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Title: Progressive Politics and Crises of Urban Reproduction in South Africa: The Cases of Rents and Transport.

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INTRODUCTION

Useful, although not necessary, points of departure for this paper are some comments that emerged in two recent contributions to progressive political debate at the University of Natal. These two contributions are Erwin's address to the University Forum on "Trade Unions and Politics" and Freund et al's contribution to the South African Labour Bulletin and the Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa Seminar on the "November Stayaway". In both of these presentations there appeared to be an enhanced interest, on the part of intellectuals of the progressive labour movement, in what I shall term as South Africa's urban reproductive crises. We have become accustomed to hearing from both liberal-reformists and radical-liberals about such crises in South Africa. These latter groups, of course, have addressed the issues in a different manner to Erwin and Freund et al because of their differing political priorities, but they have persistently addressed them all the same. The fact that we are now increasingly hearing from trade union-linked intellectuals on living place issues, however, is a fact that I take as a significant departure in the course of South Africa's urban and regional politics.

As I understand Erwin, for example, it is being recognized now in the progressive labour movement that South Africa's process of capitalist accumulation has been based, in part, upon industrialization without associated social investment in the sphere of urban reproduction. In consequence, the organized workers struggle is turning, as organizational resources permit, towards sites of struggle previously dominated by the opposition politics of liberal-reform and radical-liberal groupings. In similar vein, Freund et al (1985, p.93) drew as their first conclusion from the November Stayaways the fact that the events "crystallised the central contradiction of state policy - the 'liberalization of the industrial relations system without meaningful political and social change". They then went on to observe that "hitherto the major trade unions have focussed on factory floor issues avoiding involvement in more overtly political issues", but that "the state's failure to respond to the educational demands of students and the growing crisis in the townships have propelled the trade unions beyond the factory floor".

I do not have the expertise to comment on the question of students and educational demands, but I would like to attempt an analysis of how this new turn of events might begin to affect the politics of transport, rents and urban development in South Africa. Previously I have dealt with these issues, both in research and practice, through the conceptual frameworks of Marxist scholars of urbanism such as Borja (1977), Castells (1977;1983), Harvey (1978;1982) and Mingione (1981) (cf. McCarthy and Smit, 1984; McCarthy and Friedman, 1985). These European writers have not been very concerned with the practices of those organizing labour at the point of production in their own societies. Indeed, the typical concern of such authors has been with the so-called "unification tendencies" (Mingoine, 1981, p.18) that can emerge within the working classes (and not necessarily just wage workers) during the course of progressive organization around urban reproductive crises (cf. Borja, 1977, pp.202-203, Castells, 1977, pp.324-378). A key construct which emerged from this literature is that of "urban social movements" -- a term that was first introduced into our vocabulary by Castells (1977), and which has subsequently captured the imagination of most progressive scholars concerned with the politics of urban reproduction (see, for example, successive issues of the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research). The question thus emerges as to how the concepts of urban reproductive crises and urban social movements can be reconciled, if at all, with the emergent politics of South Africa's progressive labour movement. This question becomes particularly germane in the light of parallel developments in radical-liberal and liberal-reform politics where organizations such as the U.D.F. and the Urban Foundation have gained substantial footholds on the terrain of the politics of urban reproduction over the past few years.

The structure of the present paper, therefore, is as follows. In the section immediately to follow I outline Castell's (1977) seminal contribution to the theory of urban social movements, and I also discuss the alternative concept of urban reproductive crises. In the section following this I set out my basic assumptions about the historically specific political context that I am addressing: progressive politics in South Africa in the 1980's. A penultimate section of the paper addresses,

both theoretically and empirically, the problem of urban social movements and so-called community politics in South Africa today. The issues of housing and rent struggles are taken as illustrative of the argument that both the concept of urban social movements and that of community politics may be unhelpful to the progressive cause at the present time. With the aid of data from the Eastern Cape, the concluding section sketches out my understanding of how a coherent progressive politics of urban reproduction should emerge in South Africa in the future.

URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND URBAN REPRODUCTIVE CRISES

We can begin with some descriptive observations on the nature of so-called urban social movements. Castells (1983,XVIII) observes in the introduction to The City and the Grassroots that "urban social movements, in our societies and in our epoch, seem to develop around three major themes:

1. Demands focussed on collective consumption, that is, goods and services directly or indirectly provided by the state.

2. Defence of cultural identity associated with and organized around a specific territory.

3. Political mobilization in relationship to the state, particularly emphasizing the role of local government".

This, most would agree, is an accurate enough description of the wide range of urban protest movements current in South African cities today. Rent boycotts, opposition to relocation, demands for urban services, boycotts of local government elections, bus boycotts and the mass re-emergence of locality-based civic associations, to name but a few, all fall within the ambit of such a definition.

To agree that Castells' (1983) definition of urban social movements suits a wide range of urban protest conditions in South Africa today, however, succeeds only in raising the more fundamental question of

the political and theoretical utility of the concept itself. In his original pathbreaking work, The Urban Question, Castells (1977) made two major hypotheses: First, that there exist a set of within-state practices with regard to urban reproduction that tend towards reform or regulation of status quo relations of production and reproduction; and, second, that there exist a set of extra-state mobilizations (called urban social movements) that can be directed, together with other progressive organizations, towards the realization of socialist and/or revolutionary gains vis a vis the state (cf. Castells, 1977, pp.376-8).

These hypotheses, developed and tested during the period of the late 1960's and early 1970's in France, have subsequently drawn rebuttals from American and British left-wing intellectuals in particular. Specifically, Castells (1978) is accused of dehistoricizing theory and offering us the political context of France in a particular period as a basis for both understanding and responding to urban reproductive crises elsewhere (Duncan, 1982). And, secondly, he is pilloried for his alleged Althuserian "functionalism" with regard to state practices in the urban reproductive sphere (cf. Saunders, 1982).

It was in this context, of course, that Castells (1983) embarked upon his search for a "cross cultural theory of urban social movements" in The City and the Grassroots. Unfortunately, however, and possibly as a result of the existential reality of his being installed as Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at Berkeley, Castells (1983) relocates his interest in urban social movements from their relationship to general political theory to their effect on urban spatial structures and environments. The ambitions of The Urban Question, therefore, now take back seat to a more relaxed and descriptive geographical survey of the physical form of cities and their relationship to notable urban protest events. In consequence, Castells' (1983) most recent statements are probably of less immediate political interest in South Africatoday than his earlier hypotheses.

Apart from his observations in The City and the Grassroots that class relationships "are by no means the only or even the primary source of urban social change" and that "the autonomous form of the state,

gender relationships and ethnic and national movements" must be incorporated into the analysis of urban social movements, Castells (1983, XVIII) appears to have lost interest in what he now terms "the artificial paradises of the grand theory". For many South Africans, however, the relationship of urban social movements to problems of social theory remains of considerable practical interest.

Most obvious, in this regard, are the respective strategic concerns of the progressive labour movement, liberal reformers, and the national democratic movement with respect to crises occurring within the sphere of urban reproduction. There is no need to excavate the details of these respective concerns here, but it can at least be recognized that each position presupposes a relationship of urban reproductive crises to some more general theory of social change in South Africa. I stress, at this stage, the relationship between particular political programmes and urban reproductive crises, as opposed to any associated movements, because we would be doing Castells' (1977) hypotheses a disservice by beginning with practices rather than the crises that gave rise to them in the first place. After all, as Castells (1976) wrote in criticism of traditional studies in urban politics: "We cannot base urban research on the analysis of actors and their strategies without first analyzing the urban issues, and the contradictions in the social structure which they express".

To return to the crises and their relationship to theories of social change, then, my understanding of South Africa's progressive labour movement, is that intellectuals within it envisage, in more or less classically Marxian terms, the development of the South African working class's collective consciousness and power to the point where it can precipitate a crisis in production relationships and subsequently appropriate state power (so as to usher in a new socialist order). To the extent that urban reproductive crises can be connected to such a process their relevance or otherwise to the socialist project can be sustained. Radical-liberal intellectuals of the national democratic movement, on the other hand, envisage a development of popular protest politics to a point which deepens the state's legitimation crisis sufficiently for a national convention to be reached, from which a more equitable

distribution of access to state power might emerge. In this case urban reproductive crises are relevant insofar as they might either enhance or detract from the general legitimation crisis of the state. Both intellectuals of the progressive labour movement and the national democratic movement, however, surmise a greater degree of fragility of ruling class power than is considered realistic by establishment reformers. Urban reproductive crises, therefore, are of interest to reformers mostly from the point of view of their relevance to the process of smoothing out contradictions in the social order and the possibilities they create for enhancing the legitimacy of privatized social relations.

I believe that it is beyond our competence to scientifically "verify" any one of these views -- radical, radical-liberal or reform liberal -- in terms of their respective diagnoses of the projected trajectory of social change in South Africa. They represent, rather, "expectations" which are conditioned according to a complex of economic, social and psychological tensions that impact upon each of us differently. However, social science methodology can assist us in sorting out the nature of the relationships between urban social movements and urban reproductive crises on the one hand, and the various political projects of radicals, radical-liberals and reformers on the other. It is with this in mind that I return to the question of Castells' (1977) central hypotheses described earlier in the hope that we can explore them (i) in the historically specific context of contemporary South Africa and (ii) without the unnecessary theoretical baggage of a functionalist conception of the state. In so doing I hope it will be possible to suggest where effective alliances can and can't be made in the politics of urban reproduction that is likely to be forthcoming in South Africa.

THE HISTORICALLY SPECIFIC POLITICAL CONTEXT: TRADE UNIONS, THE U.D.F., REFORM GROUPS AND THE STATE - SOME ASSUMPTIONS

Since I have written of "historical specificity" it would seem necessary to confront the reader, directly, at this stage with my own understanding of the texture of progressive politics in South Africa today. None

of us can escape the fact that we build analyses of our society, and therefore our senses of appropriate action, upon some key assumptions about progressive politics and it is best that I clarify my own position in this regard.

My first assumption is that the restructuring of progressive politics in South Africa is being forged in relation to a simultaneous restructuring of the South African state. As most progressive observers recognize (cf. Cobbett et al, 1985; Greenberg, 1984; Saul and Gelb, 1981) there is not a one-way relationship here, but a complex process of mutual interaction. One facet of this interaction is that state structures tend to be extraordinarily divisive of opposition unity.

Specifically, I would like to suggest that what Wiehahn and associated legislation is to progressive organization in the sphere of production, spatial apartheid is to progressive organization in the sphere of consumption. The estrangement between "the worker" and "the community", or between "working" and "living", that is common in all capitalist societies (cf. Harvey, 1978), is one that is augmented in Wiehahn et al's recommendations for labour reforms on condition that trade unions distance themselves from politics. Likewise, the parochial territorialism that characterises many struggles in the sphere of reproduction in almost all capitalist societies (cf. McCarthy, 1981), is supplemented and underwritten in South Africa by the policies of Group Areas and Bantustans which are currently being metamorphosed, if we are to believe Cobbett et al (1985), into some type of regionalism-federalism. In the same sense that trade union federations attempt to overcome the internecine wrangling and competitiveness of mere trade-union consciousness, therefore, organizations such as the United Democratic Front emerged to co-ordinate opposition against the state mainly in the sphere of reproduction and within the divisive context of apartheid.

I have no intention, here, to make the untennable argument that this means that trade union federations and organizations such as the U.D.F. amount to one and the same thing, separated only by their respective balance of concerns for the politics of production versus those of repro-

duction. Of course organizations such as FOSATU are more evidently socialist than, say, the U.D.F., and this is precisely because they are accountable to an exclusively working class constituency orgnized at the point of production. Similarly, organizations such as the U.D.F. are more evidently committed in ideals to social democracy, in contrast to socialism, because their accountability is to cross-class alliances which are opposed to their disadvantage or exploitation within the sphere of reproduction. The point that is being made, however, is that the sources of division and cohesion in opposition politics are as much a product of their interaction with state structures as they are a result of objectively conflicting material interests between its various protagonists.

My second assumption about the texture of South Africa's current political crisis is that its appearance is increasingly manifest at the level of urban reproductive crises. This is in contrast, say, to the 1920's when a political crisis could be unambiguously linked to crises in production relations. I do not think it is helpful to invoke a platonic distinction here between "appearances" and "essences", unless we are happy to go along with its profoundly anti-democratic implications. Neither do I wish to discount that, at some point in the future, productive crises will come to manifest themselves as the dominant, if not exclusive, appearance of South Africa's political crisis. All that is being suggested is that at this point in time the ideological expression of South Africa's political crisis tends to be weighted in favour of urban reproductive issues, possibly more so than at other periods in South African history.

How do I make such a claim? The most obvious evidence in favour of the suggestion derives from a reading of the ruling class and reformist media. In research published elsewhere (McCarthy and Friedman, 1981; McCarthy, 1983) I have made the point that South Africa's formal media have interpreted the country's political crisis differently in different periods. These different interpretations, it was argued, were in part a reflection of different objective conditions of progressive mobilization,

in part a reflection of state responses to such mobilizations, and partly a response to changing conditions of capitalist accumulation (for a more extended discussion see McCarthy and Friedman, 1985). Thus, whilst in the 1920's the South African media focussed upon crises in production relations, and whilst it paid attention to cities mainly in terms of the installation of productive infrastructure, by the late 1940's the balance of interest had shifted to issues of urban reproduction. Interrupted in the 1960's, during a period of state and media interest in rural productive and reproductive issues, urban reproductive issues assumed centre-stage again on the ruling class and reformist ideological agenda in the post 1975 period. For instance, journals with readerships as diverse as the Financial Mail and the Weekend World responded to the 1976 risings almost exclusively in urban reproductive terms, focussing attention in particular upon housing and education conditions in black townships (McCarthy and Friedman, 1981). Progressive capital's practical response, likewise, was to form an Urban Foundation with reformist intervention directed at the educational and housing spheres.

Of course, it could be argued, according to one line of reasoning, that this simply reflects a mystification of the "real issues" by the bourgeois press and the agents of progressive capital. If by the "real issues" is meant those issues that preoccupy members of the working class, we can translate the assertion into a research hypothesis. It is an hypothesis, however, which is difficult to verify through the results of previous social research alone. Quite simply, no-one seems to have done a serious survey analysis of the working classes perceptions and definitions of South Africa's contemporary political crisis. Rather, those surveys that have been done, simply ask workers to identify uncritically with certain "political leaders", organizations or prefabricated "viewpoints" and they accord little respect to workers indigenous definitions of the situation. In consequence, the hypothesis that the working class identifies the contemporary political crisis largely in urban reproductive terms is one that must still be regarded as part of the research agenda. Nevertheless, it will be agreed that

current organizational indications are that "township conditions" are increasingly being regarded as central to the interests of the working class. As Freund et al (1985) observed, if the November Stayaway proved anything, it was just this.

The third and final assumption I wish to briefly enunciate is that the terrain of political opposition in South Africa is currently quite fluid. Not only is the state rapidly redefining the terms of reform and incorporation and thus, by implication, the terms of radical and liberal response. A new trade union federation is in embryo, and popular political organizations are busy redefining their strategies. The space for academic intervention into these transformations is not unlimited, but it exists all the same. It is within this context, therefore, that I now turn to an empirical examination of the contemporary character of urban social movements and perceptions of the urban reproductive sphere, in the hope that the various protagonists of opposition politics in South Africa today can make more informed decisions about potential alliances in the sphere of urban politics.

URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND 'COMMUNITY' POLITICS IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE ISSUES AND THE PRACTICES

There is, to date, no systematic and comprehensive analysis of urban social movements in South Africa, although a number of potentially informative projects are currently in progress (Williams, 1985; McCarthy and Smit, 1983). On the basis of preliminary investigations, however, we know that there have been periods of more or less intense U.S.M. activity this century, and that we are currently in one of these periods. Urban social movements in South Africa embrace a wide range of issues, but a very large part of what they consistently address are the differential costs and benefits of urban and regional development and the state's apartheid structuring of political and geographical relationships. Thus, for example, at stake in rent struggles are not only the immediate problems of black poverty in South Africa and the consequent inability to pay for housing, but also the legitimacy

of the systems of Group Areas and bankrupt black local and regional government dependencies. Likewise, transport struggles underline the special geographical inequalities imposed upon Africans by apartheid, the collaborator status of Bantustan governments, state support for transport monopolies, and the inability of workers to afford their lengthy journeys to work.

It would seem to me that it is partly because of such struggles that the form that the state's current search for a modernized system of political domination has taken is that of a search for "new spatial co-ordinates", to use Cobbett et al's (1985) recent phrase. A point that should be noted about such struggles is their simultaneity of political and economic expression. Political and economic demands are often so intertwined, in fact, that it becomes meaningless to ask which are the "primary" or "secondary" causes of mobilization. The recent history of Durban's housing movements exemplifies this well. Durban has two major constellations of housing movement, structured largely along racial lines because of the discrete geographical areas and bureaucratic structures that Africans and Indians respectively operate within, and must therefore confront.

The Durban Housing Action Committee (DHAC) was formed in 1980 as a federation of seven civic associations, but with time its influence grew to other areas. The original seven affiliates were the Chatsworth Housing Action Committee, the Newlands East Resident's Association, the Cato Manor Resident's Association, the Asherville Housing Action Committee, the Merebank Resident's Association, the Phoenix Working Committee and Rent Action Committee and the Sydenham Heights Tenant's Association. What these organizations had in common were constituents who were either averse to Durban City Council imposed rental increases or Department of Community Development sponsored removals (D.H.A.C., 1981).

The Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC), also a development of the 1980's, brought together civic association organizers and a few disenchanted community councillors from Lamontville, Chesterville, Klaarwater, Hlambanati and Shakasville, and representatives from several Durban

hostels. What is interesting about the J.O.R.A.C. affiliates is that they also were simultaneously threatened by P.N.A.B. imposed rent increases and insecurity associated with proposed incorporation into KwaZulu. Consequently these issues became the dual bases for popular mobilization and protest (Reintges, 1985).

Both D.H.A.C. and J.O.R.A.C. were successful in securing moratoriums on redestricting or removals and rent increases through their programmes of protest politics. In this sense, to borrow a phrase from Curtis, they were able to simultaneously deepen the state's legitimation crisis and reduce the price of their constituents "capitalist wage-commodities" (Curtis, 1984). Later, both D.H.A.C. and J.O.R.A.C. became key Durban affiliates of the U.D.F. Because individual affiliates of J.O.R.A.C. and D.H.A.C. could potentially be set against each other by the state in making their respective demands for land, housing, etc. (the geographically proximate Cato Manor Resident's Association and Chesterville chapter of J.O.R.A.C. are a case in point) their mutual affiliation to the U.D.F. was of functional significance to everyday demands. For instance, if the Chesterville chapter of J.O.R.A.C. were to press the Port Natal Administration Board or the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning for the geographical expansion of Chesterville township, this could lead to friction with the Cato Manor Resident's association who were making their own land dmands to the Durban City Council and House of Delegates. In this context, the U.D.F. slogan "Apartheid Divides, U.D.F. Unites" was more than a rhetorical, throw-away line. It encapsulated a key organizational principle required by those who sought to co-ordinate working-class opposition within a sphere of reproduction that had been deliberately fractured in the state's apartheid policies.

Transport struggles of late, in South Africa, share important features with housing struggles although they differ slightly in terms of mobilizing forces and the state agencies confronted. The specific fractions of the state involved are often Bantustan governments and the South African government's Department of Transport. And, as has been noted before in publications together with Mark Swilling (McCarthy and Swilling, 1984, 1985a; 1985b), transport struggles often include trade union involvement in contrast to community or civic association organizational domance. In the recent East London bus boycotts, for example, the South African Allied Workers Union (S.A.A.W.U.), until it was banned by the Ciskei state, played a leading role in a successful boycott

of buses partly owned by members of the Ciskei cabinet (Swilling, 1984). And in Empangeni, FOSATU joined forces with Inkatha to boycott Empangeni Transport -- a subsidiary of United Transport, which is one of the larger national transport corporations in South Africa. In both these boycotts, increases in bus fares were a triggering factor related to the central state's current fiscal crisis and its proclaimed 'inability' to meet demands for subsidized transport (cf. McCarthy and Swilling, 1985a).

The way in which worker organizations related to the respective state structures, so-called community organizations and transport corporations in each instance, however, is instructive. In the East London case S.A.A.W.U. appeared to have no serious rival "community organization" to come into conflict with and, in any event, it had for some time taken up the politics of urban reproduction within its general agenda of concerns. Thus, as Swilling (1984) has pointed out, workers were very much in control of the "Committee of Ten" which co-ordinated the East London Boycotts. Sebe's involvement in C.T.C., the transport monopoly under criticism, however, provided a state-capital alliance as an opponent which was relatively unambiguous in character. In consequence, the battle lines were quite sharply drawn and the stakes very high indeed.

In the Empangeni case, however, the situation has been more complex. For one, there was a working relationship between the region's major so-called community organization - Inkatha - and the area's predominant trade union - M.A.W.U. The interest of Inkatha in the boycott is ambiguous because, as a popular organization, it both sought to redress workers grievances and promote the interests of its more bourgeois membership through the creation of competitor bus services with the aid of K.F.C. finances. It is interesting, therefore, that the most recent legal agreement between the Commuters Committee and Empangeni Transport is that the boycott would end as and when competitor bus services were visibly operating with the aid of K.F.C. finance. In consequence, M.A.W.U. officials were left wondering about the interests behind the free enterprise terms of settlement that they had come

to agree to in coalition with Inkatha representatives (McCarthy and Swilling, 1985b).

To summarize, therefore, both rent and transport struggles represent attempts to reduce the price of so-called capitalist wage-commodities; they both involve protest politics and boycott tactics; they involve confrontation with various state agencies but usually bypass the co-optive political structures created top-downwards for blacks; and they occasionally, although by no means universally, develop in co-operation with trade unions of the progressive labour movement. In the instances cited, the economic demands of the various organizations were met, although it is arguable as to whether these gains were either translated into heightened class-awareness or transformations in the balance of class forces vis a vis the state. Only the East London bus boycott seems to have achieved substantial gains in these last-mentioned respects, and it would serve as the only clear support for Castells' (1977) hypotheses amongst the examples reviewed here. A more systematic survey of rent and transport struggles nationwide, however, would be required before we could derive firm conclusions on the validity of Castells' (1977) hypotheses with respect to transport and housing as sites of conflict. It is my intention to pursue such a research programme during the next few years as part of a wider strategy of research into geographical aspects of urban reproductive crises. Hopefully, the research results can then be shared, and critically appraised, together with the various progressive organizations showing an interest in urban reproductive issues.

I would like to suggest at this stage that it would be unhelpful in such a project to re-open any old wounds within the left by posing the problem of urban practices before the problem of urban issues has been properly addressed. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that not only should the concept of "community versus worker politics" (cf. Foster, 1982; Davies and O'Meara, 1984) be regarded as inappropriate to the task at hand; so too is the concept of urban social movements untimely as a theoretical point of departure for progressive urban research. My reasons for saying this are threefold:

* First, the concept of urban social movements presupposes a certain distance from the state in progressive urban politics which is not necessarily acceptable to all progressive groupings.

* Second, the concept, by presuming that practices will originate from the sphere of reproduction, possibly prejudices analysis in specific organizational directions and helps to perpetuate the working/living dichotomy that currently bedevils progressive unity in South Africa.

* Thirdly, it tends to make unproblematic the question of class, racial and regional alliances in the formulation of an indigenous theory of progressive mobilization over urban reproductive crises.

In saying this, I do not wish to foreclose on the Castells (1977) hypotheses on U.S.M.'s before we have given them the benefit of doubt in a careful and systematic research programme. All I am suggesting, as I indicated before in the second section of this paper, is that Castells (1977) himself would have argued that we ought to begin with the reproductive issues and the associated structural contradictions that they express, and then work from here towards organizational or tactical conclusions. It is with this in mind that I turn, now, to a concluding examination of transport and housing as reproductive issues with structural origins in South African society.

URBAN REPRODUCTIVE CRISES: STRUCTURAL ORIGINS AND POPULAR PERCEPTIONS

We owe it largely to reformist dialogue with conservative forces within the state to have discovered the depth of the state's current crisis with regard to the cities as reproductive entities. An important part of the reformists plea for privatizing, for example, black housing and transport is an appreciation of the state's current so-called

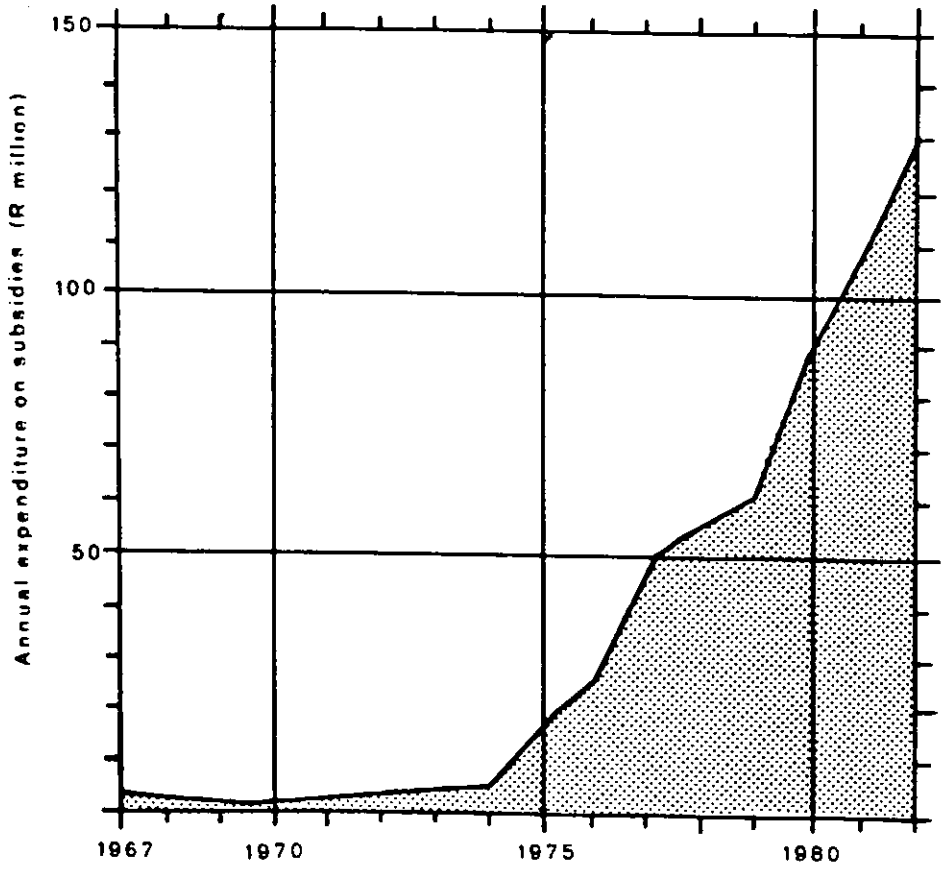

Figure 1: Pattern of annual state expenditures on subsidies to bus companies in South Africa carrying Coloured and Black commuters (Source: South Africa, 1983a, p.37).

"fiscal crisis", and the potential it has to become deepened by past patterns of intervention into urban reproduction. Evidence presented to the Welgemoed Commission of Inquiry into bus transportation, for example, illustrates the type of fiscal drain posed by fare subsidies very well (Figure 1). Partly because of a legacy of spatial idiosyncracies created by Verwoedian apartheid, and partly because of the very rapid rate of proletarianization and urbanization in South Africa, fears are now expressed that a veritable tidal wave of subsidy demands will be forthcoming if the state does not rapidly extricate itself from direct intervention into urban reproduction. This concern is not simply limited to bus transportation, of course. It extends to train transportation, the provision of residential services, housing, and so on. With specific reference to the last mentioned problem, current state strategy seems to be either that of advocating benign neglect (the so-called "self-help" solution) or that of encouraging the formation of housing utility companies with private funding and directorships. In addition, there is also the initiative to sell virtually all of the current state owned housing stock to its inhabitants (cf. Mabin and Parnell, 1983).

These state initiatives are not without their own complications. In the area of bus transportation, for example, there are some very large monopolies with vested interests in past policies who can be expected to vigorously oppose state withdrawal, and the parallel promotion of the interests of a black transportation petty bourgeoisie (cf. McCarthy and Swilling, 1985b, p.28). And, in the area of housing provision, a number of important obstacles remain to reformist initiatives, not the least being the lack of accumulated capital amongst state tenants which might enable them to meet the substantial transactions costs of homeownership. In consequence, as Mabin and Parnell (1983) have aptly warned, current policies may well lead to the replacement of the state as landlord by an indigenous rentier class.

All of this, in turn, suggests that a byproduct, if not intention, of current reformist initiatives will be to accelerate the process of class differentiation within urban black South Africa. Given that

this is the case, progressive organizations will no doubt feel the need, more urgently than ever, to reappraise their tactics and strategies with regard to the sphere of urban politics. An important aspect of such a reappraisal, I would argue, will be some systematic understanding of the way in which South Africa's reproductive crises are perceived by different groups.

A survey for which I was responsible in the Eastern Cape might be helpful in this regard. Here 735 residents of the African townships of Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Grahamstown, Kingwilliamstown and East London/Mdantsane were interviewed in 1981. One of the questions put to the respondents was "what do you think are the most important problems that people face in this (the respondent's) area?" The absolute and relative frequency with which different problems were spontaneously mentioned by respondents is indicated in Table 1. Figures are given for the total sample, for women only, for blue collar workers, for students, and for owners, managers and professionals. This breakdown allows us to explore the relative validity of a number of hypotheses put forward about the nature of urban reproductive "interests".

First, it should be evident from Table 1 that reformist presuppositions about supposedly widespread sentiment in favour of homeownership are ill-founded. The lack of homeownership was the second least often mentioned problem in the Eastern Cape, amongst a range of 21 spontaneously mentioned problem areas. This possibly assists in understanding why, up to this point, the state's so-called "grand sale" of half a million homes has been such a spectacular failure in almost all areas except the Witwatersrand. The lack of accumulated capital has already been mentioned as a factor militating against working class home-ownership in particular (transactions costs in Durban's black townships, for example, require approximately R3000 in 'up front' cash to pay surveyors and lawyers). However, it can be noted from Table 1 that all subsamples of the population accord a very low priority to homeownership. Apart from a lack of capital to buy, it would seem, there is also a lack of interest. In consequence, if Black townships in the Durban Municipal area can be taken as illustrative of national trends, only fifty one

Table 1: Frequency of spontaneously mentioned "most important problems" in Eastern Cape townships*

Problem	Overall Rank	Total Sample	Females	Blue Collar Workers	Students	Petty Bourg.
Need for more and better quality houses	1	(330) 45%	(160) 43%	(17) 15%	(23) 35%	(33) 51%
Unemployment, lack of jobs, poor wages etc.	2	(293) 40%	(165) 44%	(21) 19%	(18) 27%	(18) 27%
Electricity & phone services inadequate and/ or expensive	3	(215) 29%	(124) 34%	(41) 37%	(18) 27%	(18) 27%
Poor public transport & costs of transport	4	(175) 24 %	(88) 24%	(33) 32%	(8) 12%	(14) 21%
Bad roads and street lighting	5	(172) 23%	(82) 22%	(33) 30%	(12) 18%	(13) 20%
High rents and general C.O.L.	6	(159) 22%	(82) 22%	(38) 34%	(9) 14%	(8) 12%
Better/cheaper schooling facilities required	7	(159) 22%	(67) 18%	(16) 14%	(26) 39%	(27) 41%
Safety and crime, police patrols	8	(141) 19%	(78) 21%	(15) 14%	(7) 11%	(10) 15%
Delinquency, drinking and social pathologies	9	(114) 16%	(51) 14%	(16) 14%	(6) 9%	(10) 15%
Unhealthy squatter conditions	10	(98) 13%	(50) 14%	(14) 13%	(10) 15%	(10) 15%
Congestion and over-crowding	11	(96) 13%	(51) 14%	(13) 12%	(7) 11%	(7) 11%
Better sanitary systems, water supply & toilets	12	(84) 11%	(49) 13%	(12) 11%	(5) 8%	(6) 9%
General residential services	13	(71) 10%	(36) 10%	(8) 7%	(3) 5%	(11) 17%
Recreational facilities needed	14	(65) 9%	(27) 7%	(6) 5%	(14) 21%	(11) 17%

Problem	Overall Rank	Total Sample	Females	Blue Collar Workers	Students	Petty Bourg.
Creches and social facilities needed	15	(59) 8%	(25) 7%	(5) 5%	(14) 21%	(4) 6%
Inconvenient location/ distance to work	16	(55) 7%	(28) 8%	(10) 9%	(5) 8%	(3)
More or better shopping facilities needed	17	(42) 6%	(17) 5%	(7) 6%	(4) 6%	(5) 5%
Medical facilities not good and too far away	18	(23) 3%	(17) 5%	(3) 3%	- 0%	(2) 3%
Need for bigger yards	19	(20) 3%	(12) 3%	(5) 5%	(3) 5%	(1) 2%
Homeownership wanted	20	(10) 1%	(7) 2%	(4) 4%	(1) 2%	-
Segregation and racial discrimination	21	(6) 1%	(2) 1%	- 0%	(1) 2%	(1) 2%

* Note: The total sample size is 735. This is made up of 367 males and 368 females. In the 'petty bourg.' class there were 65 managers, professionals and owners. White collar workers (data not presented for this group here) totalled 221; blue collar workers 111; labourers and unskilled workers (data not presented for this group here) totalled 108; and there were 68 unemployed, 32 housewives, 54 self employed, and 66 students.

houses out of potential thousands have been sold up to this point (August, 1985) in terms of the "grand sale" announced in early 1983.

A second interesting aspect of the results is that, aside from some very minor differences, women's priorities are remarkably similar to the group's as a whole. Perhaps at this stage, therefore, it is premature to speak of a distinctive women's 'perspective' on township problems. This is surprising, since women have often been at the organizational forefront of urban social movements in South Africa (Lapchick and Urdang, 1982). A possible explanation for this anomoly, however, may lie in Curtis' (1984) suggestion that it is the differentially low wages and real consumption levels of women that have placed them "at the forefront of many labour, consumer, pass, rent, and fare struggles in South Africa". That is to say, women identify the same kinds of township problems as men, but they feel them more acutely. In addition, it is possible that they have more time to devote to non-workplace organizing.

Thirdly, and perhaps most interestingly, it can be seen from Table 1 that there are clearly identifiable differences in perspective between blue collar workers, students and the petty bourgeoisie. The four major areas of blue collar worker concern, in which interest was considerably higher than amongst other groups were: electricity and phone services (costs and inadequacy), high rents (and associated C.O.L. factors), expensive and poor quality public transport services, and bad roads and street lighting. By contrast, the interest of the petty bourgeois group converged upon the need for more, and especially better quality, housing, and the need for better and cheaper schooling facilities. These interests were very similar to those of the student sample.

The Eastern Cape survey results, I believe, help us to understand why rents and transport (and to a certain extent utility costs) can become working class issues around which urban social movements and/or trade unions can command broad support in their challenges to the state over the abysmal condition of the so-called "social wage". The results also serve as a reminder that the interests of students and petty bourgeoisie

often coincide, and that these interests tend to centre upon those aspects of township life that provide barriers to the process of class mobility.

CONCLUSION

One survey, of course, even when the sample size is generous, is hardly the basis for the derivation of firm strategic conclusions. There are, nevertheless, a number of provocative strategic questions raised by the Eastern Cape survey which do seem worthy of discussion in the conclusion to this paper. Of particular interest here is the question of potential alliances in the area of urban political practices.

Quite simply, given the evidence in favour of the working class character of rents, transport and utility issues on the one hand, and the broad concordance of petty bourgeois and student perspectives on the other, recent alliances over urban reproductive crises in South Africa seem irrational, at least when judged in "class politics" terms. Freund et al's (1985) rendition of the November stayaway, for example, emphasised an apparently organic link between worker and student demands. Yet, at the same time, in Natal where major U.D.F. affiliates such as D.H.A.C. and J.O.R.A.C. practice an urban politics focussing upon working class interests, there is not a good working relationship between these organizations and major trade union groupings. Indeed the only working relationship that has been struck so far in Natal over reproductive issues has been an informal liaison between M.A.W.U. and Inkatha over Empangeni bus fares and, as we have seen, the former have been ambivalent partners in the project partly because of the "free enterprise" terms of the forced solution. Moreover Inkatha, for their own part, have also proved unwilling allies in the project (incorrectly) accusing F.O.S.A.T.U., ultimately, of liaison with the U.D.F. and "jealousy" over the question of who has the right to organize the Empangeni bus drivers (Zululand Observer, 3/5/1985). In consequence, the Commuters Committee has had to disband as differences between Inkatha and trade union members reached a crisis point in July, 1985 (Byerly, 1985). In addition F.O.S.A.T.U.'s Alec Erwin and U.D.F.'s Billy Nair, commenting on a draft of this paper, each made it clear that diferent conceptions of "democratic practice" and different views on the national question still made liaison

between their respective organizations problematic, even when working class issues alone were at stake.

All of this, it seems to me, suggests one of two conclusions. Either Anderson (1984) and others are correct when they argue that "the national question" is the most glaring omission in the socialists analytical tool bag, or we are at present severely underequipped in dealing, at the organizational level, with urban reproductive issues as a terrain for class politics. Perhaps the problem is not an either/or one, however, in that the first conclusion requires mainly further analysis in proving it correct or incorrect, whereas the latter conclusion can well be changed by future practices.

The question of which practices will emerge in the future is not something that social research can determine, of course, but hopefully it can assist in the process of practical developments. The state and liberal-reformers, for their own parts, certainly have formidable resources and research apparatuses at their disposal to investigate and intervene into urban reproductive crises. If progressives remain more interested in internal divisions than in potential "unification tendencies" (Mingione, 1981) with respect to urban issues, we can only contribute towards our own historical marginalization.

It is possible, however, that the state itself is constructing a new arena within which such unification tendencies can be realized. With the introduction of the new Regional Services Councils this year (Durban's R.S.C. is to be functioning by the end of 1985), a number of developments are likely to emerge. On the one hand it seems certain that even liberal-reformers will be strongly opposed to the exclusively racial character of the Primary Local Authorities (P.L.A.'s) of which the R.S.C.'s are aggregates (cf. Financial Mail, 2/8/1985, p.55). In this there is likely to be agreement with radical-liberals and socialists. However, it is well known that the Group Areas Act is currently under review so as to allow free geographical association of commercial capital and a degree of intra-urban mobility for a fraction of the other than white population who can afford to buy into elite residential areas.

In addition the Separate Amenities Act is likely to be modified, if not discarded. This may appease reform-liberals and possibly even some radical-liberals, but it will be of relatively little consequence to the working classes. What is likely to result is something akin to a geographical reversal of the typical pattern of metropolitan jurisdictional fragmentation and class and racial segregation operating in the United States (cf. Cox, 1973; Johnston, 1984): That is say, a pattern in which there is a resource rich, and predominantly upper class occupied central municipality surrounded by resource poor and predominantly working class occupied suburbs. Within Primary Local Authorities, in other words, there is likely to be substantial class homogeneity.

The Regional Services Councils, on the other hand, will now be providing and/or regulating many of the services in the metropolitan areas that the working classes manifestly take an interest in, including electricity, water, residential infrastructure and transport. The position of house rentals is as yet unclear, although it seems inevitable that the state will press ahead with its plans for privatization, whilst raising rentals all the time (ie increasing the costs of non-ownership). This is likely in the short term to generate intensified legitimacy struggles at the local level over the costs and tenure of housing amongst the working classes. In the longer term, however, the housing question seems set to become transformed into a landlord-tenant struggle operating mainly outside state structures. Since the Regional Services Councils will be funded largely by a turnover and employment tax collected directly from capitalists, and since the disbursement of this surplus through the R.S.C.'s impinges directly upon those aspects of urban living conditions that the working classes profess an interest in, the R.S.C.'s may yet become important sites of <u>class</u> struggle over the social wage.

A major problem here, however, will be the racial specificity of the system of representation and, even though all metropolitan residents are potential voters at the local level, the age-old question of whether or not to participate within racist political structures is likely to be posed yet again. It is here that socialists may well find common

cause with reform-liberals and radical-liberals to demand certain amendments to the Regional Services Act as preconditions for participation. These preconditions would have to be worked out in the political process, of course, in order to be politically tractable. There is, however, again room for academic intervention here by decoding the package of recent legislation associated with the Regional Services Councils for the lay person. But that is a subject for another paper.

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