their better administration and control. It would appear that it was only then that government officially recognised and acknowledged the changing geographies of places such

as Alexandra into urban areas. At this stage such places did not fall under local government administration. It also had to look into areas whose health was becoming a menace to the society as well as places that were under some form of local government but whose conditions were becoming a problem.

Like the Feetham committee, this commission acknowledged that progress was made regarding the cemetery, the night soil depositing site and a more modern plant and equipment for removal and disposal of night soil. They identified the shortcomings of the AHC as an inability to prevent overcrowding. However, the commission acknowledged that the AHC did not have the powers to deal with slum conditions resulting from overcrowding. On the issue of crime the committee felt that Alexandra needed an officer of law on site. This would reduce the amount of time spent in Johannesburg courts by Alexandra residents.

The commission did not see incorporation into Johannesburg as a solution since both the city council and bommastandi did not agree to this. They further argued that it was impracticable to abolish the Township and remove the "natives" as outside assistance was the only thing needed to improve the health conditions. Instead they recommended that a Local Area Committee (LAC) be established. The LACs were to be established for areas that – due to dense populations or insanitary conditions, among others – needed closer supervision and control by the Witwatersrand and Pretoria District Health Board (WPDHB). The commission also recommended the introduction of public health control in peri -urban areas throughout the Witwatersrand and Pretoria. The membership of the committee was not to be less than three but no more than seven. They were to be appointed by the WPDHB subject to approval by the administrator or by both parties. However, the membership of the LAC was to be similar to those of the AHC as per Administrator's Proclamation No 154 of 1937. This means that there were to be a total of seven committee members. Four "Europeans" appointed by the Administrator and three "non-Europeans" elected by residents. The AHC of the time was to continue serving as the (LAC) until the end of their term. Assets of the AHC were to be transferred to the WPDHB to be held in trust. Interestingly a structure fashioned along similar lines was to appear twenty years later under the chairmanship of Sir Thornton.[133]

A conference whose brief was to deal specifically with the question of Alexandra Township was held on June 27, 1938 in Pretoria. At this time the population numbers of Alexandra "natives" stood at 21 843 as reported in 1938 census.[134] However, the 1938 Urban

[133] The Peri-urban Areas Health Board that governed Alexandra in 1958 was under the chairmanship of Sir E. Thornton.
[134] Source: Urban Areas Census of Natives, 1938.

Areas Census reflects it as 28 000 while the record of people who presented themselves for vaccination was 39 000 (Tourikis 1981). The first 1938 total gives and impression that the population had grown by 11000 in two years time while the last one suggests an increase of 22 000 in the same period. The 1938 numbers do not reflect the racial breakdown.

The conference was attended by members of the provincial and Union governments as well as the Johannesburg City Council. At the time, the predisposition in official government discourse seemed to be first, to move all "natives" in Johannesburg to the south-western areas of Johannesburg. Second, all "native" residential areas were to fall under the municipality in order to improve the regulation and control of their movement both in town and in and out of town.

The conference felt that since Alexandra Township "natives" had a vested right to move them forcefully this would create problems for government. The conference considered the possibility of removing Alexandra Township to a township with similar facilities. But this was contrary to the provision of NUAA as it did not allow acquisition of titled land by "natives" in a white area. On the other hand, they discussed abolishment of Alexandra and removal of its residents to the south-west of Johannesburg, which was connected to it by rail and road. Bommastandi would be provided with housing in a new area while they would be compensated for their land monetarily.

However, no definite conclusions came out of this conference. They ended up asking some attendees from the Johannesburg City Council constituency for costing estimates for both removal and retention of Alexandra. The group comprised Dr. E.J. Hamlin, City Engineer, Dr. Fourie, Department of Public Health, and Mr. G. Ballenden, Manager, Non-European Affairs Housing and NAD, Johannesburg. But, as Johannesburg grew closer to Alexandra Township, it became increasingly difficult for the right of its existence to be guaranteed. Thus the question of its removal became central to the Department of Bantu Administration in 1939. The Johannesburg City Council (JCC) also had an interest in removal of Alexandra as they thought this was what their constituency wanted. However, at a special meeting in March 1939 a proposal to remove all black people to Orlando was rejected. At this meeting the objections to living close to black people by many white people was raised by councillor S.J. Tighy[135] (Nauright 1992: 260). Interestingly, Tighy refers to the official line of the time, allowing black and white people to "live and develop on parallel

[135] Sarel Tighy was also referred to as the "pioneer of the western areas removal scheme" (Van Tonder, D. 1990)

lines in separate areas" (Tighy, as quoted by Nauright 1992: 260). It is worth noting that Tighy would refer to this on differently constituted spaces; Alexandra and Johannesburg. It was interesting that Tighy referred to this official line while he was talking about two differently constituted spaces that is, Alexandra and Johannesburg. It was ironic that he should say this since Alexandra was established precisely because the "non-whites" were being separated from white people. Remarkably, the establishment of the village board in 1912 was not interpreted to mark the beginning of the parallel development that Tighy was referring to.

Debates on Alexandra became centred on who should bear the resettlement costs. A council member, M.J. Green, suggested that "Johannesburg should first clean up the Western Areas and other slums inside its own boundaries" (Nauright 1992), before it could consider bearing the costs of Alexandra's removal.

The property owners and tenants were not keen to move as the former did not want to lose their freehold status and the latter did not "want to live under restrictions found in municipal townships" (RDM May 9, 1939). For example in municipal townships mixed couples where Africans and "coloured" people could marry, were not allowed. Furthermore, retired men and deserted or divorced wives did not qualify for municipal homes (La Riche 1940). However, in Alexandra such household combinations lived both as bommastandi and tenants.

This indicates that even though bommastandi had title to their properties and tenants did not at this moment they shared the sentiment of wanting to hold on to their lives in Alexandra. They were not keen to be exposed to the restrictive living conditions of municipal townships.

3.6 Way of life in early Alexandra

Given the developments leading to the passing of the Native Land Act and the increasing disillusionment with the new government, it is understandable that people such as the freeholders of Alexandra Township would want to fight and defend their rights to access private property. Although there is scanty information on life in early Alexandra, there are suggestions that bommastandi planned to settle there, hence as early as the first year of residence issues of social infrastructure such as governance, policing, education and burial arose. But also, with the kind of money charged for stands, it appears that bommastandi were

determined to purchase property, albeit under difficult financial circumstances for some families.

Prices of stands in Alexandra ranged between £40 and £100 Middle-sized stands cost £40 while corner stands ranged between £50 and £100. From the accounts provided by a child of a mmastandi family that purchased properties in the first decade of Alexandra's Second Proclamation, the homes built by earlier property owners were mud houses. This probably signalled an affirmation of bommastandi status as African who while appropriating a different space and following a titled property ownership regime, they still drew knowledge from their traditional home building styles albeit temporarily.[136] Tata Andile had this to say about the origins of their life in Alexandra:

> Let me give you my date of birth 16 September 1919 I was in Alexandra here in this very home but it was not this building nor this house it was a mud house where I was born. [137]

Describing earlier life in Alexandra, L. Charlston Coch referred to the existence of 300 to 400 houses in Alexandra within the first four years of its existence that is, in 1916. At the time, 730 lots out of 2520 were sold. Out of the former 212 were fully paid while the remaining 518 which were still being paid on instalment, £9440 13s 0d was paid on the balance owed. Coch's statistics also included a school and three churches. Coch's stats chech source

Interestingly, while the two accounts above refer to houses, in his statement on Alexandra liquor raids, signed on August 8 1922, Johannes van Vuuren, a policeman stationed at Wynberg police station, speaks of African huts in Alexandra rather than houses.

By the 1920s crime was already cited as a concern for Alexandra, but there did not seem to be a need for a special police station for Alexandra. By 1929 Alexandra Township had 1 200 houses and or rooms housing 7 200 family members (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008: 23) but still fell under Wynberg police station, which was manned by three policemen. Significantly, in spite of complaints of a high crime rate, police could enter the Township at any time as the residents were deemed law abiding. Additionally, the Native Affairs Commissioner had commented favourably on the state of Alexandra Township.[138]

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[136] Interview with mme Mmapula, Alexandra, October 3, 2003

[137] Interview with tata Andile, Alexandra, October 10, 2003.

[138] See Township Company 1929 statistics GNLB 418 85/2.

While Alexandra was labelled a slum by people agitating for its removal, the AHC queried the definition of the term. The AHC report raised concerns about the criteria used for classifying a slum. It was not clear whether the classification was based on number of persons per room, family size, or composition.[139] For a place to be declared a slum it had to have more than six people. However, there was no clarity regarding how old the occupants of the place should be. Neither was there an explanation of the gender spread that would qualify a house to be a slum. The other query was that conditions in municipal townships and Sophiatown either compared with Alexandra or were worse off. For example, the municipality provided two- to three-roomed houses that did not have facilities such as a bathroom, kitchen or food storage. However, the absence of these was used for a house to qualify as a slum. Furthermore, the stands of Alexandra were bigger than those of Sophiatown and yet the number of buildings in Sophiatown exceeded those of Alexandra per stand.

In spite of the proposal by the NAD that the TPA disestablish the AHC by the beginning of 1928,[140] as well as discussions that raised concerns about the advisability of having Alexandra where it was, life in Alexandra continued. Signs of settling were evidenced by the increasing population numbers and the continued appearance of social infrastructure such as educational facilities and churches.

The following sections show the contradictions and challenges that bommastandi faced as property owners living in a non-reserve area. However the contradictions reveal a rich experience of the traditional and the modern, the rural and the urban that complemented each other in the lives of bommastandi.

3.6.1 Inhabiting Alexandra: Ambivalence and uncertainty

Even though Alexandra was presented as providing a solution to the racial problem in Johannesburg it appears that its future was uncertain right from the start. This is evident in the way developments in Alexandra appear to have been thwarted by government offices. For example, in January 1916 the ATC wrote to the town clerk, responding to a call for tenders by the council that was made at the end of 1915. The tender related to purchasing land for housing "natives" and the ATC was interested. It is probable that the ATC bade for this land with the aim of providing housing for "natives" on it. However, they could not participate as

[139] This would include gender or age.
[140] Pretoria National Archives file 80/3131.

they wanted to provide this housing in Alexandra and the tender was restricted to land that was situated in the municipal area of Johannesburg.[141]

In the same month the ATC sent another letter to the town clerk requesting that as the population of Alexandra was growing there was a need for public transport. They requested that existing tramways be converted to accommodate locomotives.[142] It would appear that there was already resistance in Johannesburg towards accommodation of "natives" outside town as acting secretary of the ATC, L. Hockly, stated that:

> It need not be emphasized that the housing of natives is a burning question and one of paramount importance to the white population of JHB. Facilities for, to a great extent, solving this question are afforded by the township of Alexandra…[143]

However, it appears that the municipality was not co-operative. As a result, the ATC took the matter up with the Department of Native Affairs who referred them back to the municipality of Johannesburg. It became increasingly clear that the absence of a government-recognised governance structure was to the disadvantage of Alexandra for both bommastandi who needed services and the ATC who needed to attract more land sales. Alexandra was governed by the AHC from 1916. It would appear that such governing body by and large put it at a disadvantage, more particularly with regards to securing finances. It is noteworthy that out of these constraints there were some opportunities that were sought by rather than created for bommastandi, albeit under difficult circumstances.

For example, the Alexandra AHC had "native" membership who enjoyed the privilege at the time to deal very closely with state departments. Unlike other municipal townships, the Alexandra community had to chart their governance path in the sense of dealing with issues as they arose. This was done through seeking advice from the health committee, which in turn sought advice from the related government department.
In 1917 the number of members of the health committee was increased from five to seven. This was per Administrators' Proclamation No 41 of 1917. As mentioned above the AHC did not have many powers but by 1917, the Administrators' Notice No 53 of 6/2/1917, regulations which gave powers to the Health Committee were promulgated. For example, as mentioned under subheading 3.6.4 the AHC did not have rights to perform certain functions

[141] A letter from the ATC to the Johannesburg town clerk Ref 14/7/1915 dated January 28, 1916.
[142] Letter from the ATC to the Secretary of Native Affairs dated January 28, 1916.
[143] Ibid.

in terms of the Townships Act No. 33 of 1907. Such rights allowed a township to make its own regulations. Consequently, The AHC was faced with the extra task of seeking ratification from the appropriate government department once decisions outside its specific mandate had to be made.

Even though the AHC was under-resourced it would appear that the Alexandra Township community did not view its position as a disadvantage. It would appear that since the Alexandra Township residents themselves had to provide services and see to the development of the township's infrastructure, they saw this as an opportunity to skill themselves[144] and step in to provide the necessary services.

For example, by 1918, four years after its second proclamation Alexandra residents such as, Mr. Mosikatshang was being considered by the ATC for a contract for removal of buckets of night soil. The health conditions were further taken into consideration through construction of a hospital, albeit probably because of the flu epidemic of 1918. However, there were other projects that would improve life in Alexandra, such as construction of a reservoir for pure water supply.[145] By 1920, a Mr. Nakeli was already contracted to do the job. However, Tourikis (1981: 8) argues that there was a split among Alexandra residents regarding the AHC, in that while bommastandi accepted and embraced this governance apparatus the tenants did not think it was adequate precisely due to its lack of resources.

However, even though the AHC was recognised by government both at national and provincial level it had to provide and fund most of its services. Since it was under-resourced Alexandra residents themselves had to provide services and see to the development of the township's infrastructure. Further, Alexandra's establishment and governance appear to have been entangled in various pieces of legislation that made it similar to a municipal township in some ways and yet dissimilar in others. Thus its local authority, the AHC, did not have same powers as the municipality. Accordingly, the AHC often did not only have to seek clarity and confirmation of their powers from the appropriate department but had to request financial assistance as well. In all probability the governance of Alexandra was going to be based on consultations between the AHC and the ATC[146] for as long as the latter had property in Alexandra. They were going to withdraw completely from the governance as soon as all the stands were sold.[147]

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[144] Pretoria National Archives File TA 15419 A.8/10657.
[145] Pretoria National Archives File GNLB 418 85/2).
[146] Ibid.
[147] Pretoria National Archives file A5/8933 communications on the issue of the influenza. A letter from Alexandra Town Council to the Provincial Administration dated 14/3/ 1919 suggests that the company is still

3.6.1.1 Building a house

The description of how the first family house was built resonates with African traditions of building, where mud houses would be built in a similar way to that which mme Mmapula is describing. Mme Mmapula, who was born a year after her parents arrived in Alexandra, explained that her parents initially lived in rented accommodation before deciding to settle in the Township. Mme Mmapula explains the state of the yard as a "plain ground" that had nothing.

> *No, it was just a plain ground, e be ba ikagela dintlu tsa mmu. A ke re go forongwa stena se sa mmu. E seng ka foromo; e ne e le ya maplanka, e e itirelwang. E ne e dirwa ka maplanka. Jaaka ga leplanka le le jaana…wa foromo, ka kwa, wa foroma ka kwa. O nka dipekere wa kokotela, e be e nna // jaanong go dujwa mobu o tlhakantsa, e baa seretse, le kenya ka fao. A ke re wa bona. E be le o o ntsha ka diforomo ntse le o beya so. a ke re wa bona. O oma. Ga o fetsa go oma o kgona go aga ntlu. Maar…mo hatshe go ne go se na sepe…a ke re o a tlhaloganya*? [148]
> (It was just plain ground, they built themselves mud houses. Isn't they used to make mud bricks. Not with a brick-making machine, they used a self made wooden frame… [she illustrates how]. You take nails and join the wooden planks together, and then you mix mud with water and put in this frame. It dries then you can start building your house. You do understand that there was nothing on the ground then).

3.6.1.2 Ways of acquiring property

Describing how his uncles acquired property in Alexandra, baba Temba illustrates another side to creating a home. He explains how his father and two uncles bought separate stands:

> When we got here, ntate wa ka (Sotho: my father) with his brothers they were three; that is Madoda the eldest, Meshack the second and Solomon; decided to buy three properties in Alexandra. One of the properties is in 152 13th Avenue,

taking some responsibility for Alexandra. HC members were sick with influenza so they took over. See National Archives GNLB 418 85/2 Report dated April 1929 submitted by the ATC to the committee of inquiry appointed by the Transvaal Administration.

[148] Interview with mme Mmapula, Alexandra, October 3, 2003.

> the other is in 162 13th Avenue, and the other is in 119 in 19th Avenue. We had a difficulty in the family because ntate wa ka; the elder brother Madoda paid a sum of ten pounds in those days for deposit of a plot in number 162 13th Avenue. And then he then left for England on a musical tour. That was now in 1936 when he left. And he never returned home. [149]

Similar examples were raised in Chapter 1. Mama Mihloti explained how her two siblings helped their father to buy property. Mme Hunadi's family shared a similar experience where her brother assisted their parents in purchasing the third property.

Other examples illustrate how extended family boundaries and inheritance may be related to private property which is titled, that results from pooling of family resources. This will be dealt with at a later stage.

Mme Hunadi describes what happened with her parent's properties

> *Ya, go setse property e one [1], ya 545. ke gore batswadi ba ka erile ge ka nako ya expropriation, re ne re na le abuti o one, e be ba nka property e one, 547 le 271 tsa ko 3rd, ba di fa abuti wa ka. Ke gore abuti wa ka so far o nkile dui property tse four, and then rona banyana ra shera property e one. maar mo di propating tse tsa abuti wa ka kaofela di claimilwe ke nna kaofela*[150].
>
> (Ja there is only one property remaining....545. that is because during expropriation, we had only one brother, they took this property, 547, 271 and the ones at 3rd Avenue and gave them to him while the girls (my sisters and I) shared only one. However I claimed for all of my brother's properties.)

There are some contradictions where the sisters seem to show interest in the properties while at other times mme Hunadi is silent about this interest. Nonetheless it would appear though that when their mother was still alive she encouraged mme Hunadi to purchase a plot in Moretele near Hammanskraal. However, it is not clear whether this property belongs to mme Hunadi or the rest of the surviving family members.

[149] Interview with Baba Temba, Alexandra, September 26, 2003.
[150] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.

The following conversations attest to some of these experiences of joint acquisition of property and how inheritance was handled. In Chapter 1, I invoked mama Mihloti's conversation about how her family acquired their properties which was a joint effort between her father and her siblings.

The experience of mama Mihloti indicates a different situation where their brother apparently inherited the property. However, when handing over the property and any other proceeds from it to his sons mama Mihloti was also included in the inheritance.

> *Ja, ga a bowa hee; ntata gagwe a bona gore jaanong bale o ba file dishere, ba babedi ba. A ba are go ene share ya gao ke e, le rakgadi wa gao. Nna ke rakgadi phela. O tla bona gore o etsa eng ka ena……*[151]
>
> Yes, when he came back his father saw to it that since his other two sons were already given their share of inheritance, he was given the property to share with his aunt. I am the aunt. You will have to see to her. (That apparently what the father said to his youngest son)

Mama Mihloti was referring to her brother's youngest son of who went into exile. It would appear that different families' had different inheritance patterns. It is difficult to know where such practices originated from.

In the case of ntate Tshepo the only son inherited their parents' property, explaining this he says

> *e ne e le property ya batswadi, and batswadi ba ile ba hlokofala in the 60s. Re holela mo le yona as children. And as ngwana wa mosimane ebe e ba nna o ke salang mo propating. So le ha ne ho expropriatiwa I was the one o setseng.*[152]
>
> (This was the parents' property and they died in the 60s. We grew up here, And as their son I was the one who remained in the property.At expropriation I was the one who was right here.)

A case of ntate Tshepo's nephew, Thabang, who explained that their inheritance lineage is gendered because even though he had a younger sister the property was passed on to him

> *R: It is, you know I was out of the house but I opted to come back and stay in the house. It's part of the lineage.*
>
> I: Okay part of the lineage. If you were a daughter would you // if the youngest was what would the position be?
>
> *In actual fact I am the youngest of the sons, there is a younger daughter; my sister*[153].

[151] Ibid
[152] Interview with ntate Tshepo, Alexandra, September 14, 2003
[153] Interview with Thabang, Alexandra, September 16, 2003

The experience of this family is interesting in that the family paid for the brother's/uncle's property while he paid a deposit but left the country never to come back. This raises questions of extended family boundaries and inheritance in relation to private property which is titled that results from pooling of family resources.

3.6.1.3 Private property and family relationships

When bommastandi acquired property in Alexandra though, they were participating in a titled private property ownership system in which they did not seem to restrict the use of their properties to their immediate nuclear family members. This practice appears to be in agreement with Widlok, (2000) who argues that "private" should not be understood as "individual" or strictly in opposition to "communal. While the families had tenants who paid rent, members of the extended family often lived in the house of Rapula's grandma until they bought their own properties. The most important distinction between ownership and use rights lies in the ability to alienate rights in the former. Rapula, a self-employed 47-year-old man whose paternal grandmother bought property in Alexandra, was born in Alexandra. The grandmother was born in 1900 in Thaba'Nchu, a village in the Free State where her father was the right hand man to the Chief. The family left for a village in Francistown, Botswana, where they lived for four years. Rapula's grandmother left for Johannesburg to work as a domestic worker. Her father assisted her to pay £80 cash for a property with cattle. The respondent raises interesting questions of how his grandmother's property served as a springboard for extended family members who came to Alexandra or Johannesburg.[154] The grandmother's parents relocated to Johannesburg and a second property was acquired. He currently lives on his grandmother's property as his father who had his own housing passed away before his grandmother:

> *... Then e be e le gore go a simollwa go dulwa koo, ee, di youger brothers tsa gage. She became a base ya bona ga ba tla Gauteng, most of our relatives they stayed there one way or the other. Even the younger ya ntate gae o ile a dula mole just before a tlo reka poleke le ena ko 8 number 132. Ya 8th Avenue number 132 then it was a family thing, although ena naa bereka dikitchi most of the time but ko gae ene el disisters tsa*

[154] Interview with Rapula, Alexandra. September 29, 2003. The information from the interview on the amount paid for the property echoes information recorded in the ATC register in Pretoria National Archives File 2546 Alexandra Rak 1028 1407-1649.

hae, dibrother tsa hae babang ba sa bereke, ba bang ba bereka ko bo Modderfontein, le bakgwenyana, you know the joke ke gore the two guys ba baneng ba nyetse the sisters stayed there as well but o mong ene a cheka are hai ga ke hiri koo.[155]...
(Then they started living there [Alexandra] yes, the younger brothers. She became their base in Johannesburg, most of our relatives stayed there one way or the other. Even the younger … to her father lived there before he bought his own property at the 8th Avenue number 132 then it was a family thing. Although she [Grandma] was a domestic worker, most of the time her sisters and brothers some working at Modderfontein some unemployed used to be at home [Grandma's house]. You know it was funny that two of her brothers-in-law stayed there as well but the other one decided it was not right for him to be an in-law's tenant...)

Another family experience which resonates with the one above on family access to private property is presented by Khensani, also a 47-year-old man who was born in Alexandra. He is married and works as a businessman who does plumbing and any handy work. The oldest son to Khensani's great grandfather, that is his grandfather, moved to Johannesburg and bought four properties in Alexandra. Most family members who came to Johannesburg – some of whom ended up acquiring property in Alexandra – started off living in the grandfather's properties. He said this of his grandfather's properties in Alexandra:

> What is also significant about this property is that most of my relatives who came to Johannesburg in the 50s 60s and 70s most of them arrived here at our properties and there after found their own places.[156]

A similar experience where family networks provided a point of entry into Johannesburg is echoed in the experience of ntate Sechaba, a 72-year-old retired teacher who was in exile in Swaziland. His father, originally from the Free State, bought property in Alexandra Township. He later became a building contractor. The father started off living with family from his mother's side. He describes how his father came to Alexandra:

> Bomalome (My uncles) felt very obliged. O lemetse a le ko go bona, a tlile mo Alexandra mo…ke ge ba mo tlhaba ka thipa ko lenyalong. (He got injured while

[155] Ibid.
[156] Interview with Khensani, Alexandra, August 20, 2003.

visiting with them in Alex. He was stabbed with a knife at a wedding celebration.) So they did not want…to go back to the rural life, the hard life ya Vrystaat. They felt so…obliged to be responsible to see to it that… [INAUDIBLE]. It took him about…five or six months for…ntate (my father) has come out of…it was almost close to the…So we had to move gradually for six, seven months to join him. [157]

Experiences such as those by ntate Sechaba, Khensani and Rapula include ownership rights by title holders and use rights by both tenants and members of extended families who were offered accommodation in these properties.

3.6.1.4 "Home": duality or absurdity?

The temporary nature of their urban stay exposes the contradiction in the bommastandi concept of "home". If the urban "home" was defined by law as temporary, was there a more permanent "rural home" for bommastandi? What is the implication of this for appropriation of urban space by bommastandi? Did bommastandi have a rural home? How different was it from the urban home?

The term which was appropriated from this separation of the two geographic areas is *sekgoweng*, (loosely translated it means a place of white people) a term used by mama Mihloti, an 80-year-old woman who was born in Alexandra and who currently lives in her brother's property in a house built by her late husband. The family used to live in Kensington and her father was encouraged by his employers to buy property when Alexandra land was put up for sale to "non-whites".

Describing this move to Alexandra mama Mihloti does not seem to know any other place as home but Alexandra and yet she refers to Alexandra as *sekgoweng* which is "a place of the white man" and which, in this instance, is also urban. What she is not saying is *magaeng* which would denote a rural or reserve home and is the opposite of *sekgoweng*. She says:

Nna ge ke thoma // jana nka se ke ka e buwa ke tlo buwa ka ya ka. Ke tswaletswe ko 29 15th Avenue gona mo Alexandra. Go tloga moo ntate o ne ntse a bereka gona mo sekgoweng. Jaanong a tloga, makgowa ba mo raa ba re ba tshwantse ba ye

[157] Interview with ntate Sechaba, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.

Kensington, mo dithabeng tse le. Gwa fitlha gore jaanong, makgowa waitse ba re mosotho a tswe mo diplekeng tsa bona a ikele mo diplekeng tsa batho jaana ka Alexandra. [158]

(When I start I will not mention a year, I am talking about my particular case. I was born at No. 29 15th Avenue right here in Alex. From there my father was already working right here in town Now he left, the whites said to him they were supposed to move to Kensington at those mountains [pointing]. It was time now you know they said a black person should leave their places and go to black people's places such as Alexandra).

A significant paradox here is perhaps that even though she uses mo *sekgoweng* to describe Kensington including Alexandra, she does not really refer to these places as home, and yet there does not seem to be a home elsewhere for this family. Resonating mama Mihloti's experience, in as far as the idea of duality of home is concerned, mme Hunadi, a retired teacher in her sixties, refers to bringing her mother "home" to Alexandra Township from "home", the rural home. The villages of mme Hunadi's paternal and maternal grandparents were merged with other villages as they were removed. Her father bought property from Mrs. Campbell and went home (rural) to fetch his wife. Even though this place, Alexandra, was described as *sekgoweng*, the place of the white man, the reappropriation of this space suggests some ambivalence in this settling in that it carries an undertone of "foreignness" in the place: Alexandra's description as "sekgoweng", that is, the place of a white man, is paradoxical precisely because it was reproclaimed for black people in 1912.

Ke gore o kare o berekile dikitching pele. Then from there a ba a smousa then a kereya madulo mo Alex a be a tlisa mamaka... ke gore mamaka o tlile e setse e le gore ka 1920, a kere bona ba nyala Sesotho ne, ka 1920 MaCampbell o ba rekiseditse property o ne a kereya gore ba nyetse Sesotho seo, e be a ba botsa gore no ge le nyetse e so, ge monna a tlhokofala, o tlo nkelwa property ba re e ya ko government; so tshwanetse gore le nyale sekgowa. [159]

(It seems like he [meaning her father] worked in the kitchens first. Then from there he hawked then found accommodation in Alexandra and then brought my mother…it meant my mother came already in 1920… isn't it they married in the traditional way,

[158] Interview with Tsakani and mama Mihloti, Alexandra, September 16, 2003.
[159] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.

by 1920 MaCampbell sold them the property and found that they were married traditionally, she then told them if you are married like that when your husband dies your property will be taken by government so you should marry in the Western way.)

How do these families come to refer to their homes in most cases, most probably also the only homes they have, as *sekgoweng*? According to this woman her father's family was expropriated from a farm near Pienaarsrivier.[160] They subsequently had to join other villages in the current Ga-Mashashane a village in Limpopo province. Is this paradoxical duality a result of or in spite of the legal frameworks that defined Johannesburg as a "prescribed area", an urban area, *Makgoweng* or *Sekgoweng*? How did and do they as children of bommastandi engage with that legislation? The answer may lie in how they negotiate these spaces for themselves in the midst of a contradictory legal framework that continuously reinforced their permanence in the *magaeng* home, however unknown to them *magae* might have been, and the impermanent urban home, which might have been the only home they knew.

3.6.2 Earning a living

This is a complex question. It raises the question of whether bommastandi can be categorised into one group in terms of earning a livelihood. The question links to another complex question raised in Chapter 1: who were the bommastandi? A number of experiences suggest that people who came to freehold settlements such as Alexandra Township came from various and quite complex backgrounds. It also suggests that what people did to earn livelihoods in Alexandra might need to be examined closely, more particularly in relation to who they were. For example a person who came from a rich rural background with no urban skills might purchase property and yet do domestic work.

Several bommastandi worked at menial jobs, for example Rapula's grandmother was a domestic worker and yet Rapula claims that she paid cash for her property, Ntate Sechaba's father also used cattle wealth to buy his properties, On the other hand properties were bought from businesses and salaries. Moipone's parents who were a sports organiser and a nurse but also ran a business are an example at hand. The following quotations are used to illustrate this further.

[160] Pienaarsrivier is situated near Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria. It was a service point for the neighbouring farms even though it seems to have grown into a small urban settlement.

Ma Leanne had this to say about her parents

> My father was a motor mechanic and my mommy was a school teacher then my daddy had his business first in Doornfontein.....from Pretoria my father was already a young man and clever he could know how to fix bicycles and was a motor mechanic and now they shifted to Doornfontein Arrow street.[161]

Mme Mmapula reveals the way her father earned his livelihood in Alexandra.

> *Ja. O ne a rekisa mmidi, ke gore green meals, and le diperekisi le dinamune. Ke dilo tse a neng a tshela ka tsone*. [162]
> (Ja, he was selling mielies, that is green mielies and peaches, and oranges. These are things that he lived on).

He also provided a means of transport:

> *And a na le [trolley]. Trolley re ne re e bitsa [tikiline] ka nako eo. Trolley ya ditonki. Go ne go se na dibese, go ne go se na ditekisi ka nako eo. Bomme ga ba ne ba ya diwasheneng; ba ya ko bo Rosebank, ga ba ne ba sa palame tikiline ba ne ba tsamaya ka dinao, ka maoto, walking*. [163]
> (And he had a trolley. This trolley we called Tickey line by that time. A donkey trolley [people used to pay tickey when transported by these trolleys]. There were no buses; there were no taxis during that time. Our mothers when they went to do washing, going to Rosebank when not using tickey line they walked.)

Was this a sign of poverty or was it lack of skills to do any urban job? Was it a choice to be independent from any kind of formal employment? This was a family man who also managed to buy his second property later. He found an entrepreneurial gap, shortage of transport for people who needed to go to white suburbs where they worked. This resonates with Nauright's (1992) discussion of transport shortages and the competition for transport between white and black people from as early as the 1920s in Alexandra. Chapter 6 of Nauright's thesis provides

[161] Interview with Ma Leanne, Alexandra, September 4, 2003
[162] Interview with mme Mmapula, Alexandra, October 3, 2003.
[163] Ibid.

detailed information on transport concerns, starting from the first decade of Alexandra's existence. While mme Mmapula describes a donkey trolley as a mode of transport that his father used in the 1920s, Nauright (1992) traces the first African run buses in Alexandra to the same period. By 1925, a year after mme Mmapula's father bought his first property in Alexandra there were already five African owner-driven buses in Alexandra while a bus owner's association was established by 1928-29. One of these was R.G. Baloyi, who was labelled an African capitalist. He seemed to have had money since he arrived in Alexandra in 1922, and bought a bus only three years later (Nauright 1992: 300).

Through her father's experience mme Mmapula reveals how her father used his tickey line both for transporting his fruit and vegetables and people who needed a means of transport at the time.

> *Ba ne ba tlhatswa washene ka sesepa se ba reng ke koeksoda. Koeksoda e e ne e etswa ka mafura a kolobe, go tshelwa soda ka fa teng. Go ironwa ka di stofo tse le tsa bogologolo, bo-dover go besiwa di iron moo ga ba treika. A ke re wa tlhaloganya. And ga ba bereka mo dikitchining, mo boMrs, vloer planka e gone go iriwa ka kerese, kers-vet. Candle e ne e apeiwa e tshelwa paraffin, e be o e tshasa hee, wa vryfa, go be go benya gore. A ke re ke vloer-plank. Ke botshelo bo batswadi ba rona ba neng ba tshela ka bona ga ba tla bo ba reka metse e.* [164]
>
> (They did the washing using bicarbonate of soda. This soap was made from pig fat mixed with soda. They used old stoves to iron – Dover – they put irons on top of these stoves and heat the iron. You do understand. And when they worked in the kitchens the Mrs. (Madams this would most commonly refer to female white employers in a domestic work setting) they applied candle fat on the wooden floors. The candle was boiled and paraffin was poured in then you would apply it on the floor and polish, the floor would shine so much. This is the life our parents led when they bought these houses [properties]).

In this, the respondents reveal other ways of earning a living through domestic work. The respondents comment on the work ethic, the hard work that the domestic workers put into their employment. This may be related to the public discourse that suggested that owning freehold property in Alexandra came with hard work and perhaps discipline that made it

[164] Interview with mme Mmapula, Alexandra, October 3, 2003

possible for such families to pay in instalments for their stands and later their homes, under difficult conditions until they finished.

Tata Andile, an eighty-five-year-old man, describes the kind of work his family did. His father and brothers brought their parents and his grandparents from the Cape, and bought them a property in Alexandra. Even though tata Andile says the four brothers, his father and three uncles contributed towards purchasing this property, the family of his youngest uncle occupied it. This would be under their traditional rules of inheritance in which the youngest son takes over the home of the parents. Tata Andile's father and three brothers were working at the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA)[165] and Native Affairs Department (NAD). That is how they managed to buy these properties:

> *Ya kaofela then o wa se Pimville o be sebenza naye e NAD ke second born e in fact ba bararo ba ne ba bareka NAD ba bararo ntate waa ga Xolani o ne a sebetsa Witwatersrand Native labour Association ke hore poleke ee lapho be kufigela khona abantu a ba zosebenza in Johannesburg ezi mine.* [166]
> (Yes, all of them worked for NAD, the second born, in fact three worked for NAD. Xolani's father was working for Witwatersrand Native Labour Association that is the place where people who came to work in Johannesburg mines arrived).

Perhaps the experience of the two families above indicate the dynamic and adaptable choices – albeit under difficult circumstances – of bommastandi, in particular because there is evidence of simultaneous performance of urban and rural functions in Alexandra residents.

On the one hand, a report by Dr. Xuma, a medical officer of health in Alexandra even in 1931 refers to Mr. Mogoai's "pigsty" which posed a health hazard as it was located close to his well. On the other hand, by 1934, there is on record reference to a Mr. Molete who was one of the first owners of a plumbing business in Alexandra (Swift 1983: 62). Interestingly, Swift describes Molete's plumbing business as "typical of the enthusiastic approach to tomorrow among those who have tasted the bitter past" (Swift 1983: 62). He seems to locate the entrepreneurial endeavour as a shift from a particular way of life to another.

In some cases properties would be used for building houses as well as businesses. Khensani explained that businesses were run from two of his grandfather's properties.

[165] Mandela (1994) refers to a senior person in employment of Africans in mines who he met when looking for a job in the mines. It is probable that this person could be the father or one of the uncles of tata Andile who were employed by WNLA.
[166] Interview with tata Andile, Alexandra, October 10, 2003. .

Khensani: Ko number 60th. And mo 6th o ne a na le shopo…/

(At Number 60 and at 6th Avenue there was a shop...)

Interviewer: Ko 6th e ne e le shopo…

(At 6th there was a shop...)

Khensani: Butcher le shoponyana ka mo morago.

(A butcher and a small shop at the back.

Interviewer: And then number 60 was your home?)

Khensani: Ja, e ne e le lapa, though nna, my family le papa re ne re dula go na moo mo go na leng business, ko 6th. I was born there actually. [167]

(Yes it was at home, though my family with my father we stayed there where there was this business).

Mme Hunadi also shared the background of about five properties that belonged to both her parents and her brother. Some of these were used for businesses as well:

And then wa bona le ge ne ntse e le motho wa smous, from there a ba a thoma go rekisa malatlha. A tlo joyina ke abuti wa ka hee. We were the renowned coal merchants mo Alexandra. And then re ne re na le a room mo babereki ba dulang teng. So le babereki ba ne ba dula ka go bereka. And then diproperty tse na; ba be ba reka e nngwe ko 3rd, ko 135. abuti wa ka le yena e be e le gore ga ntse a gola jwalo a kereya gore ga a ya ko sekolong ga a ngwala di [examination] o a foufala, a ba a bona gore betere no, a bule business. A bula shopo ko 6th. a ke sa gopola e ne e le number what.[168]

(And then you see he [referring to her father] was a hawker, from there he started to sell coal. My brother then joined him. We were the renowned coal merchants in Alexandra. And then we had a room where we housed the workers. So the workers stayed there because they were employed by us. And then in addition to these properties, they bought another one at 3rd, at number 135. My brother became blind during exam time at school so he decided it was better for him to start a business. He started a shop at 6th Avenue. I do not remember the number any longer).

[167] Interview with Khensani, Alexandra, August 20, 2003. The exchange took place to try and clarify a very complex explanation of family links to properties

[168] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra,September 2, 2003.

The experience of business on the property reveals that at the time there does not seem to have been any delineation of sites specifically for businesses, for example shops. Butcheries were built anywhere in the Township as long as the appropriate trade license could be secured from the relevant governing body; in this case the AHC, who started issuing trade licenses from 1925.

3.6.3 Education

Mrs. Campbell, the secretary of the Alexandra Township Company, donated part of her property to the Roman Catholic Church in 1918. The following year part of this property was used to house the very first school in Alexandra, the Holy Cross while the neighbouring western "native" area had its first school a year later (Goodhew 2004). However, these were not the oldest schools in the Transvaal as in 1903 already, there were missionary schools such as Hermansburg (Hanover), Berlin Mission and the Wesleyan Methodist as well as six government schools (Transvaal Education Dept 190?).[169] Nationally, schools such as Lovedale and Healdtown, where some of the earlier African leaders had qualified either as teachers or church ministers, had already been established in the Cape by the 1800.
This church school had a government grant, which means it had government paid teachers. As it was the trend for churches to provide schools in African settlements, The Wesleyan and The Church of England later joined the RCC in providing schools in Alexandra (Coch 1919).[170]

As stated earlier by 1929 Alexandra Township had about 7 200 people.Almost half of this population were children. Hence the then existing educational facilities became inadequate. There were efforts to provide education for increasing numbers of children. The AHC requested government for assistance with educational financing. They requested the government to cater for 1 640 children of school going age out of a total number of 4 200. At the time all children who attended school were 1 140, including "coloured" children who at the time had a government school. The table below shows the breakdown of the number of children of school going age per school.

[169] See the Transvaal Education Department Report School year January to December 1903. The total number of mission schools on the Reef then including the ones above was already ten.
[170] Coch was the registered public accountant and auditor in Johannesburg up to 31/12/1918.

Table 8 Enrolment numbers in different kinds of School

Type of school	Total number of pupils
Roman Catholic school	480
Wesleyan school	201
Church of England	334
Government school for "coloured" children	129
Total	1 144

Source: Letter dated September 7 1928 from Transvaal Department of Education to the secretary for Native affairs

It would appear among others that at this stage government had not provided any schools for African children at all. According to this table, only a small proportion of children, albeit "coloured" children only, were catered for. It is interesting to note that there was evidence of tension relating to racial classification which resulted from the amalgamation of separate legislation of the colonies and republics in the specific provision of a school for "coloured" children in Alexandra. This was meant to legally incorporate the two races. In an effort to alleviate the educational situation, there were at this time already three schools that operated privately, that is, they were not government registered.[171] It is not clear how many children were catered for in these schools.

In addition to churches that provided schools for Alexandra children other churches were buying plots in Alexandra. These were registered either in their names or those of trustees. Examples were Holy Missionary Evangelist Church, African Christian Apostolic Church in Zion and African Methodist Episcopal Church at Alexandra (Trustees), and Johannesburg Diocesan trustees.[172]

During the outbreak of typhus fever, the AHC was called upon by the Provincial Administration to delouse affected people, which they did.[173] However, the concern of the Provincial Administration seems to have been more due to involvement of some Alexandra

[171] Pretoria National Archives file 85/21 Re-a letter dated 26 /1/1928 from AHC to Director of Native Labour on Native schools in Alex on establishment of a native school.
[172] Pretoria National Archives File 2546 Rak 1028 1407-1649.
[173] Pretoria National Archives File GNLB 419:85/17 Letter from JHB Native affairs Labour dated 7/5/ 1923 addressed to sub-native commissioner.

Township residents in the households of neighbouring white suburbs where they did washing, more particularly because it was common for such washing to be taken to Alexandra.[174]

A health survey of African children in Alexandra Township in 1943 by Harding le Riche indicated that during the outbreak of typhus fever, the AHC was called upon by the Provincial Administration to delouse affected people, which they did. However, the Provincial Administration seems to have been particularly concerned by this outbreak because some Alexandra Township residents worked in the households of neighbouring white suburbs where they did washing; additionally, it was common for such employees to take clothing of their employers to Alexandra for washing and ironing. For example a health survey of African children in Alexandra Township indicated that poverty-related diseases existed in Alexandra however they were not treated as critical by the authorities since they did not seem to impact directly on the white neighbours.

Also, the report continued, the health conditions of Alexandra were no different from those of other townships. Additionally, Alexandra enjoyed better health facilities as a result of the co-operation between the health care centre and the University of the Witwatersrand. The report quoted the smallpox incident of 1937, where the carrier was identified as a church visitor who was subsequently isolated and the condition immediately controlled.

Finally, doctors of the American Board Mission commented that the state of cleanliness and health at Alexandra Township was much better than that of municipality controlled townships.[175]

3.6.4. Early governance in Alexandra

According to official reports, from its Second Proclamation in 1912 until the establishment of the Alexandra Health Committee in 1916, Alexandra was governed by the Alexandra Township Company (ATC). This was because the Johannesburg municipality refused to take over the administrative responsibility of Alexandra Township (Tourikis 1981: 8). However, as mentioned earlier, by 1912 a letter dated August 17 announcing the establishment of a Village Management Board, was sent to the Ministry of Native Affairs. The board's objective was to "regulate the behaviour and movement" of Alexandra people. The board comprised Messrs. A. Fortuin, F.B. Bezuidenhout, J.M. Makhothe, J.J. Teefo, I. Krajoz, W. Idutwa,

[174]Pretoria National Archives File GNLB 419:85/17 communication to the health committee and 85/18 EKW/DGI. Letter from JHB Native affairs Labour dated May 7 1923 addressed to sub-native commissioner.
[175] See Township Company 1929 statistics NA File GNLB 418 85/2.

Masondo (who made a cross mark)[176], and Teffo. The first three members were Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

The letter, which was addressed directly to the Minister, stated:

> We the undersigned chairman and secretary of the newly formed association in the Alexandra Township beg to inform you that a village Management Board has been established as from the 5th instant for the purpose of regulating the management of the village and we hope the government will co-operate sympathetically with us in this endeavour to ameliorate the condition and regulate the movements and behaviour of our people[177].

Alexandra, which was a private township, did not fall under any municipality. It would appear that this group identified the resultant management gap and used this as an opportunity for Africans to self-govern in an urban setting in South Africa at the time. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this governance structure was approved or acknowledged by Pretoria. Nonetheless, the establishment of this Village Management Board was most probably one of the indications of the intent of property owners to settle and make a home in Alexandra. However, most importantly, this was apparently one of the first community organisations in Alexandra.

The Alexandra Township Company raised its concern over the absence of a body that would take care of services such as sanitation, and subsequently recommended establishment of a health committee. By this time (1916) Alexandra had two hundred houses and nine hundred inhabitants compared to 167 in 1912. The committee was to be constituted by property owners. This was possible since private townships did not fall under any local authority. Apparently the ATC – which, as a major property holder, governed Alexandra[178] –

[176] It is probable that Masondo could not write but this did not bar him from being a member of the village board.
[177] A letter dated August 17, 1912 written to the office of the Minister of Native Affairs Pretoria introducing the Alexandra Village Management Board. Pretoria National Archives File NA, NTS 4234 File 80/313 Vol. 1
[178] Pretoria National Archives GNLB 418 85/2 Report dated April 1929 submitted by the ATC to the committee of inquiry appointed by the Transvaal Administration. See also Goodhew (2004) on Sophiatown and Newclare. Also, the Local Government ordinance was only passed in 1912.

planned to withdraw from its administration and governance as soon as all the properties were sold.[179]

However, it is noteworthy that, while Chapter 9 of the Local Government ordinance of 1912 provided for the establishment of such a governance structure, the Alexandra Health Committee (AHC) had to be established only after the ATC made a recommendation to the Provincial Administration.[180] Drawing from this ordinance, Tourikis (1981: 9) outlines details of the evolutionary stages that a local government would follow. For example, according to this ordinance, a township would start with nominated members through to partly nominated ones and finally to the status of a village council where all members would be elected. Afterwards, an area would – if sufficiently populated – qualify to be a town council or municipality. However, the history of the AHC illustrated that the Transvaal Provincial Administration did not allow such progression in the case of Alexandra (Tourikis 1981, Nauright 1992).

Nonetheless, the first health committee was established on 18th November 1916 as per Administrator's notice No 56 of 1916.[181] The first committee consisted of five members, one from the Native Affairs department and 2 each from the ATC and the community of Alexandra Township. These were E.P. Adams, representative of the Department of Native Affairs, H.B. Papenfus and C.F. Wienand, representatives of the ATC, and J.M. Makhothe and Cacelhous who were representatives of Alexandra property owners.

The various legal frameworks that were implicated in the proclamation of Alexandra made it similar to a municipal township in some ways and yet dissimilar in others. Its local authority, the AHC, did not have the same powers as the municipality. For example, while the AHC was constituted under Section 146 (1) of the Local Government Ordinance (TVL) of 1912, it did not have rights to perform certain functions in terms of the Townships Act No. 33 of 1907. These rights allowed a township to make its own regulations. Consequently, when a need arose, the AHC often not only had to seek clarity and confirmation of their powers from the appropriate department but had to request permission to extend its powers from the relevant Transvaal Administration Department. This apparently was an exclusion

[179] Pretoria National Archives file A5/8933, communications on the issue of the influenza, a letter from Alexandra Township Company to the Transvaal Provincial Administration dated March 14, 1919 suggesting that the company was still taking some responsibility for Alexandra.
[180] A letter signed by ATC secretary to the Provincial Administration dated July 31 1916.
[181] Pretoria National Archives GNLB 418 85/2 (4). See National Annexure A of the report on the proposal for the abolition of Alexandra Township dated 24/11/1942 submitted to the Minister of Native Affairs. See also the submission dated June 4, 1940, for the removal of "non-Europeans" from Alexandra Township by the North Eastern District Protection league.

based on Alexandra's freehold status that came with non-payment of residential rent.[182] The AHC was faced with the extra task of seeking ratification from the appropriate government department once decisions outside its specific mandate had to be made even though these decisions might have been provided for by ordinances passed specifically for municipality "native" townships.

From 1921 the number of representatives of the residents who sat on the Health Committee was not only increased to eight but these members were elected by the residents.[183] But this step did not imply an automatic increase in the responsibilities of the committee. For example, the committee requested permission to issue licences for motor vehicles, bicycles and hawkers, but it was declined.[184] They also requested financial assistance towards construction of roads in Alexandra Township from the Provincial Administration. This request was also declined.[185] These decisions were always supported by some piece of legislation. Nonetheless the increase in numbers of the community representatives meant a spread in numbers that held official positions among Alexandra people and participation in activities that would most commonly fall outside the ambit of Africans, more particularly those in urban areas.

As stated elsewhere in this document the AHC increasingly had to enquire and confirm through the Department of Native Affairs or Provincial Administration what rights and powers they had as a local authority. The second decade of Alexandra's existence as a black freehold township experienced several such negotiations and requests. In response to the AHC's request for assistance in contributing towards road making in Alexandra the provincial government declined, citing their inability to contribute to development within the AHC's area of jurisdiction.[186]

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[182] Pretoria National Archives File GNLB 199 A letter from Secretary for Justice F. Bok, dated September 27 1923 to the Secretary for Native Affairs3/1417/23/401.

[183] Administrators notice No 23 of 1921 re the conditions and terms of eligibility of who sat on the Health Committee was also set out.

[184] Pretoria National Archives File TALG 1137: 8/8933 and A.3/10657, showing communication between the Health committee and Provincial Administration.

[185] Pretoria National Archives File KJB T/12/4/2 9/8933 Grant Road making and a letter dated March 17, 1922 showing communication between the Alexandra Health Committee and the Transvaal Provincial Administration.

[186] A letter from the Provincial secretary to the AHC dated March 17 1922.

3.6.5 Policing

For security and safety Alexandra was serviced by the Wynberg police station – which was operational as early as 1900.[187]Around the time of its establishment a governor could declare any area a town police district through a notice in the government gazette. [188] However, it seems town police did not necessarily operate solely within the boundaries of any particular towns. For example, from 1902 to 1908 the Transvaal town police policed Pretoria, and the Reef (Tylden 1982).

At the time there was also concern over staff shortages as it was a practice to deploy police to other departments. [189] Police officers held a variety of jobs both in their own departments and others. The duties straddled policing, military and other duties such as furnishing bodyguards for high commissioners and collection of "native" hut and poll tax. Unsurprisingly, the Wynberg police station was manned by only three officers, even though it catered for Alexandra as well. It is plausible that this concern over police staffing shortages as well as the general practice of town police at the time might explain why not only the neighbouring Wynberg station, but Norwood[190] as well, was patrolling Alexandra.

The relationship with the police did not appear to be positive as racism was already visible due to the decree of the South African Native Commission's report of 1905. Hence even though the Alexandra propertied expected to be treated civilly and with respect by the police they were not. This is illustrated by the response of the police in 1919 to the complaint to the Deputy Commissioner of Police by the neighbouring Wynberg community. Their complaint stated:

> We do not think after we have put our money and years of labour to make our homes as they are that we should be subjected to the constant loss of our poultry, fruit, clothing, crops and everything portable that natives can lay their hands on, nor that the

[187] South African Police List: Compiled from records at headquarters, Pretoria, July 31 1910 pp 135 – 160.
[188] See Proclamation for the organization and regulation of a police force #15, 1901.
[189] See Police Commission Report of 1905. For example in the Native Affairs Department only police officers were "native" pass issuers, Location Inspectors, Hut Tax collectors and Dog Tax collectors.
[190] See minutes of the commission of inquiry under Chairman J.A. Ashburnham, Chief magistrate of Johannesburg. The commission looked into complaints of "natives" residing at Alexandra Township regarding methods adopted by police in conducting liquor rates. This enquiry was held at the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in Alexandra on September 13 1921.

> peace and security of our homes and persons should be at the mercy of drunken kaffirs every weekend.[191]

The police responded with a raid on Alexandra homes. This raid of Alexandra homes by the police raised a retort from homeowners as doors and windows of their houses were broken down by the police to gain entry in order to seek evidence of liquor brewing in homes.[192]

The commission of inquiry into complaints of "natives" residing at Alexandra Township regarding methods adopted by police in conducting liquor raids took place on Thursday September 21, 1921 at 10 am at the AME church Alexandra. This commission which was briefed to investigate how the liquor raid was handled reveals that the way in which Alexandra space was controlled and regulated was racist and thus insensitive to the views of the interviewed people. For example:

> Major Bell to Esther: If you know it is against the law to make "kaffir beer" why do you make it?
> Esther: It is my husband's coffee; he was used to it before coming to the Transvaal.[193]

Beer amounting to less than 18.9 litres was found in her house. Esther's daughter-in-law Elizabeth claimed ownership and they were each fined £5 for it. They were assisted by children in this family to raise the money for bail as they could not, on their own, afford it.

Hence it would appear that any amount of beer found in possession of the family would be treated as "illegal brewing and possession of beer"[194] and therefore punishable. Further, other questions raised by the commission indicated that the police did not have any search warrants to conduct the searches, and yet the commission did not respond to this. Also, the respondent raises the tradition of having beer as part of the husband's meal (coffee) but this does not seem to be acknowledged by the commission. Finally, the fact that police broke into homes when suspects were absent did not seem to interest the commission at all. It would appear a similar incident had occurred in Klipspruit where Edward Tsewu filed a complaint against the police who searched his premises looking for alcohol without a

[191] See National archives document The Alexandra Township, p. 3.
[192] Pretoria National Archives file HSC/GAR No. 2756/13/D.54 re minutes of the commission of inquiry under Chairman J.A. Ashburnham, Chief magistrate of Johannesburg. The commission looked into complaints of natives residing at Alexandra Township regarding methods adopted by police in conducting liquor raids. This inquiry was held in the AME church on September 13 1921.
[193] Enquiry held in the AME church in Alexandra on September 13 1921
[194] Own inverted commas.

warrant. Tsewu, who was the founder of the Transvaal Native Landowners Association in Johannesburg as well as a leader of an independent "native" Presbyterian church, seemed to expect that since he lived in a freehold dwelling a search warrant was necessary. However, according to Section 67 ordinance 32 of 1902 the police could search him without a warrant.[195] However, the fact that certain items were reported missing did not seem to interest the commission since they only asked her if she was accusing the police. For example, when Elizabeth, who lost some articles during the police raid, was asked by the commissioner if she was suggesting that police took them, she answered that she did not know, all she said was that her house was left "unprotected" (her actual word) after police broke into it.

3.6.6 Cemeteries and Burying the Dead

The choice to bury someone in a particular place appears to signify acceptance of that place as home. This is evidenced by the appearance of a burial site in Alexandra in its first years of development as a black township. The first identifiable graves are in the Jukskei cemetery, which is named after the river across which they lie. There appear to have been no public records of some burials that occurred in Alexandra soon after its Second Proclamation. However, a letter of complaint from the AHC of 1922 suggests that the AHC kept burial records; unfortunately I could not trace these. This is particularly because one of the headstones with legible information on it found in the old section of the cemetery recorded the date of burial as 1919.[196] However, the burial records found at the Alexandra cemetery office only start in the 1930s.[197] Interestingly, the Braamfontein cemetery records – apparently the oldest public cemetery in Johannesburg – show the earliest African burial as 1899.[198]

While the AHC was involved in managing Alexandra graves, they had to use burial fees which were stipulated per Proclamation 368 of September 19th 1922.[199] But, given the fact that the AHC had to raise its own finances for running the township, they felt that the set

[195] File NA NLB 136 Part 2756/13/54: Letter from the deputy commissioner to director of Native labour dated January 12 1922, responding to Tsewu's complaint.
[196] The researcher visited the Jukskei graveyard on May 24, 2005 in search of information on earliest burial dates. The writing on the other headstones had faded while other graves do not have any headstones.
[197] A visit on May 24, 2005 by the researcher to the office of Alexandra graveyard to view burial records.
[198] This raises an interesting point about graves as evidence of presence and probably intention to settle.
[199] Letter of complaint in 1922 regarding burial charges by both the board and the health committee from the sub-native commissioner of Wits to the Director of Native Labour.

fees were steep and already in 1922, they raised a complaint concerning the fencing of the cemetery as well as costs of paying a caretaker.

3.6.7 What was the significance of burying in Alexandra? The expression "sifela ndawonnye"

Loosely translated means that it's best for family members to be together in death as they were in life. Baba Temba, who used this expression, explains its significance:

> Ja, well that's… No it's just a family…belief that we must si fele ndawonye. U ya bona what happens sometimes, into e ngi qabanga kith sometimes u fish kuku bona inqwaba la ka sibanibani. Ukuphi? Hey u se Springs? Ukuphi? U se Cape Town.[200]
> (Ja, well that's… No it's just a family…belief that we must literally die in the same place but it means rest or be buried in one place. You see what happens sometimes the thing that I am thinking is that sometimes you want to see so and so's grave. Where is she/he (Laid to rest?) Hey she/he is in Springs? Where is she/he? She/he is in Cape Town.

The respondent's view of graves as signifying home, seem to link this to a traditional custom of linking the present to the past. This is done through visiting graves to share the present with the dead by apprising them of developments in the family. But he also referred to the ease of access if all family members are buried in the same place or graveyard.

Hence the decision to bury the dead in Alexandra by bommastandi was most probably rooted in the traditional belief of wanting to be together by family members. This seems to suggest that this step was one way of creating a home in Alexandra. Khensani's grandmother, who died in 1933, was also buried in Alexandra. Subsequent conversation with the respondent revealed that the family was trying to find the grave of the grandmother so that a head stone could be made.[201] However, this is difficult as existing Alexandra grave records only start in 1937. Interestingly, when mme Mmapula's mother died they were still tenants, but she was buried in Alexandra. But why does a burial site matter?

A different role played by graves is revealed by ntate Sechaba. His father was buried in Alexandra in 1938 and referring to his father's grave ntate Sechaba said:

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[200] Interview with baba Temba, Alexandra, September 26, 2003.
[201] The researcher visited the Jukskei grave yard in Alexandra with a City Parks staff member on May 24, 2005, in search of information on earliest burial dates.

> We've been taught to believe we are part of a long relay race. Our great- great-great-great-grand fathers have been handing over their lives on to us. It is far more permanent evidence than a newspaper than paper than any other form of record. And once we have buried somebody there, we will not move. Anybody who wants to take us there we would rather fight and die there because there is other further evidence other than the graves to show that we lived there when they took the land on paper they did not remove Alex they took it on paper when they returned it we were still here we resisted so we have the land back.[202]

He uses the metaphor of a "relay race" which relates to the traditional, cultural linking of the present to the past referred to above. But he also argued that being buried in a place is powerful evidence for one's presence and occupation of space. He presents a grave as an indisputable trace of presence in that when the people of Alexandra Township were moved at expropriation, their dead were not exhumed from the burial sites. Thus their presence and occupation of the place presents an indelible record.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the history of private property ownership of Alexandra bommastandi in a particular way, focusing on how some of the national, provincial, and local legislation that governed property ownership was spatially manifested in Alexandra. I also examined the NUAA, the Native Administration Law, the 1936 Land Act as well as policies such as declaration of Johannesburg white in 1933. I pointed out the contradictions that Alexandra continued to raise for the Union government as one piece of discriminatory legislation after another was passed. I highlighted in this chapter, tensions that stemmed from the legalities of space that governed appropriation of freehold space that was increasingly becoming racialised.

I investigated Alexandra's ambivalence which resulted from its de jure and de facto status within this legislation and its population composition respectively. Both the property laws of the time and its racial composition – an exclusively black settlement –allowed for its existence. However, its joint ownership shared by the ATC, a white company and

[202] From a video tape produced by SET Productions ETV in 2003. Written and directed by Suheir Ismail. The name of the respondent is withheld since he was an interviewee for this research as well.

bommastandi comprising Africans and "coloured people" seemed to unsettle its legality and hence presented to government the challenge of a black, non-rural place which was not conforming to its politics and laws of space at the time.

I contended in this chapter that being a mmastandi in Alexandra not only resulted in construction of new ways of life but it impacted on the kind of place that Alexandra came to be. I showed how the spatial and racialised legislation applied in Johannesburg could not and did not apply in Alexandra precisely because of its physical position, outside the boundaries of the Johannesburg municipality.

I illustrated how becoming a mmastandi in Alexandra revealed an African whose identity was becoming non-rural as well as modern. Bommastandi in Alexandra bought and operated in a property ownership regime which the conventional wisdom labelled characteristically "un-African". Thus questions were asked about traditionality and modernity and how the processes were maintained and developed among the African bommastandi in particular. As pointed out in the beginning of this research, Alexandra Township had "coloured" bommastandi as well but the focus of this study is African bommastandi. I also raised questions of urbanity and rurality as Alexandra started off being both part of Johannesburg and not part of it, as well as neither rural nor urban.

The chapter further highlighted squabbling over Alexandra by various agencies. It showed how government, as well as some white neighbourhoods that are located close to Alexandra, were engaged in debates relating to its possible removal. It also showed how the ATC and the AHC raised concerns about possibilities or limitations that legislation that was passed presented to them.

Finally the chapter showed how the absence of a legitimate, spatial, legal framework that provided for removal of Alexandra residents whose physical location created challenges for the government on the one hand and the ATC and the AHC on the other affected the residents.

Chapter 4
GOVERNMENT DEEPENED CONFLICT WITH ALEXANDRA RESIDENTS 1940-1950S

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focused on how bommastandi negotiated the increasingly discriminatory spatial legislation and resultant policies from the proclamation of Alexandra as a black township from 1912 to early 1939. It also showed how the absence of a spatial legal framework that provided for resettlement of Alexandra residents, whose physical location in Alexandra and both the black and freehold status of Alexandra contradicted the policies of the Union, created challenges for the government on the one hand, and the ATC and the AHC on the other. Government had to deal with this challenge at three different levels – the national, provincial and local government levels. I also analysed other legislation and regulations that were concerned with defining the spatial dichotomisation of South Africa, as well as commissions of inquiry and conferences whose briefs and agendas included the spatial location of Alexandra as well as conditions regarding the presence of bommastandi in it.

This chapter starts with an analysis of the 1940s, in which the legal wrangling over Alexandra space continued. In order to legitimise the proposed abolition of Alexandra the government spent a lot of time seeking ways of legally validating this move. Commissions of inquiry and conferences continued to sit to investigate and discuss the situation of Alexandra, the most problematic township in South Africa (Libertas 1942). While the 1930s were characterised by commissions and committees that were charged with looking into the feasibility of resettlement of Alexandra residents the 1940s showed intensive participation by the Alexandra residents to counter this move. Nauright (1992) presents a detailed analysis of the protests, public meetings and deputations to government by Alexandra residents. At the same time, the demands for African labour increased and rapid urbanisation was the result (SPP Report Vol. 1. 1983). Government was forced to acknowledge the challenge facing them in resolving the contradiction between its political objective of reserves and later separate development which only started in the late 1950s (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008)and the economic needs of the country. In terms of the former, Africans were to be confined to the reserves, while the latter required Africans to be in the urban areas to provide

cheap labour. The question then was how to acknowledge the permanence of Africans in cities without giving them political rights, and how to do this without compromising the supply of cheap labour? Government focused on control of urban Africans as well as the removal of those who were deemed idle and undesirable from urban areas. Posel (1991) provides a detailed account of urbanisation and the workings of influx control.

In this chapter I examine the role played by committees, commissions and conferences that were appointed and sat to discuss the position of Alexandra which continued in the 1940s. The briefs of these committees and commissions as well as discussions at these conferences marked the initial developments of the shift in property ownership. These discussions illustrated that the shift started with the paradox of Alexandra, where government was pondering the possibility of resettlement while the life of bommastandi continued to show signs of becoming more established. They showed how the very legislation that the government passed to control and regulate African movement in Johannesburg in particular was used by bommastandi to authenticate their settlement in Alexandra. This legislation excluded them due to the history of its establishment; it was a "non-white" settlement, lying outside Johannesburg racialised space. It was also a titled freehold settlement that was not in the reserves. These legal, racial and spatial characteristics made the establishment of Alexandra an exception rather than a rule. Hence in this chapter I consider the introduction of "mortgage bonds", since 1946 amidst discussions of the contradictory situation in Alexandra regarding its removal or retention.

Although in this chapter I investigate some pieces of legislation and regulations that were intended to strengthen spatial dichotomisation of South Africa into "prescribed" and "non prescribed" areas, I do not claim to examine all of them. My aim is to illustrate the precarious and paradoxical nature of Alexandra. Finally, I analyse how bommastandi lived in Alexandra during this period.

I also do not refute some of the problems raised from different quarters about poor conditions in Alexandra. I concur with Parnell (1993) on the issue of racism as a motive for the intention to remove Alexandra. Parnell (1993: 139) argues that "racism infused almost every complaint about the poor suburbs, but until the 1920s it was rare for overt cultural prejudice to be expressed publicly without supplementary evidence being cited about either the lazy ways, unhygienic habits or drunken behaviour of the offending group". Thus townships such as Kliptown and Western Native Township were said to have emerged as a result of attempts to avoid health risks in Brickfield in 1903 in the former, while the latter

was made available to black people in 1918 after white people lost interest in it due to construction of a sewage plant close by.

Parnell (1993: 124) further asserts that "the exclusion of natives from land ownership was attributable to the mine owners' stranglehold on land rights along the Reef". These mine owners were necessarily white due to the history of dispossession. The interesting paradox here may be the position of people such as Papenfus, who was the co-owner of land on which Alexandra is situated as well as chairman of directors of the mine labour supply.[203] Examples such as these raise interesting question about such dual positions and how this might have influenced access to freehold by "non-Europeans" in the surrounding areas of Johannesburg where the mine magnates had monopoly over land. The troubled history of access to property in general and private property in particular by Africans has been well documented in the works of Platzky and Walker (1985), Murray and O'Reagan (1990), Claassens (1990), Cross (1988), Letswalo (1987), Delius (1983) and Fourie (ud) among others.

4.2 Problems in Alexandra: the view from the top

In a letter dated May 27, 1940, from the Native Commissioner to the Director of Native Labour, a number of concerns on Alexandra were raised: morality and crime, growing lawlessness, lack of parental control, prostitution and defiance of authority. These conditions existed in municipal townships as well but were more marked in Alexandra. The Commissioner motivated for the complete abolition of Alexandra by pointing out that Alexandra harboured criminals of all sorts and engaged in illicit liquor brewing. Additionally, he stated that the city clearance scheme exacerbated the abnormal influx of "natives" to Alexandra due to scarcity of accommodation elsewhere in Johannesburg. This scheme was required by the 1934 Slums Act, and it provided for the removal of residential areas that were declared slums. In Johannesburg the Western Areas Removal Scheme (WARS) which was executed in 1940, laid the foundation for removals and resettlement of urban black people (van Tonder, D. 1993). His further motivation was that the south west of Johannesburg was connected to the railway and road to Johannesburg. Alexandra bommastandi would not only be provided with housing in the new area but they would get monetary compensation for land as well.

[203] Pretoria National Archives File WLD 5/132 178/1909. According to this source Papenfus was also the MP of Hospital Hill.

The report of the Director of Labour of May 27 1940 (: 6) to, the Native Affairs Commissioner expressed his doubt regarding the wisdom of retaining Alexandra Township. He stated:

> One of the most serious objections to the Township... the objection of the adjacent Europeans... There (will) would be a constant sense of insecurity on their part, and growing hostility from the Europeans.

The same year in May, Falwasser resigned from the AHC. (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2008:57) He could not cope with the difficult position of occupying a dual role of both Township Manager and chair of the AHC. Subsequently the Native Affairs Commission, also known as Heaton Nicholls, was tasked to investigate Falwasser's resignation and to look into the feasibility of establishing an all-white AHC with a "non-European" advisory board. The Commission suggested that Alexandra had been in existence for too long a time for bommastandi's rights of freehold to be denied. At the time Alexandra Township had been in existence for 28 years. The commission recognised the failure of the AHC to stop overcrowding. Such overcrowding in Alexandra was exacerbated by high interest rates that bommastandi had to pay on their mortgage bonds. The white money lenders deducted 40% interest before the loaned money was paid out. Furthermore, the bondholders were not allowed any period of grace regarding their repayment dates (Tourikis, 1981; Sarakinsky, 1984).

The commission stated that overcrowding was a broader policy issue which was not restricted to Alexandra as other Johannesburg municipality controlled townships also faced the same problem. By contrast, while they acknowledged that conditions such as growing lawlessness, illegal brewing of alcohol, prostitution, other crime and defiance of authority existed in municipal townships, they argued that these were more prevalent in Alexandra. However, the problem of crime could not be solved under the then existing circumstances in the township.

The application of the NUAA in Johannesburg meant controlled and limited access to Johannesburg to most black people. Coupled with this was lack of accommodation in Johannesburg. These unfavourable conditions for Africans in Johannesburg served as factors drawing Africans to Alexandra.

The commission suspected that such difficult conditions would be alleviated through provision of assistance to the AHC by the state, for example, increasing the powers of the

AHC to include power to prevent slums among others. By so doing, government would gain the support of bommastandi. The commission also recommended that although the AHC could still be left to elect a town manager, such a manager not supposed to be a member of the AHC.

They also noted that the absence of an assistant commissioner to deal with civil and criminal jurisdiction exacerbated challenges of governance in Alexandra. However, the commission, like the others preceding it, acknowledged progress made by the AHC, who did their best under very difficult circumstances. Rather than focusing on the technical failure of the AHC the commission recommended that government would do well to encourage the AHC by concentrating on lessons and positive experience gained from their period of self-governance. Since as mentioned in chapter 3 the commission had acknowledged that they had made progress the removal of the township was not recommended.

By October 2, 1940 the right to vote for "non-European" members of the AHC, which was reinstated in 1937, was once more withdrawn from Alexandra residents. Instead, Administrators Proclamation No 181 decreed that an all-white three-member AHC be appointed by the Administrator including the chair, who was to be paid £250 per annum for the position. The only "native" representation in governance was to be through an advisory board.

In the same year, a submission for resettlement of "non-Europeans" from Alexandra Township by the North Eastern District Protection League (NEDPL) queried the continued existence of Alexandra Township. The NEDPL, who started campaigning for the removal of Alexandra in the late 1930s, comprised representatives from white suburbs that were close to Alexandra such as Rosebank, Parktown North, Norwood, Orange Grove, Orchards, Linksfield, Waverley, Highlands North, Bramley, Lower Houghton and Lombardy West, (Nauright 1992: 258). Although Nauright argues that those who were not in support of removal of Alexandra were not allowed to speak at the NEDPL meetings, the organisation seems to have enjoyed prominence in removal campaigns.

The NEDPL critiqued some of the findings of the commissions of inquiry such as the Young Committee and the Feetham Commission. They believed that overcrowding in Alexandra threatened public health. Like the AWNRP before them, they also used the NUAA discourse and quoted crime and welfare among the "natives" in Alexandra, among others, to support their demand for abolition of Alexandra (*Rand Daily Mail* May 10, 1939).

The government increasingly seemed to see the Alexandra problem as mainly a governance one. This was a problem for a racist government which did not cater for African

leadership in urban areas. The solution therefore seemed to lie in correcting the governance anomaly; that of having a black settlement outside a municipality or a settlement whose governance structure included Africans. Interestingly, it would appear that except for the Feetham Commission of 1936-1937, none of the commissions recommended training of members of the AHC, more particularly in view of negative reports on their performance such as the one by Murray, the assistant Medical Officer of Health (MOH) in 1926.

Furthermore, the problems of the governance of Alexandra by the AHC were still raised eleven years after the report of the Young Committee which was the first to conduct the inquiry into the governance issues of Alexandra.

As a black freehold area, Alexandra was not supposed to be ruled by a completely white committee as bommastandi would not be in favour of a governance structure which would exclude them from direct governance of Alexandra (Nauright 1992:218, Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:57). They recommended instead that the committee should consist of twelve members, with four white people to be nominated by the Administrator in consultation with the Minister of NAD. One of these members had to be approved by the Health Department of the Johannesburg City Council. The eight "non- European" members were to be elected by Alexandra residents. Interestingly, while the AHC was supposed to be independent, the JCC seemed to be drawn in indirectly.

In response to the recommendation of the Nicholls Commission, the right to vote was reinstated in 1941. Proclamation No. 162 provided once more for election of two resident members of the AHC. The following year, a print media report described Alexandra as:

> ... South Africa's number one problem township – (a) long-standing headache to Union, Provincial and Municipal authorities, the despair of those interested in Native welfare, and an urgent challenge to democracy in South Africa. (Libertas, 8/1942)

On October 23, 1942, two months after this report, a conference chaired by the Minister of Interior and Public Health, H.G. Lawrence, was called at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. Although the conference was supposed to be exploratory, their deliberations were sent to Cabinet. The conference was attended by representatives from the Union and provincial governments, the JCC, the South African Police (SAP), the NEDPL as well as the AHC. This conference was intended to investigate the recommendations of the Thornton Commission, which reported three years earlier. The commission's brief was to analyse difficulties

experienced by the Provincial Administration regarding Union legislation that governed local government administration.

Some JCC members present expressed the view that the residents of Alexandra be resettled. However, the new residential area that was to be built was to fall under municipal control. The JCC would cover a third of the removal costs. Also, the body responsible for removal was to make sure that accommodation was available for all the families before moving them.

The representative of the SAP did not seem to support any of the views expressed. He felt that if Alexandra was not removed then it should be controlled by a municipality. He revealed that at the time Alexandra fell under the Wynberg police station, which was staffed by fifteen white people and five "native" police. His concern was that since Alexandra was outside a municipality it had no influx control measures in place, thus ordinarily disallowing the SAP from removing people contravening influx control policies. He cited the example of a large number of Rhodesians who could not be resettled. However, he acknowledged the presence in Alexandra of a large number of respectable "natives".

The SAP representative further pointed to overcrowding, which he felt posed a health threat to "Europeans". He estimated that out of about fifty to sixty thousand people living in Alexandra about thirty thousand were unemployed and unemployable, thus raising the important issue of provision of labour as a significant factor in maintaining the presence of Africans in urban areas. This does not account for freehold settlement. On the question of the Thornton commission's recommendation that conditions in Alexandra be improved he argued that bommastandi could not afford those improvements. If "Europeans" were going to bear the improvement costs he felt they would have to decide where Alexandra should go. He felt strongly that alternative land was to be provided and "natives" be taught self- government in due course.

The AHC representatives felt that abolition and removal of Alexandra entailed incurring unnecessary costs and that the existing problems could be solved at a lesser cost. For example, if people were given an opportunity to access houses at low interest rates, they would not crowd into a single room. However, one view was that the AHC would consider abolition of Alexandra if its terms were first presented to inhabitants for consideration. This

was said while the representative knew very well that bommastandi would not accept abolition, as it would mean the end of freehold rights for them.[204]

Bell, the Union government Member of Parliament (MP), raised concerns about the physical location and condition of Alexandra. Regarding the former, he termed Alexandra a "black island in a white sea" as it was increasingly being surrounded by white neighbourhoods, In as far as physical conditions were concerned Bell claimed that a large percentage of stands were slums as they were each occupied by between sixty and eighty people.

The provincial secretary, H.F. Pentz, expressed the reluctance of the Provincial Administration to be involved in the abolition and removal costs of Alexandra as it fell outside the scope of their duties. Provincial administration was solely concerned with matters of local government and not expropriation. The proceedings of this conference were sent to cabinet for consideration.

The JCC "threatened to alter the position taken by the Young Committee (1928-1929), The Feetham commission (1936–1937) and the Thornton commission (1938–1939), all of which argued for the retention of Alexandra" (Nauright 1992: 292). However, in 1942 the Transvaal African Congress urged the government to adhere to the recommendation of these commissions, including the native affairs commission of 1940. The decline led to establishment of the Alexandra Anti-expropriation Committee (AAEC). This probably added further value to the significance of Alexandra on the national map. In April 1943 the AAEC collected 700 pounds for expenses incurred in defence of Alexandra.

Another argument that was mounted against removal was that the old mud brick house type was being substituted by the redbrick "bond" house. Also one of the housing and density regulations at the time was that a plot should not be covered by more than 33⅓ per cent of housing. However, Sophiatown, a municipal township, had smaller stands which were far more covered with buildings than most of Alexandra's.

At the general purpose committee Agenda 682 ordinary meeting of 26 January 1943 the following statistics were presented. Out of 2 541 stands, 1 589 were occupied by "natives" and "coloured" people while the ATC had 910 and 42 were registered as others. Of the 1 589, 546 were still under mortgage. This probably meant that the remaining 1 043 were fully paid up and transferred to the owners.

[204] Minutes of the conference chaired by H.G. Lawrence, the Minister of Interior and Public Health that was held in Pretoria, on October 23 1942.

In 1943 a Peri-Urban Areas Health Board (PUAHB) was established as per Transvaal Ordinance No. 20. As the name denotes, the board was meant to take charge of areas that were not urban and as such did not fall under any urban local authority.[205] However, it would appear that townships that were proclaimed before this ordinance were not affected. Furthermore, Alexandra had the AHC as its urban local authority hence it did not fall under the PUAHB. The 1944 deputation to meet with the Secretary of Native Affairs, D.L. Smit, to discuss bus service[206] elicited no positive response. The group urged government to take over the Alexandra bus route as the AHC was too poor to do it.

The fact that in the first decade of the 1900s Africans were buying land freehold in urban areas means that their permanence in urban areas was recognised. Also the Fagan Commission recognises the reality of African urban permanence. By contrast, Parnell (1993) and Hindson (1987) date the permanence of Africans in urban areas to earlier times. Critiquing the reference to Africans as temporary sojourners by the Transvaal Commission of 1922, Parnell speaks of "a state rhetoric that identified Africans as temporary sojourners" (Parnell 1993: 8) while there were families that had been living in Johannesburg for long periods at the time. Hindson refers to government policies that acknowledged this permanence where he states that "Since at least the 1920s influx control in the cities was closely associated with preferential allocation of employment, according to which local residents were favoured above migrants from the countryside" (Hindson, 1987: 10).

Nonetheless, legislation such as the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 was passed to ensure the temporary status of Africans in urban areas. The expunging of the African presence from urban South Africa was done systematically through legal instruments. Hence the government did at first acknowledge the permanence of Africans in urban South Africa. However, in spite of their attempts to remove Africans from urban areas, at the end of the Second World War the government seemed to accept the fact that they cannot undo this permanence.Nonetheless in the case of Alexandra the application of the Native Urban Areas Act has always been problematic since "it lay outside of Johannesburg boundaries and wae neither fully regulated nor contained by Johannesburg's system of labour or residential controls…"(Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2008:106)

The appearance of "bond" houses in Alexandra coincided with the acceptance of the permanence of Africans in urban areas by government. Thus this final change seems to

[205] Pretoria National Archives File URU 2247 2297 (1956) Band 3575 and the letter from P.A.G. Grey, Secretary for Native Affairs to The secretary for Justice dated 16/5/1957.
[206] D.L. Smit was the secretary of Native Affairs, Minutes of Conferences of October 23 1942 and July 14 1944.

correspond with dating of the appearance of brick houses – most commonly referred to as "bond" houses – in Alexandra by some of the bommastandi families that were interviewed.

As stated in Chapter 3 the Native Urban Areas Consolidated Act No. 25 of 1945, prohibited Africans from acquiring or leasing urban land unless approved by the Governor General. South African urban research including work by Horrell; 1978, Hindson 1987, Nauright 1992, Parnell 1993 discuss at length the conditions set out by this Act. These discussions cover – among others the fact that the local authorities were called upon by this law to set aside land for the establishment of African locations and hostels where all Africans, except those who fall under exempted categories, would be forced to reside as municipal tenants.

Further, research such as that conducted by Morris 1980, Platzky and Walker 1985, Hindson 1987, also discuss at length section 10 rights of the Native Urban Areas Consolidated Act No. 25 of 1945. Such rights determined who qualified to be in urban areas as well as conditions under which they qualified. It prevented black people from living in urban areas unless they were born there and lived there lawfully and continuously for fifteen years and could provide documentary proof that they had done so. Once more urban Africans en masse were deemed illegal as was the case when Johannesburg was declared white in 1933 since Section 10 rendered a large number of urban dwellers and potential residents "illegal" and hence removable (Morris 1999).

Acknowledging the permanence of Africans in urban areas was problematic for several reasons, for example there was a housing shortage for Africans with a shortage of 10 730 in Johannesburg between 1940 and 1947, and the government would have to deal with the question of justifying their exclusion from the franchise (Morris 1981, SPP Vol.1 1983).

As asserted by Hindson (1987) this argument reveals that government was recognizing two types of Africans in urban areas: those who were regarded as urban residents because they were settled in urban areas and therefore permanent and the outsiders which refers to new arrivals from rural areas. This argument also reveals an official acknowledgement of local urban residents who were settled Africans and preferable to the outsiders from the countryside.

If permanent settlement is measured by the existence of families then records of African graves in the Braamfontein cemetery dating 1899 not only locate African families in

Johannesburg but tend to suggest government recognition of this permanence through keeping their burial records.[207]

One other useful discussion for understanding the issues of bommastandi stems from the 1948 Fagan Commission or Native Laws Commission whose brief was to look into the Union laws that governed "natives" living in or near urban areas as well as all the other "natives" who were involved in all the other industries but mining.

Referring to the Native Economic Commission Report of 1932 UG 22 -which made it clear -that it did not make sense for government policies to continue operating on the assumption that "natives" were temporary as it was "clear that a considerable number of natives have become permanent town dwellers" (Fagan Commission Report 1948 Para 62), this commission also acknowledged the existence of permanent "natives".

The commission acknowledged the existence of a detribalized "native" who was defined as having "been born and brought up in an urban area, or who was permanently settled in an urban area and had no intention of returning to the Native Reserves" (Fagan Commission Report 1948: 34). Therefore it called for recognition of the distinction between a detribalized and a migrant "native". The commission was aware of the challenges facing government if they were to acknowledge "native" urban permanence. The most important of these –as stated in the paragraph above - appears to have been the franchise. Africans did not have the franchise and urban permanence would suggest rights of representation.

The Fagan Commission report was tabled in the year the National Party won the (white) election. What were the challenges that the report posed for the new government in broad and in relation to bommastandi in particular? The following section shows that the National Party remained uncertain about the position of Alexandra at least for the first few years of its government.

4.3 Alexandra and the National Party

After the National Party came into power in 1948 they later inherited the challenges of Alexandra's legal, spatial and racial particularity, more especially because they were moving towards strengthening Hertzog's policy of reserves where all Africans were ultimately to be

[207] A visit to the Braamfontein cemetery with a City Parks staff member on May 24, 2005.

moved (Van Tonder 1990, SPP Vol. 1. 1983, Platzky and Walker 1985).[208] More particularly because at the time the official concern as reported in the *Natal Daily News* of April 21 1950:

> ... generally acknowledged that the urban native who no longer considered himself to be subject to tribal control became a social danger because this control had not been replaced by anything else. It would certainly be worthwhile to investigate whether this type of Native could not again be fitted into a progressively oriented tribal relation, to the advantage of every one.

The government had to deal with the reality of increasing economic integration between black and white people and the expectations and rights that black people were fighting for as they became indispensable to the economy. Therefore the government had to acknowledge that even though they wanted to exclude Africans from political activities in the non- reserve areas, for the economy to survive they could not remove them all to the reserves (SPP Report Vol. 1 1983). They used the 1945 Act by encouraging employers to give first preference to people with Section 10 rights. Even then Alexandra presented a challenge of its own to the ruling party as it was still not under a municipality and therefore not directly affected by influx control measures.

In an effort to have all non-municipal townships under the NUAA control, an attempt was made in July 1948 to disestablish all health committees by reinforcing Section 39 (1) of the Natives Urban Areas Consolidated Act No 25 of 1945. This section empowered the PUAHB to function as an urban local authority as from July 1948.[209] However, Alexandra still remained under a health committee as the recommendation of the cabinet was that Alexandra was not to be abolished. In 1949 a committee was set up by the Administrator to look into the cabinet's decision not to remove or expropriate Alexandra, which was accepted by the Minister of Native Affairs. Further, according to this decision, Alexandra was to remain under the AHC and not JCC. The recommendation was that membership and powers of the AHC be increased. This was to be discussed with the administrator of the Transvaal.

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[208] Egoli, a History of Black Johannesburg, urbanization and Housing in South Africa's Largest City. http://www.sahistory.org.za-EGOLI-A On this website the NP government's attempt at repatriation to the "independent states" is discussed. Also www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/general/1950.html/ South African History Time Lines 1950s accessed 15/08/2006

[209] See Provincial Administration: Administrator's notice contained in TA 4/17708/1, Government Gazette No. 2057 and Letter to the secretary of peri-urban areas health board 29/7/1948 which declared the PUAHB ultra vires. The thirteen health committees were being disestablished in July 31 1948.

Government would provide financial assistance for housing and improvement of the Township in general.[210]

Nonetheless while such discussions were still underway, the committee recommended that Alexandra be incorporated into the JCC. However, in the meantime the membership of the AHC was to be increased to twelve. Eight white people were to be appointed by the Administrator, while the remaining four were to be elected by residents. The racial composition of this constituency was to be one "coloured" person for every three Africans. A recommendation was made that one of the white members be from the Provincial Administration. However, the commission did not recommend giving additional statutory powers to the AHC.

By 1949 there were 48 vacant stands in Alexandra. Three of these belonged to the AHC. The mode of transport was Public Utility Transport Corporation Limited (PUTCO) owned buses and taxis. Proclamation No. 150 of 1949 made provision for constitution of a "native" commissioner's court in Alexandra as soon as staff could be appointed. At the time Alexandra still fell under the Wynberg precinct which also serviced Marlborough, Alexandra and Zandfontein farm in addition to Wynberg. The postal services were provided by Bergvlei post office also situated in Wynberg on the Pretoria and Johannesburg road. Health services were provided by Alexandra Health Centre, the Wits university clinic, a government health centre and fourteen private practitioners. The health centre was maintained jointly by the AHC and the University of the Witwatersrand. It was staffed by a matron and an assistant matron and both white and "non-white" nurses.[211]

In 1950 the Group Areas Act (GAA) No. 41 was passed. According to this Act, occupation of urban space was racially differentiated. Different racial groups were to occupy separate geographic spaces. In the same year a Population Registration Act No. 30 was passed. In terms of this Act, a national data bank was created. This contained a list of people differentiated according to race. In cases where there were disagreements on a person's racial classification, a Race Classification Board which was subsequently established made the ultimate pronouncement. The provisions of these acts were applied retrospectively. This meant that mixed races who occupied the same places had to be separated. Hence the then

[210] Communication of the secretary of NAD to the Provincial Administration in Minute No. 80/313 of December 18, 1946.
[211] The report of a committee set up by the Administrator to look into the cabinet's decision not to remove or expropriate Alexandra, 1949.

Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. E.G. Jansen, gave accommodation priority to "natives" who had a right to be in an urban area.[212]

In Alexandra bommastandi officially comprised two racial groups, the "natives" and "coloured people". However, its removal was not mooted at the time. This interfered with the NP policy which was intended to separate different races as well as to "retribalise" the "natives". The *Star* of February 16, 1950 reported that the National Party believed that in order to retribalise the "natives" they had to be constantly exposed to their customs. For government to achieve this it was necessary for them to have control over the presence of Africans in towns. Apparently the way of life in Alexandra was seen as emulating that of the "European" and this was deemed unacceptable since it was believed to promote detribalization. Therefore government envisaged achieving control through ensuring that Africans lived in municipal locations. As expressed in an open letter from the AHC to the citizens of Johannesburg in 1943 bommastandi felt that:

> Locations have been created to "control" them for the convenience of the Europeans for whom they work; from whom they receive their meager wages; and who for, for their own safety and convenience insist on the residential segregation of Africans in locations "run" by European officials of the municipality. For better or for worse, many Africans seek to avoid, or escape from, this system. Whether as owners or as tenants in Alexandra Township, they feel that they are "living like Europeans" – less interfered with; more their own masters than in any European controlled location.

This was contrary to the retribalisation policy that government was pursuing. For example, Dr. Jansen raised concern about the identity of the urban "native" since the policy of the government was endeavouring to reconstruct the tribal customs. Expressing this sentiment in the The *Star* of 16/February 1950 he said:

> Apartheid does not mean that all the natives will be sent into the reserves. It means the development of the native along the lines founded on what is their own. The natives were not trying to further their own tribal ideals-they were trying to become white.

[212] The *Natal Daily News* April 21 1950 report on Jansen's speech.

The Mentz Regional Planning Committee, which was briefed to formalise plans for Soweto, among others – recommended that Alexandra remain. Since there was a high likelihood that Alexandra was going to be proclaimed an African group area by the Group areas board the committee set conditions for its stay. First, it suggested that all non-Africans be removed from the area. Secondly, since urban spaces occupation precluded freehold rights for Africans, Alexandra bommastandi would also lose such rights. Its residents were to serve as a labour pool for Johannesburg North, but this would depend on reduction of its population to 30000 as well as creation of barriers between it and the white areas (Jochelson 1988). The committee also placed a moratorium on further extensions of Alexandra Township. Further, intra-racial transfer of property as well as from any race to a "native" was acceptable. This was in line with the terms of the GAA which prohibited other races from acquiring property from "natives" unless they were permitted to do so by the "Land Tenure Advisory Board". Such permits were in any event never issued in Alexandra.[213]

In 1952 the amendment of the Urban Areas Act applied in Alexandra. Section 10 of this Act demanded that residents demonstrate their right to be in the township through continuous residence and employment within the municipality of Johannesburg. The specificity of the latter condition exposes the contradictions for Alexandra mmastandi in particular. Their continued residence in Alexandra would be overwritten by employment outside the Johannesburg municipality and hence disqualify them from living in Alexandra while a tenant who worked in Johannesburg could acquire such rights. This perhaps marked the beginning of contestation of Alexandra space that was not ownership based.

4.4 Problems in Alexandra: the view from below

According to the statistics provided by Prof. Hoernle of the AHC, in the 1940s, the population of Alexandra was recorded as comprising 39 000 "native" and 1 000 "coloured people". At the time the Native Affairs Commissioner referred to the AHC as a "recently detribalized community in the work of municipal government". This was apparently used to explain their "failure" to perform efficiently. However, insufficient resources were one of the major contributory factors. For example, due to "bond" houses the township was paying a large part of its earned income in meeting indebtedness outside Alexandra. It paid interest of up to 40 per cent to "European" moneylenders and these monies were deducted before the

[213] A letter from the secretary of NAD to the secretary of National Housing office dated 24 January 1955 using the Mentz Report as guideline.

loaned money was even paid to the lender and this militated against payment of services rendered by the AHC.[214]

The response from below to the removal of Alexandra was from both tenants and bommastandi. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Nauright (1992) covers intensive participation by the Alexandra residents at length therefore I will not go into detail.

For example, an open letter from the AHC to the citizens of Johannesburg referred to above was speaking on behalf of all Alexandra residents. The purpose of the letter was to clarify their position since discussions and debates about Alexandra excluded Alexandra residents. The AHC made it clear that in response to the proposals from different quarters stated above, Alexandra bommastandi were opposed to any form of removal. This included moving Alexandra Township or incorporating it into the Johannesburg municipality. In this letter they cited different arguments that were presented for the abolition of Alexandra Township, but most importantly they made it clear that they were aware that unless there was enabling legislation for its removal the Johannesburg municipality knew and understood that at the time they did not have powers to remove them. Furthermore, the letter stated their reluctance to even consider moving as they understood that the provision of freehold plots for the stand holders in a municipal township, which the city council itself admits to be an essential part of its abolition scheme… is legally not possible being in conflict with the policy of the Urban Natives Areas Act. This shows that even though bommastandi, together with their tenants, fought for retention of Alexandra, they were not always necessarily united. They would for example, be united on issues of bus boycotts but adopt differing stances on issues of rent as it militated against tenants and their subsequent subletting would clash with the interests of bommastandi whose properties would be overcrowded even further.

The debates on transport touch on the racial issue of who should own bus companies that serviced Alexandra and how the black owners such as Baloyi, referred to in chapter 3, had to sell their buses in the 1940s.[215] . The discussions of the bus service commission, which were set up to investigate the bus strikes, suggest a subtle way of getting rid of Alexandra. First, the AHC suggestion that the JCC or PUTCO provide a bus service to Alexandra was refused. The argument was that the 50 000 Africans resident in Alexandra provided labour at no cost to the city, therefore white people who benefited from this should subsidise their

[214] A letter from the Native Affairs Commissioner to the Minister of Native affairs dated October 30, 1940, File No 80/313.

[215] Nauright (1992) illustrates how an attempt by Baloyi to avoid losing the transport business culminated in a formation of an Alliance between himself and Xuma as well as Moroka. The alliance failed and Baloyi's bus company was sold in 1940.

transport. However, this led to a stalemate as "this argument agitated the many whites who knew that the JCC also proposed spending millions of pounds on Alexandra removal" (Nauright 1992: 303).

Also, fare increase was a way to force people to move or want to move out of Alexandra. The AHC reported to the Native Affairs Commission that Alexandra workers paid £1 2s and 5d per month while those from Orlando paid 8s.6d. per month for a similar distance from Johannesburg city centre.

There were further, countrywide economic hardships due to war. In Alexandra, these hardships were exacerbated by mortgages which constituted heavy financial burdens on bommastandi. This led to increased rents to tenants, which in turn led to their subletting. The ripple effect of this was more overcrowding. Significantly, Nauright recognises the porousness of boundaries between bommastandi and tenants, because even though he draws a distinction between Tourikis' (1981) "super exploited" and the "rack renting" groups, he also acknowledges that not all tenants and bommastandi could be said to have been super-exploited and rack renting respectively.

The rent increase of 1944, which was a response by bommastandi to economic hardships, led to a protest by the Bantu Tenants Association. Their appeal to the Native Commissioner to intervene led to the establishment of a rent control office in Alexandra in 1944. Two years later some rents were decreased, but were challenged by bommastandi. The subsequent response of the tenants was perhaps the first en masse movement out of Alexandra, although not supervised and enforced by the government. The tenants moved to Orlando, where they joined one of the largest squatter movements of the 1940s in Johannesburg, led by Sofasonke Mpanza (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008: 67, Morris 1981, Mashabela 1990). Nauright (1992) emphasises that white people in the neighbourhood of Alexandra had attributed this overcrowding to the influx of Rhodesians who came to Alexandra because it had no influx control. Interestingly white protesters linked the uncontrolled presence of Rhodesians at the time directly to rising crime rates in and around Alexandra.[216] Interestingly, instead of embracing this as a stepping stone towards removal of Alexandra, government moved the squatters back to Alexandra, where they occupied squares 1 and 3. Those who were not from Alexandra but employed in the Johannesburg municipality

[216] The 2003 debates on crime rates in the media present them most commonly as a black phenomenon. There were no reports on what the position is on foreigners of other races. The point I am making is that one would think that there are no foreigners who are not black. We never get to hear anything about foreigners from other continents except Africa. There are Chinese, Pakistani, "Europeans" and others but the media is silent on this.

were moved to Orlando, while the others were either sent "back to rural areas" or "dumped" in Hammanskraal.[217]

The Township residents sent a deputation to the Mayor of Johannesburg, Mr. J.J. Page. The Mayor had been active in meetings that discussed incorporation of Alexandra into his municipality, although dissenters were not allowed to voice their opinions. An opinion expressed in *the Rand Daily Mail*, of May 10, 1939 was that the residents did not wish to be municipal tenants; however, they were willing to consider moving on condition they retained their mmastandi status. Additionally, the AHC letter of July 1943, expressed their disenchantment with all these debates and enquiries that were done without consultation with the community. They indicated the significant role played by the AHC in trying to improve Alexandra Township with meagre resources that they raised themselves from service charges while no government authority showed interest in providing assistance. This letter stated:

> In fact…..the vast majority of Alexandra Township natives consist of respectable, hardworking natives, employed mostly in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. By scrimping and scraping, often denying themselves food, they have managed to purchase their own plots in Alexandra Township at high prices and to erect houses, shops etc. thereon. At first, natives were obliged to erect their buildings entirely on their own capital as a result of which thousands of raw brick, iron and slummy structures sprang up... in the last five to six years helped by loans from the building societies and other investors the face of the Township has practically changed. Mud hovels have given place to properly erected brick houses, shops, recreation halls and a bioscope.

The AHC queried the advisability of viewing removal as an option in the face of the Second World War. First, they queried the practicability of considering removal, given the shortage of building materials during the war. However, it would appear that the powers that be viewed the building material argument as insignificant since it affected other parts of the country as well. Second, there were pending issues of justice and morality regarding the question of the removal of Alexandra.

[217] A rural place in the North of Pretoria.

On July 14, 1944 another conference was called by the Provincial Administration at the request of the AHC. This conference, chaired by the Deputy Administrator Pentz, was to investigate matters relating to Alexandra. Some of the people attending this conference were also present at the earlier of Pretoria on October 23, 1942. Discussions at this conference seemed to be predisposed towards the abolition and removal of Alexandra. They focused mainly on the impossibility of providing a railroad link between Alexandra and Johannesburg as well as a need for a less haphazard development plan for Alexandra.[218] Regarding the latter issue a concern was raised that the AHC had neither money nor expertise to draw such a plan.

The issue of crime was also raised at this conference. It was suggested that the Johannesburg municipality was the only body that could reduce crime in Alexandra and that it was nearby. The reason advanced was that even though Wynberg police station was said to be doing well in servicing Alexandra, 90 per cent of its work was in Alexandra. This therefore indicated the need for construction of a police station for the exclusive servicing of Alexandra, more so because the law-abiding citizens of Alexandra also needed a police station. However, construction of a police station in Alexandra would not be possible since, as a non-municipality controlled township, its plan did not have open spaces that were designated for building public facilities.

The conference also argued that the newly formed PUAHB could not undertake local functions of Alexandra at the time since Alexandra fell outside its scope of functions. This board was not an urban local authority. However – in spite of the predisposition of the conference alluded to above – some views expressed suggested that the abolition was not going to take place. A government official from NAD stated that government was not in agreement with the JCC, which recommended removal of Alexandra. Hence issues of appointment of a "native" commissioner's office and a courthouse for Alexandra were discussed. Furthermore, during discussions of what would happen if Alexandra was to remain, it was suggested that the provincial government and JCC discuss its future. The final recommendation was that the JCC would be asked to draw a planning scheme of Alexandra and a conference would reassemble to discuss this.

The developments in South African urban legislation that governed "natives" were increasingly identifying them as a homogeneous group. Crankshaw (2005) refers to social class compression which, through provision of physically uniform housing in particular, hides the differences among urban "natives". In Alexandra introduction of such legislation

[218] The JCC had already responded negatively when the ATC requested that then existing tramways be converted to accommodate locomotives that would service Alexandra.

manifested differently. Section 10 rights clustered together and in some instances separated people who had different and similar property rights respectively. The following section raises questions of redefinition of ownership and use rights that were governed by application of urban "native" legislation in Alexandra.

4.5 Redefinition of legal rights to Alexandra space

To further tighten measures to keep the "native" out of towns and to control his/her conditions of stay in town acts such as the Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act No. 67 were passed in 1952. This Act made it mandatory for all black men – and later women – to carry reference documents on their person. Dingake (1987: 47) describes a reference document as:

> A multipaged document with my photo on the inside cover...it was a comprehensive document divided into a number of sections detailing one's identity, tax payment, residential permit employment address and employer's monthly signature…

These documents would serve to control the presence and movement of Africans in towns in a much more stringent way. Africans were to carry these documents all the time as they were expected to produce them as and when the police demanded them. Alexandra, which fell outside the mandate of the NUAA could not escape the reference document since they went to other areas where NUAA was applied on daily basis for employment.

In 1954, the Black Resettlement Act No. 19 which gave government the right to remove Africans from Johannesburg was passed. The following year, approximately 60 000 black people were moved at gunpoint from Johannesburg's Western Areas. Such people were moved to Meadowlands (Beavon 2004: 131). These townships were redesignated white, for example Sophiatown was renamed Triomf (Beinart 1994: 148, Mabin 2005: 19). Since the Act could not yet apply to Alexandra, people from resettled areas continued to flock to it. By the mid-1950s the population of Alexandra was recorded as 100 000 or more (Tourikis 1981, Nauright 1992).

Mme Nthabiseng, whose family moved from Sophiatown a year before the passing of this Act, had this to say about coming to Alexandra:

> In Alexandra actually I came as you know they had to remove, they remove Sophia town you know when it was? ekare ke di 1953 (I think it was in 1953) I don't know whether it was 1953 but it was still the fifties, but we were forcibly removed in Sophia town and it became a white area, but came with my parents bona stand seko Alex.(To their stand in Alex)[219]

Moving and resettling in another freehold area was not the only worrying trend for government. The other choice was to shuttle between settlements.

> Up to 1948 I was a resident of Sophiatown, I was to be back in 1954 and then back to Alex in 1957 when I ducked the forced removals to Meadowlands. I shuttled between the two townships, because they shared many common features. Their two main differences were at the time: Sophiatown had some street lights whereas Alexandra was unlit...[220]
> (Dingake 1987: 27)

By March 10, 1956, a report appeared in the *Bantu World* on the removal of Africans – by the JCC and the Resettlement Board – from several townships such as Pageview, Kliptown including Kensington B, which was part of Alexandra Township. However, in Alexandra the portion of interest to this study, only "condemned houses" were to be removed.

In the same year, the Natives Prohibition of Interdicts and the Natives Urban Areas Amendment Bills were being discussed in parliament. The first Bill, which was later passed as Natives Prohibition of Interdicts Act No. 64 of 1956, disallowed Africans to contest removal through courts. It further disempowered courts by taking away from them the power to stop any removals. The *Saturday Star* of March 31, 1956 stated this on the Natives Prohibition of Interdicts Bill:

> The main effect of the Bill is to prohibit the courts from preventing the forcible and unlawful removal of an African from any land, building or area, provided that such threatened removal is to be carried out under an order or warrant which an official

[219] Interview with mme Nthabiseng, Alexandra,July 30, 2003.
[220] Dingake is a political activist who was banished to Robben Island. This book is about his experiences in Sophiatown.

> purports to make or issue under any law whether or not such law in fact authorizes him to do so.

According to the *Bantu World* of March 1956, the second Bill would give Local authorities overarching powers to expel any African from the city. The position of bommastandi was ambiguous. Some of them would only be affected by this legislation during the day at their places of employment where the NUAA and its amendments would be applicable, but go home to Alexandra where it did not. How did this impact on ability to keep jobs in the cities? Would there be a link between the unemployability of Alexandra residents that The NEDPL identified in earlier years and the ambiguous position of Alexandra bommastandi. In other words, were some of them unemployable in legal terms in that they were legally disqualified to be in the city where NUAA was effective? Moreover, in 1956 the PUAHB was designated the urban local authority of Johannesburg North as per proclamation No. 241 of the same year. However, this proclamation did not at the time include Alexandra Township.

These developments and processes were in essence writing away the possibility for Alexandra Township bommastandi to remain in Johannesburg on their own terms. They could either be moved to homelands or live in Johannesburg on terms set out by the JCC and the relevant state department. The intention to retribalise the "native" was re-emphasized and taken a step further by Dr H. F. Verwoerd, the successor to Dr. Jansen in the portfolio of Minister of NAD. His plan was to have all Africans ultimately sent to the reserves. As reported *World* March 1956 Dr. Verwoerd stated in his speech in Benoni[221]:

> In South Africa there are places for black and white. Bantu have come to work in white areas. They must not expect the same rights in urban areas as they expect in their own Bantu areas.

This pronouncement emphasised the spatial differentiation based on segregation not only for Johannesburg but for the whole of South Africa. The statement further problematises the Alexandra mmastandi status. If Africans "should not expect the same rights in urban areas" what then were the rights of bommastandi of Alexandra?

[221] A town in the East Rand what is currently referred to as Ekurhuleni.

4.6 Ways of life: Life goes on in Alexandra

Agitation for Alexandra's removal did not stop life in Alexandra. While concerns such as crime, health and the slum conditions in Alexandra were raised by people agitating for its removal, life went on. New people came in and bought properties, old residents bought different properties, wives and children inherited properties.

At the conference chaired by the Minister of Interior and Public Health H.G. Lawrence, held in Pretoria on October 23, 1942, the representative from the South African Police, Lt. Col. O.J.P. Horak, provided crime statistics. He stated that between October 1, 1941 and September 30 1942, there were 4 961 Liquor law offences out of a total of 6 896. These included offences such as 222, 451 and 1 260 motor ordinance AHC regulations and other offences respectively.[222] Also, out of 38 homicide or murder only three were premeditated. In as far as liquor brewing and selling offences were concerned the AHC argued that liquor brewing offences in Alexandra were no different from those in Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare, which fell under the municipality of Johannesburg. Thus the argument for abolition of Alexandra should not be based on the inability to curb crime such as liquor brewing.[223]

Alexandra was occupied by bommastandi of different backgrounds, from the poor to the better off. However, the proceedings of several conferences whose agendas included discussion of the conditions in Alexandra indicated that the emphasis was largely on the poor. A closer look at a report that appeared in Libertas revealed that bommastandi were disparate. Libertas commented on the cinema which at the time operated once a week due to the poverty of inhabitants who could not afford to go to films more than once a week. Such a report however, continued to reveal how preposterous this was as there were other fortunes made out of Alexandra. This would refer to high interest rates that were paid by bommastandi of Alexandra. Citing the findings of the Nicholls Commission Tourikis (1981), refers to high interest rates that bommastandi had to pay on mortgage bonds. He pointed out that bommastandi had to pay 40% interest to the "European" moneylenders before they could get the loans that they requested.

Most of the residents (this would probably include bommastandi and their tenants) worked in Johannesburg and the East Rand. Libertas (August1942) reported that the average

[222] Report on the committee appointed by the Administrator-in-Executive Committee to consider the future of Alexandra Township and the control of the native townships and settlements near Pretoria 1949.
[223] Letter Submitted by the AHC to the Minister of the Public Health in reply to the proposal of the JCC to abolish Alexandra in 1940.

family income was about £60 per annum. This excluded washer women and domestic workers who would mostly be based in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. How did the workers travel to work? Depending on their destination, they used either bicycles or PUTCO buses. The bus fare as reported in 1942 – 22 shillings a month – amounted to 25 per cent of their earnings. However, the report made the interesting point that among the residents there were a few "plutocrats" – people who could afford cars and even chauffeurs.

Land in Alexandra was becoming increasingly costly. It was valued at about £200 per acre, compared to £150 for neighbouring Houghton and Kew. An acre bought for £200 would be subdivided into four and fetch £1 000 in Alexandra. In some instances the mmastandi family had to spend more money towards building a home. However, "The desire for ownership is strong... and unbelievable sacrifices are made" (Libertas August 1942). Why were Alexandra bommastandi constantly referred to as poor and willing to make sacrifices towards making a home in Alexandra? Such sacrifices were a result of uncertainties and constant shuttling of Africans by government particularly due to the 1913 Native Land Act (SPP, 1983; Plaatjie 1916).

However, rather than label all bommastandi poor, one should focus on financial challenges that they faced which were better captured in the following report:

> If an African or Eurafrican mortgage to anyone but the ATC is foreclosed, the creditor has not the right to repossess, since only Africans or Eurafricans may own property. Therefore the foreclosed property is put on the market, and then the most usual trick is for the moneylender to pay and African to buy it at the auction – commonly for a fraction of its normal market value. Then the African (but really the moneylender) resells it at a fat profit.[224]

The table below shows part of the history of stand 1 038. According to the Libertas report, it is probable that a moneylender paid Msimang to buy it from Badela at the amount owed to the ATC. In this way the ATC gets the £8 owed while the moneylender gets £77 profit for the same property on the same day, only to fetch £232 and £1 042 more six and seven years later respectively.

[224] Libertas, August 1942 p. 12. The term "Eurafrican" refers to "coloured" people, those of supposedly mixed European and African descent.

Table 9 History of stand 1 038

Plot	Date	Size	Transferred from	Transferred to	Amount paid
1 038	1/5/1923	77 sq roods	ATC	Elsie Badela	£40
	8/10/1936		E Badela Widow messenger sale 22/6/31	Henry Msimang	£8
	8/10/1936		H Msimang	Annie Mafani Widow	£85
	19/5/1942		Annie Mafani	G Radebe	£240
	15/1/1943		G Radebe	Josia Nkoalipe	£1 050

Source: Pretoria National Archives File T341 Rak 1026 Plots 905 – 1147

Contrary to the case above, Table 10 below shows that there was a waiting period of 3 years before property that was bought through the messenger of the court was sold by the buyer Isaac Komane. Just like the example above it is probable that Nobokwa owed the ATC £10 for the property. The question arising is, were there other possibilities besides the one sited by Libertas where other people, probably Africans, also bought foreclosed properties for profit. Komane made a profit of £80 on this property.

Table 10 History of stand 1 601

Plot	Date	Size	Transferred from	Transferred to	Amount paid
1 601	4/9/1929	77	ATC	Woodroff Nobokwa	£40
	29/1/1932		W Nobokwa Mess of Court 20/3/31	Isaac Komane	£10
	5/2/1935		I Komane	Japhtalina Sekhota	£90

Source: Pretoria National Archives File T341 Rak 028 Plots 1407 - 1649

The government intervened through the Minister of NAD, Mr. Reitz, who empowered the Governor General to set conditions for private companies who were selling land. Unfortunately, just like all the other legislation, such conditions would protect potential property buyers in townships established after the Minister's pronouncement. However, the population numbers in Alexandra continued to grow. According to the 1946 census a total of 52 237 people were resident in Alexandra. This comprised 50 791, Natives, 1 420 "coloured people", 19 white people and 19 Asiatics.

Furthermore, while the discussions on possible removal and irritations continued, developments in Alexandra Township appeared to be based on its permanence. Hence Messrs. Baloyi and Brown separately submitted applications for building of cinemas on their properties. Earlier there were already discussions on regulations for tea rooms, eating houses and extramural activities such as choral music, athletics and clubs.[225]

4.6.1 Changing from mud houses

The mud houses whose style of building seemed to have been a continuation of African traditional home building were increasingly being replaced by houses of red bricks and red corrugated iron roofing. This could suggest an important break with rural African traditions on the one hand, but on the other it could mean a response to the official challenge that bommastandi occupied slums or the financial capacity to upgrade.

An interesting coincidence was that the changing housing styles and the acknowledgement of permanence of Africans in urban areas that came after the Second World War occurred together. What did permanence mean to government and the urban Africans, particularly bommastandi of Alexandra? How did the dual application of legislation affect them? They were exempted from the NUAA on the one hand as long as they were in Alexandra but they would be treated differently in Johannesburg city. Did different stamps appear in their passes? What did the police look for in their passes?

Significantly, the shift coincided with the passing of the NUAA Amendment Act No 25 of 1945 which reinforced The Native (Black) Urban Areas Act No 21 of 1923. The significant point for Alexandra mmastandi is that while in general government policy acknowledged the permanence of urban Africans, it did not move away from the principle of controlling conditions of that presence. Hence the contradictions of Alexandra remained, both

[225] Pretoria National Archives File TA 10/10657 KJB T/12/4/2 n\N/9/13/3. Discussions in the 1940s between various bodies, for instance Native Affairs, Director of Labour, commissioner and the Health committee.

as part of the non-reserve space and as a place. Alexandra occupied the non-reserve space that was segregated in that it was not meant for black people and legislation was increasingly making this the government position. However, bommastandi were continuously creating a place in Alexandra that was becoming different from other African places in Johannesburg, although remaining similar in some ways.

4.6.2 Accessing a mortgage bond

As mentioned earlier it was common practice among bommastandi to use their stands as collateral to obtain mortgage bonds in order to build homes. However, it would seem that there was no direct access to financial institutions for bommastandi (Tourikis 1981). Tourikis elaborates on how bommastandi interests rates were charged in Alexandra Township. Even though some respondents referred to "Equity", a financial institution which appeared to have provided money to some bommastandi, the common practice appears to have been having white attorneys act as middlemen. This meant that bommastandi would be charged interest twice: first, to pay the interest charged by the bank, and second, the one charged by the attorneys. Describing how her parents got access to the second property mme Mmapula describes how the family's second property was acquired in 1945:

> *Ee. Bondo tsona di tlile 1946. Ja. Ke ile ka bona di lawyera tse ba reng ke Greenfield and Greenfield.... A ke re re bagolo; go ne go na le monna o mongwe ba re ke Mr. Ndaba, ene o ile a tsena sekolo ko Odlange, in Natal. A etsa standard 6. o ne a etsa building. .. Ke ene a ileng a tsaya batswadi ba rona a ba isa ko bo Greenfield and Greenfield le Mr. Rohm and // a ke re ke di company; Greenfield and Greenfield, Rohm and Rohm.* [226]
>
> (There was no "bond" house... We are still coming to the story about bond... Yes the "bonds" came in 1946. Yes I saw the lawyers called Greenfield and Greenfield... Let's say the parents did... there was a man called Mr. Ndaba. He went to school in Odlange in Natal[227]. He did his standard six. He also did building... he is the one who took our parents to Greenfield and Greenfield and Mr. Rohm and // these were companies) (Referring to law firms).

[226] Interview with mme Mmapula, Alexandra, October 3, 2003.
[227] One of the oldest and most prominent African schools in the present Kwa Zulu Natal province

It is probable that after having acquired the land in 1947 the family applied for the mortgage bond using their land as collateral.

The amounts loaned would depend on the size of the house that a particular family wanted and could afford. The link between a builder and lawyers that mme Mmapula refers to is further captured by ntate Sechaba, whose father was a building contractor. He explained how attorneys such as Klein acted as middlemen for his father's contracting company, who using money received from lawyers would then build homes for bommastandi. Describing the process ntate Sechaba said:

> *Ntate ha a qala a sebetsa, he became a builder, and then he quickly had a contract firm, e ya go aga. Now they were a group. Jaana ke cho ke re go ne go na le ntate Lebuso, go na le ntate Selepe, go na le ntate, go na le ntate Dlamini, they were four. They used to have their own building contractor // contracting work. Ke nagana gore ba ne ba kadimana chelete bona around. That's why they kept such a close bond. And then mona, mo re neng re le teng, ntate o ne a sa koleke rente after ga re aga dirumu. Go ne go tlo koleka o mongwe wa bona. Ntate o ne a tsamaya a yo koleka ko gongwe ko bona ba dulang teng Ba kena mo dibondong ka bo 50, late 40s, ka bo 49, 50; ba kena mo dibondong ba reka di //ba nka dibondo bona, because they were building these houses. All these many face brick houses, my father laid his hands on them.* [228]
> (When my father started working he became a builder and then he quickly had a contract firm, for building. Now they were a group. Let me say there was ntate Lebuso, ntate Selepe, my father, and ntate Dlamini, there were four of them. They used to have their own building contract // contracting work. I think they used to loan each other money. That's why they kept such a close bond… They got into "bond" in the 50s late 40s, 49, and 50. They got bonds. They bought through bonds, but because they were building these houses, all these many face brick houses my father laid his hands on them (i.e. as a member of a building contractors firm my father played a role in their construction).

Clarifying the role of the lawyers and their link to people who got mortgage bonds he continued:

[228] Interview with ntate Sechaba Alexandra, September 2, 2003

No. [They] were this group of lawyers, this group of Jews who were attached to blacks. Jwale bo Klein, o ne a nka bond ko Klein o ka re ke Klein a mo kadimang chelete, and who is also his lawyer. He is the person who is loaning money, and yet it is the bank that is actually lending ntate money. [229]

(There was this group of lawyers, this group of Jews who were attached to Blacks. No Klein and them took out these bonds I think it was Klein – who was also a lawyer who took out the bond and loaned money to my father. He is the person who is lending my father the money but actually it was the bank that loaned him that money.)

How did this process impact on the final interest charged to and paid by bommastandi? If one considers the chain of hands that the money had to go through before it reached bommastandi then perhaps the 40 per cent referred to above might be conservative, particularly in instances such as this. Mme Nthabiseng explains how this relay that passed through a lawyer, between the bank and bommastandi affected them:

No they use to pay bond, akitsi gore akere the bond will pay the people of the stand then you pay back to the lawyer who paid back the money that you borrow, ka bond but it took long and it has the rent so have to sort of try and feel (probably fill) the interest so that o etse kapele. [230]

(No they used to pay bond. I do not know maybe I should say the bond will pay the people of the stand then you pay back to the lawyer who paid back the money that you borrow, but it took long and it had interest so they had to try and pay up quickly so as to reduce the interest.)

4.6.3 New ways of building - "dibondo" (mortgage bonds)

The introduction of "dibondo" in Alexandra was signalled by the appearance of red bricked corrugated iron roofed houses in 1946. "Dibondo" referred to housing that, though owner built, was built with money loaned on "mortgage bonds". It seems new housing styles appeared as a result of the AHC "efforts to control the slum conditions".[231] The AHC had to

[229] Ibid.
[230] Interview with Mme Nthabiseng, Alexandra, July 30 2003.
[231] A letter signed by Nts'ala and Maeger, members of the AHC N/A File TA 10/10657 KJB T/12/4/2 n\N/9/13/3. Discussions in the 1940s between various bodies, for instance Native Affairs, Director of Labour, commissioner and the Health committee

approve plans of new homes. The most common practice seems to have been to use land as collateral once it was paid off to the ATC. For example, the Native Affairs Commissioner expressed concern over a large number of Alexandra buildings that were bonded to the Equity building society. Although this was an argument he raised in support of retention of Alexandra in later years he revealed the trend that existed in Alexandra where bommastandi bonded their properties with Equity.[232]

The experience of baba Temba reflects this trend as well. He said:

> *There was a difficulty ko gae, because mme // I didn't understand every time I talked to her ngi funu kwazi kuthi what's happening; but said uku bhadal' istandi; si sa bhadala. Every time mafelo a kgwedi hey imali manje ku funeka kuthi si bhadele….. ku funeka si yo bhadel' iequity and all that; hey, hey, hey*.[233]
>
> (There was a difficulty at home, because my mother // I didn't understand, every time I talked to her wanting to know what was happening; but said we were still paying for the stand. Every time at the end of the month hey money, we need to pay… we need to pay Equity and all that; hey, hey, hey.)

When asked what his parents loaned money from Equity for he explained that the money was for the house. Although he was not sure of exactly what had happened he thought Equity had kept his parents' title deed as security. The inference I am making here is that the building society held the title deed of the land as security for the loan, while attorneys were "lodging" the bonds and had to be paid interest. The appearance of this new housing style seemed to exacerbate the contradictory status of Alexandra as it appeared at the time when the government debates were focused on eradication of African access to freehold, more particularly the ones located in the non-reserve areas. However, Alexandra was, among others, protected by its non-municipal status as well as its racial composition.

[232] Letter from Native commissioner of Alexandra to Chief Native Commissioner of Johannesburg dated February 6, 1952.
[233] Interview with baba Temba,Alexandra, September 26, 2003

4.6.4 Bond repayment

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Alexandra was occupied by bommastandi of different backgrounds. Even though there were the poor as well as the better off, it means that in general, there had to be creative ways of raising funds for bond repayments.

Although there had been renting of property before the period of "dibondo" in Alexandra it would appear that it became even more expedient to have tenants in the 1940s. In fact, it became more crucial since bommastandi were under pressure to repay bonds at inflated interest rates. This was due to the high interest rates alluded to above. They had to pay banks as well as white lawyers who took bonds on their behalf. Renting was more advantageous than ever, not only to increase the home budget but to repay the bond so as not to lose the land and the house on which it stood. The oppression of tenants that Tourikis (1981) alludes to in his study is linked to the dual and high interest rates that bommastandi were paying.

In his description of how his uncle ran his property, baba Temba explained how his uncle lived where he worked in the East Rand but only came back at month end to collect rent from his tenants and pay his bond at the lawyers.

> *So now ntatemoholo Solomon needed help. So I then moved down to occupy one of the rooms there to be a caretaker, ke etsetsa hore I must collect his rent and everything ga a fitlha ena; here is rent and what's wrong with this and that; as a supervisor...* [234]
> (So now uncle Solomon needed help. So I then moved down to occupy one of the rooms there to be a caretaker, so that I could collect his rent and everything so that when he arrived I would give him the money and a report of what's wrong with this and that; as a supervisor...)

There were eight tenant families living on the property at the time. In this instance the house was not even a full time home for baba Temba's uncle.

It is clear that in addition to subletting, bommastandi also held other regular jobs. Referring to the job held by her mother, mama Nomvula, a 70-year-old retired woman, said:

[234] Interview with baba Temba, Alexandra September 26, 2003.

One a nka diwashene ko makgoweng atla le yona mo, a e aenela mona e busetsa. Ba rekisa le di fruits, ba di rekisa ko makgoweng. So ga nne ga agiwa, bond ena one a patela. Ke ne ke utlwe ba re ke ko equity building society.[235]
(She used to take washing from the whites and brought it home. She used to iron the washing here and return it to them. They also used to sell fruit, they sold them in the white people's place. So when they build the "bonds" she used to pay for it. I heard them say it was at Equity building Society (meaning that is where they paid this bond).

Before this period, it was claimed that tenants were taken in to assist them to gain access to Johannesburg which was increasingly becoming hostile towards unendorsed African presence. This is illustrated in the following section.

4.6.5 Property ownership and being humane

Owning was seen as a platform to help. Tenants needed a place to stay and property owners provided the place to stay. Continued exemption of Alexandra from spatial legislation that governed Africans' stay in urban areas was seen as a cause of overcrowding. However Tsakani's explanation focuses on the action of subletting as arising out of being humane. Tsakani is mama Mihloti's nephew. He is a third generation freeholder. His grandfather as well as his father and his siblings lived in Alexandra. His father used to be a member of the AHC and he worked for the JCC at the time of the interview.. His father, who was a driver for a soft drinks company, also had several businesses. He reveals another side of property use in Alexandra – a symbol of kindness and humanity:

It was a free title hold deed and di bond tsa mo Alexandra they are as equal le tsa Sandton ka chelete. Because it's in the prime area. Unfortunately ka botho ba rona Basotho, we allowed all the people to come into Alex. This was just a // we'd call it a stepping-stone into the city. E ne e le…camp, ga re batla go buwa nnete, gore o mongwe le o mongwe, whether o tswa Malawi or Zambia or Mozambique or kae kae,

[235] Interview with mama Nomvula. Alexandra, October 10, 2003.

o thomile mo Alexandra go dula. Hence we have people like the President, le ena e ne e le legoduga. O se ke wa tshaba go e bua eo, e ne e le legoduga.[236]
(It was a freehold and the bonds in Alexandra are equal to those of Sandton (the monetary value of Alex houses is equal to those of Sandton) Because Alexandra is in the prime area. Unfortunately due to our kindness … we Africans[237] we allowed all the people to come into Alex. This was just… we'd call it (Alexandra) a stepping stone into the city. To tell the truth, Alex was a camp where anybody could start their life in Johannesburg. This would include people from places such as Malawi, Mozambique and other places. Hence we have people such as the president he was also an outsider (Legoduka[238]). Do not be afraid to say it.)

The respondent does not seem to see any contradiction here. Thus he presented it as source of revenue as well as some form of assistance. But also he seemed to link the action of humanity – through taking many people in – to the devaluing of their properties. He compares their property values to those of the neighbouring Sandton, which was not used as a receptacle for people starting their lives in Johannesburg. He further emphasises the indiscriminate way in which they took in people. It did not matter who they were and where they came from. Thus a list of people from outside South Africa is included and he uses the term "legoduka" which includes the former president.[239] Tsakani does not seem to see any contradiction in taking in tenants both for money as well as some form of assistance.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on how the legal wrangling over Alexandra started to build up in the 1940s. It shows the paradoxical position of Alexandra which results from the apparent

[236] Interview with Tsakani and mama Mihloti, Alexandra, September 16, 2003
[237] Generally most African groups will either use Sotho "humanity" or give a derivative of their particular group to mean the same e.g. Sesotho or Setswana. Here, I settle for "humanenness as "Botho" does not mean "humanity". When Africans are referring to a common practice among themselves as a group they would most commonly use their particular ethnic grouping for example a Motswana or Mosotho will say Batswana or Basotho do this and that instead of MoAferika which is a Sotho derivative of African.
[238] Generally "an outsider". "Goduka" is an isiXhosa word for leaving or going away. In this instance it refers to the fact that the president arrived from outside Alexandra. Nieftagodien (2011) provides a detailed analysis of the concept
[239] The ongoing debates on "foreignness" most commonly depict local Africans as xenophobic. Tsakani quite interestingly refutes this picture somewhat albeit from a historical point of view. When there was a need, at the risk of devaluing their own properties, they took everybody in. However, they understood that they would not be prosecuted as they were bommastandi. He uses the term "legoduka" which is derived from an isiXhosa verb "goduka" "to leave", most commonly packing a bag to leave home for some time. See also Nieftagodien (2011)

government predisposition towards its removal while the life of bommastandi continued to show signs of becoming more established. It shows how the very legislation that the government passed to control and regulate African movement in Johannesburg in particular was used by bommastandi to settle in Alexandra as it continued to exclude them, which made its establishment an exception rather than a rule.

The events referred to in this chapter revealed various opinions concerning the future of Alexandra. For example, while the Thornton, Feetham and Native Affairs Commissions did not recommended inclusion of Alexandra in JCC jurisdiction, the city council and representatives from neighbouring communities of Alexandra did not agree to its retention. Reasons for these positions varied between the high costs that would be incurred if Alexandra was removed, high crime rates and diseases in Alexandra and the fact that there was no moral justification for removing Alexandra bommastandi after they spent a long time in Alexandra.[240]

Bommastandi did not believe that they should be removed at all, as events of the 1940s seemed to galvanise the status of Alexandra into a beacon of hope for the larger African community, more particularly the urban one. This was the time when Alex residents were fighting against attempts to move Alexandra as well as against Falwasser's attempt to form an all-white AHC and the bus boycotts of the early 1940s.

In the chapter I investigated the introduction of "mortgage bonds" which came in the wake of the 1945 NUAA. This Act and the new housing styles tended to exacerbate the contradictions of Alexandra. Like other spatial laws before it the 1945 NUAA which provided for eradication of the kind of residential area that Alexandra was, it specifically exempted Alexandra from its provisions. Its freehold status, its location in the non- reserve as well as its racial composition kept Alexandra safe from abolition and removal until such time that a specific piece of legislation that catered for Alexandra was passed. It is ironic that it would appear that the very undesirability of Alexandra as racialised space was used by bommastandi and everybody who supported it to defend its life.

[240] The argument of morality was raised by the Feetham Commission.

Chapter 5
INCREASED GOVERNMENT CONTROL IN ALEXANDRA 1958-1972

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I investigated the disputes over Alexandra as they continued unabated through to the late 1950s. When the National Party government came into power in 1948, there appeared to have been a decisive move to remove the AHC as well as introduce a shift in property ownership in Alexandra, from private to sovereign regime. Removal of the AHC would pave way for inclusion of Alexandra in the general spatial dichotomization legislation from which it was previously exempted. This was to be done through the introduction in Alexandra of a different governance structure the Peri -Urban Areas Health Board (PUAHB). This would mean a closer vigilance on Alexandra by the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA). In this chapter I examine how the PUAHB governance made possible the application in Alexandra of the legislation of the National Party government and the one preceding it.

This chapter examines two key moments in the property ownership history of Alexandra: the introduction of the PUAHB, and the hostel city. It covers the period from 1958 through to 1972. It starts with the declaration of the PUAHB to be the urban local authority for Alexandra, and how this impacted on the private property ownership that had thus far operated in Alexandra. I also examine the operation of influx control measures in Alexandra that were introduced through the permit system of the PUAHB. The chapter shows how the influx control and related policies linked Alexandra to other places such as Soweto and the homelands, which became receptacles of some of the people removed from it and how these impacted on the life of bommastandi in Alexandra. I also analyse the introduction of the idea of the hostel city, the building of hostels as well as the response to occupation of hostels by both Alexandrans and other interested parties. It focuses on the formation of the Alexandra Liaison Committee (ALC) which acted as the mouthpiece of Alexandrans in fighting expropriations both during execution of the hostel city plans and beyond.

5.2 Take-Over of Alexandra by PUAHB: Coincidence or Design?

Was it coincidental that the PUAHB, whose establishment was recommended by the Thornton Commission of 1938-39 had its first chairperson as Sir Thornton? Was it coincidental that that PUAHB was appointed the urban local authority in Alexandra? What made it possible and desirable? What was the broader plan and who was driving it? This chapter outlines the developments that led to the operation of the PUAHB in Alexandra as well as the implications of these on the property owning status of bommastandi.

In Chapter 4, I noted that that the PUAHBs were established to take charge of areas that were not urban but were located at the fringes of urban areas. This was done in 1943 as per Ordinance No. 20 of the Transvaal. I also noted that an attempt was made by the National Party government to have all non-municipal townships fall under the control of the Natives Urban Areas Consolidated Act No. 25 of 1945.

The introduction of the PUAHB in Alexandra was significant because there seems to have been a very interesting parallel between this development and the recommendations of the Thornton commission of 1938-39. The commission recommended the introduction of public health control in peri-urban areas along the whole of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria. It further recommended establishment of Local Area Committees (LAC). These LACs were to be established for areas that were deemed to need closer supervision and control by the Witwatersrand and Pretoria District Health Board (WPDHB), due to dense populations or insanitary conditions, among others. Alexandra was included. The LAC was to substitute the AHC. But, the AHC was to continue serving (as the LAC) until the end of their term. The membership of the LAC was to be constituted in a similar manner to that of the AHC of the time. It would comprise at least more than three, but less than seven members. However, assets of the AHC would be transferred to and held in trust by the WPDHB.

Was there any relationship between the introduction of the PUAHB in Alexandra and the conference held in Pretoria, on October 23, 1942? As stated in chapter 4, the conference that was chaired by the Minister of Interior and Public Health, H.G. Lawrence. This conference was tasked to look into the recommendations of the Thornton Commission nonetheless it did not come up with any recommendations. The PUAHB that was established in 1943 a year after this conference appointed Sir Thornton as its chair.[241]

[241] Sir Thornton attended the 1944 conference that was called by the Transvaal 1975 Provincial Administration at the request of the AHC as chair of the PUAHB.

It would appear that when the National Party (NP) came to power they wanted to abolish all health committees in order to better control townships that were under their jurisdiction. An announcement was subsequently made that all health committees were to be disestablished. Instead, Section 39 (1) of the Natives Urban Areas Consolidated Act of 1945 was to be reinforced. This section empowered the PUAHB to function as an urban local authority. This was to be effected nationally from July 1948.[242] However, since the cabinet had recommended at the time that Alexandra was not to be abolished, the AHC remained its local authority.

The National Party passed additional spatial legislation that endorsed abolition of townships such as Alexandra. As stated in Chapter 4, the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950, called for codified racial classification while the Group Areas Act (GAA) No. 41 of the same year called for spatial separation of races. Alexandra was according to the 1912 proclamation established for the "natives" and "coloured people".. Further, the introduction of the PUAHB as an urban local authority in Alexandra seemed to have been in line with the call by the Minister of NAD Dr. Jansen that appeared in the *Natal Daily News*, of April 21, 1950 where he declared that real homes for "natives" would be in their "native" areas. It would appear that he was calling for affirmation of the dichotomisation of space into prescribed and non-prescribed areas that was in accordance with the 1923 NUAA that would be all-inclusive. In other words, home for the "natives" could only be where the government had decreed it to be, the reserves. It was envisaged that the "natives" would learn to govern themselves nowhere else but in these "native" homes where they could develop "their own national character."[243] This seems to suggest that the self-governance of Alexandra through the AHC – albeit a mixed organisation racially – was misplaced as the "natives" were learning governance away from "home".

Urging the nation to recognise and appreciate the importance of his stance, the minister who was referring to the new townships stated that:

> We must realize that the housing of Natives is urgent. Our first duty is to see that the Natives who are entitled to be in urban areas have a proper roof over their heads… in my opinion it is a wrong idea to provide to a native who has hardly left his primitive

[242] See Provincial Administration Administrator's notice contained in TA 4/17708/1, Government Gazette No 2057 and letter to the secretary of Peri -Urban areas health board 29/7/1948 which declared the PUAHB ultra vires. The thirteen health committees were being disestablished on July 31, 1948.
[243] Ibid.

> state with a house that must look like a palace to him and with facilities that he cannot appreciate, and without which he can manage for many more years.[244]

The type of housing provided was based on the minister's opinion of what structure a "native" deserved. This pronouncement could not have included the non-municipal "natives" where housing was self-provided. How did the houses of bommastandi look like?

Contrary to the minister's notion about the kind of housing that should be provided to suit the "native" needs, image and way of life, Hellman's (1952) reference to Sophiatown suggests that "natives" who had provided their own housing produced different structures from what the Minister perceived as ideal for them. When the government declared Sophiatown a slum in support of its policy for the township's removal, Hellman argued that "It is false to give an impression that the Western Areas are solely slums. There are homes in Sophiatown, owned by natives which would do credit to any middle-class European suburb" (Hellman 1952: 36). As a freehold settlement, more particularly after the introduction of "dibondo" (mortgage bonds) in Alexandra, it is probable that the self-provided houses of bommastandi were comparable to the ones referred to by Hellman. This would then suggest that while government had a particular kind of house in mind, bommastandi were providing housing suited to their interests, lifestyle and pockets. This was a far cry from what the minister had in mind. Jansen rejected the notion of a non-rural "native".

Dr. Jansen believed that even if the "natives" were to live in urban areas they were to be encouraged to keep ties with their customs. What did keeping ties with rural customs mean? This could only be achieved through constant contact with "a rural home", in this way they would be "kept alive to the customs of their tribe". Jansen seemed to be preoccupied with ensuring that while "natives" stayed in urban areas to provide labour they simultaneously had to lead rural lives as he was concerned that any other way of life would thwart the aim of the government policy. He argued that "the natives were not trying to further their own tribal ideals – they were trying to become white" (*The Star* 16 February1950).

Seemingly, it would be difficult to leave Alexandra under the AHC after declaring Johannesburg North a PUAHB area in 1956, as the township was in the north of Johannesburg as well. Further, even though there was increasing pressure to remove Alexandra before introduction of the PUAHB's governance in Alexandra, resettlement

[244] *Natal Daily News* of April 21 1950

policies could not legally be enforced. Although there had been a call for abolition of Alexandra from several quarters from earlier times, the Resettlement Act No. 19 of 1954 which would make this possible was also not yet applicable in Alexandra. Ever- increasing numbers of "natives" who flocked to Alexandra could not be curbed as the Native Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act No. 67 of 1952, which was a cornerstone of influx control policies, was not enforceable in Alexandra.

By January 6, 1956 already, the PUAHB sent a query to the secretary of NAD concerning control of sprouted grain and brewing of "kaffir" beer in their area of jurisdiction. This query illustrates challenges that government faced pertaining to control of Alexandra since in 1920 already Alexandra was being raided for "kaffir" beer brewing.[245] In response to this query TPA Secretary Grey wrote to the justice department who would be involved in raids and arrests of brewing offenders explaining the conditions in Alexandra:

> Although peri urban is not an urban local authority …and its area is therefore not an urban area, such board is nevertheless, when designated under Sect. 39 (1) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidated Act 1945, invested and charged with all the powers duties and functions of an urban local authority under this Act.[246]

This would make it possible for the justice department to hold "natives" liable for breaking the law if they were to brew sorghum beer in an area "in respect of which the board has been so designated for the purpose of that section if such a native is otherwise not authorized to brew the beer," the letter continued. Pronouncements and developments such as these suggested that if there was a shift in governance Alexandra was controlled and regulated by the PUAHB, which was an arm of the TPA, then this shift would make way for a shift in property ownership. This would mark a move towards spatial control in Alexandra similar to the one in municipality townships.

The AHC was informed of the PUAHB takeover a year before its proclamation as the urban local authority of Alexandra in 1958. On November 12, 1957, the Office of the Administrator of the Transvaal wrote a letter to the AHC informing them of the decision to place them under the jurisdiction of the PUAHB. They were advised that subsequent to meetings between themselves and the Transvaal Administrator pertaining to Alexandra that

[245] Pretoria National Archives HSC/GAR # 2756/13/D.54.
[246] Pretoria National Archives 593/3131 (7) (G): A letter from Secretary for Native Affairs, P.A.G. Grey to The Secretary for Justice, dated 16/5/1957.

took place on September 4 and 12, 1957, the Administrator had decided to place Alexandra under the PUAHB.[247] Members of the AHC were requested to co-operate with the PUAHB members who, in preparation for the takeover, were going to conduct some investigations in the township. Further, the Administrator assured the AHC members and staff that the Board would see to it that their interests would be safeguarded.[248] This was in line with the Thornton recommendation that the LAC be established.

The residents of Alexandra opposed the PUAHB take-over by sending a petition to the Minister of Bantu Affairs (the erstwhile NAD). In this petition they stated their names, addresses and status such as bommastandi, tenants, traders, and church ministers. Expressing how they felt about this step, they wrote:

> WE HEREBY record our dissatisfaction with the said Board and appeal to the Honourable Minister of Native Affairs to take steps to remove Alexandra Township from the jurisdiction of the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board and to establish a Health Committee as recommended by the Commission of Enquiry in their report dated the 30th October 1940 covering the years 1939 – 1940 to administer the affairs of Alexandra Township.[249]

This petition did not, however, yield positive results for bommastandi. In preparation for the takeover of Alexandra the PUAHB sent a memorandum to the Provincial Administration requesting to be designated an Urban Local Authority for Alexandra.[250] It would appear that the PUAHB claimed that they could only take "proper control of Alexandra" if they were given the status of an Urban Local Government in the township. This designation would enable the PUAHB to apply in Alexandra – one of the cornerstones of the permit system – Section 10 rights of the Native Urban Areas Consolidated Act No. 25 of 1945 and related spatial legislation that have thus far been unenforceable in Alexandra.[251]

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[247] Pretoria National Archives T.A.L.G. 1/1/1A letter signed by the secretary for the Transvaal administration to the AHC dated November 12, 1957.
[248] Pretoria National Archives 80/313/1 letter signed by the provincial secretary dated 12.11.1957.
[249]Pretoria National Archives NTS 4234 80/313 Petition sent by Alexandra residents.
[250] Pretoria National Archives EGdF/MEC 20 – 21/1/58. Explanatory memorandum stating that the Administrator supported the request subsequent to which the PUAHB was proclaimed the urban local authority of Alexandra.
[251] In Chapter 3 I showed how Alexandra has been excluded over the years from the spatial legislation due to its particular history.

In support of this request, on February 24 1958, the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa, Dr. E.G. Jansen, designated the PUAHB to be the urban local authority of Alexandra[252] (Van Dijk 1980, Sarakinsky 1984, Jochelson 1988). The proclamation stated clearly that the designation would take effect from the first day of the month following the one on which the proclamation was publicized. Further, it stipulated that all the provisos of the Native Urban Areas Consolidation Act No. 25 of 1945 would henceforth apply.[253] With the PUAHB take over, the legislation that dichotomised South African space into reserve-non reserve was in place in Alexandra.

How did the PUAHB permit system in Alexandra relate to conditions set by the Native Urban Areas Consolidated Act No. 25 of 1945? Permits issued by the PUAHB were fashioned along Section 10 rights. However, it would appear that conditions in Alexandra were adjusted to suit its "latecomer" status. For example, first, all the people who lived continuously in Alexandra since 1950 were issued permits. A conversation with someone who has worked in Alexandra for quite some time revealed two types of permits among others. I am using these two to illustrate the point above. There was a Section 6 owners'certificate or a "pink permit". This certificate was offered to families who had titled ownership rights in Alexandra Township. A Section 5 (1) (a) residential permit or "green permit" was given to families who had section 10 1(a), (b), and (c) rights. For one to qualify for section 1 (c) rights they had to be a dependent – including a child or wife - of a person with section 10 1(a) or (b) rights. In other urban areas, however, the condition was that for people to qualify, they had to be born in these areas or lived in them legally and continuously for fifteen years. Second, people who were employed also qualified to get permits. In other areas the length of the period of legal and continuous employment had to be ten years. These permits were further categorised into married and single.[254] These referred to people who had families living with them in urban areas and those who did not. Besides permits, other measures were used to discourage people from moving to Alexandra Township. For example, there was imposition of higher local taxes to discourage people not only from acquiring property but from maintaining it as well. Additionally, the PUAHB purchased property from the landowners.

[252] See Pretoria National Archives URU 2247 2297 (1956) Band 3575 proclamation by the Governor General of the Union of South Africa.
[253] See proclamation of Alexandra a PUAHB in 1958. Section 39 (1) of the NUAA gave the PUAHB powers to function as an urban local authority and this essentially gave the PUAHB powers to apply the provisions of the NUAA in areas that fell under its jurisdiction.
[254] Population removals Development studies Group Wits University quoting Sarakinsky, M (1984) Jochelson, K (1988) refers to PUAHB's permit system which was used to control residence in Alexandra

5.3 What did The PUAHB Bring into Alexandra?

At first the purpose of the PUAHB's presence in Alexandra appeared to have been positive. Referring to this impression a quote from *Izwi lase Township* of 6/July, 1982 stated:

> At first the peri- urban did a few nice things in order to cover the pill with sugar. They built storm water drains, they promised a swimming pool and they erected concrete umbrellas at the beer-hall.

The previous chapter showed how the AHC struggled with finances in its governance of Alexandra. The PUAHB which could access money from the combined Alexandra – Johannesburg North Levy fund appeared to be in a position to provide relief to Alexandra's financial difficulties. This access was decreed by the Native Laws Amendment Bill read by Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs in Parliament. He stated that up to that time "natives" who lived in Alexandra and Evaton (near Vereniging) and worked in the Johannesburg city did not access the Native Service Levy Fund Act as freehold townships were not provided for by the Act (Sarakinsky 1984). The funds could be accessed as a grant in terms of Section19 (3) Bis (f) of Act No. 25 of 1945.[255] For example, they applied for financial assistance for improving street lighting to the tune of £18 500. The application was approved.

The positive picture referred to above soon disappeared. One such indication was that the Secretary of Bantu Administration, H.C. Froneman, declined to provide assistance in financing other projects in Alexandra. The term "bantu", which took the place of "native", was adopted by the National Party after 1948 (Ramphele, M. & MacDowell, C. (Eds.) 1991). In response to one such request for financial assistance, Froneman wrote:

> **HEFFINGSFONDS VIR NATURELLEDIENSTE: ALEXANDRA DORP: PROJEKTE NOS. B.3, B.4 AND B5**
>
> Aangesien die Wet op Heffings vir Naturreledieste geen voorsiening maak vir dienste soos deur u bogenoemde projekte aangevra, moet ek u meedeel dat die Department

[255] Pretoria National Archives 593/313/ (3) C (1) (2).

nie hierdie projekte vir goedkeuring deur Sy Edele die Minister van Bantoe-administrasie en –Ontwikkeling kan aanbeveel nie. [256]

(LEVY FUND FOR NATIVE SERVICES: ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP: PROJECTS NO. B.3, B.4 AND B.5

Because the levies for Natives Services Act makes no provision for services as requested by your above mentioned projects I wish to inform you that the Department cannot recommend these projects for approval by the honourable Minister of Bantu Administration and Development.)

The reason for this was not clear. These projects included an increased number of sanitary buckets and bucket washing facilities. Service improvement included an increased number of days on which buckets could be removed, among others.

Apparently it was such refusals that were to lead to the comment by the MP of the Progressive Party, Mrs. Helen Suzman, in later years that nothing much had changed significantly in Alexandra after the introduction of the PUAHB as local government. The *Sunday Times* of 4 May 1975 quoted her as saying:

> The place is a slum-mainly because of the lack of sewage, lighting and adequate roads, all of which were promised by the Peri Urban Board in 1958, but never materialized.

By the 1960s Alexandra was one of the few surviving black freehold areas (Mashabela 1988). However, the actions of the PUAHB were presenting mixed messages. They were improving physical and infrastructural conditions of Alexandra on the one hand while reducing the number of people in Alexandra on the other. It would appear that permits were not only serving the purpose of determining which people qualified to be in Alexandra, but that they were further used to reduce the Alexandra population. It would only be after this reduction that alternative accommodation would be provided elsewhere – exclusively for people who "qualified" to be in Alexandra. Therefore, only people who qualified to be in Alexandra under various stipulated conditions were allowed to remain. For example, according to the report that appeared in *the Rand Daily Mail* of May 17 1955), the Peri-Urban Board was

[256] A letter from the Secretary of Bantu Administration to the PUAHB in response to financial assistance for development projects in Alexandra dated November 8, 1958. Translation to English by Itiseng Matlapeng

mandated to remove from Alexandra Township employees who did not work in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.[257] Further, the Peri Urban Ordinance No. 29 of 1943 provided for reducing the Alexandra Township population from 100 000 to 30 000 (Sarakinsky 1984).[258] Interestingly, in 1916 when the AHC was established the Alexandra population was reported to be 30 000. Consequently, forced removals intensified from the 1960s.

It would appear that it was going to be hard to reach this target. For example "only 7,500 African residents were removed between 1963 and 1967" (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:184). Between 1963 and 1964 people were being moved to Meadowlands, Diepkloof in Soweto, and Tembisa on the East Rand. Stringent control measures such as demolition of expropriated homes were put in place to ensure that there was no reoccupation of such homes. With the use of the permit system referred to above and continual raids on homes, it was difficult for such properties to be "illegally" reoccupied. In the same year government claimed that they did not raze homes unless occupants had alternative accommodation(*Izwi lase Township* 4 1982). In spite of such pronouncements the hostel city plan proceeded.

5.4. The "Hostel City"

It appears that the residents were not privy to the government plan for Alexandra. In his book "To every birth its blood", Mongane Serote, an author and a poet born in Alexandra, represented the uncertainty created by a lack of information when he stated that "They are building bridges, hostels, beer halls in our place, without even asking us…To be defeated is a very painful thing" (Serote 1989: 17). As reflected in the Izwi lase Township 4, 1982, the plan for "the hostel city" was only made public in 1963. The "hostel city" plan followed a recommendation of a commission of inquiry that Alexandra Township was to be rezoned for 25 000, single black people (Van Dijk 1980, Alex Urban Renewal proposal September 1986., Jochelson 1988). For this to happen stands were to be bought from bommastandi to make way for the construction of hostels. The table below shows some of the stands that were bought from bommastandi between 1960 and 1971 by the PUAHB.

[257] *The Rand Daily Mail* May 17, 1955).
[258] *Dark City* Report October 1986. Reference to Mentz regional Planning Committee of 1952 by Jochelson 1988. Unofficial History of Alex compiled in August 2001 and updated in August 2005 for Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP) http//www.alexandra.co.za/01_about/history.htm accessed 20/5/2006

Table 11 Stands bought from bommastandi between 1960 and 1971

PLOT NO.	NAME	SIZE	DATE	AMOUNT
P922	L Koza	610sq.m	27/10/1967	R 766.75
P1627	L Koza	606sq.m	27/10/1967	R 698
P148	E C Masonti	694sq.m	14/10/1966	R 2127
P150	EC Masonti	694sq.m	14/10/1966	R 2486
P2525	W Shiburi	555sq.m	03/05/1963	R 1413
P402	G Mekgwe	1110sq.m	27/11/1964	R not clear
P699	D Noge	1110sq.m	05/08/1962	R1573
P1990	P Noge	1110sq.m	01/06/1960	R 3600
P1035	J Serote	694sq.m	13/05/1965	R 1,57?
P945	Segopa	1110sq.m	28/02/1964	R 2060
P2121	R Hlubi	1110sq.m	13/02/1967	R 4089

Source: Adapted from a register of expropriations compiled and kept by Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA)

From this table it is difficult to derive a pattern followed by the PUAHB in paying for the stands. The price discrepancies for stands of the same size even those which were purchased on the same date is however, noteworthy. For example, Masonti's same size property bought on the same date had a price difference of R359.00. Probably such discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that the conditions of properties might have been different.

Mme Hunadi, whose family had several properties, remembers how they left one home in 5th Avenue to create space for construction of Madala men's hostel. Although the hostel was not built on the site on which the property of Mme Hunadi's parents stood, the family was removed since it was too close, but also, as explained below, the place became isolated since all the family's neighbours were removed.

Remembering this experience she said:

> *…E rile ga ba sena go ntsha ko, ba thuba ko five, mo re neng re dula teng…..Ja, a ke re jwanong e ne e re ga ba sena go dira, ba thuba, then ra kereya e le gore diproperty*

tse di ka mo siding ya rona ga go sa na batho and gwa kereyega gore we are in danger ka gore ba setse ba aga hostele ya banna…[259]

(…After removing, breaking down at 5th (Avenue implied) where we used to live… Ja, isn't it after they did...after they broke there we found out that other neighbouring properties were unoccupied and we found that we were in danger as they were already constructing a men's hostel.)

Describing where her home was she reveals that the erased physical structure was still vivid in her memory:

ke mo e leng lebala la Rotary; o a bona ka mo morago ga hostele ya Madala, go na le lebala. Ke lebala fela la ground. Ya ba e thubile, ke mo ke reng ke ground, o ka se tlhole o bona any structure moo…..ke gore bloko ra rona re ne re le between Roosevelt le Rooth; di thubilwe go setse fela ko Rooth, and then wa bona dihostele di moo. [260]

(This is where the present Rotary grounds are. You see just behind Madala hostel, there is a ground. It is just a ground. Yes. They broke it down (referring to their house), that is why I say it is just a ground you cannot see any structure there, that is our block was between Roosevelt and Rooth. They were all broken down it is only at Rooth that there are some houses remaining and you can see the hostels are just there.)

Such experiences illustrate that the intention of government was initially to attain the hostel city plan through withdrawal of the freehold rights of bommastandi. But the second stage of the plan was to remove them from Alexandra and resettle them elsewhere. This was to be reinforced by the provisions of the Better Administration of Designated Areas Act No No 51 of 1963, which at the time was a Bill that was being debated in Parliament. The Bill's aim was to extend apartheid laws to freehold townships (Sarakinsky 1984, Jochelson 1988). The "hostel city" plan in Alexandra was intended to ensure continued provision of cheap labour for neighbouring industrial areas and white residences in the north of Johannesburg. This was not new since it was a recommendation of the Mentz Regional Planning Committee in 1952 at the time they formalised Soweto plans (Jochelson 1988: 16)

[259] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.
[260] Ibid.

Removing Alexandra Township pressured government into producing more housing because not only did it have to provide extra housing for Alexandra Township residents but most people who moved from other parts of Johannesburg to Alexandra Township now had to be catered for as well. The cumulative effects of enforcement of the Group Areas, the Slums Clearance, and Resettlements Acts and other racialised spatial legislation in particularly in Johannesburg, meant that the government was under pressure to provide more urban black housing. Additionally, extra land was needed to provide leasehold property for Alexandra Township former freeholders.

Even though the removal process was slowed down mostly by a lack of accommodation, there were instances where some residents refused to move as they "considered it their birthright to remain in an area that has always been their home" (Alex Urban Renewal Proposal September/86: 4). In the case of bommastandi in particular, they were unwilling to surrender their property ownership rights.

After 1964 removals slowed down due to a shortage of alternative housing. With the passing of the Housing Act No. 4 in 1966, which empowered government through the National Housing Commission to exclusively provide housing, government was faced with the task of essentially accommodating all Africans who qualified to be in urban areas. Further, the Bantu Housing Board was established and it was responsible for acquisition of land and property. The board also had to maintain dwelling units as well as formulate housing policy for Africans.

By 1968 the Resettlement Board had removed 22 500 families and 6 500 single people to Diepkloof and Meadowlands in Soweto (Marks 2001). In the same year, 30-year leases that were provided to former property owners were withdrawn (SAIRR: 4, Mashile 1981, Morris 1980). Withdrawal of leases exacerbated the pressure on government to provide more rental housing as people who could build their own houses were no longer allowed to do so.

In the same year, there was concern that the number of people willing to sell their properties was decreasing. As a result in 1969, the Resettlement Board started forcing property owners who refused to surrender the properties to do so (Jochelson 1988). The secretary of the Resettlement Board of Johannesburg resorted to legislation which identified Alexandra as a specified area or black spot. This was:

> ...an official term that is generally used to refer to an African freehold which was acquired before the 1913 Land Act and which lies outside the scheduled or released

> areas.[261] It is one of the categories of land threatened by removal because it falls within what is considered the white area (Platzky and Walker 1985: xi).

The Secretary of the Johannesburg Office of the Bantu Resettlement Board, issued circulars, advising property owners that they were permanently closing, sections of the properties in sections of Fourth and Fifth Avenues: this was making way for the Madala and Helen Joseph hostels, which were constructed on Fourth Avenue. This circular, referring to the Black Resettlement Act No. 19 of 1954, stated:

> Your attention is further drawn to section 16 of the Act…which empowers this board (Resettlement Board) to expropriate properties situated in specified areas. Before taking action as so authorized, and particularly to avoid unnecessary expense, you are requested to offer your stand for sale. (*The Rand Daily Mail*, March 21, 1969)

This resort to legislation was also accompanied by a threat that if people failed to take heed of the circular their properties would be expropriated as their action would be taken as reluctance to negotiate for the sale of their properties. Further several pieces of legislation could be referred to. The Native Urban Areas Act was intended to limit access to urban areas as well as control the access once gained. The Black Resettlement Act allowed for removal and resettlement of people who were said to be occupying "wrong" places. Finally, as stated in Chapter 4 the bill which became the Natives Prohibition of Interdicts Act No. 64 of 1956 precluded Africans from challenging removal through courts as well as simultaneously prohibiting courts from stopping any removals. This was to mark the beginning of the end of the mmastandi era in Alexandra.

5.5 The 1970s: The Hostels Are Here!

In 1969, a year before two singles hostels were constructed, the following report appeared in *Izwi lase Township* 4 of 1982:

> The long awaited and delayed conversion of the "unkempt city" of Alex into an orderly complex of single quarters for Johannesburg's Africans started this week.

[261] Scheduled areas refer to land set aside for Africans in terms of the 1913 and the 1936 Land Acts.

It would appear that even though Alexandra was designated a specified area, Africans were not to be removed in the area. Instead, execution of the "hostel city" plan only meant the physical reconstitution of the township in that while Alexandra maintained its African presence the mmastandi family units were to be substituted by single male and female units. This inconsistency in the application of this policy was picked up by the Alexandra Liaison Committee in a few years' time. The effacing of ownership rights in Alexandra implied that the conditions and terms of African presence in Alexandra were to be redefined and that they were to be stringently determined and regulated by government. This particular kind of residence would largely house people who would provide labour to the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg. The number of hostels that was planned for completion by 1970 was eight, however, only one was built in 1971 with the third completed in 1981 Sarakinsky (1984:51).

Apparently the idea of "independent homeland" as another mode of influx control was already conceived through the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act No. 46, of 1959. According to this Act Africans were categorized into eight ethnic groups which had a commissioner general each.The commissioner generals were briefed to develop a homeland for each ethnic group. The objective of this step was to have eight ethnic areas that were to be allowed to govern themselves with the ultimate aim of government granting them independence.[262] As shown by Geoff Budlender (1990: 70-72), the use of homeland citizenship as a form of influx control where the Alien's Act was applied to the Africans whose homelands/tribal areas acquired political independence, was to be consummated in later years. According to the Aliens Act No. 1 of 1937, the definition of an "alien" is "a person who is not a South African citizen" (Budlender 1990: 83). At this stage, this meant that once a tribal area attained political independence from South Africa, affiliates of that tribe would be classified as aliens who would then be treated as foreigners in South Africa. Such people could not enjoy any citizenship rights in a "newly defined foreign country", the white South Africa. For example, they could not legally stake claims such as property ownership rights and also could not vote. In this way African people who wanted private property, could acquire it only in "their specific homelands". Although this "opportunity" was taken up by some bommastandi their selection of a new home did not always tally with their ethnic grouping. For example, as stated later in this chapter two families moved to

[262] Special project: Homelands http://africanhistory.about.com/od/apartheidlaws/g/no 21of 23htm accessed 15/04/2006

homelands that were not related to their ethnic grouping. One was Pedi but moved to a Bophuthatswana area while the other one was Shangaan but moved to a Ndebele area.

In 1971, Bantu Affairs Administrative Boards (BAABs) were created to control all locations Mabin (2005: 3). The establishment of these boards was provided for by the Bantu Affairs Administration Act No 45 which was passed in 1971. These bodies, which reported to the Department of Bantu Affairs, took the place of townships' local authorities and took control of locations (Sarakinsky 1984). Their mandate was to "bring the administration of influx control, housing, etc. more into line with Nationalist Apartheid policy." (Izwi lase Township 1/84) In Alexandra the Bantu administration inspectors were evicting tenants who did not have permits by October. The *Daily Mail* report of 10 October 1971 exposes an interesting case which illustrates the inconsistencies in the application of the permit policy. Mr. Katane, who belonged to a former mmastandi family tried to get permits for his tenants, but to no avail. His concern was that these tenants had the right to work in Johannesburg and yet the applications for permits to reside in Alexandra were turned down. The National Citizenship Act came at an opportune time as government was finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate all expropriated people. This Act provided for removal of all black citizenship rights from South Africa to all homelands which were ultimately to be given political independence. Even though this Act did not call for the removal of people who qualified to be in urban areas to homelands, they did not have any citizenship rights outside these homelands.

Furthermore, even though government claimed that expropriated stands in Alexandra were only demolished once the occupants had alternative accommodation, the pursuit of the Alexandra "hostel city" plan put the pressure on government to provide housing (Izwi lase Township 4/82). It was becoming increasingly difficult for government to provide accommodation for newcomers to the city and even more so for the removed people who needed resettling, because the withdrawal of leasehold meant that bommastandi whose properties were expropriated were denied an opportunity to build their own homes in successor townships.

5.6. How Did The Appearance of Hostels Change Alexandra?

According to a report that appeared in *Izwi lase Township* of July 6, 1982 although there was a claim that only single men and women would be accommodated in the hostels, there were concerns from various quarters that this was not so. The Black Sash, a South African white

women's resistance movement which was founded by Jean Sinclair in 1955 raised two moral issues about hostels and their occupation. First, they had misgivings about the way the permit system was applied. The table below illustrates who was supposed to be classified according to the permit system.

Table 12 How the Section 10 1 rights of the Native Urban Areas Act was applied in Alexandra

Section	Who qualifies for the right	Entitled to	Proof Needed
10 1 a	A person born in Alexandra	Live in Alexandra and work in any white area, can buy or rent a house	Birth certificate or witnesses to birth
10 1 b	Lived in Alexandra legally for fifteen years Worked legally for one employer for ten or different ones for fifteen years. This included people who worked contracts for same employer and went to rural areas at the end of contracts	Live in Alexandra, rent or buy a house in Alexandra. Work in the white area for which permit had been issued.	Proof that residence or employment was legal. Housing permit or records or employment in pass or letters written by employer.
10 1 c	Not qualify for a and b but husband does. Man under eighteen living with a parent with a or b rights. Unmarried woman of any age living with a parent with a or b rights.	Work in a white area Not entitled to buy or rent a house. Can live in a single hostel	Proof of husband's or parent's section 10 1a or b rights

Source: Adapted from *Izwi lase Township July 6, 1982*.

The Black Sash argued that these criteria were not adhered to. They explained that in some instances families were broken up since husbands and wives were issued with single permits. In instances where such husbands and wives had children these were denied entry into their parents'permits. In this way, Black Sash argued, new single people were created and such people were subsequently accommodated in hostels rather than family units. These non-families would be disqualified from accessing family homes in Tembisa and Soweto (Sarakinsky 1984). Authorities concerned with issuing of permits denied this. This was an underhanded strategy adopted by government to remove people from urban areas and resettle them in homelands. Second, Black Sash contended that government was under pressure to find alternative family unit accommodation and since there were insufficient funds to build new homes, some families who were removed could not be provided with alternative accommodation.

Echoing the Black Sash, the Synod of the Transvaal, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church as well as the Citizens' Hostels Action Committee also opposed the notion of "single hostels" as they perceived it to be disruptive to family life. Jochelson (1988) highlights that in addition to disruption of family units the other concern was severing ethnic ties which was seen as necessary for creating stability in communities, hence the decision to divide hostels ethnically and giving them Bantu names among others. A meeting of the synod of the Transvaal constituted by heads of several churches which was held in May 16, 1972, was concerned with the size of these hostels. They argued that, due to their large size, the hostels must reflect failure by the society to accommodate families. Like the Black Sash, they were also not convinced that the hostels would exclusively cater for unmarried people. The meeting called upon government to provide family units for married people resident in the city.[263]

But, the synod meeting of the Presbyterian Church raised concerns with how influx control affected widowed women with children. Previously in Alexandra these people were not expelled. However, at this stage, they were supposed to live in the reserves unless the widow had an adult son who would take over the father's position of government tenant, as was the case in other urban areas. Interestingly, in a letter to Mr. I.P. van Onselen, the secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, dated November 8, 1972 the Synod of the Presbyterian Church seemed to view hostels as an improvement on back rooms which, up to that point, were occupied by domestic workers. They saw hostels as better equipped and

[263] At this meeting it was resolved that heads of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Congregational and Lutheran Churches of the Transvaal be informed of their decision at this meeting.

places that could be better controlled. They further appeared to call for decompression of social classes as they recommended different accommodation to accommodate better paid families.[264] So far people in rental accommodation generally occupied accommodation with no social class or income differentiation. However, white mistresses who also opposed hostels were not impressed with this. To them, hostels were an inconvenience as it meant that they would not have access to their domestic workers for 24 hours a day.

This also appeared to be an underhanded strategy for sending people to homelands while the government denied creating new single people from people who had families. A report in the *The Rand Daily Mail* of May 14, 1982 as cited by Sarakinsky (1984) publicized an announcement by C.H. Kotze, the manager of the Bantu Administration Board for the development of Peri-urban Areas, who stated that:

> We are giving them the choice: they must send their children back to the homelands and move into hostels or they must go back to the homelands themselves. This is the policy and we will enforce it.

To reinforce obliteration of these family units their children were refused access to schools (Sarakinsky 1984). Such details are discussed at length by Sarakinsky (1984). This means that to avoid contradiction in government records such children could not be entered into school records since their presence was not recorded in the municipal records.

From the interviews I conducted some of the children of urban dwellers who are in their 70s and 80s were either born in Alexandra or had never lived anywhere else but Alexandra. How could they have gone back? Therefore I contend that children belonging to this group would not have been returning but would have been uprooted and forced to go to "strange places".

5.7. The Residents' Response to the "Hostel City"

Residents of Alexandra responded to the hostel plan, recognising that it implied their removal from the township. One way to resist was through establishing the Alexandra Liaison Committee (ALC) in 1974 by Rev. S. Buti and other businessmen such as Khoza and Koalipe

[264] The letter apprised the secretary of what was discussed at the synod meeting and would form the basis of the discussion between the church representatives and the secretary.

(Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2008:217) Rev. Sam Buti, who was the head, was a Dutch Reformed Church Minister who arrived in Alexandra as a newly qualified church minister in 1959. He still lived in Alexandra at the time of my field work however, he died in August 2010.

Buti faced a challenge of distrust from Alexandrans from the beginning. It was difficult for the Alexandra community to reconcile a devoted Dutch Reformed Church minister with anti-apartheid campaigns, when this church was perceived as an extension of government.[265] At this stage government was not popular in Alexandra due to everything that was happening pertaining to property ownership among others. Buti had to convince the community that in spite of this he was black like them and therefore equally oppressed.

In the fight against expropriation the ALC advanced an argument that tried to show the lack of feeling in government plans. Referring to substitution of bommastandi stands with homes for single migrants, they could not understand the sense of removing one black community, more particularly a community that had occupied the place for 60 years at the time and substituting it with another (Swift 1985: 34). The general trend had always been racial removal and resettlement that in which one race would be replaced by another. But in this instance, the plan was to replace one black group with another.

5.8. Ways of Life

The significance of introducing the "native" urban legislation in Alexandra, more especially through employment of the PUAHB as a local authority, appears to have been based on the assumption made by government that Africans who lived in urban areas did not embrace their Africanness. However, contrary to this, the experience of bommastandi suggests that in spite of having lived for years in Alexandra, and in some instances having lost all links with a rural village, in instances where there ever was, there is still a clear self-identification with being African. Examples from the interviews with Rapula, baba Temba and Tsakani are interesting with this regards, Rapula invokes a praise poem while baba Temba and Tsakani talk about the importance attached to the graves by raising issues around ancestral rituals.

It would appear that the Nationalist Party urban native policy which was intended to 'retribalise' him was not necessary at all. Nonetheless the Nationalist Party seemed to believe that to ensure retribalisation Natives were to be "kept alive to the customs of their tribe." (*The*

[265] Source: Lucille Davie. http://www.joburg.org.za/2003/oct/oct14_sam.stm accessed 20/4/ 2005

star 16/2/1950). Government seemed to believe that to maintain their tribal identity the "natives" had to have spatial links with their tribal villages. However, it would appear that there is little if at all relationship between one's spatial location impact and their tribal affiliation. In other words, one does not necessarily change one's tribal identity once they relocate to a place away from their tribe. The tribal relationship and affiliation seem to have been misunderstood. It appears to be much more complex than what the Minister was suggesting. From the experiences of some respondents, belonging to a tribe did not seem to be necessarily determined by the particular geographic space occupied. People who seem to have severed ties with any rural home still understood their tribal affiliation and custom.

Moreover, in some instances the very villages that people were expected to link up with had ceased to exist due to removals and subsequent merging of some villages that were referred to in earlier interviews. For instance, in Chapter 3 there was reference to a family who joined another village in Limpopo province after their farm, which was near Pienaarsrivier, was expropriated. Another example is that of Nhlanhla, whose parents went to Alexandra after the Anglo-Boer War, and yet he knows that even though at the time their immediate point of departure was the Free State, they were originally from Swaziland. He stated:

> .....wa tseba rona (You know) we are Swazis. Originally we are Swazis from Swaziland, we are from Swaziland. The Magagula's they have a village. There is a place in Swaziland called Stokoto and Tokolwane; there is a big area there. Everybody…So apparently you know…wa tseba when the British came, these Dlaminis, the present king; they are not Swazis, they are from Mozambique.[266]

While Minister Jansen was concerned that people who lived in urban areas were determined to efface their cultural identity by adopting a white culture completely, Rapula, whose paternal grandmother bought property in Alexandra had this to say about her

> *Maria... ke modisaotsile le kgomo tsa ga rraagwe tsele tse pedi ka mola*…[267]
> (Maria this is the cattle minder who has come with two of his grandfather's cattle from yonder…)

Although Rapula is citing a sentence that resembles a praise poem that refers to his ethnocultural identity, to refer to his grandmother, he knows of no other home but Alexandra.

[266] . Interview with Nhlanhla,Wynberg, October 10, 2003.
[267] Interview with Rapula,Alexandra, September 29, 2003.

The first line derives from some kind of a praise poem. So far the only way to translate a praise poem is literal. Maria received money to buy her property from cattle that belonged to her parents. The cattle were sold for this purpose. There is a long history of inheritance practices behind this. However, instead of specifying how many cattle his grandmother received, Rapula provides the information in a praise poem. In other words Rapula is urban but he is, contrary to the government concern about "the detribalising Native", also self identifying as African by reciting a "praise poem" to honour his grandmother.

Another example is that of the interview with baba Temba where from I inferred that bommastandi might well have been doing some things differently from the way perceived by the Minister, although they did not seem to have been aspiring to be white. They were adjusting to urban ways of life without losing some of their traditional beliefs.

Baba Temba shows links with his culture when talking about being asked to live with his grandparents. He states:

> *Ja he was transferred. You know // wa tseba…di customs di funny sometimes. Nna as the eldest bathi hamb' u yo hlala no // u yo thengela umama // ugogo wakho a thume wena u yom khelela amanzi and all that. that's…ye siswazi*.[268]
> (Ja he was transferred. You know // (wa tseba) You know… customs are funny sometimes. I as the eldest it was said go and stay with…. Go and buy our mother.... Your grandma should send you to fetch her water and all that. That's…of Swazi.)

He mentions the fact that his grandpa, a church minister, was transferred from a Swazi area in Ermelo to Alexandra, and yet the family still adhered to their customs of giving a child to grandparents in order to run errands for them.

He further cites an interesting experience that his family had when they helped pay for the property that his uncle, Madoda, only paid a deposit of £10 for, and travelled to England never to return. Baba Temba lived in his uncle's property. He understands that due to the extended family relationship and the fact that the uncle did not have children there should not be a problem with them accessing his estate. Explaining how they as a family were entitled to his uncle's property baba Temba said:

[268] Interview with baba Temba,Alexandra, September 26, 2003.

To the council ya. I don't know ha ba etsa ntho tsena what do they think of…naturally, nge sintu; ifa labantu a lidliwa wo munye umuntu. Ifa la ka ( ) a likwazi li yo dliwa ka sibanibani, no. because in other words what I thought was the right thing, was if there is a dent whatever it is mo, at that place and I was long // if I come ke re nna; o e ne e le ntatemogolo wa ka, o ne a se na le bana and all that. as it is in my case I told them 113 19th Avenue; bathi look la; ku ka bab' umkhulu. And u bab' umkhulu his only son, his last and only son committed suicide. And so I was the only person who was around. Now he is dead and I have this pass book ya ka e na le stamp sa hore I was living in that place…e ne e le direct descendent motho oo. [269]
(To the council ja. I don't know if they do such things what do they think of…naturally, according to our tradition/culture; people's inheritance is never taken over by just any other person (who is not a blood relative). The (baba Temba's surname)'s inheritance cannot be eaten by so and so, no. Because in other words what I thought was the right thing, was if there was a problem at that place I would go and say this was my father's elder brother he did not have any children and all that. As it is in my case I told them 113 19th Avenue; I said look here, this place is my father's elder brother's home place. And my father's elder brother's only son his only son, his last and only son committed suicide. And so I was the only person who was around. Now he is dead and I have this pass book of mine with an endorsement (a stamp) showing that I was living in that place…he was a direct descendent that person (referring to himself).)

Baba Temba is invoking the traditional cultural belief that the family estate has to remain within the family cycles. It was therefore up to the family to decide what should happen to the uncle's estate. This raises the question of private property as titled and individual and how this is articulated within the notion of an African extended family. For example, what does exchange and sharing resources among members of an extended family translate to under such circumstances? How does this impact on access to such resources among family members? Interestingly, according to baba Temba's "dom pass" his domicilium is registered as the uncle's property, while he seemed to have lived in two of the three properties that were registered under his parents and uncles' names.

[269] Interview with baba Temba,Alexandra, September 26, 2003.

Another pointer to being an African Swazi family related to the remains of the uncle who was buried in Accra. As baba Temba was looking for his uncle, Madoda, through the services of a lawyer, he got a report that Madoda left England to go to the celebration of political independence of Ghana in 1957. He was subsequently involved in a fatal car accident. Baba Temba's family received a copy of his death certificate as well as a photograph of his grave in 1970. He stated:

> *No that's one thing I //as it is I have one other wish; to get to Accra to go and see that fellow's grave. If possible I would like to exhume him and bring his bones to South Africa. And I'll only do that; only and only if I am aware that there is no (He mentions his surname), there is nobody connected to that man. (This means that as long as he did not have any wife and or children in Accra). And I want to bring [him] home to bury him here in the township… You know it has so much meaning. Let's say now you'd find…all. In the Township (meaning Alexandra Township) we've got more than six graves. Now we always wish that we should be together (In other words in life and in death). That is why I am telling you that if I could have a chance of going to Accra…Madoda and bring them home. (Referring to his uncle Madoda's bones). So, home is // with us it's Alexandra*.[270]

Baba Temba has ties with Swaziland and has a house there, while ntate Sechaba does not seem to have any links with a rural village since they were moved. Even though the respondents spoke several African languages they all could identify their ethnic groupings.

Tsakani also pointed out the significance of a grave for a family in the following discussion. I asked Tsakani asked about a place that carries importance as *home.*

> *AM:* But when does one refer to a place as home? What's so different about that place to call it home? Besides the fact that it might be where your parents reside? What is it that needs to happen about it? Is it parents? Is it beyond the fact that that is where your parents are?
> DK: I think it must the graves/graveyard.
> AM: Why? Graves do…/

[270] Ibid.

DK: Isn't it it's where we have to go and talk to our ancestors, you talk to your ancestors..... Yes this is where the rituals are done

5.8.1 The Legal and the Everyday

Some of the respondents used legal terminology in their everyday language. For instance, such people would refer to themselves as either the "originals" or "bona fides"[271] to self-identify and differentiate themselves from other legally or non-legally defined categories of Alexandra residents. For example, referring to Section 10 (1) (a) rights, a formal legal category, Tsakani refers to people like himself who were born in Alexandra as "originals"[272] .Although bommastandi were initially exempted from this NUUA, Tsakani uses it to authenticate his urban status. In response to a question on the permits of the PUAHB he stated that they "happened to be 10-1-A tsa mo Alexandra mo (of Alexandra)".[273]

However, it appears that the distinction made by Tsakani – that of referring to the children of bommastandi who had section 10 (1) (a) rights as "originals" – was not necessarily uniform. Another term was "bona fide" or "Alexandrans". Asking for an explanation as to who a "bona fide" Alexandran was, Thabang said:

> It's difficult to define them, but I think non-Alexandrans are... you know because of Alexandra is... you know in the olden days Alexandrans as property owners we used to know each other. You know our parents used to know each other, they formed, you know a relationship that... you know we stay in 16th Avenue, if I was at 3rd Avenue and a parent in 3rd Avenue could punish me for wrongdoing because they knew that my dad was (family surname), or I belong to that (Family surname) family. And, you know defining somebody who is not an Alexandran is someone who really does not, you know understand the norm of that small family and also believing in that. May I say, you know a parent wherever, I am a son or a daughter of anyone old in Alexandra... I think some people who came into Alexandra never bought into; you know that type of system. You know hence it has been easy to say they are not

[271] See Nieftagodien (2011)
[272] Interview with Tsakani and mama Mihloti, Alexandra, September 16, 2003
[273] Ibid.

> Alexandrans… No. it was not... you know even a child of a tenant became part of Alexandrans.[274]

This variation seems to suggest that while some respondents such as Thabang recognised that the expropriation was inevitable, Tsakani did not. The division into "originals" or "non-originals" did not seem to matter anymore as the PUAHB was making tenants of every family living in Alexandra. This would then mean that there was a shift towards municipal township status where Section 10 1 (a) rights and the kind of permits issued would be used to distinguish between two groups those who qualified and those who did not qualify to be in Alexandra rather than the mmastandi/non-mmastandi differentiation.

5.8.2 Moving to Rural Areas: Defeat or Acquiescence?

While bommastandi were being told that they belonged "elsewhere", to some there was no other place where they belonged but Alexandra Township. It is, however, important to note that in spite of this, some families such as mme Hunadi's and mama Mihloti's brother created or recreated a home elsewhere.

Mama Mihloti explained how at expropriation her father bought property in Dennilton, situated in the Mpumalanga[275] area.

> *Ja. Chelete, a ke re ena ba ne ba e kopantse le ausi o a mo hlahlamang, ga se no ntate a ilo reka ko Dennilton, gore a tsee mokekolo wa gagwe gore a yo nna le ena ko dipolasing. Ke gore jaanong rona a ke re, ke ne ke se ntse ke nyetswe le ausi a nyetswe*.[276]
>
> (Yes. Money. Isn't it they co-owned this property with the elder sister, My father then went and bought in Dennilton, so that he could take his wife so as to go and live with her in the farms. By that time my sister and I were already married.)

[274] Interview with Thabang. Alexandra, September 16, 2003.
[275] One of the nine South African provinces. The area in which Dennilton lies did not acquire independence from South Africa, however it was a homeland.
[276] Interview with Tsakani and mama Mihloti, Alexandra, September 16, 2003

Even though the aim of these NP policy position was to entrench the notion of home for Africans as "non urban" at least not in South Africa the choice of terminology to refer to newly acquired places is interesting. Dennilton is referred to as *dipolasing*. This is a term commonly used by urban dwellers to refer to *magaeng* areas away from town or non urban or homes. However *dipolasi* also refers to "white owned farms". It is difficult in this case to understand whether Dennilton is *dipolasing* in the sense of non-urban or in the sense of indeed being a farm rather than a village version of home.

In the case of mme Hunadi, whose parents also bought property in a homeland area, Bedwang, a freehold place just outside Moretele a village in the erstwhile Bophuthatswana a different term is used. She describes the place as *diteneng* or *diplotong* (the place that is subdivided into stands or plots respectively). The terminology used to describe this place clarifies her differentiation of it from a village where properties would be communally owned under a chief. (Mme Hunadi) made this distinction clear by stating that it was not a village: it was in fact across a river from the village. These were privately owned properties.

This NP policy position further did not seem to take into consideration the unsettling effect that it would have on freeholders particularly those who may have created homes in the early years of Alexandra's Second Proclamation. It would appear they were expected by government to make a backward leap of about 40 years and reconnect with in some cases start afresh in rural areas in the reserves just because of their racial and tribal affiliation.

Interestingly, none of these families moved to a homeland which was meant for or occupied by people who shared the same tribal identity. The parents to mama Mihloti and mme Hunadi who are Tsonga and Pedi respectively moved to kwa-Ndebele and Bophuthatswana respectively. These were homelands meant for Amandebele and Batswana respectively.

5.8.3 Racial Identity: A Strategy for Survival

An interesting point that might link to the government's concern seems not to be necessarily related to wanting to change tribal or racial identities. It seems to be a survival strategy adopted to gain access to opportunities such as better salaries or even citizenship. The case of ma Leanne who, although using an African name, does not seem to belong to any conventional African tribe, reveals an interesting experience. Further the family history that she represents suggests that there might not be any links with the old home of her paternal family. She stated:

No, my mommy was from Cape Town ….You know the story of my father I can hear from my grandparents. Do you know the time when maburu (Boers) chase them from the Island my dad, then my daddy had his first ... (inaudible) in Doornfontein ... Do you know the time when the Boers cornered them from the plot. So my daddy, they were two brothers and two sisters and they were given a lift by a Dutch man who covered them with potato bags in Southern Rhodesia, ka moo (in there) they were bags of potatoes and this Dutch man dropped them.[277]

Asking where her father came from she said he was from St. Helena Island. She further explained that her father had Indian features. From this I can infer that the family of ma Leanne, wherever they came from before settling in Alexandra, did not have a link with any other place but Alexandra. With a name change it would appear that they started a new family tree with roots in Alexandra. Ma Leanne further stated:

Ja, you know what, the way I can see ne, they got this (Family name) surname when they, like now, today Zimbabwean change surname. My father has Indian features you see or it was Maistry, but well I am not sure my darling because I was not there.[278]

Another interesting example is cited where some African families would change their names in order to acquire a "coloured" identity which at the time came with better salaries.

You know this was a joke that they used to say as the family. My grandfather was more like a coloured guy. You know he had this coloured blood. So he would look for work somewhere and then my grandfather's family would go and visit him ko femeng (at the firm or industrial area). And he would say no, no, no I don't know these people, I am a coloured …. So he used to say no I am a coloured. I don't know these people and later on he'd say don't come there, I got work because I said I was coloured.[279]

[277]Interview with Ma Leanne, Alexandra, September 4, 2003.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Interview with an informant, Alexandra, September 02, 2003. A man in his 40s who says he was a member of Umkhonto We Sizwe. Although he was not part of bommastandi he was willing to discuss violence that erupted in the 1980s..

It would appear that the introduction of the PUAHB which was supposed to promote ordering of African presence in Alexandra conflated the situation more, in that the policy was trying to categorise residents whose stay in Alexandra was always provisional in the face of changing legislation. Explaining the introduction of the PUAHB permit system Mme Hunadi states:

> *And then the first register ga ba nka di property tsa batho, ba file di permits tse green. Ke gore o ka re batho ba // the original people ba Alexandra ke ba dipermits tse green. Jwanong go na le green, go na le pink, go na le white, go na le yellow. Ke gore go tla ona mo counseleng as CEO or whoever, o tla a strategy sa gagwe; go tla ona ka strategy sa gagwe; just like that.* [280]
>
> (And then the first register, when they took people's properties, they issued green permits. That is to say it seems these people… the original people of Alexandra are those of green permits. Now there is green, there is pink, there is white, there is yellow. It means a CEO comes in to Council or whoever comes (that is as CEO) brings in their strategy; just like that.)

5.9. Conclusion

In this chapter I analysed the introduction of closer control of Alexandra by the government through the introduction of the PUAHB. I showed how, through this board, a clear shift from the private property ownership in Alexandra came about. It also alludes to the beginning of tension between the former bommastandi and their tenants concerning the rights to Alexandra. The corruption of the two groups into one became problematic, particularly among families that remained in Alexandra. While bommastandi who left could get leasehold in the successor townships in Alexandra, they were issued the same permits as the tenants. The way in which Section10 1 (a) permits are issued is particularly mentioned by bommastandi and it shows a rupture among them as to who has more rights to Alexandra. However, this also suggests lost opportunities for bommastandi since not only is their status lost, but their freedoms are curtailed. These freedoms are not only physical but financial and emotional as well. They are physical in that in some families had to leave Alexandra Township to resettle in successor townships (Lebelo 1981) such as Meadowlands, Diepkloof and Dube, among others. Other families left their properties but continue to live in Alexandra. They were financial as they had to start paying rent, which did not happen

[280] iInterview with mme Hunadi. Alexandra, September 2, 2003

previously as they owned their properties, but also the income that they got from their tenants ceased as their tenants either left or were beginning to be taken over by the board. Finally, it was emotional in that such families did not decide on their own to move house they were forced out. The rationale for expropriation was motivated by the racial politics of the erstwhile government and the one preceding it. Bommastandi's attempts to illustrate the immorality and illegitimacy of government's plan to remove them, were thwarted by the government which in turn passed law after law to prove that the removal was legal. Finally their properties were taken away from the families after a long battle to keep them.

Chapter 6

"REPURCHASING" OF PROPERTY IN ALEXANDRA 1973-1988

6.1 Introduction

The 1970s and 1980s was a period during which the government came under enormous pressure to change its policies due to intensive political resistance. It was also one of the most complex moments in the history of Alexandra. It was the time of the Save Alexandra Campaign and the reprieve of Alexandra, the Third Proclamation, and two urban renewal plans (1980 and 1986 respectively). But it was also a phase period of rent boycotts in urban areas, the ANC's call for "ungovernability", political reforms that were inadequate as there was a call for a total political change, the scrapping of influx control and the civics movement (Jochelson 1988, Carter 1991).

Against this background, this chapter looks at the introduction and role of the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) in expropriating and compensating bommastandi. It further looks at disgruntlement from bommastandi regarding the protracted process of expropriation, unequal treatment of evicted complainants and lack of alternative accommodation, among others. In this chapter I attempt to probe specific questions. What did property ownership by bommastandi represent to the state during this period? What did it mean to bommastandi to own property and how were they affected by the developments of the period? Did the order made by WRAB to bommastandi to pay rent as from January 1975 mark the end of private property ownership? Did compensation payout mark the end of private property ownership? What was the ownership status of those people who were not compensated for their properties? Finally, I examine developments in Alexandra when an announcement was made in 1988 that properties were available for sale in Alexandra. I explore challenges that resulted from what will be referred to as a "period of repurchasing". I raise questions about "repurchasing", such as what did "repurchasing" mean, particularly to bommastandi and what was it that they were "repurchasing"?

6.2 The Reform

The period from the mid-1970s onwards was one of the most complex and challenging in South African history. This was the time government started to feel pressure both internally and from the international community to introduce political change. For example Omar (1988: 20) cites increased international isolation including isolation from international sports. However, this expected change manifested in reforms (Omar 1988, Lijphart 1985, Sutcliffe, Todes and Walker 1990, Beinart 1994) which were met with resistance as they did not represent what people wanted. They took the form of a tricameral parliament, formation of a president's council and reform of urbanisation, urban administration and housing policies; among others (Beinart 1994, Sutcliffe, Todes, and Walker 1990, Omar 1988, Marais 1989).

For example the Riekert Commission of 1979 called for recognition of "urban outsiders" and "rural outsiders" among Africans while these two groups were still regarded as homeland citizens. The only difference was that the former were to enjoy some concessionary rights to urban places such as leasehold tenure rights and township governance while the latter's access to urban areas was to be even more limited (Beinart 1994: 228-229, Sutcliffe, Todes, and Walker 1990: 86-106).

By 1980 the president's council which was to replace the senate was introduced and followed by the establishment of a tricameral parliament in 1983 (Beinart 1994: 229). The president's council was an advisory body, headed by the vice- president. This advisory body was established to substitute the senate (Marais 1989). These bodies marked a reform of parliament which was to include "coloured people" and Indians in a limited way in that the two racial groups had their own parliaments whose executives would participate in the president's council. However, this change was effected as a result of a white only referendum (Beinart 1994: 229). Hence, Omar, a black member of the erstwhile president's council stated that reforms were "based on white perception of the solution to South African problems" (Omar 1988: 15).

Some of the concessions made for the urban Africans manifested in the promulgation of several Acts. Among these were the Bantu Affairs Administration Act No 45 which was passed in 1971, which provided for the establishment of Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAAB). The aim of this Act was to enable removal of administration of black townships from city councils that were controlled by government opposition. These included Cape Town, Durban- Pinelands and Wits city councils (Marais 1989: 242).This would keep both opposition and government constituencies happy. Hence reform which was seen as a

mechanism that would appease white people of different political persuasions aimed to "… try to limit the suffrage of black citizens in order to maximize the whites' relative share of voting power and thus to appease their anxiety and opposition" (Lijphart 1985: 5).

Other laws included the Black Affairs Amendment Act 45 of 1975 and the Community Councils Act 125 of 1977. The former allowed black people to occupy land and housing in non-homeland areas on a 99-year leasehold basis (Marais 1989: 247). In Chapter 5 it was indicated that the 30 year leases which were offered to former freeholders who moved to successor townships were withdrawn in 1968. This meant that government came under pressure to provide more rental housing. Thus the reintroduction of leaseholds would ease such pressure. However, it was also part of a reformist agenda since government was still unwilling to offer urban Africans freehold tenure rights.

The Community Councils Act provided for establishment of community councils whose members were locally elected. These were to be changed to black local authorities according to the Black Local Authorities Act 102 of 1982. These community councils took over most of the functions of the Bantu administration boards (Marais 1989: 242). However, lack of resources and political credibility in the 1980s which plagued the black local authorities (Sutcliffe, Todes, and Walker 1990: 95) rendered their operation untenable.

Therefore, this illustrates that these changes were not in any way aimed at scrapping "Grand Apartheid"; instead they were merely concentrating on "petty apartheid". Examples would include getting rid of using racially separate facilities such as lifts and introduction of mixed sport, and declaring some areas such as Hillbrow in Johannesburg grey in that black people were not forced out of them. Hence the changes only led to disgruntlement with the government agenda which resulted in a wide-spread general urban management crisis in black townships nationally. The new government policies and resultant structures were not matched by increased financing for administration and development in townships. As a result expenditures incurred in the running of townships had to be financed through revenues raised in the townships. This led to increases in rent. This fiscal crisis culminated in rent boycotts, which were part of a broader national campaign to air local grievances such as unemployment and poor living conditions in black urban areas. These spiralled into political demands such as the call for the unbanning of the ANC and dissolution of the police force.

Although Alexandra Township also participated in rent boycotts the Alexandrans? were also disgruntled with the lack of alternative accommodation which appeared to have been linked to the renewal plan. For bommastandi in particular all these appear to be linked to the discontent that resulted from the loss of freehold rights and the loss of related

privileges. Ultimately people who remained in Alexandra Township were never provided with government housing on a large scale. They either moved to other properties and built shacks or continued occupying their homes as council tenants. This includes tenants who continued living in rented rooms, backyard rooms and shacks (Jochelson 1990: 3). Further "the cost of the new houses had become unaffordable to residents, and they had resisted being moved from their homes in the first place – they were to spend years in temporary accommodation instead of months, waiting for their new homes" (Jochelson 1988).[281]

In the sections below I discuss how reforms manifested in Alexandra Township during the 1970s and 1980s and what their implications were for bommastandi. I investigate the role of one of the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards, the West Rand Administration Board, in Alexandra, local government politics and how they manifested in the establishment of the Save Alex Party and finally the introduction of the two urban renewal plans of 1980 and 1986. In this section I also discuss the specific response to government legislation, policy and action by Alexandra residents, but more specifically how it impacted on bommastandi.

6.3. The Administration Board

The Bantu Affairs Administration Board that operated in Alexandra was the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB). Even though Bantu administration inspectors started working in Alexandra in 1971, it was only on the first of July in 1973 that the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB), an arm of Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAAB) was charged with full administration of Alexandra Township (Jochelson 1988).[282] By June 1972, there were still 1 025 stands in the hands of bommastandi while about 1 475 were already government-owned, demolished or rebuilt into new structures.[283]

The WRAB found 887 stands still in the hands of bommastandi in Alexandra, invoking a comment from Harry Mashabela, who wrote extensively on informal housing in the then PWV area that Alexandra was at the time "a hotchpotch of the old and the new" (Mashabela 1988: 19). The WRAB needed to raise R6 209 000 in order to purchase these remaining stands (Sarakinsky 1984, Jochelson 1988).

By August 15, 1974 WRAB acknowledged that they were facing financial problems. According to information provided by Dave Dalling, a Sandton MP in 1974, 2 230 families

[281] For details of this see: Jochelson, 1988.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Alex Urban Renewal Proposal 9/86.

were moved to Soweto while 54 were moved to the homelands. These numbers were reduced drastically in the following two years when 252 families and only one were moved to Soweto in 1975 and 1976 respectively. In the case of homelands, while no families who were moved there in 1975, 34 were moved in the following year (Sarakinsky 1984: 56).

The rule of the WRAB in Alexandra brought more pain to the residents in general; however, it would appear that bommastandi were affected most. Newspaper reports raised concerns about what they labelled "land theft" in Alexandra in the hands of WRAB. Subsequent investigation by the Progressive Party found that it was more accurately labeled "extortion". In fact, "extortion and not expropriation was taking place" (Sarakinsky 1984: 54-55). The compensation amount per square meter (or that amount that would have been paid) was different in the neighbouring white areas. The apartheid processes were illegitimate, immoral and unjust but they were legal as defined by laws of the land at the time.

Bommastandi were given a deadline to either hand over their properties or pay rent to WRAB. It would appear that where these deadlines failed, underhand tactics were used by WRAB to access these properties. Sarakinsky (1984: 54) provides interesting cases to illuminate this. For example there was a case where a mmastandi family was evicted at the same time as a tenant family that lived on their stand. The two families were evicted in the same way, that is, without court orders or eviction notices. However, on querying this unlawful eviction in court the two cases were handled differently. Mfolo, the tenant, was allowed back into his room pending his provision of proof that he was living in Alexandra legally, whereas the eviction of Mr. Tsie, the property owner, was endorsed (Sarakinsky 1984: 53, quoting *the Rand Daily Mail* March, 7 1975).

6.4 The Reprieve of Alexandra: Alexandra Mmastandi Are No More

As stated in the previous chapter, the Alexandra Liaison Committee (ALC), which was established in 1974, negotiated against expropriation of Alexandra with the various heads of the erstwhile Native Affairs Department – which also changed names in the process. For example, they negotiated with M.C. Botha who headed the department when it was called Bantu Affairs and his successor, W.A. Cruywagen, through to the Department of Plural Relations and Development, the name instituted by Dr. Connie Mulder. The negotiations ended with Dr. Piet Koornhof who became the "Minister of Co-operation and Development" in 1979. It was also stated in Chapter 5 that the ALC which was under the leadership of Rev. Buti, was established to represent Alexandrans in the quest to resist removals.

The name ALC was changed to Save Alexandra campaign and later Save Alexandra Party. This change was aimed at making it possible for the committee to participate in the local government elections of May 16, 1979, which they won. According to an explanation provided to parliament by the deputy Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr. W. Vosloo, a meeting was held between his department and the ALC in Alexandra in 1978. At this meeting, the ALC was told that government would only recognise them once they drew up a constitution and held elections. The party had over the years become popular in Alexandra as it opposed forced removals and resettlement to homelands among others. The party became involved in several improvement projects such as tarring of roads. Jochelson (1988) provides further details. But most significantly, as the PUAHB had redefined many people as "illegals" while they were not, the party helped reinstate the status of such residents, who would otherwise not have qualified for family homes in the new township. The "legals" were defined according to the Section 10 rights of the Native Urban Areas Act. The details of Section 10 rights are set out in Chapter 4.These rights were prioritised. For example someone holding a 10 1 c permit had fewer rights than someone holding a Section 10 1 a permit. For one to qualify for Section 10 1 c rights, they were supposed to be a wife, or child of a person who was born in an urban area and therefore qualified under Section 10 1 a rights.

Dr. Piet Koornhof, who was regarded as a "verligte",[284] had an interesting relationship with Rev. Buti. They knew each other from the Free State as their fathers, who were both ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, were friends (Davie 2003). Buti was born in Brandfort in the Free State, while Koornhof was also born in the Free State. For example, when Koornhof was Minister of Sports he introduced mixed sports.[285] Dr. Koornhof, NP Minister under B.J. Vorster and P.W. Botha. Koornhof received a PhD in 1952 from Oxford University. His thesis condemned migratory labour. He joined the Department of Native Affairs under Verwoerd and became secretary of the Broederbond in 1962.This organisation that was established in 1918 by young Afrikaners who were unhappy with the political developments of the time in South Africa. By then it was named Jong Suid Afrika but changed to Afrikaner Broederbond in 1919. Koornhof entered parliament in 1964 with a verligte reputation. He was appointed to cabinet in 1972 as sports minister and introduced the first breaches in sports apartheid (O'Meara 1996).

[284] Afrikaans term for enlightened (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:220).
[285] Mixed sports means that different races were allowed to play sports together.

Referring to black and white soccer teams playing against each other, Buti said "it was impossible for a slave to play with his master" (Swift 1983: 35). It was on the basis of this kind of relationship that Buti appealed to Koornhof to stop expropriations, demolitions and removals in Alexandra. He spoke to Koornhof in Afrikaans; the language they both understood and the language of the Dutch Reformed Church, which was close to their hearts. Buti said to Koornhof "My mense praat van 'die erwe van ons vadere' en vra: Hoe moet ons verstaan?" (Swift 1983: 35). Translated, this means "my people are talking of 'the heritage/legacy of our fathers' and ask how should we understand?" The heritage refers to the land, which is regarded as a birthright in that it was inherited by virtue of being born in the place. The Trekboers, who left the Cape in 1838 when they disagreed with the British rule in general but the emancipation of slaves in particular, fought their way inland. Hence having "conquered" the land they felt strongly that it belonged to them. Even though Buti uses this metaphor to appeal to Koornhof's emotional sense, the Africans more generally would talk of being "children of the soil", which links them to the African soil by birth and not by conquest. They were thus asking how Koornhof expected them to let go of their land. Buti expected Koornhof to understand the metaphor as Afrikaners also use it often to refer to land. In this instance the same metaphor held for bommastandi, as they inherited their properties from their fathers - strictly speaking their parents. The Alexandra bommastandi failed to understand why this land was being taken away from them, a plea that Afrikaners could readily understand (Davie, 2003).

Therefore when Rev. Buti received a phone call from Deputy Minister, Dr. W. Vosloo, at 6.30, on May 7, 1979; announcing that the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr. Piet Koornhof, had cancelled the "hostel city" plan of 1963, it was assumed that the reprieve resulted from the conversation above as well as Buti's campaigns to stop resettlement. For example, quoting one such source, it was said in the media:

> He had initiated and drove the Save Alex Campaign in the late 70s through the Alexandra Liaison Committee, and his appeals to Minister of Co-operation and Development Piet Koornhof eventually halted the government's removal plans (Davie, 2003)

Thus, Alexandra had been saved – but for whom and from whom and what did it mean? It is ironic that while the pronouncement invoked resounding joy in Alexandra, in fact it meant the final pronouncement of the death of Alexandra as a black freehold settlement. The *Dark*

City Report picked up the misunderstanding in its report of October 1986. The report referred to a phrase "letting family units remain in Alexandra", as a phrase which was interpreted differently in different quarters.[286]

It is important to note that the reprieve still occurred within the government's reformist agenda as the WRAB's presence and impact were still very much felt in Alexandra. To government the announcement was not about reinstating the freehold that began in 1912 that bommastandi wanted. Instead it meant allowing the families that were still in Alexandra and "legal" to remain in Alexandra and abandonment of the "hostel city" plan.[287] Furthermore, these families would participate in the development plans (Sarakinsky 1984: 57). The government's intent was to keep urban black people in urban areas according to the NUAA. This meant control and regulation of their urban stay, something foreign to bommastandi.[288] This in essence meant going ahead with the policies of spatial dichotomisation that the National Party entrenched, refined and expanded.

A comment in *Izwi lase Township* (4/82) succinctly summed up this position when referring to Alexandra as:

> ... a creation of a group areas policy, it is consequently a ghetto, and cannot be justified in any way. Whether it is uplifted or not, it remains a segregated location in any of its forms…In the short term it is correct to resist eviction and removals, to demand proper housing, to protect freehold rights – in other words to obtain maximum concessions from the state.

To bommastandi this phrase meant going back to freehold as they knew it. For them it signalled the reversal of expropriations, removals and resettlements. Rather than allaying fears of bommastandi this was to create more uncertainties. Similar uncertainties were created in the 1940s when serious discussions of the removal of Alexandra were started. These discussions are covered in Chapter 4. Then, there was intervention which led to an illusion of permanence for bommastandi, for example the possibility of acquiring loans to

[286] *Dark City* Report on unrest in Alex 10/86: 2. Family units referred to households which could comprise any number of members.
[287] *Dark City* Report on unrest in Alex 10/86 talks about 'letting family units remain in Alex', a phrase which was apparently interpreted differently by different quarters.
[288] This meant redevelopment of Alexandra as a high density black urban area instead of a freehold one (Alexandra Urban Renewal Proposal 9/86).

build “bond” houses. The “reprieve”, which meant discontinuing demolitions, in the same way created an illusion of permanence for them.

This became one of the defining moments of freehold property in Alexandra; it had reached a point of no return. Alexandra became a new apartheid township. According to the recommendations of the 1980 urban renewal plan, a “Garden City” was to be designed, which would be a creation of a different physical landscape in Alexandra. To this end, basic infrastructure was to be established. The plan also included construction of sports facilities such as a large sports stadium, tennis courts and a park. These were necessary as the old privately-owned township plans did not make provision for any public spaces, except for three squares and a strip of land east of Yokeskei (Jukskei).[289] Quite clearly this plan did not imply discontinuation of expropriation as space was needed for these upgrading plans.

Even though at this stage Alexandra was clearly functioning as a non-freehold township, its status was proclaimed only in 1980. On August 15, 1980 Alexandra was proclaimed “an urban black residential township”[290] (Van Dijk 1980). This third Proclamation legally bestowed sovereign property ownership status on Alexandra. In Chapter 1, I referred to two proclamations of Alexandra, the first being in 1905 when Alexandra was proclaimed a white township while the second one was in 1912 when it was proclaimed a black township. This meant that officially bommastandi were not recognized as private property owners any longer. Instead, they acquired “use rights” to the properties which they occupied. When the Save Alexandra Party encouraged residents to move into temporary accommodation including renewed buses where they would await new houses to be built for them. However, they later became suspicious. They saw the suggestion as yet another government ruse to move black people from Alexandra Township. The plan is discussed at length by Sarakinsky (1984) and Jochelson (1988).

By the 1981 elections, the Save Alex Party showed signs of declining in popularity. Ironically, the Save Alex Party was suspected of collaborating with the state through the WRAB in that the residents believed that it helped the state determine and decide who had the rights to live in Alexandra Township. What exacerbated its loss of credibility even more was the pronouncement made by the leader Rev. Buti, which was paraphrased by Swift

[289] Alexandra did not have any land reserved for public or municipal purposes – except for three squares and a strip of land east of Yokeskei – since it was laid down before the Township Act 23 of 1907, which made provision for these. Furthermore, it would appear that as a private township where land was sold for profit it would not be prudent to provide for such spaces.

[290] Urban Renewal Proposal 9/86. This means that it was given the same residential grading as all the other African non-freehold townships. Alan Mabin (2005) briefly hints at the origin of the use of the word “township”

(1983: 60). as "aiming at the future and taking the past as just that … something that has left a mark on the consciousness but is no longer relevant in anything but memory" Moreover, in the same year, the urban renewal plan became unpopular with bommastandi as they realized that it did not include a return to freehold home ownership. Homes resulting from this plan were to be owned under the 99-year lease which superseded the thirty-year leasehold.

By July 4, 1981 a report appeared in the *Sowetan* of July 4, 1981 announcing a plan by the WRAB to build 500 houses and 150 flats in Alexandra before the end of that year. However, whilst some families were being temporarily housed in Alexandra, others were removed to SOWETO whenever there was alternative accommodation for them. Studies on removals and resettlements about Alexandra and Sophiatown and western areas indicate that the intention of government was to move and allocate homes in successor townships to families comprising husbands as heads of households (Tourikis 1981, and Sarakinsky 1984, Goodhew 2004, Lebelo 1981,Van Tonder 1993). In some cases reports of the eviction of people who were deemed to be illegal appeared in the media. For example the *Sowetan* of November 16, 1981 stated that:

> About 100 people "squatting" in the backyard rooms of an Alexandra house were yesterday left homeless when WRAB bulldozers moved in to demolish the 26 structures… The people, said to be illegals, were not offered alternative accommodation.

Interestingly, in spite of all these developments, by 1982, the WRAB was still buying property and removing families to Meadowlands, Diepkloof and Tembisa *(Dark City* Report 10/1986:2). At the same time they promised 79 families that were located between Roosevelt, London and 11th Avenue that they would be resettled in new homes with all the facilities. The Alexandra Liaison Committee called upon affected residents to co-operate (Sarakinsky 1984: 69-70). The Government Gazette announced that under section 2 (1) of the Black Local Authorities Act No 102 1982 Alexandra's future was to be determined by Alexandra residents themselves. This Act provided for the replacement of larger community councils by town councils which would have similar powers to those of white municipalities (Mandy, 1984: 227). People of Alexandra, whoever they were "were granted the right to establish the Town Council of Alexandra" (Swift 1983: 15).

In 1983 the first town council was established in Alexandra as per the Black Local Authorities Act No 102 of 1982. The Save Alexandra Party accepted this as they could not

raise funds to develop the area. Buti, the "darling" of Alexandra, lost popularity as the leadership structure he helped establish was accorded the status of an "apartheid authority structure" (Davie, 2003). This Town Council of Alexandra which comprised nine members replaced the Liaison Committee but members of the committee such as Buti, Khoza and Makubiri remained in the council. Although the committee had changed its name to Save Alex Party some sources continued to use the name ALC but also Khoza is the same leader who continued from the AHC through the PUAHB. They remained in the council since this appears to have been a pattern in Alexandra where members of the old governing structure would be carried through to the new one. For example J. M. Makhothe, the treasurer of the Village Management Board that was established by property owners in 1912 was elected in the government sanctioned AHC of 1916.

6.5 The Mid-1980s

The unsuccessful reform agenda, coupled with the call for "ungovernability" and "people's power" by the African National Congress in exile, exacerbated the crisis facing the apartheid government. The call for "ungovernability" meant rendering government organs inoperable through mass resistance and opposition and instead structures of governance were to be developed by the masses (Marks, 2001*).* A year after the call was made the influx control measures were scrapped. The abolition of influx control meant that, for the first time in several decades, Africans' inflow into urban areas was not curbed. The absence of infrastructural programmes to accommodate a possible inflow of large numbers of people into the urban areas, led to competition for limited resources (Morris & Hindson 1993; Bonner & Ndima 1999). This exacerbated the chronic accommodation shortage in urban areas. However, several studies which were conducted immediately after 1986 showed that the large number of people who occupied informal settlements at the time were not necessarily new arrivals from rural areas. Most of them were from the neighbouring farms, as well as people relocated from condemned enclaves in other black townships (Hart and Hardie 1987; Black Sash 1989; Crankshaw, Hart and McNamara 1988). Nonetheless, the scrapping of influx control measures was significant particularly on the Reef due to job losses in smaller towns. Most of these towns were experiencing economic decline. Further, economic decentralisation policies were failing to generate enough jobs (Mashabela 1990: 14), thus increasing number of squatter communities who were not only coming from these small towns but from white owned farms who were also hit by poverty. Further, this influx

coincided with occupation of vacant lands by former township tenants. Alexandra was probably no exception as some of these people from the neighbouring farms and small towns might have ended up in Alexandra.

The year 1986 also marked the year government introduced the second urban renewal plan (Jochelson 1990: 21). Acknowledgement of the permanence of Africans in urban areas came with new and better standard homes in townships. For example, in Soweto this was the time when townships such as Selection Park and Diepkloof Extension Four in Pimville and Diepkloof respectively emerged. This renewal plan called for provision of services. Subsequently, services such as clinics, post offices, and public telephones were provided. The plan also called for rapid and easy provision of home ownership under 99-year lease-holds, as well as sectional title. It further called for provision of loans for upgrading property. Planners argued that bringing employers, building societies and financial institutions on board would give the community a stake in the land as well as remove state responsibility of subsidisation (Jochelson 1988: 23). Furthermore, with this plan in place, homeowners would be more disposed towards cooperating with the local authorities. The planners also suggested that the city council could use house sales money to recover costs it incurred in construction of infrastructure. Building projects would, in addition, provide both skills and jobs for the local residents as well as promote small business development.

In Alexandra, the first phase of the plan was aimed at making way for service lanes as most space was occupied by unplanned informal constructions. This meant categorizing buildings into permanent or temporary. The kind of building material was used as criterion to decide on the status of these structures. The new housing developments were going to be executed in eleven phases, but only three; phases 1, 2 and 10, were completed. People who could not afford to access housing in Alexandra Township were expected to move and settle in Orange Farm where rent was R10.00 per month and serviced sites were sold for between R600.00 and R2, 400.00 with a service levy of R37.00 per month (Jochelson 1990: 24).

Further, since the government plan was to develop a new Alexandra with family homes for “legal” families only, residents were classified as either "qualified or disqualified" Their original status in Alexandra Township was used to determine this. These would be families whose presence in Alexandra was ratified by Section 10 rights. The permit system was used to determine this differentiation (Jochelson 1990, *Izwi la Township,* 1982).

By the end of 1987, there was a change in the Alexandra cadastral map; instead of approximately 2 500 stands originally demarcated, the number of newly subdivided stands totalled 6 000. This meant rezoning and re-planning with the view of having existing number

of properties subdivided into three portions each, or even four in cases of bigger stands. Because of the shortage of space, each stand accommodated between three and seven families, and this included both original stand owners and tenants.[291] However, in real terms many more families lived in Alexandra. As stated earlier, from as far back as the period of "dibondo", a family bond house would be occupied by many family units whose rentals would be used to fast track the bond repayments. Consequently, the offer to repurchase in 1988 exacerbated the problem for both council and bommastandi, albeit in different ways.

6.6 The 1988 Offer to Repurchase

In 1988, Alexandra Council made stands available in Alexandra for sale. It would appear that, as mme Hunadi explains, preference was given to families of the former bommastandi. In the absence of this group, the oldest tenants would be considered. The "oldest tenant" refers to a family of tenants that had lived the longest on a particular property.

> *First preference e ne e le the property owner le di descendents tsa gagwe. And ge batho bao ba se yo, the oldest tenant.*[292]
> (First preference was for the property owner and his/her descendents. And in their absence, the oldest tenant would be considered).

This raised several concerns. The legal ownership and use histories of Alexandra properties raised complex questions about what constituted a property in Alexandra then and who should have access to it. The most crucial question, which apparently was not asked, when an offer to purchase was made, what did this offer mean? Earlier on in this Chapter we stated that by the end of 1987 Alexandra had 6 000 stands. This means that instead of 2 500, Alexandra properties were subdivided each into three or four portions. In view of this, would Alexandra's physical landscape of about 2 500 properties be reconstructed? In other words what would happen to the new cadastral map of 6 000 properties? From this several questions arose. Was this an offer to "purchase" or "repurchase"? What was being purchased or repurchased? When bommastandi first purchased their properties Alexandra comprised 2 500 stands. In the 1980s Alexandra consisted of 6 000 stands, because properties were subdivided. Therefore during the call for "repurchasing" in 1988, bommastandi were

[291] Most interviewees stated that their parents' properties were subdivided after expropriation.
[292] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.

referring to 2 500 properties while government was referring to 6 000. For bommastandi to reinstate their parents' properties they had to purchase three or sometimes four portions that constituted the initial stands. What happens to people who were living in these properties, more particularly the ones who arrived after expropriation?

Second, calling upon the tenants of bommastandi was problematic since they had disappeared at expropriation when everybody who remained in Alexandra became a government tenant. In other words, officially, differentiation between bommastandi and their tenants ended. Third, the transient nature of residency in Alexandra more particularly in the 1980s meant that some of these "tenants" might have been difficult to trace. Further, "resurrecting" bommastandi and their "tenants" and calling upon them to claim a stake in the Alexandra property raised questions of legal ownership and use rights. Who had rights to Alexandra property?

As stated in Chapter 4, during high apartheid, (Crankshaw, 2005) the apartheid government wanted to reinforce the temporary status of all Africans in urban areas and all non-reserve areas, therefore council took away freehold rights and gave everybody in Alexandra who was legal according to Section 10 rights a space to occupy on a temporary basis be it government tenancy or leasehold. Consequently, more people than what the initial properties could house as property owners gained legal tenant rights to live in Alexandra. As illustrated at the end of this chapter and in Chapters 1and7, these concerns are still crucial for bommastandi more particularly, in the process of land restitution and claims.

6.6.1 Challenges of Repurchasing

It would appear that while the offer to repurchase was seen by bommastandi families as an opportunity to reinstate their parents' freehold properties, to council it implied purchasing only the pieces of land on which the homes they occupied at the time stood. This probably meant that the offer was intended to let former freeholders gain access to their parents' houses on 99-year leasehold which was at the time being accorded to people who bought new private developer built homes in areas such as phases 1 and 2 in Alexandra. The appearance of such houses was however, not unique to Alexandra. It was in line with the government political "reform" agenda of creating an urban black middle class. Therefore other similar developments were already visible in parts of Soweto such as Selection Park and Diepkloof Extension in Pimville and Diepkloof respectively.

Because repurchasing offered bommastandi an opportunity to reinstate their parents' properties, the question of property size became crucial to them. Given the redefined cadastral map of Alexandra and the fact that bommastandi have copies of title deeds whose sizes and boundaries are based on the old Alexandra cadastral map that comprised about 2 500 properties, how then were the 6 000 plots to be sold? The dilemma posed by this question for bommastandi was how they reconciled the notion of reinstatement of their parents' properties with buying stands that derived from the 6 000 stand cadastral map. They would either buy portions on which their parents' houses stood, which meant they were not reinstating their properties, or they would purchase all the portions that constituted the old property, which caused a dilemma for bommastandi: in view of the subdivision, "repurchasing" meant that a family would either buy only one portion of their parents' property, or buy all separate portions that constituted it.

6.7. Threats to Bommastandi Way of Life

The bommastandi way of life became complex as their private property status was eroded. This complexity was exacerbated by the fact that the process of change from being property owners to being government tenants was uneven and fractured. Too many processes occurred simultaneously, but also some of the plans that were drawn to accommodate bommastandi were abandoned due to various reasons. These reasons would include costs or even change in government policy.

Furthermore, as it became increasingly clear that it was difficult to expropriate, the WRAB announced that, pending availability of funds, Alexandra's resettlement would be completed in 1984. However, as Jochelson points out "financial constriction did not deter the Board altogether… if it could not buy people out of their houses, it could simply force them to pay to live there" (Jochelson 1988: 26). Hence in December, only four months after this announcement, the WRAB sent out notices to bommastandi who had not yet moved from their homes to vacate their properties or begin to pay rent by January 16, 1975. These letters of notice were sent by the Bantu Resettlement Board on behalf of the WRAB. According to *the Rand Daily Mail* Extra dated August 28 1975 the letters stated:

> The Bantu Resettlement Board is acquiring properties in Alex on behalf of the West Rand Board… An expropriation notice in respect of the abovementioned property was served on you on… Possession of this property will be taken on January 10, 1975 and

> from that date you will be required to pay rental for the site which is now being occupied by you…In order to arrange your monthly payments, you are required to report at my office not later than 1/10/75. Yours faithfully, Township Manager.

Further the residential permits were withdrawn and tenants of bommastandi were told to pay rent to the WRAB (Sarakinsky 1984: 52). These permits which were issued by the PUAHB differentiated between bommastandi and tenants with the former holding a Section 6 owners' certificate or a "pink permit" and the latter a Section 5 (1) (a) residential permit or "green permit" which was given to families who had Section 10 1(a), (b), and (c) rights. The status of both bommastandi and their "former tenants" was being corrupted to that of "council tenant". Did the order made by WRAB to bommastandi to pay rent as from January 1975 mark the end of private property ownership? Did compensation payout mark the end of private property ownership or were people whose properties were not compensated still owners?

Expecting all bommastandi to pay rent by the beginning of 1975 did not take into consideration whether they were compensated for their properties or not. The Expropriation Act 63 of 1975, which allowed government to take ownership of any property that it considered needed for public purposes was to be enforced in Alexandra. Although expropriation orders made it clear that rent payment was expected, bommastandi who were uncompensated declined. Mr. B. Sibeko, who was not happy with the compensation amount offered for his two properties, was expected to pay rent to the WRAB. Expressing his reason for non-payment he said:

> This is very unfair. Up to now I have not been compensated for my expropriated property. Board officials first started by cancelling our residential permits and then issued summons for the continued illegal occupation of our properties.
> *(Rand Daily Mail* Extra 28/8/ 1975)

According to the WRAB, even though Mr. Sibeko was contesting his compensation amount he was still expected to pay rent, failing which he would be fined R5.00 by a court of law. *(Rand Daily Mail* Extra 28/8/ 1975). Additionally, *the Rand Daily Mail* report of October 25, 1975 cited the case of a widow, Mrs. Seko, who was charged rental retrospectively for refusal to pay rent before compensation was paid. She was asked to pay R56 which accumulated over a period of eight months while waiting for compensation money.

Bommastandi who argued that the land they occupied belonged to them until they were compensated made it clear to their tenants that they expected them pay rent. Also in most cases properties – houses or rooms – which tenant families occupied, were built by former bommastandi. Thus they warned the tenants that they would expel them if they did not pay rent until compensation was paid (*Rand Daily Mail Extra* October 21, 1975).

6.7.1 Government as Mmastandi

It became increasingly clear that like all the other urban black people, bommastandi were government tenants. This means that their conditions of stay were determined by the spatial legislation that defined them as temporary in urban areas. The WRAB charged all Alexandra residents R7-R9 per room. In other words a former tenant occupying a single room would pay the said amount to council per month while a former mmastandi family occupying a five-roomed home would be charged the amount multiplied by the number of rooms of their home (Jochelson 1988).[293] This meant that finally all Alexandra residents were like all the other township residents they were all neither property owners nor leaseholders. Instead they were all paying rent to the government.

However, it would appear that tenants managed to sublet in some of these properties Thabang states that while bommastandi could not derive any rent from their homes after expropriation, some former tenants managed to make money by building shacks and renting them out:

> *...You know some of the tenants built shacks in the yard, and they started renting the shacks out to their own tenants. They then became landlords. And we had no say in that. You know it really became a period where the yard itself, you know became insecure, you know because we did not know who comes in and who goes out. And it was new faces all the time that we didn't know*.[294]

[293] Jochelson's (1988) thesis provides details of the rent boycotts.
[294] Interview with Thabang, Alexandra, September 16, 2003.

6.7.2 Expropriations in Alexandra

The Expropriation Act was described by the Progressive Federal MPC, Dr. Selma Browde, as discriminatory. This was because the formula used to determine compensation amounts was different from the one used for white people. Dr. Browde argued that:

> A different Act of Parliament from that used for Whites. This is not the honeyed differentiation which the Nationalists are currently trying to con the world into believing is their policy. It is instead the crude discrimination and is used against Africans to their disadvantage.
> (*Rand Daily Mail* July 10, 1975).

She pointed out that the formula used to determine compensation amounts for black people was different from the one used for white people since "Whites were entitled to compensation at market value for expropriated property" (Sarakinsky 1984: 54). The Resettlement Act formula for black people was based on the initial price of the land and six per cent per annum and the upgrading values also plus six per cent per annum, whichever was the lesser (The *Sunday Times* May 4, 1975). Even then, it would appear that the board deviated from the said formula as they were the sole buyers in Alexandra. Some bommastandi employed as "independent valuators" but there were reports that compensation of less than half the independent valuations were paid in some instances. For example:

> In an area where industrial land was valued at R1.50 a square foot, valuators worked on the basis of 25cents a square foot. But the Board works on the even more absurd basis of 10 cents per square foot.[295]

The group that agreed to expropriation was moved. Bommastandi were provided with an alternative to move to Soweto. However, it is probable that at this stage they could not lease land and build their own houses in places such as Diepkloof and Dube under 30- year leasehold as this was withdrawn in 1968. Furthermore, the compensation monies were in some instances so little that bommastandi could not enter the leasehold market in any event. For example Rapula and his grandmother fought compensation amounts that were below

[295] Ibid.

what his grandmother's property was worth. Rapula helped his grandmother to query the compensation amount offered by the WRAB at expropriation. They were offered R11 000 for their 1200/m2 stand which had two bonds and other rooms. They demanded an expropriation amount that could at least buy them leasehold, which was the closest to freehold. The asking price for a 99-year leasehold house in Selection Park, Pimville in Soweto at the time was about R14 000. Selection Park refers to a housing development that appeared in the 1980s as a result of government reforms. These were 99-year leasehold settlements where home owners who 'qualified' could access mortgage bonds from banks. They were finally offered R19 000. They most probably paid for the services of the attorney from this amount since they had employed one. However, after a protracted battle with the WRAB over the compensation amount, they opted to occupy their home as government tenants.[296] This seemed a better option than having an 80-year-old start a new life in a new place totally different from the life she had become accustomed to.

The option to remain in Alexandra seemed to be preferable due to its favourable location. Even though Thabang argues specifically for tenants' choice to remain in Alexandra as based on its favourable location, it could be said that the same argument held for the former bommastandi. Thabang's focus seems to be on all people who invested their time in living in Alexandra for many years and how they came to appreciate the locational advantage and economics of living close to employment places. He explains:

> Another thing with Alexandra tenants, what it meant was, if I move out of the property then I have to go to another place where I have to pay... you know it was more of the finances then, because I am used to paying R5 to R15 a month; now if I move and go into a flat, then we're talking R200 to R300. It was more of a habit in terms of the rental... I think it's still... even now it's still a problem of Alexandra tenants moving out of Alexandra in a sense that Alexandra itself; you know they're working around the area. You know they... you know also I think they bought into the ownership of Alexandra to say no; we've been in Alexandra for so many years, you know there is no way that I can move out of Alexandra. You know I'll give an example of the one tenant in the yard. He really resisted moving out of the yard because he said he's been in this yard for 42 years, there is no way that he can seem...

[296] Interview with Rapula, Alexandra, September 29, 2003. Mike Sarakinsky (1984) also refers to cases raised by the liberal press who, through their investigations, reported that fair prices were only paid after long legal battles.

> you know he's just about to go on pension; there is no way that he can move from here to Braam-Fischerville.[297]

Nonetheless, people who remained in Alexandra lived like all the other urban black people; as government tenants, whose conditions of stay were determined by the spatial legislation that defined them as temporary in urban areas.

6.7.3. Uprooting and Unsettling the Elderly

Other freeholders such as the 60-year-old Mrs. Noge and the 95-year-old Mrs. Modiba knew the prices at which their properties were valued. The first property, a five-roomed house and a four-roomed cottage as well as a storeroom standing on half an acre was valued by a Mr. Alex Gorshel at R8 500. However, the WRAB only paid R3 000 for it. In the case of the second family, there were two properties, both with businesses and homes that were valued at R20 000, but the Board paid only R8 000 (The *Sunday Times* May 4, 1975).

Even if such bommastandi may have wanted to move, where would they go? Mrs. Noge referred to above lived with her 111-year-old father Mr. Moloadi. How could they start a new life in a new place? Being born in Alexandra for Mrs. Noge and having lived here for 60 years meant that she was being uprooted from the only home she knew and forced to move and adjust at that age to a different place with different ways of life. Confirming how she felt about this, Mrs. Noge said:

> We are too old to move, where are we to go? ….. But would however, reluctantly say goodbye to Alex if they were assured of adequate compensation for their properties. (*The Sunday Times* May 4, 1975)

6.7.4. Compensation

As stated above bommastandi were not compensated adequately for their property. In some instances the compensation was so small that bommastandi could not enter the leasehold market in any event. The table below shows how much compensation some families received

[297] Interview with Thabang, Alexandra, September 16, 2003.

from the resettling boards.[298] These included the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board, the West Rand Administration Board and the Resettlement Board.

Table 13 Compensation amounts paid to bommastandi in the 1970s and 1980s

PLOT NO.	NAME	SIZE	DATE	BODY	AMOUNT
P1601	Shiburi	1110sq.m	27/05/1972	Resettlement Board	R 6460
P1287	H Serote	674sq.m	21/03/1973	Peri	R 2 700
P312	Emily Piliso	674sq.m	30/04/1975	Resettlement Board	R 5000
P2489	T Mlangeni	554sq.m	21/09/1976	Resettlement Board	R 6413 (approx.)
P238	W Shiburi	1110sq.m	20/07/1977	Resettlement Board	R 7540
P1709	P Magagula	1110sq.m	23/10/1978	Resettlement Board	R 8270
P1599	Petrus Noge	1110sq.m	06/12/1979	Resettlement Board	R 16 750
P1483	S Noge	1110sq.m	19/12/1979	Resettlement Board	R 19 000
P1486	M Segopa	1110sq.m	03/12/1980	Peri	R 15 750
P1143	Rebs Serote	1110sq.m	07/11/1980	Resettlement Board	R 13 302
P2522	Isaac Hlubi	555sq.m	24/06/1981	Resettlement Board	R 8050

The table is adapted from the register of expropriations compiled and kept by Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA).

As the table shows, these amounts could not really do much by way of purchasing alternative accommodation for bommastandi who may have wanted to move into leasehold properties and build homes for themselves. The investment that their parents had tried to make for them came to naught. In the interview with people such as mme Hunadi[299] she makes it clear that their parents were investing in these properties for the future of their children.

Referring to cases such as these, Sam Buti said "in all the history of black urban renewal… the hardest hit have been the pensioners and the poor. They are the ones who feel the economic pinch the most" (Swift 1983: 62). The other complaint about the expropriation process was that it was protracted. According to a report that appeared in *the Rand Daily Mail of* January 22 1975 an attorney Mr. Tucker who was involved with expropriation cases of bommastandi, commented:

[298] It would appear that even though the WRAB was in charge of removals from 1973, other resettlement bodies did not withdraw.
[299] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra, September 2, 2003,

> The board has the power to expropriate and can do so, but one of the things that concern me is that the money owing to the clients has not been paid… We are negotiating with the board about this, but it seems as if the financial side of the deal will bear some investigation.

Further, it would appear that – in spite of descriptions of buildings in Alexandra as not necessarily all poor – the reason advanced for such small compensation amounts was slum conditions. For example in *the Rand Daily Mail* of July 10 1975, Dr. Selma Browde's view of properties in Alexandra was that:

> ... Many of the houses, big, solidly built, would not disgrace a working class white suburb. Residents say they would improve their properties if they were not under threat of eviction...

In addition to this comment Ethel Hazelhurst wrote about confusion of bommastandi who were not getting any clarity from the WRAB officials about whether they were being expropriated or not, more particularly because their homes were not gutted. Hazelhurst referred to one family house in Alexandra in *the Rand Daily Mail* dated September 18, 1975, which in her opinion "did not look bad at all".

Speaking at a Progressive Party meeting, which was reported about in *the Rand Daily Mail* of July 10 1975, Dr. Browde raised an additional concern: in some instances amounts paid to property owners were even worse compared to amounts that would have been paid for same size land in the neighbouring industrial area. She felt:

> ... It is bad enough that Africans are being forced out of their homes in this area...But the position arises where a half-acre bought 20 years ago for R2 000 can now be expropriated according to the official formula for R4 400. But in the adjacent industrial area, the same sized land, it is estimated could be worth R200 000.

Ms. Helen Suzman referred to the example of a property whose minimum value in 1963 was £3 000. However, the PUAHB, who commanded the buying monopoly in Alexandra, then offered £657 for it (Sarakinsky 1984: 54). In defence of the state the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration Cruywagen argued that they were using a property evaluator of high

standing. However, the example he chose was that of a property that was bought for R4 600, even though it was valued at R4 420 (ibid: 54-55). This example was in agreement with Suzman's and Browde's points.

6.7.5 Power of Owning: Whose Right to Alexandra Is Supreme?

These conversations revealed a palimpsestic occupation of Alexandra. Bommastandi bought property, they allowed other residents to come and live on their properties mostly as tenants. When government expropriated these properties, both tenants and bommastandi became government tenants. In other words, as bommastandi lost their legal right to property ownership they kept access to their homes and so did other residents. During the mid-1980s other layers of occupation set in. In 1986 the ANC-in- exile called for the urban residents in particular to render their places ungovernable. One strategy was to flood the urban areas with mekhukhu or shacks. This was described as:

> *.....a sort of a weapon ya go lwantsha mmuso gore ungovernability to render it ungovernable, gore ga re tlo latela melao ya lona. And go na le ntho e ya gore whether it's true or false ya gore (that) the more mekhukhus we have, the more settlement ya mekhukhu we have the easier for freedom fighters to hide. It's easier for them to hide unlike in a place which is structured*.[300]
>
> (...a sort of a weapon to fight the government… ungovernability to render it ungovernable, to state that we were not going to obey your laws (Government) And there is this thing… whether it's true or false that the more mekhukhus we have, the more settlement in the mekhukhus we have the easier for freedom fighters to hide. It's easier for them to hide unlike in a place which is structured.)

He explains the strategy of destabilizing government and resisting its legislation. He explains how many shacks would be used as hiding places for freedom fighters who at the time were infiltrating the country. The building of mekhukhus is most commonly without any specific layout and thus it is difficult for an outsider to find direction when walking among them.

This approach manifested in a slogan *phambili ngo mkhukhu Phansi ngo mmastandi*. The first part of the slogan which literally means "forward with shacks" was intended to

[300] Interview with an informant, Alexandra,January 19, 2004. See footnote 279

render the urban places ungovernable by flooding of them with mekhukhu. One informant, a former tenant, explains the phrase this way:

> *Mamela rona tje ka re le bana ba mona; the people ba re neng re le bana ba mole, re fila ga re sa kgone go dula bomme ba rona ka mo di one rumung, ga go na privacy. Wa understanda. Because mama a ka se tlhape ke le hier. Wa understanda? And then le nna ka mo. So dilo tse tshwanang le tseo. So we said "pambili ka mekhukhu". But that concept a zang re e kwale. So ke mo e ileng ya bulega ko teng ya ba gore e ba everybody's issue. Everybody comes from anywhere a tla go aga mokhukhu up until Alexandra e ba le congestion e baie so…*[301]
>
> (Listen as local children, we felt that we could not live with our mothers in single-roomed homes, there was no privacy. Do you understand? Because my mother cannot bath in front of me. Do you understand? And then I also cannot have a bath. So, it's things such as those. So we said "pambili ka mekhukhu". But we did not close that concept. So it was open and it became everybody's issue (That is including even people who did not at the time live in Alexandra). Everybody came from anywhere to build their shacks up until Alexandra had so much congestion.)

However, the last bit *Phansi ngo mmastandi* which means "away with bommastandi" created a problem for bommastandi in that it did not support their wish to re-own their properties. How do they support a fight which calls for their losing their hard-fought for property? This is evident in the many struggles between those who are trying to repurchase or have repurchased their properties and the other people living on the properties who may be former tenants of these families or people who came in during this time. The chasm between the former bommastandi and the other residents in the offer to repurchase properties that came at the end of the 1980s was further exacerbated by the fact that first preference was given to the former group.

This rupture between the two groups is illustrated by ntate Tshepo:

> *...everybody was in a struggle or riots; or supporting the riots. But go na le puo in a township ya gore ga le tsebe go reka batho. Ke gore batho ba ba dulang in the*

[301] Interview with an informant, River Park, April 26, 2004.

property. You can't buy people. Jaanong some people went ahead ba reka but some didn't. So ba ba rekileng, I know one or two… Ba eleng gore up to now there's a bitter struggles between bona le ditenants refusing to pay. Legal struggles and you know…[302]

(…everybody was in a struggle or riots; or supporting the riots. but there is in the township a saying that you cannot buy people, that is people who currently live in the property…so people went ahead and repurchased... So those who have repurchased... Up to now… there's a bitter struggles between bona le ditenants refusing to pay. Legal struggles and you know…)

The informant above explains the phansi kwe mmastandi part of the dictum as:

So now like this is my property. A ke re ke a e claima, I am in the process. Batho ba le ba bangwe ba agile mekhukhu, ba bangwe ke ditenants mo distandeng tse right; you see. And then all the process I want gore ke ntshe batho just like that, and that thing e organisa divictims tse… batho ba ba o ba victimisang they become organized.[303]

(So now like this is my property. Let's say I am claiming, I am in the process. These other people have built their shacks, some are tenants in these stands right; you see. And then all the process I want is that I should force people out just like that, and that thing results in these victims organising…the people that you are victimising... they become organised.)

This tension is picked up by Lucas (1996) who argues that old property owners were in support of government, who attempted to squash the squatter infiltration. If both tenants and property owners were in the struggle for political freedom, how come in the end the one side loses out? The argument was, if the former property owners repurchased their properties, then it would mean they were buying them with people who were occupying them and owning people is not possible.

Both repurchasing and restitution involved the question of power. Whoever has ownership rights to the said property will decide who has access to that property and under which circumstances. Commenting on the fact that some residents were not paying for services and that council could not get them to pay or to leave, ntate Tshepo said:

[302] Interview with ntate Tshepo, Alexandra,n September 14, 2003.
[303] Interview with an informantRiver Park, April 26, 2004.

> *If you say the property owner must take over obviously there is going to be control ga gona motho yo o tla dulang fela a sa duele and so on.* [304]
> If you say the property owner must take over obviously there is going to be control (there is nobody who is going to live without paying) and so on.

But then he situates this rupture within the bigger struggle for political freedom in South Africa and this resonates with the quote above.

> *If we were defying government gore a si bhadale sithi pambili ngo mkhukhu re aga mokhukhu; who are you to say o rekile re patele wena?..Now you realize as property owner, you were part of the struggle; o lwanna liberation ya motho o montsho.You weren't outside the struggle…* [305]
> (If we were defying government saying we are not paying; forward with shacks and we are building shacks; who are you to say you bought the property and we should pay you? Now you realize as property owner, you were part of the struggle; fighting for the liberation of the black man. You weren't outside the struggle…)

However, one gets a sense of the yearning for that power in the conversations. Having been part of the struggle for political freedom alongside tenants, it seems unfortunate that the very slogan that promoted flooding urban areas with *mekhukhu* in order to support the struggle also came with suppression of the yearning to own property. Hence *phansi kwe mmastandi* as part of the slogan that promotes rendering townships ungovernable by flooding them with shacks sounded somewhat misplaced, if not downright contradicting the last part, which advocates the removal of bommastandi.

6.7.6 The Impact of the Offer to Repurchase on the Lives of Bommastandi

To bommastandi the offer to repurchase seemed to have come at a time when their position as property owners needed redeeming. However, the offer had its own complexities. How did it impact on the lives of bommastandi? What were its implications for families who occupied such properties all along? In some instances these would include both tenants and former

[304] Interview with ntate Tshepo, Alexandra, September 14, 2003.
[305] Ibid.

owners, while in some properties would be occupied solely by tenants. Either way, the issue of defining who qualified for access became crucial.

6.7.7 Reclaiming an Alexandra Home

The offer to repurchase complicated the issue of who qualified to stake a claim in Alexandra. It probably suggested that the rights of former bommastandi superseded those of all other residents, albeit inadvertently. Which of the former bommastandi families would be considered for this offer? At this stage there were bommastandi families who never left Alexandra, some were still in their original homes while others were in Alexandra but not in their homes. Those who had left Alexandra did not feel that they had completely abandoned their family properties since some family members remained. For example, Khensani's father got a house in Diepkloof, however, some of his uncles and aunts remained in some of their properties in Alexandra as tenants, on the other hand tata Andile left his parents' house but his mother and son remained in both of their properties.

Given this, those bommastandi families whose applications and registration for repurchasing were unsuccessful, were very disappointed. Tata Andile, whose application to purchase both his parents' properties, was refused. He only managed to get one. As an heir he expected to get both properties, but this was not forthcoming. He was advised that the fact that at the time of registration for repurchase there was no family member living in the second property, it would be unfair on people who had been living in the property for his family to purchase it. He did not understand this. He felt that they were being punished for having left the property at expropriation, which they were expected to do. Even then, according to him, his son had been living on this property.

Musa's case, illustrates another interesting issue:

> *There was an offer but now during that time nna ke ne ke le ko Tembisa but I approach my father ge ke utlwa gore there are possibilities of repurchasing, only to find that when we go there, me and my father to the registration so to hear more about the repurchasing we were told now, that offer,, it has been cut off, dates has*

been cancelled. Why guys? No there is a dispute between the tenants and the retles the civics says no guys this guys they cannot buy back.[306]

(There was an offer, but now during that time I was in Tembisa (he got married and bought a house in Hospitalview, Tembisa while his father remained in Alexandra) but I approached my father when I heard that there are possibilities of repurchasing, only to find that when my father and I went to register for repurchasing, and to get more details about it, we were told that offer had been cut off, dates has been cancelled. Why guys? No there is a dispute between the tenants and the ... the civics says no guys this guys they cannot buy back.)

Although Council often advised them that they could only repurchase if the tenants gave them the go-ahead to do so, in the case of Musa the dispute was not between himself and the tenants. Instead, even though he ultimately repurchased his parents' property, at the time of the interview he was expecting to be moved. According to the new redevelopment plans, the place was earmarked for some buildings.

Interestingly, even in instances where tenants agreed that properties could be bought, they did not support mmastandi after the repurchase. The case at hand is that of ntate Thapelo, who repurchased his aunt's property after discussing the issue with his two cousins. At the time of the interview Ntate Thapelo's two cousins were both married and living in Soweto.

He had to buy two portions out of four because if he had only bought the one with the "bond" house he would not have been able to access his home. He was promised that the council tenants, who lived in the premises at the time, would leave after five years. This has not happened. His concern is that tenants are neither leaving nor willing to pay rent. He is too old to move to Lichtenburg, where the family has a farm, and start life afresh. Further, they cannot evict the tenants for fear of violence. He recounted a story of man from the mmastandi family who was killed by a mob a few months before the interview after he won an eviction case against tenants:

ka kwa, batho ba palama ntlu ba latlhela [mollo] in the house. Re mmolokile only about two months ago, X, a property owner. Property owners have been killed in this

[306] Interview with Musa, Alexandra, August 10, 2003. Although Musa had left Alexandra Township, his father remained in their property until the so called Nkatha violence when they moved him to join them temporarily in Tembisa. Musa subsequently returned to Alexandra to rebuild his parents' property

Alexandra. And hence ga ne re ngwalla the minister of justice at that time; you know re kopa a help, he didn't do much. Though o ile a ngwala back to the station commander a leka to push them gore ba re thuse, that didn't help that much…[307]
(That side people climbed on top of the roof and threw fire into the house. We buried him only about two months ago, X, a property owner. Property owners have been killed in this Alexandra. And hence when we wrote a letter to the Minister of Justice at that time; you know asking for help, he didn't do much. Though he wrote back to the station commander trying to push them to help us that didn't help that much…)

Another woman from a mmastandi family also died of a heart attack after tenants refused to leave. The other concern was that although they had fully paid for the property they did not receive a title deed for it.

6.7.8 Purchasing or Multiple Repurchasing?

The following conversation with mme Hunadi, captures some of issues that bommastandi had to grapple with when registering "for repurchasing" of stands in Alexandra:

Nna ke batla property jaana ka ge ba e nkile mo rona. So e be e ele gore ausi o la a re if at all ga ba batle there is nothing I can do, and le wena if at all ga o batle gore ba reke a portion, ka gore ba ne ba se tse ba se divayidile into three; le bona ba ka se reke."…..: Yes, I wanted the whole thing.[308]
(I want the property the way it was when they took it from us (meaning Government/council). So that ousi said if at all they (people living in the stand that used to belong to mme Hunadi's parents) do not want, there is nothing I can do and if you (mme Hunadi) you do not want them to buy a portion thereof as it was divided into three, they will not buy... Yes, I wanted the whole thing.)

This conversation is about mme Hunadi reinstating her parents' property through purchasing all the newly defined stands that constituted the old one; it is also about someone else wanting to buy a portion thereof. Further, it was about the other people who were living in the property. The challenge for Council was to mediate among these three groups and reach

[307] Interview with ntate Thapelo, Alexandra, September 8, 2003.
[308] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra,September 2, 2003.

and equitable solution before application for "repurchasing" could be approved, and the stand sold. The challenge lay in trying to reconciling three different interests competing for access and occupation of land which formed part of an area that was reconstituted from two cadastral maps. The dilemma arising was protecting interest of all these groups. First, mme Hunadi had to be consulted when the third party wanted to buy a portion of her parents' property, because she wanted to buy all the portions that constituted the old property. Second, regardless of who was buying, people living in the property had to agree of the sale. This experience of mme Hunadi typifies competing claims for Alexandra properties that bommastandi had to grapple with when registering for "repurchasing".

6.7.9. What Happened to Other Families on the Properties after "Repurchase?"

Depending on the agreement between the buyers and other families, such families may have to leave and seek accommodation elsewhere. As illustrated in the case of mme Hunadi above, the tenants did not agree to her buying the property.

Mme Hunadi clarified that they wanted their parents' properties back and not tenants. In other words, they wanted to buy all portions that formed the parents' original properties, not because they wanted more tenants. In fact it is probable that since some of the tenants settled on the properties after expropriation, they were not keen to let them live on the property after repurchase:

> *Ga re llele di tenants, re llela di property tsa batswadi ba rona, because a title-deed ya Alexandra e ne e ke freehold. And then ga re e tlhalosetsa ke batswadi ba rona; ke hore until wena mong wa yona o sa tlhole o e batla, no any other person o ne a tshwantse a go nkele pleke eo. And then ba ne ba e eleditse bana ba bona*.[309]
> (We are not crying for tenants, we are crying for our parents' properties, because the Alexandra title deed stated that it was freehold. When our parents explained to us, freehold meant you had a right to your property until you decided personally that you did not want it, no other person was supposed to take that place from you. Our parents bought this so that their children could have a place to stay.)

[309] Ibid.

What would then happen to tenant families, who find themselves in such situations? Would they have a right to a home in these properties if they reverted to private property, be it under leasehold or freehold? The suggestion that a property would be resold only if the tenants agreed was thus an attempt not to eject non-property owners from their homes.

In addition to the issue of tenants, access to the property by siblings after repurchasing was another concern which seemed to exacerbate the condition raised above. Once more, the use of the term "repurchase" seems ill-advised. If one child of the former mmastandi decided to buy the property would it mean that all the other siblings would have a right to it? Explaining her concern mme Hunadi continued:

> *...Err nna ka 88, ka nako e ba reng ba di rekisa back, ke ile ka re ke batla go reka property e. E le gore le mme o ne a insista a re reka; ke re hey, wa tseba I am not interested because ke tshaba dipuo tsa family and all that. E be e le gore as time went on, ke bona gore it's a necessity ka nnete gore ke reke property e. E be ke ya ko council ke ngwadisa lebitso, e be ba bitsa batho ba mo jarateng; Ausi o na o re o batla go reka property e le ya bona o a qualifaya. Le nna kwa le ba mpotsisitse gore o eng le Edward (surname withheld), ka re ke abuti wa ka. Ka qualifaya, ka gore ena o permanently ko Daveyton and then a ka se tlhole a sa boa ka kwano. Ka kereya e le gore I qualify, jwanong ba bitsa batho ba mo jarateng. Ga ke fitlha kwa le…ne se batho ba originally mo jarateng e ne e le batho ba kereileng open space fela ebe ba e nka*.[310]
>
> (ERR… In 1988 by the time they (Council) were selling back properties I wanted to buy this property (Where the interview was conducted) my mother was insisting that I should. I said Hey I am not interested because I do not want to deal with family members who might not like it and all that. And then as time went on, I saw that it was a necessity for me to buy the property. I went to council to register my name; they called all the people in the yard. They told them that I wanted to buy the property and I qualified. Meantime they asked me my relationship with Edward (Surname withheld, his name was appearing in the title deed) I told them it was my brother. I qualified because he lives permanently in Daveyton and he will not come back here. I found that I qualified and they called people from the yard. When I arrived these were

[310] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.

not the people who were originally in the yard, they found an open space and took it over.)

In this case the solution was provided by the family since there were no competing claims for ownership among siblings. The brother, who owned some of the stands, was not intending to go back to Alexandra.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I examined the period from 1973 to 1988. I investigated the complexities that arose as a result of the shift in property ownership from private to sovereign property ownership. The chapter looked at the ambiguity of the term "reprieve" as it raised false expectations among bommastandi who were hoping for a return to private property ownership. It also shows how bommastandi lost their social position as well as a source of income accruing from rentals when they lost their properties when the WRAB took over their tenants. But most significantly, it showed how people who were not compensated for their properties, were all the same, expected by the state to pay rentals and how all this culminated in legal battles. These battles included fighting for payment as well as for the payout amounts which were not only based on a formula that was rejected by bommastandi but in some instances the WRAB was accused of deviating from the very formula.

The chapter revealed the pain of losing property and a home to the state. It also questioned the motive behind the expropriation which took place in Alexandra. It can be argued that this expropriation was not for the conventional legal public good in that it unsettled people for political expediency. Although it was racially motivated, it did not make sense, as initially it seemed Africans were removed from Alexandra only to be replaced by Africans. But this move was an economic one as the latter were retained to supply labour to the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg. I also revealed the pain of reoccupying one's home under degrading circumstances of losing ownership rights only to be – offered usage rights of the same property.

Finally, I analysed the offer to "repurchase" of 1988. I revealed what this meant and how the meaning attached to it by bommastandi families appeared to be different from that of council. I also showed the challenges that came with implementation of "repurchasing". More significantly, I showed that in the current Alexandra there are residues from the past. Signs of dispossession and expropriation are still visible in the lives of women who still live in shacks,

as well as those who wish to repurchase their properties and cannot, and those who have "repurchased" but are still disgruntled due to absence of power and rights over their properties.

Chapter 7
CONCLUSION: OTHER WAYS OF KNOWING

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I showed how former property owners and other Alexandra residents fought – although ultimately without success – to recreate the Alexandra they knew. I investigated the way the events of the period – from the inception of the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) governance system to the ambiguities of the Alexandra reprieve in the 1970s – impacted on the mmastandi of Alexandra. It showed how the reprieve came about and how it was understood. This was done by examining the complex period of the 1970s through to the late 1980s in Alexandra. To government the reprieve meant the end of removals and resettlement, while to bommastandi it constituted a promise for a return to freehold. However, this was never meant to be, as government policy then pressed for temporary urban status for all Africans. The 1980s, which reflect uncertainties both at policy level and in the way bommastandi lived, was also explored.

This concluding chapter touches briefly on some of the developments in Alexandra from 1990 to 2004. The aim is to highlight how the current challenges faced by bommastandi were shaped by these developments. In the first part of the chapter I briefly review the intense period of violence in Alexandra from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. This violence is explored and specifically linked to the effects it had on property rights. Significantly, this is a period in which new ways of relating to property by both former bommastandi and tenants were evident.

Against the background of the national events pertaining to land ownership, which were introduced after 1994, when the first democratically elected government came to power in South Africa, I explore the complexities of reclaiming property that bommastandi families are facing. I further examine the ways in which bommastandi families in Alexandra have been taking steps to reclaim their properties and the reasons for doing so. In this, I refer to the accounts of bommastandi who indicate that they experienced a substantial material loss, but also other, less overt but linked, losses.

In this thesis I illustrated that the concept mmastandi is a useful lens through which the **heartfelt and lived experience** of being modern, African and permanently in an urban

area, can be revealed. The interrogation of this concept and how its history and meaning are played out in the property life stories of bommastandi raised the significant question of legalities regarding space and time, and also provides a window through which one can examine the social and physical topography of Alexandra. Additionally the thesis highlights that other concepts such as *sekgoweng* and or *makgoweng* and *magaeng* are foundational in understanding contradictions in the spatial dichotomisation policies of the South African government. The first two literally mean "a place of white people". The terms are most commonly used to refer to urban areas or white farms though most commonly the later would be referred to as *dipolaseng*. However, *dipolaseng* also has been used colloquially to refer to African rural villages. These African rural villages are also referred to as *magaeng* though *magaeng* really refer to home.

Research on Alexandra raises debates on the class analysis of Alexandra residents, the history of Alexandra, agency role of Alexandra residents, Alexandra residents as a community and the housing debates that are situated within the broader politics of dispossession, removal and resettlements. However, though the concept of mmastandi draws from such debates, in fact families of bommastandi were purchasing private property in an area that was increasingly becoming urban in South Africa. The apartheid government was, however, at the time legislatively expunging the presence of Africans in the urban areas that were progressively becoming an enclave of white people. This implies that we should rethink such debates. Engaging the metaphor of "palimpsest", the study highlights a series of layers in property relationships that could not be entirely effaced by policy changes and through which the past is rendered visible in the present.

Finally, I briefly examine the impact of the building developments of the 2000s in Alexandra on the hopes and aspirations of bommastandi families for reclaiming old properties.

7.2 The face of violence

A vast literature accounts for the political violence that occurred in South Africa at the beginning of the 1990s (Segal 1991; Simpson & Rauch 1991; Innes and Kentridge 1992; Morris and Hindson 1993; Stavrou 1993; Adam and Moodley 1993; Bonner and Ndima 1999; Zulu 1998; Guelke 2000; Charney 1999, Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008). Although this violence was a national phenomenon, "from the statistics presented by the SAIRR the most violent provinces which jointly accounted for 80% of the deaths were KZN and

Gauteng" (Guelke 2000: 241). In their chapter on "civil war" Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008:359-382) provide a detailed analysis of this period of violence.The section below focuses on this violence to the extent that it impacted on the property and life stories of bommastandi.

Graeme Simpson & Janine Rauch (1991) provide a picture of violence that occurred in Alexandra during this period: when they argue that:

> "Another significant example was the attack at the night vigil of Jane Ramakgola on March 27 in Alexandra. The pre-dawn attack which left 15 people dead involved the use of pangas and automatic weapons and took place 800 metres from the Alexandra police station. It was followed by claims of police incompetence or complicity. The significance of this attack was that it signalled the intrusion of the violence into Alexandra Township which had remained virtually unaffected by the Reef conflict in 1990"

This violence also received prominence from the media. For example, the following captions appeared in the World News section of the *New York Times* of March 10, 1991 and April 2, 1992 respectively "10 Die in Factional Violence Near Johannesburg" and " 5 Dead in Rising South African Strife". Describing one of the many incidents of the macabre murders that resulted from political violence in Alexandra Christopher S. Wren of the *New York Times* reported on March 29, 1992:

> His startled face frozen in death, the sniper's victim lay bleeding this afternoon into the garbage-littered dirt. The fatal bullet that ripped through his blue coveralls appeared fired from an open window of the nearby migrant workers' hostel. Policemen in camouflage fatigues hugged the surrounding shacks and glanced about for the sniper before they scooped the body onto a metal stretcher.

Although my respondents were not keen to rehash experiences such as these as they brought out a chapter in their lives that they would prefer to forget, some accounts were given, albeit in a drawn out and tentative way. Recounting an experience of one such gruesome event, one of the women from the bommastandi families who lived in the boardroom of the council offices at the time of the interview said:

...Ke gore ke shebile, ka gore ke ne ke le ko strateng and light e le teng. Ke gore ga ba fetsa go mo tlhaba ka dintjumentju ba tlhaba ba fetsa; ba nke dicardboard tsele tsa ko Terry ko shopong ba mo kwale ka tsone. Ba kwale so.[311]

(...That is because I was watching, I was standing in the street and there was light. When they finished stabbing him with "ntjumentjus"[312], they took card boards, the ones they got from Terry's shop and covered him with them. (She shows how the covering was done.)

Echoing this, one of these women remembered the stench that she came to associate with violence which typified such killings in the Beirut [313]area:

Ja e so … e ne e re ka nako e nngwe ga ke dutse ke re nh! A re (Name withheld) se o qadile. Ke re hey ku ya nuka. A re yini gogo? Ke re lapha kune sdumbu. One day ka bona it was after five days, maburu a tle, ba apara dihand gloves. (Name withheld) are... Ba se kereya sedumbu se setse se nkga[314]

(Ja it's like this… sometimes when we were just sitting I would say nh (The sound made when smelling something bad) she (name withheld) would say gogo[315] what is Echoing this, one of these women remembered the stench that she came to associate with violence which typified such killings in the Beirut area:
your problem. I would say hey there is a horrible smell here. And she would say what now granny? I would say there is a corpse over there. One day I think it was after five days, The Boers came, they put on their gloves. She (name withheld) said... They found the corpse and it already smelt badly.)

However unpalatable these experiences may have been, they formed part of these women's life experiences, more so because they lost their homes by fleeing them due to such horrendous acts of violence. The significance of this violence in the lives of Alexandra residents in general is that there was a lot of movement, more particularly away from "Beirut". In the case of bommastandi the move spelt ultimate severance from their former

[311] Interview with Mokgadi, mme Mmaphefo, mme Mosidi and ma Elise Alexandra, March 26, 2004.
[312] This is a long sharp instrument that is used to stab and kill brutally.
[313] The area around Madala hostel was named Beirut due to violence that erupted in it. This area extended from 1st to 8th Avenue and from London to Roosevelt.
[314] Interview with Mokgadi, mme Mmaphefo, mme Mosidi and ma Elise see footnote 311
[315] A Nguni word used to address an elderly woman; it signifies that the woman is older than the speaker's mother.

properties. This was a significant moment in their lives in that it marked a final loss and displacement from their properties which went beyond the legal. In effect this displacement did not necessarily imply that the displaced families all left Alexandra. Some shifted to other properties and moved in with friends.

7.3. Losing a home is more than losing a house

The loss of homes by bommastandi was reminiscent of the initial conversation with my ex-colleague. This conversation is alluded to in the preamble. To her the lost home was physically there and yet unrecognizable in her childhood memory of it. It was a loss of a way of relating, belonging and attaching to a particular physical structure, a house. Although the physical structure exists, albeit in a dilapidated state, it cannot connect to her childhood memory of it.

A home is constituted by "both material – a building often with garden or yard attached located in a particular neighbourhood – and a space in which identities and meanings are constructed" (May and Cloke 2006: 225). In Alexandra a home was depicted as all of these and more. In line with May and Cloke (2006) it was a site of security but also a site of oppression. However, the oppression they cite is directly linked to fear of violence and male tyranny over women and children... but, in Alexandra a home increasingly became a site of state oppression which led to homelessness. This homelessness did not always manifest in rooflessness as it was invisible (May and Cloke 2006). Some bommastandi families had roofs over their head but they lost security, power and many other domestic rights that go with having a home.

Alexandra brings memories of a beautiful place, a place that was loved as a home, a place where families had power to decide what kind of structures they could have in their properties. While some bommastandi still lived in these homes, they have changed both physically and in many other ways. They reveal some of the losses through the kind of relationships they had with the home, some happy, some sad. For instance, the Alexandra that Nhlanhla is reminiscing about was beautiful.

> *Ja, it was a bit…it was [an opulent] township because some shacks were well // o kereya go dula family fela, and it had a nice green grass and fruit trees; and you*

know ba ruile le bo nogwatsha and all that. it was so nice. There used to be places along the river banks…[316]

(Ja, it was a bit…it was an opulent township because some shacks were well … you found that only the family lived (in these properties), and it had a nice green grass and fruit trees; and you know they reared rabbits and all that. It was so nice. There used to be places along the river banks…)

As explained below, the beautiful memories he had of home were accompanied by those of the surrounding places as well:

Ja, even // wa tseba Jukskei ke Jukskei, but it used to have others, smallanyana…from ko 4th, ko 6th and the others. So gone go ba le green grass mole and I remember when we were young we used to go with our girlfriends re dule moo, re be le picnic. It was so nice; it was not overcrowded like this.[317]

(Ja, even... You know Jukskei its Jukskei, but it used to have others, small... (Supposedly small picnic spots) from 4th to 6th Avenue and the others. So there used to be green grass there and I remember when we were young we used to go with our girlfriends and sit there and have our picnic. It was so nice; it was not overcrowded like this.)

The physical Alexandra that Nhlanhla described above also held emotional currency as described by ntate Sechaba, whose father almost died from heartbreak when they were faced with losing their homes.

This home? The [property] was expropriated ka 61. ijoo! My father nearly died. He just… [err] 61. and they engaged // they clubbed up together to challenge that"…….Yes. He was at the forefront of the Residents' Property Owners to challenge this. [318]

However, he was not willing to just let go and accept defeat without a fight. Hence, he became one of the leaders of property owners who challenged the government.

[316] Interviewwith Nhlanhla,Wynberg, October 10, 2003.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Interview with ntate Sechaba, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.

Loss of a home, a physical structure, is also a loss of power over that space. Nhlanhla's striving to regain his parents' property also highlights his desire to regain the power of governance over that lost space. Resonating this loss, Palesa explains:

> *But batho ba ba leng teng ba, ga re ba tsebe. Ga re tsebe le gore ba kene jwang. O tla bona fela motho a setse a le teng. And then from there they are having control ya pleke. Instead of ga ba etsa ntho, they should approach o kapa o. A ke re ke bona ba setseng mo gae. Nou ga ba ba approache. Like gate e le, they don't lock. Because nna itse ga ke boa ka ba botsa gore gate ena…So ga ke tsebe.*[319]
> (But we do not know people who are here. We do not know how they came to be here. We just found them here. And then from there they take control of this place. Instead of approaching you when they do anything, now they do not. Take for instance that gate, they do not lock it. When I asked them about this gate…so I do not know.)

The loss of power over the place that they still had a close social attachment to, although they were legally detached from it, is evident from what is apparently the mere closing and locking of a gate. The source of this apparent disrespect for former property owners is further encapsulated by Vuyo who explains:

> *I'm sorry I'm sure maybe ga ba utlwisise hantle. You see most of these people ba ba agileng mo, ba nkile advantage ka nako ya merusu. Ba ikeletsa the way ba batlang ja teng. That's why a ba zange ba ba approache. Do you understand? They felt gore they can do anything, because ka lebaka la merusu. That's why ba ba undermayina gona jwanong.*[320]
> (I'm sorry I'm sure maybe they do not understand quite well. You see most of these people who have built here, took advantage during the times of riots (merusu). They do what they want. That's why they never approached them (meaning this family). Do you understand? They felt that they can do anything; because of the riots (Supposedly there was no order). That's why they are currently undermining them (the family).

[319] Interview with Palesa.Alexandra, August 21, 2003.
[320] Vuyo, Palesa's brother-in-law during the interview conducted with Palesa above.

This view raises an important point about property relations in Alexandra in the 1980s. While the former property owners understood that their properties belonged to the state, they still expected some recognition as main tenants of council. However, in Alexandra council declared everybody equal and hence the properties were occupied at will by whoever wished to do so. This is the point some bommastandi families are covertly raising.

The refusal to pay rentals is not depicted as necessarily lamenting a loss of income, but it reflects inability to have a say over how their properties are occupied and by whom.

> *Ga ba patele anything, they're arrogant. Ba bangwe ba kereile // what is sad, most of them with the exception of three, most of them ba kereile dintlu ko bo Tsutsumani and…but they have left their daughters or their grandsons*.[321]
> (They are not paying anything, they are arrogant. Some of them have... what is sad, most of them with the exception of three, most of them have houses in places such as Tsutsumani and…but they have left their daughters or their grandsons.

Nhlanhla is highlighting that some of the occupants are not remaining on these properties because they do not have anywhere to live, but just because they can, since the former owners who may have regained ownership or are still fighting to do so have no power over the properties whatsoever. Echoing Nhlanhla's sentiments on the issue of power, mme Hunadi said:

> *Jwanong wa bona ge nkebe e le gore ba re fa diproperties tsa rona; and then ba ba tsebise batho ba gore property jwanong ke ya mme o; ke ya mme o; and ga a le kobe, le dula mo. Ba se ke ba ba botsa gore ba tlo ba sutisa. Fela gore ba kgone go capturer batho ba // and then ga e setse e le ya rona, ba re fe title-deed. Ge ntse re dula le bona, ro boledisana le bona ka rente, electricity oa ikenyeditseng o tla ithekela pre-paid ya gagwe. Ga a ka fetsa three months a sa patele, it's then we'll evict that person. And ga re mo evictile, ga a mathela ko council for help, council e mmotse gore ke lona batho ba le sa batleng go patela; this person has a right to evict you, because e setse e le three months o sa patele. And le rona re tshwantse re ba tsebise gore ge o ka fetsa three months o sa patele, o tsebe gore ko ga geno ke ko*

[321] Interview with Nhlanhla,Wynberg, October 10, 2003.

strateng. Wa bona e ne e tlo solva taba ya gore batho ba be conscious ka gore tshwantse ba patele di services.[322]

(Now you see, if they could give back our properties and then let the people know that this property now belongs to this woman; and she is not chasing you away, you live here. They (presumably council) should not tell them that they will remove them. So that they can capture them (this means that they should be able to have a record of all the people living in the property)... and then when the property is ours then they should give us our title deed. While we are living with them (other occupants), we will raise the issues of rentals, electricity with them and those who have installed their own electricity will continue to use their prepaid system. However, if they stay for three months without paying rent, it's then we'll evict that person. And once we have evicted them if they go to council for help, council, they should be told that they are the people who are refusing to pay rentals and that I have a right to evict them, because you are three months in arrears. And we should also tell them that they should be aware of the fact that if their rent is three months overdue they will be evicted. This system would solve the problem by making people aware that they are expected to pay for services.)

Mme Hunadi raises two issues in addition to wanting to regain power over her property. She is raising the issues of an amicable solution of (to) the problem of occupation of the property by other families. She recognizes their history of occupation of this property and she also acknowledges that she cannot wish the history away. Her solution is to keep her property and have non-family members paying her rent and paying for consumption of utilities. As a landlord she should be supported by council to evict families who are unwilling to pay for their keep. Nhlanhla's solution is to take full control and not compromise. This is probably due to the fact that he believes that families who have alternative homes but still want to keep rooms in the old Alexandra do this because they do not have to spend money for their keep in these properties.

Well I'll have to vacate them. I told them to leave, because really wa bona there is no point in trying to discuss with them, because legally they are not supposed to be there, because the government is trying to dedensify Alexandra. It has moved them // they

[322] Interview with mme Hunadi, Alexandra,September 2, 2003.

are the problem with those people over there, not our [problem] (Meaning moving them should be the government's problem).[323]

A significant question concerning identity that arose out of the loss of a home was nuanced in the way some bommastandi referred to their Alexandra home. They sometimes presented a home that seemed to lack a geographic location. Their home tended to vacillate between urban and rural, Alexandra was home and yet it was not, rural which could have or should have been home did not seem to be known by some of them. For most, this rural home was an imagined home a home in the cultural sense. However, for government this home had to be physically realizable through homelands. The notion of culture as home is used by Mitchell (2002). Mitchell (1996) on the other hand, focuses on the significance of a landscape which he describes as dynamic, in that it serves to create and naturalise the histories and identities inscribed upon it. However, he also portrays it as simultaneously hiding and revealing social and historical formations. It is through the cultural processes of imagining, seeing, historicizing and remembering that space is transformed into place and geographical territory into a culturally defined landscape (Mitchell 1996: 6).

7.4 The failure of bommastandi to regain their landlord status

The second point that ntate Tshepo is raising is that of division between former bommastandi and their "former tenants". This division was particularly played out after an offer to repurchase where the former bommastandi were given first preference. The following experience indicates how repurchasing properties meant living with tenants who may have come into the property during the many phases in the history of Alexandra property. It better illustrates how to bommastandi repurchasing meant gaining control of the property to do what they pleased and allowing whomever they wanted on their properties.

Ja. la mathomo I was assaulted by the same person yoo, o a agileng ntlu ele, ga ke re ke a mo stopa gore you can't come and do anything [in that] place, it's not your property, it's my property. I was assaulted, and we had a case against him. … So ga re //go le jwalo I went to the council; you know ke mo ba mphang this. And then now, gone jaanong ga ke bolela jaana // ga ke bolela jaana I'm just from the police station

[323] Interview with Nhlanhla, Wynberg. October 10, 2003.

this morning; ke butse a docket against the boy o a thubileng the // ena o nne a thuba mo le. Ena o ne a re tshwarisitse. Now I'm making a counter-case against him. I've just been to the police station, ke feditse docket ya ka. Now they are looking for him. [324]

(First I was assaulted by the same person who built that house, when I tried to stop him…you can't come and do anything [in that] place, it's not your property, it's my property. I was assaulted, and we had a case against him… So I went to council you know and they gave me this.. And then now...as I am talking to you…I am just from the police station this morning, I have opened a docket against the boy who broke in, the one who broke in there…The one who got me arrested… Now I'm making a counter-case against him. I've just been to the police station. I have just opened a docket… Now they are looking for him.)

Ntate Thapelo is referring to a young man, the son of a former tenant, whose parents left stuff in the room which they used to rent from his family when they left. This young man returned to the room and decided to renovate the roof without consultation with ntate Thapelo's family. When they called him to order a fight ensued, and this led to charges and counter charges of assault. Ntate Thapelo feels that even though he has now repurchased the property, he still does not have rights over it. Having done this he still feels that they are being treated unfairly because he does not understand why he has to be arrested for defending and protecting his property. However, in spite of this unfair treatment, he and his wife who is also in her 80s cannot leave as they are too old to start a new life elsewhere.

Wa bona gore we are living here; ga ke tshabe go go bolella gore we are living in hell, we are holding because this is our property and we // o fitlhela e le gore if we have to move out, we'll be moving out leaving all our valuable things in this house, and even the house, the property itself is ours.[325]

(You see we are living here. I am not afraid to tell you that we are living in hell we are holding because this is our property and we... You find that if we have to move out, we'll be moving out leaving all our valuable things in this house, and even the house, the property itself is ours...)

[324] Interview with ntate Thapelo, Alexandra, September 8, 2003
[325] Ibid.

She continues

> *Mo o yang ga o na // ga o so age; you don't know. E ne o ka re mmuso a ka re agela le ga e ka ba two rooms ko bo // mapolasi a le a ne a nkilwe ke mmuso wa pele. Ga ba re busetsa back mafatshe a na a rona, tlhaga e kwa o e kena jwang at my age. O rema eng, wa beya eng. Wa bona ge mmuso o ne o ka //di two-roomsnyana, it's not a big [family].*[326]
>
> (Wherever you are going you have not yet built... We wish the government would build us houses even if it were only two rooms in the farms which were expropriated by the previous government. When they give back our land… how does one even begin to live in the tall grass in those places at my age... You see only two rooms this is not a big family.)

Referring to a dispossessed farm which the family had bought in the 1930s with other members of their extended family, mme Lesibana, ntate Thapelo's wife, expresses a wish for assistance from government. If only they could build at least a small two-roomed house on their farm they would perhaps consider abandoning their Alexandra home.

7.5 Justice and fairness

7.5.1 Unfair compensation

Now that, in theory at least, people can return to their parents' properties a lot of concerns are raised by bommastandi. The current strife to regain parents' properties revealed a link between the past and present. In the explanation of their experiences the past seemed to be collapsed into the present. The past could not be completely effaced from the present. Developments in the lives of families of bommastandi, constantly reminds them of their histories of properties. Hence in the explanation of their experiences the past seemed to be collapsed into the present. The injustices that were linked to both the periods of expropriation and repurchase are seen as two sides of the same coin. During expropriation bommastandi received very little money from the state to compensate them for their properties. During repurchase families of bommastandi competed with other people such as their erstwhile tenants to purchase their parents' properties. But also they could only purchase such

[326] Ibid.

properties if people who lived with them agreed to the purchase. The queried money, queried, the failure of government to provide freehold rights during repurchase, the failure of the government to adequately compensate these families at restitution and all the other losses that were linked to having lived in Alexandra, illustrate how the past and the present seemed to be rolled into one. Therefore, the history of property ownership in Alexandra makes the removal of all injustices in the present practically impossible.

The ongoing discussions by bommastandi about restitution of their properties and the related challenges brought the families together in a number of ways. First, the property owners association which keeps on re-emerging in the history of Alexandra was resuscitated in a very powerful way. The Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA), a group of former property owners who are representing interests of bommastandi in many different ways, took up the fight to champion the cause of bommastandi families, more particularly those who wanted to reinstate their parents' properties in Alexandra. Sinwell (2009) explains though that ALPOA's self acclaim as representative of former property owners is problematic. Through debates about the current and future status of bommastandi in Alexandra in ALPOA meetings the link between the present and the past was revealed in a very profound manner. In these debates, the significant role of memory that links the temporal continuities and discontinuities was highlighted. For example, these debates revealed that the past of bommastandi, even though not always documented, still holds currency in the lives of their children. The conduit for these past experiences is memory, both individual and collective (Huysen 2003 and Claassens 1991). In the introduction to his book, *Present pasts, urban palimpsests and the politics of memory (2003),* Andreas Huysen captures the idea of memory as belonging to the present rather than the past. He argues that this idea has in the past ten years increasingly been at the centre stage of academic debates. The history/memory debate has been the focus of historians and other related disciplines for quite some time (Hofmeyr 1993). Huysen, who presents the agenda of history, states that "the discourse of history was there to guarantee the relative stability of the past in its pastness" (2003: 1). He situates representation of history within the 19th century nation-states, whose reason for doing this was to "monumentalize national and universal pasts" (2003: 2). Hence Field (2001: 117) talks of "memories are who we are". This means that memory constitutes part of people's identity.

The importance of this statement in the case of bommastandi feeds into the larger land debates in South Africa. The impending question that should be asked is, is the land question in South Africa a part of monumentalized past which is racialised and thus analytically

appealing to the resuscitation of the many nations that were constituted along racial and ethnic lines? Although Aninka Claassens (1991) uses the example of rural lands she also brings the past and the present together. She argues that…racial restrictions on black farming and black land ownership are not part of our history, they are our present. They are the parameters within which present rural (and urban) land struggles are being fought and, as such, provide the experience and reference points which inform African peoples' views and aims in relation to land (Claassens 1991: 50).

The significance of this relationship between the past and the present for this study is that the issues of justice and fairness in the property life stories of bommastandi are not remembered as isolated incidents. They present as intertwined moments of single episodes which play a role in cumulatively exacerbating the injustices pertaining to their property relationship. For example, as pointed out in chapter 1 the process of restitution evoked to some families the history of contestation for property, first against the state which is covered in Chapters 3 and 4. Second, it also invokes the more subtle contestations between bommastandi and tenants, which is discussed particularly in Chapter 6 as well as at the beginning of this chapter. The obvious and discernible loss manifested in loss of property, loss of homes and in some instances loss of moveable property such as furniture. However, from conversations with the families of bommastandi it became increasingly evident that material loss is only part of it.

Furthermore, discussion of lost properties evoked memories of unfairness that accompanied the process of compensation. The owners expected some fairness in compensation when their properties were expropriated. However, their experience does not indicate this:

> *You know le ne le sa negotiate o sa beye diterms tsa hao hore nna ke batla bokana. As a result it brought a lot of heartache. Go tshwana le go tseelwa. Now ba ile ba expropriata and then ba re fa bonnyane bo ba re fang bona which we feel was not worth amount e tshwanetseng boleng ba property as such. They were saying whether you are interested, or ha o interested, ba e nka property. So people were helpless and bitter. And I suppose that as that according to me, maybe I could be wrong; ya be e introdusa le division between diproperty owners le ditenants so to say….in the sense ya hore; you know prior to that re ne re phela re le like a big family in a yard. So ya*

introdusa a lot of wrangles and struggles between property owners and ditenants and of course they started because ba nkile diproperty they started charging dirental.[327] (...You did not negotiate to put down your terms to say I want this much... It was just like the property was taken from you…they expropriated and gave us the little amounts which we feel were representative of our property's worth…or if you are not interested they will take the property...this introduced the division between property owners and the tenants... we lived like a big family in the yard. So it introduced a lot of wrangles an...] You know...You did not negotiate to put down your terms to say I want this much. As a result it brought a lot of heartache. It was just like the property was taken from you…they (the state organ) expropriated and gave us the little amounts which we feel was not our property's worth. They were saying whether you are interested, or not they will take the property. So people were helpless and bitter. And I suppose that according to me, maybe I could be wrong this introduced the division between property owners and the tenants. So to say .... in the sense that you know that prior to that we lived like a big family in the yard. (Meaning families of bommastandi and those of their tenants lived like one big family). So it introduced a lot of wrangles and struggles between property owners and tenants and of course they started because they (meaning council) took the properties and they started charging rent.)

Ntate Tshepo describes his experience of compensation, which did not come as reparation at all. He expected to discuss the amount that would be paid for his property but in this case he was just given an amount at the will of the government. He feels that their properties were just seized with no interest as to whether they were satisfied with the amounts of money paid (Compensation is also discussed in Chapter 6).

This resonates with the argument by Mngxitama (ud.) and Ramutsindela (2007). They argue that the amounts are too small to be used to correct the racialised space of the apartheid period. Although the argument that Ramutsindela (2007) mounts specifically focuses on the need to include betterment schemes in the erstwhile homelands in the land restitution process he raises a similar concern about flat rate financial compensation. He states that "in formerly exclusive white towns and cities in the vicinity of the former Bantustans cash payments discourage the movement of successful land claimants into former white areas"

[327] Interview with ntate Tshepo, Alexandra, September 14, 2003.

(Ramutsindela 2007: 47). Mngxitama (ud), on the other hand, argues that "the current proposals and practice misses the fundamental point which is that claimants lost much more than the land on which their houses stood." Therefore restitution can never make up for the loss suffered by the claimants.

This resonates with the argument by Mngxitama (ud.) and Ramutsindela (2007). They argue that the amounts are too small to be used to correct the racialised space of the apartheid period, at most such amounts should make purchasing comparable property possible for the claimants. Although the argument that Ramutsindela (2007) mounts specifically focuses on the need to include betterment schemes in the erstwhile homelands in the land restitution process he raises a similar concern about flat rate financial compensation. He states that "in formerly exclusive white towns and cities in the vicinity of the former Bantustans cash payments discourage the movement of successful land claimants into former white areas" (Ramutsindela 2007: 47). Mngxitama (ud), on the other hand, argues that "the current proposals and practice misses the fundamental point which is that claimants lost much more than the land on which their houses stood." Therefore restitution can never make up for the loss suffered by the claimants.

7.5.2. Humiliation and disrespect

The loss of Alexandra property meant loss of a way of life and of doing what they (bommastandi) deemed fit within the framework of the law. This loss also represented a defeat, since they had purchased their properties and had title to them.

The phrase that cropped up in almost all conversations was *go reka*, which means "to buy". This act of buying carried a deep meaning for the respondents in that it appeared to emphasise the right to land, that was supposed to ensure that they would not be affected by the land acts in the first instance. They also expected that the new laws of the post- apartheid government would correct the effects of the 1913 Land Act in ways that would be deemed acceptable by them. When they purchased land their right to it went beyond the surface. The passion of this feeling is evident in the pronouncements by Palesa and her siblings. Referring to their father's sentiment pertaining to his rights of ownership they said:

Ja cause ntate (name withheld) o ne a expleyina gore he bought the land. And then e belonga ko yena. So he won't move out. O batla the [depth], because o rekile pleke e.[328]

(Ja because ntate (name withheld) explained that he bought the land. And then it belongs to him. So he won't move out he wants the depth because he bought this place.)

Interviewer: Okay, ga a reka just ntlu? (Ok he didn't just buy the house)

Ga reka ntho ela // the ground... Up to the [depth]. Wa bona?[329]

(He didn't buy that thing... The ground... Up to the [depth] you see?)

A third loss suffered was the loss of pride and status that attached to owning freehold. Describing the kind of life they led, Tsakani describes Alexandra which he remembers as a shack-free place. The only shacks they had were not used as houses or homes.

Alexandra had no shacks, re ne re di bitsa dihoko tsa dikgogo, re beya [mateng?] le dikgogo le dithulusu. Those were the types of mekhukhus we had in Alex, the whole Alex... Go na le di gardens, we used to sow some nice vegetables gona mo di gardening; and fruits. But all the...went away in 1979 when the…invaded.[330]

(Alexandra had no shacks, we used to call them fowl runs, we used to put offal, fowls and tools. Those were the type of shacks we had in Alex, the whole Alex…There were gardens, we used to sow some nice vegetables in these gardens and fruits. But all the...went away in 1979 when the…invaded.)

Different families followed different processes when acquiring their properties. Some were assisted by other family members while others were not. For instance, the first property which belonged to Tsakani's family was bought jointly by his father, his grandfather and aunt. Tsakani's father subsequently sold this property and managed to purchase two properties. In some instances, such as baba Temba's case the mmastandi status was hard-won. As indicated his family had to make a number of sacrifices so as to acquire properties.

[328] Interview with Palesa, Alexandra, August 21, 2003.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Interview with Tsakani and mama Mihloti, Alexandra, September 16, 2003

Baba Temba compared his hard work, which was geared towards ensuring that his parents did not lose the property, to sweating blood.

> *Ke gore in other words those rooms ke chelete e ke ne ke e sebeletsa out of my own blood;……. So in other words it was not bonded, e ne e le chelete ya ka from my pocket; from fights and all that…*[331]
> (This means in other words those rooms were built with the money that I worked for, it was out of my own blood. So in other words it was not bonded; it was money from my pocket from fights and all that...)

Referring to how they managed to keep their property he tells how his mother had to support the family with money from doing washing as his father was sickly. This included payment for his school fees. At the time he was still at a boarding school in Evaton.[332] He subsequently dropped out.

> *It was difficult because now mme had to support nna ko Wilberforce le the family ka mo ka eng? Ka chelete ya di washing. So it was so tough that ultimately after form two I found that I could not go back to school because mme could not afford it*.[333]
> (It was difficult because now my mother had to support me in Wilberforce and the family on the other side, what with? With the money that she made from doing washing. So it was so tough that ultimately after form two I found that I could not go back to school because my mother could not afford it.)

The pride is also indicated in the way properties were bought. Buying for cash invoked a sense of pride.

> *Ga se ka di terms. Ke a sola gore ke chelete ya dikgomo. All these many face brick houses, my father laid his hands on them*.[334]
> (It was not bought on terms (monthly payments). It was probably from money that was gained from selling cattle. All these many face brick houses, my father laid his hands on them.)

[331] The respondent, baba Temba was a professional boxer in the mid-1950s.
[332] This was an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church boarding school in the Vaal area.
[333] Interviewwith baba Temba, Alexandra, September 26, 2003
[334] Interview with ntate Sechaba, Alexandra, September 2, 2003.

This illustrates pride in affording to buy for cash rather than use monthly instalments to purchase their property. Buying for cash also had advantages, as families did not need the rent money to pay off the bond.

> *There was this attractive [angle] to owning property. It's to rent out. Jwale ke cho gore ka bo 44, 45 during the great…go ne go tletse straight rooms tse di agilweng ka mabota...Dicottages were the in-thing prescribed here…once you are resident in this area you have to build four or five-roomed to six-roomed cottage. That is how we did.*[335]
>
> (There was this attractive [angle] to owning property. It's to rent out. So this means that in the 1944s, 1945s during the great…straight rooms which were built from bricks were many...The cottages were the in-thing prescribed here…once you are resident in this area you have to build four or five-roomed to six-roomed cottage. That is how we did.)

The family managed to upgrade their mud to brick built rooms. Hence, he states that his family could afford to do the "in thing" (which means "the fashionable thing" at the time). In the paragraph above ntate Sechaba also indicated that the family had cattle prior to coming to Alexandra and with proceeds from the sale of cattle they managed to buy for cash. This early start further made it possible for his father to join a group of other tradesmen and they started a building construction business. The pride further manifested in different ways of earning a livelihood which in some ways were linked to being mmastandi.

7.5.3. The subdivision of properties

Another injustice that they are fighting is that of the division of the original properties. After expropriation, properties were subdivided into three or four portions each. Since repurchasing or restitution is about claiming back the original properties they feel that they have to fight against maintaining the new map, that with subdivided properties, of Alexandra.

[335] Ibid.

One; re tshwantse re lwantshe di division // di partition tse le tse di editsweng these properties; they are illegal. Two; ga re re na di title-deeds.[336]
(...One we have to fight against the divisions, these partitions that were made in these properties... two we do not have title deeds.)

Contained in this statement is also the problem of title deeds. Although they purchased properties they were not given title deeds. For example, ntate Thapelo refers to how, after purchasing his aunts' property after the call for repurchasing in 1988, he is still contending with former tenants who are unwilling to leave or pay rent. An observation he makes in the conversation below:

Our lives are being threatened. But you know jwalo ka batho, we can't stand back. Ga o ne o le a news writer, I was going to show you a room that has been // tenant e e tswileng kgale, e tlogetse rubbish ya yona ka mole. O romela ngwana wa gagwe gore a tlo nna in that room. E be a tla a tlo tlhatlhamolla that room, a ntsha disenke tsa ko dimo, gore ka gore di setse di tsofetse, a tsenya tsa gagwe disenke…. Ee. A ba a tlhatlhamolla a latlhela kwa, a tla le tsa gagwe a tlo kokotela. So le rona ra be re organisa to unroof, go kgakgamolla disenke tseo, re di latlhela kwa. Tseo tse ncha. So there was a case against me. Myself // the two of us were arrested.[337]
(Our lives are being threatened. But you know as human beings, we can't stand back. If you were a news writer, I was going to show you a room that has been... A tenant who moved a long time ago left his rubbish in there. He sends his son to come and live in the room. Then he comes and removes the corrugated roofing sheets with the intention of using his material to reroof s the existing ones were too old... Yes he pulled down the roof and threw the old material away, brought his and started putting up his roof. So similarly, we made arrangements to remove his roofing material, to pull it down and threw them away...The very same new ones. So there was a case against me. Myself // the two of us were arrested.)

Ntate Thapelo highlights a significant point: He has purchased this property and yet his ownership rights are challenged by people who have acquired tenant use rights. What he is

[336] Interview with ntate Thapelo, Alexandra, September 8, 2003.
[337] Ibid.

concerned about is that he expected such families to recognise and respect that his family has repurchased the property and they are to decide who lives in the property and the conditions of their stay. The significant point raised is how tenure is understood. Would his production of a title deed make any sense to the current occupant of the property? How do they define and defend their rights to occupation?

This experience emphasises that, in the call for repurchase by the erstwhile government in 1988 and in the restitution of post-1994, two different processes seem to be corrupted into one. The distinction seems to be as clear as mud on the side of bommastandi. To them, they were being given an opportunity to regain ownership rights to their former properties, albeit in different ways that is repurchasing in 1988 and restitution post- 1994. Both processes presented one goal, gaining access to Alexandra property by families who were dispossessed.

This complexity seems to be lost on council or they might have been disinterested. To them, it seems selling of Alexandra property was just that, selling. The fact that the property that was being repurchased was fashioned along the lines of reproducing old stands seems to be lost on council. However, the trend was people who repurchased most commonly bought more than one portion of their original stands, where possible they bought all portions which constituted their original properties. Further, the fact that former bommastandi were given first preference when these properties were sold, to them, meant they were given an opportunity to reclaim their properties.

7.6. Through the Eyes of Mmastandi

In this thesis I plead for rethinking the story of Alexandra Township by including the role of private property ownership in it. Thus I explored the idea of private property ownership and how the lived experiences and practices of the families of private property owners were shaped and continue to shape the understanding of private property ownership. In rethinking Alexandra I adopted a methodological approach of property life stories by assuming the mmastandi lens. The points to follow illustrate how adopting the concept of “stand and its adaptation into an African language” highlight other ways of knowing that link to the very history of this adaptation

7.6.1 Unsettling the notion of private property

Private property ownership presupposes an enclosure, a legally bounded, clearly defined and precise space which is usually understood and acknowledged by both owners and non-owners. In the case of *standi* there is more to this. Acquiring property by some families of bommastandi unsettles the very notion of private property as titled and individual. Although it was legally individual in that it formally belonged to the individual whose name appeared on the title deed the enactment of this ownership was more often broader and more inclusive. If there were members of the extended family such as parents, siblings (in some instances children purchasing together or assisting parents to purchase) who contributed to purchasing such a property I argue that they should be regarded as "silent partners". This is because the process of acquisition reveals social relationships that manifest in constant cross-movement between properties by various members of the "extended family". Hence the strict sense of ownership as an individual and legal space with exclusive rights to titleholders was destabilised in a significant way. The implications of having such silent partners were to be more pronounced during the period of repurchasing in 1988 but more sharply after the introduction of the Land Restitution Act No 22 of 1994, which impacted heavily on rules of inheritance of the various families.

This study has illustrated how the historical blanket approach to private property tends to disadvantage some families more particularly those who have adopted creative means when acquiring private property. The legalistic approach to restitution – though critiqued by, for instance, Roodt (2001) and Kariuki (2004), need to be reviewed carefully in order to highlight specific details of how such an approach impacts on families of property owners. Rules of inheritance have built-in networks and inner workings of family relationships. However, since these are not always codified, there is a need to examine each case individually and the merits thereof should be used to promote justice and fairness. Thus there is a need to revisit laws legislating private property.

The experience of baba Temba's family is illustrated in chapter 5:

> *I don't know ha ba etsa ntho tsena what do they think of … naturally, nge sintu; ifa labantu a lidliwa wo munye umuntu. Ifa la ka (Surname omitted) a likwazi li yo dliwa ka sibanibani, no*.[338]
> (I don't know if they do such things what do they think of … naturally, according to our tradition/culture; people's inheritance is never taken over by just any other person (who is not a blood relative). The (baba Temba's surname)'s inheritance cannot be eaten by so and so, no.)

In other words, their family inheritance cannot just be given to non-family members. Baba Temba is invoking the traditional cultural belief that the family estate has to remain within the family. Therefore it should be up to the family to decide what happens to the uncle's estate. Despite the fact that his grandfather, father and uncle paid up his uncle's property in his absence the extended family cannot claim any compensation against the said property. This is because such pooling of family resources was not codified and even if it was, such written proof would seemingly still fall outside the ambit of the Restitution Act as currently pronounced. Such a blanket approach to compensation of erstwhile owners of dispossessed properties as provided for in terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 is seen as unjust by some families of bommastandi. For example Section 3 A of the Land restitution states that:

> A person shall be entitled to claim title in land if such a claimant or his or her or its antecedent was prevented from obtaining or retaining title to the claimed land because of a law which would have been inconsistent with the prohibition of racial discrimination contained in section 8(2) of the constitution had that subsection been in operation at the relevant time.

I pointed out in chapter 1, descendant is narrowed down to "direct descendant" of original owners and the burden of proof rests with the claimant. Therefore the Act does not allow access to properties whose owners are deceased and have no "direct descendants" to members of their extended families. This experience raises issues of inheritance. To what

[338] Interview with baba Temba, Alexandra, September 26, 2003.

extent should the state intervene in institutions of inheritance? Who and what constitutes family and how should the state determine family boundaries vis-à-vis inheritance of property and restitution under such circumstances?

The contradiction resulting from the enactment of bommastandi's social and legal identities in the same physical place over time complicates the application of restitution. This refers to the dilemma and the contradictions resulting from the reality that some families of bommastandi became tenants in the very properties they used to own. In other words their status in relation to the properties was redefined without any physical movement from the same properties. Also the tenant status of such families meant that suddenly they were equal to their erstwhile tenants. Instead of controlling access as legal owners to the property by non-owners, they had to start paying rent to the city council alongside their tenants. This was during the removal and or expropriation period.

The concept of mmastandi emphasises the need to revisit the identity of Africans when that identity is complicated by the geographies of the time and place in Alexandra. Debates on the issue (Mbembe 2001; Mbembe & Nuttall 2004; Simone 2004; Simone & Abouhani 2005) have failed to resolve the essentialism and constructivist binary in the understanding of African identity. Instead, they highlight the importance of reducing every African to rural and communal identity.

7.6.2 On Identity

The experiences of bommastandi unsettle the notion of the African who would invariably have a rural home. The segregationist policies and later the apartheid ones constructed an African identity that was based on the reserves and homelands respectively. The assumptions were that all Africans can be tracked to an original geographic space depending on their language. The history of some families of bommastandi only links them to a particular language grouping without necessarily placing them at a particular rural place. Ma Mihloti of Tsonga origin was born in Alexandra and thus does not connect to any physical place that she could call home as was prescribed by the state.

Similarly ma Elise, who has a non-African surname, traces her family roots to Malawi, with no specific geographic place. Also she does not seem to identify any African language as hers either in Malawi or South Africa. On the other hand ma Leanne, who bears an African name but has adopted a "coloured" identity, speaks of a name change by her father on arrival in South Africa (chapter 5).

Secondly, the idea of a group identity, whether ethnic or racial, needs to be analysed since such an identity is not necessarily stable. For example, intermarriages between different ethnic groups or even races as was the case with African-"coloured" marriages, had implications for the nominal identity in that particular family and later virtual identities. The latter means that after proclamation and enactment of the Group Areas Act the Africans and "coloured" people were separated into two different races that were legally called upon to lead separate lives.[339]

In some instances a simultaneous enactment of two racial identities would be used for expediency because it impacted positively of the family's livelihood. One informant highlighted his family experience in the following way:

> You know this was a joke that they used to say as the family. My grandfather was more like a coloured guy. You know he had this coloured blood. So he would look for work somewhere and then my grandfather's family would go and visit him ko femeng (at the firm). And he would say no, no, no I don't know these people, I am a coloured … So he used to say no I am a coloured. I don't know these people and later on he'd say don't come there, I got work because I said I was coloured.[340]

The informant's grandfather, who was light-skinned, adopted a "coloured" identity in order to earn a better salary. This meant that his family was not supposed to visit him at work since they belonged to two separate races and therefore could not openly acknowledge their family ties.

Additionally the experience of bommastandi indicated that being a mmastandi was also not a closed identity. The financial circumstances might force a family to sell property and become tenants in some instances until their circumstances improved. Such details indicate that a reductionist approach that is seldom adopted in understanding identity needs revisiting, if specific communities are interrogated. Thus while Hall (1995: 203) calls for understanding "identity" as "often a way of telling the story of ourselves" one needs to

[339] The experience of ma Zodwa's family is interesting in that, while she uses an African surname, she clarified that there were two branches in her family, namely Swazi and "coloured". At expropriation her "coloured" children, that is those who used a non-African surname, moved to Rabie Ridge, a township that was built for "coloured" people, while her Swazi ones either lived with her or found rental homes in Alexandra. See Chapter 1 (Methodology).

[340] This is a particular instance where some African families would change their names in order to acquire a "coloured" identity which at the time came with better salaries chapter 5

understand factors such as how the story is told and for what purpose it is being told. For example, in the post-1994 discourse, where being South African held some form of currency, information on roots outside South Africa might not have been helpful.

7.6.3 Political Dynamics

Private property ownership is also not a hard economic reality that is necessarily based on the need for extra cash but properties were additionally used as platforms for assistance of people who needed access to the city but were legally barred from doing so. Drawing from African concepts such as *botho,* Tsakani emphasises that the devaluation of Alexandra is a result of the willingness of families of bommastandi to provide accommodation to people who needed access to the city. However while families providing accommodation earned rent, in some other instances they were just helping out.

For example, Khensani stated with pride that his parents and grandparents had provided a springboard to the city for most of their relatives who were coming to the city for the first time. Referring to one of his grandfather's properties Khensani stated that:

> "What is also significant about this property is that most of my relatives who came to Johannesburg in the 50s, 60s and 70s, most of them arrived here at our properties and thereafter found their own places."[341]

Such examples highlight the significance of contextualisation of law and space. The laws were established for bommastandi, despite not serving their interests precisely because they were racist and meant to exclude them. However, their agency status is indicated by their engaging with those laws to use them for expediency. For example, exemption of Alexandra from 1913 Land Act meant that they could host whoever they pleased without contravening this law. Thus their space was used as a springboard to the city for most Africans.

7.6.4 Methodological Considerations

In this study, I adopted a combination of research tools and sources. These include documented and oral evidence. The former included published, unpublished and archival

[341] Interview with Khensani, Alexandra, August 20, 2003.

materials from several archives such as UNISA, William Cullen libraries, Johannesburg City Library, ALPOA documents and the SA National Archives. The latter (oral evidence) refers to property life stories of families of bommastandi who never left Alexandra despite their dispossession and/or expropriation.

The difficulty with the archives was that there is no single central point where the needed information could be accessed. The time-consuming exercise of finding the actual places as well as the longer process of locating documents proved to be tedious, albeit fruitful in some instances. Other challenges of using archival material have been documented. However of particular importance is the point raised by Peterson (2002) on exclusion of information. The central question, he argues, is on whose judgment a decision to exclude is arrived at and which material is chosen for exclusion. Invariably it would be that which is deemed insignificant. It is this possibility of exclusion of big chunks of life experiences of people such as the bommastandi of Alexandra that necessitated the employment of property life stories as a way of accessing, recording and ultimately storing information that would otherwise be lost in the oral tradition and memory of the people who know.

Life stories in general, shed light on hidden historical processes. As Hofmeyr (1993) points out, attention has to be paid to "forms of interpretation and intellectual traditions that inform facts of oral history" (Hofmeyr 1993:9). In order to open the possibility to access historical processes that may be hidden in the oral history I drew from my interest in and experience in translation projects.[342] This, together with my speaking and understanding a few South African languages, helped to inform me and appreciate the significant links across languages. Hence my decision to record interviews in the language of choice of the respondent rather than English, since I was interested in self-expressions in their original form in order not to lose sight of the original meaning. In this way issues of translatability were confronted, albeit in a limited way.[343] Expressions such as *go ya moreneng* and *magoduka* did not need translation since the respondents expected me to understand them as was indeed the case. The two, loosely translated, mean "going to introduce yourself at the chief's kraal as a new arrival in the village" and "people who are arriving from outside."[344] Such a position made communication easier. Crang (2003) points out that it is important to be

[342] I do mostly English to Setswana and rarely if at all Setswana back to English.

[343] Coming from the language background of the Sotho languages it was far much easier to confront the translation and or translability across languages in this group. However, in general, respondents chose the communication language which mostly was the township language, a combination of several languages that are spoken in South Africa.

[344] Outside does not necessarily mean outside the state political borders. For example, someone arriving from the rural areas with a luggage that indicates spending some time at their destination, in this instance the city.

aware of issues at hand. For example coming from the same racial background did not stop my being rejected for various reasons by potential respondents despite their having initially agreed to see me.

Although the property life story method is not new the innovation of using mmastandi as an analytical tool rather than as a "category of practice" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:1) presented an opportunity for in-depth understanding of subjective meanings and descriptions that are specific to individual experiences. Creswell (2002), citing Bertaux (1996:8) points out that data collected using qualitative methods helps "give voice to the socially excluded". In its ordinary sense mmastandi has been used as a "category of practice" since it was used to refer to people who engaged in the practice of purchasing and owning stands. In this thesis I argued that adopting the concept implores us to broaden our understanding of who bommastandi were. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis the name mmastandi was given to people who acquired a stand and such naming simultaneously implicated a particular identity that attached to the acquisition process. Although bommastandi form a distinct group of Alexandra residents individual interviews with them resulted in their highlighting their specific individual family experiences, they highlighted their self-identification as urban Africans in spite of what is indicated in the literature on African urban tenure. For example, such literature points out that "despite a longstanding recognition of its importance, little was published on urban land tenure in developing countries before the 1980s" (Payne 2001:415). As Mabogunje (1990) points out the late attention to urban land tenure might be ascribed to the fact that "colonial interests defined the city as essentially a "European" abode to which Africans were admitted on sufferance and, if possible, only temporarily" (Mabogunje 1990:18). A proposition further supported by Comby's study of French-speaking African countries South of Sahara. In this study, Joseph Comby (2007) revealed that there is an assumption that "in most African cities, the majority of the population does not have any rights for the property it lives on and land it works on, according to theoretically operational laws" (Comby 2007:1). While research on the urban land tenure in the developing countries has been appearing since the 1980s (Payne 2001:415) a keen focus on this issue in South Africa has only been indicated in research produced by Urban LandMark in the past few years. Even then Urban LandMark which "is working towards improving poor people's access to well-located urban land[345]" focuses mainly on the urban land markets. This study explored "the mode by which the land is held or owned or the set of relationships among

[345] http://www.urbanlandmark.org.za/ Urban LandMark Making Urban Land Markets Work Better for the Poor. accessed December 16 2009.

people concerning the use of land and its product" (Payne 1997:3). This was done by focusing on a specific group of Alexandrans; bommastandi the property owners.

I argue in the thesis that the morphology and root of the concept – at least according to its recorded history which places its origin in Johannesburg (Mandy 1984; Beavon 2004) – implore us to include in its examination questions of land and or property and identity. This is because in the exploration of experiences of bommastandi, it became evident that enactment of private property ownership in Alexandra implicated other concepts. In addition to the two major ones above, other concepts such as how being African away from the areas denoted African at the time of its second proclamation resulted in the need to re-think Alexandra by looking at more than the political struggles experienced by its residents. Instead this approach called for re-interrogation of the subjective experiences of families of bommastandi as a separate group so as to understand them as agents who experienced Alexandra in the midst of and in spite of changing geographies of space and law. Thus it necessarily had to invoke the politics of space as determined by the legislatively dichotomised space it had to draw upon the creative ways of making such life work (Simone 2004) in a new place that was increasingly rejecting them. They necessarily had to unsettle notions of who they are, how they lived and ultimately how they survived.

It is thus the intersection of these concepts which is implicated in the meaning and the history of the concept of mmastandi that called for an innovative approach regarding the way in which the life story methodology played out in this thesis.This story explored bommastandi's ways of life in order to highlight how they self-identified in relation to their positions as private property owners. Drawing a distinction between nominal and virtual identities, Jenkins (1995) points out that the former refers to the naming of a particular identity, while the latter refers to the experience of that identity. However, while Jenkins further states that an experience can change while the name remains and the name may change while the experience changes, the experiences of bommastandi implore us to analyse this further. First, sharing a similar identity does not necessarily imply sharing a similar experience of it.

The ways families of bommastandi experienced dispossession, resettlement and removals are in some instances as disparate as the ways in which they acquired their properties. Finally, the stories told by families of bommastandi connect their present to their past. Restitution in their present connects to the "repurchasing" of 1988, but it also connects to the initial acquisition of their properties. A connecting thread in their story is their living in Alexandra no matter what. Thus the metaphor of palimpsest better captures their story of

resilience, the story of specificity of their relationship to their properties which is spatial, social and legal. This metaphor also highlights the continuities and discontinuities of such relationships of bommastandi to their properties over the years. In other words, the metaphor captures the complex relationship of bommastandi who remained in their erstwhile properties after expropriation as the legal context of their occupation changed from freehold to repossession and or expropriation and even back to freehold in some instances. The story reveals bommastandi as ordinary human beings trying to make their lives work under difficult socio-political circumstances. However, it also shows them to be extraordinary people who fought the dislocation in their occupation of their properties to the bitter end. Thus the story of bommastandi of Alexandra is about a specific group but it is also about broader questions of African urban identities and how such an identity attaches to land more particularly in urban South Africa.

Finally, the accessibility of language or assumed understandings of the meaning attached to certain concepts created difficulties where answers would not be forthcoming simply because the assumption was that I should understand since I was seen to come from a similar background as the respondents. Questions relating to home and burying are cases at hand. I tried to understand the question of settling as signified by creating a home and this was linked to burying in a place and the assumption was that I should understand the significant link between *burying*, *the badimo (*ancestors*)* and *home.*[346] The challenge was to present the information out in a clear manner, which was not always easy. For example ntate Thapelo's reference to home was interesting:

> *Ee, ele gore legae la gagwe ke kwa, maar o goletse maburung*[347] *and re belegetswe maburung. Re gudugile mo maburung*.[348]
> (Yes his home was yonder, but he grew up in the place of the Boers and we were born in the place of the Boers. We moved from the place of the Boers.)

Constant reference to the place where he was born as the "place of the Boers" is interesting because he keeps "othering" it as if ordinarily he would not live there. The simultaneity of

[346] Interestingly Ntate Sechaba in an interview for a TV documentary does not attach ancestral importance to graves in a traditional sense exclusively, he also views them as an "indelible record" of their presence in Alexandra chapter 3).
[347] Corruption of an Afrikaans word Boer which means a farmer but colloquially used to refer to an Afrikaner
[348] Interview with Ntate Thapelo, Alexandra, September 8, 2003.

home[349] as a place of *maburu* in that they were born there and reference to a rural village, the original home of their father as home was interesting because as ntate Thapelo continued with his life story it became apparent that he never really lived in that particular village. When the family was forced to move from this "Boers place" near Heidelberg they trekked to a place in Lichtenburg where interestingly they secured a farm from a "Dutchman"[350].

7.7 New Perspectives

In this thesis I have shown that by drawing from several bodies of literature, new perspectives can be gleaned from existing information to explain salient features of private property ownership as experienced by families of bommastandi. The history of the concept of "stand" and its adaptation into an African language implies ways of knowing that are linked to the very history of its adaptation. Therefore what is known and how it is known in the construction of that knowledge or approach to that knowledge plays a significant role in this work. Drawing from the property life stories of bommastandi afforded this work the space to highlight perspectives that may have been overlooked in the meta-narrative but which proved to mean the world to bommastandi of Alexandra, whose property life stories indicate that they were at a nexus of the land/property, race, urban, rural/reserve debates in the emerging union of two former Boer republics and two British colonies.[351] At the time of the second proclamation of Alexandra these four regional governments were still struggling to reconcile their histories of difference.

The thesis reveals that there is a need to approach the African as a research subject in a more inclusive way. Focusing mainly on the "poor" African, though important, means that an opportunity is lost for research to reveal that there were other Africans in the history of South Africa. In spite of their experiencing oppression, they were not indigent. Therefore there are important lessons to be learned from them. Consequently, research should go beyond historical materialism in explicating the African urban presence. Some families of bommastandi, who could trace their history to a rural area, used cattle wealth to acquire

[349] The translation of the concept of "home" across space and time is interesting. See Kihato (2009:8) for the way it is used in this instance. See also Nyamende (1996:191)

[350] At the time of this purchase the law did not allow this but they still managed to buy from white farmers who did not like the idea of living close to "Batswana" as he puts it. Batswana are found mostly in the North West province. The farm was subsequently expropriated and at the time of the interview the family had apparently just regained possession of the farm.

[351] The two Boer republic comprised Transvaal and the Free State while the Cape and Natal were colonies.

property in Alexandra. This demonstrates a need to revisit reasons for the presence of such families in urban areas.

Furthermore, the thesis showed how the palimpsest metaphor can be used in understanding property ownership. It became evident that residues from the past in the current Alexandra are not only discernible in its physical landscape. Signs of expropriation are still evident in the lives of women whose properties were expropriated. Such women still lived in shacks at the time of my fieldwork. Evidence of the violent period of the early 1990s is still discernible in the lives of women who were left without homes, and are still living in office buildings, while the private developer homes of the 1980s are also noticeable. In addition, hostels such as Madala, Nobuhle and Helen Joseph, which pioneered the hostel city notion, are still standing. Alongside all these historical structures are new developments such as housing areas like River Park, Tsutsumani, and East Bank and a shopping mall. The past of Alexandra is traceable in the present.

Finally this thesis has alluded to the fact that the African urban question should go beyond the urbanisation of an African, and should in addition explore the urbanised African. Property life stories of bommastandi which broadly span a period of 97 years, indicate that such experiences should be used to understand an "urban" rather than an "urbanising" African. The culture of urban living that evolved from this long history of bommastandi's life in Alexandra needs to be interrogated more closely. Such understandings and their engagement should form the basis of research that informs the larger South African urbanisation project, that of dismantling the apartheid city.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research
7th floor Richard Ward Building
University of Witwatersrand
PO Wits
2050
January 17, 2003

Alexandra Land and Property Owners Association (ALPOA)
2nd Avenue
Alexandra Township

Dear Sir/Madam

Abueng Matlapeng is a PhD student at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is conducting research on Property Ownership and Dispossession: The Case of Alexandra Township. Her supervisors are Dr Irma du Plessis, Dr Teresa Dirsuweit, Prof Achille Mbembe and Prof Alan Mabin[352].

She would like I will like to trace and identify family clusters who lived and owned property in Alexandra Township over the years. To this end she will need access to a database of title deeds as this will best show the movement of these families within Alexandra Township as they bought and sold properties. The identity of these families will not under any circumstances be revealed as she is interested in general trends of ownership.

We will appreciate any assistance that your office can offer.

Thank you for your attention to the matter.

[352] The supervisors have changed and so has the topic

Appendix 2

SUBJECT INFORMATION SHEET

I am Abueng Matlapeng, a PhD student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting research on Property Ownership and Dispossession: The Case of Alexandra Township 1985 – 1995. My supervisors are Dr Liz Walker, Dr T Dirsuweit, Prof Achille Mbembe and Prof Alan Mabin.

My study explores the social, cultural and economic meanings of property ownership in Alexandra Township by examining:

Interaction between communal, private and sovereign property ownership regimes
Relationship between tenants and land lords during these periods of changing regimes
Understand how the violence of the late 80s and early 90s and the related dispossession affected property relations and ownership in Alexandra Township

This is a study project and the results there from will be used to produce a thesis which will be submitted to the university. Further, these results will be published in scientific journals.

Your participation should be voluntary and your identity will not under any circumstances be revealed.

Appendix 3

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I ---------- (the interviewee) voluntarily grant Abueng Matlapeng (the interviewer) permission to use contents of this interview for research purposes.

Address: ----------

Date: ----------

Signature: ----------

Restrictions: ----------

Appendix 4

CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF A TAPE RECORDER

I ---------- (the interviewee) voluntarily grant Abueng Matlapeng (the interviewer) permission to use contents of this interview recorded today on tape for research purposes.

Address: ----------

Date: ----------

Signature: ----------

Restrictions----------

Appendix 5

Bommastandi of Alexandra Township

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Date of visit	
Name of respondent (Optional)	
Address	
Gender	
Age	
Place of birth	
If not Alexandra year of arrival in Alexandra	
Where they came from	
No of siblings	
Those still living in Alexandra	
Why remain in Alexandra	
Marital status	
Educational qualification	
Religion	
Occupation	
Home Language	
Language spoken more often at home	
Nationality	
Citizenship	
Income per month (Formal employment)	
Other (Source of Income)	Rent
	Spaza
	Other

A BROAD OVERVIEW OF ISSUES RAISED[353]

THE PROCESS OF PROPERTY ACQUISITION

Who bought this property?

When did they buy it?

Where did they come from before buying this property?

Why did they leave that particular place?

Why did they acquire property in Alexandra in particular?

What kind of work did they do?

Any other source of money (Distinct from income) for this?

How was payment made for?

Purchasing of the land

Building the house

Any other buildings in the yard

RENTING OUT AND TENANTS

Did your family any tenants?

When did you start having tenants?

Did you have any particular kind of selection criteria?

What kind of buildings did they live in?

Who constructed these?

Do you still have some of the tenant families living in this property?

What kind of relationship did you have with your tenants?

Who else lives in the property?

What kind of relationship did your family have with them?

When did they arrive to live in your property?

Where do they come from?

Who was responsible for the upkeep/maintenance of buildings in your yard?

Who was responsible for cleaning the yard?

Who paid them?

If these were tenants, did performing of these odd jobs in any way offset payment of rentals?

[353] This was not a questionnaire since respondents were asked to talk freely about their properties in Alexandra Township, however, where some of the issues were not covered reference to this document would be made by the interviewer

HOSTELS

When hostels were constructed in the beginning did any of your tenants/family relocate there?

Did you maintain contact with them?

Any contact with other hostel dwellers?

Any other kind of relationship?

GOVERNANCE

What can you tell me about the following organisations?

Peri Urban Board

Health Committee

Safe Alexandra Campaign

Civics

Black Local Authorities

Rent Board

The West Rand Board

Who were members of these organizations?

What role did they play in your community?

EXPROPRIATION AND DISPOSSESSION

What happened when the pass laws were scrapped?

What happened when the ANC called for "Ungovernability"?

What happened during the period of hostel wars/ Inkatha /Mabutho?

Do you link any of the above organizations with dispossession?

Were you or any members of your family attacked during these times?

Who do you think attacked your family?

What do you think were their reasons for this?

Why did you remain in Alexandra Township during all these years?

GENERAL

If you were writing this history what events would you include?

What persons stand out in your mind?

How did this community share in experiences common to much of the nation?

How was the community unique?

Any family myths related to property ownership (check them out)

Appendix 6

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

Names of[354] Respondents	Date interviewed	Place
Mme Nthabiseng	September 14, 2003	her home
Ntate Tshepo	September 14 2003	his house
Thabang	September 16, 2003	home
Mama Mihloti Tsakani	on September 16, 200	Mama Mihloti's home
Baba Temba	September 26, 2003	ALPOA offices
Tata Andile *Mme Bontle	October 10, 2003	his home
Mama Nomvula	on October 10, 2003	her home
Mandla	August 28, 2003	His home
Mme Mmapula	October 3, 2003	Her home
Palesa Mogau Tebogo Vuyo	August 21, 2003	Parents' home
Mama Zodwa *Mfana	September 4, 2003	Her home
Ntate Thapelo *Mme Lesibana	August 9, 2003	home
Khensani	August 20, 2003	ALPOA offices
Mme Moipone		
*Tiisetso		
Ntate Sechaba	September 2, 2003.	ALPOA offices,
Rapula	September 29, 2003	ALPOA offices
Mme Hunadi	September 2, 2003	Her House
Ma Leanne	September 4, 2003	her home
Nhlanhla	October 10, 2003	his offices in Wynberg
Musa *Puseletso	August 10, 2003	home
Mme Mmaphefo Mme Mosidi Ma Elise Mokgadi	March 26, 2004	Council offices

[354] Asterisks in Column 2, are used to specify family members who participated intermittently, in the interviews.