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TITLE: Modernity and Measurement: Further Thoughts on the Apartheid State

BY: **DEBORAH POSEL**

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Modernity and Measurement: Further Thoughts on the Apartheid State[1].

Deborah Posel

In 1957, the *Commission of Enquiry in regard to Undesirable Publications*, which had been appointed to 'investigate the problem of undesirable and inferior publications as systematically and scientifically as possible'[2], presented its findings. In pursuit of 'reliable data...and a scientific explanation of them'[3], the Commission had commissioned a case-study of 'reading matter and illustration among the Bantu in Pretoria', and had nominated the head of the Mathematics Division of the SA Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), together with a government ethnologist, to do the job. The Commission concluded, *inter alia*, that illustrations of White women were probably having a harmful effect on 'the Bantu in Pretoria'. This is how it reached that conclusion:

> The illustrations encountered as decorations in the homes or rooms of the Bantu in Pretoria are analysed below under various headings[4]. By this means, an idea may be formed of the types of illustrations in which the Bantu are primarily interested.
>
> *European Women*: In the four groups consisting of 50 homes each, 69 illustrations (including photographs) of European women were found. The number for each group of 50 homes ranged from 15 to 19. Vlakfontein (the most recently established residential area) had the lowest figure, namely 15. In the three older areas, there was hardly any variation in the respective numbers found, namely 17, 18 and 19. The points of occurrence totalled exactly 50, thus giving a percentual increase of 25 in the case of family groups. Of the total number of 69 illustrations, 39 were undesirable and 30 passable. Undesirable illustrations of European women were encountered in 30 homes, this figure representing an incidence of 15%. In the single quarters, there were 72 rooms which were occupied by 150 Bantu of various ages. In 17 of these rooms,

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1. An earlier version of this paper was presented as the Keynote Address to the annual conference of the Canadian African Studies Association, in May 1995, and as a seminar in the Department of Sociology, University of Witwatersrand, October 1995. Some of the ideas developed in the paper first emerged while producing the exhibition 'Setting Apart' [on Segregation in Johannesburg], with Susan Parnell and Hilton Judin, at the Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of Witwatersrand, in 1994. I have enjoyed a stimulating and helpful exchange with Sue on these issues ever since.

2. *Report of the Commission of Enquiry in regard to Undesirable Publications* (chaired by Geoffrey Cronje), UG 42/1957, para 15.12.

3. *ibid*, para 15.10

4. I have only cited one of these headings; the others are very much in the same vein.

30 illustrations of European women were found, and in 12 of these, there were undesirable illustrations, representing an incidence of 16.7%, as compared with a figure of 15% in the case of the family groups. When it is borne in mind that, particularly in the case of single persons, but also in the case of families, large numbers of Bantu pass through these rooms over a period of time, the influence emanating from this comparatively high incidence of undesirable illustrations must obviously be much greater than is suggested by the figures given above. If the occurrence of 99 illustrations of European women, of which 56 were undesirable, is set against the low figure of only 8 illustrations of non-European women, of which only 1 was undesirable, it is obvious in this connection that, in so far as the fact under consideration is concerned, the emotions and thoughts of the Bantu can be influenced to a far greater extent by illustrations of European women than by those of non-European women. This influence may often be harmful...[While] it is advisable to guard against too precipitate conclusions and generalizations in this connection...the present state of affairs, as revealed by the above data, is in any case by no means reassuring[5].

Specious logic and the inexpert use of statistics, no doubt. But why did the Commission think it necessary to appoint the head of the Maths Division of CSIR, along with an ethnologist[6], to oversee this research in the first place? Why was 'the nature of reading matter and illustrations among the Bantu in Pretoria' considered and presented as a statistical issue?

It will take a while to suggest an answer to these questions. I have cited the Commission's report at the outset as what might seem to be a farcical example of the subject of this paper: an enduring and familiar (although fractured[7]) preoccupation within the apartheid state, with generating and storing vast amounts of statistical[8] 'knowledge', particularly in respect of the African population. In fundamental ways, apartheid was elaborated in and along with continual efforts to count and classify the population, so as to try to measure - *inter alia* - the exact size of the African majority and the rate at which it reproduced itself compared with other racial groups; the spatial distribution of various races within segregated spaces; the extent of interracial sex and marriage; the numbers of Africans 'legally' resident in urban areas; the

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5. *ibid.* para 3: 294 - 298. As if the verbal presentation of these findings was not 'scientific' enough, they were also presented in tabular form (see pp. 123 - 4 of the Commission).

6. The role of government ethnology in the elaboration of apartheid statecraft is similarly interesting and merits attention in its own right, as well as in its relationship to statistical modes of knowing - both concerns which are beyond the scope of this paper.

7. The lapses and contradictions in this project - which are particularly evident in the politics of gender - are as revealing as the monumental effort which went into it. See D. Posel, 'State, Power and Gender: Conflict over the Registration of African Customary Marriage in South Africa, 1910 - 1970', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 8/3, 1995.

8. I use the term 'statistics' primarily in the descriptive sense, of compiling and comparing quantitative information.

numbers considered 'surplus' to urban labour requirements and therefore liable for removal; the fluctuations in African labour 'supply' relative to labour 'demand'; the extent of 'idleness' amongst African youth in the cities - not to mention the extent of moral harm inflicted by illustrations of white women in African homes. And the list could go on.

This paper aims to reflect more closely on some of the connections between capacities to count and control in South Africa (particularly during the first phase of apartheid). In some ways this exercise is a rather obvious one, and it might seem surprising that little along these lines has been attempted before. It reflects, perhaps, a lingering reluctance to engage with the growing body of historical work influenced in some way or other by Foucault's writings on the knowledge/power nexus in the 'modern' world.

There are diverse readings of Foucault's texts - not least by Foucault himself - and this is not the place for any detailed interpretation or discussion. But it is pertinent at the outset to signal what I take to be some of the more suggestive and provocative aspects of these studies which intersect with the concerns of this paper. Concerning the relationship between knowledge and power itself: 'Foucault's interest was in establishing the ways in which state power was not simply a matter of repression but had an epistemological and discursive character'[9]. Ways of thinking about the character, exercise and limits of power do not merely legitimise political rule; they also produce it. For Foucault, understanding the exercise of power therefore includes identifying what he terms the 'rationality of government' or 'governmentality' - that is, the modes of reasoning by means of which states 'think about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed)'[10]. In reflecting on the forms of knowledge which emerged along with the 'modern' state, Foucault recognised the centrality of statistical measurement as a mode of surveillance. In his view, one of the distinguishing characteristics of 'modern' states is that problems of governance are rendered as problems of managing populations[11], in ways which promote co-ordinated, bureaucratised modes of administration. This form of political rule is in turn predicated on particular forms of knowledge, which organise and comprehend social realities in the form of measurable units of population. The exercise of classifying and counting units of population thus becomes both a discourse and techniques of power, in rendering the society in a form amenable to bureaucractic modes of control[12].

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9. N. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (London, 1994), p. 41

10. G. Burchell et al (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago, 1991) p. 3.

11. Foucault claims that the conceptualisation of problems of 'population' which inhere in modern modes of political rationality, displaced earlier notions of the governance of 'peoples'. But certainly in the South African case (and probably all colonial societies), these two modes of reasoning are by no means mutually exclusive; rather, they coexist and intersect. See also A. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham and Londond, 1995), p. 39.

12. These insights and propositions are not wholly unique to Foucault. There are some strong resonances with Weber's account of political authority, and particularly his notion of 'technical rationality' as the dominant and distinguishing mode of authority in 'modern' societies. Indeed there are aspects of Weber's theorisation of the state which I regard

This emphasis on the discursive techniques of political rule - the idea that ways of ruling are fashioned by ways of knowing - helps in redressing the instrumentalism which has characterised much of the writings on the South African state. Although some of the more recent South African historiography also dismisses such instrumentalism, there has been relatively little discussion and debate about alternative theorisations of the state and the methodological consequences thereof[13]. As I see it, retrieving the state as an object of analysis devolves in part on disaggregating what is historically constructed as 'the state' into its institutional components and processes. But it also requires an understanding of the manner of their unity as part of the same state. The state is constructed as the unity of various institutions of governance. And at least part of this process involves what I will call 'statecraft[14]', by which I mean the ways in which states represent themselves and their relationship to their subjects, the problems of governance and the 'right' ways to govern[15]. The elaboration of statecraft goes hand in hand with the institutional fashioning of the state.

While inspired by the sorts of questions which Foucault's work raises, this paper is not, however, an 'application' of Foucauldian theory to the South African case[16]. It is as much a theoretical critique of the argument which assumes too neat and complete a relationship between power and knowledge - as though the exercise of power mirrors its discursive construction. If the tendency in the existing literature on the subject is to treat statistics as an instance *par excellence* of 'modern' panoptic techniques of surveillance, the case study of apartheid produces a much messier, more contested picture. In ways which I hope to show in the paper, it was inherent in the power relations being 'measured' that the measurements produced were not wholly reliable, comprehensive or comprehensible. So, while routines of statistical

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as important antidotes to Foucault's rather limited focus on only one kind/mode of power; his disinterest in discussing the state itself; and his difficulties in accomodating agency and resistance. But the details of this kind of theoretical synthesis are beyond the scope of this paper.

13. Two noteworthy exceptions are D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party 1948 - 1994* (Johannesburg, 1996) and J. Hyslop, 'Polar Night: Social Theory and the Crisis of Apartheid', in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds), *South African Review 6* (Johannesburg, 1992).

14. I am using my own term, rather than Foucault's, because there are aspects of Foucault's theorisation which I find problematic - but without wanting to go into any theoretical detail here. See also footnotes 10 and 14.

15. Notions of statecraft may, of course, be themselves the focus of contestation and conflict within and between institutions of the state. The point is rather that we need to understand how state institutions locate and position themselves in relation to each other, and as part of a broader project of governance.

16. I take issue with various aspects of Foucault's work which cannot be discussed in any detail here - such as its discursive determinism, disinterest in engaging questions of social causation, and difficulty in theorising social agency. Also, arguably, the corpus of his work does not add up to a coherent, consistent whole. His influence, as I see it, is less by way of producing a complete theoretical 'framework', and more by way of foregrounding issues of power in a distinctive way, drawing attention to techniques of power, rather than merely the interests which shape and constrain the exercise of power - the 'how' of power as opposed to the 'why'. But this distinction too should not be overstated or overworked: the 'how' ultimately invokes the 'why'.

measurement of the population were certainly enmeshed within the exercise of power, that power was spasmodic and uneven (rather than capillaric, as Foucault's argument would have it).

Moreover, at an historical level, it seems to me unhelpful to take Foucault's version of power in 'modern' states as a prototype which is then replicated to varying degrees in particular cases. It is more fruitful to view 'modernity' as a set of processes rather than a condition, processes which are always rooted in specific times and places, which therefore do not unfold uniformly along the same historical trajectory, and which may be uneven, partial and contradictory. Yet the concept of the 'modern' is also intended to articulate historical interconnectedness. To rephrase Nicholas Thomas' remark *appropos* colonial culture: if there can be no global theory of the modern state, it remains the case that modern states are global phenomena"[17]. Or, as Henrietta Moore puts it.

> governmentality is concerned with specific discourses and practices and with the particular rationalities which sustain them in the context of a given set of material and historical conditions...Such rationalities will always be local, developed in specific contexts by politicians, academics, media and ordinary people. However, these rationalities will also be international in their perspective and global in their scope. They are forms and techniques of knowledge which tie people into those processes of modern living which are beyond their control but in which they are forced to participate, directly or indirectly[18].

This is a rather more deterministic rendition than I would give, but it highlights the analytical value of the concept of 'modernity' for my purposes - in helping to conceptualise and theorise aspects of apartheid in ways which can identify both its interconnectedness with more global processes, and its historical specificities.

In this vein, the paper's focus on the relationship between counting and controlling also illuminates several key features of the apartheid state, helping both to contextualise the emergence of apartheid in relation to more global changes in governance, and to identify aspects of the distinctiveness of apartheid as compared to the segregationism which preceded it. I argue that the institutionalisation of statistical knowledge should be understood as part of a more broad-ranging initiative to 'modernise' the South African state and its techniques of control anew, in ways which made new racist imaginings possible

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17. N. Thomas. *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 66

18. H. Moore. 'The Changing Nature of Anthropological Knowledge', in H. Moore (ed), *The Future of Anthropological Knowledge* (London and New York, 1996), p. 12.

(although not always practicable). One aspect[19] of the distinctiveness of apartheid, as compared with segregation, is as a project to 'modernise' racial domination[20].

Statistical measurements of the population acquired a particular salience in the elaboration of statecraft under apartheid: but this must also be situated historically, as a process which took root well before 1948 and shaped to a considerable extent by the legacies of segregationism. The following discussion is by no means comprehensive, focusing primarily on the sphere of urban African governance. While partial and incomplete, this restricted discussion is nevertheless suggestive, in that it was precisely in respect of urban African governance that the novelty of apartheid was first apparent.

Statistical Knowledge and Power Pre-Apartheid:

The assumption that statistical measurement of the population produces knowledge in a form well-suited to techniques of political control is deeply embedded in the history of the modern state in the West[21]. It was likewise one of the epistemological underpinnings of power in many colonial states, where censuses and surveys were as much exercises in defining subject populations - who or what is governed - as in measuring their various demographic characteristics[22]. In the South African case too, since Union in 1910, various aspects of political rule developed alongside growing capacities to classify and count different groupings within the population[23].

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19. This paper does not discuss the distinctiveness of apartheid in its entirety. The discussion is partial and incomplete, but in ways which hopefully open up other avenues of research to add to a more broad-ranging, comprehensive picture.

20. Heribert Adam used the phrase several years ago, to describe the exercise of power under apartheid. But he didn't make that much mileage from it - limiting its applicability to processes of 'pragmatic rationalization' - a means-end rationality - which characterised decision-making within the apartheid state. See H. Adam, *Modernizing Racial Domination*, (California and London, 1971).

21. See eg. S. Woolf, 'Statistics and the Modern State', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31/3, 1989; I. Hacking, 'How Should We Do the History of Statistics' in G. Burchell et al (eds), *The Foucault Effect* (Chicago, 1991); M. Anderson, 'The History of Women and the History of Statistics', *Journal of Women's History* 4/1, 1992; M. Poovey, 'Figures of Arithmetic, Figures of Speech: The Discourse of Statistics' in J. Chandler et al (eds), *Questions of Evidence*, (Chicago & London, 1994 edn).

22. See eg. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991 edn), chapter on 'Census, Map, Museum'; B. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, Oxford, New York, 1992 edn), chapter on 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia'; N. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, pp

23. Hopefully someone will soon write a history of the national population census in South Africa (initiated in 1912), with an eye to these issues. Right now, as far as I know, no research has been published on the subject, so I am not in a position to factor it in to this paper.

Research by Braam Fleisch[24] and Sue Krige[25] into the making of Native Education policy, for example, suggests the increasing prominence of statistical notions of evidence within official commissions of inquiry, from the 1930s. The 1932 Carnegie Commission was the first commission to use large-scale surveys and statistical analysis as the basis of its findings[26]. But this newly 'scientific', quantitative notion of evidence was not yet routinised or institutionalised. Thus the 1935 Welsh Committee, inquiring into African education, for example, was marked by internal conflict on precisely this issue, with E. G. Malherbe the lone member insistent on a 'systematic scientific base'[27].

One of the more sustained discursive associations between measurement and power in the pre-apartheid period was evident in efforts to solve the so-called 'urban Native problem' - which were also recognised as being pivotal in the elaboration of segregation more generally.

Segregationist regimes (like their apartheid successors) were set on reconciling the pursuit of white political supremacy with white economic prosperity. The country's industrialisation path was one which depended heavily on securing abundant supplies of low-waged African labour, to fuel industrial growth, concentrated in and around the cities. This presented the architects of segregationist policies with a recurring contradiction: the more effective their efforts at sustaining economic growth, the larger the urban African workforce, and therefore the greater the potential threat to the preservation of political order and stability. Efforts to solve 'the urban Native problem' were seen to depend in large measure on finding formulae for containing the political costs of economic success, by limiting the numbers of African people permitted into urban areas according to the size of local (white) labour demands. The 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act enshrined this way of thinking: the presence of Africans in 'white' urban areas could only be justified in so far as they 'ministered to white economic needs'. Solving the 'urban native problem' depended on 'allowing only such natives as are necessary to remain in the [urban] areas, and the elimination, as far as practicable, of those already in the areas who are not essential'[28]. Its goal was to engineer, as far as possible, a three-way numerical match, between the numbers of African people permitted to to be in an urban area, the numbers in employment and the numbers allocated township housing. In terms of the 1923 Act, municipalities were obliged to provide 'adequate' accommodation only to those African people who were legally entitled to live in an urban area, because they were 'ministering

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24. B. Fleisch, 'Social Scientists as Policy Makers: E.G. Malherbe and the National Bureau for Educational and Social Research, 1929 - 1943', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21/3, 1995.

25. S. Krige, 'Segregation, Science and Commission of Enquiry: The Contestation of Native Education Policy in South Africa 1930 - 36', Seminar Paper no. 398, Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of Witwatersrand.

26. Fleisch, 'Social Scientists as Policy-Makers'.

27. S. Krige, 'Segregation, Science and Commissions of Enquiry'.

28. GNLB 352 223/23/110, H. S. Cooke, Johannesburg to A. Pienaar, Dept of Interior, 19 August 1925.

amongst others - were already peppered with statistical counts and comparisons of various kinds.

But the project was piecemeal and uneven, in ways which reflected the limits of the 'modernity' of the South African state at this juncture[30]. For one thing, the very scope of the influx control system was fragmented. A series of exemptions were permitted - to all African women, and to African men of 'reputable' character or class. And the expertise for, and interest in, the sort of detailed counting called for by the 1937 Act was slight - as was the capacity for social surveys within urban areas more generally[31].

The limited capacities to count Africans in cities were related in turn, to the particular character of urban governance. Before the National Party's election victory in 1948, the Department of Native Affairs had remained a small, relatively minor, under-resourced department. Partly for this reason, a high degree of control over urban African communities had been delegated to local authorities. But this decentralisation was also predicated on dominant notions of statecraft. Throughout the Segregationist period, the central Department of Native Affairs remained respectful of a 'tradition' of municipal discretion, jealously guarded by the administrators. Ordinarily, the Ministry saw its role as initiating legislation on urban matters at the behest of, and in response to, the local authorities. The Department constructed the framework of a national 'urban Native policy', but accepted that local authorities would interpret these guidelines in the light of the exigencies of local government. As one of the Department's Under-Secretaries put it,

> government officials must constantly bear in mind that...a full appreciation of local circumstances and conditions is the best way to secure goodwill, and that uniformity, however it may simplify office routine, is apt to be as great a danger as it is an advantage.[32]

So the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act gave local authorities the *option* of implementing influx control, by proclaiming their areas of jurisdiction subject to the provision of this law. Most did not. By 1937, only 11 local authorities had chosen to invoke the terms of this law[33]. The 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act can be read as part of an effort to introduce greater uniformity within the sphere of 'urban native

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30. In *The Politics of Official Discourse in South Africa* (Oxford, 1990), Adam Ashforth seems to treat the South African state as unproblematically 'modern' from its inception, taking as his evidence the tradition of Commissions of Inquiry - 'Commissions of Inquiry are a particularly authoritative institution within modern states' (p. 6). By contrast I view 'modernity' as a process - an uneven, contested, and in some respects, a contradictory process; and regard 1948 as a critical moment in that process in SA.

31. See 'Address by Professor Edward Batson on: Research and Social Surveys, with special reference to Native Housing', in IANA, *Record of the Proceedings of the First Annual Conference, 1952.*

32. J. S. Allison, 'Some Aspects of Urban Native Administration', *Race Relations* vol 7, 1940, p. 112.

33. See D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, (Oxford, 1991), pp. 42 - 44.

administration'. But the Department of Native Affairs was deeply divided over the merits of the 1937 Act, and failed to oversee its implementation in any consistent way.

Moreover, many local authorities had been loathe to differentiate a separate sphere of 'urban native administration' in the first place. Of the nine local authorities on the Witwatersrand, for example, seven established Departments of Non-European Affairs only after 1946[34]. And even then, the scope of the exercise seems often to have been limited.

> Urban Non-European Affairs Departments have, in many cases, been very hesitantly established by Local Authorities. In nearly every case, such a Department is treated with the same measure of hesitation and, in some cases, with an attitude which verges on suspicion[35].

World War Two, however, represented a watershed for urban governance. In the case of 'the Native question', the sheer numbers of people converging on the cities during the war years completely overwhelmed the state's existing capacities for control, and redefined the manner and scale of the problems confronting it. The experience of most local authorities was one of near-total impotence to stem the tide of African migration. At the same time, housing construction in the townships came to a virtual standstill, producing overcrowding, accommodation shortages and explosions of popular discontent on a scale hitherto unknown. Squatter settlements in areas beyond municipal control also proliferated in abundance - perhaps one of the most powerful signifiers for white society of chaos, the absence of effective control, together with moral and political menace.

One of the decisive effects of the war, then, was to provoke often heated re-evaluations of statecraft within the state and white polity at large, particularly in respect of the 'urban Native question'. It was initially the local authorities who complained most volubly that the Department of Native Affairs was ill-equipped to tackle the problems of control looming in the urban areas. The main weakness identified was the absence of planning; 'attempts at proper planning came into the picture only when the problem within a specific area became accentuated out of all proportion to its solution'[36]. Local authorities who had themselves been firm supporters of decentralised administration now saw this as something of an anachronism and called for more integrated, centrally planned and co-ordinated interventions from the Department of Native Affairs.

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34. 'Address by Mr A.S. Marais, President of the Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs', in IANA, *Record of Proceedings of First Annual Conference*, 22-25 April, 1952, p. 3.

35. *ibid.* p. 4.

36. A.S. Marais (Manager for Non-European Affairs, Boksburg), cited in Institute for Administrators of Non-European Affairs (IANA), Report of 1952 Conference, p.

The Department of Native Affairs remained lethargic and indecisive[37], however. But calls to extend and modernise the apparatuses of urban control - and the state more broadly - began to resonate more widely. The establishment of the CSIR in 1946 was in part, an effort to institutionalise the contribution of 'scientific' expertise to processes of government, in ways befitting a 'modern' state[38]. The Social and Economic Planning Council (SEPC), instituted in 1942, was borne of what Peter Wilkinson has called a 'discourse of modernity', distinguished by its emphasis on co-ordinated, 'scientific', state-led planning of the country's social and economic development[39]. A more proactive, centrally controlled approach to the planning and running of urban townships was one of its recommendations.

The thinking of the SEPC anticipated, in some respects, the mode of political rationality which informed the Fagan Commission of 1946 (which subsequently became the UP's election manifesto in 1948). Although uncertain and ambiguous at times[40], Fagan echoed local authorities in recommending that 'the urban problem' had grown far too large for small-scale, locally uneven, *ad hoc* interventions. To solve a 'problem' of such proportions necessitated a more centralised, 'well-planned', nation-wide assault, mounted within a more comprehensive and sophisticated network of state institutions. This included, in particular, creating a national system of labour bureaux to monitor and control the flow of African people in and out of the cities, regulated by the pulse of local labour markets. Fagan stressed too, that this in turn required the development of effective systems for identifying and classifying African people 'in order to take steps...to ensure that everybody has some fit place to which he is entitled to go'[41].

> The object which we have in mind with the organisation suggested by us will not be achieved by the establishment of a few labour bureaux here and there, but by a country-wide organisation, which will collect information throughout the country, correlate it, and again disseminate information throughout the country. *It is, indeed, this correlation, collection and dissemination of country-wide information which is the essence of our scheme*[42].

Fagan thus also recommended the expansion of central state bureaucracies and redirection of powers over urban Africans away from the local authorities. In his view, control was to be effected through the rational, efficient mastery by the state over impersonal demographic processes, which had to be regulated,

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37 Posel, *The Making....* p. 45 - 47.

38. Thanks to Sue Parnell for this point.

39. P. Wilkinson, 'A Discourse of modernity: the Social and Economic Planning Council's fifth report on "Regional and Town Planning", 1944', forthcoming in *African Studies*.

40. Posel, *The Making....* pp. 48-9.

41. Union of South Africa. *Report of the Native Laws Commission, 1946-8*, UG. 30/1953, p. 27.

42. *ibid*, p. 28. My emphasis.

important part[45].

Perhaps because apartheid became so aberrant, South African scholars tend to look for an explanation of its origins and development in the particularities of the country's history alone. We forget that the Nationalists' confidence in the enormous problem-solving capacities of a large, efficient, well-informed state echoed some of the ideas about modern statecraft which prevailed in many other parts of the world at the time. Roosevelt's New Deal, the British state's programme of post-war reconstruction, or the Nazi programme for Aryan supremacy, for example, were each particular instances of a wider consensus about the prospects for large-scale social transformation, and a confidence in a suitably 'modern' state's capacities to bring it about[46]. From this perspective, governance consisted (at least in part) in solving big national problems, through large-scale interventions, co-ordinated from the centre. And the agent of social transformation was a much bigger, more powerful, more knowledgeable, state.

In colonial Africa too, notions of statecraft were changing, albeit as a defensive against the growing forces of African nationalism. Bruce Berman has argued that by the 1940s, the trend towards the centralisation of power in a bigger, more bureaucratic state was evident across colonial Africa, as local, paternalistic traditions of power were rendered anachronistic by the emergence of national opposition movements[47].

What differentiated and distinguished apartheid statecraft[48], in my view, was the opportunity to hook up a modernist confidence in the powers of the central state as an agent of large-scale social transformation, with a more aggressive, thorough-going commitment to white supremacy - in a form compatible with the renewal of white economic prosperity. By re-imagining the capacities, scope and entitlements of the state along more 'modern' lines, it became possible in turn to imagine a society in which constructs of race

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45. In order to relate this argument to the substance of my previous work, it is useful to distinguish between the apartheid **project**, apartheid **policies**, their implementation in **practice**, and apartheid **statecraft**. In earlier work, I have argued that the apartheid **project** during the first phase of apartheid was a commitment to coupling white supremacy and economic prosperity by way of a more systematic, thoroughgoing racist social order, with Afrikaners at the political helm - recognising the 'realities' of the market and therefore the impractability of 'total segregation'. But there was no coherent, systematic package of **policies** - or single 'Grand Plan' - to bring this project to fruition. This paper argues that apartheid **statecraft** was characterised by a strong emphasis on the need for 'planning', 'better control', and more systematised, centralised modes of governance - a *discourse* of planning.

46. See eg. Z. Bauman. *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1995 edn).

47. B. Berman, 'Structure and Process in the Bureaucratic States of Colonial Africa', *Development and Change* 15, 1984.

48. Note that my discussion in this paper is primarily concerned with the first phase of apartheid - as one critical moment in the process of 'modernising' the South African state. This process continued, and in many respects, shifted gear in the 1960s - in ways which I don't deal with in the paper. For a different version of these changes, see B. Bozzoli, 'From Governability to Ungovernability: Race, Class and Authority in South Africa's black cities', Seminar Paper no. 394, Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of Witwatersrand.

became the all-embracing, ubiquitous basis of the social order fashioned by the state, and the unit of what was envisaged as an ubiquitous, all-encompassing classification and quantification of the country's population. The apartheid version of a 'modern' state was one which was sufficiently large, powerful and centrally co-ordinated to keep each 'race' in its 'proper' place, economically, politically and socially[49].

The first apartheid government wasted little time in initiating a prolonged process of enlarging and restructuring state institutions. This was particularly conspicuous in the Department of Native Affairs, which took about five years to transform itself from a relatively small, minor department into the vanguard of apartheid policy-making. The urgency and prominence of 'the Native question' gave Jansen and Verwoerd - the first two Ministers of Native Affairs - opportunities to boost their executive powers within the Cabinet, at the same time as greatly expanding the scope of the Department's bureaucracy. In 1951, two assistant Ministers were appointed - Native Affairs being the only Department to do so. The Minister and his two Assistant Ministers - all members of the Cabinet - constituted a *de facto* sub-Cabinet dealing with Native Affairs. The Native Affairs bureaucracy in turn expanded dramatically. Between 1948 and 1950, over 600 new posts were created. And between 1948 and 1960, the Department's white staff establishment almost doubled, from 1750 to over 3000. The scope of Departmental control also enlarged. In 1952, the Department created its own sub-department of Labour, and in 1953, a sub-department of Housing. And control over economic issues affecting the African reserves was wrested from the Department of Economic Affairs[50].

These institutional transformations went hand in hand with avowedly more 'modern' notions of the 'right' ways to govern. While on the one hand parading their ideological commitments to the preservation of racial purity and white supremacy, the new cadre of Nationalist rulers also reproduced some of Fagan's rendition of governance as rational and ambitious strategising for solving large-scale problems. But for the Nationalists, the proper scope of central state intervention was even greater than Fagan had envisaged. Whereas Fagan was resigned to the impersonal mastery of market forces over the pace of African urbanisation, the new cadre of Nationalist leadership was confident of the state's powers to control market forces in what they deemed 'more rational' ways. No problem - not even the political refashioning of the market - was too large or overwhelming to defeat rational, efficient efforts by the state to solve it, in time. So alongside a strident ideological zeal went an equally assertive rationalism, expressed as a confidence in a steady, step-by-step approach to the problems of control, taking it one step at a time, always informed by the 'realities' of the situation. As Verwoerd put it, 'while on the one hand the policy of Apartheid has

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[49]. The discursive construction of 'race' in apartheid statecraft warrants fuller discussion in its own right in ways which highlight the distinctiveness of these discourses in the South African case - particularly in stressing their radical interconnectedness with the country's economic trajectory and emerging class relations. One of the crucial features of the role of 'race' in apartheid's 'modernising' project was precisely its **embeddedness** in efforts to sustain capitalist development and white economic prosperity.

[50]. See Posel, *The Making*.... ch. 3.

to be implemented, at the same time it has to be done step for step [sic] in such a way that the country can bear the implementation of that policy'[51].

Rational, effective government was also knowledgeable government. For the Nationalists, solving South Africa's political 'problems' required a government which was better informed about the 'realities' of the day, in order to evaluate what the 'country could bear'. 'Good' government was also directly involved in the production and control of that information. The Native Affairs Department, for example, created its own internal research unit, to 'provide [the minister] with the necessary information for framing his policies'. The Department initiated a series of 'Fact Papers on Native Affairs', circulated widely within the state and on some occasions, also published for wider consumption by the Department of Information. In the main, these alleged 'fact papers' comprised statements of National Party policy justified with reference to the said 'realities' of the day. However, to dismiss the exercise as mere propoganda misses the point that producing documents like these were part of an energetic process within the state of reconstituting the standards and benchmarks of good governance in an efficient, modern state.

Some of the knowledge considered necessary to govern was 'ethnological': 'factual' information about the 'traditional' cultures and 'customs' of African peoples, objective yet 'intimate' knowledge of the 'mind' of 'the Bantu'. But this was accompanied by more copious efforts at statistical measurements of the population, once a cluster of 'problems of control' - from squatting and overcrowding, unemployment, racial mixing, juvenile delinquency, the destabilisation of marriage - were rendered as national rather than local 'problems'. To a far greater extent than preceding regimes, apartheid's policy-makers tried to comprehend the country as a whole, rather than as regional segments with particular, often distinct, political and administrative traditions. And in most instances, this was seen to depend on being able to aggregate each local manifestation of the various 'problems of control' country-wide. The exercise was *inherently quantitative*: measuring each instance of a problem and then adding them up was the only way to represent the national dimensions of the problem.

The Department's commitment to more 'modern' forms of control resonated well with movements to transform the practice of 'urban Native administration' which emerged amongst some of the more influential administrators themselves. In 1952, the Institute for Administrators of Non-European Affairs was established, in the recognition that 'an entirely new approach to the whole question of urban Non-European development is required'[52] - one which was premised on greater professionalisation and specialisation on the part of the administrators.

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51 *House of Assembly Debates*, 1955 vol. 88 col. 3760.

52. 'Address by A.S. Marais...' in IANA, *Record of Proceedings of First Annual Conference*, 1952, p. 3.

> The urgent need for an Institute to undertake the improvement of the professional and technical knowledge of Administrators...has been felt for years...It was high time that Non-European Affairs administration was recognised as a specialist profession and given the status due to work which demanded such extensive knowledge and exacting qualifications[53].

The statistical rendition of social problems formed an integral part of this newly 'specialist' representation of urban administration.

> The scientific aspect of Non-European administration was also very important. There were very few administrations which were adequately equipped to provide the information and material which were necessary for sound judgement and the formation of policy. Of late various surveys had been undertaken by Municipalities and many hitherto unknown facts had come to light as a result of these. [It was]...hoped that every effort would be made to conduct research which was vitally important to good Non-European administration.[54]

Much more could be said about both the institutional refashioning of the state, and its new modes of political rationality, which marked the inauguration of apartheid. But the central facet of these processes for the purposes of this paper, is the ways in which a predeliction to classify and count units of population inhered in the very logic of 'modern' political control, as it was represented in the discourse of apartheid governance.

The supposed connection between counting and controlling was absolutely central in the way in which the 'urban Native problem' was defined and its solution was strategised[55]. As Verwoerd put it during a meeting with urban administrators in 1952, 'your first problem is uncontrolled influx, from which the other uncontrolled conditions arise', and to solve that problem requires 'that you know your labour needs'[56].

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53. *ibid*. p. 7.

54. Comment by Rheinalt Jones on A.S. Marais' Presidential Address, endorsed by other participants, in IANA, *Record of Proceedings of First Annual Conference, 1952*, p. 10.

55. I stress, once again, that the practice of implementing these and other strategies was far more fractured and complex than was intended, in ways which belied the practical efficacy of the discursive commitment to thorough-going planning.

56. 'Conference between Officers of the Native Affairs Department and Managers of Departments of Non-European Affairs....January 1953'. [When I consulted this document it was part of the Brakpan City Council archive, file 14/1/25. These papers have since been moved].

One of the principal foci of debate during the 1948 election, 'the Native influx of alarming proportions'[57] into the cities also featured very prominently on the legislative agenda of the newly elected Nationalist government. Having assiduously courted the votes of white farmers, the Nationalists were careful to stress that the impact of the problem was felt far beyond the cities, in rural areas all over the country. If the problem in the cities was one of 'oorstroming' [overflowing], many of the country's white farmers had had to endure acute labour shortages, as hundreds of thousands of erstwhile farm workers fled to the cities. The 'urban Native problem' then, was the obverse of a rural 'Native labour' problem, which had to be treated as a unified national problem, rather than a series of local problems of control. Countrywide, said Eiselen, African labour was 'maldistributed'. Solving the 'problem' required taking an integrated view of the country's labour markets, both urban and rural, so as to engineer a more effective, 'rational' allocation of labour between them. This, said Verwoerd, was the 'modern' way - suitably adapted to the South African situation.

> When we examine labour movements in other countries, we find that matters are also planned there...The whole modern labour system is one of planning, one of not allowing people to roam aimlessly until at some time or other a place is accidentally found where there are possibilities of employment. No, we guide our labour through certain channels...We are busy with such a system and we are adapting it to the conditions of this country - a country with a type of labour and labour conditions which are totally different from those of other countries[58].

Eiselen, Secretary for Native Affairs, was emphatic that existing patterns of employment were thoroughly 'wasteful': to date, white employers in urban areas had not exhausted the labour supply at their doorstep, meeting their labour needs by importing workers from the rural areas instead. Much of the urban labour market was structured *de facto* by a principle of rural labour preference on the part of employers, particularly those who sought African workers for unskilled work. By contrast, remedying the 'maldistribution' of labour between urban and rural areas required prohibiting any additional migration into the cities until the entire labour 'supply' already resident there had been exhausted.

The logic of this urban labour preference policy, then, was premised on a rather simple arithmetical understanding of how 'rational' labour markets would function. Labour supply and demand were both conceived as homogenous quanta, which ought simply to be numerically matched. So, if any given city, the collective demand was for x number of African workers and the size of the local economically active African population was $x + n$, then it was irrational to bring more labour into the area, until the growth in the size of the local labour demand exceeded n.

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57. Jansen, quoted in Department of Native Affairs' Fact Paper no. 9 of 1951, 'Native Policy of the Union of South Africa'.

58. Verwoerd, in HAD, 7 2/52, cols. 774-5.

The centrality and longevity[59] of the urban labour preference policy reflected the state's continuing confidence in its capacity - via labour bureaux system - to remodel the country's labour markets. And these interventions were in turn premised on the capacity to measure and match the two critical quanta: the (white) labour 'demand' and the (African) labour 'supply'. A large part of designated functioning of labour bureaux was therefore the production of detailed statistical returns: of numbers of workseekers' permits issued: numbers refused: the number of service contracts registered. Local, district and regional labour bureaux statistics were in turn sent to the central data-collecting depot in the Department of Native Affairs itself.

Other facets of the making of apartheid arguably illustrate a similar mode of political rationality - the assumption that social transformation could be comprehensive and systematic, on the strength of a suitably 'modernised' state, acting upon a quantitatively constructed social 'problem'. Research by Susan Parnell and Alan Mabin illustrates how modernist notions of urban planning - already current in academic circles by the late 1930s - took hold in the policy-making sphere during the next decade[60]. Within this planning paradigm, the 'problem' of African housing, for example, was represented as one of national proportions, requiring the specialised expertise of town-planners and construction scientists, in coming up with a rational, cost-effective formula for mass housing. Careful costing of the construction process, and calculations of the carrying capacity of particular housing stock, went hand in hand with elaborate counts of the units of population to be housed[61].

Arguably, the logic underpinning the Group Areas Act exhibited the same epistemology of power. Instituting residential segregation was cast as a centrally controlled process of organising units of population - systematically classified and comprehensively counted - in designated areas[62].

Yet it would be wrong to present the commitment to 'modernise' the state as having been an altogether comprehensive, unitary or coherent undertaking. This paper has isolated some of those aspects of apartheid statecraft which fitted well with the idea of a more centrally interventionist state, honing its powers of surveillance through its capacities to construct comprehensive systems of population

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59. The urban labour preference policy survived various other strategic shifts in efforts to control urban African populations - see Posel. *The Making*..., ch. 9

60. See eg. S. Parnell and A. Mabin. 'Rethinking Urban South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21/1 1995.

61. ibid.

62. It may be that the drive to create a Bantu Education system for a mass of African schoolchildren was predicated on similarly modernist logic. I am grateful to Cynthia Kros for alerting me to the hearings of the 1951 Eiselen Commission (which did much of the intellectual groundwork for the Bantu Education system), in which the Transvaal Education Department urges a 'geweldige modernisering' of the current system of African education, perceived as being unscientific in its approach, and unco-ordinated and old-fashioned in its thinking. (See A.H. Murray Papers in UCT's Manuscript and Archives Division, BC 282 A1.21, 'Naturelle Onderwyskommissie- Transvalse Toer').

measurement and classification. But the challenges of political control were by no means uniform and there was much with the Department was unable to 'see' or count - as is perhaps best illustrated by the politics of gender within the Department of Native Affairs.

The Native Affairs Department's designs to stem the tide of African urbanisation put a premium on controlling the movements of African women (since the growing presence of mothers and children in the cities accelerated rates of urban population growth exponentially). Verwoerd was therefore adamant that African women should be included within the ambit of the newly revised system of influx control[63] - which was duly reflected in the 1952 Native Laws Amendment Act (which amended the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act accordingly). But Verwoerd rapidly capitulated in the face of the political furore which greeted the passing of this law[64]. The relevant clauses of the law were to remain dormant, given African women a *de facto* exemption African women from the terms of influx control and from having to register with labour bureaux[65]. From the vantage point of apartheid statecraft, this was a huge concession. Enjoying greater mobility than African men, African women thronged to the cities in increasing proportions throughout the 1950s. And in fundamental ways, the movements of African women remained unknown and unknowable.

The long-standing political saga over the bureaucratic status of African customary marriages is another case in point. As part of the same strategy to control African urbanisation, the Department of Native Affairs sought to restrict access to township housing to married couples, who could prove the fact of their marriage. Couples married in court or church could produce an official marriage certificate. But outside of Natal, there was no official record of customary marriages, which meant that a mere affadavit sworn by both parties to a supposed customary marriage, had to suffice as the required 'proof'. In the midst of rapidly proliferating restrictions on African peoples' access to the cities, thousands of couples faked a customary marriage in order to gain a house. Local authorities and Departmental officials were well-aware of this practice. Pressure mounted on the Department's decision-makers to stamp it out by creating an official register for customary marriages, in the absence of which it was impossible to impose the desired controls on urban migration. Various efforts were initiated by the Minister to emulate the Natal system country-wide. But in the face of concerted opposition from African chiefs resisting attempts to reconfigure the terms of African patriarchy, the Department buckled. No register was created - which left the Department powerless to count and control the transformations of 'custom' which their policies

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63. Previous regimes were occasionally tempted to go this route, but quickly backed off, in fear of the explosive political reaction which any talk of passes for African women provoked from African men and women alike.

64. For more detail, see Posel, *The Making...*, ch. 3 and 4.

65. These exemptions remained in place in most parts of the country until the late 1950s. And it was only in 1963 that the then Department of Bantu Administration and Development enforced the letter of the law nation-wide.

engendered[66].

Implications for the Exercise of Power

Apartheid was never implemented wholly as intended. Some policies were internally contradictory; some policies were at odds with each other. Many of the ambitions of its planners were never fully realised, and often, control was established in different ways, and to different degrees, from those intended. The exercise of power was always contested, in ways which profoundly affected the practice of a policy, as compared with its original intentions[67]. But, the state undeniably did achieve a greater degree of centralised control than ever before; it did invade the lives of its citizens in much more labyrthine and aggressive ways than before. The manner and extent of state power certainly changed under apartheid, even if sometimes differently from the way apartheid's planners would have liked. In all of this, the measurement of population played an important part, as part of the discourse of power and as a technique or instrument of power.

With the proliferation of bureaucratic apparatuses to govern African life, the reliance on statistical measurement grew increasingly routinised - along with the confidence that statistical measurements were reli*able*, as authoritative measures of social realities. Semiotically, merely citing a statistic seemed to confer authority, as though self-evidently an objective and expert measure. The assumption was evinced even as it was (unwittingly) parodied - as in the case of the Cronje Commissions' report, in which the moral impact of illustrations of white women was rendered as the number of times an African person walked past it; or the case of one Senator T. Viljoen, for example, who - speaking entirely off the top of his head - asserted quite confidently in the Senate in 1949 that 'I should say that about 78% of the Non-Europeans are infected with syphilis'[68].

Rendering social realities in statistical form was more than a rhetoric of authority and expertise, however. A host of official memoranda, correspondence, committee reports and commissions of inquiry, as well as political debates, suggest that politicians and bureaucrats felt the need to quantify a problem in order to comprehend it fully - as though social realities were somehow *unknowable* in the absence of a quantitative measurement. This is surely the tacit epistemology underpinning the appointment of the head

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66. See D. Posel, 'State, Policy and Gender: Conflict over the Registration of African Customary Marriage, 1910 -1970', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 8/3, 1995; and Posel, 'Marriage at the Drop of a Hat: Housing and the Politics of Gender in Urban African Communities in South Africa, 1930s - 1960s', paper presented to conference on Africa's Urban Past, SOAS, June 1996.

67. See Posel, *The Making...*

68. Senate Debates, 20 June 1949

of the Maths Division of the CSIR to join an ethnologist in analysing 'the nature of reading matter among the Bantu of Pretoria'. It is also manifest - for example - in Verwoerd's intervention in a parliamentary debate about 'locations in the sky' in which minutely detailed numerical information informed the construction of the 'problem' under discussion:

> Now I wish to take another example in Johannesburg, the Fairway Estates (Pty) Ltd, which recently applied for a licence to house 26 Native men and 70 Native women on the premises at 8 Syferfontein No. 2. The men will do duty as cleaners, night watchmen, gardeners etc., while the women will do domestic work for the tenants. All these Natives will be housed in a wing of the building which consists of 3 floors...The area covers approximately 16 morgen and according to the architect, 8 such blocks will be erected eventually. Each will cover 4 acres. In time to come 768 Natives will be housed in these blocks of flats. In a European area![69]

In some respects, the quantitative precision with which Verwoerd made his case is gratuitous: it has no bearing on the substance of his argument, which could just as well have been made by asserting that 'a lot of' or 'too many' 'Natives' would end up living on 'white' premises. The impact and significance of all the numbers lies in the mode of reasoning and style of debate, suggesting that there is knowledge in the mere fact of measurement: and therefore, that the capacity to engage and solve the 'problem' depends crucially on having measured it first.

Statistical measurement thus became more than merely a useful tool aiding the processes of political planning. In key respects statistical knowledge was also claimed as an *index* of power - a way of measuring the extent to which the state had comprehended, and intervened effectively, in solving its 'problems of control'. The 'right way to govern' - in both technical and moral sense of the term - was (at least in part) measurable. And throughout the various phases of apartheid, the state did so repeatedly, in both confidential and public evaluations of its performance.

Indeed, in at least some spheres, the statistical measurement of power itself became institutionalised. For example, the labour bureaux compiled masses of statistical data on a monthly basis, showing the numbers of workseekers' permits issued, the numbers denied, the numbers of people 'endorsed out' - all data which had limited utility other than as a quantitative index of the labour bureaux' performance. In many urban areas, these statistics had little bearing on the day-to-day routines of influx control because in practice, labour bureaux generally did *not* make decisions about whether or not to issue more workseekers' permits or register service contracts in particular urban area in the light of whethere was a labour 'surplus' in the

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[69]. *House of Assembly Debates*, 3/2/55, col. 532.

area or not[70].

If statistical measurements and computations were accepted as vehicles for technically correct analysis, then it was but a small step to the presumption that such objective knowledge should be the basis of sound moral reasoning. It was the South African Bureauu of Racial Affairs (SABRA) which took this position most explicitly, defining its brief as the pursuit of scientific knowledge of the country's race problem, for the sake of a morally defensible solution to it. But it seems to me that the elision of numerical and moral values was manifest more widely within state institutions. To come back to the Cronje Commission: seemingly objective statistical 'proof' that illustrations of European women could harm 'the Bantu' was also justification for the morality of racial forms of censorship. Also, the practice of ethnic grouping in urban townships -introduced in the mid-1950s - was morally justified by the 'fact' that administrators could count up more people of the same ethnic group living concentrated in the same neighbourhoods than not, thus 'proving' that people of the same ethnic groups had 'natural' dispositions to congregate together, irrespective of the machinations of apartheid administrators.

Confidence in the authority of statistics and the measurability of power was not confined to the state alone, however, which had a significant effect on the manner of political debate and criticism within the country. Statistical discourse was more widely, a discourse of power. Much of the parliamentary debate about the merits and demerits of apartheid, Opposition MPs cited the country's demography as 'proof' that apartheid was not working. while National Party supporters produced different figures showing the rate at which apartheid has succeeded in slowing the rate of African urbanisation. Also, the South African Institute of Race Relations. one of the most vocal liberal critics of apartheid, chose to present its most sustained social and political commentary in the form of an annual 'survey of race relations'. The idea that race relations were best analysed and understood by measuring them indicated the extent to which the state's epistemological assumptions about statistical measurement were more widely shared within the polity[71].

Increasingly institutionalised and ambitious avenues for statistical measurement during the 1950s signalled growing capacities to control the composition and character of the urban African population. Yet for all this, there was no simple linear relationship between the activities of counting and controlling.

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70. See Posel, *The Making*.... ch. 7.

71. The use of statistics as a tool of political critique was particularly significant from the 1960s onwards. During times of heightened repression and censorship of any opposition which fell under the state's rubric of 'communism', a debate about numbers was protected by their aura of objectivity and scientificity. It was an ironic *ricochet* of the state's own coupling of moral judgement and objective renderings of 'the facts'. Statistical measurement became one of the most common - because it was also the safest - means of exposing the magnitude of apartheid's moral horrors. The South African Institute of Race Relations, for example, produced reams and reams of statistics, which quantified the damage and distortions wrought by apartheid in the spheres of education, housing, unemployment, poverty, family life, etc - data routinely reproduced by a host of anti-apartheid organisations, locally and abroad.

Of course, the state exercised some power in the mere fact of being able to impose and routinise activities of counting. But in many instances, the apparent precision of statistical counts effaced the uncertainties, ignorance and lapses in control which also inhered in the apartheid project. Ironically, some of the statistical constructions of the urban African population remained just that - constructions - which often substituted for, rather than conferred, the powers to refashion that population.

One of the ruptures between garnering statistical knowledge and exercising power derived from conceptual muddles over what was being measured. Take for example, a report by C.W. Prinsloo ('Information Officer' for the Department of Native Affairs):

> In Johannesburg during the period October-November 1953, 5710 Native juveniles who were unemployed and considered to be unemployable, and as being part of the tsotsi pool, registered with labour bureaux in Johannesburg and 5 333 were placed in employment[72].

The aura of control created by being able to assign numbers to the workings of the labour bureaux disguises the opaqueness or vacuity of the categories being measured. Who is 'unemployed'? What were the criteria for being 'unemployable' (particularly since such persons were then placed 'in employment)? What exactly is the 'tsotsi pool'?? As long as the units of measurement remained murky, then even the most copious statistics were no basis for effective re-organisations of the labour market in the manner intended.

The extract from the Cronje Commission cited at the outset of the paper is an unwitting parody of statistical opacity. Unless I am missing something, the quantitative results of the 'scientific' study of reading habits among the 'Bantu in Pretoria' are mostly meaningless - so much so that the researcher himself feels the need to ignore the figures...in insisting that 'the influence emanating from this comparatively high incidence of undesirable illustrations must obviously be greater than is suggested by the figures given above'!

Statistical counts of the population were also emblematic of the limits of surveillance. Once again, the issue of influx control illustrates the point well. Published and unpublished reports evaluating the implementation of apartheid policy routinely cited statistics of urban African employment, unemployment and labour bureaux placements, alongside measurements of population size and population growth. But, precisely because of the mounting rigour of influx control policy, all of these counts were inherently unreliable, as people with no legal 'right' to live in the urban areas eluded efforts to count them. Indeed, the practice of influx control created endemic forms of ignorance for the state. Paradoxically, the more stringently influx control was applied, the more entrenched the ignorance. In terms of the influx control laws, only certain numbers of African people were legally entitled to live, work and be housed in urban

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72. Cited in *Rand Daily Mail*, 12/3/54. 'New Rules Won't Lead to Labour Shortages'.

areas. All those who were there illegally were liable to be 'endorsed out'. Being able to enforce influx control laws depended, then, on being able to recognise and distinguished the 'legals' from the 'illegals.' 'Illegals', however, did not come forward to be counted. On the contrary, to be 'illegal' was by definition to be *invisible* to official eyes. Intensifying the influx control legislation only compounded the problem. Stricter influx control laws did not wholly deter people from coming to town; by shrinking the spaces for 'legal' migration, they created a larger population of 'illegals'. And the larger the number of 'illegals', the harder it was to police the influx control policy effectively.

So, when Verwoerd asserted (for example) that 'it is well-known that there are between six and eight hundred thousand illegal immigrants in the country'[73], the use of the statistics confers an illusion of precision in professint to count the uncountable. And this incapacity to quantify the numbers of people who eluded being counted corrupted all of the manifold measurements of population routinely gathered by the apartheid state[74].

In recognition of this problem, urban administrators adopted as their rule of thumb that 'illegals' constituted about 20 - 25% of the urban African population[75]. But this was more properly a thumb-suck, as once again there was no way of reliably quantifying the degree of error in their capacities for population measurement.

As apartheid evolved, the Nationalists aspired to a national information system which was impossible to produce - not least given the information technology of the day. In all its various phases, apartheid included a series of strategies to control who lived and worked where, when, and under what circumstances. For an African, to be in an urban area longer than 72 hours depended on meeting certain legal requirements in terms of Section 10 (1) of the Urban Areas Act; to work in an urban area depended on authorisation from labour bureaux; to get access to a house in an urban area depended on being legally resident. Everyone legally resident was supposed to be in authorised accommodation; information about how many people legally in the area were not employed was necessary to measure the size of the labour surplus. The knowledge required to implement the urban influx control policy, with the urban labour preference principle at its core, required a capacity to cross-reference and cross-check disparate batches of names on one hand (comparing lists people with passes with people allocated housing, as tenants or

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73. *House of Assembly Debates*, 3/2/55, col. 524.

74. Debates about the reliability of various statistical data were not uncommon within the Native Affairs Department. The Botha Report for example, which launched an inquiry into the extent of unemployment and 'idleness' in urban African communities, roundly rejected all available statistical data on the subject as wholly unreliable and set out trying to construct its own alternative data - with equally questionable assumptions about the units and scope of measurement.

75. Interviews with various municipal officials, including W.J.P. Carr, S.B. Bourquin, J. Rees (all done by me during 1984/5).

sub-tenants), and statistics on the other (comparing numbers of people allocated housing with numbers in employment). But the bureaucratic competence - let alone the information technology - required to do so was unavailable. Moreover, and more importantly, the political will to do so was ultimately seriously tempered by a recognition of - and capitulation to - the 'realities' of the market which the state completely failed to refashion.

These lapses in the control conferred by the routines of measurement are not merely academic ironies in the practice of apartheid. They signal the place and impact of social agency in complicating, and times confounding, the knowledge/power nexus, in ways which often disoriented decision-makers, destabilised their plans, and subverted the prospects for the kind of integrated, systematic and all-encompassing modes of control to which the apartheid state aspired. Nicholas Thomas' remarks about the limits of colonial knowledge are equally apposite to the apartheid project:

> even if colonial knowledge often took the form of a panoptical, encyclopaedic appropriation of indigenous customs, histories, relics and statistics, such displays of intellectual rapacity were frequently accompanied by a kind of despair, which found the space and social entity of the colony to be intangible, imperceptible and constantly untrue to the representations that might be fashioned of it[76].

Postscript: Some Comments on Statistics and Power Post-apartheid:

The South African state is still engaged in a process of 'modernising'. The RDP is in many respects, a modernist project - albeit with cautions and tensions borne of the global moment. With scepticism having mounted elsewhere in the world about the idea of Big government as the engine of large-scale social transformation, the RDP presents a more qualified picture of the power of the central state - acknowledging the power of impersonal market forces, conceding significant powers to regional governments, and (sometimes) recognising a space for communities to define their own local needs and priorities. But even taking these qualifications into account, the commitment to social transformation in South Africa is surely borne of a persistent confidence in the state's powers (at whatever level) to remake the social order. Social transformation is once again about large-scale state intervention in solving large-scale problems.

A new modernist state is one of the legacies of apartheid - and in many respects, the processes of a modern state are indispensable if the damage done by apartheid is to be undone. We need a large,

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[76]. N. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, pp. 15 - 6.

powerful, well-co-ordinated state to re-engineer the allocation of land, to re-configure the country's political and residential geography, to re-fashion and re-constitute state bureaucracies.

Once again the state's powers of social transformation will depend heavily on its capacity to 'size up' the population in all sorts of ways, and once again the measurements required are vast and complex. Perhaps the new state has both the legitimacy and information technology necessary to do a much better job of it than the apartheid state could ever muster before it. Indeed, there is a certain irony in implementing a project of modernist proportions in a supposedly post-modern age. If post-modernism generates a scepticism about social engineering of this order, it is also this era which has produced the information technology which opens the way for massively improved powers of surveillance, borne of increasingly sophisticated forms of statistical measurement, and which offer accordingly more ambitious avenues for social transformation.

Even so, some of the biggest social 'problems' will remain inscrutable, and for similar sorts of reasons as before. Illegal immigration is unquantifiable, as is the extent of tax evasion, and the size of the informal sector. Efforts to construct a comprehensive voters' roll in KwaZulu-Natal, for example, ran aground on peoples' suspicions of being numbered and classified by the new state - or indeed any state. As in the past, the 'modernising' project sets standards for itself which are impossible to sustain, so that rituals of counting will say as much about the 'gaps between projection and performance'[77] as they do about the scope of political surveillance. Aspects of the 'New South Africa' too will be 'intangible, imperceptible and constantly untrue to the representations that may be fashioned to it', in ways that attest to the limits of modernity itself.

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77. N. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 16.