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A relational history of space, administration and economic extractivism in the Mogalakwena Local Municipality in Limpopo, South Africa (1948-2000)

Pearson, Joel David

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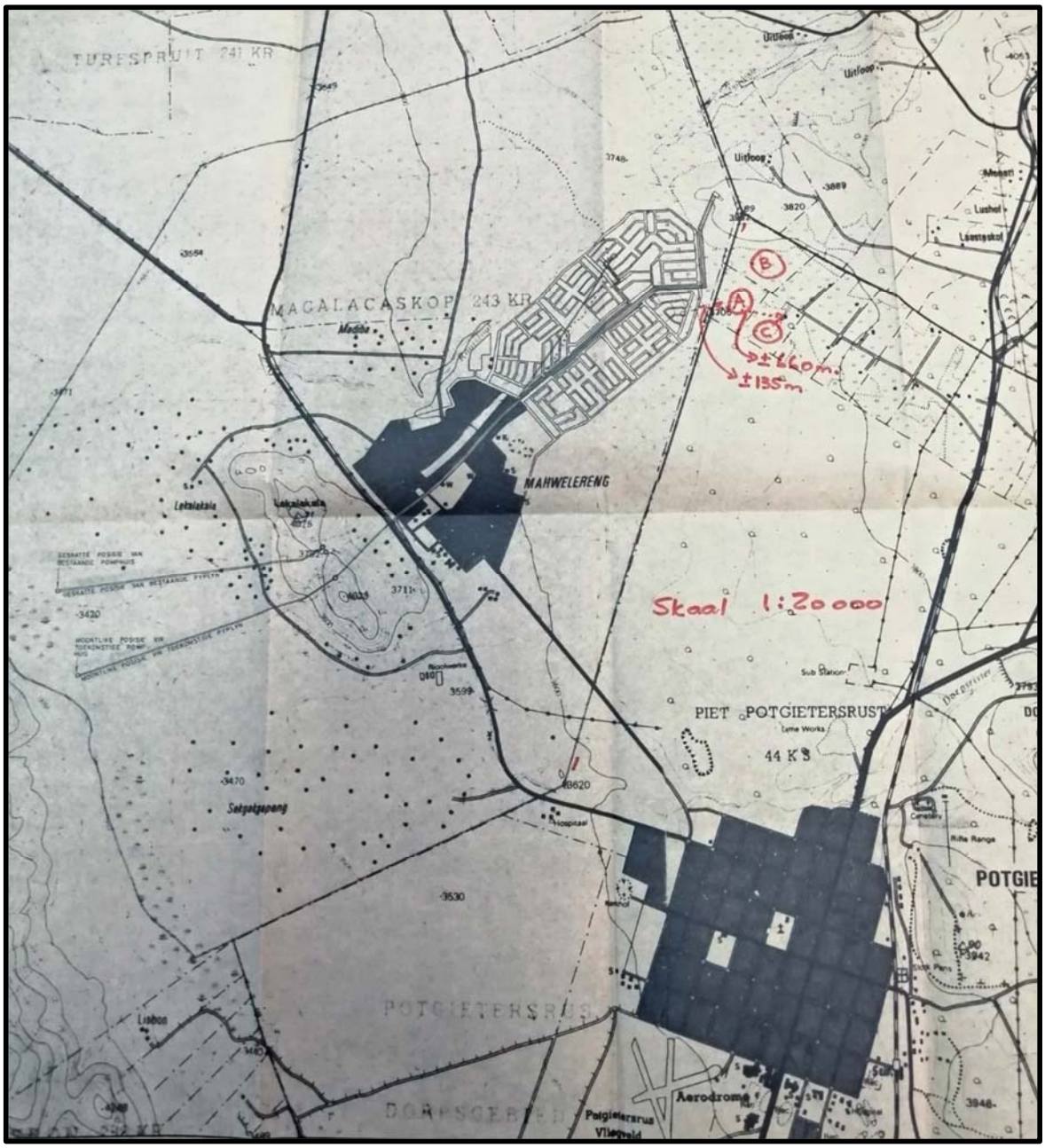
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THREE AXES OF RURAL LOCAL GOVERNANCE:

A relational history of space, administration and economic extractivism in the Mogalakwena Local Municipality in Limpopo, South Africa (1948-2000)



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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History)

SUPERVISED BY DR. MOSA PHADI AND PROF. NOOR NIEFTAGODIEN

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is solely my own work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author.

Versions of parts of this thesis were published in the following article:

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I obtained ethics clearance for relevant components of the PhD research from the University of the Witwatersrand (number: H19/02/27).



……
Joel David Pearson
13 March 2024

In memory of those we lost

My aunt and uncle, Vida and Glen Rafferty, and my uncle Keith Pearson.

Bob Mmola and Alson Matukane.

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to contribute to existing local government scholarship by presenting a situated and relational historical study of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality in present-day Limpopo Province of South Africa. By adapting and extending Gill Hart's spatial-relational methodology, this study draws out key mechanics of change over time in the Mogalakwena area since the early 20th century. This historical analysis reveals that the shifting array of power relations which together structured the field of rural local governance came to be enacted and concretised through specific and identifiable processes of spatial transformation, administrative government, and economic extractivism. While existing scholarship has elaborated on aspects of these processes, the present study insists on analysing all three together, in relation to each other, attentive to forms of both mutual constitution and contradiction, and cognisant of how these processes feed into political dynamics of varying scales – local, regional, and national. As such, the thesis argues that these three sets of processes should be understood as axes of rural local governance. This analysis draws off an empirical foundation compiled from archival and oral history sources, and which points to three broad historical conjunctures of local governance in Mogalakwena over the apartheid and early democratic eras. The first, spanning the period between the early 1950s and early 1970s, is identified as an era of state-building and remaking the countryside under the ascendant National Party (NP), one in which the white central state initiated massive and sweeping transformations of rural areas to bring to life its "Bantustan strategy". The second conjuncture, defined as the terminal phase of apartheid from the late 1970s through to the end of the 1980s, was one in which rural local governance came to be dominated by forms of resistance, reform and repression when bottom-up political forces challenged the reach and authority of the apartheid central state in rural localities. And during the third conjuncture, the transitional period of national negotiations and democratisation between 1990 and 2000, rural local governance came to be defined by uneven and contested initiatives towards institutional amalgamation, deracialisation and redress. In considering the field of rural local governance within which the Mogalakwena Local Municipality operates today, this study concludes that the three axes together remain key determinants in structuring local and regional power relations. While dramatic new power relations have unfolded within and around the municipality since its creation in the year 2000, this study concludes that these have continued to be materialised through intertwined spatial, administrative and extractivist processes which extend back into history. As such, it suggests a new systematic approach for the study of local government institutions, histories of the state in rural areas, and studies of the state more broadly.

Acknowledgments:

My relationship with Mogalakwena began in April 2015. Shortly after finishing a History Masters dissertation, I received a phone call from Mosa Phadi, who asked if I would be interested in joining a team to embark on research into the Mogalakwena Local Municipality. Mosa had recruited Emma Monama, who had just completed her own Masters in Geography, and Thomas Lesaffre, a political scientist. Because they had negotiated permission to photograph the documents in the Municipality's strongroom, Mosa explained, they needed someone who had experience in working with archival material, and so I was brought on board.

What I would learn at Mogalakwena would profoundly shape my understanding of politics – and of what South Africa is and has been. And it would also introduce me to a wide range of people who generously offered their hospitality, time, wisdom and patience, without which this project could not have proceeded.

While I wish to extend my deep appreciation to all of those who agreed to participate in this study, I would like to thank in particular Hendrik Ngoepe, Bob Mmola, Rahab Lebelo, Irene de Villiers, John Dombo, Peter Seko, Ray Bossenger, and Ahmed and Nazli Cachalia, who each in their own way immeasurably aided the advancement of this study. There may be some strong disagreement with the interpretations presented here, but it is my hope that at least some part of the text resonates with those who have participated in the study. Any shortcomings, blind spots, analytical missteps or factual errors are entirely mine.

Thanks also to the staff at the Cullen Library at Wits University, the Polokwane City Library, the Johannesburg City Library, the Limpopo Provincial Archives, Wits Historical Papers, the South African History Archive, and the National Archives of South Africa.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations:

ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	ANC Women's' League
AWB	Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging
Azapo	Azanian People's Organisation
Azanla	Azanian Liberation Army
BAC	Bantu Affairs Commissioner
BAD	Department of Bantu Administration and Development
BHAWU	Black Health and Allied Workers Union
BIC	Bantu Investment Corporation
BLA	Black Local Authority
BLAGWU	Black General Workers' Union
CBAC	Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner
CCAWUSA	Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CP	Conservative Party
DP	Democratic Party
DA	Democratic Alliance
Exco	Executive Committee
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers' Union
FF	Freedom Front
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HNP	Herstigte Nasionale Party
ISCOR	Iron and Steel Corporation of South Africa
LDC	Lebowa Development Corporation
LEBCOC	Lebowa Chamber of Commerce
LEBNA	Lebowa Nurses' Association
LEPSA	Lebowa Public Service Association

LEYCO	Lebowakgomo Youth Congress
LGNF	Local Government Negotiating Forum
LPP	Lebowa Peoples' Party
MAC	Mahwelereng Action Committee
MAYCO	Mahwelereng Youth Congress
MANCO	Management Committee
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MICWU	Motor Industry Combined Workers' Union
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MP	Member of Parliament
MPNP	Multi-Party Negotiating Process
MWASA	Media Workers Association of South Africa
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NAFCOC	National African Chamber of Commerce
NECC	National Education Crisis Committee
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
NOTRAPSU	Northern Transvaal Public Servants Union
NP	National Party
NOTTU	Northern Transvaal Teachers' Union
NSMS	National Security Management System
NTCA	Northern Transvaal Civic Association
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
PF	Patriotic Front
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RLC	Rural [Transitional] Local Council
RSC	Regional Services Council
SAAWU	South African Allied Workers' Union
SABSWA	South African Black Social Workers' Association
SACCAWU	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union
SACP	South African Communist Party

SADF	South African Defence Force
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SANCO	South African National Civics Organisation
SANT	South African Native Trust
SAP	South African Police
SASCO	South African Students' Congress
SASPU	South African Students' Press Union
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress Association
SNC	Sub-Native Commissioner
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSC	State Security Council
SWAPO	South-West Africa People's Organisation
TEC	Transitional Executive Council
TLC	Transitional Local Council
TLU	Transvaal Landbou Unie
TPA	Transvaal Provincial Administration
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TUATA	Transvaal United African Teachers Association
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNIN	University of the North
UPF	United People's Front
ZAR	Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek

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Introduction

The Mogalakwena Local Municipality is situated in the town of Mokopane (formerly Potgietersrus) in the Waterberg District of Limpopo, some 200km north of South Africa's capital, Tshwane, and 60km south of the provincial capital, Polokwane. While it operates from the large building complex in the centre of Mokopane, the municipality covers an expansive territory of arid bushveld which stretches in a northerly direction towards the Botswana border – one beset by an unforgiving climate with soaring temperatures and prone to recurrent and devastating spells of drought. It is home to Anglo American Platinum's Mogalakwena mine, which sits atop what is reputed to be among the largest platinum reefs in the world.[1]

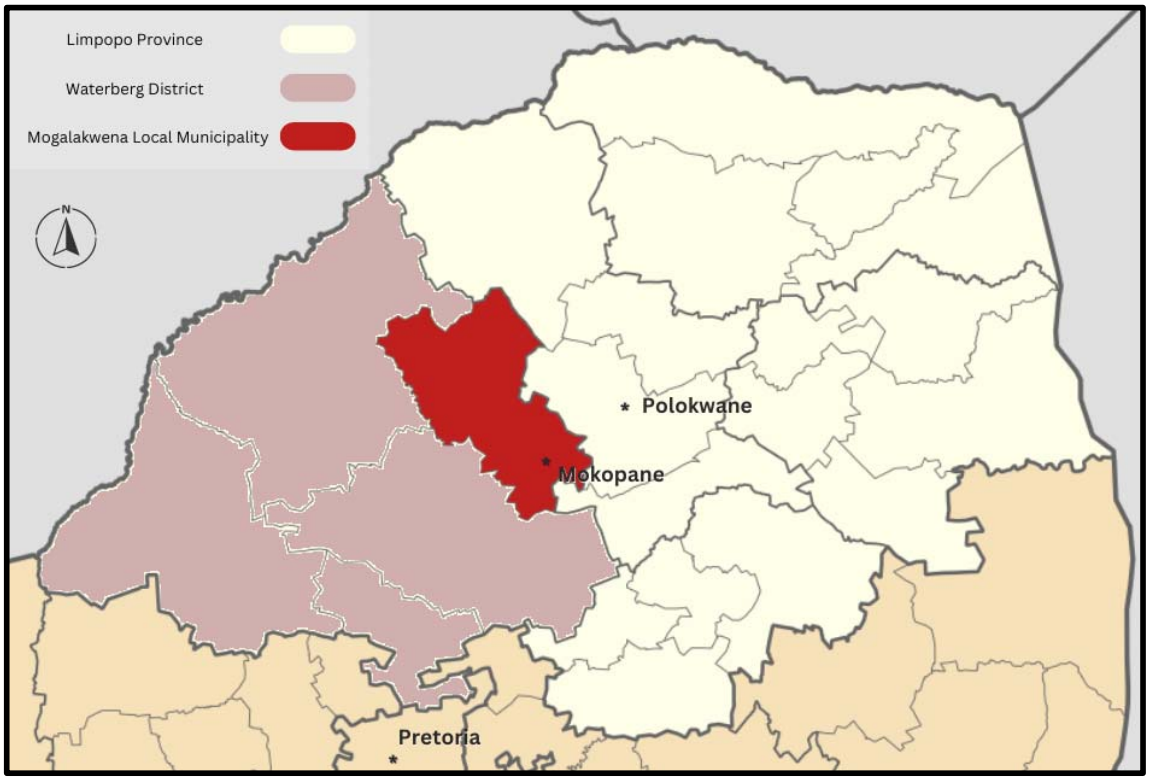


Figure 1: Map identifying the Mogalakwena Local Municipality, situated within the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province.[2]

Like so much of rural South Africa, the region is also profoundly marked by histories of conquest, colonial enclosure, violent segregation, and the massive expansion of the reach of the white apartheid state into every facet of life. The many areas that constitute present-day

[1] See *Mining Technology,* "World's ten largest platinum mines in 2021", 3 June 2022. Available at: https://www.mining-technology.com/marketdata/ten-largest-platinums-mines-2021/

[2] Adapted from "Mogalakwena Local Municipality", *Wikipedia,* available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogalakwena_Local_Municipality.

Mogalakwena have borne witness to, and have been profoundly changed through, continued processes of untamed economic exploitation, and halted democratisation – deeply entrenched histories of dispossession whose sharpest contradictions are perhaps expressed most dramatically and spectacularly today in local municipal politics.[3]

This dissertation takes a long historical view of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality to draw out one key set of historical dynamics which, it shows, have long shaped the ground of rural and small-town municipal politics across South Africa today, a notoriously fractious and violent sphere of the state. Considering in particular the apartheid and early democratic eras, the study draws out evolving and multiscalar forms of spatial, administrative and economic relationality as three intersecting processes which have historically animated local politics and the practices, challenges and contests of local governance in the region. The thesis advanced is that the shifting power relations which together have constituted the field within which rural local authorities are situated have historically been concretised through these processes. Given their continuing salience in structuring the terrain of action, possibilities and limitations in Mogalakwena today, these spatial, administrative and economic processes are defined as the persistent axes of rural local governance.

Welcome to Mogalakwena



Figure 2: The Mogalakwena Local Municipality office complex in Mokopane.[4]

[3] To follow the formulation of Gillian Hart, who points to local government as "*the* key site of contradictions" in the post-apartheid order. Gillian Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2014), p.5.

[4] *eNCA,* "Cops physically remove councillors", 5 November 2015. Available at: https://www.enca.com/south-africa/cops-physically-remove-limpopo-councillors

My first visit to Mogalakwena took place in 2015 as part of a research team from the Wits-affiliated Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI). What brought us there was a prolonged political crisis that had gripped the municipality and quite literally turned it into a battleground between opposing factions of the ANC, which commanded an overwhelming majority of council seats.[5] The municipal complex and the surrounding streets became the scenes of running battles between supporters of opposing factions. Heavily armed security personnel guarded the entrances of the building. Protestors gathered to call for the removal of the mayor and his allies, and physically clashed with his supporters. Expelled councillors and administrators addressed the gathered crowds, issuing angry ultimatums and demanding action from the central government and police. The police responded with heavy-handed techniques to break up the protests, firing rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons. A murder trial unfolded at the nearby magistrate's court in which a well-known taxi operator, an alleged ally of the mayor, stood accused of killing a rival. On days of the trial, protestors staged a shut-down of the town, preventing businesses from operating. Police helicopters circled the air from the early hours of the morning and walls of barbed wire were drawn across the roads around the court.

The deepening municipal crisis was narrated in weekly editions of local newspapers, radio shows, public meetings – and, eventually, the national media. What we pieced together from these sources was that the first glimmers of institutional crisis had begun as a long-standing dispute over the appointment of the municipal manager.[6] The appointment had been opposed by a faction allied to the then mayor, who had worked continually to have the municipal manager removed. The municipal manager had, in turn, mobilised key supporters in council and the administration, who claimed the mayor and his cohort were involved in blatant acts of corruption, and commissioned forensic reports to prove it. Together, a faction of ANC councillors and allies in the opposition secured municipal resolutions ordering that the mayor and his allies be removed from their position. The mayor in turn sought the support of provincial and regional party structures, who insisted that the actions of the rogue councillors in support of the municipal manager constituted a breach of party discipline and summarily expelled them.

[5] What follows is merely a schematic overview of pertinent developments in the Mogalakwena saga. A fuller description of the events that follows is detailed in: Mosa Phadi, Joel Pearson, Emma Monama and Thomas Lesaffre., "The Mogalakwena Local Municipality: An Institutional Case Study" (Public Affairs Research Institute, 2017).

[6] The position of municipal manager stands at the helm of the municipal administration, and as the accounting officer, has the power to sign off on key items of municipal expenditure – perhaps most importantly, tender allocations and staff appointments.



Figure 3: Police fire rubber bullets into the Mogalakwena Municipality precinct, 27 November 2014.[7]



Figure 4: Police escort the mayor into the municipal precinct after clearing out the building with teargas and rubber bullets.[8]

[7] *Northern News,* "Top cops and mayor to be jailed, orders court", 27 November 2014. Available at: http://noordnuus.co.za/articles/news/28152/2014-11-27/top-cops-and-mayor-to-be-jailed-orders-court?highlight=
[8] *Ibid.*

In late November of 2014, the mayor's faction stormed the municipality, accompanied by battalions of police officers and the Deputy Provincial Commissioner. They broke open the gates and drove an armoured police vehicle into the precinct. Officers flooded the buildings with teargas, and shot rubber bullets and water cannon at fleeing officials. Meanwhile, the mayor and ANC councillors alighted a police vehicle and entered the council chambers, where new councillors were sworn in to replace the rebellious councillors who had supported the municipal manager.

In April 2015, our research team arrived to conduct a study of the municipality, which was still very much in the grip of crisis. In the long report and journal articles we published from the archival and oral testimony we had collected, we pieced together something of the proximate causes, personalities and processes that had led to the late 2014 meltdown. The Mogalakwena Local Municipality, we argued, was in the grip of "perpetual instability", with "with routine and competing political intrusions resulting in an entrenched spiral of institutional damage, rising securitisation, protest and violence".[9] This situation was "perpetual", we argued, due to the "recurrent and hastening splintering" of the African National Congress (ANC), "intensifying factionalism over which the party has largely lost control" and which was being refracted through the daily operations of the municipality, turning it into a site of continual conflict. [10]

In the years since our initial study, Mogalakwena has continued to be mired in ongoing scandals, institutional breakdown and violent political factionalism. In August 2019, two ANC councillors were murdered in broad daylight while sitting in a car together in Mokopane, just prior to the delivery of a damning report alleging audacious corruption on the part of key officials and ANC politicians. In 2021, President Cyril Ramaphosa authorised an investigation by the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to probe allegations into "serious maladministration, improper or unlawful conduct by officials or employees and unlawful appropriation or expenditure of public money or property". Yet in April 2023, it was reported that the municipality was still being "looted and robbed blind", while basic infrastructure – most critically, that providing water – was in a state of serious deterioration.[11] And positions of

[9] Mosa Phadi, Joel Pearson, and Thomas Lesaffre, "The Seeds of Perpetual Instability: The Case of Mogalakwena Local Municipality," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2018, p.593, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2018.1464301.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Lucas Ledwaba, "SA's broken municipalities: Mogalakwena Looted and Robbed Blind", 30 April 2023, Available at: https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/mogalakwena-looted-and-robbed-blind-20230430.

leadership at the municipality – including the mayor and municipal manager – have remained subject to continual turnover.

The Crisis of South African Local Government

While dramatic, the kind of continuing instability that afflicts Mogalakwena Local Municipality is not unique. It is, indeed, one of South Africa's many municipalities identified as seriously dysfunctional. The Auditor General describes the sector as characterised by "dysfunctional municipalities, financial mismanagement, council and administrative instability, and crumbling municipal infrastructure".[12] In October 2023, the minister in the Presidency for performance, monitoring and evaluation warned that of South Africa's total 257 municipalities, 163 were considered "distressed", while 66 were "totally dysfunctional".[13] As Thina Nzo points out, many of the most dysfunctional are "rural and peri-urban local and district municipalities".[14]

While perhaps it is true that over "the past decade, local government institutions have been mired in an exponential increase in corruption and maladministration",[15] scholars from varying disciplines have written of the poor and declining state of local government since at least the mid-2000s. This was given added impetus by the rise of "service delivery protests" from 2004 – or what Kate Alexander called a "rebellion of the poor".[16] These protests, widespread across towns and cities of the country, came to be interpreted as proof of the failure of the local state both to provide basic amenities and to realise aspirations for local representative democracy.[17] Public administration scholars at the time raised a range of systemic and historical issues that they argued underpinned post-apartheid municipal dysfunction. Doreen Atkinson pointed to failures of the intergovernmental system and the prevalence of poverty and unemployment,

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[12] Cape Talk, "Performance of Municipalities deteriorates further – AG report", 31 May 2023,
[13] eNCA, "Motlanthe warns municipalities are heading for collapse", 28 October 2023.
[14] Thina Nzo, "Social accountability capacity building for local CSOs in rural municipalities to strengthen local governance: the case of Alfred Nzo District Municipality", 2023, *Public Affairs Research Institute,* p.4
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Kate Alexander, "Rebellion of the Poor: South Africa's Service Delivery Protests – a Preliminary Analysis," *Review of African Political Economy Review of African Political Economy* 37, no. 123 (2010): 25–40.
[17] Richard Ballard, Adam Habib, and Imraan Valodia, eds., *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006); Susan Booysen, "With The Ballot and The Brick: The Politics of Service Delivery in South Africa," *Progress in Development Studies* 7, no. 1 (2007): 21–32; Susan Booysen, "Beyond The Ballot and The Brick: Continuous Dual Repertoires," in *The Politics of Service Delivery in South Africa*, by B Munslow and A McClennan (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009); M Ramjee and M Van Donk, "Recognising Community Voice and Dissatisfaction: A Civil Society Perspective of Local Governance in South Africa" (Johannesburg: Good Governance Learning Network, 2011); Richard Pithouse, "A Politics of the Poor Shack Dwellers' Struggles in Durban," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 43, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 63–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909607085588; Kate Alexander and Karl von Holdt, "Collective Violence, Community Protest and Xenophobia'," *South African Review of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (2012): 104–11.

which she argued had "trapped [municipalities] in a vicious cycle of poor rates bases, low levels of payment for services, poor cash flow, poor maintenance, public disaffection, and further deteriorating payment levels".[18] Werner Zybrands detailed the challenges associated with collecting property rates, water, electricity, sewerage and refuse; the inability of municipalities to raise funds through credit facilities; the difficulties associated with accessing government grants; and interdepartmental conflict.[19] Neva Makgetla drew attention to the "continuing spatial inequalities built up under apartheid", the inadequate and inequitable state funding models that perpetuated uneven access to resources between different municipalities, and understaffing in poorer municipalities.[20]

Significant causal weight was, however, attributed to the quality of the individuals who staffed municipalities. In 2007, Atkinson portrayed a "crisis of governance" within local government structures, produced by "numerous and deep-seated problems with regard to municipal management" which included a lack of skills and experience, nepotistic and political appointments, growing instances of corruption, and "conspicuous consumption based on a culture of self-enrichment".[21] The prevalence of corruption, political appointment and a lack of skills early on came to form a primary element in the diagnosis of local government crisis. In seeking to insulate municipal resources from misappropriation, public administration scholars have insisted on the need to create an appropriate "political-administrative interface" and suggest means of insulating administrative processes from "political interference". In particular, they call for an end to the ANC's practice of "cadre deployment" – that is, the tendency to appoint party apparatchiks rather than qualified personnel to administrative positions – and the introduction of competitive, meritocratic recruitment procedures.[22]

Beyond the field of public administration, a range of other scholars have contributed insights into the workings and challenges afflicting South African local government – although often from a perspective outside of the municipality, looking in (that is, with a focus on state-society relations). Social movement scholarship, for instance, has considered the role of local

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[18] Doreen Atkinson, "Taking to the Streets: Has Developmental Local Government Failed in South Africa?," in *State of the Nation*, ed. Sakhela Buhlungu et al. (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007), p.72.
[19] Werner Zybrands, "Municipal Structures and Finances - Predicaments and Performance Challenges" in *Local Elections in South Africa: Parties, People, Politics*, ed. Susan Booysen (Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2012), 67–88.
[20] Neva Makgetla, "Local Government Budgets and Development: A Tale of Two Towns," in *State of the Nation: South Africa 2007*, ed. Sakhela Buhlungu et al. (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007).
[21] Atkinson, "Taking to the Streets", pp.53–77.
[22] See, for instance: Robert Cameron, "Redefining Political-Administrative Relationships in South Africa," *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 76, no. 4 (2010): 676–701; Jaap De Visser (2010) Political-administration interface in South African municipalities Assessing the quality of local democracy. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 5, 86–101; Purshottama S. Reddy, "The Politics of Service Delivery in South Africa: The Local Government Sphere in Context," *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 12, no. 1 (December 3, 2016): 8.

government functionaries in the upsurge of protests. In *The Smoke that Calls,* which offered wide-ranging analyses of protests in various small towns across the country, councillors and mayors feature as protagonists in the unfolding dramas.[23] Out of this work, Malose Langa and Karl Von Holdt would develop their notion of the "dual nature" of protest, suggesting a complex interplay between "factional struggles on the part of some protest leaders" within the ambit of the local ANC, and "the struggles of the poor against corruption and for the provision of public goods".[24] A related seam of literature has emerged which considers the contested relationship between municipal councillors and local communities, with new scholarly contributions emerging especially around the time of local government elections, when public dissatisfaction and competition between party candidates is often at its fiercest and most visible.[25]

Work by urban geographers offers further insights into the everyday relationships between councillors and their constituencies outside of spectacular moments of popular protest. Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, for instance, opened new paths into understanding the political calculations of local councillors vis-à-vis their constituents, drawing on ethnographic studies in Johannesburg.[26] And Hannah Dawson considered the tumultuous routes to power for aspiring councillors in the Zandspruit informal settlement, describing dynamics of "patronage from below".[27]

Throughout this scholarship, concepts of "patronage", "clientelism", and "neopatrimonialism" emerge as central analytical tools in analysing local government – as indeed they have been for scholars of the South African state more broadly.[28] Questions of patronage were only

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[23] Karl von Holdt et al., "The Smoke That Calls: Insurgent Citizenship, Collective Violence and the Struggle for a Place in the New South Africa" (The Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the Society, Work and Development Institute, 2011).

[24] Malose Langa and Karl Von Holdt, "Insurgent Citizenship, Class Formation and the Dual Nature of Community Protest: A Case Study of 'Kungcatsha,'" *Contesting Transformation: Popular Resistance in Twenty-First Century South Africa*, January 1, 2012, 80–100.

[25] See, for instance, the edited collection by Susan Booysen, ed., *Local Elections in South Africa: Parties, People, Politics* (Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2012).

[26] Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, "'Up Close and Personal' – How Does Local Democracy Help the Poor Access the State? Stories of Accountability and Clientelism in Johannesburg," 2011, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909611415998; Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, "Party Politics, Civil Society and Local Democracy – Reflections from Johannesburg," *Geoforum* 43 (2012): 178–89, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.08.006.

[27] Hannah Dawson, "Patronage from Below: Political Unrest in an Informal Settlement in South Africa," *African Affairs*, 2014, 518–39, https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adu056.

[28] One major exception, which emerged after the publication of our own studies, is the work of Thina Nzo. Nzo's work details the immensely complex environment through which councillors navigate both demands for local development, and similarly details the contradictory and contested domain of intra-party politics, with different levels of the party (especially the regional and provincial levels) embroiled in pitched battles over decision-making at the local government level. The actions of municipal officials, including corrupt actions, Nzo concludes, must be understood as stemming from "systematic tensions

sharpened as politics within the ruling party became increasingly fractious and conflictual over the course of the administration of Jacob Zuma (2009-2018). In 2015, Susan Booysen pointed to "a far-reaching war for institutional control by individuals and groupings within the ANC" since the notorious 52nd National Conference of the ANC in Polokwane, Limpopo in 2007, at which President Thabo Mbeki and his coterie were unceremoniously ousted and replaced by a slate dominated by allies of Zuma.[29] After Zuma had been formally appointed president of South Africa in 2009, Booysen noted, "continuous purge attempts" had been undertaken against deployed politicians and officials at all levels of the state – including local government – igniting far-reaching battles for institutional control by competing factions of the ANC.[30] "ANC contests and their repercussions are directly transferred to the state", Booysen wrote, which can result in "inaction and paralysis in the public sector". At local government level, she argues, many municipalities have become "local fiefdoms" of ANC politicians who, through cadre deployment, have "built power reserves used by leaders to endear themselves to national leadership and enclaves of vocal and powerful citizens".[31]

Mcebisi Ndletyana and colleagues have written extensively about the transformation of the ANC into a "rent-seeking instrument", condemning the tendency amongst ANC councillors to manipulate their positions to dispense municipal contracts to companies for kickbacks.[32] Similarly, Alexander Beresford writes of the rise of "gatekeeper politics" within the party, with competing factions seeking to gain control of the "'status, resources and opportunities" that lie within state institutions in order to foster a "cyclical relationship" in which "patronage is distributed to regenerate the political power of the gatekeeper" and "political power (control of the gate) is used to replenish the resources needed to maintain these networks".[33] In this, Beresford writes, "local councillors play a particularly prominent gatekeeping role".[34]

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and contradictions of representative local democracy". She critiques what she describes as the "patronage analytical framework", arguing that this focus "has been used to homogenise local government, which often obscures the understanding of the heterogeneous practices of ANC councillors in local government decision-making" beyond narrow concerns of patronage distribution. Thina Nzo, "Local Government Party Politics and ANC Councillor Representation: The Dynamics of Council Decision-Making in South Africa" (University of Edinburgh, 2019), Available at: https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/36059/Nzo2019.pdf?sequence=1.

[29] Susan Booysen, *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Power* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2011), pp. 359, 371;

[30] Susan Booysen, *Dominance and Decline: The ANC in the Time of Zuma* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2015), p. 95.

[31] *Ibid.* p.107.

[32] Ndletyana, M. (2015) ANC: From an emancipatory to a rent-seeking instrument. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 87, 95–116. https://doi.org/10.1353/trn.2015.0003; Ndletyana, M., Makhalemele, P.O. and Mathekga, R. (2014) *Patronage politics divides us: A study on poverty patronage and inequality in South Africa*. Pretoria: Mapungubwe Institute Publication.

[33] Alexander Beresford, "Power, Patronage and Gatekeeper Politics in South Africa", *African Affairs*, 114, 445 (2015), pp.226, 238.

[34] *Ibid.* p.236-237.

Concerns over the fusion of party and state through ANC patronage networks reached a crescendo in the public sphere in 2016, with revelations of "state capture" under the Zuma presidency emerging in ever-more lurid detail.[35] At local government level, this was only sharpening by the increasing levels of political violence attributed to municipal competition. In KwaZulu-Natal in particular, a string of political assassinations of councillors and municipal managers in 2016 prompted the appointment of a commission of enquiry headed by Advocate Marumo Moerane. Citing Hamlet, the opening lines of the report refer to violent intrigue and betrayal of Shakespearean proportions.[36] And in the midst of a growing campaign to unseat Zuma, Crispian Olver's highly publicized *How to Steal a City* offered a gripping first-person account of how ANC-linked politicians and businessmen in Nelson Mandela Bay deployed violence to siphon off municipal resources and build the powers of syndicates linked to the party at regional and provincial levels.[37]

Deciphering Mogalakwena

It was in an intensifying heat of public outrage around corruption that we had conducted our research and analysed the situation at Mogalakwena. Our approach at the time had not been focused on unearthing the truth of the many corruption allegations that swirled around the municipality, however. While certainly useful, we were increasingly convinced that existing work around resource flows was only illuminating a certain set of stories unfolding at local government level. And we suspected that the somewhat singular fixation on patronage was obscuring other determinants of municipal politics. What we discovered in Mogalakwena was a world of complexity that was difficult to decipher. Certainly, there were plentiful examples of the phenomena described by scholars – the deepening factional divisions, contests over access to municipal resources, violent protests in the streets, and a rising tendency of political assassinations. Yet it was clear that there were a great many more layers to the story than just competition for resources.

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[35] "State capture", in the narrow sense used at the time, denoted the attempts by Jacob Zuma and his political allies to "repurpose the state" towards benefiting a "shadow network" at the head of which stood the Guptas – a family of Indian-nationals with close personal and business ties with the Zuma faction. See Mark Swilling et al., "Betrayal of the Promise: How the Nation Is Being Stolen", *State Capacity Research Project*, May 2017. It has since come to be applied more broadly to aspects of impropriety and the rein of special interests in determining decisions around public expenditure and appointments in state institutions.

[36] Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal, "Report of the Moerane Commission of enquiry into the underlying causes of the murders of politicians in KwaZulu-Natal", September 2018. Available at: http://www.kznonline.gov.za/images/Downloads/Publications/MOERANE%20COMMISSION%20OF%20INQUIRY%20REPORT.pdf.

[37] Crispian Olver, *How to Steal a City: The Battle for Nelson Mandela Bay* (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2017).

Above all, we focused our study on trying to understand the kind of environment that the municipality had become, what everyday life was like for officials working within it at this moment of crisis, and the array of actors and institutions from beyond the walls of the municipality who came to be implicated in one way or another in the unfolding dramas. In contrast to the many accounts of local government which tend to isolate the dysfunctions of local government to endemic causes, especially to the incompetence or ethical malignancy of its leadership, our study argued that the municipality functions as a theatre for a wide array of different actors – party regional secretaries, social movement leaders, forensic auditors, security companies. The factional battle unfolding within the municipality, moreover, formed part of a much larger set of political processes which reached right up to the arena of national politics. After seeing these complex webs of interconnection, it became clear that what was happening in municipalities like Mogalakwena was not just of parochial concern, but instead revealed key insights into the dynamics of South Africa's entire political system.

Yet still there was much we could not decipher about what was happening in Mogalakwena; it became increasingly evident that we were just scratching the surface of its many issues, underneath which lay far deeper determinants. It was evident, for instance, that the political terrain of Mogalakwena was one profoundly shaped by what Jacob Dlamini calls "local intimacies",[38] cut across by thick sets of historical relationships. And our work had focused on a very limited time period which essentially began with Jacob Zuma's tenure as president from 2009, and thus remained somewhat in thrall of the anti-Zuma moment, as revelations of state capture came to galvanised a broad-based public campaign to oust the President. The truncated nature of our research project, constrained by time, resources, the reporting demands of donors, and the hostile climate that pervaded the municipality meant that we could only wonder about the longer histories at play in the Mogalakwena crisis. At best, we were able to offer a snapshot of a particular period of crisis in a much longer history of municipal politics, and the politics of the region more broadly.

These shortcomings were made especially evident through the subsequent research we embarked on in 2016 at the Lephalale Local Municipality which neighbours Mogalakwena.[39] Unlike in Mogalakwena, where we were seized with the immediacy of explaining a political meltdown, in Lephalale we were drawn to consider the longer history of the institution and that

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[38] Jacob Dlamini, "Voortrekker: The Smoke That Calls," in *The Smoke That Calls: Insurgent Citizenship, Collective Violence and the Struggle for a Place in the New South Africa*, ed. Karl von Holdt et al. (The Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the Society, Work and Development Institute, 2011).

[39] See: Mosa Phadi and Joel Pearson, "'We Are Building a City': The Struggle for Self-Sufficiency at Lephalale Local Municipality" (Public Affairs Research Institute, 2018).

of the various spaces over which it presided. The legacies of apartheid spatial history were immediately evident at the institution, which remains afflicted by a critical shortage of municipally-owned land – one particular outcome of its history as a company town.[40] Lephalale also pointed towards the importance of understanding the longer histories of local politics and bureaucracy. The legacies of the Lebowa Bantustan administration on current municipal governance emerged as one area which deserved much fuller attention. As did the massive state-led exercises of forced removal and dispossession which were carried out over this period. It was in Lephalale that we were also introduced to the enormous influence wielded by the ardently segregationist Conservative Party (CP)[41] between the 1980s and late 1990s, which sought to use the levers of local government to stall the repeal of apartheid on the ground. We were also drawn to give greater consideration to the particularities of the predominantly rural context within which these local municipalities of the rural hinterland operate – the shrubby bushlands, the waterless plains, the punishing heat, the scattered and remote settlement patterns, the prevalence of mining operations and their many wounds on the environment, the decades-long patterns of migrancy which shaped the local economy, along with persistently high levels of unemployment and poverty.

It became increasingly clear that to understand many of the continuing determinants of municipal politics, one had to understand the histories of the spaces in which municipalities are embedded, the evolution and conflicts that historically permeated the field of local administration, and the economic histories which had long preceded the current political contests that unfold at rural local municipalities. The imperative to better understand the key historical processes which had fed into the present moment drove my decision to return to Mogalakwena in 2018 and pursue research for a doctoral dissertation.

Theoretical Framework: The Local as Relational

In crafting an approach through which to embark on a new study of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality with an explicitly historical orientation, this study turned to the work of Gillian Hart, who has offered a radical path through which to study the local state. Hart represents something of an outlier among scholars of post-apartheid South African local government, both because of the emphasis she places on much longer historical and spatial processes, and because she uses a multidisciplinary theoretical toolkit to do so. Her ethnographic and archival studies of two neighbouring municipalities in Kwa-Zulu Natal also represent among

[40] See Faeeza Ballim, “The Evolution of Large Technical Systems in the Waterberg Coalfield of South Africa: From Apartheid to Democracy” (PhD Dissertation, Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 2017).
[41] Called the Konserwatiewe Party (KP) in Afrikaans.

the few sustained historical analyses of local government in predominantly rural spaces from apartheid through to the early period democratisation.[42] The present study has drawn from Hart a great deal of practical guidance and conceptual direction for how one might undertake a historical study of a rural municipality.

The first major set of insights that are carried through the present work are spatial. In her research on Ladysmith and Newcastle, Hart draws on Marxist scholarship and radical geographers to develop a theory of how one might conceive of the space of "the local" – particularly, Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey and Stuart Hall.[43] Lefebvre sought to unseat the idea that space should be seen as just a passive stage upon which the forces of history intervene, "a passive backdrop or container" in which "time as an active, dynamic force" plays out.[44] Instead, our everyday experiences of space should be understood as being "produced" through sets of relations, "everyday practices that are simultaneously material and metaphorical" – and that constitute processes which change both the physical and experiential or phenomenological landscapes of space, producing new understandings of what different spaces mean.[45]

What different spaces mean and how they are experienced is a product not only of social relations enacted within them, however, but also of interconnections with other geographies – relations between spaces and beyond them. This is encapsulated by Massey:

> places, in fact, are always constructed out of articulations of social relations (trading connections, the unequal links of colonialism, thoughts of home) which are not only internal to that locale but which link them to elsewhere. Their "local uniqueness" is always already a product of wider contacts; the local is always already a product in part of "global" forces, where global in this context refers not necessarily to the planetary scale, but to the geographical beyond.[46]

Such a conception immediately resonated with the sense of interconnection we had encountered in our earlier work on Mogalakwena, but seemed to offer far greater theoretical precision and methodological avenues. Conceived as the site of the coming together of a bundle of ever-shifting relations, radical geographers insist that the local offers a vantage point to understand much broader processes.

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[42] Gillian Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Scottsville: University of Natal Press, 2002); Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony*.
[43] Gillian Hart, "Relational Comparison Revisited: Marxist Postcolonial Geographies in Practice*," *Progress in Human Geography* 42, no. 3 (June 1, 2018): p.373, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516681388.
[44] Hart, *Disabling Globalization*, p.33.
[45] *Ibid.* p.34.
[46] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 39 (1995): p.183.

While Massey's later work took a post-structural turn, Hart followed a different path through reading the work of Stuart Hall.[47] In particular, Hart drew on Hall's conception of "articulation", developed from Gramsci, by which he meant:

> a connection or link which . . . requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not "eternal" but has constantly to be renewed, which can under some circumstances be overthrown, leading to the old linkages being dissolved and new connections—re-articulations—being forged.[48]

A conception of the local as shaped by the articulation of processes with uncertain trajectories offers an open sense of dialectical change over time. The divergence that Hart detailed over the course of the transition between events in Newcastle and Ladysmith, for instance, suggested that the outcomes of the interconnections that unfold in a locality are cut through by "contingency, openness and possibilities".[49] As such, the study of these two interconnected localities could help reveal the "multiple trajectories of socio-spatial change".[50]

This path of moving from the "abstract to the concrete" does not imply radical voluntarism or the absence of "structural constraints", however.[51] Hart argues for the need to understand the "multi-levelled constraints" which shape both the limits and possibilities for action to be found in a particular space.[52] And she insists on maintaining the "materialist premise that historically and geographically specific configurations of economic forces and relations set the conditions for existence for other practices".[53] Yet the concept of articulation militates against a "reductionism" which, for instance, posits all social phenomena as products of an economic base.

Drawn from Lefebvre, the concept of the "everyday" assumes an important analytic place in Hart's study of processes; processes need to be understood as "constituted in relation to one another through power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life".[54] It is at the level of the quotidian that structure is manifested as multiple articulations converge to (re)produce concrete realities; yet it is also in the everyday that these concrete

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[47] Gillian Hart, "Becoming a Geographer: Massey Moments in a Spatial Education," in *Doreen Massey: Critical Dialogues*, ed. Marion Werner et al. (New Castle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing, 2018), p.380.
[48] Cited in Gillian Hart, "Denaturalizing Dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism | Request PDF," *Antipode* 38, no. 5 (2006): p.998, FN6.
[49] Hart, *Disabling Globalization,* p.9; 15.
[50] *Ibid.*, p.14.
[51] *Ibid.*, p.9; 15.
[52] She thus describes her work as seeking to "transcend the antinomy between economism and voluntarism" – the idea that either "only one thing is possible" or that "anything is possible". Hart, *Disabling Globalization*, p.10; p.15; p.291.
[53] *Ibid.*, p.295.
[54] Hart, "Relational Comparison Revisited, p.374-375.

realities are reformed and refashioned. Such an emphasis allows the researcher to by-pass the tired dichotomy asserted between structure and agency, and to consider instead multiple trajectories that take shape dialectically and through empirically identifiable processes. The concept of the everyday has similarly been taken up by historians to challenge dominant modes of retelling liberation history.[55] In centering the everyday, Hart emphasises the need for empirical study through critical ethnography – to understand the different array of relations coming together to shape the daily facts of life in a geographical space, to understand how shape the production of space, and how they render each a "place" with its own specificities and paths of change. At the same time, studying the local can open a vantage point on the articulation of broader processes which connect to forms of change on a grander scale – the regional, the national, the transnational.

Hart's spatial analysis has a bearing on how we understand post-apartheid municipal politics: "while local government contradictions have their own specificities, they cannot be understood simply in local terms".[56] Her historical focus furthermore demands that we understand local municipalities as sites of unfolding processes of much longer provenance, even as they shift in the face of new realities and relationalities. For instance, South Africa's democratic transition represents, for Hart, an era in which racialised histories of dispossession came to be overlaid with neoliberal state restructuring in the 1990s to render the local state "the key site of contradictions in the neoliberal post-apartheid order":[57]

> Broadly speaking, local government has become the impossible terrain of official efforts to manage poverty and deprivation in a racially inflected capitalist society marked by massive inequalities and increasingly precarious livelihoods for the large majority of the population.[58]

Hart's spatio-historical lens has found considerable purchase among numerous South African scholars, including historians.[59] In considering the "place of the local" in the evolution of the Wits History Workshop's engagement with local history between the 1970s and 2010, Noor Nieftagodien describes how historians turned to the local to bring to light the unfolding of "history from below", "foregrounding the lived experience and struggles of 'ordinary people'".[60]

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[55] See, for instance: Enocent Msindo and Nicholas Nyachega, "Zimbabwe's Liberation War and the Everyday in Honde Valley, 1975 to 1979," *South African Historical Journal* 71, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 70–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2019.1583682.
[56] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis,* p.6.
[57] Hart, *Disabling Globalisation,* p.7.
[58] Hart, *Disabling Globalisation,* p.5.
[59] See: Sharad Chari, Mark Hunter, and Melanie Samson, "Working Radical Concepts with Gillian Hart," in *Ethnographies of Power: Working Radical Concepts with Gillian Hart* (Johannesburg, 2022).
[60] Noor Nieftagodien, "The Place of 'The Local' in History Workshop's Local History," *African Studies* 69, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): p.42.

Yet in these studies, space and place have often simply been understood as "a mere backdrop for explanations of the broader processes", and not taken seriously in their own right as constitutive of social and political life.[61] The spatial challenge thrown by radical geographers, and in particular the "production of space", Nieftagodien contends, means "it is no longer possible to regard 'the local' merely as a place in which history happens. Place and space must be comprehended in their own right: their constitution and continuous reconfiguration … should occupy a more central place in local history".[62]

Three Axes of Rural Local Governance

The present study seeks to interrogate the history of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality by considering the unfolding of much longer structural processes. In both method and analysis, this study adopts a conceptualisation of "the local" as constituted through multiple and shifting forms of relationality both within and beyond the geographical confines of Mogalakwena. Like Hart, it seeks to "reconstruct dimensions of local histories and translocal connections" in Mogalakwena. Yet the present study extends Hart's analytical approach and empirical focus in several new respects.

Firstly, in terms of the geographical scope of the municipality under analysis, this research also considers a wider set of areas than that which informed Hart's original study. When Hart was first undertaking her research in Ladysmith and Newcastle, the process of so-called "amalgamation" had not yet taken place. Instead, the town councils of each were in the process of transition, and each had only just come to include the nearby townships of Ezakheni and Madadeni respectively under the mantle of a Transitional Local Council (TLC). After the redrawing of municipal boundaries and the establishment of wall-to-wall municipalities in the year 2000, however, the areas under the jurisdiction of municipalities would grow exponentially – including in the newly constituted Mogalakwena Local Municipalities. The bulk of Mogalakwena's territory would be constituted by what had been the Mokerong 2 Magisterial District of Lebowa – made up of 178 villages and the townships of Mahwelereng and Rebone – which was incorporated into the new municipality, along with the former "whites-only" town of Potgietersrus and the "Indian Group Area" of Akasia that abutted it. Mogalakwena thus drew in vast swathes of the rural hinterland, massively expanding the size of both the municipalities' territory and developmental mandate in ways that often only further expanded and deepened the contradictions and crises of rural local government. Beyond just town-township connections, this study thus set out to study more systematically each of the different spatial

[61] *Ibid.*, p.49.
[62] *Ibid.*, p.43.

typologies that had structured the central state's rural apartheid strategy, and the relations that unfolded between them.

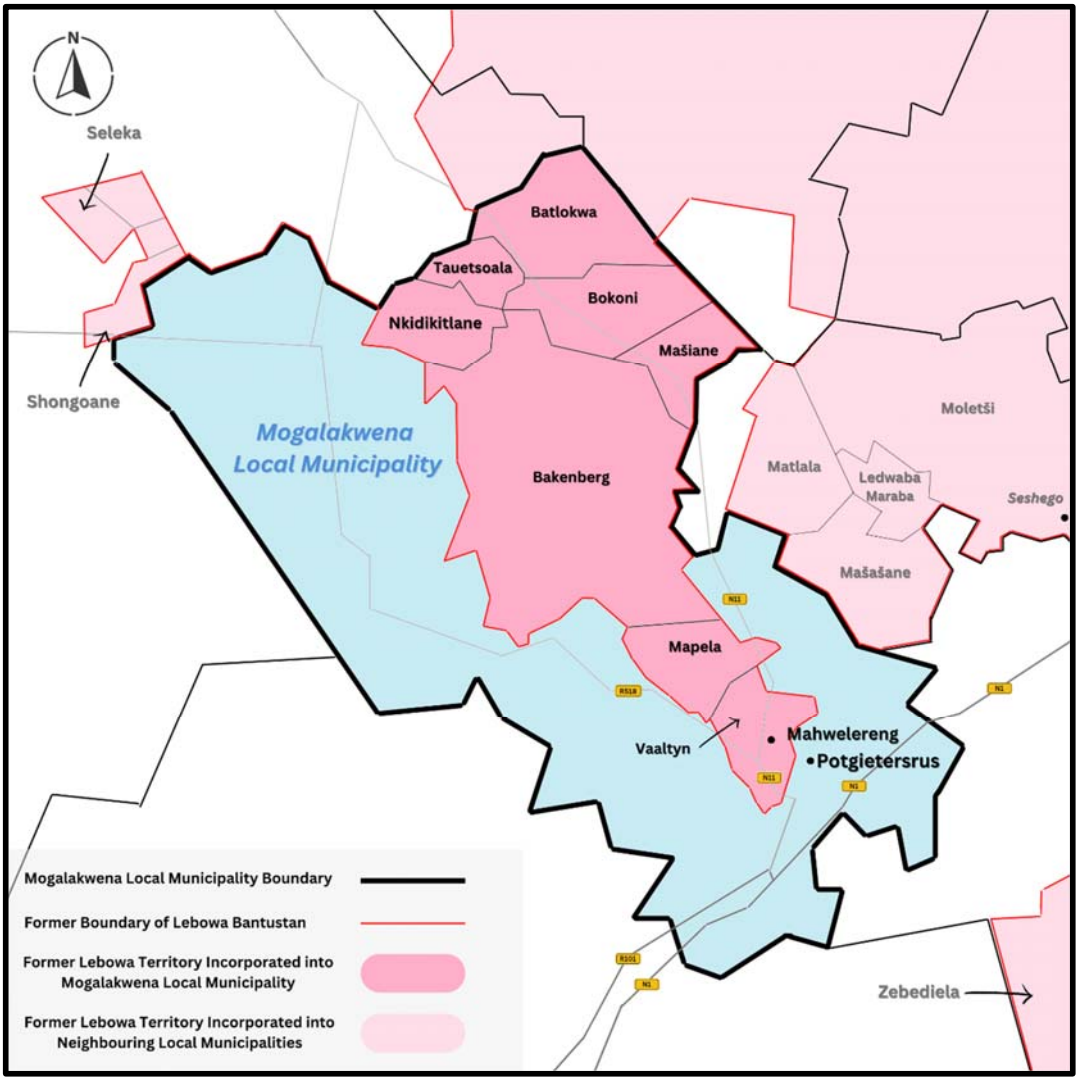


Figure 5: Map of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality indicating the spaces of the former Lebowa Bantustan that came to fall within the municipal boundaries after 2000.[63]

[63] Adapted by author from Municipal Demarcation Board Map, available at: https://spatialhub-mdb-sa.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/40705a64588144fb936e7c64a8115c10/explore.

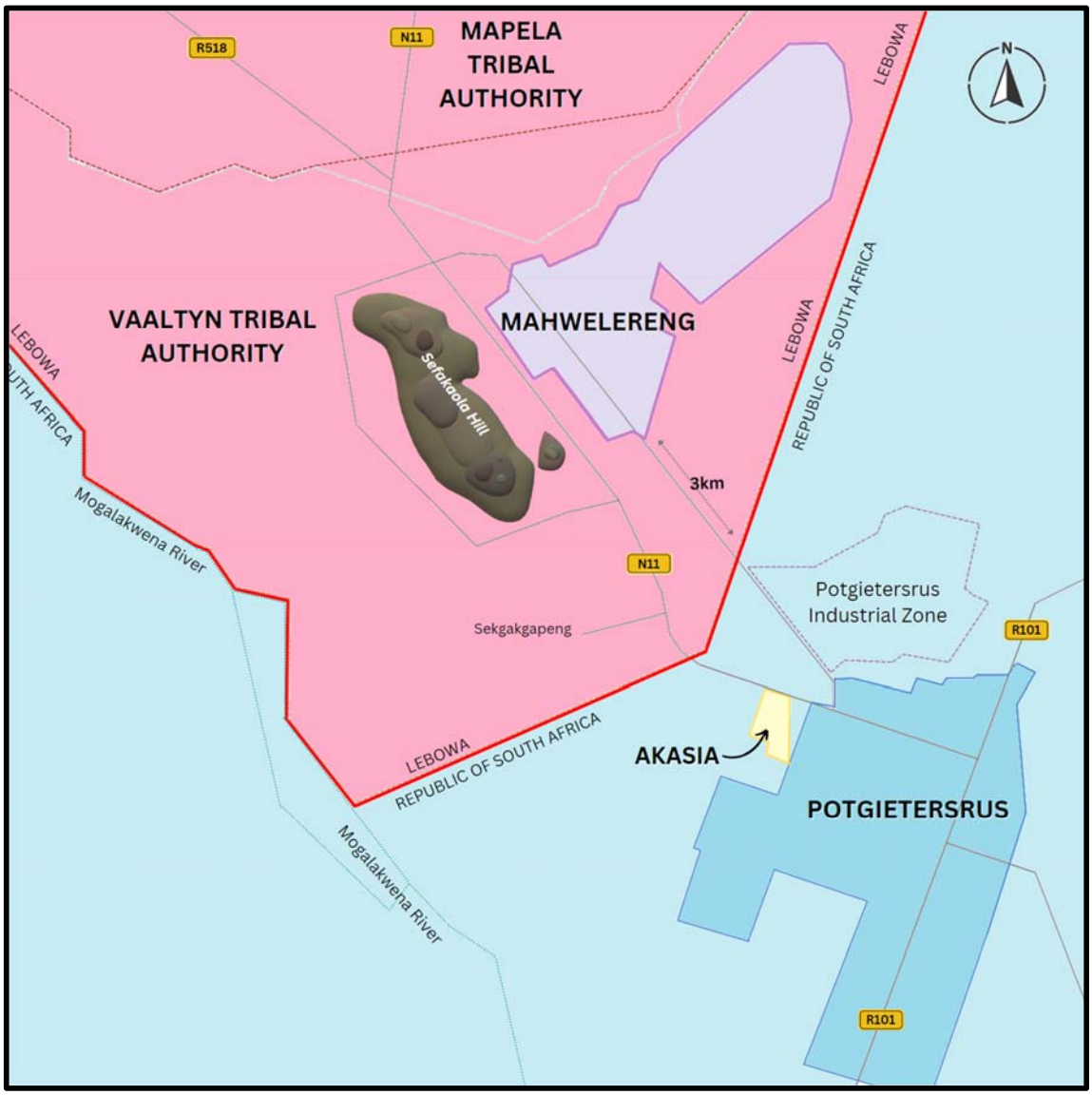


Figure 6: Map indicating the areas within the immediate vicinity of Potgietersrus which were amalgamated under the Mogalakwena Local Municipality in 2000.[64]

Secondly, this project examines a different array of "interconnected historical geographies" than those which concerned Hart.[65] Given her interest in understanding how these localities are situated within global processes – seeking, for instance, to offer critical reflections on the concept of "globalisation" – Hart's work draws connections between transnational processes of political economy, drawing Taiwan and mainland China into conversation with rural KwaZulu,[66] for instance, or considering the influence of South Africa's post-apartheid

[64] Map created by author using aerial photography from Google Maps and including an approximation of the border determinations adapted from Hofmeyr (1991) and Lekgoathi (2006)
[65] Hart, "Relational Comparison Revisited", p.373.
[66] Hart, *Disabling Globalisation.*

reconnection with global circuits of capital.[67] While the areas of Mogalakwena have certainly been marked by historical and ongoing connections to a range of transnational and national social, political and economic geographies, including the transnational and national, however, the outer boundaries of the present study's geographical focus largely lie at the borders of the current Limpopo Province, and even more specifically, to areas of the former Northern Transvaal and Lebowa. While at times illuminating the influence of global linkages with Mogalakwena, and situating it within the broader history of South Africa, this study focuses especially on tracking modes of relationality at the regional scale.

Thirdly, this project pursues a different set of historical processes than those that interested Hart. In *Disabling Globalization,* Hart illuminates how the town councils of Ladysmith and Newcastle were integrated within: (a) "historical processes of racialized dispossession" that led to the creation of rural townships adjacent to "white" towns; (b) apartheid processes of "industrial decentralization"; (c) the "movement of large numbers of small-scale Taiwanese industrialists" into these towns since the 1980s.[68] And in *Rethinking the South African Crisis,* she examines how processes of "denationalisation" and "renationalisation" were producing new forms of crisis at the local government level.[69] Stemming from its more narrowly regionalised focus, the present study seeks to situate the local state within three other sets of historical processes which can be read as supplements to the transnational processes identified by Hart.

1. *Processes of* ***spatial transformation***

Here the study emphasises the importance of the array of relations that have historically emerged over questions of space and space-making in the area of present-day Mogalakwena from the era of conquest. In particular, processes of forced removal and resettlement, spatial segregation, and the instantiation of the Lebowa Bantustan boundaries are examined, as are later initiatives by activists of the liberation movement to undermine, subvert and campaign against apartheid spatial boundaries, and by white reactionary politicians to maintain racialised space. Finally, processes of transitional and

[67] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis.*
[68] As summarised in: Hart, "Becoming a Geographer", p.373-374.
[69] The first describes the highly-advantageous terms through which multinational capital renegotiated its reconnection to South Africa after the end of apartheid, maintaining its highly concentrated character and facilitating the denationalisation of their operations and financial flows. The second refers to the attempts by the ANC government to reforge the social through "rainbow nation" discourses (from Sitas, "indigenerality"), inflected with exclusionary anti-immigration tropes. Yet still she argued that the effects of these processes are felt most acutely at the level of the local state, and now insists that local government has become "*the* key site of contradictions". Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis,* p.6-10

post-apartheid spatial segregation and redress are examined, leading up to the creation of the Mogalakwena municipality in the year 2000.

2. *Processes of* ***state expansion and administrative governance***

The study also examines the range of state institutions, administrative patterns and infrastructures that came to be developed within the segregated localities of Mogalakwena, and their entrenchment within the broader system of rural local government that came to be developed over the course of the twentieth century – a centralised apparatus that articulated across regional, provincial and national spheres. In particular, the study investigates how the sphere of rural local government was conceptualised by the apartheid central state and its democratic successor in each of the segregated spaces. It examines the creation of the Tribal Authorities, the Bantustan township authorities, the "whites only" town council, and the "Indian" management committee, and their later dissolution and amalgamation under a single municipal authority.

3. *Processes of* ***capitalist accumulation and economic extractivism***

And finally, this study seeks to track the forms of economic relationality that came to develop between each of the divided spaces of Mogalakwena over the course of the twentieth century, and their changing trajectory through the transition and post-apartheid era. This thesis conceives of the forms of parasitic capitalist accumulation that came to be entrenched between settlements of the Lebowa Bantustan and "white South Africa" as processes of "extractivism" – a term which, as Chagnon et al note, has its origins in popular struggles against natural resource extraction, but which has subsequently come to be expanded to encompass a much broader array of relations sustained through "self-reinforcing practices, mentalities, and power differentials" which rationalise "socio-ecologically destructive modes of organizing life through subjugation, violence, depletion, and non-reciprocity".[70] The apartheid order used the powers of the central state to rationalise space, build infrastructures and administrative regimes which worked to drain the wealth and life from areas designated as Black while "without returning anything substantial".[71] The immiseration and continual dispossession wrought by these relations of apartheid-era economic parasitism would later come to be overlaid by new forms of socio-ecological destruction with the introduction of mining in post-apartheid Mogalakwena. "Extractivism", I contend, is thus a term capacious enough to draw these

[70] Christopher Chagnon, Francesco Durante, Barry Gills *et al,* "From extractivism to global extractivism: the evolution of an organizing concept", *The Journal of Peasant Studies,* 49, 4 (2022): 760-790.
[71] *Ibid.* p.764.

historical relations of parasitism into the same analytical frame, and bring to light key economic continuities both during and after apartheid.

The thesis advanced is that it is through processes of spatial transformation, administrative government and economic extractivism that power relations of varying scales and provenance are materially instantiated at the local level, and that it is through the shifting articulations of these three processes that the terrain of rural local governance in Mogalakwena has historically been structured. While existing scholarship speaks at great length about each of these aspects, the present study insists on reading these different sets of processes together in order to more comprehensively apprehend the field of power relations within which rural municipalities operate. In other words, these processes cannot be studied on their own, but must be analysed together, in relation to each other.

The concept of "rural local governance" used in this study is developed from the concept of "urban governance" long employed by scholars like Ilda Lindell to denote "the multiple sites where practices of governance are exercised and contested, various and entangled layers of relations and a broad range of practices of governance that may involve various modes of power, as well as different scales".[72] In adapting this framework to the rural and small-town setting of the areas that today fall under the Mogalakwena Local Municipality, this study situates rural local state authorities such as the chieftaincy, other Bantustan local authorities, and the white town council within a web of shifting historical power relations constituted by both state and non-state actors, institutions and ideas, operating at multiple scales over different periods of time.

While this study reaches back to processes that have unfolded since the 1850s in the Mogalakwena area, and offers further data and analysis on the post-apartheid period (until present day), its empirical contribution lies overwhelmingly in the period which began with the onset of high apartheid in the 1950s and ended with the amalgamation of municipalities in the year 2000. In analysing the shifting terrain of rural local governance over this period, three broad historical periods are identified:

1. The period between the 1950s and early 1970s in which the ascendant apartheid state set out to **build the state** and fundamentally **remake the countryside** and the systems of local government within it. This began with the introduction of Bantu Authorities in

[72] Ilda Lindell, "The Multiple Sites of Urban Governance: Insights from an African City," *Urban Studies* 45, no. 9 (2008): 1879–1901; For an example of the application of the "urban governance" framework in a South African city, see: Antonio Pezzano, "'Integration' or 'Selective Incorporation'? The Modes of Governance in Informal Trading Policy in the Inner City of Johannesburg," *Journal of Development Studies* 52, no. 4 (April 2016): 498–513, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2015.1126254.

the 1950s, proceeded through massive schemes of successive forced removal and resettlement and the entrenchment of racial segregation, and culminated in the formal promulgation of the Lebowa Bantustan in 1972.

2. The tumultuous period of **resistance, reform and repression** from the late 1970s through to the early 1990s. Against the backdrop of rising forms of Black popular protest, sharpening economic crisis and growing international condemnation, the apartheid state set about introducing both nominal reforms and increased securitization to the apartheid order, especially at local government level.

3. The period of **transition and amalgamation** which began from the late 1980s and roughly continued through to the year 2000. This was a period which began with processes of halting negotiations, democratisation and the demobilisation of the liberation struggle. After the elections of 1994, formerly segregated government institutions were amalgamated into single authorities at provincial, district and local levels, producing out of the offices made during the apartheid past a new institutional landscape within which new political struggles would unfold in the democratic era.

Each of these periods are defined in this study as key historical conjunctures of rural local governance. If "articulation" describes a "connection or link" between processes, Hall uses the concept of "conjuncture" to denote "the totality of power relations within a given social field during a particular period of time".[73] The "conjunctural move" in Hart's work entails "bringing key forces at play in South Africa and other regions of the world into the same frame of analysis".[74] With its focus on rural local governance, however, this study defines historical conjunctures in terms of *shifting fields of power relations constituted by a wide array of actors, institutions and ideas at multiple scales which together structure the domain of rural local governance over particular periods*.

Once again, however, this thesis argues that in each of these periods, power relations came to be concretised at the local level through intertwined spatial, administrative and economic processes. And throughout the periods identified, the combined effects of these processes as they are instantiated on the ground are shown to feed into broader processes shaping South Africa as a whole. In line with Hart, this thesis argues that the segregated territories of

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[73] Jeremy Gilbert, "This Conjuncture: For Stuart Hall," *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 96, no. 1 (2019): p.6.
[74] Gillian Hart, "Relational Comparison Revisited: Marxist Postcolonial Geographies in Practice*," *Progress in Human Geography* 42, no. 3 (June 1, 2018): p.373, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516681388.

Mogalakwena have historically formed "connected yet distinctively different nodes in globally interconnected historical geographies – and as sites in the production of global processes in specific spatio-historical conjunctures, rather than as just recipients of them".[75]

In its final chapter, this study demonstrates how these three sets of processes continue to shape the terrain of rural local governance in Mogalakwena today. Given this persistence and historical centrality, this study concludes that these sets of processes should not merely be understood as shapers of rural politics, but rather the "axes of rural local governance": the key historical mechanisms which together determine the shape and trajectory of the field of power relations within which rural municipalities like Mogalakwena operate.[76]

Studies of the Transformation of the South African Countryside

This study draws on a long, expansive and rich historiography that describes the transformations that have taken place in rural areas of South Africa from the very beginnings of conquest. This scholarship has emphasised that rural areas should not be understood as backwaters disconnected from national political processes, but rather as sites profoundly embedded within and co-constitutive of them. Concerns with relationality have, in other words, long been implicit in studies of rural change. The present project stands on the shoulders of this long tradition. It is particularly indebted to the significant body of work that has been produced on the histories of the Lebowa Bantustan, as well as the smaller pool of scholarship that considers particular localities of present-day Mogalakwena.

It is within this body of empirical and analytical work that this study has sought to develop an historical account specifically of rural local governance, especially over the course of apartheid and beyond, and theorise some of key dynamics that shape it. If this project was guided by the imperative to bring historical perspective to existing scholarship on local government, it also seeks to bring the domain of local governance within historical analyses of South Africa's rural areas. In bringing to bear its emphasis on understanding spatial, administrative and economic processes together as constituting the axes of rural local governance, the present study has thus sought to bring together works of social history, spatial history, and state institutional history together within the same analytical frame.

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[75] *Ibid.*, p.373.

[76] The word "axis" derives from the Latin word for "axle" or "pivot", and it has been defined as "an imaginary line through the center of an object, around which the object turns". Oxford Dictionaries Online, Available at: https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/axis#:~:text=an%20imaginary%20line%20through%20the,Oxford%20Advanced%20Learner's%20Dictionary%20app.

The Revisionists, the Social Historians and the Bantustans

From the 1960s and 1970s, a range of historians came to center the importance of the Bantustan policy in the unfolding of apartheid. Among the most incisive and influential of these works were those that emphasised how urban and rural apartheid were deeply interconnected, with the Bantustans being constructed as a reservoir for "cheap labour" or "an industrial reserve army" for urban capitalists,[77] as sites where a "relative surplus-population" could be removed from the environs of the city, where they posed a political problem, and could instead be deported to rural areas where the costs of social reproduction would not have to be borne by capital or the state. In 1975, Hemson and Legassick traced the intertwining processes of spatial segregation and capitalist extraction from the late colonial era, and describe the Bantustan as signifying "the transformation of segregation into apartheid, the transformation of migrant labour into contract labour". And they continue:

> This policy began to be implemented in the 1950s, but was most massively and brutally enforced in the 1960s, when literally millions of the black population of South Africa have been removed from their homes and resettled in areas which "fit in" with the grand design. But the grand design is not a product of irrational racial prejudice. The aim is that the majority of the African working population and their dependants should be situated as "citizens" in the Bantustans and, although fully proletarianised, should be permitted into the urban-industrial areas only for the term of their work: for the period in which they are selling their labour-power as a commodity. The system is administered by labour bureaux in the Bantustans. From the Bantustans mining and farming can recruit their labour. From the Bantustans manufacturing industry can swell its labour supply in times of industrial expansion. The social costs of reproduction of labour-of caring for children, the unemployed, old people, non-working wives, are transferred to the Bantustan governments. Troublesome African labour organisers are expelled to the Bantustans, where the black mark on their computerised cards will ensure they never get a job again.[78]

A great many studies since have foregrounded the historical entrenchment of relations of accumulation within an evolving system designed to protect white racial and economic supremacy. The present study has drawn substantially on this analytical direction, understanding the Bantustan project as representative of the twinning of the technologies of spatial segregation and statecraft to processes of capitalist extraction. The third axis of rural

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[77] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (November 1, 1972): 425–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147200000023. Martin Legassick and Harold Wolpe, "The Bantustans and Capital Accumulation in South Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 3, no. 7 (1976): 87–107, https://doi.org/10.1080/03056247608703302.

[78] Martin Legassick and David Hemson, *Foreign Investment and the Reproduction of Racial Capitalism in South Africa* (Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1976), p.9-10.

local governance presented here seeks explicitly to account for the combined effects of shifting sets of relations condensing around matters of capitalist accumulation. Yet the study does so by situating the ever-shifting processes of capitalist extraction that manifested in the Bantustan project in relation to other evolving processes around the production of space and the elaboration of state administration within rural areas. And in substantiating and historicising these latter processes, this study benefitted from the avenues of inquiry opened up by social historians of the 1980s especially.

The initial radical Marxist framings of the apartheid state's Bantustan turn remained at a fairly high level of abstraction.[79] While in this earlier scholarship, the project was largely discussed in structural-functionalist terms, scholars of the 1980s would set out to research their empirical realities, describe the array of lives that were being lived within Bantustan territories, and elaborate not only on their economic relations with "white South Africa", but the social and political relations that were being forged across geographies. A wave of social historians who emphasised a combination of archival and oral history methodology described the divergent outcomes of apartheid's Bantustan policy, their dramatically changing spatial configurations and administrative make-up, their transforming economic and political complexions. Many of these studies considered in particular the linkages of Black resistance established between urban and rural areas through the migrant labour system, and forged the kinds of expansive political networks that came to form the sinews of the liberation struggle from the late 1970s especially. [80]

Questions of Black agency against the structures of apartheid deeply informed the kind of studies being undertaken. Written at the height of the anti-apartheid struggle, historical

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[79] This was exemplified in the ways in which the Bantustan featured in the debates around the compatibility of apartheid and capitalism within this dynamic. On this question, in addition to the works of Wolpe and Legassick cited above, see: Robert Davies et al., "Class Struggle and the Periodisation of the State in South Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 3, no. 7 (1976): 4–30; Belinda Bozzoli, "Capital and the State in South Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 5, no. 11 (January 1, 1978): 40–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/03056247808703349; Simon Clarke, "Capital, Fractions of Capital and the State: 'Neo-Marxist' Analysis of the South African State," *Capital & Class* 2, no. 2 (July 1, 1978): 32–77, https://doi.org/10.1177/030981687800500103.

[80] Among the most prominent of this wave, see: William Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930* (Cambridge: University Press, 1982); William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido, eds., *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa 1850-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986); Peter Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth Century Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983); Peter Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996); Belinda Bozzoli, ed., *Class, Community And Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987); Philip Bonner et al., *Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1989); Belinda Bozzoli and Mmantho Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-83* (Portsmouth, NH: James Currey, 1998).

scholarship sought to interrogate how Black rural resistance was unfolding even within the confines of the Bantustan system, and detailed how audacious and persistent forms of mass struggle were undermining the grounds upon which it stood. These studies thus detailed how rural struggles were directly linked to South Africa's path of national liberation, rather than constituting peripheral histories. Yet they also considered questions of race, of gender and generation, producing radical new insights about rural politics over the course of the 20th century, many of which have been woven into the story that is told in this thesis.

Studies of the Lebowa Bantustan have proved especially instructive in this research. The work of Peter Delius details processes of conquest, resistance, spatial dispossession, and local politics over the course of apartheid in one of Lebowa's districts, the rural Sekhukhuneland – a territory that neighbours Mogalakwena.[81] Delius' emphasis on rural "transformation" has proved a central influence in the present study. Through his written work and in post-graduate courses at Wits, Delius elaborated on the dramatic social and political shifts that occurred in the region over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, emphasising the far-reaching effects of apartheid's projects of spatial reconfiguration and forced removals in radically upending the basic living conditions of rural residents, creating new sources of insecurity, shifting livelihood strategies (especially towards urban migrancy), shaping gender and generational identities and hierarchies, and transforming the terrain of politics.

Complementary to Delius' analysis of spatial change in Lebowa is the earlier work of Essy Letsoalo, whose 1982 development studies dissertation studied the "geography of poverty". Letsoalo provides a detailed examination of the forced removals and processes of spatial reconfiguration across the Bantustan. Letsoalo describes the brutal processes through which communities in the Northern Transvaal were uprooted, severed from the commercial livelihoods and access to markets, and, in many cases, forced to live in inhospitable environments which could not support subsistence agriculture.[82] Along with descriptions of resettlement villages in land under chiefly authority, Letsoalo's study also provides a broad survey of the creation of the so-called "Bantu Towns" established across Lebowa in the 1960s.

While detailing the history of consistent and damaging state intervention in Sekhukhuneland, Delius also tracks the concomitant evolution of forms of resistance in Sekhukhuneland to the deepening intrusions of the white state and the penetration of capitalist relations to the countryside, showing how forms of resistance changed over the course of apartheid along

[81] Of these, see especially: Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*; Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*.
[82] Essy Morongoa Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies In Rural Lebowa: A Study In The Geography Of Poverty" (University of the Witwatersrand, 1982).

with changing structural conditions. While a migrant worker organisation, Sebatakgomo, fomented rebellion against the state between the 1940s and 1960s, by the 1980s, it was young people who were taking the lead in defying apartheid laws and demanding a new order from the bottom-up. Delius describes the expansion of structures of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the 1980s, the youth rebellion in the villages, the crushing state repression meted out, and the glimmers of change brought about by the advent of democracy in 1994. And similarly, Inneke van Kessel considered the rise of the UDF across the Northern Transvaal more broadly, although largely still focused on Sekhukhuneland.[83] It was also during this era that Isabel Hofmeyr undertook her work on the history of the Vaaltyn chieftaincy. Because Hofmeyr's area of focus, Vaaltyn (present-day Moshate), her work will be given fuller elaboration below. At this point, it is worth noting Hofmeyr's novel theoretical and methodological contribution to rural historiography at the time, detailing how processes of enormous social change and state-led dispossession was reflected in the evolving history of storytelling in the region.

The democratic elections and the unfolding of the new democratic order was accompanied by something of a lull in rural historical studies in the 1990s, with dynamics in rural areas slipping from mainstream historical focus. Nevertheless, there were pockets of scholarship concerned with developments in rural areas. In policy circles, significant work was produced in the early 2000s in the wake of proposed legislative changes to the powers of the chieftaincy, rural land tenure, and women and children's status under customary law. Legal scholars like Anninka Claassens dubbed these the "Bantustan Bills" because they essentially threatened to reify apartheid-era denials of property rights and citizenship – an issue which has continued to rear its head.[84] Over the course of the 2000s, there remained historians and anthropologists who had continued to reconsider other dimensions of rural history, including questions around land use, the chieftaincy, gender, and class differentiation.[85]

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[83] Ineke Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams: The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa*, Reconsiderations in Southern African History (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).
[84] Anninka Claassens, "'Bantustan Bills' trample on the rights of rural people", 4 November 2019.
[85] Lungisile Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of the Land in South Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Barbara Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power & Culture in the Post-Apartheid Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Aninka Claassens and Ben Cousins, *Land, Power & Custom: Controversies Generated by South Africa's Communal Land Rights Act* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008). J. C. Myers, *Indirect Rule in South Africa: Tradition, Modernity, and the Costuming of Political Power*, (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2008)

In Lebowa, this saw new research undertaken by Deborah James into Kiba dance groups in the Sekhukhune region, and later into savings clubs.[86] Sekibakiba Lekgoathi's study into the forging of ethnic nationalism and the unfolding liberation movement amongst teachers and school-going youth in Lebowa has proved especially instrumental in this study.[87] His research area overlaps significantly with my own: Lekgoathi brings to light the transformations that unfolded in Zebediela over generations of colonial and apartheid rule, and shows its political and social connections to the broader region, including Mokopane. His emphasis on the forms of relationality that developed across different spaces of Lebowa (rather than just the urban-rural link emphasised by previous scholars) proved instrumental in shaping my understanding of how politics had unfolded in the area in ways that were quite different from other parts of Lebowa, while at the same time articulating with broader processes of change in the Bantustan.

The early 2010s would see the resurgence of studies interested in understanding the histories of rural areas, and the legacies of the Bantustan era that continued to be felt in everyday life.

Part of this was driven by scholars at the Wits History Workshop, who were encouraged to pursue questions of rural history as part of the "Local Histories, Present Realities" NRF Chair which began in 2008. In presenting a range of new work in 2012 which investigated a wide array of new research projects into rural localities, Phil Bonner pointed to the need to correct a metropolitan bias in both media and scholarly works which largely ignored "the bulk of this country, which is rural, semi-rural or small town".[88] He insisted that it was here that one could see the less-publicised yet profoundly transformative "bottom-up processes of restructuring South African society", as scholarship was only just beginning to grapple with. "A vast subterranean level of transformation has remained largely unexplored, which itself is often one reason for national change", Bonner argued.[89]

In 2011, a conference convened by the Chair was held at Wits University, which brought together a range of scholars who were "unearthing previously unknown histories of the

[86] Deborah James, "Mmino Wa Setso: Songs of Town and Country and the Experience of Migrancy by Men and Women from the Northern Transvaal" (University of the Witwatersrand, 1993).
[87] Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, "Ethnicity and Identity: Struggle and Contestation in the Making of the Northern Transvaal Ndebele, ca. 1860-2005" (Minnesota, University of Minnesota, 2006); Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy in the Rural Northern Transvaal Community in Zebediela, 1986-1994," *South African Historical Journal* 58 (2007): 226–52.
[88] Philip Bonner, "History and the Here and Now," *Social Dynamics* 39, no. 2 (June 2013): p.160, https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2013.806416.
[89] *Ibid.*, p.165-166.

Bantustan and their critical legacies for the present realities of those areas today".[90] The collection of articles in the 2012 special issue of the South African Historical Journal, edited by Ally and Lissoni, entitled *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans,*[91] pointed to emerging work being produced by researchers "working in multiple localities in a deeply textured and granular way".[92]

The expansion of research sites across various former Bantustan areas has served to deeply enrich conceptualisations of the Bantustan and its legacies, to bring to light "the historicity of different 'homelands' in the *longue durée* of their establishments, dissolutions and afterlives". Where once the scholarship focused overwhelmingly on the Transkei, KwaZulu, and Bophuthatswana,[93] there has rapidly grown a new set of literatures about other less-studied Bantustans.[94] Still, however, in the case of Lebowa, Phillips notes that "neither the Bantustan nor its democratic successor [the Limpopo Province] feature as central case studies for understanding political, social or economic history in rural South Africa".[95] Yet research into other Bantustan formations like Lebowa, Ciskei, KaNgwane, Venda and KwaNdebele has presented a range of particularities which often stand at odds with conclusions drawn from the

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[90] These included those who had continued studying the Bantustans for many years, such as Andrew Manson, Bernard Mbenga, William Beinart and Sekiba Lekgoathi, as well as emerging scholars like Tim Gibbs, Laura Evans, Arianna Lissoni, Shireen Ally, and Laura Phillips. See: Shireen Ally and Arianna Lissoni, "Preface: 'Let's Talk About Bantustans,'" in *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), p.xii.

[91] And which was subsequently turned into a book by the same name. *Ibid.*

[92] *Ibid.*, p.xi.

[93] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen & Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised;* Timothy Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen: Nationalist Elites and Apartheid's First Bantustan* (Oxford: James Currey, 2014); Ivan Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*; J. B. Peires, "The Implosion of Transkei and Ciskei", *African Affairs* 91, no. 364 (1992): 365–87; William Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 1982). Gerard Mare and Georgina Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power: Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987); Michael Lawrence and Andrew Manson, "The Dog of the Boers' The Rise and Fall of Mangope in Bophuthatswana," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 1994): 447–61;

[94] See, for instance: Luvuyo Wotshela, "Homeland Consolidation, Resettlement and Local Politics in the Border and the Ciskei Region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1960 to 1996," PhD Dissertation (University of Oxford, 2001; Luvuyo Wotshela, "Territorial Manipulation in Apartheid South Africa: Resettlement, Tribal Politics and the Making of the Northern Ciskei, 1975–1990," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (June 2004): 317–37, https://doi.org/10.1080/0305707042000215383; Laura Evans, "Resettlement and the Making of the Ciskei Bantustan, South Africa, c.1960–1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, 1 (January 2014): 21–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2014.889359; Chitja Twala, "The Qwaqwa Public Service, 1975–1994," *African Historical Review* 50 (July 2018): 78–100, https://doi.org/10.1080/17532523.2019.1596402; Chitja Twala, "The Qwaqwa Bantustan and the Nuances of Political Transition and Integration into the Free State Province, 1989-1996," 2020; John Aerni-Flessner and Chitja Twala, "Bargaining with Land: Borders, Bantustans, and Sovereignty in 1970s and 1980s Southern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 47 (October 2021): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2021.1982264.

[95] Laura Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo: Differentiation, Stratification and Class Formation in South Africa, 1972 – 2009" (New York, New York University, 2020), p.4.

four major independent Bantustans. And, as Lissoni and Ally note, this new scholarship is placing greater emphasis on "the variety of 'homeland' formations produced by different regional traditions of administration, and the historicity of different 'homelands' in the *longue durée* of their establishments, dissolutions and afterlives".[96]

The present research was undertaken at a time when an emergent cohort of new scholars had begun post-graduate studies which aimed to significantly expand the space opened up by historians since the early 2010s, undertaking research in a variety of understudied localities, seeking answers to a range of new questions.[97] In particular, several colleagues have tackled different areas and aspects of the Lebowa Bantustan, and this study has benefitted immeasurably from engagements with them.[98] Working alongside these scholars has, furthermore, emphasised the particularities of the Mogalakwena area even compared to other parts of Lebowa, once again underscoring the importance of situated ethnographic studies attentive to both specificity and interconnection.

Histories of the South African State and the Bantustan Bureaucracies

Alongside questions of space and relations of accumulation, this study interrogates the shifting nature of state power in rural areas over the course of the apartheid era, seeking to understand the role that the enormous expansion of multiscalar and racially segregated bureaucracies played in transforming the terrain of rural local governance over the course of apartheid, the institutional landscape through which these bureaucracies operated, and the political contests, challenges and crises that shaped their evolving form.

It was largely from the late 1980s that scholars of apartheid history came to place far greater attention on interrogating the nature of the state. In 1990, Bonner, Delius and Posel stated that "paradoxically, for all the stress laid on the power and prominence of the apartheid state, very little has been written about its actual workings".[99] They described how "the early radical school" of historians largely viewed the apartheid state an "instrument/agent of interests within the wider society, be these capitalist or Afrikaner Nationalist".[100] As a result, the apartheid

[96] Ally and Lissoni, "Preface: 'Let's Talk About Bantustans,'" p.xi.
[97] Kefuoe Makena, "Violence and protest: How violence shaped the "peaceful" people of Bethanie, c.1860s to 2018", Wits University Master's Thesis, 2021; Hilary Lynd, "Homelands: Together and Apart in the Soviet Union and South Africa", PhD Dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 2023).
[98] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo"; Sarah Bruchhausen, "Women and Emancipatory Politics in the Former Lebowa Bantustan of South Africa, 1940s to Present" (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 2023). And see forthcoming dissertations by Mphako Sheriv and Emma Monama.
[99] Philip Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel, "The Shaping of Apartheid: Contradiction, Continuity and Popular Struggle," in *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), p.23.
[100] *Ibid.*

state was characterised in monolithic terms, rather than a field of contest, contradiction and change in its own right. The result was what Posel described as the "grand plan" theories of apartheid, which broadly held that "the Afrikaner nationalist vanguard in the state … built the apartheid edifice brick by brick according to the dictates of a single, systematic long-term blueprint".[101] These monolithic conceptions were also echoed in the early Marxist portrayals of the elaboration and operation of the Bantustan states.

Posel's work challenged the instrumentalist rendering of the state, however, and insisted on the need to both disaggregate the state to understand the sometimes uncertain and often conflictual processes that coursed through institutions of the bureaucracy, and, moreover, to understand apartheid as having been "forged through a series of struggles within and beyond the state".[102] The present study is similarly concerned with describing the shifting relationships and internal conflicts that shaped the operations of offices of the apartheid bureaucracy and its successor. And it emphasises the contradictory outcomes of apartheid state policy, showing, for instance, how central state action in the reengineering of the areas of Mogalakwena produced new forms of local politics which ultimately came to challenge the authority of the central state.

Yet it insists that while the instantiation of apartheid was characterised by significant ambiguities, contest, controversies, and contradictions, the effects of state action were, nonetheless, enormous – not least in rural areas.[103] And while certainly apartheid's policies of spatial segregation, administrative balkanisation and economic parasitism did not unfold neatly according to a single "grand plan", the state displayed significant consistency in its commitment to these fundamentals; indeed, these three aspects, it will be argued, formed the *sine qua non* of the apartheid worldview.[104] These would remain largely unchallenged pillars of apartheid even at the height of the 1980s crisis within the state, even as PW Botha's administration introduced hasty reforms.

In the years since Bonner *et al* made the call to "insert the state more forcefully into the picture, in order to understand apartheid as shaped simultaneously by struggles from below and

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[101] Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict And Compromise*, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.2.
[102] *Ibid.* p.5.
[103] It is important to consider that Posel's main case study was the instantiation of so-called "influx control", which, given the untameable mobility of humanity, was even in theory a Herculean proposal – it might thus be expected that a study of the apartheid state through this dimension would discover roiling and unceasing contest and contradiction.
[104] Consider the concept of "sovereignty in one's own sphere" emphasised in Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.68.

interventions from above",[105] significant scholarship has emerged which examined the workings of the apartheid state – along with its colonial predecessor. Ivan Evans' *Race and Bureaucracy* has proved a key text in understanding the development and implementation of "native policy" in South Africa over the course of the 20th century. Keith Breckenridge has detailed the processes through which apartheid's biometric technologies were brought to life.[106] This literature has, in part, been interested in understanding more carefully the kind of state that the democratic government inherited, and the modalities of administrative statecraft that were historically hardwired into their operations.

In more recent years, a particular line of inquiry has emerged within the new scholarship on the Bantustans which has centered on the establishment and changing nature of the Bantustan bureaucracies, and the long shadows they cast over the post-apartheid state. At the heart of the Bantustan project was the elaboration of a complex new rural administrative web that connected distant rural localities into an ever-expanding nexus. While existing scholarship tended to focus on key Bantustan leaders and political elites, few specifically studied the structure of the Bantustan bureaucracy and the social transformations it induced.[107] This drew Ivor Chipkin and Sarah Meny-Gibert to argue for the need to study the histories of the Bantustan bureaucracies, and the processes through which they came to be incorporated into the new South African provinces, to surface some key dynamics underpinning contemporary public administration.[108]

In the years since, important work has been produced which examines some of these rural administrative histories. Tim Gibbs, for instance, has tracked the elite political networks which came to permeate the Transkei Bantustan.[109] Others have studied particular forms of social service provision the Bantustans – especially around health and education.[110] Research into

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[105] Bonner, Delius, and Posel, "The Shaping of Apartheid", p.3.
[106] Keith Breckenridge, *Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[107] In the case of Lebowa, see the dissertation by Mose Jacob Duba, "The Conversion Function of the Political Process in Lebowa until 1990 According to the Structural Functional Analysis of Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell Jr." (University of South Africa, 1992), Available at: http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/16716/dissertation_duba_mj.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.. And for descriptions of the processes of institutional amalgamation at the provincial level, see: Louis A Picard, *The State of the State: Institutional Transformation, Capacity and Political Change in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2005).
[108] Ivor Chipkin and Sarah Meny-Gibert, "Why the Past Matters: Studying Public Administration in South Africa," *Journal of Public Administration* 47, 1 (March 2012): 102–12.
[109] Timothy Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen.*
[110] Anne Digby, for instance, considers the (uneven) efforts made within decentralised Bantustan health departments towards more progressive and preventive healthcare – initiatives which came to be dissolved with the advent of democracy. Ann Digby, "'The Bandwagon of Golden Opportunities'?

Bantustan education departments, schools and teachers has, indeed, produced a wealth of scholarship. Linda Chisholm, for instance, has considered the role of education reforms and reformers both within and between different Bantustan administrations of the late apartheid period.[111] Sarah Meny-Gibert's work on the education bureaucracy in the Eastern Cape points to the influence of longer histories of the Ciskei and Transkei Bantustan administrations, which exercised "weak control over the expansion of the education system, weakly and unevenly supervised the work of teachers, and the allocation of education resources in schools".[112] These weaknesses, she argues, were reproduced by post-apartheid governments who have been unable to build sufficient state capacity (or "infrastructural power") at the level of rural school education.

An especially rich literature on education in the Lebowa Bantustan has also emerged, upon which the present thesis draws considerably. Sello Mathabatha has written extensively about school protests in Sekhukhuneland over the course of the 1970s, and during 1976 in particular, in relation to changing political climate of the Bantustan, and, in particular, the forms of massification undertaken by the Bantustan government.[113] Lekgoathi has considered the struggles that emerged in Zebediela within the teaching profession over the question of political affiliation in the midst of deepening school-based campaigns against repressive conditions and the Bantustan system more broadly.[114] Anne Heffernan has considered the

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Healthcare in South Africa's Bantustan Periphery," in *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 18–42. Elizabeth Hull explores the provision of services by the KwaZulu government, and demonstrates that the ethic of community healthcare persisted in the Bethesda Hospital through the Bantustan period, only to be dismantled in the democratic restructurings of the 1990s. Elizabeth Hull, "The Renewal of Community Health under the KwaZulu 'Homeland' Government," in *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 43–61. And Linda Chisholm explores the Bophuthatswana Primary Education Upgrade initiative to argue that, notwithstanding the "stultifying goals of Bantu Education", the Bantustan system did open up some spaces and opportunities for progressive educational experimentation. Linda Chisholm, "Bantustan Education History: The 'Progressivism' of Bophutatswana's Primary Education Upgrade Programme (PEUP), 1979–1988," in *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans* (Routledge, 2017).

[111] Linda Chisholm, "Late-Apartheid Education Reforms and Bantustan Entanglements," *African Historical Review* 50, no. 1–2 (July 3, 2018): 27–45, https://doi.org/10.1080/17532523.2019.1588496; See also: Linda Chisholm, "Bantustan Education History: The 'Progressivism' of Bophutatswana's Primary Education Upgrade Programme (PEUP), 1979–1988," in *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans* (Routledge, 2017).

[112] Sarah Meny-Gibert, "State 'Infrastructural Power' and the Bantustans: The Case of School Education in the Transkei and Ciskei," *Public Affairs Research Institute,* 2020, p.3. See also: Sarah Meny-Gibert, "State capacity and governance in South Africa: A case study of school education in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng provinces, c. 1970 to 2015", PhD Dissertation, (University of the Witwatersrand, 2021).

[113] Sello Mathabatha, "The 1976 Student Revolts and the Schools in Lebowa, 1970–1976," *South African Historical Journal* 51 (2004) (March 26, 2009): 108–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/02582470409464832; Sello Mathabatha, "Missionary Schools, Student Uprisings in Lebowa and the Sekhukhuneland Students' Revolts, 1983–1986," *African Studies* 64, no. 2 (December 1, 2005): 263–84, https://doi.org/10.1080/00020180500355827.

[114] Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy".

institutional history of the University of the North (Turfloop) and its connections to unfolding liberation politics.[115] And Phillips has detailed how rural schools emerged as the site of growing power struggles between chiefs, principals and school committee members in the Mapulaneng district, arguing that "the 1980s Bantustan school laid down the architecture upon which post-1994 education was built".[116]

Phillips is among the few scholars that have considered the role of the Bantustan civil service as an agent of change in the social, political and economic landscapes of rural areas more broadly. Her recent PhD study seeks to show how the growing Lebowa bureaucracy brought with it new forms of class stratification, gender relations and patterns of elite formation across the Bantustan. She considers the drive to create a stable, home-owning middle class, while also examining the rise of a new "business-political class" from contracts and development initiatives generated by the Lebowa state, and perhaps especially through the Lebowa Development Corporation (LDC).[117] The transition era, Phillips shows, saw a reconfiguration of these elites through connections with the incoming ANC-run provincial government of the Limpopo Province. Yet she argues against oversimplified explanations which posit a linear causal sequence between Bantustan bureaucracies and their post-apartheid successors, the provincial governments, emphasising "considerable shifts, political struggles and structural changes in the last years of apartheid" – and, one might add, in the era of democratisation itself.[118]

The present study seeks to contribute to this burgeoning scholarship on the history of rural government by considering in particular the place of local government in both the Bantustan system and in white regional government. This has been given little sustained attention in the histories of South African rural areas over apartheid – a tendency that echoes a more general neglect of the local state in historiography.[119] Certainly, substantial and important work has been produced on the shifting role and form of the chieftaincy in the face of massive societal

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[115] Anne Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy: Student Politics & Democracy in South Africa* (Boydell & Brewer, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787444287.
[116] Laura Phillips, "Principals, Chiefs and School Committees: The Localisation of Rural School Administration in Lebowa, 1972-1990," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 2 (2015): p.300.
[117] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo: Differentiation," p.150.
[118] Phillips (2020:22) cites the examples of: Jonathan Hyslop, "Political Corruption: Before and After Apartheid," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 4 (2005): 773–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070500370555; Tom Lodge, "Political Corruption in South Africa," African Affairs 97, 387 (1998): 157–87.
[119] Just as local government is "often overlooked in analyses of state-crafting in post-apartheid South Africa", Noor Nieftagodien observes, "this tier of the state was similarly neglected under apartheid". Nieftagodien, "The Place of 'The Local'", p.53.

transformation.[120] And, beyond Hart's studies, some new work is emerging which seeks to situate rural municipalities in historical perspective. Marc Epprecht and Tim Gibbs have each offered far-reaching investigations into the history of Umsunduzi Local Municipality in present-day Kwa-Zulu Natal. While presiding over a secondary city, Pietermaritzburg, which, like Mogalakwena, absorbed large swathes of the former KwaZulu Bantustan.[121] Gibbs' emerging work is notable for its attempts to situate the contemporary municipal crisis in a historical perspective, specifically from the angle of municipal revenues and redistribution.[122] Others have highlighted key periods in the histories of some local authorities. Tshepo Moloi has provided key insights into the complex character of the Maokeng Town Council in the rural township outside of Kroonstad from 1976 to 1994.[123] Luvuyo Wotshela has offered an analysis of the overhaul of local government system in the Ciskei.[124] And Fani Ncapayi has considered struggles around municipal revenue in the course of the amalgamation of formerly segregated areas in the Sakhisizwe Local Municipality in present-day Eastern Cape.[125]

Yet a great deal more work is needed to understand the broader, multileveled institutional matrix that came to constitute the local government sphere in rural areas over the course of apartheid, the functions and relations that attended rural municipal structures, and their shifting place within transforming historical landscapes. The present study seeks to bring greater clarity to these questions. With respect to the last of these, the present study approaches institutions of local government in terms that echo the "state-in-society" approach:[126] because the state should not be considered an entity autonomous from society, but rather is constituted by institutions and agents which are embedded in society, it should be studied in relation to

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[120] In addition to the works already cited above, see: Barbara Oomen, Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power & Culture in the Post-Apartheid Era (New York: Palgrave, 2005); William Beinart, "Chieftaincy and the Concept of Articulation: South Africa circa 1900-50," in Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa (London & New York: Routledge, 1995); Ineke van Kessel and Barbara Oomen, "'One Chief, One Vote': The Revival of Traditional Authorities in Post-Apartheid South Africa," African Affairs 96, no. 385 (October 1, 1997): 561–85.

[121] Marc Epprecht, Welcome to Greater *Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City*, McGill-Queen's Studies in Urban Governance 5 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016); Timothy Gibbs, "Anatomy of a Municipal Meltdown: Revenues, Redistribution, and Political Clientelism in Post-Apartheid South Africa" (History Workshop, Wits University, Johannesburg, 2022).

[122] Gibbs, "Anatomy of a Municipal Meltdown."

[123] Tshepo Moloi, *Place of Thorns: Black Political Protest in Kroonstad since 1976* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2018).

[124] Luvuyo Wotshela, "Long-term struggles for land and related services: Egalitarian local authority in the Eastern Cape's Border-Kei region from the mid-1980s to 2010", *Transformation Special Issue: Revenues, Rule and Redistribution*, 110 (2022):21-41.

[125] Fani Ncapayi, "From Elliot to Sakhisizwe: municipal finance in a changing political economy", *Transformation Special Issue: Revenues, Rule and Redistribution*, 110 (2022):93-101.

[126] See: Joel S. Migdal, "The State-in-Society Approach: A New Definition of the State Transcending the Narrowly Constructed World of Rigor," in *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3–38.

the changing society around it. Tim Mitchell has formulated this even more sharply, arguing that "the distinction between state and society is not a boundary between two distinct objects, but a discursively constructed line. The line is historically created and drawn and re-drawn politically".[127] This line of study has been taken up strongly by anthropologists of the state, who seek to understand how this line is socially produced through performativity, symbolism and everyday activities of ordinary people – whether state employees or citizens.[128] Similarly, this study proceeded with the imperative to understand municipal agents within situated webs of sociality and meaning; they are participants of multiple social worlds beyond the walls of the municipality. Local, regional and national social networks thus come to refract in municipal politics in complex ways, surfacing a key aspect of the local state's relationality. This provided another major imperative towards undertaking life history interviews with municipal officials and those involved in connected realms of politics and governance.

Yet equally, this study emphasises the powerful structuring effects of the administrative habitus on the menu of choices available to agents of the state – the elements of "path dependency" that inhere in, for instance, in the municipal procedures and protocol, modes of statecraft, and entrenched modes of governing populations, many of whose origins can be traced to the white colonial state. Distinct threads of continuity will be shown in this thesis, for instance, in the models of local development espoused by the state across the Bantustan and post-apartheid eras. And, indeed, in the fraught yet complex political relationship that developed between the state and those it racially-inscribed and dispossessed. As Antina Von Schnitzler writes of life townships in urban settings, through its radical social engineering, the apartheid state produced "particular ways of being in the world":

> In the absence of political rights, township residents experienced the state primarily via administrative connections. The state was made manifest in the most spectacular fashion via its repressive policing powers and the racist necropolitics on which it relied throughout (Mbembe 2003). But in its various local guises, the state was also the provider and landlord of plots and houses, infrastructures and basic services, and collector of payments and rents. Thus, apartheid was not only an ideological and repressive project, it also helped bring into being much more mundane modalities of power and modes of existence that produced a set of habits, sensory environments, and forms of sociality.[129]

While the apartheid state's physical and administrative infrastructures (what Von Schnitzler calls "techno-politics") profoundly change the rhythms of everyday life, and aimed to induce

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[127] Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy and the State Effect," in *State/Culture: State-Formation After the Cultural Turn*, by George Steinmetz (Cornell University Press, 1999), p.14.
[128] Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006).
[129] Antina Von Schnitzler, *Democracy Infrastructure* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), p.14.

Black compliance and quell the threat of rebellion, these nonetheless became the determinants of local resistance against the state:

> If bus and rent boycotts, the nonpayment of service charges, the burning of passbooks, and small acts of sabotage were central in politicizing seemingly neutral, technical-administrative links to the state, they were also sites for the cultivation of political subjectivities, not merely or even primarily in the form of ideology, but also in the production of oppositional habits, affective attachments, and embodied stances of defiance against the state.[130]

Localized struggles for improvement in basic living conditions, including in Mahwelereng and the villages of Lebowa, would form the bedrock of the liberation struggle, and would prove central in delivering the ANC to power. What the mythology of "reconciliation" and the "Rainbow Nation" through which the emergent "liberal-secular" order was constituted could not wish away, however, was the intransigence of apartheid's "administrative-infrastructural terrain, the affective registers and embodied stances toward the state that lived on after the end of apartheid".[131] It is with these longer "administrative-infrastructural" legacies in mind that the final set of chapters of this dissertation give sustained empirical focus to the period of local government transition in Mogalakwena, one beset by the challenge of transforming the racially and ethnically segregated institutions of the apartheid-era, a period in which activists who had emerged out of the tumultuous liberation struggle would encounter both the possibilities and sharp limits of state power at the end of the Cold War.

Existing Work on the Localities of Mogalakwena

In its efforts to produce a relational history of Mogalakwena, this study has benefited from a range of studies which have been undertaken on aspects of specific places that fall within the present-day municipality.

Among the earliest work produced in the area was by Isabel Hofmeyr, who offered detailed oral and archival history of both the Vaaltyn chieftaincy and the earliest years of the white town of Potgietersrus.[132] Hofmeyr tracks the turbulent history of white conquest history in the area, Lutheran missionary involvement, the expanded control of the white state in the early 20th

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[130] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[131] *Ibid.*, p.17.
[132] Note that this thesis has drawn predominantly from Hofmeyr's PhD thesis, which contains extended empirical data as compared to the later published book of the same name. Isabel Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told", PhD Dissertation (University of the Witwatersrand, 1991); Isabel Hofmeyr, *"We Spend Our Years as a Tale That Is Told": Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom*, Social History of Africa (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993); See also: Isabel Hofmeyr, "'Nterata' / The Wire: Fences, Boundaries and Cultural Resistance in the Potgietersrust District," in *Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid* (History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990).

century, the elaboration of rural enclosure and fencing in the region, the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism in the region and the destructive results that the onset of apartheid brought to the chieftaincy. Additionally, Hofmeyr explores narrative accounts of the fabled "Siege of Makapansgat", events which took place in 1854 at the Gwaša cave some 12km north of the white settlement of Potgietersrus, in which the Ndebele under Kgoši Mugombane were effectively starved to death by the Boers, and she considers how these stories came to be interwoven in white segregationist mythology. Hofmeyr's work has proven invaluable in the present study, as have the photographs she collected which document dramatic spatial change in the Vaaltyn Chieftaincy.

Along with tracking the ill-fated Northern Ndebele secessionist movement, which included a number of chieftaincies of the Mogalakwena area, Sekibakiba Lekgoathi's work also offers detailed empirical accounts of the shifting politics around the Zebediela chieftaincy, which once fell under the Potgietersrus Magistracy. In his elaboration of popular protest movements which emerged around issues of education in Lebowa, Lekgoathi also shows direct connections between struggles in the village and those unfolding in Mahwelereng.[133] And his thesis revisits the foundational debates around conquest in the area, considering once again the Gwaša cave incident and the resultant historical narratives.

Dineo Skosana's Master's thesis, which considers a succession dispute between competing claimants to the Vaaltyn chieftaincy, provides fascinating insights into how the transition to democracy, the delimitation of post-apartheid municipal boundaries, and the introduction of open cast platinum mining on communal land has influenced chiefly politics.[134] The mine in question belonged to the Canadian multinational, Ivanplats, which began prospecting and developing the mine in 2007, and leaving significant social upheaval in its wake of dispossession. The Mogalakwena area is, however, also home to an Anglo-American Platinum mine which has been operating in the Mapela area since the early 1990s. Mnwana, Mtero and Hay examine the processes of dispossession experienced by communities of Mapela as the mine has expanded over the years, setting this against the longer history of dispossession through colonial and apartheid-era forced removals.[135] In assessing the influence of the mine in the concluding epilogue of this thesis, the present study has deferred to these previous studies, along with the recent PhD dissertation by Laura Phillips, which gives

[133] This is also covered in: Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy."
[134] Dineo Skosana, "Why Are Chiefs Recognised in South Africa's New Democracy? Issues of Legitimacy and Contestation in Local Politics: A Case Study of Chiefly and Local Government in Vaaltyn" (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 2012).
[135] Sonwabile Mnwana, Farai Mtero, and Michelle Hay, "Dispossessing the Dispossessed - Mining and Rural Struggles in Mokopane, Limpopo" (University of the Witwatersrand: Society, Work and Development Institute, 2016).

substantial attention to the mining deals carved out by the outgoing apartheid and Lebowa states during the early 1990s, including the Mogalakwena mine deal.[136]

Several sources detail aspects of the history of Mahwelereng Township. Tsoaledi Thobejane's autobiographical *Fight for an Egalitarian Society* (2009) proved an invaluable source for understanding the trajectory of local politics in Mahwelereng over the course of the 1980s, and leading up to the period of negotiations in the 1990s, a time marked by brutal state repression, uncertainty and unpredictability.[137] As a participant in local politics, having served as the Chair of the Mahwelereng Branch of the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo), Thobejane's book offers a sense of the everyday political life of the township, brutalising experiences of the white town, the politicising influence of Black Consciousness, and the rise of liberation politics.[138] Faizul Bhyat writes about the history of the Mokopane College of Education from 1940 to the 1990s. He provides a particularly useful focuses on the period of student protest in the mid-1980s at the College and across Mahwelereng more broadly. Bhyat had been a student himself at the College over this period.[139] The present study seeks to expand on these histories of struggle in Mahwelereng, offering a broader array of oral history interviews from activists who lived in the township. And it also seeks to understand the processes which resulted in the creation of Mahwelereng, its local government systems, and the kinds of infrastructure that structured it.

Faeeza Ballim writes about the contested creation of the Akasia "Indian Group Area" adjacent to the "white town" of Potgietersrus, and further details the halting efforts of the state to remove Indian traders from the town's central business district over the course of the apartheid period.[140] In another article, Ballim explores the history of the Potgietersrus Tobacco Corporation (PTK), which the present study has drawn on considerably and complemented with further oral history interviews and state archival sources in elaborating on the everyday lives of residents of Akasia, experiences of segregation and racism, relationships of both friendship and commerce that existed across different race groups in the region, and of the political awakening of those who joined the liberation struggle.

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[136] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo," p.278-290.
[137] Tsoaledi Daniel Thobejane, *The Fight for an Egalitarian South Africa / Azania: Towards Politics of Racial Harmony and Equity* (New York: Nova Publishers, 2009).
[138] This study also benefited from an interview I had with Thobejane on 28 May 2019 via Skype.
[139] Faizul Bhyat, "The Mokopane College through the Years, 1940's - 1990's" (Thesis, 1996), http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/20686.
[140] Faeeza Ballim, "The Un-Making of the Group Areas Act: Local Resistance and Commercial Power in the Small Town of Mokopane," *South African Historical Journal* 69, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 568–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2017.1377760.

Few studies have considered the political history of Potgietersrus itself. There have been studies on questions of racial desegregation in post-apartheid Mokopane,[141] but beyond Hofmeyr's brief descriptions of the establishment of the town in the 19th century and its elaboration over the first half of the twentieth century, little exists in terms of a social history of the town during the apartheid period. Numerous printed and oral versions of the history of the Afrikaner Nationalist mythology of the town were encountered in the course of research – narratives that Hofmeyr describes as part of the white settler colonialist canon which celebrates white conquest. It was reproduced, for instance, in a Centenary Album of the town published in 1954, which I analyse in Chapter 3 of this thesis.[142] Yet the present study has sought to develop a richer understanding of everyday life in Potgietersrus which departs from the triumphalist white narratives to consider how it was structured, which institutions and individuals held sway, how segregation manifested in the town, and what the rhythms of white politics in the town and region more broadly were.[143] In this, the study has also benefited from broader literature which investigates whiteness, white politics and ideologies of white supremacy in South African state and society during apartheid, especially the works of Dan O'Meara, Aletta Norval, Dunbar Moodie, Christi van der Westhuizen and Saul Dubow.[144] Indeed, spatial and administrative modes of racialisation and the phenomenology of race constitute major characteristics of the axes that are described – a key shaper of everyday life that has continued to permeate rural local governance through to the present day.

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[141] Sahba Shaker, "Race and Space in the Small Town Context of Mokopane" (Cape Town, University of Cape Town, n.d.); Sahba Shaker, "Understanding Informal Segregation : Racial and Spatial Identities among the Indian Minority of Mokopane" (Master Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2010), Available at: https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/18375. Sahba Besharati and Don Foster, "Understanding Informal Segregation: Racial and Spatial Identities among the Indian Minority of Mokopane," *UNESCO Diversities* 15, no. 2 (2013); Emma Monama, "Emerging Patterns of Social and Spatial (Dis) Integration in Suburban South Africa: The Case of Mokopane", Masters' Dissertation (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 2015).

[142] AJ Combrink, ACJ Mellet & JH Barnardo (eds.), 1954. *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* Potgietersrus: Potgietersrus Sentrale Eeufeeskomitee, Andy Goetsch Private Collection.

[143] Interesting empirical comparisons and theoretical reflections about the structuring of white society are offered by Neil Roos, "South African History and Subaltern Historiography: Ideas for a Radical History of White Folk," *International Review of Social History* 61, no. 1 (2016): 117–50; Christi van der Westhuizen, *White Power & the Rise and Fall of the National Party* (Zebra Press, 2007); Aletta J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London: Verso, 1996); Deborah Posel, "A Mania for Measurement: Statistics and Statecraft in Modern South Africa," in ed. Saul Dubow, *Science and Society in Southern Africa* (Manchester: New York : Manchester University Press, 2009).

[144] T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (University of California Press, 1975); Saul Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa,1919-36*, St. Antony's/Macmillan Series (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1989); Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years :The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994 /* (Randburg, South Africa :, 1996), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31822023637002; Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*; van der Westhuizen, *White Power & the Rise and Fall of the National Party*; Roos, "South African History and Subaltern Historiography"; Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

While existing work has shown aspects of select localities within the present-day municipal boundaries, this study aims to view these localities together as an interrelated totality. This departs from the tendency of South African local historians to delimit the geographical purview of their investigation to the racialised boundaries imposed by the colonial and apartheid states.[145] Nieftagodien comments that much of the work produced by radical local historians from the late 1980s remained focused on Black working class localities in the Witwatersrand – townships, inner city slumyards and locations. When it appeared increasingly evident that urban townships would be the center of the insurrectionary anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s, this only added to the concentration of studies on these areas. Yet, as the present study shows, far from operating as spaces autonomous from each other, the segregated spaces of Mogalakwena remained enmeshed in evolving webs of historical relations. Just as spatial, administrative and economic processes need to be analysed together, so too must the racially segregated spaces of rural areas be read as part of a grander totality greater than the sum of its parts.

Throughout the apartheid period, the white town, Akasia, Mahwelereng, and the rural villages had been cut across by thick webs of interconnection, and that together they formed something of a (divided) unity – and indeed, the white state had explicitly planned these different racial-ethnic geographical containers formed so closely to each other to function as a bloc, balancing the needs of the local economy against its commitments to racial segregation. The town/Group Area/township/village constellation formed a central motif of the

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[145] The claim that local historical studies have been segregated by place has surfaced time and again in post-apartheid scholarship. In 1995, Mabin and Parnell pointed to the tendency of South African urban historical studies to isolate their focus to particular racialised compartments of the apartheid city in ways that mirrored the racial classifications of the state (see Alan Mabin and Susan Parnell, "Rethinking Urban South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, 1 (1995)). Saunders noted similarly that works of urban history had largely neglected to show the city as "an integrated whole" (Saunders 1992). And Maylam argued that urban historiography had largely remained "history-in-the-city" rather than "history-of-the-city", and that what predominated were studies of "the black urban experience and urban policy as it affected black people" (Paul Maylam, "Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies.* 21, no. 1 (1995): p.20-21). He emphasised the need to look "at the total spatial organisation of cities and towns - not just black townships" (Maylam, p.37). In her 2008 survey of the work on urban history that had been produced since the end of apartheid, Bickford-Smith argued that there remained a relative paucity of urban historical work that tackled the "whole" as opposed to just segments of the city: "case studies of parts of cities, citizens or periods … still dominate South African urban history … [and] so many remain explicitly or implicitly ethnically and racially compartmentalized … Thus a range of urban South African ethnic and racial groups, and the spaces they inhabited (and that inhabited them), have continued to be the focus of urban histories since 1995". Moreover, Bickford-Smith argued the "urban histories of South Africans defined as African continue to dominate" (Bickford-Smith 2008, p.303-304). Alongside Gill Hart's studies on Ladysmith and Newcastle, Stephen Sparks' PhD thesis stands as a notable exception to this tendency. Both considered the creation of white towns and Black working class townships in relation to each other. See Stephen Sparks, "Apartheid Modern: South Africa's Oil from Coal Project and the history of a South African company town", PhD Dissertation (University of Michigan, 2012).

state's rural spatial planning and its overall "Bantustan strategy". The peculiar forms of local politics that emerged in the terrain of present-day Mogalakwena must, thus, be understood in relational terms, as constitutive of a larger totality of power relations that extended beyond racialised boundaries.

One set of relations that this thesis emphasises are the forms of economic parasitism that emerged between so-called "white towns" of the Northern Transvaal, including Potgietersrus, and the institutions and individuals who resided in the Bantustan. While revisionist scholarship emphasised the forms of urban-rural economic exploitation at the heart of the Bantustan project, attentive to how processes of dispossession and proletarianization in the countryside were furnishing demands of mining on the Witwatersrand, for instance, this study emphasises the need to consider the many forms of economic parasitism that unfolded across racialised divides in rural regions themselves. The towns of the Northern Transvaal were daily the sites of thick interaction between white employers, Black workers and customers, for instance. Rather than a self-sufficient white racial enclave, autonomous of the Bantustan, as apartheid discourse asserted, towns like Potgietersrus were directly dependent on the extractive economic relations that were entrenched with the settlements of Lebowa.

What prevailed in the rolling-out of the Bantustan strategy is what Swilling *et al* have called "functional inclusion": the contradictory dual impulses at the heart of the apartheid project to impose political "self-determination" while maintaining the underpinnings of white economic prosperity and power.[146] And, as this thesis shows, the economic dependence of the white towns consisted in more than just a reliance on Bantustan labour – although this was an integral element. Another major pillar of the local white economy was derived from the money spent by Black consumers in white-owned businesses in town. This was further entrenched through official policies of fiscal apartheid: so-called "white taxpayers money" was to be purposed towards the exclusive development of the "white towns", even as these revenues could not have been produced without the daily efforts of those who lived in the Bantustans. What development did take place in the Bantustans was, at least initially, largely paid for by Black residents themselves, a cruel form of fiscal abandonment justified in the racist language of "self help" – or, in the appalling formulation of the Bantu Affairs Department, a means to "teach the child to walk".[147] Given the white town's parasitic reliance on the lives and labours of those in the Bantustans, I argue that the white town should firmly be understood as an integral element of apartheid's Bantustan strategy.

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[146] Swilling *et al, Apartheid City in Transition,* p.175.
[147] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.6-7.

While drawing on some of the existing histories of areas of Mogalakwena, this thesis moreover explores geographical spaces within the municipality that have not been covered in scholarship at all, including areas which are considerably more remote (that is, distant from present-day Mokopane) than those presently covered in scholarship. These include some of the areas of the chieftaincies of Bakenberg, Nkidikitlane, Taueatsoala, and Mapela. If the Mogalakwena area exhibits some distinct differences from other areas of Lebowa, this sense of internal heterogeneity applies equally to within the vast areas that came to be included in the municipality– even just at the level of physical geography, which changes quite dramatically from one side of the municipal area to the other. While the present study seeks to capture some dynamics in these unstudied areas, it does so once again by emphasising the thinness of the existing historical record. The paper record gathered on some of these localities consists of just a few pages, for instance. While this study has sought to fill these in with oral history testimony, this project represents only a very humble beginning in this direction, and far more interviews should be conducted to capture the relational histories of these diverse areas.

Methods and Sources

The chapters of this thesis are compiled from a patchwork of different source material. Among the documentary sources, the study drew on various state archives; a wide variety of newspapers stored in both physical and electronic forms; oral history testimonies; personal papers; reports by academic researchers and consultancies; and a host of secondary literature. And this was accompanied by extended research trips to Mokopane and the surrounding areas between 2018 and 2022 to conduct interviews.

From these sources, a timeline of change was pieced together which began from the earliest date for which sources could be discovered, working forward to the present. In the thicket of details that emerged, the study remained especially attentive to questions of apartheid space and administration, and the forms of economic relationality these had produced, dimensions which continued to prove their salience over the course of the research. It was around these three interlocking dimensions that key determinations of municipal politics in Mogalakwena became discernible, axes that came to centrally inform the method of analysis pursued.

Oral History

Oral history, and the semi-structured life history interview in particular, proved one of the major pillars of this study. In total, 49 different individuals were interviewed over the course of the project. Interviews generally lasted between two and three hours. Respondents were given

the opportunity to initially take the lead in taking the narration in the direction they chose, offering free-form narratives which were then followed up with questions of clarification or inquiries into further details about emergent themes. It was through an immersive inductive process that a sense of the basic flow of everyday life both today and in the past came into view.

Through life history interviews with former and current municipal officials, former liberation activists, local and regional politicians, and ordinary residents, a basic understanding of Mogalakwena's many places and their many names was gleaned – how they were experienced and the memories which remained embroidered in these spaces for both individuals and collectives. Places, as Massey recognised, have material as well as phenomenological dimensions – humans make meaning of space, deploying both inherited and invented symbolic and literary resources, through recollections transmitted across generations. Hofmeyr has elsewhere written about how oral testimonies offer a means to understand the "imaginative organisation of space".[148] In the Mogalakwena area, what permeates many recollections are memories of profound racial segregation and the racialisation of space, for instance. These divided spaces are, at the same time, remembered as home, as places where they raised a family, or indeed as the place where revolutionary change happened. And these imaginative dimensions prove crucial in understanding the constitution of local politics, revealing a sense of how, as Hart puts it, "people's understandings of themselves as political subjects and actors have taken shape".[149]

Undertaking a history of a small town and its environs can appear misleadingly simple, given that it is nowhere near the size of a major city like Johannesburg. Nevertheless, it is still hostage to the problem of selection and sampling. There are, to be sure, innumerable stories that one could dig up about a place. One's research can also always benefit from interviewing just one more person; each brings into view a different layer of meaning and experience of a place. As Hart notes, "histories of place are never just a straightforward accounting of 'the facts'. Like the life histories with which they are closely intertwined, they are always multiple, contested, deeply politicized, produced in specific contexts, and made to serve the needs of the present".[150]

Cognisance of this proved crucial in both the interpretation of data and in recognising the limits of my own interpretations as someone who did not grow up in the region, who cannot speak

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[148] Isabel Hofmeyr, "Turning Region into Narrative: English Storytelling in the Waterberg," in *Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1989).
[149] Hart, "Denaturalizing Dispossession," p.992.
[150] Hart, *Disabling Globalization*, p.9.

the predominant languages (SiNdebele, Sepedi and Afrikaans) beyond rudimentary greetings and phrases, and who cannot access the vast array of subtexts and latent meanings which underwrite daily interactions. The exercise of discerning the truth in an environment saturated by rumour and gossip is, of course, not even straightforward for residents of Mogalakwena themselves. One participant warned me about taking what I heard at face value in a town where everyone knows everyone else: "Every story in Potties[151] has a long tail/tale, you have no idea where it began".[152]

The unstable political context in Mogalakwena played a shaping role in the course that the research took and the range of participants available to be interviewed. The ANC's internecine battle for control over Mogalakwena had continued unabated since our first research visit, and saturated municipal politics and the daily operations of the administration.[153] Nevertheless, when I first arrived back at Mogalakwena in 2019, I managed to secure permission to conduct research there largely as a result of the relationships established over the course of the previous PARI research. I had by this point become a fairly familiar face at the municipality, and my interest in historical research became widely known. Hendrik Ngoepe, Mogalakwena's long-standing Chief Operations Officer, with whom I developed significant rapport, played a central role in smoothing my path of access, and this project is profoundly indebted to his interventions. Over the month of May, I was able to enter the municipality freely and knock on the doors of administrators, conducting interviews long-standing administrators.

My access to the municipality would come to a resounding halt, however, when in the last days of July in 2019, Ralph Kanyane and Vaaltyn Kekana, two ANC councillors, were shot dead as they sat in a parked vehicle on Pretorius Street in Mokopane. Kekana was the chairperson of the municipal oversight body which monitors spending, the Municipal Public Accounts Committee, and according to a spokesperson for the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), Kekana was about to table a report to the municipal council, regarding irregular

[151] Nickname for Potgietersrus, still largely used by people across races today.
[152] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 15 March 2020.
[153] Our research showed, for instance, that the ANC's contentious 52nd National Conference held in Polokwane in 2007, at which Jacob Zuma unseated Thabo Mbeki to become party president, set off a series of explosive, multiplying apparently uncontainable fractures in the Limpopo ANC, as different groupings of the ANC at various levels battled against each other for control over command posts both in the party and in government. In particular, a provincial power bloc that gathered around the Premier, Cassel Mathale, and the ANCYL President, Julius Malema, came to undertake purges of their rivals in provincial and regional ANC structures, and set out to frustrate the path to re-election for President Jacob Zuma in the 2012 Mangaung Conference. The Mogalakwena saga – and, in particular, the appointment of the municipal manager and the campaign to unseat him that followed - was directly connected to these new political fractures.

expenditure and maladministration in the Mogalakwena municipality.[154] Kekana was, I would later learn, also a local ANC struggle stalwart, having served as the chairperson of the Vaaltyn Youth Congress in the mid-1980s and as an ANC branch chair in the early 1990s. His killing rocked this generation of older councillors – as they had increasingly been over the past decade as many of their comrades were murdered as the intra-organisational conflict within the ANC spun out of control.

The murders once again prompted a community shutdown of the town, and accusations that the same clique of local politicians who had orchestrated the November 2014 takeover were responsible – and were supported by key politicians at the provincial level, who allegedly were using the municipality as a "milk cow".[155] Once again, the political centre appeared bereft of solutions. Members of the ANC's National Executive Committee appeared to have little power to calm the situation – when, that is, they belatedly arrived to confront the situation as it became ever more untenable. [156] These events have had a profoundly chilling effect on the local political scene, and presented new obstacles to conducting research in Mogalakwena. In the first instance, it foreclosed the possibility of conducting further interviews and archival research at the institution itself. Furthermore, potential respondents who were generally already suspicious of outsiders coming to do interviews in the wake of the 2014/2015 meltdowns were now exceptionally wary of involving themselves in research.

In the wake of these events, I opted to concentrate on interviewing a range of other actors beyond the immediate ambit of the unfolding politics at the municipality. This took me in several directions. First, I came to meet activists from the UDF and other Black political formations who had played a prominent role in local and regional activism and, in some cases, municipal politics of earlier eras. Second, I made contact with former white officials and politicians who had worked at the municipality during the apartheid era and/or the democratic transition that followed. Third, I sought out officials who had been involved in structures of the provincial department of local government and the district municipalities during the 1990s, overseeing the process of local government transition across the region, including in the

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[154] *Pretoria News,* "Four men accused of murdering ANC ward councillor Vaaltyn Kekana, Ralph Kanyane denied bail", 18 October 2022. Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/news/four-men-accused-of-murdering-anc-ward-councillor-vaaltyn-kekana-ralph-kanyane-denied-bail-7e51efef-9ed3-47dc-95dd-cbd4d15afbc2

[155] *The Citizen,* 'Duarte to visit Limpopo over Political Killings', 16 August 2019, Available at: https://www.citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/politics/duarte-to-visit-limpopo-over-political-killings-infighting/

[156] For instance, a meeting organised by the ANC's then Deputy Secretary General, Jessie Duarte, in the wake of the 2019 assassinations was the scene of chaotic clashes between supporters of the (most recently appointed) mayor and those calling for her removal. *The Citizen,* 'Duarte to visit Limpopo', 16 August 2019.

Mogalakwena area. And fourth, I set out to meet ordinary residents of each of the formerly segregated areas and record their memories of the past.

It should be noted that I did not seek to make any contact with either traditional leaders or those who staff the traditional council offices – a distinct limitation of the present study. This was due to a number of factors, including time and resource constraints, along with the difficulties of negotiating access with these institutions. This thesis nevertheless tackles the social, administrative and economic dynamics that unfolded over the course of the apartheid era in villages under communal tenure, drawing on archival evidence from state institutions, life history interviews with activists who grew up and became politicised in these spaces, and the large body of existing sources which interrogate dynamics of particular chieftaincies in the Mogalakwena area and in Lebowa more broadly.

Most of the interviews conducted were, moreover, saturated with the names of other people who had been involved in particular initiatives, who had occupied an official position at a particular time, who had spearheaded forms of protest or had had some involvement in the liberation struggle, for instance. This sense of thick interpersonal connection of regional and national dimensions is a crucial component of the political history of Lebowa and the Northern Transvaal, as it remains the Limpopo province today. Only a fraction of these political networks were interviewed, and many activists from the area may be disappointed by the absence of key individuals in the narrative presented in this thesis.

In making these connections, against the backdrop of the ongoing crisis at the municipality, could prove challenging. Often being vouched for by well-known local politicians was insufficient to win the trust of prospective respondents. In introducing myself in person, I was still required to offer repeated reassurances – a pattern that repeated across most of those I interviewed. It would often take a great deal of work to win over prospective participants' trust, to assure them that I was not conducting an investigation or expose of corruption at the municipality, that I was interested in much longer histories. In this, the participant information and consent forms proved helpful in offering institutional legitimacy to my endeavour. And sending back transcripts of the interviews afterwards also helped cement this sense of trust. There were, however, a great many in the ANC who resisted involvement in the project, perhaps given the high-degree of hostility that coursed across local politics. And some of key white conservative former politicians had declined to participate.

Nevertheless, on the whole, once most potential respondents understood my intentions and the kinds of questions the study was pursuing, they participated eagerly in the project. This was especially helped by the adoption of the open-ended life history approach, which encouraged participants to narrate their own stories – about childhood, schooling, the

challenges they faced as young adults, what their memories of particular places were, what everyday life was like, their hopes, fears and aspirations, their political awakening. The historical nature of the project appealed to many of these participants. Many former activists, for instance, welcomed the opportunity in a project that recorded what they considered a neglected history. Indeed, as has been noted: "In post-apartheid South Africa, the rich histories of struggle against colonialism and apartheid came to be largely monopolised by the ruling party … [and] the story of the ANC was told in a way that foregrounded the role of the elite within the organisation."[157] Yet commenting on the process of collecting oral testimony from activists in various localities in Gauteng, Nieftagodien describes how the phrase "We have our own Mandelas" emerged as a common refrain.[158] Similar sentiments were expressed by many of the activists encountered in this research. Many wanted recognition, hoping that their stories of daring and revolutionary romance would be captured, preserved, and taken onwards. Many were grateful for the opportunity to have their stories recorded and transcribed for posterity and transmission.

In the deeply divided context of Mogalakwena, I also recognised that I would need to establish independent contact with other political actors beyond my initial key respondents, wary of being sent to interview only political allies within groupings of the ANC. To be sure, this was explicitly encouraged by all of those I interviewed, who agreed that I needed seek out actors across the political and factional spectrum – even if they had at different times been their adversaries. This speaks to a tendency in small town political arenas which is perhaps more common than the kind of acrimonious opposition that make news headlines would suggest: a tolerance for inhabiting the same spaces despite differing opinions.

In addition to interviewing activists who had operated in Mahwelereng, Akasia and the villages close to Potgietersrus, several former members of the UDF who had operated in the far more remote villages of Bakenberg, Mapela and Matlala were interviewed. This was separately facilitated by Hendrik Ngoepe, Peter Seko and Godfrey Molekwa, each of whom drove me to these localities, many of which could not have been reached without a bakkie or 4x4.

Engagements with current and former ANC members revealed a sense of the multiple overlapping networks which condensed around party structures. But they also revealed some of the channels of communication and information-sharing that bring these networks together. WhatsApp groups, for instance, have proved crucial for sustaining political debate and action

[157] Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, "When you ill-treat the African people, I see you", September 2019, Available at: https://www.thetricontinental.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/190902_Dossier-20_EN_Web_Final.pdf
[158] Nieftagodien, "The Place of 'The Local'", p.54.

between comrades that have often come to be scattered across different geographies. I was fortunate to have benefited from these posts which were regularly forwarded to me by participants and which contained significant historical data. This discourse among the sprawling networks of former activists also revealed a key sense of how historical memory continues to be protected and passed on in Limpopo, and reinforced once again just how pivotal politics in this province were in the liberation struggle – a role that is often not acknowledged in mainstream ANC history.[159]

This study also drew in interviews with political activists outside of ANC circles – and particularly those affiliated with the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo). I was fortunate to attend the party's 2019 election manifesto launch, where I came to meet key former activists who had been active in Mahwelereng and beyond in the 1980s.

My research was significantly disrupted interrupted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which effectively halted fieldwork for two years. Leaving Mokopane just as Cyril Ramaphosa announced lockdown measures on 24 March 2020, I was only able to return to wrap up the last round of interviews in March 2022.

Archival Sources

Documents of various kinds gathered from several different repositories form the second empirical pillar of this study, with several chapters of this thesis relying extensively on archival sources. When read in combination with oral history testimony, these sources help bring to life the world of rural apartheid, the structures of everyday life in what became known as the Northern Transvaal and Lebowa Bantustan, and the contested ways in which notions of race, class, gender, tradition, modernity, development and governance were deployed, navigated, and redefined.

State Archives

Various state archives were consulted over the course of the research. Given the panoptical aspirations of the apartheid state, there are a great many maps and plans to be found on particular localities, even of settlements in remote areas. The apartheid government, even more so than its colonial predecessor, was very much a paper-driven enterprise obsessed

[159] The neglect of Limpopo activist history in the annals of the ANC was recently reiterated by Barbara Masekela at the launch of a recent biography of John Nkadimeng. She noted that the tendency to denigrate activists from the north as backwards and unsophisticated was pervasive amongst activists in the Witwatersrand during the liberation struggle, and this neglect has been echoed in contemporary struggle historiography. Peter Delius and Daniel Sher, *Mokgomana: The Life of John Nkadimeng* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023).

with planning, a machinery that operated on the continual exchange of documents and which constituted a sprawling archival system that sought to process, quantify, catalogue and file localities across the country within a centralised database. This documentary mode powerfully underpinned its approach to statecraft. Documents remain a major medium of interaction between organs of the state in the post-apartheid era, and as I found in the contemporary politics of Mogalakwena, paperwork remains a key instrument of power.[160] Records of the post-apartheid state are, however, considerably harder to access than those of the decades before democracy.

In May 2019, I had successfully negotiated with the mayor, manager of corporate support services and the chief operations officer of Mogalakwena to be allowed to return to the municipal archive. Yet with the assassinations that took place in August, I was advised to avoid returning to the municipality, which was once again descending into a site of pitched conflict between competing factions of the ANC. This represented a setback in my hopes of accessing documents from the municipality's past, yet I was, nonetheless, able to find a great many documents in collections held by the National Archives in Tshwane.

Archival collections were initially searched primarily using spatial designations as key words: most broadly, "Lebowa", "Northern Transvaal"; more specifically, "Potgietersrus", "Mahwelereng", and the names of the various chieftaincies, "Bakenberg", "Mapela", "Vaaltyn", and so on. As the study went on, the names of individual activists, chiefs or organisations were also employed as search terms. Given that many collections offered limited returns on the specific localities that make up the present-day Mogalakwena, I often opened up the search to include other localities in the broader region – the townships of Seshego, Mankweng and Lebowakgomo provided helpful comparative reference points, as did villages in other parts of Lebowa, speaking to the profound interconnectedness that has long existed between different places across the region.

Accessing the Lebowa state archive has long proved difficult for researchers.[161] When I first visited the archive in 2018, the cataloguing process was nearing its end and several finding aids had been developed. Yet retrieving the documents listed in these guides has proved

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[160] Joel Pearson. "Document Wars and the Local Archives: The Case of Mogalakwena Local Municipality." *South African Historical Journal* 71, no. 2 (April 3, 2019): 242–62; Joel Pearson, "Paperwork and Power-Plays: Contestation and Performance at a Limpopo Municipality." *Transformation* 103 (2020): 59–82.

[161] Phillips describes how, when she first began research on Lebowa, records were housed in the basement of the old government complex in Lebowakgomo. This material was uncatalogued, and many remained in unorganised piles. In 2017, however, these documents were moved to the Limpopo Provincial Archives (along with material from the former Venda and Gazankulu Bantustans) and a contract was awarded for the creation of a filing system Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo" p.24.

decidedly patchy. Many of the call numbers listed in the guide brought forth documents that did not match the descriptions. While some of these mismatched documents provided interesting glimpses into aspects of the Lebowa state that I had not even considered requesting – monthly x-ray statistics of the Mokopane Hospital, water sample analyses from boreholes in Mahwelereng – they offered little detail that was directly useful for this study. Accessing the correct documents in future may yet provide important supplementary sources. And, once again, the Mogalakwena Local Municipality archive may also prove a valuable resource in future under a different political climate.

Newspapers

While state archives provided key seams of documents, they gave only rare glimpses into the everyday experiences of the Lebowa Bantustan and the white towns of the Northern Transvaal. Newspaper collections proved far richer sources in this respect and have been used extensively in the pages that follow. National newspapers, drawn largely from online repositories,[162] offered significant coverage of high-level political events in the regions. Regional newspapers, by contrast, provided exceptional detail into the quotidian aspects of life in towns and villages of the region, as well as key eyewitness accounts of pivotal moments in the life of communities of the region.



Figure 7: Typical front pages of the Noord-Transvaler and Northern Review

[162] Of these, SA Media Online and Sabinet Discover provided the greatest resources.

The *Northern Review* and *Noord Transvaler* were two weekly papers delivered to the white communities of the Northern Transvaal.[163] These are contained in large bound volumes in a small storage room at the Polokwane City Library, spanning the period 1950 to 2001.[164] Over several lengthy visits with my PhD colleague, Sarah Bruchhausen, we photographed virtually every page of these newspapers spanning from the 1970s to the early 2000s.[165]

While these weekly newspapers offer detailed renderings of daily life in the white towns, the *Lebowa Times* offers a far fuller picture of the everyday life and political dynamics of communities of Bantustan. After a great deal of searching, Sarah and I tracked down copies of the *Lebowa Times* in the Johannesburg City Library,[166] and once again photographed virtually every page from the years 1979 to the very last edition in 1995.

One might be justifiably wary of approaching a newspaper which took its name from the Bantustan as a credible source. And certainly, much of the content of the paper could be said to normalise and legitimate the Bantustan project. It features frequent direct contributions from Bantustan leaders – the Chief Ministers and his cabinet – advancing Christmas and Easter greetings to "Lebowans", singing the praises of development projects, encouraging residents to pay tax, and so on. Yet the *Lebowa Times* was much more than simply a mouthpiece of the Bantustan elite (there was, in fact, another official state publication called *Tswelopele*). The newspaper in fact hired a great many Black Consciousness journalists – particularly those affiliated to Azapo.[167] One regional Azapo leader, Khangale Makhado, told Sarah Bruchhausen that the *Lebowa Times* "gave us serious support".[168] It is certainly true that Azapo used the platform frequently to advertise various meetings. And there was little

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[163] There are some differences in scope and coverage of the two newspapers. While the *Northern Review* aimed to provide coverage of the whole region, its most regular content remained overwhelmingly focused on the areas of the regional capital Pietersburg and the nearby Lebowa township of Seshego. Other regional white towns like Potgietersrus received far less coverage. The *Noord Transvaler* offered far greater reportage on events in Potgietersrus, Naboomspruit, Warmbad, Nylstroom. I also picked up some differences in coverage of political parties between the two, with the *Noord Transvaler* offering somewhat more favourable coverage and more interviews with Conservative Party politicians, while the *Review* leaned somewhat closer to the regional National Party (although much of this was subtle given the overwhelming conservatism of the region generally). These editorial differences may be attributable to the differences in ownership – the competition between Naspers (*Review*) and Perskor (*Noord Transvaler*) has been detailed by O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years.*

[164] These included the *Zoutpansberg Review* between 1950 and 1956, the *Northern Review* from 1970 until 2001, *Noord-Transvaler* from 1967 to 1995.

[165] An archive that we will willingly share with any interested researcher.

[166] While the *Lebowa Times* was not included in the catalogue of the library newspaper collection, we were fortunate that a security guard overheard our requests and insisted that he had seen the paper. He escorted us down three flights of steps in the library's basement, and took us to a shelf laden with piles of the paper wrapped inconspicuously in thick brown material.

[167] In fact, I learned of the existence of the *Lebowa Times* through the tragic story of one of its most talented journalists, Makompo Kutumela, the paper's Mahwelereng correspondent and a member of Azapo.

[168] Interview with Khangale Makhado.

recollection of the role of the *Lebowa Times* amongst local ANC activists, who instead noted their preference for the national publications of the ANC such as *Umrabulo* or *New Nation*. While coverage of the *Lebowa Times* carries the risk of overstating Azapo's role in the period, it does contain significant coverage of ANC/UDF activities nonetheless, including the launch of Youth Congresses, the speeches of some Azaso activists, the political trials of ANC members, and the funerals of prominent activists. While the Bantustan townships perhaps attract the most attention – Seshego and Lebowakgomo in particular – we are also offered rare glimpses into village life – struggles over water, dynamics around farming and the chieftaincy.

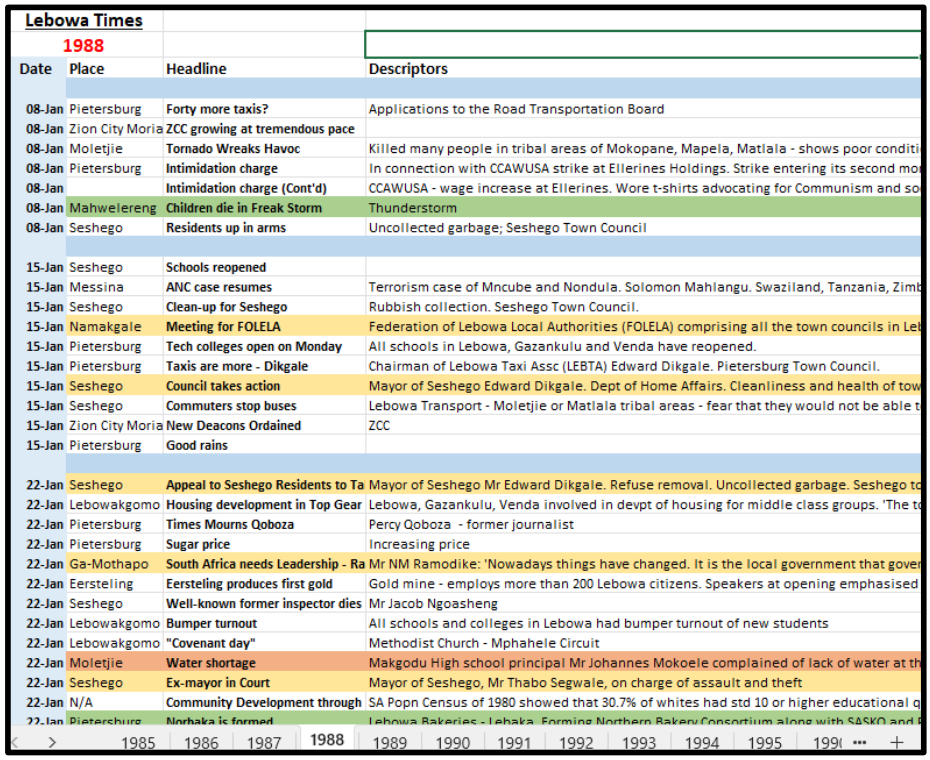


Figure 8: A typical page from the Lebowa Times (January 1985)

These newspapers offer a rich sense of the organisational and associational life that spanned across towns and villages of the region – political parties, church networks, business groupings, popular organisations, civil servant networks, sports clubs, teachers' unions, and so on. We see how different localities were connected through people, networks and campaigns. The *Review* and *Noord Transvaler* offer a means to track the shifting landscape of regional white politics. And the *Lebowa Times* in particular gives a sense of the dynamics

around campaigns of liberation movements and popular initiatives. Virtually every edition featured adverts for meetings arranged by workers unions, political parties and other forms of popular organisation. Beyond major political associations and events, the newspapers also give us a sense of the humdrum of everyday life – the celebrations and daily hardships; the celebrities and sportsmen; the gossip, fashion and the music. These offer a means to understand how these spaces were held in the minds of those who lived there – once again, how space was constructed imaginatively, and how change over time was conceived.

In order to process the thousands of photographed newspaper pages into a workable resource, files were bound into digital PDFs separated by month (eg. August 1989), and text-recognition software was employed on these files for purposes of key-word searchability. Catalogues were then created on Excel which included the date, headline and geographical location of each article by issue, followed by descriptions of its content (see image below). While articles in the *Lebowa Times* were written entirely in English, the use of the Afrikaans newspaper sources required further painstaking work of translation. In this way, by slowly moving through articles in chronological order, the study gained a far more granular sense of life and the unfolding of historical processes within an evolving context whose many shades and dimensions were richly documented. This provided a broader quotidian backdrop against which to present the material which dealt specifically with the areas under study.



Lebowa Times

1988

Date	Place	Headline	Descriptors
08-Jan	Pietersburg	Forty more taxis?	Applications to the Road Transportation Board
08-Jan	Zion City Moria	ZCC growing at tremendous pace	
08-Jan	Moletjie	Tornado Wreaks Havoc	Killed many people in tribal areas of Mokopane, Mapela, Matlala - shows poor conditi
08-Jan	Pietersburg	Intimidation charge	In connection with CCAWUSA strike at Ellerines Holdings. Strike entering its second mo
08-Jan		Intimidation charge (Cont'd)	CCAWUSA - wage increase at Ellerines. Wore t-shirts advocating for Communism and so
08-Jan	Mahwelereng	Children die in Freak Storm	Thunderstorm
08-Jan	Seshego	Residents up in arms	Uncollected garbage; Seshego Town Council
15-Jan	Seshego	Schools reopened	
15-Jan	Messina	ANC case resumes	Terrorism case of Mncube and Nondula. Solomon Mahlangu. Swaziland, Tanzania, Zimb
15-Jan	Seshego	Clean-up for Seshego	Rubbish collection. Seshego Town Council.
15-Jan	Namakgale	Meeting for FOLELA	Federation of Lebowa Local Authorities (FOLELA) comprising all the town councils in Leb
15-Jan	Pietersburg	Tech colleges open on Monday	All schools in Lebowa, Gazankulu and Venda have reopened.
15-Jan	Pietersburg	Taxis are more - Dikgale	Chairman of Lebowa Taxi Assc (LEBTA) Edward Dikgale. Pietersburg Town Council.
15-Jan	Seshego	Council takes action	Mayor of Seshego Edward Dikgale. Dept of Home Affairs. Cleanliness and health of tow
15-Jan	Seshego	Commuters stop buses	Lebowa Transport - Moletjie or Matlala tribal areas - fear that they would not be able t
15-Jan	Zion City Moria	New Deacons Ordained	ZCC
15-Jan	Pietersburg	Good rains	
22-Jan	Seshego	Appeal to Seshego Residents to Ta	Mayor of Seshego Mr Edward Dikgale. Refuse removal. Uncollected garbage. Seshego to
22-Jan	Lebowakgomo	Housing development in Top Gear	Lebowa, Gazankulu, Venda involved in devpt of housing for middle class groups. 'The to
22-Jan	Pietersburg	Times Mourns Qoboza	Percy Qoboza - former journalist
22-Jan	Pietersburg	Sugar price	Increasing price
22-Jan	Ga-Mothapo	South Africa needs Leadership - Ra	Mr NM Ramodike: 'Nowadays things have changed. It is the local government that gover
22-Jan	Eersteling	Eersteling produces first gold	Gold mine - employs more than 200 Lebowa citizens. Speakers at opening emphasised
22-Jan	Seshego	Well-known former inspector dies	Mr Jacob Ngoasheng
22-Jan	Lebowakgomo	Bumper turnout	All schools and colleges in Lebowa had bumper turnout of new students
22-Jan	Lebowakgomo	"Covenant day"	Methodist Church - Mphahele Circuit
22-Jan	Moletjie	Water shortage	Makgodu High school principal Mr Johannes Mokoele complained of lack of water at th
22-Jan	Seshego	Ex-mayor in Court	Mayor of Seshego, Mr Thabo Segwale, on charge of assault and theft
22-Jan	N/A	Community Development through	SA Popn Census of 1980 showed that 30.7% of whites had std 10 or higher educational q
22-Jan	Pietersburg	Norhaka is formed	Lebowa Bakeries - Lebaka. Forming Northern Bakery Consortium along with SASKO and

1985 1986 1987 **1988** 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 199

Figure 9: Screenshot of the Lebowa Times Newspaper Catalogue compiled over the course of research

Nevertheless, while offering valuable glimpses into a wide array of localities in Lebowa and the Northern Transvaal, these newspapers were often more limited in their coverage of Potgietersrus, Mahwelereng and the villages that came to be incorporated into the Mogalakwena Municipality. Instead, reportage tended to be concentrated on the region's major settlements – Pietersburg, the nearby Seshego Township, and the then capital of Lebowa, Lebowakgomo. As such, there were many story fragments which mentioned territories and personalities from the areas of present-day Mogalakwena, and yet provided too little information to be used as historical sources. At times, the study cites events and dynamics in other localities of Lebowa or the Northern Transvaal to infer broader historical tendencies playing out in the region within which the areas of present-day Mogalakwena are situated.

Visual Materials

Throughout this thesis, extensive use is made of images of various forms, which are embedded throughout the text – archival documents, newspaper articles and images, official maps, and photographs taken by the author of areas of contemporary Mogalakwena. These are offered both to aid interpretation and visualisation of this particular spatial, social and political landscape in South Africa's rural north over the course of almost two centuries of profound transformation. Numerous maps have been included, which present the shifting boundaries and, from its aerial perspective, exemplified the conceptions of top-down spatial engineering that fuelled the operations of the apartheid state, and which continue to permeate post-apartheid governance. Yet the photographs presented aim to offer a different angle, one which allows for glimpses of everyday life in these areas, the profoundly interpersonal nature of politics, and the shattering events that have come to mark the history of Mogalakwena.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into three parts, according to the conjunctural chronologies identified above. Before this, however, a preliminary historical chapter is presented which offers a brief history of the area between the period of conquest until the rise of apartheid in the late 1940s. Many of the cornerstones of rural apartheid had, indeed, already been laid well before the rise of the NP to power. The variable success of interventions around rural space, administration and economic relationality, and the forms of outright crisis they induced, directly fed into the rise of the apartheid state and shaped the approach it took to rural local governance – the subject of the chapters that then follow.

Part I is comprised of three chapters, which consider the contested formation of apartheid's different rural spatial-administrative typologies (rural villages, township, white town and "Indian Group Area") between the early 1950s and the early 1970s.

Part II is constituted by two chapters which cover the volatile period of change from the late 1970s through to the end of the 1980s. The rise of movements of Black liberation and white reactionary politics are examined.

Part III is made up of three chapters which examine the period of transition between 1990 and 2000, considering the tumultuous political landscape in which institutions of local government were reformed and democratized.

Each part is introduced through a series of framing remarks which highlight key processes around space, administration and economy in each era. These section breaks aim to describe and delineate the characteristics of changing historical conjunctures within which rural local governance took shape over the course of the apartheid and early democratic period.

In the concluding chapter, I return to consider how the three historical axes I describe may be usefully deployed to understand the present-day crises afflicting the local state, demonstrating how the spatial, administrative, and economic extractivist processes detailed in the preceding chapters are crucial to understanding key dynamics in Mogalakwena today. This discussion makes clear how these tension-ridden processes are deeply interconnected, and seeks to show how, through analysing them together, we might reach beyond the confines of much of the existing literature on the crisis of local governance.

Chapter 1: Conquest, Segregation and the Eve of Apartheid in Mokopane

Introduction

In this opening chapter, I offer an historical account which sets the stage for the arrival of apartheid policies of spatial, administrative and developmental reengineering in the area. This draws us back to the violent history of white settlement in the area, the wars of conquest which unfolded in the 19th century, the dispossession and attempts at enclosure that followed, and the experiments in indirect rule that were undertaken. Running through this narrative is the rise of a virulent Afrikaner Nationalism, which by the late 1940s had seized white communities of the region, including in Potgietersrus, who came to fervently support the NP. This chapter predominantly draws on secondary literature – especially the works of Isabel Hofmeyr and Sekiba Lekgoathi. Where possible, however, I cite other archival and interview sources which highlight aspects of the evolution of state intervention in the region, its spatial and administrative schemes for the countryside, and how these segregationist schemes intersected with and were productive of new forms of local politics in the areas of present-day Mogalakwena just before the rise of apartheid.

The Ndebele and the Voortrekkers

The region that today falls under the Mogalakwena Local Municipality had between the 16th and 17th century come to be inhabited by groupings that would be identified by 20th century state ethnologists as “Northern Ndebele”, although, as Lekgoathi indicates, this appellation obscured various important subdivisions:

> The Northern Transvaal Ndebele … comprise firstly the Kekana Ndebele of Moletlane, which are subdivided into three groups, the Zebediela, the Mokopane and the Majaneng. The second subdivision … is the Langa, subdivided into the Bakenberg and Mapela sections. Lastly, the Ledwaba Ndebele of Maune is composed of four subsections, the Mašašane, Maraba (of Kalkspruit), the group of Eland Maraba, and the Ngidigidlana Maraba. These are the official genealogies that reflect the views of the ruling elites which tend to gloss over the complex internal ethnic makeup of the different chiefdoms.[169]

[169] Lekgoathi, “Ethnicity and Identity”, p.8.

Lekgoathi observes that "individuals identified as Ndebele saw themselves primarily as subjects of particular chiefdoms rather than members of particular ethnicities or tribes".[170] Nevertheless, Lekgoathi argues, a shared sense of Ndebele identity across the different chieftaincies and communities of the Northern Transvaal was not simply invented by the colonial and later apartheid state.[171] Rather, a sense of common identity had been forged "by the middle of the nineteenth century … [in part] based on a common language, similar origins, marriage alliances and clan names". However, this identity was "both weak and fluid", and "political and ethnic allegiances" shifted with some regularity, against the backdrop of "recurring social and political upheavals".[172] Lekgoathi illustrates how "being ethnically Ndebele did not necessarily provide immunity from attacks by people of the same ethnicity who happened to be subjected to the authority of another chief".[173] Another indication of the limits of Ndebele ethnicity as a mobilising identity could be seen in the failure of the various chiefdoms of the region to "create a strong bond of unity in the face of the Boer settlers' advances".[174]

From the 1840s, small parties of Voortrekkers began settling in the area, enticed to settle by the "abundance of game, especially that with ivory, in the northern hinterland".[175] By 1852, the Boers had established a settlement under the name "Vredenburg" in the valley between the rolling hills of the Waterberg to the west and the Strydpoortberg to the east. The area was claimed as part of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR), the independent Boer state which was only just in formation in the middle of the 19th century.[176] "In addition to practising slavery," Lekgoathi notes, "the new invaders ignored African claims or rights to land… Consequently, conflicts soon arose".[177]

While not all Ndebele were singularly antagonistic towards the Boers – Lekgoathi reports that "Zebediela's Ndebele … collaborated with the Boers as they had a common enemy in the Pedi chiefdom of Sekwati"[178] – the relationship of most Ndebele communities to the Boers was hostile. The reconstitution of slavery and the ruthless activities of raiders like Hermanus

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[170] *Ibid.*, p.68.
[171] "It was not simply the Europeans who named them but … they named themselves and filled that name with some meaning" *Ibid.*, p.46
[172] *Ibid.,* p.45.
[173] *Ibid.,* p.63.
[174] *Ibid.,* p.45.
[175] *Ibid.*, p.307.
[176] *Mogalakwena Local Municipality* (Hereafter 'MLM'), 'How the Town got its Name', No Date, Arend Dieperink Museum Pamphlet.
[177] Lekgoathi, "Ethnicity & Identity" p.308. Delius writes that "The Boer communities in the Transvaal lacked the means to integrate or control adult captives and, in common with some other societies in Africa which practised domestic forms of slavery, sought young children". Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us,* p.140.
[178] Lekgoathi, 2006, "Ethnicity & Identity", p.65.

Potgieter incited an offensive by two allied Ndebele magoši, Mokopane of the Kekana and Mankopane of the Langa, murdering twenty eight Boers in three separate incidents in 1854 that would set off one of the most infamous episodes of frontier history which would come to be powerfully encoded in both anti-colonial narratives and Afrikaner Nationalist mythology of the 20th century.[179] In the wake of the Ndebele offensive, a Commando was despatched from Pretoria to deal with Kgoši Mokopane and his followers, who had taken refuge in the Gwaša caves some 13kms north of the town – part of a cavernous complex that Afrikaners would come to call "Makapansgat".[180] The Boers laid siege to the caves over the course of several months, and between 1,000 and 3,000 people were estimated to have perished from thirst or disease. According to white accounts, amidst the ongoing siege, Piet Potgieter, a young Boer soldier, was shot and killed as he peered into the cave's rocky opening.[181] And, as the story goes, a young Paul Kruger would climb down into the cave and retrieve Potgieter's body. Potgieter's name would live on in the white settlement, which was renamed Potgietersrust.[182]

The end of the siege did not signal the end of conflict in the area. The Ndebele had not been entirely subdued by Boer forces, and instead reconstituted to launch continuous assaults on the Boer settlement.[183] In 1868, Paul Kruger led a Commando against the chiefdom of Mokopane once more, but his forces were routed and the village of Pietpotgietersrust was sacked. The settlement would remain abandoned for over two decades owing to the "combined effects of fever, military resistance, a collapsing ivory trade, drought and locust plagues".[184] The only white presence in the area in the 1860s would be the Makapanspoort station of the Berlin Mission Society,[185] which was also ultimately abandoned in 1877.[186]

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[179] *Ibid.* Hofmeyr also explains, the first incident took place at the Forest of Lions (*esikgweni sengwenyama*) or Moorddrift, as it would later be known in Afrikaans, and the subsequent incidents closer to the kraal of Mankopane in Mapela. Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.147-148. Today, Peter Seko believes, a bottle store stands on the grounds of the old kraal. Interview with Peter Seko, Mapela, 22 March 2020.

[180] Amanda Esterhuysen has contributed significant archaeological analysis pertaining to events at the cave complex. See: Amanda Esterhuysen, "Let the Ancestors Speak: An Archaeological Excavation and Re-Evaluation of Events Prior and Pertaining to the 1854 Siege of Mugombane, Limpopo Province, South Africa," PhD Dissertation (University of the Witwatersrand, 2007), Available at: https://www.academia.edu/856974/Let_the_Ancestors_Speak_an_archaeological_excavation_and_re_evaluation_of_events_prior_and_pertaining_to_the_1854_siege_of_Mugombane_Limpopo_Province_South_; Amanda B. Esterhuysen, "Excavation at Historic Cave, Makapan's Valley, Limpopo: 2001-2005," *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 65, no. 191 (2010): 67–83.

[181] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.149-150

[182] The cave, serving as the resting place of Mokopane, would remain an important ritual place for the Ndebele, a "powerful sacrificial site in times of drought". *Ibid.,* p.61.

[183] Following the siege, the Kgoši's capital relocated from Chidi to the east of present-day Mokopane – an area also called Pruissen – to the Sefakaola hill – the site of the present day Vaaltyn chieftaincy to the north-west of the town *Ibid.,* p.159.

[184] *Ibid.* p.61.

[185] *Ibid.,* p.19.

[186] *Ibid.,* p.61.

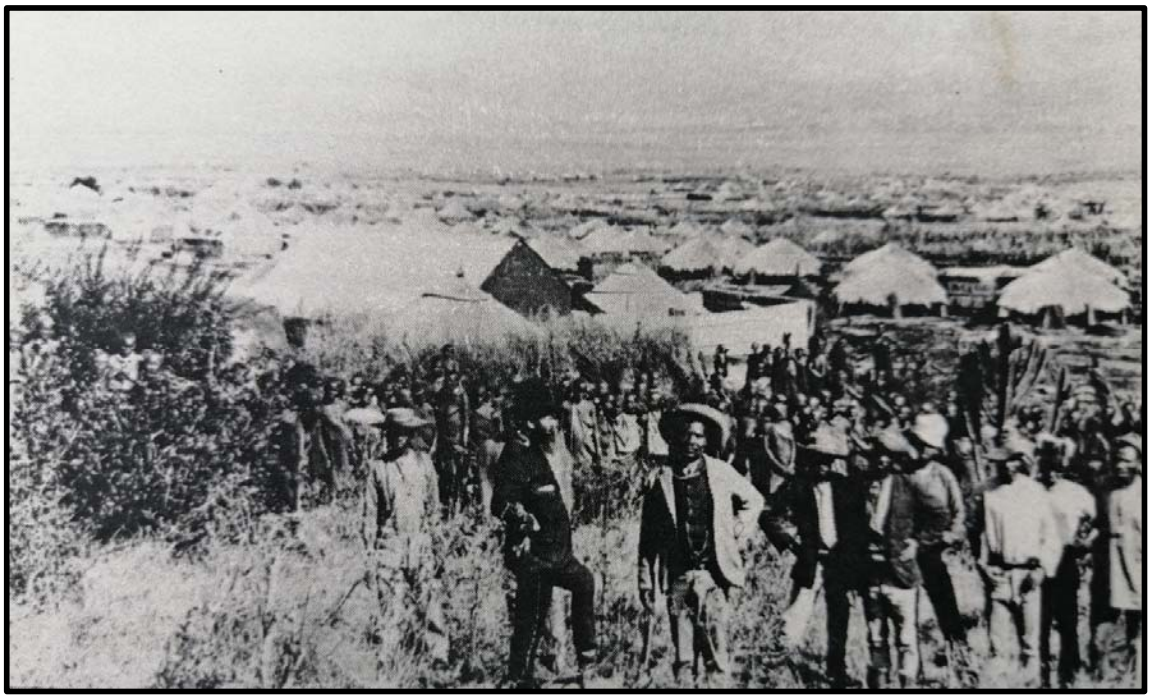


Figure 10: A view of the Vaaltyn chieftaincy in the 1880s taken from the base of Sefakaola Hill.[187]

Pretoria's Return and the Elaboration of White Local Government

The abandonment of Pietpotgietersrust took place while the ZAR had also effectively relinquished control over the much of the Soutpansberg region to the north. From 1867, white settlers had fled Schoemansdal, scourged by virulent malaria and fearing the reprisals of Venda groupings.[188] The capacities of the Boer Republic to effectively govern much of the northern hinterland beyond its administrative seat in Pretoria would remain nominal for several decades. This would begin to change from the late 19th century, through the expanded coercive capacities of Paul Kruger's state, and the infrastructural power of the railways, postal and telegraph network.[189]

From the 1880s, according to Hofmeyr, the white town came to be repopulated and Pretoria began to "move with some conviction against African communities in the Transvaal".[190] The next decades would see the expanding reach of the white state into the lives of Black communities - and attempts to coral chiefly communities into a new system of paternalistic

[187] From *Ibid.* p.16.
[188] Johann Tempelhoff, 1999, *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg: A Centenary History, 1899-1999*, Commissioned by the Louis Trichardt Transitional Local Council. Potchefstroom: X Printers. p.26-27.
[189] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.150; p.62
[190] *Ibid.,* p.47.

white local government led by deployed officials of the Native Affairs Department (NAD). The conversion of the chiefdoms in the area into so-called "native locations" would signal, in Hofmeyr's estimation, a major "threshold of change" towards this system.[191] The process began with surveys conducted by the South African Republic Location Commission from 1883, which "travelled through the Transvaal either dispossessing chiefdoms entirely or penning them into absurdly small areas of land".[192] In 1890, the Commissioners ordered that six native locations would be proclaimed in the vicinity of the white town of Potgietersrus. Three would be situated to the north-west of town in a continuous block that would begin with Vaaltyn's location, closest to the white town, and then moving northwards, Mapela location and Bakenberg location. These three together were "17kms long and 5 kms wide [and] housed some 30 000 people".[193] To the north-east were proclaimed the locations of Matlala and Mašašane, while to the south-east of the town would be the Zebediela location.

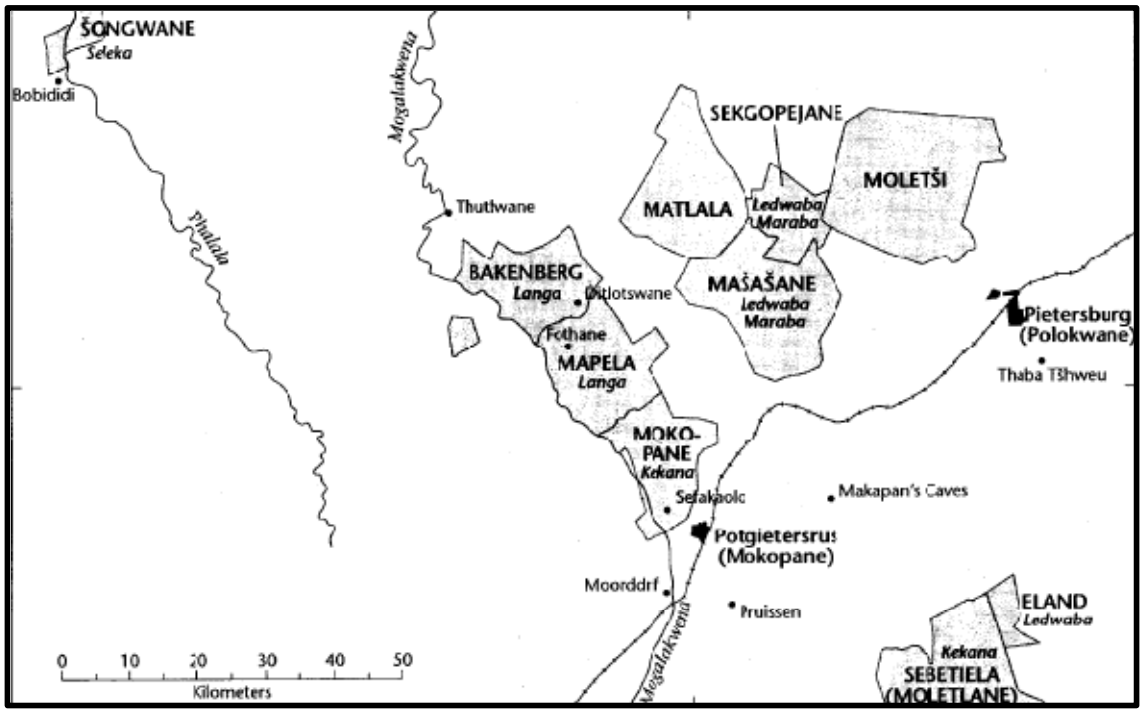


Figure 11: Map indicating the Northern Ndebele "locations" demarcated between 1890 and 1908.[194]

These moves would signal increasing levels of colonial intrusion directed from an increasingly interventionist central state. A police station was established in Pietpotgietersrust in 1893, initially to "protect the [Location] commissioners and to monitor violations of the boundary

[191] *Ibid*., p.16.
[192] *Ibid.,* p.16, p.62.
[193] *Ibid.,* p.98.
[194] Lekgoathi, "Ethnicity and Identity", p.43.

rulings".[195] In the wake of the South African War (1899-1902), Hofmeyr remarks on the arrival of "a host of zealous Milnerite officials intent on reconstructing the Transvaal countryside in the image of British order", including structures of local government.[196] A Town Council was established in 1904, and began "surveying, fencing and assisting white settlers to start farming" in the environs of the town, whose name was shortened to Potgietersrust.[197] The first council chambers saw the introduction of many of the British-style rituals and procedures of statecraft that would survive over the next century, into the democratic era – the formalities, garb and ceremony of council sittings, the positions of leadership, and the paper-based system of hierarchical governance.[198]



Figure 12: The First Town Council Building, 1904.[199]

Over the course of the first decade of the twentieth century, the town was also increasingly secured by the growth of a regional network of white settlement. The town of Nylstroom (now Modimolle), 100kms to the south-west of Potgietersrus, had remained inhabited since 1868.

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[195] *Ibid.,* p.47.
[196] Hofmeyr, "We spend our years", p.63.
[197] *Ibid.,* p.47.
[198] Over the decades, the original council chambers would be adjoined by new additions. Yet still today, the buildings house the mayoral chambers of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality.
[199] JH Meyer, 'Die Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van Potgietersrust as Dorp', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.26.

Further south still was the town of Warmbad (now Bela-Bela), the closest of the bushveld settlements to Pretoria. In 1898, Pietersburg (now Polokwane) was established some 60kms to the north of Potgietersrus, a town which quickly expanded to become the regional capital. Further north still, Louis Trichardt was resettled in 1899. From 1907, a settlement developed halfway between Nylstroom and Potgietersrus which become the town of Naboomspruit (now Mookgophong). Thus, by mid-century, a column of white towns had been firmly established from Warmbad to Messina (now Musina), all the way to the northernmost border of the country. These towns would come to operate as key centers of territorial control and segregation throughout the century. And, as will be demonstrated in this dissertation, the maintenance of the prosperity, security and identity of these white towns would form a key element of the later Bantustan strategy.

In 1923, Potgietersrust was declared the centre of a magisterial district of the same name.[200] In 1930, the district covered some 7,356 square miles and contained an estimated white population of 7,000, most clustered in the town, but with growing numbers of white farmers.[201] The expansion of the railway network which connected Potgietersrust to Pretoria and other towns of the region from 1897 had a powerful effect in stimulating the local economy and regional mobility.[202] Farming came to form the backbone of the district's economy. While most of the territory was considered suitable only for grazing, fostering the growth of a major cattle trading market, the remaining quarter offered land for cultivation constituted by a portion of the Springbok Flats, the 160km wide plain that stretches to Pretoria in the south. The Sterkrivier area some 20kms from the town offered further croplands. In the decades that followed, the fortunes of a range of local farmers would be made. And this would come especially from growing and curing tobacco – a crop that would come to underpin the identity of the town to a large degree.[203] While a stratum of very wealthy farmers emerged in the area, commercial farming for most proved a difficult enterprise, prone to bankruptcy, in the face of a harsh climate and slim opportunities for credit. There thus emerged significant distinctions between better capitalised and poorer farmers. In 1930, Ballim writes, an inspector from Standard Bank in Potgietersrus reported that "the majority of Dutch farmers can only be classified as indolent, and those in the Bushveld exist on the fauna of the country".[204] Class distinctions within white

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[200] HWA Rein, 'Regsdienste, Potgietersrust, 1854-1954: Magistraat, Potgietersrust', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.58.
[201] Ballim, "The Pre-History of South African 'Neo-Liberalism'", p.1244. I have been, however, unable to find reliable figures indicating the size of the area's Black population.
[202] FMJ Wilson, 'Die Spoorwegdiens, Potgietersrust', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.41.
[203] Ballim, "Pre-History of South African 'Neo-Liberalism'", p.1244.
[204] *Ibid*.

society of the region would persist throughout the century, and form a motor force behind the peculiar white political struggles that evolved over the course of subsequent decades.

Beyond farming, the district saw a number of short-lived mining ventures in the first half of the twentieth century. Among the first mineral discoveries in the region was tin, first found in 1906. This would attract small parties of treasure-seeking miners to the region, and would kickstart a small industry just outside of Potgietersrus in an area that is still called "Tin Myne" today. The promised fortunes of tin never truly materialised, however, and its contribution to the local economy was always fairly small over the decades, finally petering out entirely by the 1970s.[205] In 1924, Hans Merensky would discover a rich seam of platinum group metals which over the course of two years he had traced continuously for some 150km. It passed through areas to the north of Potgietersrus, much of it through areas under the rule of the Ndebele chiefdoms. In 1928, a platinum smelter had been established only to be shuttered two years later. It proved even less profitable than tin mining at the time.[206] Yet platinum mining's time would come: in the 1990s, an open cast mine would finally be developed, fundamentally transforming the town and its make-up.

Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the town also grew into an important regional trading hub, buoyed by the arrival of first-generation Indian settlers to the town. The prominent Hassim family, for instance, established a trading business in then Potgietersrust in 1895, having come to the town with the help of "family members who were already well established in Pietersburg and Pretoria" (EH Hassim's continues today as a hardware store with branches across the province).[207] Ballim states that these "individual immigrants were thus in some cases able to gain access to capital, know-how and supply contacts in order to trade in these far-flung areas. Some of the early pioneers at first travelled through towns in the countryside as salesmen or hawkers, bringing goods from Johannesburg to the rural interior".[208] Over the course of the 1900s, the Indian population of Potgietersrus grew steadily.[209] In what would remain a relationship of economic interdependence throughout the 20th century, Indian traders proved a lifeline to local farmers, extending credit to purchase basic goods which would be repaid during the harvest.[210]

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[205] JH Meyer, 'Die Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van Potgietersrust as Dorp', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album*, p.25; *Rand Daily Mail*, "TC Lands sees growth resuming in 1979", 30 November 1977;
[206] Ballim, "Pre-History of South African 'Neo-Liberalism'", p.1244.
[207] Ballim, "The Un-Making of the Group Areas Act", p.572.
[208] *Ibid*.
[209] *Ibid*.
[210] *Ibid.* Interview with Younus and Ahmed Cachalia, 5 March 2020.

The town would grow dramatically between 1900 and 1950. In 1954, the white Town Clerk reported the achievements of the Potgietersrus Town Council since its establishment, marking its growth as an increasingly developed town. Over the course of the 1930s in particular, the Clerk noted the development of a water scheme, abattoirs, the fencing of town lands, the construction of a town hall, and tap water furnaces. An electricity scheme was devised in 1937, a garbage removal scheme in 1938, swimming pool constructed in 1938, tar schemes in 1940/41 and 1947, and a flood drainage in 1940 and 1948.[211] Over the same period, property values and investments in construction increased enormously. Between 1937 (the point at which "construction took place with more seriousness than in previous years") and 1953, it was estimated that the value of construction increased from £340,750 to £2,396,068.[212] The Town Council also built a "town location" for Black residents which lay to the north-west of the town. Offering a history of the town in 1954, the Potgietersrus Town Clerk explained that the location had been created after an earlier forced removal of a community on mission-held land:

> Until about 1938 there was still a considerable part of the old Location on the town's side of the Dorpsrivier on the Limburg road. Most of the buildings were churches and church schools. Through negotiations, compensation was agreed upon and the owners of such buildings were paid out and they swept the buildings and moved to the current location.[213]

By 1951, the population of the white town was estimated to number 3,775, location residents numbered 3,000, 212 so-called "Asiatics" 212, and 31 "Coloureds". Yet accompanying the relatively massive growth of the town over the course of the early 20th century was also deepening interventionism by the central state to dispossess Black residents, harden racial boundaries and reconfigure the chieftaincy into a pliable agent of central control.

The Battle over Racial Boundaries and Betterment

From the 1920s especially, the central state set about entrenching the borders of the "native locations" across the South African countryside, hemming Black residents in ever greater numbers into the confines of what would come to be known as the "reserves" in line with the notorious 1913 Land Act. This would be accompanied by ever more forceful segregationist legislation over the course of subsequent decades. Yet initially, in the Potgietersrus area, attempts to entrench and police the boundaries between the reserves and so-called "white" territory would be met by both inertia and ongoing forms of resistance. At the Native Lands

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[211] JJCJ Van Rensburg, 'Die Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van Plaaslike Bestuur: Stadsklerk, Potgietersrust', in Combrink *et al* (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.29.
[212] *Ibid.,* p.33.
[213] *Ibid.,* p.31.

Committee held over the course of 1916 and 1918 (the "Stubb's Committee"), a local NAD representative from Potgietersrus testified that Black residents continued to defy the attempts to impose enclosure which legislation envisaged, and indeed many people continued to live outside of the native locations and chiefly control: "There are five locations in my area with a population of about 22,000. My total native population is 51,000. Of the balance some live on company and Government farms as rent-paying- squatters, and others are labour-tenants".[214] Another official estimated that there were 11,000 labour tenants in the Potgietersrus district "doing ninety days' service in consideration of a piece of ground to cultivate and grazing rights".[215] He also spoke of significant "agitation among the natives", which, he argued, was due to "to the size of the areas set aside for them, which they state are not large enough".[216]

One vantage point through which to view both the audacity and the limits of local state power over land enclosure and racial boundary-making in the region can be seen in the variable fortunes of the barbed wire fence. When the locations had first been established in the 1890s, the "vague boundary lines that the Location Commission had ordained remained entirely unfenced and completely hypothetical".[217] Fencing first started appearing once the South African War ended in 1902. Yet in the first decades of the 1900s, fencing initiatives by agents of the local state found ambivalent success. Hofmeyr observes that the fence threatened to entrench white possession of land, and deprive black residents of "the means of livelihood like grazing, game, wood and water".[218] The fencing process "formed part of a wider net of white control",[219] and thus occasioned blatant refusal and destruction of fences.

Hofmeyr offers insights into the contested fencing processes in the Vaaltyn Location specifically. She notes, for instance, how the fence came to materialise increasing tensions between Black residents and white farmers. White farmers, Hofmeyr writes, were seeking to claim every inch of land they could, especially because Vaaltyn, Mapela and Bakenberg were situated on rich arable land "similar to the clay and loam of the Springbok flats", and as such, "some farmers soon came to regard them with avaricious eyes". [220] Seeking to lay greater

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[214] *Union of South Africa,* 1918, "Minutes of Evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee," p.4–5.
[215] *Ibid..,* p.197.
[216] *Ibid.*, p.4–5.
[217] Hofmeyr, "'Nterata'", p.4.
[218] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.1–2.
[219] *Ibid.*, p.104.
[220] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.101. At the 1918 Commission, for instance, the local NAD official stated that Vaaltyn's location "is a very fertile location. Between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of it is arable and productive." He also remarked that the rainfall was significantly higher in Vaaltyn's location (18-22 inches per annum) as opposed to that on the border of the Pietersburg and Waterberg districts (15 inches). *Union of South Africa,* "Minutes of Evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee,", p.197.

claim to these fertile lands, farmers themselves would take it upon themselves to embark on fencing, moving the officially prescribed beacons to form boundaries that better suited them.[221] Such was the scale of their intrusions that when the chiefdom of Vaaltyn was surveyed in 1936, it was found that in fact the 14 451 hectare allotment officially provided in 1913 had shrunk to 12 229 hectares.[222] These actions reveal the disjuncture between central state allocations and local campaigns around land. And they speak also to the resentment that white farmers would express about the shape that segregationist schemes were taking in the area. For instance, white farmers between the westerly chiefdoms (Vaaltyn, Mapela and Bakenberg) and those to the east (Matlala and Mašašane) – the so-called "white finger" – voiced disdain at being stuck between "two black blocks" – dissatisfaction that would be echoed in the Bantustan period. And in presenting evidence to the Stubbs Land Commission of 1918, white farmers of the area had called for the five chiefdoms to be "swept further North into marginal bushveld areas" – a position that was supported by the Potgietersrus Town Council. [223]

In the event, the plan to relocate the tribal locations further north never materialized.[224] Yet, Hofmeyr notes, processes of fencing did proceed more forcefully from the 1930s, perversely as official concerns grew about the carrying capacity of the land. "From the turn of the century onwards," Delius explains, "concerns had been expressed over the capacity of the reserves to sustain a growing population".[225] He notes how, by the 1930s, increasing official panic ensued over the possibility of the reserves declining into "dustbowls". In the Vaaltyn Location, notwithstanding the relative fertility of it soils, location dwellers were already complaining of an acute shortage of land and water in 1906.[226] Ecological conditions in the chiefdoms degraded significantly over several decades due to enforced overcrowding. One immediate

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[221] Hofmeyr, "'Nterata", p.4.
[222] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.99.
[223] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.101. A Mr Louis Peens claimed at the Stubbs Committee to have been chosen by the public to make representations to the Committee on behalf of some residents of Potgietersrust, echoed a call that would be repeated throughout the 20th century: "We do not want black islands among the white people. We want proper segregation. I would not link up all the existing separate areas, but should be in favour of abolishing them altogether and granting one large area in the north sufficient for all the natives" (*Union of South Africa,* 1918:198–99) Adding impetus to this agitation for removal was the discovery of platinum lying beneath the territory of the magoši in the late 1920s. The short-lived enthusiasm that the find evoked prompted a visit by Prime Minister JMB Hertzog in 1928, who called for the removal of the locations as a result. (Hofmeyr, 1991: p.70.)
[224] The SNC described, between the farm Beauty and the Magalakwin River, was "an absolute wilderness. There is no water supply whatever away from the river with the exception of three springs. These springs perhaps might water 1,000 head of cattle a day. There are no cattle there now. That region is uninhabited… There is not a single native family with the exception of two on the farm Oporto where one of the springs I have mentioned is. There are no natives because the ground is unproductive". Moreover, the Magalakwin river was described, even in 1917, as a "perennial": "It is dry for four months in the year". (*Union of South Africa:* 1918, p.197).
[225] Delius, Lion Amongst the Cattle, p.52.
[226] Hofmeyr, "'Nterata", p.7.

result of this was to radically diminish the prospects of agricultural subsistence, increasing pressures for location residents to seek wage-based work on farms, in towns and in the urban mining metropoles. From the outset of the declaration of the native locations in the area, Hofmeyr observes, "migrancy, which up until this point had largely been voluntary, became more of a necessity".[227] By 1918, in response to deepening environmental degradation, she writes, 70 percent of men from the Potgietersrus district were said to be working in the mines.[228]

By the 1930s, Vaaltyn was compared to the Sahara desert, and recognised by the state as "one of the worst in the Transvaal".[229] And these conditions were not made any better by cyclical droughts of increasing intensity.[230] Against the backdrop of this environmental deterioration, "officials and politicians were haunted by the spectre of rural impoverishment leading to mass urbanisation which would swamp white cities, scupper segregationist designs and nurture proletarian revolt".[231] The state, in response, deployed the an ostensibly techno-scientific language of "conservationism", which by the 1930s had "become a dominant element in characterisations of the problems facing the reserves". By introducing so-called "betterment schemes", the central state believed, rural African land-use patterns would be coercively infused with "conservationist" ethics. In practice, it entailed the far deeper intrusion of the central state into the lives of rural Black residents. As Delius notes, this saw the rise of a "new order" of state control "which seemed determined to penetrate and dominate every nook and cranny of their world".[232] The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act vested control of all reserve land in the South African Native Trust (SANT). And to police Trust lands, prevent the cutting of

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[227] Hofmeyr, "We Spend our Years", p.16
[228] *Ibid.,* p.102.
[229] *Ibid.*, p.102.
[230] In 1934, an article in the *Rand Daily Mail* gave a visceral sense of this recurrent drought: "It is 20 months since rains fell and the whole of the Northern Transvaal is nothing more than a sandy desert… For weeks the wind has blown not only in Potgietersrust itself but throughout the district. The dust has settled, swirled and settled again till every leaf bears its coating of dust. When I toured the area I found a sad state of affairs. There is scarcely a blade of grass in Koedoesrand. For miles and miles one sees nothing but bare red veld, gaunt thorn trees and shrivelled bushes. The cattle are in extremely poor condition… Native cattle are travelling many miles daily for water. Their condition is pitiable. In Mapela location I saw them standing round a dry trough fed by a borehole pump; the borehole was sunk last year by the Govt. The pump was out of order. Natives were trying to repair it while the thirsty cattle stood round lowing plaintively and returning again and again to the holled-tree-trunk trough looking for water. At this place is a block of native farms, some of the driest, sandiest, rockiest and most infertile farms in the district. Before the Govt sank boreholes here last year cattle had to be driven to the Magalakwin river daily, a distance of 10 miles, to drink. Domestic water supply was little better. The stads are scattered and women still carry water long distances for domestic use… On the Potgietersrust town lands and in the town lands camp, donkeys have been dying daily for lack of feed. There is plenty of water for them in the town furrows, but no grass (*Rand Daily Mail*, "Drought broken in Northern Transvaal, But area is still parched", 18 October 1934).
[231] Delius, Lion Amongst the Cattle, p.52.
[232] *Ibid.,* p.72.

firewood, cull cattle and fence borders, the state recruited local rangers and agricultural officials.[233]

This took place against the backdrop of sweeping changes to the NAD, in line with the central state's embrace of ideas of segregation developed over the first decades of the twentieth century. Over the course of the 1920s, white political discourse cohered into new strains of white supremacist segregationism which came to suffuse the operations of the state. The Native Administration Act of 1927, for instance, represented the embrace of a "comprehensive strategy of "retribalisation" while greatly enhancing the nature and scope of the [Native Affairs] Department's jurisdiction".[234] This bolstered the powers of Native Commissioners considerably, whose "lingering idiom of benevolent paternalism was submerged by a more robust and purposeful bureaucratic apparatus which, over time, became increasingly repressive".[235] Native Commissioners were, for instance, empowered to preside over criminal matters in their courts.[236] This came with a growing emphasis on "efficiency" and "uniformity", and entailed the consolidation and centralisation of the NAD's administrative structures.[237] Importantly, it "entrenched the principle of government by executive proclamation", a top-down mechanism which subsumed the local forms of consultation and "personal rule" which had guided Native Commissioners in the past –[238] laying the groundwork, Saul Dubow argues, for its rise as a "state within a state" in the apartheid era.[239]

Hofmeyr writes that the introduction of "Betterment" marked a major "threshold of change" to affect the chieftaincies of the region. She writes:

> platoons of agricultural officers, vegetable garden advisors, prickly pear exterminators, comment surveyors, bull castrators, engineers, dipping inspectors common soil conservation officials, irrigation scheme planners, veld improvement officers common and forest ranges invaded the countryside in an attempt to mark and possess it in as many ways as possible.[240]

Yet throughout this process, agricultural officers and officials of the local state grew exasperated by the continued cutting of fences and essentially gave up enforcing them, and it was largely left to farmers to continue battling to install and maintain the boundary. By the 1940s, northern Transvaal officials were complaining of a "veritable epidemic of fence cutting".

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[233] *Ibid.,* p.55.
[234] Dubow, Racial Segregation, p.13.
[235] *Ibid.*, p.13.
[236] *Ibid.*, p.122.
[237] *Ibid.*, p.13.
[238] *Ibid.*, p.126.
[239] *Ibid.*, p.13.
[240] Hofmeyr, "'We Spend Our Years", p.98.

"So critical had the situation become," Hofmeyr writes, "that many north-western Transvaal farmers, whose properties bordered on Black areas, could not keep even a few miles of boundary fence intact".[241] This echoed broader opposition to Betterment and enclosure across the country, which in some areas culminated in wholesale rebellions.[242] By the 1940s, the state had not found means of resolving – a contradiction "bequeathed to the apartheid regime".[243]

The ways that the state-led processes of fencing were abandoned in favour of private fencing signaled the limits of central state control in the spatial reconfiguration of the countryside. There remained a vast difference between the designs plotted out on the maps and administrative circulars of the NAD and life as it was lived on the ground. Nevertheless, Hofmeyr writes about the adoption of the fence by residents of Vaaltyn themselves, from the 1940s especially, which were also deployed in processes of internal stratification. While for most small-scale agriculturalists and women who found their access to water obstructed, processes of internal fencing did stand to benefit the rising stratum of black elite "progressive" farmers as well as the old chiefly caste who similarly sought to protect their own grazing terrain and herds. As such, chiefly punishment for fence destruction came to increase over the decades,[244] and Hofmeyr explains that "fencing played no small part in reinforcing old cleavages and creating new forms of stratification".[245] The nature of society in the rural locations thus came to be radically reshaped in the face of sweeping changes to land settlement patterns and the severe new limitations imposed on agricultural subsistence.

Attempts by the state to intervene more directly within the political structures of the chieftaincy remained, however, far more limited. In the face of what were perceived as the potentially destabilising effects of the Victorian civilizing mission, the segregationist state had devised plans for "retribalization", premised on a strategy of local chiefly elite cooptation as intermediaries of the programme of rural containment. Yet, at least in the case of the Vaaltyn chieftaincy, Hofmeyr remarks that this strategy was fairly limited: "internal affairs remained largely untouched by direct intervention from white political authorities".[246] More generally, the

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[241] Hofmeyr, "Nterata", p.1.
[242] Rebellions in Pondoland, Witzieshoek, Zeerust, Xhalanga and Sekhukhuneland are covered in existing scholarship. See, among others: Govan Mbeki, *South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt*, Penguin African Library (London: Peter Smith, 1964); M. Chaskalson, "Rural Resistance in the 1940s and 1950s," *Africa Perspective* 1, no. 5–6 (1986): 47–59; Peter Delius, "Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organization, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, 4 (October 1, 1989): 581–615.
[243] Bonner, Delius and Posel, "The Shaping of Apartheid", p.6.
[244] Hofmeyr, "We spend our years", p.114.
[245] *Ibid.*, p.103.
[246] *Ibid.,* p.16.

Native Affairs Commissioner, who operated out of an office in Potgietersrus, was hamstrung by deficiencies in personnel and funding, while "the areas to be controlled were simply too huge, the people in these areas too numerous and too unwilling to be governed". As such, Hofmeyr argues, the shift towards central control from the Pretoria-based NAD "probably happened more in theory than in practice".[247] Instead, the Commissioner's office "had to tread carefully and could not rile its subjects too deeply",[248] and remained "structurally remote" from the chiefdoms and the everyday life that played out in them. Given these limits, subjects in the chiefdoms attained a measure of "autonomy and freedom".[249]

Establishing and maintaining the boundaries between black and white and transforming chiefly institutions into local arms of the white state was thus highly contested in the early 20th century. These attempts, variable though their outcomes may have been nonetheless signaled the growing power of the white central state in reshaping rural life. As Hofmeyr points out, the fence was merely a consequence of land dispossession rather than its cause.[250] On the eve of apartheid, Hofmeyr argues, "native locations" of the Mogalakwena area were already characterized by an "endemic climate of insecurity",[251] beset by threats of further land dispossession and ecological degradation, and overwhelmingly dependent on waged forms of work for survival. These factors had radically spurred levels of permanent urban migration and engendered deepening militant opposition to the white minority state, and it was these intensifying forces that the apartheid government and its far-reaching plans of social engineering would seek to resolve.[252]

The Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism

The encroaching violence of the white state was widely supported by white residents of the town. As Hofmeyr puts it, "most residents of the town resented living cheek by jowl with a densely settled town location and chiefdom", and writes that "at every available opportunity they called for removal in language whose shrill racism increased sharply as Afrikaner nationalist campaigning got under way".[253] The rallying cries for the upliftment of poor

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[247] *Ibid.*, p.88.
[248] *Ibid.*, p.88.
[249] *Ibid.*, p.88; p.125. Hofmeyr on p.169 does note a reference to Jackson's *The Ndebele,* which states that the Native Commissioner named King despatched the incumbent chief, presumably of Vaaltyn, to a Pretoria lunatic asylum and took up residence in the chief's courtyard proclaiming "I am the chief".
[250] Hofmeyr, "Nterata", p.7.
[251] *Ibid.*, p.10.
[252] Hofmeyr reports that as early as 1918, the ability of residents to eke out a living from the land had long evaporated, and as early as 1918 it was reported that 70% of males from the Potgietersrus district were working on mines on the Witwatersrand. Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.102; *Union of South Africa,* 1918, "Minutes of Evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee," p.198.
[253] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.101.

Afrikaners also found a ready audience in Potgietersrus, which Ballim notes was marked by high levels of white poverty: "with a European population of 2,250, 75 per cent of whom the Standard Bank inspector considered 'poor whites'".[254]

The Northern Transvaal region, and Potgietersrus in particular, was drawn into the rising tide of Afrikaner Nationalism, and came to form one of its key organisational bases early on. Potgietersrus assumed a particular symbolism in the "sacred history" that was being spun around an appeal for deepening racial segregation to maintain the gains of conquest. White narratives surrounding the 1854 siege of Makapansgat came to occupy a "central place … in the mythology of Afrikaner nationalism", Hofmeyr shows, "often seen as the Transvaal equivalent of Blood River".[255] A relief of the episode is featured on the base of the statue of Paul Kruger in Church Square in the nation's capital. The episode took on a quasi-Biblical status, a parable of white heroism amidst Black savagery and backwardness, "a homily on the righteousness of colonial conquest whereby unprovoked African barbarism is justly chastised and suppressed in order to make the country safe for further white settlement".[256] These stories fed into broader processes of white nationalism in the region, serving to justify yet further violent dispossession and conquest.

The rising tide of Afrikaner Nationalism was accompanied by a concerted campaign of cultural mobilisation – and indeed, historical invention – across the country which emphasised "national white unity and supremacy" – or, as Norval states, "die *volkseie"*.[257] But in Potgietersrus, this took on a particularly vociferous tone: "in the Northern Transvaal where white control had always been shallow and had, in any event, largely been shaken off during the South African war, this stress on racial supremacy carried an urgent, local meaning rather than a vague national symbolism".[258] Following the creation of the Union government in 1910, Potgietersrus became the site for the erection of a range of statues, commemorations and speeches by Afrikaner Nationalist leaders. It promoted itself as a site of Afrikaner history, boasting a range of cultural, youth and political organisations which, among other activities,

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[254] Ballim, "Pre-History of South African 'Neo-Liberalism'", p.1244.
[255] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.189.
[256] *Ibid.*, p.189. Hofmeyr also details how the Ndebele offensives that preceded the cave siege came to be laced with sensational accounts, "tinged with folkloric intimations of cannibalism" (many of which were still relayed to me in interviews with white respondents) (p.52). And she highlights the central role of Gustav Preller, famed Afrikaner Nationalist historian, in translating these myths into the canon of Afrikaner white supremacist tradition, incorporating the same motifs he deployed in his prose on Blood River. (p.204-208).
[257] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.57.
[258] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.203.

took part in historical re-enactments and organised initiatives to clean and maintain statues commemorating white conquest.[259]



Figure 13: Procession to mark the 1938 centenary of the Great Trek in Potgietersrus.[260]

In 1912, for instance, a monument was erected at Moorddrift in remembrance of the Boers who had been killed there in the months preceding the siege, unveiled by the Minister of Land and Natives, JFB Rissik, on 16 December – the public holiday which commemorated the Boer's defeat of the Zulus (Dingaan's Day).[261] At the festivities organised by a local committee, the town's mayor repeated the blood-soaked tale of collective massacre by "Chief Makapaan", insisting that "the blood of the Voortrekkers [was] avenged" with the entrenchment of white control in the region.[262] This version of history, which emphasised "unprovoked black aggression, white retribution and victory that spelled the end of Ndebele power" would form

[259] *Ibid.,* p.208-211.
[260] JA Robbertse, 'Kultuurorganisasies Potgietersrust', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.182
[261] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.202
[262] *Ibid.*, p.203.

the staple of representations of conquest repeated by local politicians throughout the twentieth century.[263]

On the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938, Hofmeyr describes how the town came to be gripped by "veritable Voortrekker mania", choreographing massive shows of pageantry by local cultural organisations, schools, churches and other local institutions.[264] She notes how a procession of wagons travelled through the town, accompanied by men and women dressed in Voortrekker attire. Wagon wheels were drawn through a concrete slab next, as was done in many parts of the country, symbolically (and concretely) connecting the town into the geographical nexus of deepening white nationalism.[265] The Makapan's cave complex grew to become a kind of pilgrimage site for Afrikaners, with calls from locals for it to be recognised as a national monument successful by 1938. The discovery of *Australopithecus* remains by archaeologists prompted another act of enclosure in the 1940s, with a fence erected around the complex, which had become a research site of the University of the Witwatersrand.[266]



Figure 14: Bas-relief on the plinth supporting the statue of Paul Kruger in Church Square, Pretoria, depicting Kruger rescuing the body of Piet Potgieter from the Gwaša cave.[267]

[263] *Ibid*.
[264] *Ibid.*, p.209.
[265] *Ibid*.
[266] *Ibid.*, p.210.
[267] Ibid. p.189.

An integral element of Afrikaner Nationalism, and a key conceptual universe through which it claimed legitimacy, Aletta Norval has argued, were the idea of "die volk" (nation) and "die volkseie ("the nation's own"). Ideologues refracted age-old white supremacist conceptions of the inferiority of racial others through the languages of cultural difference furnished by ethnologists (many of whom came to play leading roles in formulating apartheid policies), emphasising the need to recognise profound material, cultural and social inequalities – even between Afrikaners and English-speakers – such that they could be considered different "*volkere*".[268] These ethnological fallacies would be married with strands of Kuyperian-Calvinist thinking which emphasised the need for each *volk* to be provided "sovereignty in their own sphere". This was interpreted in very literal terms, with "sphere" understood as a territorial designation.[269] Indeed, the separation of races across distinct and bounded zones, and the policing of interactions between races within racialised space, was the very definition of "apartheid" – of "separateness" conceived, in first instance, in spatial terms. It was also, however, conceived in administrative terms – true "sovereignty in one's own sphere" was also understood to entail bestowing the capacities for "self-government" to different race groups, and the eventual relinquishing of white "guardianship". This would later come to be crystallised in the concept of the Bantustan, which apartheid statesmen insisted would bestow "political independence" on an ethnic basis. Yet Afrikaner Nationalist ideologues were careful to echo the evolutionary conception at the heart of the colonial civilising mission, that true sovereignty to other races could only be ceded gradually by a beneficent white state.

While the conceptual constellation of "volkere" would only truly come to find expression in state policy with the onset of apartheid after 1948, the groundwork for their use had been laid by successive anthropologists and ethnographers, many of whom were attached to the Department of Native Affairs. Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, Lekgoathi explains, the communities of the Mokopane area would come to be understood in the eyes of the state as "Northern Ndebele" through the work of Dr NJ Van Warmelo, the chief ethnologist of the NAD, in conjunction with a range of local assistants.[270] While not wholly "invented" by white interlocutors, Lekgoathi nonetheless argues that colonial and apartheid attempts to construct "rigid ethnic boundaries" worked to grossly simplify what was an "amorphous, fluid and contested identity tied to shifting boundaries in the precolonial era".[271] Van Warmelo helped construct a vision of the Ndebele as a "bifurcated tribe", for instance, split between Southern

[268] Norval, p.94.
[269] *Ibid,* p.68*;* Moodie, "The Rise of Afrikanerdom", p.56.
[270] Lekgoathi, "Ethnicity & Identity", p.23-24.
[271] *Ibid.*, p.iv

and Northern Ndebele, regardless of many of their diverse origins.[272] And in his categorisation of the Northern Ndebele, he rather arbitrarily lumped together "the various subdivisions of the Kekana, the Ledwaba, and the Langa".[273] In this, Lekgoathi observes, Van Warmelo was driven by a view of identity fixed in language – in common with other Afrikaner cultural anthropologists or *Volkekundiges.*[274]

Black Liberation and African Nationalism

While the early 20th century South African state set about carving up the countryside, entrenching forms of enclosure made with increasing appeals to ethnic difference, the stirrings of opposition would grow within Black communities, including in the Northern Transvaal. In particular, the activities of the African National Congress would come to find increasing support. Delius tracks the ebb and flow of Congress structures in the broader region, with a particular focus on the neighbouring Sekhukhuneland. He has described how a range of Bopedi chiefs from Sekhukhuneland were instrumental in the foundation and the early years of the ANC, and indicates that Congress meetings were held at the Pedi Paramountcy to denounce the 1913 Land Act and collect funds to support the ANC delegation to England.[275] By the 1930s, however, the ANC leadership's interest in the countryside had dwindled, and "it was not until 1936, when the Rev. James Calata became secretary-general, and in reaction to the Hertzog Bills, that a gradual recovery took place which quickened in the 1940s under the leadership of Dr Xuma".[276] Xuma sought to cultivate support amongst chiefs, which was met with limited success, with most "wary of alienating an increasingly assertive NAD".[277] Nonetheless, there were some indications of organisational growth in the region, with a branch launched in ga-Matlala (which fell in the Potgietersrus District) in the 1930s, in the Pietersburg area in the 1940s, and in Duiwelskloof/Zoutpansberg area.[278]

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[272] *Ibid,*, p.89; p.100.
[273] *Ibid.*, p.101.
[274] *Ibid.*, p.103. The supposed erosion of Northern Ndebele cultural distinctiveness would lead state officials of the apartheid era to negate the possibility of devising for them a separate ethnic homeland, instead insisting that the territories around Mokopane be subsumed by the Lebowa Bantustan. Over the course of the apartheid era, as Lekgoathi has extensively documented, unhappiness with this state of affairs and perceived North Sotho homogenization would flow into ill-fated initiatives for Ndebele nationalism – secessionist impulses which would never truly meet any success
[275] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.80-81.
[276] *Ibid.*, p.82.
[277] *Ibid*.
[278] *Ibid.*

Lucas Mabetwa, who at the time of being interviewed worked as a manager of development services at the municipality, grew up in ga-Matlala. He recalls how he came to understand the involvement of his grandfather in Congress, and in initiatives to resist betterment:

> Then when these things of rearranging settlements in this linear form. Remember in the past, people built their houses randomly, without any order of streets and address. So my grandparents were part of the African National Congress [ANC], who resisted that arrangement - they could foretell that this was the first part of disorganising our social and political structure. And they did not want to go into that.[279]

Saleem Badat has written about the involvement of the Matlala Paramount Chieftainess, Mme Makwena Matlala. Opposition to Betterment planning had attracted active resistance from 1939, and in the subsequent decade, members of the *kgoro* identified as Ma-Congress (because of their links to the ANC) aligned with the Chieftainess in refusing Betterment. The NAD wrote that "in the Matlala Location, because of the attitude of the Acting Chieftainess … much difficulty was and is still experienced". [280] As will be explained in the next Chapter, with the onset of apartheid the Chieftainess and her supporters would be banished to the King Williams Town, yet even as late as the 1970s, a supporter of the apartheid-endorsed chief that replaced Makwena would comment: "This thing is a Congress. We have been hitting it but it does not die".[281]

In the area of present-day Mogalakwena, Godfrey Molekwa recalls the presence of the ANC in several villages of Bakenberg. A branch operated from Clermont village, which according to Molekwa fell under what was called the "Pietersburg West District". It is unclear if the branch was operating in the 1940s, but in the run-up to the Congress of the People in 1955, Molekwa explains, a church gathering at the village contributed half crowns to send delegates to the gathering in Kliptown at which the Freedom Charter was ratified. Membership was scattered across villages "You get two members there, five members there". He contrasts this to the situation described by Mabetwa and Badat in Matlala: "it was not mass politics, like at ga-Matlala".[282] Nevertheless, the Clermont branch got the attention of the authorities. In one archival record, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner would report that "A certain part of the tribe at Malakongskop and tribal farm Cleremont is known to have many members of the ANC.

[279] Interview with Lucas Mabetwa, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 26 August 2019.
[280] Saleem Badat, 2012, The Forgotten People: Political Banishment under Apartheid, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, p.42.
[281] Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.47.
[282] Interview with Godfrey Molekwa, ga-Molekwa, 25 March 2022.

They attend no meeting at which is hostile to Captain and Department."[283] Yet what form this hostility took is unclear.

I could find no archival sources or oral testimony which explicitly proved an ANC presence in Vaaltyn or Mapela, although there it is most certainly the case that some residents would have participated in earlier ANC activities. Memories and knowledge of ANC tactics amongst an older generation were mentioned in interviews I undertook with activists of the 1980s generation. Many of these were connected to experiences of activism of those who had undertaken migrant work in the Rand, with its vibrant political ferment. One youth leader stated that it was only when he began his own career in political activism in the 1980s that he learned that he heard of his grandfather's experiences with the ANC while working in the Witwatersrand.[284]

Political linkages between the Rand and rural areas are a common story in the region, as they would remain throughout and beyond the apartheid era. Delius has detailed how in the mid-20th century, Pedi migrant associations would form a link between rural Sekhukhune politics and the growing worker militancy on the Rand, infusing struggles against rural dispossession with tactics and organisational forms inspired by urban mobilisation and the ideological outlook of the Communist Party of South Africa. This would culminate in the formation of Sebatakgomo in the 1950s which would launch a protracted and militant struggle against apartheid's renewed initiatives of Betterment.[285] Nothing on this scale took place in the Mogalakwena area. Yet even Sebatakgomo and its successor, Fetakgomo, would crumble by 1962 under the weight of state repression, chiefly cooptation, and the continued "deterioration of rural resources" which together "ate away at the foundations of a world view which saw the countryside as a place of refuge".[286] The last stand against white authority in rural areas took place as resistance movements across the country were banned by the state and activists went underground to escape arrest. What was often remembered amongst the activist generation of the 1980s I interviewed was the memories that their older relatives had of state repression, and their insistence to stay away from political activism.

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[283] *National Archives of South Africa (*Hereafter *"NASA"),* SAB KGL 158 1/1/3/2, 'Kapteinskap: Bakenberglokasie, Potgietersrus', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Potgietersrus, to the Personal Clerk of the Commissioner General, Pretoria, 22 July 1964.
[284] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[285] See: Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle;* Delius, "Sebatakgomo".
[286] Delius, "Sebatakgomo", p.615.

Conclusion

One thread running across the course of the decades that followed the notorious siege at the Gwaša cave in 1854 is the growth of central state authority and its contested intrusions into the hinterland of the north. While white state power was thoroughly routed in the Mokopane area for several decades, this began to change from the late 19th century as Pretoria advanced attempts at land enclosure and the elaboration of white local government – although the frontier legacies would continue to permeate the consciousness of white communities in the region, who continued to perceive their presence as fragile and in need of vigilant defence.

Firming up spatial conquest formed a primary drive behind state action in the countryside from the late 19th century through to the segregation era. The creation of the "native locations" signaled a decisive turning point, representative of the newfound technological and administrative might that the central white state accrued over the turn of the century. And the Union government came to display increasing ambitions for a centralised strategy for "native administration". The NAD, which was characterised by increasing forms of repressive and administrative power, pursued far-reaching policies which sought to advance the enclosure of land, to transform the reserves into viable ecological bases, to halt Black urbanization, and to coopt the chieftaincy as a pliant tool for white rural statecraft.

Yet in the Mokopane region the results of these attempts continued to diverge from official policy. Betterment policies in many places were applied "haphazardly and half-heartedly",[287] processes of fencing were met with routine resistance and vandalism, and chiefs continued to evade the intrusions of Native Commissioners. Nevertheless, processes of enclosure, contested as they were, produced destructive consequences for those who were forced to live in the circumscribed areas of the "tribal locations", hastening processes of environmental degradation and entrenching a reliance on labour migrancy to South Africa's urban areas. Yet this would also spur processes of permanent Black urbanisation, which in turn contributed to the growing sense of threat faced by the white minority government and the white population more generally, who looked upon sharpening popular struggle and labour mobilisation with acute fear.

This sense of fear would be galvanized by the NP, whose solution to the growing contradictions of segregationist rule lay not in an acceptance of South Africa's racially integrated realities, but in the fiction of primordial racial-ethnic difference and the need for "separate development". Over the course of the 1950s, the apartheid state would come to

[287] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.17

promote a rural strategy which sought to achieve what the segregationist state had failed to – the cooptation of the chieftaincy, the hardening of racial territorial separation and the entrenchment of migrant labour – through invocations of ethnic self-determination and self-reliance. And it would do so through a massively expanded state apparatus. In the domain of "native administration" in particular, the apartheid state would transform "a ramshackle system, full of inconsistencies, and in many cases in retreat"[288] into an administrative behemoth with aspirations of totalising control. And amongst white residents of Potgietersrus, as across the region more generally, the slogan of apartheid would find fervent and ready support.

[288] Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994*, Illustrated edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.12.

PART I: BUILDING THE STATE, REMAKING THE COUNTRYSIDE

"The last hundred years have witnessed a miracle behind which must lie a divine plan. Indeed, the history of the Afrikaner reveals a will and a determination which makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of men but the creation of God".[289]

In *Magnetic Mountain* (1995), Stephen Kotkin considers how a rural backwater amidst the Ural Mountains in present-day Russia was transformed into the massive urban center of Magnitogorsk by the 1930s from the perspectives of various inhabitants who lived there. Referring to the dramatic changes introduced in the Soviet Union by the Bolsheviks in reengineering society towards their vision of state socialism, Kotkin observes that central state "policies and programs formed part of the lives of people, ordinary and higher-ups alike, and their actions and reactions, initiatives and responses, in significant ways influenced how those programs were carried out, circumvented, and changed in unforeseen ways".[290] In short, he emphasises the need to understand how "the revolution came to [Magnitogorsk], and how the inhabitants of the resultant urban center … took part in the creation of what would come to be known as Stalinism".[291]

Apartheid too unfolded across South Africa, moving from the realm of policymaking to its implementation phase, when new laws crafted in the national parliament would come to be etched into the ground across the country by a state apparatus undergoing its own grand expansion. Yet, as Kotkin states, the passing of laws is "only the beginning of the story".[292] The following chapters explore how apartheid policies of spatial, administrative and economic transformation came to meet and reshape the realities for people living in Mogalakwena, and across the broader region. To rework Kotkin, these chapters seek to understand how apartheid came to the area, and how its inhabitants took part in what became known as apartheid - or, indeed, were forcibly coerced to do so.

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[289] Prime Minister DF Malan, cited in T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (University of California Press, 1975), p.1.
[290] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain,* p.21.
[291] *Ibid.*, p.2.
[292] *Ibid.*, p. 21

The Nationalist ascent to power in 1948 under the slogan of apartheid introduced ideological direction and unprecedented vigour to strategies for rural reengineering, heralding the dawn of a new era of rural local governance. In its first two decades in power, the apartheid central state set about radically transforming the countryside, introducing unprecedented interventions to restructure the ways that rural space, administration and economic relations functioned. These three dimensions formed the very core of the apartheid project, both at the level of rhetoric and practical implementation.

At the rhetorical level, each was understood to be a constitutive element in achieving the Kuyperian-Calvinist notions of “sovereignty in one’s own sphere” and the “Volkseie”: white statesmen promised that different “ethnic groups” were to be afforded their own territories within which to attain “self-governance” free from the corrupting influence of interactions across racial lines; each was to be governed by their “own” bureaucracies, suffused with ethnic idioms and modalities of rule; and each was to be allowed to pursue “separate development”, attaining economic self-sufficiency through their own efforts. In rural areas, these three promises came together in the central state’s much-vaunted “Bantustan policy”, which NP policymakers euphemised in the language of decolonization and self-determination.

At the practical level, however, these three elements were drawn into a more brutal calculus. Black communities were to be uprooted and resettled in great numbers on land which amounted to a fraction of the space that they had previously lived and worked on, decimating existing livelihood strategies and enforcing dependence on the white-dominated capitalist economy; the relations of economic exploitation which saw labour and wealth drain from Black areas to the cities and towns of “white South Africa” were to be entrenched through policies designed to halt the emergence of Black trade unionism, to limit the horizons of Black business, and to choke the flow of resources back into Bantustan areas; and the perennially under-resourced Bantustan bureaucracies were to provide a fig-leaf of legitimacy to these *de facto* policies of dispossession, absorbing Black economic aspirations and political contests, and emphasising the virtues of “self-help”. Spatial segregation, balkanized administration and economic exploitation were to form the mutually supportive pillars which preserved white minority rule and wealth.

To bring about these new facts on the ground, apartheid officials set the machinery of state in motion. What distinguished the apartheid state from its predecessor was not only the grandeur of its aims to transform the world in its image and the overwhelming faith it invested in the powers of administration to achieve this. From the 1950s, the white state would undergo massive expansion, crafted into the preeminent instrument of social engineering. Through procedure, paperwork, and naked coercion, officials of the apartheid state set out to carve the

world into racial-ethnic containers and police the relations between them. Its operations came to be suffused with what Posel describes as a "high-modernist fantasy, a hankering for totalizing order, positioning the eye of the state at the pinnacle of an orderly bureaucracy, with a panoramic view of the racial landscape and everything constructed upon it."[293]

The ambitions of the Department of Bantu Affairs and Administration (BAD) were particularly grand. From its previously lowly status under the segregationist government, the BAD under Hendrik Verwoerd came to seize native administration with newfound managerial vigour, growing into what Evans has described as a "state within a state": "[The BAD] amassed vast powers, generated ambitious blueprints, and undertook programs it drew up itself".[294] Over the course of the following two decades, the BAD would seek to remake virtually every facet of life for rural residents. It would undertake the massive reengineering of the countryside into segregated spaces, and elaborate a new system local and regional government.

Successive pieces of legislation signalled a sweeping new interventionist approach to rural "native administration" on the part of the central state: the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act, the 1959 Bantu Self-Government Act, and the 1970 Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act. These would effectively strip Black residents of South African citizenship, transforming them into citizens of one of ten new "Homelands" or "Bantustans" - divided in the terms of the categories of "ethnic" difference determined by state ethnologists. Invoking the language of "ethnic self-determination", apartheid statesmen portrayed the Bantustans as spaces in which Black Africans could live autonomously, developing "along their own lines" and through their own efforts. They enthused over the new system, claiming that it realised the same aspirations that had animated struggles for decolonization throughout Africa at the time. Yet for Steve Biko, the system constituted the "greatest single fraud ever invented by white politicians".[295] Yet Neville Alexander recognised that the "Bantustan strategy" threw up difficult obstacles along the path towards the resolution of the "national question". He conceived of the Bantustans and "the theory of nationality" that underpinned their formation as grave threats to Black liberation. Writing in 1979, Alexander wrote:

> Far from being "nonsense", nationality is an historic force. This is the reason for the propagation and proliferation of bogus nationalisms, the main purpose of which is to dissipate the force of the class struggle by deflecting it into channels that will nurture the dominant classes. to harness the creative and revolutionary energies of the national liberation movement in order to use them against the emergent

[293] Deborah Posel, 2001, "Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth Century South Africa", *African Studies Review*, 44, 2, p.100.
[294] Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*, p.2.
[295] Frank Talk, "Let's Talk about the Bantustans", *SASO Newsletter,* September-October 1972.

> nation by dividing it into warring and antagonistic groupings graced with the tainted robes of 'independent nations'.[296]

And, as the chapters of this thesis suggest, the Bantustan strategy succeeded to a significant degree in dividing Black struggle along class lines, and in instilling a certain kind of chaotic durability to the apartheid project over the next decades.

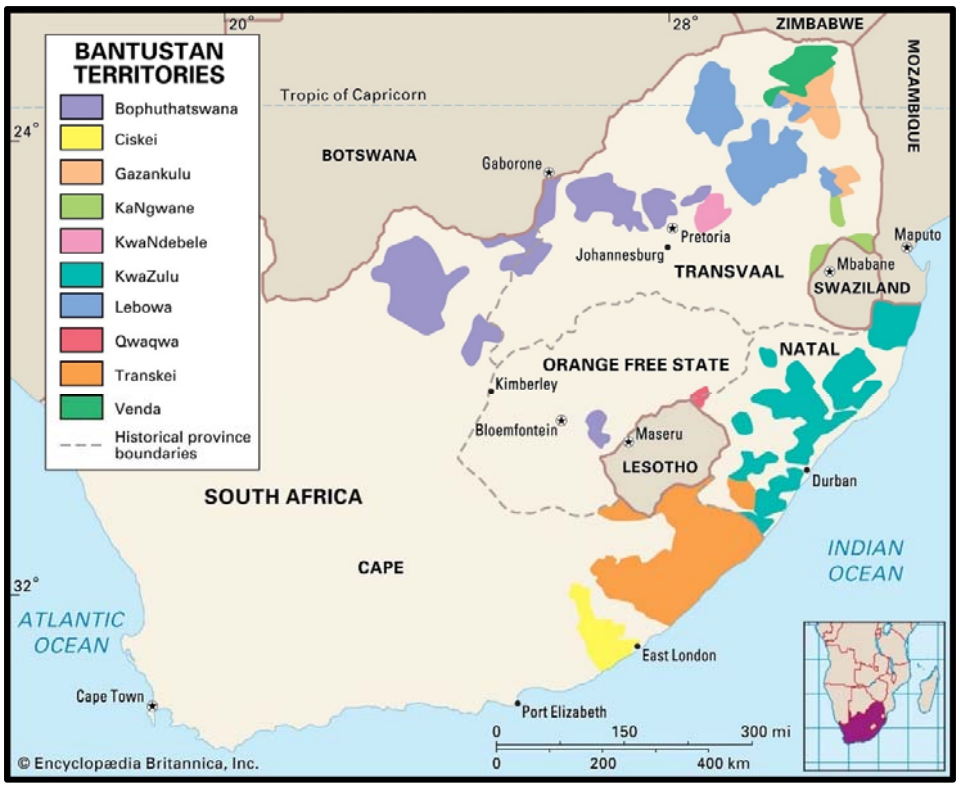


Figure 15: Bantustan boundaries designated over the course of the apartheid era.[297]

The Lebowa Bantustan lay to the country's north, one of six such territories carved out of the Transvaal province for Black occupation. Lebowa was officially proclaimed in 1963, branded by apartheid policy-makers as a multi-ethnic Pedi and Northern Ndebele "Homeland". It consisted of thirteen geographical territories ("magisterial districts") spread over a large part of the central, north-eastern and eastern parts of the then Transvaal – an archipelago of disconnected islands between the farmlands and towns of so-called "white South Africa".

[296] No Sizwe, *One Azania, One Nation,* p.7-12.
[297] Source: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023. Available at https://cdn.britannica.com/67/129967-050-A03E06DA/territories-Bantustan-South-Africa.jpg.

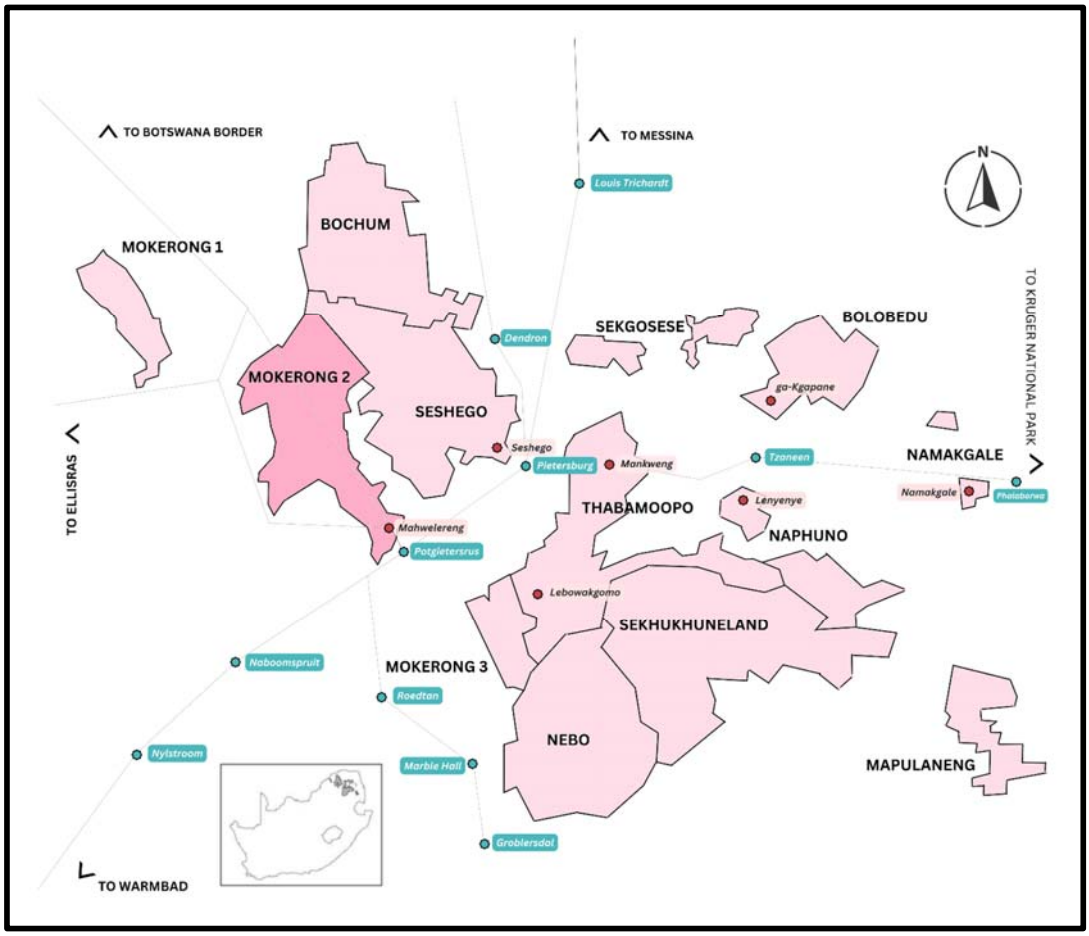


Figure 16: Map of the Lebowa Bantustan adapted from Letsoalo 1982. Areas which would come to fall under present-day Mogalakwena fell under the Mokerong II magisterial district coloured in a deeper shade.

The central state set about creating new departmental structures which would form the bureaucratic backbone of the new statelets. The Lebowa bureaucracy would come to be elaborated over the course of many years. While its first political executive was appointed in 1963, the administration would be built over the subsequent years, only really coming into effect in 1972 when the Bantustan received "self-governing status". At first based in the township of Seshego, outside what was then Pietersburg (today Polokwane), the administration would eventually move to Lebowakgomo, a new settlement proclaimed the capital of the Bantustan, and in which the trappings of national government were built – a parliament, administrative departments, and official residences. With the former school teaching inspector, Cedric Phatudi, installed as Lebowa's Chief Minister following the ouster of MM Matlala, Lebowa did not, however, agree to full independence. Phatudi frequently addressed gatherings of his Lebowa Peoples' Party (LPP) with criticisms of apartheid and the Bantustan system, especially given the paltry resources made available for Bantustan development, especially in the Bantustan's earliest years. Lebowa could not, as such, simply

be described as a puppet of the apartheid state, even as its room for manouevre was severely circumscribed. And under Phatudi and his ministers, there was to be little room for more radical forms of critique or action.

In transforming these three integrated policy elements into official processes that came to effect change on the ground, the state employed globalising technologies of statecraft – rapid bureaucratic elaboration, multiscalar and hierarchical state structure, the multiplication of offices and officials, rule by paperwork – technical and infrastructural interventions – bulldozing houses, transporting communities *en masse* to new locations, building roads, dams, walls, police stations, jails, military bases. To these should be added another technology of statecraft: banishment and abandonment – a technique crystallised in the cyclical episodes of forced removal which saw communities thrown into inhospitable and overpopulated terrains, deprived of the means of making a local livelihood, and then expected to bear the burden of local development in the absence of state investment.

Local government institutions and systems were designed to fulfill a particular role for the apartheid state in the rural and small-town landscapes of Lebowa and the Northern Transvaal, and were integral to the central state's overall Bantustan strategy. If the Lebowa state apparatus really came into its own over the course of the 1970s, it was preceded by almost two decades of spatial transformation and institution building at the local level. The first anchors of what would become an elaborate bureaucratic machine were dropped at the local level; the system was, in certain senses, created through state action from the bottom up. Between the 1950s and 1970s, apartheid policymakers and bureaucrats devised a new system of multiscalar local government that would be brought to life with varying degrees of success, premised on wrenching forms of spatial upheaval, interventionist forms of administration, and concerns to preserve conditions of white capital accumulation. In imposing this system on the various localities that make up present-day Mogalakwena, the state carved up the terrain into four broad spatial and administrative typologies: the "tribal village", the "white town", the "Bantu town", and the "Indian Group Area". Each of these typologies was planned according to distinct spatial characteristics and land use; each was to have its own form of local administration connected to parallel multileveled, segregated bureaucracies; and each was to be drawn into broader systems of capital accumulation.

In Chapter 2, I explore the roll-out of what would constitute the first wave of apartheid rural reengineering from the 1950s, announced with the passage of the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act. In the implementation of this act, local and regional apartheid officials were tasked with imposing new forms of settlement and land use (in the name of so-called "Betterment"), with

reconfiguring the chieftaincy into a bureaucratic local authority connected directly to institutions of the white state, directing control over the flows of labour between the rural and urban, and relegating the responsibility for local development to residents themselves.

In Chapter 3, I consider the schemes of spatial segregation that unfolded in the town of Potgietersrus. Central state administrators ordered the "whitening" of the town through the expulsion of Black residents from the Old Location to territory behind the border that state planners had concocted for Lebowa, by removing residents classified as "Indian" to a new "Group Area" adjacent to the now "whites-only" town, and by expelling all "Coloured" residents to a settlement in Pietersburg. While some disagreement over the modalities of segregation was aired by the Potgietersrus Town Council, this emerged largely over the question of maintaining access to labour. And from the mid-1960s, the supremacist myth of a "whites only" modern utopia, ordained by God, was allowed to take root in the town, even as it remained economically reliant on those it racialised and forcibly removed.

And in Chapter 4, I examine the processes through which the so-called "Bantu Town" of Mahwelereng was spatially rationalised, built and administered, and the local institutional landscape, social life and forms of economic relationality that resulted. The concept of the "Bantu Town" was, in policy terms, quite distinct from the urban townships, and apartheid ministers branded these new constructs as the place where Black residents could obtain the trappings of middle-class life. Nevertheless, in its levels of underdevelopment, its overwhelming reliance on migrant forms of labour for economic survival, and in the bold new forms of political contest it produced, Mahwelereng and other "Bantu Towns" came to feature many of the dynamics that permeate urban townships.

These three chapters describe a historical conjuncture in which the central state came to play a fundamental role in reshaping the field of rural local governance. Through the unfolding of processes of spatial, administrative and economic transformation which played out across the hierarchy of the white state and its agents, the central state's Bantustan strategy came to be instantiated on the ground. While certainly, as Kotkin describes, there, apartheid programmes on the ground were "carried out, circumvented, and changed in unforeseen ways", the following chapters emphasise the enormous scale and speed with which the central state moved to dramatically remake virtually every element of life, and the significant extent to which the state was, on its own terms, successful in achieving what it set out to do in the countryside. Yet spatial upheaval, the instantiation of Bantustan statecraft, and the entrenchment of relations of economic exploitation would unleash profound new dynamics in the field of local power relations, often beyond the imagination or control of apartheid state planners, politicians and bureaucrats.

Chapter 2: "Tribal Local Governance" in the Potgietersrus District: Betterment, Bureaucratisation and the Bantustan

"[W]hen it is realized that the success of the Government's policy of separate development is largely, if not entirely, dependent on the success of the system of Bantu Authorities, the importance of leaving no stone unturned to ensure that all Bantu Authorities will, in the shortest possible time, fulfill the functions for which they were established and become the effective and dynamic bodies which they should be, cannot be too strongly stressed".[298]

Introduction: Verwoerd Meets the Chiefs

In November 1954, the Minister of BAD, Hendrik Verwoerd, met a congregation of chiefs from around the region of present-day Limpopo at the Oliphants River, near the Zebediela Citrus Estates. Included in the gathering were chiefs of the Mogalakwena region. Flanked by his senior ministers, Verwoerd urged the chiefs to accept the state's roll-out of the Bantu Authorities system.[299] The Minister branded it as an extension of black "self-determination", translated by the ethnological department of the BAD as "Pušô ya Setshaba".[300] This was accompanied by promises of forms of modern "development" – infrastructure, schooling and the trappings of local administrative governance. Yet this, the Minister insisted, was to be undertaken according to "own cultural lines", hence the slogan of "separate development".

One of the Department's key aims was "the reorganization of administration in the reserves", which sought to bind traditional modes of rule ever more closely to the white state, using these existing structures to carry out forms of spatial dispossession, labour recruitment, containment and control.[301] Chiefs were to be transformed into what were called "Tribal Authorities", which Evans describes as local "administrative factotums of apartheid".[302] And responsibility for the development of key public infrastructures in the villages – schools, clinics, roads and so on – was initially thrown onto the backs of the Tribal Authorities.

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[298] *NASA* KGL 151 F55/1 'General Circular No. 17 of 1962: Bantu Authorities, Development and Functioning of', Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 2 July 1962, p.1.
[299] *Wits Historical Papers*, AD1646 'Urban Unrest, Banishments, Removals, 1948-1969' Institute of Race Relations Collection.
[300] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 F53/1, 'Algemene omsendbrief no. 6 van 1965: Bantoestam en Gemenskapowerhede', Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 8 February 1965
[301] Evans, 1997, *Bureaucracy and Race*, p.200.
[302] *Ibid.* p.x.

The transformation of the chieftaincy was spelled out in the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, a flagship piece of rural apartheid legislation introduced by Verwoerd's Department. In Mahmood Mamdani's view, what the NP signalled with the passage of the Act was "a comprehensive program for the restoration of fully autonomous Tribal Authorities".[303] He argues that apartheid "brought to South African natives full-blown indirect rule".[304] The white central state transformed chiefs into "decentralised despots"; a system in which "all moments of power: judicial, legislative, executive and administrative" were "fused in a single person" – the chief.[305] Lungisile Ntsebeza similarly argues that "colonialists and the architects of apartheid gave both chiefs and headmen enormous powers at the local level, the main powers being land administrative and judicial powers",[306] and argues that this rendered them "the primary level of rural local governance".[307] In this concentration of power, Ntsebeza echoes Mamdani's characterisation of the apartheid chief as a "clenched fist".[308] Yet, he argues, "while despotic, [Tribal Authorities] were not decentralised in the sense that they were autonomous and had significant powers devolved to them".[309] The Tribal Authorities functioned as an "extended arm" of the apartheid state, under tight control of local white officials.[310]

Both Mamdani and Ntsebeza drew their findings from areas of the Transkei. The work of a range of other scholars on the chieftaincy have sought to emphasise the diversity of responses and outcomes of the Bantu Authorities Act in the Lebowa context.[311] Where some chiefs emerge as archetypical "constructs of apartheid", empowered by the autocratic provisions of the Act and subsequent Bantustan legislation,[312] others evinced a more complex relationship with both the apartheid state and their communities, and many retained a significant degree of popular support.[313] Still others used their positions as chiefs to advance liberation politics.[314]

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[303] Mamdani, *Citizen & Subject*, p.95.
[304] *Ibid.,* p.89.
[305] *Ibid.*, p.19.
[306] Lungisile Ntsebeza, "The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same: Rural Land Tenure and Democracy in the Former Bantustans," in *The Promise of Land: Undoing a Century Of Dispossession in South Africa*, ed. Fred Hendricks, Lungisile Ntsebeza, and Kirk Helliker (Jacana Media, 2013), p.55.
[307] *Ibid.*, p.60.
[308] *Ibid.*
[309] Ntsebeza, Democracy Compromised, p.25.
[310] *Ibid.,* p.14.
[311]). See also: Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa*; Dineo Skosana, 2019, "Traditional Leadership and the African National Congress in South Africa: Reflections on a Symbiotic Relationship," in *Traditional Leaders in a Democracy: Resources, Respect and Resistance*, ed. Mbongiseni Buthelezi, Dineo Skosana, and Beth Vale, 2019, Johannesburg: Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection.
[312] Aninka Claassens, "It's Not Easy to Challenge a Chief: Lessons from Rakgwadi" (University of the Western Cape: Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, 2001).
[313] Dineo Skosana, "Why Are Chiefs Recognised", p.14. Saleem Badat, *The Forgotten People: Political Banishment under Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2012).
[314] Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle,* p.142.

These same variations can be found in the chieftaincies of the areas of present-day Mogalakwena.

In what follows, I trace the shifting terrain of chiefly rule in what was the Potgietersrus District following the passage of the Bantu Authorities Act in 1951, through to the proclamation and bureaucratic elaboration of the Lebowa Bantustan over the course of the 1960s and 1970s. Beyond attempts to transform the chieftaincy into an extended arm of the apartheid state, among the most profound changes that the central state brought to village life, however, was spatial: over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, processes of enclosure and dispossession which were already well advanced during the era of segregation were deepened further through the profoundly destructive methods of forced removal and resettlement devised by apartheid spatial planners and carried out by local agents of the white state. As William Beinart put it, Betterment "constituted perhaps the most far-reaching intervention into rural life since annexation and the introduction of taxes".[315] Rural areas were to be geared towards accommodating ever more people as the apartheid state stepped up its spatial engineering interventions.[316] The mass seizure of land and the transformation of scattered villages into grid-like settlements (that grew increasingly reliant on the cash economy and migrant wages), represented a seismic change in the rural spatial landscape, and dramatically changed the terms of local politics, including the place of the chieftaincy within it.

The place of the chieftaincy in local life also came to be redefined with the rise of an increasingly elaborate Lebowa bureaucracy, whose departments were mandated to oversee issues of local governance in the villages. While the Bantu Authorities Act stipulated the transformation of the chieftaincy, it also stipulated the development of a three-tiered governmental system, and the Tribal Authorities came to occupy the lowest rung of the new multiscalar bureaucracy that would be called "Lebowa", and whose top-level departments would operate out of the capital of Lebowakgomo, situated some 60km from present-day Mokopane. For many chieftaincies of Mogalakwena, this would entail the diminution of local power over the basic facets of everyday life – the means of agricultural (and social) reproduction, land usage and local development. Nevertheless, Tribal Authorities were modeled as agents of rural developmentalism and, in the language of "self-help", a euphemism for state neglect, they were tasked with taxing community members to build basic infrastructure.

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[315] William Beinart, 2001, *Twentieth-Century South Africa,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.135.
[316] These also imposed restrictions on, for instance, collecting firewood. *Zoutpansberg Review*, "Native Women Fined for Theft of Firewood", 6 May 1950.

Spatial Reconfiguration: Forced Removal and Resettlement

Once Bantu Authorities had been formally adopted, the very first initiative they were expected to facilitate was the implementation of "Betterment", which intended to radically remake rural settlements, gearing them towards taking on the scores of people soon to be displaced by forced removals of the central state. Spatial enclosure once again formed the first priority in the state's rural strategy. Delius describes how "from the 1950s, Betterment villages mushroomed across the veld. Distinct residential stands were laid out on grids and set boldly upon the plains amidst fenced fields. These settlements were dubbed *malaeneng* (the place of lines) by their inhabitants in recognition of their dreadful symmetry".[317]

Betterment attracted fierce contest, however, which explains the overwhelming focus of scholarship on this particular aspect of chiefly cooptation. In the face of orders for stock limitation (culling), fencing off of grazing lands for "rehabilitation", and resettlement of residents according to linear grids, Delius argues, "many people believed that their whole way of life faced destruction".[318] It was precisely because these measures had attracted such fervent resistance in preceding decades, when they had been carried out by Trust officials, that the apartheid state sought to use the institution of the chieftaincy to impose them.[319] Yet in some cases, this saw the ire of local communities either being turned onto the chiefs, who were pressured into refusing betterment schemes, or resistance being spearheaded by the chiefs themselves.

Sekhukhuneland was perhaps exceptional for the level of organised resistance that the prospect of Betterment elicited. Yet there were other organised attempts to prevent the roll-out of Bantu Authorities in the broader region. In ga-Matlala, Saleem Badat notes that the opposition waged by Kgošigadi Makoena and her supporters, broadly aligned to the Congress, had been quashed by [1955] with the mass deportation of those considered instigators, including Makoena herself. From the limited records I was able to find on the chieftaincies of the neighbouring Potgietersrus District do not suggest forms of resistance on a similar scale. Some chiefs in the area appear to have adopted the system fairly rapidly, while in others it took several years. The circumstances and processes through which these proclamations came to be made is not evident in the archival record. Bakenberg, Seleka and Mapela Tribal

[317] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.144–45.
[318] *Ibid.*, p.128.
[319] Apartheid officials claimed that "our critics say that we are forcing it down their throats and putting the clock back". By coopting chiefs, these measures could ostensibly be undertaken on a voluntary basis. *Ibid.*, p.79.

Authorities were declared in December 1954.[320] The relatively small traditional areas to the far north of the District soon followed: Shongoane Tribal Authority in 1955, Taueatsoala Tribal Authority and Lekalakala Tribal Authority in 1957.[321] The Nkidikitlane, Bathlokwa and Bakoni Tribal Authorities were proclaimed in 1962.[322] Yet the records only provide glimpses into the events surrounding their proclamation.

Hofmeyr's work on the Vaaltyn chieftaincy provides far greater detail, however. She describes longstanding opposition to Betterment, and resistance to the imposition of Tribal Authorities because of it. [323] Even as other chiefdoms in the area accepted Bantu Authorities and acceded to Betterment planning, Hofmeyr reports that the Vaaltyn chiefdom "would have nothing of it" and they "held out".[324] The BAC of Potgietersrus penned with exasperation in 1962:

> Only one tribe, namely the Ndebele of Vaaltyn, still stubbornly refuses to have anything to do with a tribal government. There is not the slightest prospect that this tribe will ever accept it. They believe, for example, that the Department will then take control of their location and apply improvement methods.[325]

Nevertheless, according to Hofmeyr, the Vaaltyn chieftaincy finally buckled after the death of Gwejela, and the Bantu Affairs Commissioner then exploited the factions that emerged within

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[320] *NASA* SAB KGL 158 1/1/3/2 'Besonderhede van Sotho Kapteins: Kaptein George Masibi Langa, Bakenberg, Distrik: Potgietersrus', Memo from WWM Eiselen, Commissioner-General of the Noord-Sotho Volkseenheid, to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 30 January 1963.
NASA SAB KGL 151 'Stamowerhede: Potgietersrus', Memo from Administrative Assistant of the Commissioner General to Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 4 July 1966

[321] *NASA* SAB KGL 158 6/2/2/66 'Besonderhede van Sotho Kapteins: Sampson Kgoboki Taueatsoala', Memo from MJ Phasha, Magistrate of Mokerong, Potgietersrus, 7 November 1975; *NASA* SAB KGL 158 1/1/3/8 'Besonderhede van Sotho Kapteins: Kgukari Lekalakala', Memo from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 4 May 1963. NASA SAB KGL 151 11/1/2 'Stamowerhede: Potgietersrus', Memo from Administrative Assistant of the Commissioner General to Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 4 July 1966.

[322] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 11/1/2 'Stamowerhede: Potgietersrus', Memo from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Administrative Assistant of the Commissioner General, 17 August 1966.

[323] She writes that in the Vaaltyn chieftaincy, "plans for dividing the chiefdom into arable, grazing, and residential areas had been finalized by the late 1930s", but that vigorous "popular pressure intervened at crucial points to prevent the chiefly imposition of resettlements". Then from as early as 1949, rumours abounded that Chief Gwejela had sold land for the development of a township on the village's doorstep, and the Chief felt sufficiently threatened that he "was scared to move out of his home after dark". Nevertheless, the support of the Native Affairs Department meant that the Chief "weathered this storm of popular scepticism and he remained in power" Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p. 122-123.

[324] *Ibid.,* p.123.

[325] Further details aspects of leadership dispute: "The previous captain, who wanted to cooperate, unfortunately had no influence. All the members of the Bakgomans [*sic*], who rule the tribe, were opposed to him. They have now asked for someone to be appointed as captain who is insane and who was not born of a tribal woman. However, the Department decided that his uncle should be appointed acting captain. If he accepts the appointment, the same difficulty can be expected as before. This has already occurred during the few months he has been observing. It would therefore be a vain hope to expect them to accept it now." Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30, N11/1/2, 'Funksioneering van Bantoe-Owerhede', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 5 September 1962.

the chiefdom.[326] The Vaaltyn Tribal Authority was declared on 6 December 1963. At this point, the Department declared, “all tribes have introduced Bantu Authorities” in the Potgietersrus District, making it the first district to have done so in the Transvaal.[327]

Once Tribal Authority status was conferred, it appears that Betterment procedures were rapidly introduced. The files of the Taueatsoala Tribal Authority, established on 11 May 1956, bear witness to some of the changes introduced: “Camps' fencing almost complete - neighborhoods and lands surveyed and allocated - and a school of 4 rooms; 2 boreholes equipped - bordering Magalakwins River”.[328] Vaaltyn was declared a Tribal Authority in 1963 through a decree that: “required inter alia that the scattered, traditional style villages within the chiefdom be moved into consolidated grid plan settlements.”[329] From the mid-1960s, the Vaaltyn chieftaincy was being “forcibly rearranged” into residential, arable, and grazing areas, and “plots of uniform size in the newly designated arable area were issued to all. These plots, which were generally a quarter of what was considered necessary for a viable farming unit”, and in any case, demand quickly overshot available land.[330]

Official records show that the “progressiveness” of a chief was assessed by Departmental officials according to a willingness to impose the planning scheme. The Lekalakala Tribal Authority, for instance, was spoken of in glowing terms by the BAC because Kgoši Kgukari Lekalakala “had his area declared as an improvement area and necessary planning was done.” In the character profile contained in the BAD archives, Lekalakala is written to have “always worked very well with Dept… [He is] very loyal to the department and officials. Will likely continue”.[331] Yet in this task, chiefs more often functioned as a local rubber stamp, extending “permission” to a range of different officials who were brought in to carry out the tasks of Betterment – or, what JC Myers might term “the costuming” of state action in forms of traditional legitimacy.[332] A flood of planners, surveyors, engineers, agricultural officers, dipping inspectors, and various other Trust officials were sent out to re-engineer rural space.

Developments in the Potgietersrus District suggest that the state was pursuing a different strategy than that which it imposed in Sekhukhuneland, owing to differences in political

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[326] Hofmeyr, “We Spend Our Years”, p.124.
[327] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 1/1/2 ‘Bantoe-owerhede’, Memo from JC Venter, Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, to Commissioner General for the Noord-Sotho Volkseenheid, 25 April 1963.
[328] *NASA* SAB KGL 158 6/2/2/66 ‘Besonderhede van Sotho Kapteins: Sampson Kgoboki Taueatsoala’, Memo from MJ Phasha, Magistrate of Mokerong, Potgietersrus, 7 November 1975.
[329] *Ibid.,* p.116.
[330] Hofmeyr, “We Spend Our Years”, p.124.
[331] *NASA* SAB KGL 158 1/1/3/8 ‘Besonderhede van Sotho Kapteins: Kgukari Lekalakala’, Memo from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 4 May 1963.
[332] Myers, *Indirect Rule in South Africa*.

context. The apartheid state had sought to undermine the power of the Sekhukhune paramountcy by proliferating the number of recognised chieftaincies (from just 3 in 1955 to 54 *magoši* in 1970).[333] This had been precisely aimed at crippling the forms of organised resistance that [Kgoši Sekhukhune] and the networks of Sebatakgomo had galvanized. By contrast, the number of chieftaincies in the Potgietersrus District, which was not characterised by a paramountcy through which to channel united resistance, remained more or less constant at 11. There are just two cases in which Tribal Authorities were created without previously recognised chiefs, and both were headman of small peripatetic groupings.[334] This might also be indicative of the far higher levels of white state control in a District, characterised by a relatively accessible geography, greater road mobility and closer proximity to the infrastructure of white state repression than the mountainous region of Sekhukhuneland.

Betterment policies saw the radical diminution of available land amidst the ever greater populations that were being forced to live in what the state called "Betterment villages" and "closer settlements". Scarcity of land would only increase over the subsequent decades, as the planning of the emergent Lebowa Bantustan (discussed in the next section) "made allowance for the settlement of 40 per cent more residents than there were plots available".[335] Forced removals were carried out with unprecedented vigour in areas deemed part of "white South Africa". Delius writes:

> [O]fficials and farmers moved decisively to put an end to African families' access to land in "white" farming areas… The 1960s also brought an intensified onslaught against settlements described in the grotesque language of the times as "black spots". These blemishes on officially defined white landscapes consisted of rent tenants, residents of mission stations and communities which had purchased farms.[336]

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[333] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.141.
[334] As has been reported of other areas, the Department intervened in succession disputes in the Mokopane region, supporting those who expressed acceptance of Tribal Authorities and Betterment policies. According to state records, the Lekalakala Tribal Authority was constituted by a wandering faction from ga-Matlala, under a headman who had resented the impositions of the chief. He and a group of followers had ultimately settled on the farm, Tiberius, towards the north of the district of Potgietersrus, and had obtained Tribal Authority status in 1957. *NASA* SAB KGL 158 N1/1/3/8 'Geskiedenis van die Bakonistam, Lekalakala', Memo from JC Venter, Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 4 May 1963. Similarly, the Nkidikitlane grouping had not initially been recognized as an independent 'tribe', but at the time of the first Betterment planning in the area, the Department had instead intended for the grouping to fall under Chief Matlala's Bakoni Tribal Authority. The Department had later changed its mind and recognized Nkidikitlane as its own Tribal Authority in 1962, elevating a former headman to the role of chief. *NASA* SAB KGL 151 11/1/2 'Stamowerhede: Potgietersrus', Memo from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Administrative Assistant of the Commissioner General, 17 August 1966.
[335] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle,* p.125.
[336] *Ibid*, p.142–43.

Letsoalo describes the violence of these processes in settlements across Lebowa. One particularly harrowing account of removal is described in which Black residents who had over the years developed their own local economies, built key infrastructure and sustained access to markets, came to be dumped in the semi-desert conditions of the Metz and Bothashoek resettlement areas in Lebowa. Letsoalo records the decline of the consumption of nutritional food amongst those resettled, and outlines some of the strategies through which people tried to get by. One widespread response was to send family members to find work in urban areas. Indeed, while policy may have claimed that what distinguished "Betterment villages" from "closer settlements" was the former's agricultural emphasis, in reality there was no real distinction, both having been constructed without any real economic base.[337]

These areas came to be increasingly looked upon as rural dormitories for unwanted "surplus populations". Delius describes "industrial villages" in the countryside, created on the basis of "mass resettlement and draconian control over movement".[338] And Residents became even more dependent on wages from the urban and industrial economy, and those without jobs suffered greatly as it became more difficult to access land".[339] This was also explicitly acknowledged by state officials: the BAD Minister in the early 1960s, MDC de Wet Nel, was reported in the *Rand Daily Mail* as having described the newly devised rural settlements as acting as "numerous little sponges" to soak up reserve Africans "not destined to be farmers and would thus be migrant labourers, periodically employed on mines, White farms etc".[340]



Figure 17: Government trucks used to forcibly remove rural residents in the late 1970s.[341]

[337] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.80.
[338] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, 145.
[339] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.10.
[340] *Rand Daily Mail*, "De Wet Nel Explains Plans for Bantustans", 15 April 1962.
[341] *Northern Review,* "Sanctuary for Tribesmen Against Moving", 12 October 1979.

Forced removals massively expanded the populations of rural reserves across the country. Evans observed "explosive growth of the reserves' population between 1955 and 1969. In this period, population density increased from 60 to 100 persons per square mile, yielding a growth rate of 5.38 percent accountable for neither by immigration nor by natural increase."[342] These processes would only accelerate in the following decade.[343] Notwithstanding the "self-governing" status bestowed on the Lebowa Bantustan, the 1970s would represent a high tide of forced removals. In Lebowa specifically, Letsoalo estimated that between 1952 to 1982, 80 000 - 250 000 people had been affected by removals in the Bantustan. The most conservative figures suggest that 20 000 were removed through 'black spot removals', 27 000 by Homeland consolidation, and 30 000 by urban relocations.[344]

As across Lebowa, waves of uprooting and forced resettlement were witnessed across areas of Potgietersrus. One amongst many of those that experienced the trauma of expulsion was the Mmamelete Location, a community which fell outside of chiefly control on the odiously named "Bastaardspad" farm, some 50kms away from the fledgling Mahwelereng. The Mmamelete Location had in fact been proclaimed a "Rural Bantu Town" ["Landelike Bantoedorp"] in 1956.[345] But just five years later, an "Ad hoc committee planning the district" had recommended its disestablishment,[346] which was ultimately assented to by Minister de Wet Nel in 1965.[347] Over the next four years, the homes that had been built through the efforts of local Black residents were successively pulled apart.

A consistent stream of paperwork between local agents of the white state and top officials of the BAD accompanied the drawn-out processes of forced removal. Indeed, the archival record shows the scrupulous involvement of officials at the very summit of the department, including the Secretary of the BAD, who was in regular contact with the Bantu Commissioners in the region over the Mmamalete removal, both the local Potgietersrus office and the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the Northern Areas based in Pietersburg.

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[342] Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*, p.243.
[343] Letsoalo provides figures drawn from political scientists at the time. Mare reported, for instance, that between 1948 and 1976, 258 632 Africans had been removed from 'black spots' and resettled in the Homelands; for the years 1970 to 1979, Gordon (1981) the figure at 240 555, and by 1980, Marks reported it at about a quarter of a million. Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.29.
[344] *Ibid.*, p.69.
[345] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2/1545/1 'Potgietersrus: Mmamelete Bantoedorp: Afskaffing en Betaling van Vergoeding', Internal memorandum of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 25 February 1965.
[346] *Ibid*.
[347] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2/1545/2 "Afskaffing van Dorp Mmamelete in die Distrik Potgietersrus". Proclamation by the Minister of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Government Gazette Notice, 6 January 1965.

It was up to the Agricultural Official [Landboubeampte] of the Potgietersrus office to conduct a detailed survey of the existing houses on the land in 1963, and assess the value of the structures for possible compensation.[348] It was reported that one "settler" in particular was demanding compensation for his four-roomed home which he had styled as a guest house, and as such the official drew up a floorplan of the building, including the materials used and the value of each. (See fig. below). Such was the intrusive gaze of the state into the housing arrangements of Black residents of the land. It was determined that the value of Mr Shiburi's house was R500. One other structure, owned by John Mashaba, was deemed to be worth R140. The rest, however, were deemed to be of very little value (under R80), and thus only entitled to a demolition fee. The two houses that remained on the land, it was noted, were transferred to the Trust for their own uses.[349] And finally, in a letter of 12 August 1965, the Secretary of BAD, apparently without any sense of shame, repeatedly inquired as to whether there were any building materials left behind that could be auctioned for income for the South African Bantu Trust Account.[350] These documents reveal the granular detail with which homes were scrutinized as targets of administrative intervention.

[348] *Ibid*.
[349] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2/1545/4 'Afskaffing van Mmamelete Bantoedorp', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 21 July 1965.
[350] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2/1545/4, 'Afskaffing van Mmamelete Bantoedorp: Distrik Potgietersrus', Letter from Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration, Pretoria, to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 12 August 1968.

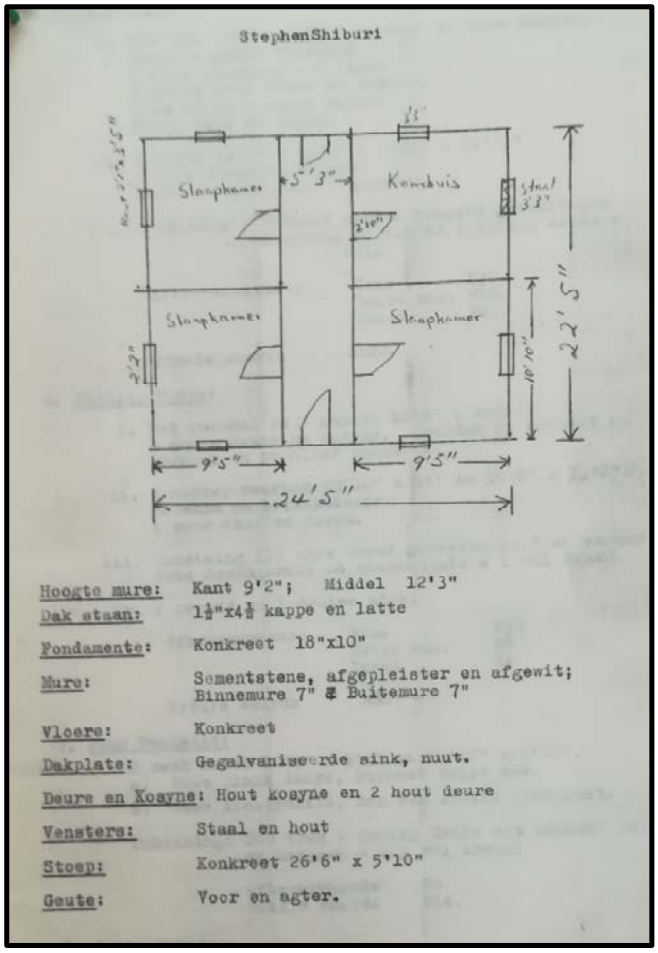


Figure 18: Plan of Mmamelete Location home drafted by the Agricultural Official of the Potgietersrus Bantu Affairs Commissioner detailing the components to be pulled apart.[351]

Perversely, in 1971, when the area of Bastaardspad would come to fall under the Lebowa Bantustan, it was decided to re-establish a location on the grounds that had been occupied by the Mmamelete Location residents in order to relocate residents from the Ellisras and Vaalwater areas who were said to be occupying white farms. And so it was that some 263 families from across the Vaalwater and Ellisras areas were to be relocated to the old Mmamelete location, vacated just 6 years previously, and declared part of a new

[351] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2/1545/4 'Afskaffing van Mmamelete Bantoedorp', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 21 July 1965.

"Bantoedorp".[352] Numerous respondents from other areas indicated that they, like the residents of Mmamelete, were not just forcibly removed once but several times.[353]

There are some indications about the enormity of spatial change and ecological destruction witnessed in the "tribal locations" of the Potgietersrus District. In Vaaltyn, where subsistence agriculture was already stretched, further deterioration marred survival prospects; this was dramatically worsened with the ceding of some 376 hectares of communal land for the creation of the Mahwelereng from the early 1960s.[354] Hofmeyr provides aerial photography which demonstrates the effects of these mass resettlement processes in the Vaaltyn chieftaincy, attesting to the enormous spatial changes that took place in the area over the course of just over three decades.[355] (See aerial photographs overleaf).

[352] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2/1545/1 'Vaalwater: Vestiging van Bantoe Gesinne in Bantoedorp in die Tuisland: Distrik Potgietersrus', Letter from Department of Community Affairs, Lebowa Government Services, Pietersburg, to the Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development', Pretoria, 9 June 1971.
[353] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Mokopane, 8 March 2020; Interview with World Phago, Mokopane, 24 May 2019.
[354] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.116.
[355] The photographs that follow have been reproduced from Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.124-125.

Figures 19-23: Aerial Photographs of Vaaltyn/Mahwelereng



The Vaaltyn Chieftaincy in 1953



1963: the beginnings of the Mahwelereng Township



1970



1987

Just as resettlement processes were first unfolding in the Potgietersrus District, the region was hit by a lengthy and punishing drought – one of many cyclical bouts of prolonged baking, bone-dry weather that has long gripped the region. In 1962, for instance, it was reported that in Mapela Location, "the blue sky means only hunger here".[356]

In the years that followed, villages in the Potgietersrus District would continue to be hemmed into grid-patterns and subject to even greater population influxes. In 1968, Cosmas Desmond observed in the Potgietersrus district:

> Throughout the whole district almost all the tribal villages have been taken over by the Bantu Trust. As usual this meant that the people had to demolish their houses and rebuild in the specified place without compensation. In this area, in particular, the passion on the part of the authorities for straight lines seems to have been given full play. I heard of cases where people had to demolish and rebuild their house a few feet further back because part of it was over the line demarcated for the residential site. Most of the residential areas are already extremely over-crowded but people are still being moved in from European farms. … The local clergy and others say that there is extreme poverty and malnutrition.[357]

While Betterment took time to implement, Hofmeyr reports by 1970 it had largely been completed. By 1982, Letsoalo estimated that between 80-94% of the area of the tribal locations of the Potgietersrus district was under Betterment,[358] and 72% of land in Lebowa as a whole had been planned according to Betterment regulations.[359]

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[356] They are having a hard winter at Mapela Location… It has not rained and children are hungry. Even the wild spinach that grows in the veld has shriveled and died. Many of Mapela's menfolk work in the cities and send small sums home. Their wives, in good seasons, till their own plots and help local farmers with harvesting. But the drought has upset the delicately-balanced budget of the average Mapela householder. *Rand Daily Mail*, "Five children, parents share water melon", 12 July 1962.
[357] Cosmas Desmond, 1971, *The Discarded People: An Account of African Resettlement*, Johannesburg: The Christian Institute of South Africa, p.161.
[358] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.68.
[359] *Ibid.*, p.69.

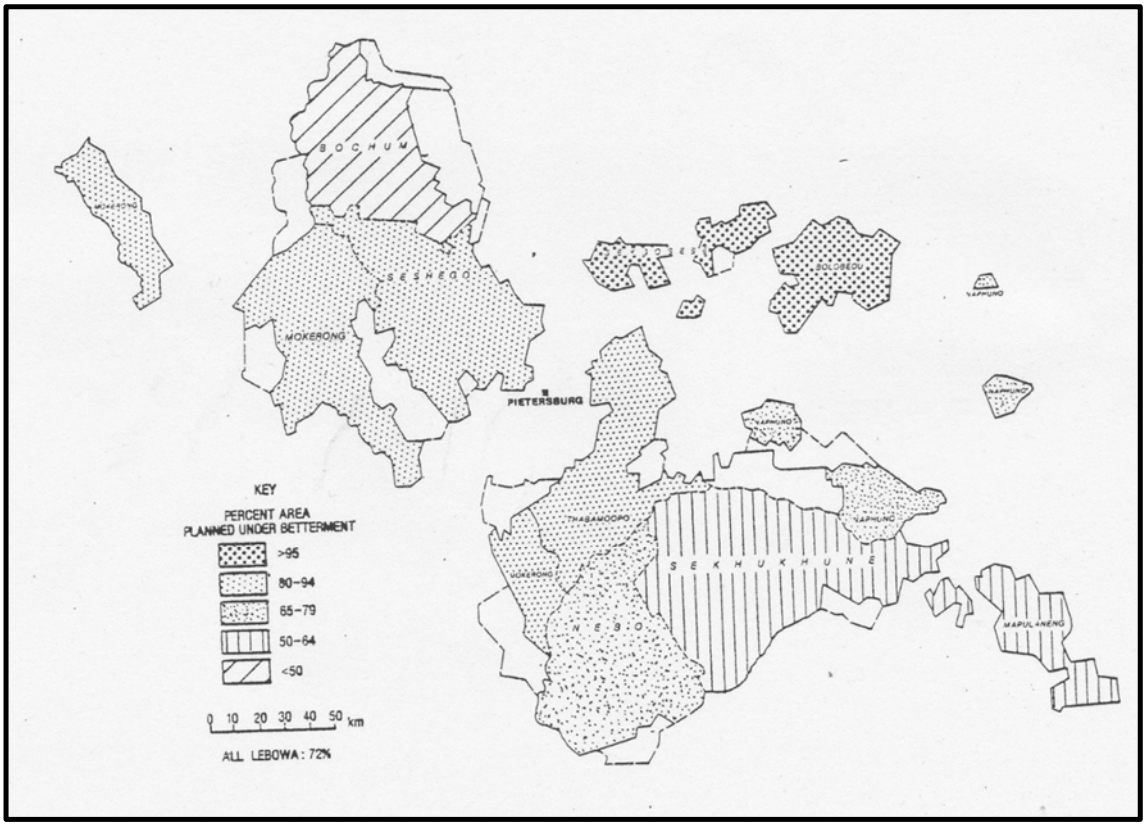


Figure 24: Map indicating percentage of Lebowa planned under Betterment regulations. Note: The Tribal Authorities of Mogalakwena fell under the District of Mokerong.[360]

The effects of forced mass resettlements on the land were profoundly destructive. And it was not only commoners who suffered its results; traditional leaders too felt the biting results of the central state's resettlement schemes. In 1964, a quarterly meeting of the chiefs and headman of the district with the BAC, police commanders and senior administrator of the Commissioner General's office, traditional leaders aired their grievances, which were noted as: "They are poor and are paid too low wages. They have too little land for their livestock which is reduced annually". By way of response, white officials lectured the gathering about the importance of protecting "fauna and flora". The Chairman of the committee insisted that not everyone could be a farmer, that "the growth among the Bantu is very high… If livestock herding is not adapted, thousands of cattle will be lost every year because owners do not rely on Trust Auctions etc. do not want to sell". He berated the chiefs for not recognizing "what the Department does about feeding people, relief work etc", and, perversely, contended that it was because "[white] Officials are sympathetic to Bantu as far as his problems are concerned so

[360] *Ibid.*, p.68.

he constantly goes to them for help" but that "Tribal Authorities have a great obligation to actively help people".[361]

The transformations of communal land and residence patterns, and the massive rise of the rural population, also signalled a major challenge to one area which Ntsebeza regards as central to the "clenched fist" of chiefly power: land allocation. Ntsebeza reports that in the rural Transkei, "the powers that traditional leaders possessed during the colonial and the apartheid era forced communities to abide by tyrannical chiefs, otherwise they would stand little chance to acquire land".[362] There are recorded instances of chiefs exploiting their powers over land allocation to punish rivals and reward supporters, to extract forced labour and to expropriate cattle.[363] Yet in Lebowa, as land became less productive and the centre of the rural economy shifted away from agricultural, the force of this power was significantly diluted. If certain powers remained fused in the figure of the chief, it was nonetheless over a distinctly reduced set of capacities. The role of chiefly institutions in key aspects of local social reproduction had, by the 1980s, been virtually hollowed out.

Bureaucratisation and Developmentalism: "The child should be taught to walk"

The reduced role of the chieftaincy in some of the most determinant aspects of local governance was further accelerated by processes of administrative reconfiguration taking place alongside Betterment. Along with Betterment, the Bantu Authorities Act also prescribed radical alterations in the institutions of chieftaincy. It spoke of inculcating bureaucratic modalities of governance in the "tribes", fostering a cohort of administrators trained in the principles of so-called "modern government", and transforming Tribal Authorities into local "development machinery". What this represented, more cynically, was an attempt to entangle the chieftaincy into greater forms of centralised bureaucratic oversight – an "iron cage of rationality" premised on the constant gathering of local information, regular reporting to superior governmental structures and the strict control of resources.

A series of government circulars from the late 1950s and early 1960s contained in the National Archives make clear the state's intentions to tightly regulate the chieftaincy rather than expand its realm of autonomy, contra Mamdani. They provided interpretive guidance to local level

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[361] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N1/15/4 'Bywoning van die kwartaalvergarderings van kapteins en hoofmanne', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to the Commissioner-General of the Noord-Sotho Volkseenheid, 7 February 1964.
[362] Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised*, p.99.
[363] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.46.

BAD officials who were implementing the administrative vision spelled out in legislation. Drafted by officials of the Department in Pretoria, these circulars show there was to be very little that was "indirect" in apartheid's vision of "indirect rule".

What the Bantu Authorities system proposed, the circulars stated, was that the chieftainship be "modernised": it was to be "the traditional system of government of the Bantu adapted to *modern requirements*".[364] A new set of administrative roles and protocols were to be introduced at the level of the Tribal Authority which, it was hoped, would gradually wean rural black Africans off their supposed "dependence" on the BAD and its officials on the ground. The Tribal Authorities were to be reshaped according to modern administrative requirements, constituted as a council system, with an executive constituted by the Chief and his councillors (*bakgomana*).[365] The Act provided for salaried "clerical and administrative personnel" to assist the chief in his duties, initially constituted by a Treasurer and Secretary.[366] Circulars detail the explicit hope that this nascent administration would absorb the aspirations of the growing class of educated rural inhabitants and "encourage" the growth of "career" bureaucrats who would look upon their work as worthwhile.[367] There was thus a vision of a cohort of black administrators who would have a stake in the system, and thereby ensure its sustainability.[368]

While laced with the language of self-determination, this was only to be realised in its fullest extent when the white state deemed it opportune – "Bantu control over Bantu areas", would be bestowed, in the words of Verwoerd, "as and when it becomes possible for them to exercise that control efficiently and properly for the benefit of their own people'".[369] The role of white guardianship espoused by the colonial civilising mission was retained, but the language used to describe it was transformed into that of "modernising" and "supervising" the entrenchment

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[364] Emphasis added. The Department insisted, for instance, that the "old ways of life" such as "hunting and migrating with cattle" had "long since been left behind", and the "Tribal Authority must now consider what steps in accordance with the new way of life (ie. Ploughing, stock improvement, milk schemes, water boring, afforestation, etc.) should be taken to improve the life of the tribe". *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959: Financing of Bantu Tribal Authorities and Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure", Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 6 July 1959, p.6.
[365] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.163.
[366] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.17.
[367] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.17. As Phillips indicates, there was also an emphasis on educating the sons of chiefs. Officials hoped that through education, they would become more than mere "symbolic heads" or "puppets", and be trained in aspects of "practical useful knowledge" pertinent to administration, including "Bantu Administration and Law, Bookkeeping, Agriculture, Office Routine, General Science, Commercial Arithmetic and Typing". Quoted in Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.51.
[368] This resonated with the broader aims of the apartheid state to foster the growth of a black middle class and diminish the pull of revolutionary impulses. As Delius has argued, the Act "aimed to lay the foundations of a political and economic arena which would absorb the energies and aspirations of the African middle classes." Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.110.
[369] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.131.

of bureaucratic procedures and developmentalism.[370] The ambit of the BAC's role in "tribal life" stipulated in the policies remained broad, attending "meetings of Bantu Authorities on every possible occasion in order to advise and guide those authorities in the performance of their functions and duties".[371]

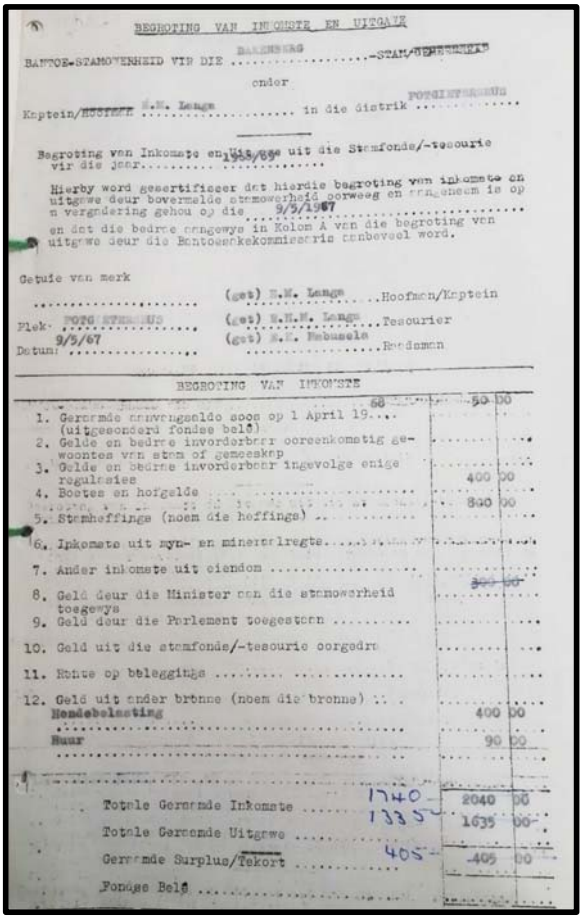
The Tribal Authority was also expected to function as an information-generating entity, gathering data on births, deaths and a range of other local statistics. These were to be conveyed periodically to the BACs to be fed into the central state machinery which sought a "panoramic view of the racial landscape and everything constructed upon it."[372] The BACs of each district in the Northern Transvaal would, for instance, report upwards to a Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner (CBAC) who sat in Pietersburg. The Secretary of the BAD in Pretoria would issue correspondence to both the CBAC and individual BACs, seeking continuous streams of information about the roll-out and functioning of the system. Heavy volumes of correspondence continued to be transmitted between the Department and its field agents, outlining in meticulous detail developments around the roll-out of the system. In theory and in practice, the white state did not seek to ease its grip on "tribal life".

Financial control over the Tribal Authorities remained firmly within the purview of the BAC. He exercised strong powers vis-à-vis the Treasurer, whose he was to ratify.[373] The apartheid state sought to introduce an elevated expectation[374] for strict financial documentation and record-keeping systems for the central government to "gauge with some degree of certainty … the authority's financial position".[375] The BAC was to teach the Treasurer what was cast as the fulcrum of "modern government": the "proper control over and administration of public moneys".[376] The "maintenance of the prescribed ledger" was deemed of utmost importance.[377] The Treasurer was to submit annual budget documents to the BAC for consideration by the Department,[378] and the chieftaincy was now inducted into the cycle of government time: the financial year, which ran from April to the following March.[379] The books were to be made

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[370] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.6.
[371] *NASA* KGL 151 F55/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1962", p.5.
[372] Posel, "Race as Common Sense", p.100.
[373] *NASA* KGL 151 F55/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1962", p.9.
[374] There had been bookkeeping undertaken with some advancement prior to this. See *NASA* SAB KOG 627 'Zebediela's Location Local Council: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 1949', Letter from Secretary of Native Affairs to Chief Native Commissioner, Pietersburg', 8 April 1949.
[375] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.11.
[376] *NASA* KGL 151 F55/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1962", p.6.
[377] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.22.
[378] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 29 of 1960: Amendment to the General Regulations for Bantu Tribal Authorities published by Government Notice No.939 of 1953", Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 30 August 1960, p.1.
[379] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 29 of 1960", p.1.

available to "the auditor", who would now also enter the field of "tribal local government".[380] The BAC also retained "ultimate responsibility" for the collection of "tribal levies and taxes",[381] access to the Trust Account, and veto power over expenditure plans.[382] He was also to ensure that "any tendency to act irregularly or beyond the scope of the Authority's powers and functions" was "dealt with tactfully but firmly".[383]



BEGROTING VAN INKOMSTE EN UITGAWE

BANTOE-STAMOWENHEID VIR DIE ..... -STAM/GEMEENSKAP

onder

Kaptein/HOOFMAN E.M. Lenge ..... in die distrik .....

Begroting van Inkomste en Uitgawe uit die Stamfonde/-tesourie vir die jaar 1967/68

Hierby word gesertifiseer dat hierdie begroting van inkomste en uitgawe deur bovermelde stamowerheid oorweeg en goedgekeur is op 'n vergadering gehou op die 9/5/1967 en dat die bedrae aangewys in Kolom A van die begroting van uitgawe deur die Bantoesakekommissaris aanbeveel word.

Getuie van merk

(get) E.M. Lenge ..Hoofman/Kaptein

Plek: POTGIETERSRUS (get) E.M.M. Lenge ..Tesourier

Datum: 9/5/67 (get) E.M. Mabusela ..Raadsman

BEGROTING VAN INKOMSTE

		68	50 00
1.	Geraamde saldo soos op 1 April 19.... (uitgesonderd fondse beleë)		
2.	Gelde en bedrae invorderbaar ooreenkomstig gewoontes van stam of gemeenskap		
3.	Gelde en bedrae invorderbaar ingevolge enige regulasies		400 00
4.	Boetes en hofgelde		800 00
5.	Stamheffinge (noem die heffinge)		
6.	Inkomste uit myn- en minerale regte		
7.	Ander inkomste uit eiendom		
8.	Geld deur die Minister van die stamowerheid toegewys		800 00
9.	Geld deur die Parlement toegestaan		
10.	Geld uit die stamfonde/-tesourie oorgedra		
11.	Rente op beleggings		
12.	Geld uit ander bronne (noem die bronne)		
	Hondebelasting		400 00
	Huur		90 00
	Totale Geraamde Inkomste	1740	2040 00
	Totale Geraamde Uitgawe	1335	1635 00
	Geraamde Surplus/Tekort	405	405 00
	Fondse Beld		

Figure 25: Budget of Incomes and Expenses drafted by officials of the Bakenberg Traditional Authority in 1967.[384]

[380] *NASA* KGL 151 F55/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1962", p.8-9.
[381] *Ibid*., p.10.
[382] There was a cascading level of authority for authorizing payments: the BAC could affirm payments of up to £500; the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner (CBAC) of between £500 and £1,500; and the Secretary of the BAD any amount. And the Department was quick to warn its officials that "Care should be exercised that Bantu Authorities … do not gain the impression that they have merely to apply for funds and that such funds will be forthcoming. Both … have sources of revenue available to them and they should be encouraged to exploit these sources of revenue so that by applying the principle of "self-help" they can on their own initiative find the funds, or at least a portion thereof, necessary to undertake community and development services" *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 'General Circular No. 29 of 1960", p.1; *NASA* KGL 151 F55/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1962", p.4.
[383] *NASA* KGL 151 F55/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1962", p.5.
[384] *NASA,* SAB BAO 11/1/3 'Begrotings, 1968/1969: Bakenberg', Letter from Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 25 April 1968

Greenberg explains that the Traditional Authorities were also conceived to function as a node in the sprawling apparatus of labour control, part of the "rural control machinery" which had hitherto not existed. Under the Bantu Labour Regulations of 1968, Tribal Authorities were now required to establish tribal labour bureaus. These structures would register African work seekers, process job requisitions and attest employment contracts. The state's intent was undisguised: the tribal bureaus would receive displaced squatters and redundant Africans, "Bantu who are no longer productively employed outside the homeland"; and, according to Greenberg, "they would above all become a point of control", with the state insisting that "every Bantu who wished to leave his homeland to take up employment outside has first to obtain the approval of his Bantu authority, failure to do so being a punishable offence".[385]

While the state sought to sharpen and intensify its gaze and modes of control in rural life, it spoke of its interventions in the institutions of chieftaincy in terms of development – a buzzword in official apartheid discourse. But apartheid refracted the concept through its particular brand of modernist, bureaucratically-driven, racial-ethnic segregationist vision. The roll-out of infrastructure was intended to serve as a "pull" factor, encouraging rural residents to build lives in the Bantustans and invest in its political project. The Tribal Authority had to be "modernized" because the "old ways of life" such as "hunting and migrating with cattle" had "long since been left behind", and it now had to "consider what steps in accordance with the new way of life (ie. ploughing, stock improvement, milk schemes, water boring, afforestation, etc.) should be taken to improve the life of the tribe".[386] Infrastructure was also to be the means by which separation would be realized, monitored, policed.

In this schema, institutions of chiefly rule were to be coopted as something akin to development partners. The Tribal Authorities were, indeed, to be engines of local development. Instead of large-scale central state funding, the roll-out of rural infrastructure would instead be borne largely by rural Black residents themselves – and this was euphemized in the language of taking responsibility for one's own ethnic destiny. Amidst the crippling survivalism unleashed by Betterment and mass resettlement, it was to be the Tribal Authorities and their subjects who would bear the public responsibility for "developing" their localities.[387] The discourse of "self-help" permeates government circulars, thinly veiling the unwillingness of the state to commit the resources actually required for developing the rural areas into

[385] Greenberg, *Legitimating the Illegitimate*, p.46.
[386] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.6.
[387] Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*, p.67.

economically viable entities. “The child”, the circular reads, “should now no longer be carried by its mother [the white state] but should be taught to walk”.[388]

While the Tomlinson Commission of 1954 had insisted that a least 45% of total South African territory should be set aside for the Bantustan system,[389] and stipulated massive state investment to industrialise these territories and create genuine self-sufficiency (that is, “absolute apartheid”), Hendrik Verwoerd had rejected the Commission’s proposed £104 million out of hand, because it would have meant that “white living standards would have to be curtailed in order to make apartheid work”.[390] Promising just a fraction of the proposed amount, Verwoerd instead insisted that the costs of building infrastructure in the Bantustan would be borne by residents themselves.

In the BAD circulars, we are told that Minister Nel, Verwoerd’s successor, “is anxious for all tribes to progress” and “he expects them to indicate to him what steps they intend taking in this regard, eg. What schools, dams, roads, bridges, drinking troughs, afforestation, social services etc. they desire to provide for their areas”.[391] But a departmental circular from 1959 makes explicit the state’s unwillingness to contribute to local infrastructural development. At most, the state would make a small contribution towards the total costs of a project – even, for instance, to the erection of chiefly court facilities.[392] While it would, in theory, provide ring-fenced grants to Tribal Authorities for specific projects which were sufficiently planned,[393] the Department insisted that this would only be provided to those who endeavoured to “help themselves”.[394] Tribal Authorities were, in turn, expected to raise taxes on their subjects to pay for infrastructure – communities that had witnessed the destruction of viable agricultural subsistence, the mass culling of cattle and donkeys by BAD officials, the loss of established economic livelihoods and homes, and who lived in a context in which even the collection of firewood was criminalised. Predictably, the collection and use of community funds would form a key issue of contention in rural villages.

In the Potgietersrus District, the roll-out of the administrative dimensions of the Tribal Authorities project was rather more variable from the perspective of local bureaucrats. The BAC of the district wrote in 1962 that, “with the exception of the Zebediela Tribal Authority,

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[388] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 “General Circular No. 17 of 1959”, p.6-7.
[389] van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.44.
[390] O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.70.
[391] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 ‘General Circular No. 17 of 1959”, p.19..
[392] *Ibid.*
[393] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[394] If a dam was required, for instance, government would assist with extra funds to those who “also could make a contribution in the form of money, free labour, the supply of draught animals, transport or any other matter, the reason being that the Minister, like any parent, is more inclined to assist those who show signs of wanting to stand on their own feet, signs of wanting to get up and walk”. *Ibid.* p.6.

which is financially fairly strong and has shown progress, the remaining Tribal Authorities have made very little progress due to lack of funds and personnel".[395] The BAC reported that:

> The Tribal Authorities in this district are constantly provided with the necessary advice, guidance and assistance. For example, they are unable to draw up their annual budget themselves. They must be constantly warned that without sufficient funds there is not much to be paid … especially as regards allowances to the [chief], secretary and members of the Tribal Authorities. This is their biggest problem - a lack of the necessary funds - some do not have funds at all".[396]

Starkly, a hand-written note stated in relation to the Taueatsoala Tribal Authority: "This tribal government with only 145 taxpayers actually has no right to exist. The estimated outcome from fines, R80 seems very unlikely."[397] In the neighbouring district, And BACs from across the Northern Transvaal observed the slow pace of progress in constituting functional Tribal Authorities because of a crippling lack of funds. In Pietersburg, the BAC reported that most Tribal Authorities were unable to "offer sufficiently large salaries to attract efficient Secretaries/Treasurers", which was a "primary factor for any lack of progress or expansion".[398] And he wrote that the vast majority of Tribal Authorities "suffer from a [shortage] of funds which is a major obstacle to their development".[399]

Nevertheless, the reforms did produce some of the stipulated outcomes, including a system of monetary surveillance and documentary-led governance. Most of the Tribal Authorities of the Potgietersrus District had, by the late 1960s, appointed the stipulated personnel, were submitting financial records, even if they detailed the paltry state of resources, and were being fairly consistently monitored by local officials of the NAD. In many respects, then, the Department made some headway in introducing new administrative structures and systems to the Tribal Authorities. Yet the effectiveness of these structures to yield the state's much vaunted "development" of the countryside fell far from official visions. By 1964, the Department was forced to admit that in view of all existing sources of income, the Tribal Authorities were

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[395] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2, 'Bantu Authorities: Progress Made By', Letter from Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, to Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 10 January 1962.
[396] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30, N11/1/2, 'Funksioneering van Bantoe-Owerhede', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 5 September 1962.
[397] *NASA* SAB KGL 158 26N.11/1/3(5), 'Begrotings 1968/69: Taueatsoala Stamowerheid, Potgietersrus', Letter from Mr Snyman, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner for Northern Areas, Pietersburg, to Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 26 April 1968.
[398] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2, 'Bantu Authorities: Progress made by', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Pietersburg to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 3 April 1962.
[399] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2, 'Funksioneering van Bantoe Owerhede: Ministerieële Opdrag', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Pietersburg to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 10 September 1962.

unlikely to develop into "powerful development machinery in Bantu areas. Irrespective of how zealous a Bantu Authority may be, if it does not have funds, very little can be done".[400]

The Department scrambled for suggestions about other means of financing the Tribal Authorities, with the Commissioner General Eiselen proposing labour licences and liquor sales as key sources of revenue.[401] Yet pitiably, it was reported that just two sources still provided the largest sources of income across Tribal Authorities: levies and dog taxes.[402]

Between the late 1950s and early 1970s, the apartheid state gave no quarter, and continued insisting that Tribal Authorities become financially self-sufficient – an imperative that was brought to bear on Black areas generally, including in the urban centres. There were to be no more funds made available by the Department, and instead BACs resorted to putting additional pressure on chiefs to extract taxes from their subjects. In the midst of deepening economic devastation, however, some chiefs had limited scope to demand more from their subjects. In the Tzaneen District, the BAC stated that "taxation is a measure to which the authorities will not yet proceed – it is too unpopular. But it will have to come".[403] It was remarked that Chief Mathebe in the neighbouring Groblersdal district had tried to introduce a levy of R2.00 per annum to service the proposed budget of the Regional Authority, but this had "been a complete failure": "because of the attitude of his people," the BAC of Groblersdal wrote, "it will be necessary for this office to prod and push this Authority all the time, with a view to making progress".[404]

While some expressed misgivings about the shape that the system was taking, none of the missives from white officials dare criticise the ultimate wisdom of the system. "From previous experience," one wrote, "I am satisfied that the Bantu Authorities system is the one way through which the Bantu people of the Reserves are being taught to adopt more enlightened methods of administration and take responsibility".[405] Rather than taking signs of failure and

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[400] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 F.53/14/1 'Memorandum aan die Komitee insake Bantoe-Owerhede oor Bronne van Inkomste van Bantoe-Owerhede', 18 June 1964, p.12.
[401] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 11/1/2 'Bronne van Inkomste van Bantoe-Owerhede', Memo from WWM Eiselen, Commissioner-General for Noord-Sotho Volkseenheid, to Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, 9 September 1964, p.2.
[402] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 F.53/14/1 'Memorandum aan die Komitee insake Bantoe-Owerhede oor Bronne van Inkomste van Bantoe-Owerhede', 18 June 1964, p.6.
[403] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2 'Bantu Authorities: Progress, Tzaneen District', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Tzaneen, to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 14 December 1961.
[404] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2, 'Progress Report: Bantu Authorities Groblersdal', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Groblersdal to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 5 September 1962.
[405] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2, 'Bantu Authorities: Progress made by', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Bushbuckridge to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg. 15 November 1961.

resistance as a symptom of an unworkable system, a tendency emerges in correspondence to advance a voluntaristic and individualised diagnosis of the source of the problems; character defects, ignorance and corruption on the part of the chiefs or their functionaries are blamed for the "lack of progress". As one put it, much inertia "is probably largely due to the fact that many Tribal Authorities have not fully appreciated the importance of their functions".[406]

The character of chiefs, councillors and the new administrative personnel was the subject of continual scrutiny, as is indicated by the highly detailed documentation produced by local officials. Character sheets, for instance, were compiled of each chief, detailing *inter alia* their perceived loyalty to the government, relationship with alcohol, and tendency towards subversion.[407] Officials frequently described the main challenge to the system as one of "attitude" that could be bent by the firm and persistent hand of the BAC. Of the Baroleng Tribal Authority, "a complete lack of initiative" was described. "They also expect to have everything done for them by this office, and it will be a most difficult task to educate them up to the stage where they will learn to do things for themselves".[408]

BACs also began deploying the language of corruption in assessing the performance of chiefs and expressing concern that some chiefs were manipulating legal provisions and newfound administrative coercive capacities – including access to funds – to strike out on their own, to untether themselves from the control of the white state. They precisely feared too much autonomy on the part of these "tribal" governments. In a 1965 circular, the Department warned that some chiefs, "under the guise of the Bantu Authorities system only appointed their friends as councillors of Tribal Authorities which *resulted in maladministration and corruption*".[409] A number of reports register concern about *ad hoc* levies being imposed by chiefs. Technically, the Bantu Authorities Act did not confer Tribal Authorities with "the power to levy taxes on Bantu is its territory", but could impose levies "at the request of the tribe by the State President from powers under the Native Tax and Development Act, 1925".[410] Yet some chiefs were, in the view of the Department, imposing their own unregulated levies. In some cases, officials sounded warnings about those who filled the new administrative roles. In 1962, for instance,

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[406] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 N11/1/1 "General Circular No. 17 of 1959", p.22.
[407] See the following volume in the National Archives: *NASA* SAB KGL 158 1/1/3/2 'Besonderhede van Sotho Kapteins'.
[408] "For example", he wrote, "the Tribal Secretary is unable to make out his monthly requisition for funds for the salaries of the Chief and Councilors correctly, and every month, for the past year, these forms have had to be returned to him for amendment". Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2, 'Progress Report: Bantu Authorities Groblersdal', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Groblersdal to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 5 September 1962.
[409] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 F.53/1 'Algemene Omsendbrief No. 6 van 1965', p.4.
[410] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 F.53/14/1 'Memorandum aan die Komitee insake Bantoe-Owerhede oor Bronne van Inkomste van Bantoe-Owerhede', 18 June 1964, p.5.

the BAC of Groblersdal stated that in one Tribal Authority, the "Tribal Secretary" was negatively "influencing the Chief" to reject certain legislative provisions.[411]

Certainly, the system lent itself to forms of chiefly misappropriation, as has been noted in scholarship on Lebowa.[412] There are numerous examples of this among the chiefdoms of the Mokopane region.[413] And as will be discussed later, these exactions became the target of fierce forms of local popular resistance against autocratic chiefs. Yet there is some indication that white officials were exercised by these tendencies, which they feared might enflame popular sentiment against the Tribal Authorities system. In 1962, a hastily convened committee of local officials of the BAD found Kgoši Patrick Kekana of Zebediela guilty of the "unauthorized appropriation of tribal money" (R1 202), the mismanagement of tractors, the indiscriminate spending of tribal funds, and the failure to submit birth and death statistics. The committee also found that Kekana was "too heavy-handed" in his rule, and was concerned by the chief's growing unpopularity:

> it is essential to keep a close eye on the activities of the Bantu authorities, especially in cases where they are functioning effectively, in order to prevent any undermining of good progress or success, which the government can bring discredit to the tribe, as in the case of Kekana where scornfully the authority is referred to as TC (trust scrap). Where necessary, staff must be made available for this.[414]

The risk of chiefly abuse enflaming popular sentiment against the Tribal Authority was therefore something that worried Departmental officials.

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[411] Lebowa State Archives, BAO A30 N11/1/2, 'Progress Report: Bantu Authorities Groblersdal', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Groblersdal to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 5 September 1962.

[412] Delius states that in the Sekhukhune District, chiefs "manipulat[ed] bureaucratic power while resting on the active support of a fragment of their communities… the level of chiefly exactions and their abuse of community funds became a festering issue" Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.162. And Phillips affirms that "Invoking 'tradition' and the 'customary,' many of Lebowa's chiefs lorded their power over their subjects". Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.42.

[413] In ga-Matlala, for instance, a spokesperson for a women's community group wrote that the Chief had demanded that villagers pay a £1 levy "for the building up of the Bantu Authority", which included the establishment of a police station in the area. "It then means that we have to pay money for the establishment of a police training school and the salaries of those police who will capture us, our women and our children". Further, the Matlala grouping complained that the Chief had "built shops with tribal money while telling the tribal members that he was buying tribal farms… He demands other money from the tribe and one day he will find himself in such a position that he will be afraid…". *NASA* SAB KGL 111 1/93 'Bantoe Politieke Organisasie: Bapedi Women Club', Letter from Administrative Assistant of the Commissioner-General to Chief Bantu Commissioner, Pietersburg. 30 June 1966.

[414] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 4731/4 'Chief Kekana: Potgietersrus', Letter from VMP Leibbrandt, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, to NR Franken, Secretary for Bantu Adminisration and Development, 25 June 1968.

Yet there were also instances in which the central state made it clear that it was unwilling to act against an abusive chief because they were seen to work well with the Department. One example is that of Chief Tyson Kibi of Bochum, who was described by Department officials in 1961 as "very cooperative and progressive" and that the Tribal Authority was "building a useful, satisfactory and content community".[415] Open displays of subversion by chiefs against white authority was the subject of far more acute official anxiety and action than instances of misappropriation and corruption, per se. Kgoši Patrick Kekana of Zebediela, for instance, had also had a fractious historical relationship with the Department, having some years back publicly told the BAC that he was "not afraid of a white man", and that he could "Voetsek!". This had been the grounds for an earlier removal.[416] In 1965, the CBAC condemned Kekana's successor, Kgoši Shikoane, as a man "considers himself to be a man of power with little or no regard for the Departments of Bantu Administration or Bantu Education". During a meeting, this official wrote, "I gathered that the chief was defiant in his attitude and felt that he was justified in taking the law in his own hands".[417] And there follows a series of statements which contain precisely the Department's concerns about expanded chiefly autonomy:

> He knows that we are encouraging these authorities to accept more responsibility… Very obviously he is seeking power without guidance … The chief and his councillors have considerable power and have inspired fear and terror in the hearts of their followers… [their] desire is to assert the authority of the chief and make it quite clear to all concerned that he alone will control the Tribe without interference from outside bodies".[418] [419]

Despite their concern, however, the Department officials perceived limited recourse. In this case, the CBAC asserted that the immediate deposition of the chief was inadvisable since it

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[415] Lebowa Archives, A30 Letter from CBAC Pietersburg to Secretary for Bantu Administration and Development, 10 January 1962. [p.10].. Yet, as Phillips has detailed, Kibi had replaced all councillors with personal allies, and gone on to impose a punishing regime of levies, fines and charges, including a R2.00 fee of *lotsha* (allegiance). Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.44.

[416] Lekgoathi, "Ethnicity & Identity", p.120.

[417] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 4731/4 'Chief Kekana: Potgietersrus', Letter from VMP Leibbrandt, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, to NR Franken, Secretary for Bantu Adminisration and Development, 25 June 1968.

[418] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 4731/4 'Chief Kekana: Potgietersrus', Letter from VMP Leibbrandt, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, to NR Franken, Secretary for Bantu Administration and Development, 25 June 1968.

[419] Kgoši Shikoane had allegedly ordered the boycotting of a white-owned store and the expulsion of the principal of the local high school. In the version of events given by Shikoane, he claimed that the central issue behind the dispute was that both the Principal and the BAC had refused the introduction of classes beyond matric level at the local high school. He claimed that the BAC had threatened him, and that he had therefore taken matters into his own hands. (These dynamics speak to the changed institutional landscape of chiefly land, and the multiple actors with a stake in local governance). Yet these matters were given short-shrift by BAD officials, since the Chief had ignored established protocol and acted "on his own". Once again, the central bone of contention appears to have been the Kgoši's abrogation of deference to local white officials, revealing the distinct limits imposed on chiefly action in their own domain.

"might well lead to more serious trouble in the Tribe". Instead, the Department issued a sternly-worded rebuke to the chief, and moved to reelect a new council, which it claimed had been irregularly constituted. Tellingly, the CBAC also called for a meeting of the "Lebowa Advisory Committee" [an early body of the Lebowa Territorial Authority] at which Dr Eiselen would be present, along with other "Bantu leaders" to put pressure on the chief to "mend his ways".[420]

Officials viewed the functionaries of Tribal Authorities with prevailing suspicion. Even as late as 1972, just prior to the formal constitution of the Lebowa Bantustan, a departmental report emphasised the role of BACs and Magistrates in keeping an eye out:

> Bantu Affairs Commissioners / Magistrates should be aware of any currents or events in the districts under their control. The report admitted that many chiefs were not to be trusted in the search for reliable information. The BAD admitted that popular grievances still threatened the stability of the system … We must all remember and accept that the prevention of unrest and unrest among the Bantu and in particular the identification of points of friction, is continuous and must be progressively developed and maintained … relaxation of vigilance can lead to relapse … The watchword must be "vigilance"".[421]

The Rise of the Lebowa Bureaucracy

This state of official anxiety over the chieftaincies would, however, recede substantially with the creation of Lebowa. The Lebowa bureaucracy would evolve over time with waves of new legislation bedding down the apparatus of the emergent state. The vision of Black rural local governance contained as early as the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act was one premised on a three-tiered government of expanding scale and authority: at the lowest rung were the "Tribal Authorities" (*Stamowerhede*), next at the meso level were the "Regional Authorities" (*Streeksowerhede*), and finally Territorial Authorities (*Gebiedsowerhede*) were positioned at the highest echelon of state authority, covering the whole Bantustan.[422]

In 1962, the "Lebowa Territorial Authority" was announced, which "consisted of a chairman and one-third of the members of the twelve various Regional Authorities within Lebowa".[423] In

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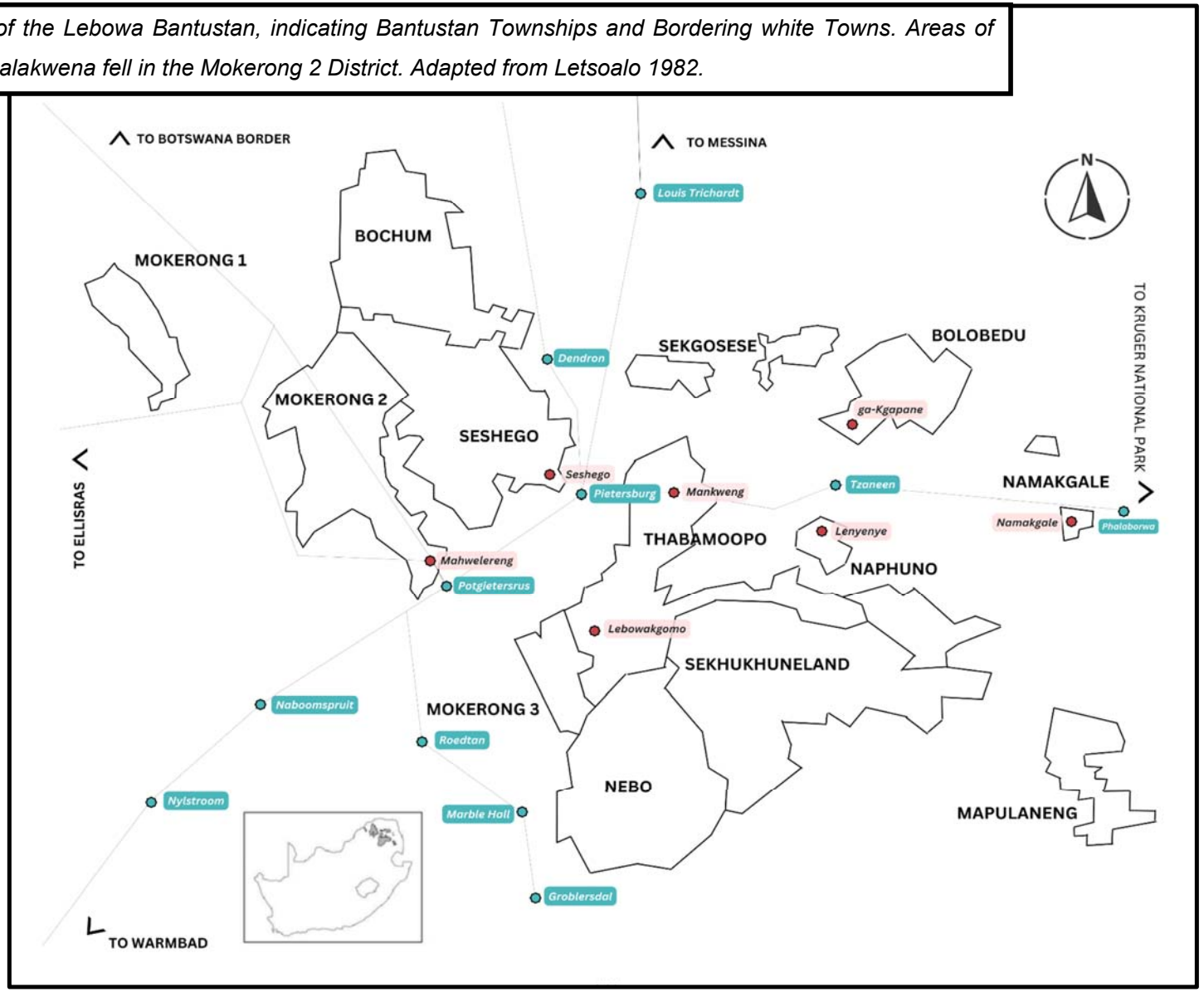
[420] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 4731/4 'Chief Kekana: Potgietersrus', Letter from VMP Leibbrandt, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, to NR Franken, Secretary for Bantu Adminisration and Development, 25 June 1968.
[421] *NASA* SAB KGL 111 X109/6/3 'Koördinerende Streekskomitees: Die identifisering van wrywingspunte en die voorkoming van onlus en onrus onder die bantoe', Letter from Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 14 December 1972.
[422] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 F.53/14/1 'Memorandum aan die Komitee insake Bantoe-Owerhede oor Bronne van Inkomste van Bantoe-Owerhede', 18 June 1964, p.12.
[423] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.48.

1969, executive council of six was appointed to oversee a civil service of six departments.[424] Following the Black States Constitution Act of 1971, the Lebowa Legislative Assembly was established with limited legislative powers and was granted jurisdiction over all the territories of the Regional Authorities.[425] And in 1972, Lebowa formally became a "self-governing homeland".[426] Periodic elections were held in the Bantustan for the selection of members of a legislative chamber. From this structure, a cabinet vested with executive powers was constituted, comprising a Chief Minister, Dr Cedric Phatudi, and 8 ministers appointed from the ranks of the Legislative Assembly. Each was to assume the role of political executive of one of 8 departments.[427] The new bureaucracy would grow substantially over time, initially out of offices in Seshego township outside of Pietersburg, and then in the 1980s out of the newly-built capital in Lebowakgomo.

The Lebowa Bantustan consisted of thirteen geographical territories spread over a large part of the central, north-eastern and eastern parts of the then Transvaal.[428] It was, as Letsoalo attests, territorially non-contiguous, resembling "something akin to a crossword puzzle with patches of Black areas surrounded by large blocks of territory belonging to White South Africa".[429] The Bantustan was divided into 11 different magisterial districts, with each representing a constituency for election.[430] The "tribal authorities" of the Mogalakwena area were to be subsumed under the Mokerong 2 district (see map below).[431]

[424] *Ibid.,* p.49.
[425] *Ibid.*, p.52–53.
[426] *Ibid.*, p.53–54.
[427] Office of the Chief Minister; Department of Education; Department of Finance and Economic Affairs; Department of Home Affairs; Department of Health and Social Welfare; Department of Police and Justice; Department of Agriculture and Environmental Conservation; Department of Works and Public Utilities. After 1983, the portfolios of Police and Justice were split into two separate departments, while Economic Affairs was separated from Finance) Duba, 1992, "The Conversion Function", p.54; p.68.
[428] *Ibid.*, p.13.
[429] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.47.
[430] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.13.
[431] Specifically, the Mokerong 2 constituency. The chieftaincies of Seleka and Shongoane which fall under the present-day Lephalale Local Municipality fell under Mokerong 1.

Figure 26: Map of the Lebowa Bantustan, indicating Bantustan Townships and Bordering white Towns. Areas of present-day Mogalakwena fell in the Mokerong 2 District. Adapted from Letsoalo 1982.



With the elaboration of the Lebowa bureaucracy, several intractable challenges produced for the central state through the roll-out of the Bantu Authorities system would potentially be addressed. First, the involvement of white BAD officials in the local politics of the chieftaincy would be reduced in favour of a parallel administration whose leadership structures would be answerable to Pretoria. It would no longer be exasperated Bantu Affairs Commissioners "prodding" the local chieftaincies towards "progress". Second, the results of the Department's massive spatial reengineering and administrative rural restructuring schemes would now be borne by an ostensibly "semi-independent state". As part of the Bantustan mythology, the brutal outcomes of dispossession were naturalized and legitimised in terms of ethnic self-determination. But third, the central state would also commit significantly more resources towards Bantustan development. According to Beinart, successive Nationalist governments after Verwoerd gave increasing financial commitments to the Bantustans: "'Homeland revenues increased fourfold during the first half of the 1970s from around R120 million to R520 million – and continued to grow quickly".[432] A significant portion of this would go towards the development of the Bantustan bureaucracy. Yet by Beinart's estimation, some 50% would also go towards the development of education, public works and agriculture.[433] These developments would fundamentally transform rural society and the place of the chieftaincy within it.

Despite the trappings of civilian government, chiefs were still portrayed as the kernels of the Bantustan system. They assumed a slight numerical majority in the Legislative Assembly. Of the 96 seats inf the Lebowa Legislative Assembly, 58 were "constitutionally reserved for the designated *magoši*".[434] Additionally, many positions in cabinet were filled by the chiefs. Yet while Evans has argued generically of the Bantustan, a "rigged modern 'state'", that "the dominance of chiefs was guaranteed", this is not entirely borne out in the examples of the chiefs of the Potgietersrus District.[435] Not every chief across the Lebowa territory could access the Bantustan apparatus in terms that bolstered their power equally. in practice, this dominance was neither even nor linear. And in terms of local governance, the emergent Bantustan administration produced a complex field of political action which chiefs navigated with varying degrees of success to bring forms of development to their localities.

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[432] William Beinart, "Beyond 'Homelands': Some Ideas about the History of African Rural Areas in South Africa," no. October (2012): p.9.
[433] *Ibid.,* p.10.
[434] Duba, "The Conversion Function"*,* p.81.
[435] Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*, p.275.

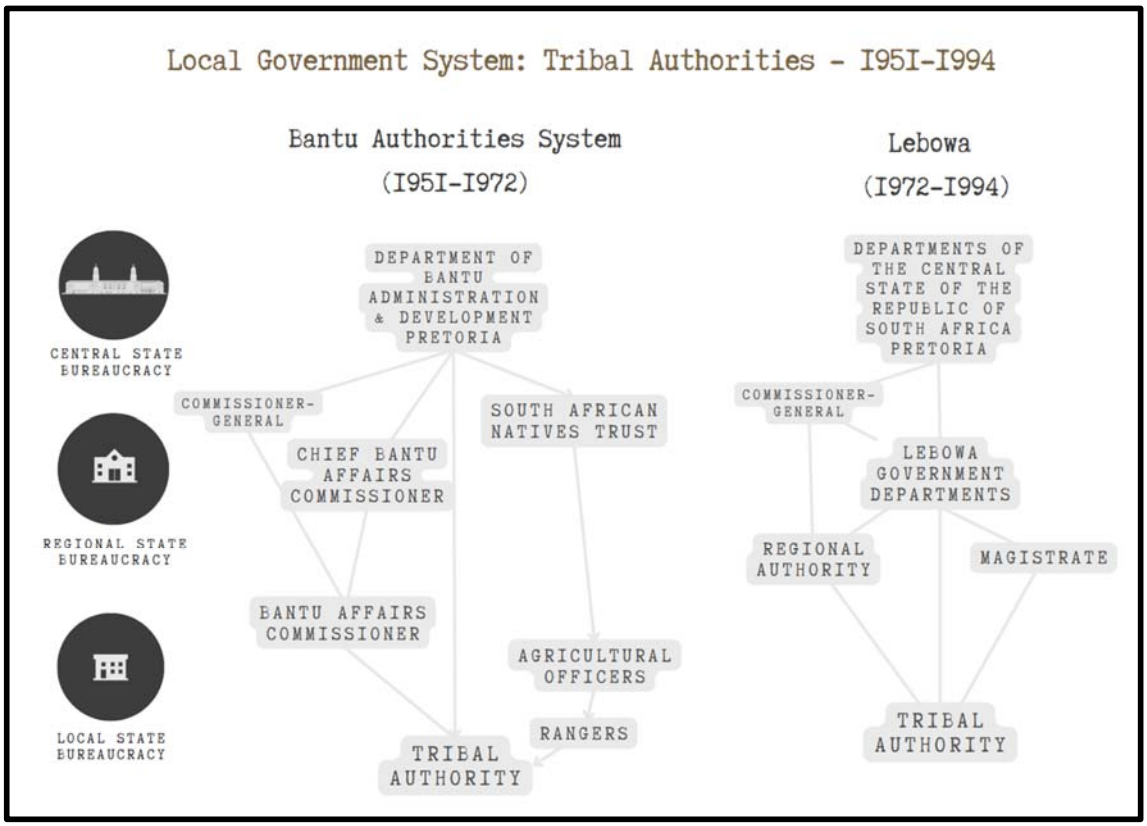


Figure 27: The shifting institutional networks which constituted the local government system in areas designated as Tribal Authorities.[436]

The Tribal Authorities emerge in official documentation as one among many political centres making claims on resources with varying levels of success – and often one which received lowly consideration in the Departmentally-centric structure of the Lebowa Bureaucracy. Minutes presented by Duba show how the traditional leadership structures were now entrenched in the hierarchical system of government, and requests for development projects or access to public goods by the Tribal Authorities would have to be directed through the bureaucratic chain of command. Minutes from a meeting held in Matlala detail appeals made by various *izinduna* (headmen) to departments of the Lebowa state: "(a) Headman Seopa requested a scraper from the Works Department to come and repair some of the eroded streets in his village; (b) Headman Nong asked for culverts to be repaired next to the local school by the same Department; (c) Headman Matlala reminded the Health Department about the need for the erection of a clinic building at his village".[437] These requests reveal how villagers came to direct appeals for local development to the relatively distant Lebowa bureaucracy, first in Seshego and then in Lebowakgomo. There was a great deal of frustration

[436] Devised by author.
[437] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.127.

registered in the minutes of the Regional Authority meetings about the inaccessibility or unresponsiveness of the Lebowa bureaucracy. For instance, in a June 1978 meeting, Kgoši DB Taueatsoala is noted to have remarked that the "Lebowa Government promised the Regional Authority machinery (bulldozers) to improve all roads in the district of Mokerong, since then nothing was done". Further, he reported that they had requested an "executive meeting" from the Lebowa government, but "no reply was received".[438]

Even though the central state expanded the contributions it made towards Bantustan bureaucracies, this nonetheless continued to fall far short of requirements. The funding for many basic development projects in Lebowa's villages would, as such, continue to be borne by villagers themselves in what the government called a "Rand-for-Rand" scheme: to build schools, hospitals, and other amenities, communities were expected to raise half of the costs, and the Lebowa state would fund the rest – at least in theory. This was once again euphemized in the language of "self-help". As the Minister for Cooperation and Community Development (the successor of the BAD) would put it in 1980: "die inisiatief moet kom van swartmense" (the initiative must come from black people).[439] As Phillips explains, the granting of funding for a Rand-for-Rand project could be used as a political instrument against chiefs or communities who had proved recalcitrant against the Lebowa state.[440] But the monies collected by communities, and usually held in a Tribal Authority account, were also easily accessible to unscrupulous *magoši.* Numerous accounts emerge of misappropriation of collected monies.

Beyond their very localised roles of extraction and coercion, many chiefs often had little power to direct the energies of the Bantustan state to local development. And forms of institutional white control and surveillance would continue through magistrates appointed by the Department of Justice, and who occupied newly built offices generally situated in the Lebowa townships – the Mokerong Magistrate was, for instance, based in Mahwelereng township. Rather than a CBAC, a Chief Magistrate with offices based in Pietersburg was appointed to oversee the activities of each of the Lebowa magistrates. Like the BACs before them, the magistrates involved themselves in a range of issues of everyday life. "The Magistrate not only presided over local legal issues," Phillips writes, "but dealt with a range of tribal administrative concerns, from the banking of local funds, to securing funding from the Lebowa Government, to managing the chief's deceased estate. In this position, the magistrate held significant power

[438] *NASA* KGL 23 3/4/6 (A) 'Minutes of a meeting of the Ndebele Regional Authority held at Magistrate's Office, Mokerong, 6 June 1978', Letter from Magistrate of Mokerong to Commissioner-General of Northern Sotho National Unit, Turfloop. 19 July 1978.
[439] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.60.
[440] *Ibid.,* p.62.

that could be used both to strengthen and undermine the chief's authority".[441] Under pressure to reduce the misappropriation of community funds, the Lebowa government also began handing over Tribal Authority accounts to Magistrates, which caused only further tension at the local level, and prompted some to try and create parallel accounts.[442]

The Ndebele Regional Authority of the Mokerong District, one of the 11 bodies presiding over Lebowa's different regions, also took place at the Magistrate's court in the presence of a white magistrate (it would only be in the 1980s that the position would be "Africanised").[443] It is clear that many chiefs in the district continued to be strongly directed by the local and chief Magistrates. Financial control would still, for instance, rest firmly in the hands of the magistrate. Illuminating the contradiction between claims of "self-government" and continuing white control, minutes of a 1978 meeting of the Ndebele Regional Assembly note that Magistrate GK Nel informed the chiefs that Lebowa flags had been manufactured and were now available for purchase, but they would have to seek authorization from his office to purchase them with tribal account funds.[444]

The multiplication of offices and overlapping mandates between Magistrates and the Bantustan Departments furthermore "contributed to the fog that shrouded the administrative system".[445] This appears to have also frustrated attempts by Traditional Authorities to undertake even simple tasks in their areas. The Magistrate informed the chiefs that Lebowa had too little money for purchasing extra machinery for the creation of fire-breaks. In response to this, it was stated that chiefs in the "house wished to raise questions, but the Magistrate informed members that he could not reply to them and that the matter will be referred to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry for a reply".[446] In the face of this bureaucratic fog, Tribal Authorities came to significantly depend on personal connections in the struggle to develop their areas. "Through personal contacts with the Chief Minister or any of the Cabinet Ministers" Duba writes, "Magoši usually bargain successfully for governmental grants and services for their tribes. They consider this personal connection approach to be more effective and convenient than having to formally articulate the demands of their tribes through the

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[441] *Ibid.*
[442] *Ibid.*
[443] *NASA* KGL 23 3/4/6 (A) 'Minutes of a meeting of the Ndebele Regional Authority held at Magistrate's Office, Mokerong, 6 June 1978', Letter from Magistrate of Mokerong to Commissioner-General of Northern Sotho National Unit, Turfloop. 19 July 1978.
[444] *NASA* KGl 23 3/4/6 'Minutes of a meeting of the Ndebele Regional Authority held at Magistrate's Office, Mokerong, 27 July 1978', Letter from Magistrate of Mokerong to Commissioner-General of Northern Sotho National Unit, Turfloop. 5 September 1978.
[445] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.173.
[446] *NASA* KGl 23 3/4/6 'Minutes of a meeting of the Ndebele Regional Authority held at Magistrate's Office, Mokerong, 27 July 1978', Letter from Magistrate of Mokerong to Commissioner-General of Northern Sotho National Unit, Turfloop. 5 September 1978.

offices of the district magistrates".[447] This is echoed by Delius: "Access to services and opportunities increasingly depended on an individuals' capacity to pick their way through the burgeoning bureaucracy and to secure a sympathetic hearing from relevant officials".[448]

Yet the Lebowa state was also constituted by "networks of economic and political patronage".[449] Delius described the "widely believed perception" that "resources commanded by the Lebowa government … were being monopolised by a political and economic networks situated to the north and rooted in the Mphahlele chiefdom – the area close to the new capital of Lebowakgomo in which Phatudi had grown up".[450] There was comparatively little representation for magoši of the Mokerong District in which the Northern Ndebele chiefs fell. Some civilian politicians from the area rose to the rank of Ministers in the Lebowa Cabinet – most notably, the highly unpopular Education Minister SP Kwakwa who resided in Mahwelereng – while others served in the Legislature as MPs for the district. But out of the *magoši* of Mokerong, only Kgoši ZT Seleka was granted such a position (and he resided in the distant Seleka Tribal Authority in the present-day Lephalale Local Municipality).

Thus, Lekgoathi writes, amongst the Ndebele magoši of the Mokerong District, there had long been strong resentment of the "curtailment of their power and influence" and the "destruction of Ndebele culture and language", and there existed amongst these magoši a "desire to have direct access to, and control over, the scarce economic and political resources in their own ethnic enclave"[451]. This would, in part, fueled the unsuccessful efforts made by a number of chiefs from the Mokerong District for a separate Northern Ndebele homeland.[452] Ultimately

[447] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.116–17.
[448] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.173.
[449] *Ibid.*
[450] *Ibid.*, p.175. Delius further highlights (*Ibid.*) that the Legislature included "a handful of individuals whose primary allegiance lay with the ANC but who believed that the homeland system was a political terrain which should not be surrendered entirely". At one point, a rival political party emerged in opposition to the ruling Lebowa People's Party, but folded back following a poor election performance.
[451] Lekgoathi, "Ethnicity & Identity", p.137.
[452] Principally Kgoši Shikoane Kekana II of Zebediela, supported by Kgoši Shikoana Kekana, Kgoši Dennis Langa of Bakenberg, Kgoši Alfred Kekana of Vaaltyn and Kgoši Hendrick Langa of Mapela. *Ibid.*, p.157.

Lekgoathi observes that the moves towards secession floundered as the Lebowa state was able to use both "patronage and coercion" to quell secessionist impulses.[453] [454]

The rise of the Bantustan bureaucracy had wider implications for rural society, which fundamentally transformed the social and political terrain within which chiefs operated. There was, for instance, a groundswell of new local jobs created through the emerging Lebowa administration.[455] The expansion of schooling proceeded apace from 1972 providing new opportunities for teachers, as well as the opening of new Magistrates offices and a range of regional branches of the Bantustan departments like Education, Agriculture and Public Works bringing new opportunities in the civil service.[456] The civil service emerged as a powerful interest group at some distance from the institutions of chieftaincy. And there remained a tension between the relative power of chiefs and administrators at the heart of the Lebowa state that would routinely emerge during sittings of the Lebowa Legislative Assembly.

The Lebowa Agricultural Corporation (LAC) would also grow to become an especially prominent institution in the life of the Tribal Authorities, holding the prospect of developing cultivation and irrigation schemes, for instance. Here again, the LAC represented another new institutional actor within the schema of rural local governance. In addition, the rise of the Bantustan saw the emergence of a new local business elite, who at times were seen as an "an alternative centre of power in rural Lebowa" and "a threat to chiefly authority".[457] Phillips states that many migrant workers invested their earnings from urban employment into trading ventures in their home villages. Traders assumed significant local power with their access to goods and capital. It is perhaps telling that, as one interviewee told me, electricity lines were brought to just two places in his village: the chief's kraal and the spaza shop.

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[453] *Ibid.*, p.218. Further, a secret document drafted by an administrator of the Commissioner-General, with the input of a "reliable source" reported the discussions that had taken place at the Ndebele Regional Authority in 1978 between the Ndebele chiefs and a cohort of leaders from Lebowa, including Phatudi, former Chief Minister MM Matlala, and the Chief Whip of the Legislative Assembly, Mothiba. The source indicated that the latter three had obviously "caucused beforehand and with threats that the Ndebele would have to move if they decided on their own homeland, they tried to persuade them to remain part of Lebowa". At the meeting, it was recorded that most of the chiefs present agreed to stay in Lebowa. *NASA* KGL 23 'N. Ndebele se standpunt T.O.V. 'e eie tuisland', Notule van Samesprekings: Minister van Bantoe Administrasie en Ontwikkeling met Ndebele Streeksowerheid, 22 September 1977.
[454] Dennis Langa is reported to have "switched his allegiance from [the separatist organisation] to Lebowa after the Phatudi administration built him a new house". And Lekgoathi found that both Shikoane and Hendrick Langa were unseated due to their involvement in the secessionist agitation. *Ibid.*, p.235.
[455] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.10.
[456] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.147.
[457] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.57.

Conclusion

When Mamdani speaks of expanding chiefly "autonomy" through "decentralization", he in many ways takes the public rhetoric of the apartheid state at face value – the promise of "sovereignty in one's own sphere".[458] By contrast, Evans argues, the intention was rather to create the "illusion of decentralization".[459] What the Department sought was not greater autonomy for institutions of chieftainship, but rather their deeper imbrication into structures of administrative control, buoyed by a modernist faith in the power of the bureaucracy to surveil and organize the daily lives of Black residents. What they sought, Evans argues, was a "viable synthesis of rational administration and tribal ideology" – white state control with a chiefly veneer.[460]

There is thus significant truth in the claims made by Chief Albert Luthuli in anticipation of the Bantu Authorities Act that the apartheid state was seeking to turn chiefs into "minor puppets and agents of the Big Dictator."[461] The Comaroffs recount how Chief Kebalepile Montshiwa of the Tshidi-Barolong similarly warned that chiefs were being reduced to shadows of their former selves, and if they survived at all, they would do so only in "bureaucratic servitude to the purposes of the state and the industrial economy". They were, in his words, being turned into an "empty chair".[462] In the areas of Mogalakwena over the course of the early apartheid era, the institution of chieftaincy witnessed the radical diminution of its role in shaping the rhythms of everyday life and governance. This was, in the first instance, due to the sweeping campaigns of spatial dispossession undertaken by the central state, which massively enlarged rural village populations, diminished the potential for subsistence agriculture, and enforced migrant forms of work among residents. Secondly, questions of rural space, administration and economy came to be increasingly bureaucratised with the rise of the Lebowa state and its multiple departments, and the chieftaincy's role was reduced to that of a local authority on the bottom-most rung in the hierarchy of state.

Certainly, the intention here has not been to provide an apology for the excesses and corruption of traditional leaders. The violent repression, and continuous exactions of abusive chiefs would, indeed, fuel forms of popular struggle in tribal areas over the course of apartheid. As a number of activists attested, some magoši of present-day Mogalakwena used their capacities to monopolise local resources, quell dissent with an iron fist, and instill fear in their

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[458] Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*, p.225.
[459] *Ibid.* p.16.
[460] *Ibid.* p.21.
[461] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 2018, *The Politics of Custom: Chiefship, Capital, and the State in Contemporary Africa*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p.3.
[462] *Ibid.*

subjects. There is evidence to suggest that some chiefs of the Mokopane area collaborated with the Security Branch in the arrest and torture of local activists. There were, additionally, chiefs who responded to the deepening hold of apartheid differently and who came to be recognised as more "progressive", having supported the liberation struggle to varying degrees. Instead, the argument here is that the realm of chiefly authority should be understood in relational terms, as having been shaped by the rapidly transforming spatial, administrative and economic forms of relationality that unfolded in the wake of the apartheid state's massive interventions in the countryside. Indeed, the disavowal of responsibility for the massive implications of these state-led upheavals on the part of apartheid officials was precisely articulated in terms of chiefly corruption and despotism.

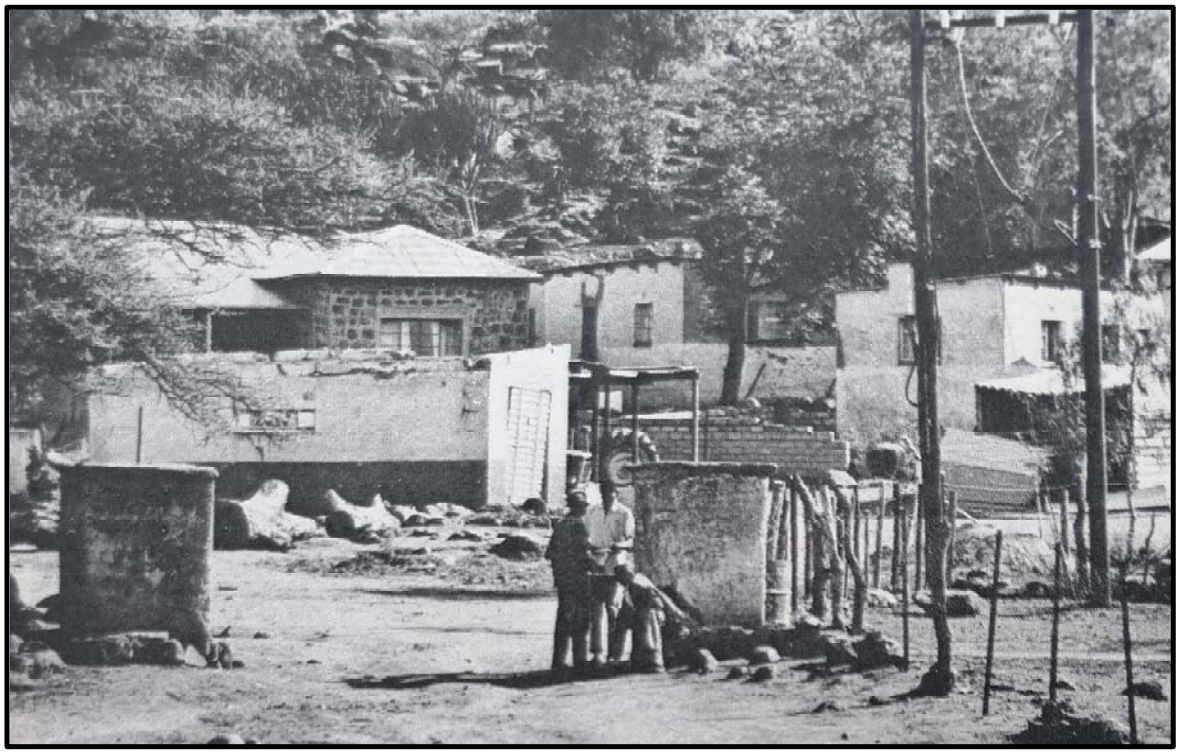


Figure 28: A view of the Vaaltyn Tribal Authority in 1989.[463]

[463] From Hofmeyr, "We Spend our Years", p.139.

Chapter 3: The Potgietersrus Town Council and the Myth of the White Town

Daar is a dorpie stil en mooi geleë
Reg in die hartjie van die ou Transvaal
Voortrekkers na hul moeitevolle weë
Het hier eens uitgespan en afgesaal.
Waar in die son oer-oue rotse gloei
En geurig soet alom die dorinbome bloei,
Hier het a held gesneuwel, dus
Dra ons sy naam … Potgietersrus.[464]

> Among the historical places on the Road to South Africa, Potgietersrust will always remain one of the most important. Its centenary is therefore not only of local importance, but also of general South African and therefore national significance. The tragic events there still testify loudly to the lion courage and bravery of the leading Voortrekkers. It was a heroic generation. But where blood has flowed, especially innocent blood, there is written in immortal language the testament that secures our people's heritage for all generations. In the deepest sense of the word, our country [land] thereby became our own. We have built on that, and we will continue to build our own nationhood. Under God's guidance, we have received a calling and a task to fulfill. Be faithful! Let our whole nation's message be with you with this important celebration. And let your own watch word sound clear and definite again in the ears of our whole people: "Be Faithful!".[465]

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[464] "There is a village quiet and beautifully located
Right in the heart of the old Transvaal
Voortrekkers, after their difficult paths,
Once stretched out and saddled here.
Where in the sun ancient rocks glow
And fragrantly sweet, everywhere the thorn trees blossom,
Here a hero died, so
We bear his name… Potgietersrus.
Combrink et al, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album*, p.1.

[465] Prime Minister DF Malan, 'Boodskap van Sy Hoogedele Dr DF Malan, Die Eerste Minister', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album*, p.7

Introduction

In 1960, a film crew from Britain travelled to the town of Potgietersrus to shoot a documentary. What they found was a "small prosperous town" in which "Afrikaans is the mother tongue of the white inhabitants, most of whom are strong supporters of the government, and life is dominated by the idea of apartheid".[466] At the time, the world within and around Potgietersrus was being dramatically reshaped in the name of apartheid: processes initiated by the central state were underway for the "whitening" of the town. In the years that followed, the town would witness the forced removal of those classified as "nie-blanke" ["non-white"], the instantiation of the border of Lebowa just a few kilometers from the town's perimeter, and the imposition of rigid forms of everyday racial policing backed by government legislation. Segregation of responsibilities would also be introduced in local administrative structures, with the white town council shorn of its responsibilities for "native affairs", and a separate committee constituted for Indian residents.

Against the backdrop of wrenching and drawn-out processes of forced removal, a particular vision of idealised white community came to take root in the town – one which drew both on the heroic, Biblically-derived version of patriarchal and militant Voortrekker colonial history described in Chapter 1, and on the idioms of modernity, urbanity and consumerism that swept across the globe in the second half of the twentieth century. White supremacy here came to be codified in the town's architecture and infrastructure, and everyday racial segregation structured the experience of its residents in ways that made racial difference appear natural and immutable. This allowed for the myth of the "white town" to take root, one which presumed that what held the social fabric of town together was the hard work and pioneering spirit of its white residents, and especially of its men. Yet for all the talk of white self-reliance, the town remained dependent on the labour, goods and resources of those that the state cast as racial others.

The Eden of the Bushveld

The 1954 centenary of the town of Potgietersrust was commemorated in a lengthy locally-produced album which celebrated the achievements of the town since its "founding" in 1854.[467]

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[466] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Film Trilogy on African 'Wind of Change'", 7 April 1960.
[467] Rather than beginning the history of the town with the establishment of the village of Vredenburg in 1852, the celebrations marked the town's birth with the death of Piet Potgieter in the Siege of Makapansgat two years later. That the town had been evacuated for many years from the 1860s did not disturb the almanac's retelling of unbroken Afrikaner tenacity and strength in a climate beset by threats on all sides – not least by the Ndebele communities of the region.

The album offers a glimpse into the white idealisation of Potgietersrus and its history. It shows how the town of Potgietersrus claimed a special role in the unfolding of what Dunbar Moodie describes as apartheid's "sacred history" which tells the story of the Afrikaners in the vein of the Israelites – God's chosen people anointed with a holy mission to develop themselves into a nation.[468] And reveals aspects of the ideologies which permeated the town's self-representation some six years into apartheid.

The album begins with messages of celebration by notable men of the state. Prime Minister DF Malan's commemoration, quoted above, linked the history of the town to that of the manifest destiny of the Afrikaner in general. And in the contributions that follow, the story is retold of improbable victory by Voortrekker ancestors, ordained by God, who defeated the Ndebele, tamed the landscape and dreamed of freedom. "We think of the time when the earth here was still wild and rugged", the mayor MJ de Villiers intoned, "Even then, we tough Voortrekkers thought and dreamed of the day when our villages would be a point of strength for a tough people of freedom. It was the alluring ideal that gladdened the hearts of heroes in days gone by. Long is the road by which she came!".[469] This was a road on which innocent Afrikaner blood had been spilled and heroic lives sacrificed, the messages emphasised. "Mapela! Makapaansgat! Moordrift! Icy names!", proclaimed the local historian, JH Meyer.[470] Yet these were worthy sacrifices in the realisation of the Afrikaner's manifest destiny, of which Potgietersrus formed an integral part: "Yes, we are proud. For here, more than a thousand miles from where Jan Van Riebeeck lit the lamp of civilization at the southern tip of Africa on April 6, 1652; here in the Far North to the outcry of the Union; here on the borders of the Limpopo; here too the price was paid, here too the sacrifices were made to keep that light … burning and to carry in even deeper!" [471]

If the Afrikaners had toiled in the desert for many years, they had found their promised land in Potgietersrus. Through their efforts, a former MP marvelled, "wonders" had been achieved: "a wild and relatively unhealthy region has been transformed into a beautiful and productive … pleasant and economically healthy center". The mayor reflected: "Today, South Africa knows Potgietersrust as a thriving farming district with its cattle, tobacco, peanuts, maize and oranges".[472] The album contains pictures showing the development of large-scale irrigated

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[468] Moodie, 1975, The Rise of Afrikanerdom.
[469] MJ de Villiers, 'Boodskap van Sy Edelagbare Die Burgemeester', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.13.
[470] JH Meyer, 'Die Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van Potgietersrust as Dorp', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.17.
[471] *Ibid*.
[472] *Ibid*., p.13.

farming systems in the district, of auction yards filled with healthy livestock, of local industries producing agricultural equipment, and of modern machinery processing the harvest.



Figure 29: The tobacco processing plant of the PTK.[473]

The tobacco processing plant in the centre of town, a sprawling brick building just opposite the municipality, represented the heart of the town's aspirational identity. The centenary album boasted of its "modern" design and community orientation, run as it was by the Potgietersrus Tabak Kooperatiewe (PTK).[474] Annual tobacco yield had grown dramatically over the mid-twentieth century: from 1,567,719 kilograms in 1939-40 (or 14% of total national output) to 3,602,030 in the 1952-1953 season (or 43% of the national harvest).[475] By 1951, Ballim states, Potgietersrus tobacco farmers were at the crest of a "wave of prosperity", earning an estimated £1 million per year in revenue.[476]

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[473] GF Combrink, 'Die Potgietersrus Tabak-Koöperasie', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.136.
[474] Ballim has detailed the enormous benefits that tobacco farmers derived from the PTK. Formed in 1933 as the Stirum–Limburg–Potgietersrust Kooperatiewe Tabakplanters Vereeniging, the cooperative would from 1937 enjoy a state-protected single-channel marketing system. Farmers would be paid out both before and after the harvest, could access agricultural supplies and machinery at discounted rates, and had shares in a joint members fund. Ballim, "The Pre-History of South African 'Neo-Liberalism,'" p.1246.
[475] JS Marais, 'Die Landbou-Potensiaal van Potgietersrust', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.133
[476] Ballim, "The Pre-History of South African 'Neo-Liberalism,'" p.1247.

The figure of the Boer remained a central pillar of the white community and of aspiration. Yet he was not the solitary and quaint Boer of the past, but a man (indeed, always a man) of rather more sophistication – the "modern Boer". An article in the *Rand Daily Mail* captures this: "Nowadays the modern home is conspicuous in the tobacco lands of Potgietersrus where the farmers play tennis by night on brilliantly-lit courts. And the old days when you were offered a cup of coffee are gone. Most farmers run to modern cocktail bars".[477]

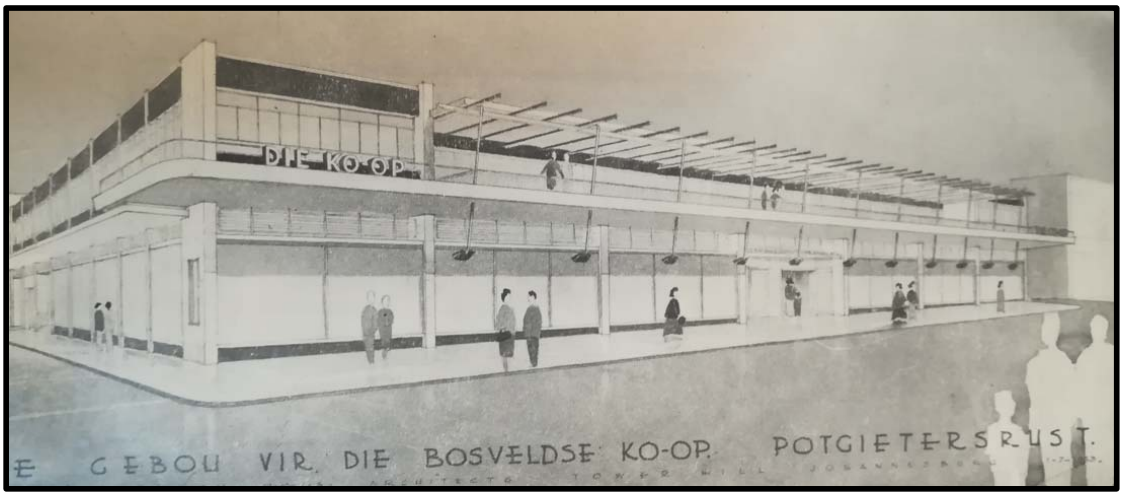


Figure 30: Architect's rendering of the Potgietersrus Bosveld Cooperative.[478]

Aspirations of modernity indeed suffuse representations of Potgietersrus in the centenary album, which also resonated of the technomodernist and consumerist future promised by the NP in its formulation of apartheid.[479] The citizens of Potgietersrus lived in modern homes, drove American vehicles, had access to modern amenities, could follow modern professional careers, and could pursue modern leisure activities. The white residential areas of Potgietersrus (or "Potties") would come to mimic the wide verges, green lawns, swimming pools and luscious gardens filled with alien plant species which were taking root in white homes in Pretoria and Johannesburg – themselves modelled on American-style suburbs. This was a far-cry from the spartan rural settlement of the past. This was a modern, white Eden in the dry bushveld.

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[477] *Rand Daily Mail,* "New Houses for Old", 2 March 1957.
[478] Combrink et al, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.117.
[479] Several authors have written about the transformation of the underpinnings of Afrikaner Nationalism from a set of predominantly rural agricultural ideals with the rugged, solitary Boer at their centre to visions of urban modernity, industrial prowess and consumerism. Stephen Sparks describes, for instance, how the massive technomodernist Sasol project condensed a range of aspirations of the modern Afrikaner, framed as part of the "shift from an agricultural past to an industrial modernity". Sparks uses the term "apartheid modern" to capture the peculiar mix of regressive racism and major techno-scientific ambitions that characterised the apartheid state. Sparks, p.3. This was symbolised in a frieze over a provincial government building in Pietersburg (today Polokwane), which depicts the Voortrekkers moving from an agricultural backdrop towards a landscape punctuated by industries.



Figure 31: "A typical house that has begun to appear generally in Potgietersrust".[480]

The centenary album also boasted of the town's role as a well-developed business centre, marked by modern retail and banking services. And drinking cocktails alongside the modern farmer was another pillar of the white community, the tenacious businessman and industrialist – another masculine ideal type at the heart of small-town life.[481] By the 1950s, Potgietersrus was home to a range of businesses, including agricultural equipment manufacturing, motor vehicle sales and repairs, banking, legal and financial services, luxury goods. In the decades to follow, businessmen would appear in the pages of local newspapers as community stalwarts. In every town a "Sakeman van die Jaar" (Businessman of the Year) was announced, and congratulations filled the pages in the form of advertorials from a host of other local and regional businesses. The interests of businessmen were refracted into organised associations – the Afrikaner Sakekamers (business chambers), the Handelsinstituut (trades institute), and various cooperatives; associations which formed an important nexus of local and regional politics.

Together, the tenacious Boer and the pioneering businessman were portrayed as the very essence of white self-reliance in hostile region. Yet what this mythology conveniently erased was the fact that Black industry and labour formed the foundation of local white prosperity –

[480] Van Rensburg, 'Die Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van Plaaslike Bestuur': Stadsklerk, Potgietersrust', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album, p.35*
[481] Often, of course, these identities were combined in the form of the farming business elite

an occlusion that is repeated in Potgietersrus centenary album. The only contribution to the album by a Black writer came from the Headmaster of the Mokopane Training College (later the College of Education), EL Ntloedibe, who praised the arrival of white settlers for having brought education:

> Gratitude and pride fill our hearts as we recall our late past in this town and its surroundings. Here where there used to be only ignorance and primitivism celebrated. Murder and ignorance were the order of the day. At the blowing of the flute or drumming of the tambourine, our youth used to come only the way to the mountains. Today they flock in response to the whistle's call to the schools, beacons of civilization and knowledge.[482]

What was not mentioned was how the expansion of primary schooling in the district was guided significantly by the need to secure labour for white farmers (an aspect explored in Chapter 4).[483] Where representations of Black people are included, it is as symbols of "swart gevaar" in the mythologised retellings of the Siege of Makapansgat, as ethnological subjects in images of "tribal life", as unnamed labourers in pictures which aimed to boast the achievements of white farming, industry and commerce (Black women standing behind tobacco processing machinery, for instance)[484], or as objects of ridicule and amusement – a picture of local Black evangelist, Izak Maluleke, is captioned "Die Malman onder die Boom";[485] a messenger identified only as "Old Sixpence" is consistently pictured sitting on the floor in the annual Barclays Bank staff photographs, described as "one of the most amusing characters in commercial circles in Potgietersrust".[486]

The White Town Council

The centenary album also offers a historical account that runs over several pages about the establishment of local government in the region. This is, once again, a narrative of the spread of white civilisation and development to a backwards land – roads, water, electricity and urban planning. It follows a substantial retelling of the white mythology around the siege of Makapansgat described in Chapter 1, and concludes with the call for the people of Potgietersrus to "continue to build in the spirit of hard work, togetherness and faith with which our forefathers, now in their rest over there, built".

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[482] EL Ntloedibe, 'Die Bantoe Kyk Terug…', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.92.
[483] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.21.
[484] Combrink et al, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.54; 56
[485] J Robbertze, 'Die Nederduitse Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk se Sendinggemeente, 1933-1954', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.74.
[486] AJ Becker, 'Barclays Bank, Potgietersrust, 1904-1954', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.54.

Formally, the role of the white town councils of the Northern Transvaal was fairly limited in scope. The most basic function of the Town Council was to provide water and electricity to the white community, collect property rates, maintain public infrastructure, and pass by-laws. Councillors were elected in municipal elections which took place every 6 years. The Councils were filled only with Ward Councillors and thus remained small. Over the course of the apartheid era, the Potgietersrus Town Council gradually grew to include 9 councillors, each representing a ward of the town.[487] One long-standing councillor and mayor, George Morkel-Brink, explains the role of the councillors:

> if people had a complaint about water, electricity, roads, and that type of thing, which is very local. Nothing out of town. And then you went to council and said that this is the complaint I have, or you phone the Town Secretary and ask for it to be put on the agenda, the council discusses it and then they make the necessary recommendations. The [budget] estimate had to be finalised by the last day in June every year.[488]

Councillors were not meant to receive a salary, but were paid an honorarium from the municipality for the various duties they performed. Every year, from amongst these Councillors, a mayor would be elected – a largely ceremonial role, opening ceremonies and attending the key functions of the town. He was *primus inter pares* – first among equals in Council. According to Morkel-Brink, the mayor was "actually the town's public relations officer. He must be a mirror of his town".[489] The position came with significant social prestige, likened, according to Morkel-Brink, to that of a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) – and, indeed, the position was bestowed with quasi-religious patriarchal symbolism.

[487] This was generally the case with towns throughout the region. In Nylstroom 9, in Warmbad 9, in Naboomspruit, Potgietersrus' closest neighbour to the south, there were 9. Even in the larger Pietersburg there were just 9 councillors.
[488] Interview with George Morkel-Brink, Mokopane, 29 August 2019.
[489] *Ibid.*



Figure 32: The Potgietersrus Town Council, including councillors and administrators, 1952-53.[490]

The real muscle in the Town Council lay with the Management Committee (*Bestuurkomitee)* made up of a one third of council. The Management Committee would have regular meetings with the administrative management of the Municipality and together setting the agenda for sittings of Council. Thus, the Chair of the Management Committee occupied one of the most powerful positions of Municipality. In Potgietersrus as elsewhere, these positions circulated amongst councillors.

The municipal administration was structured into different departments dealing with the functional aspects of local government – water, electricity, parks, traffic, for instance – along with the secretariat which maintained the institution's administrative requirements, including the organisation of meetings, the drafting of minutes and agendas, the collection and cataloguing of records. At the head of the municipal administration stood the Town Clerk (*Stadsklerk*), a position introduced in the 1960s which at the time was described as an experiment unique to the Transvaal.[491]

Irene De Villiers, who served in various administrative roles at the municipality, describes the ambit of municipal authority as very circumscribed: "You had only like powers on local stuff. At

[490] Combrink *et al, Potgietersrus Eeufees Album*.
[491] E. F. W. Gey Van Pittius, 1962, "The Transvaal's Experiment in Local Government," *Public Administration* 40, 1, pp.65–68..

that stage, it was only the town of Potgietersrus".[492] She explains that white municipal government in the Transvaal was governed by Ordinance 17 of 1939 – "If it was not in the Ordinance, then you just couldn't do it. Then you had no powers to do that". Initiatives that fell outside of the ambit of the Ordinance would require the permission of the Transvaal Administrator, the administrative head of the Transvaal Provincial Authority (TPA), roughly the equivalent of the provincial government. Furthermore, white farming areas which fell outside of the town limits fell under the "peri-urban councils" governed by the Administrator, and as such, the municipal administration "did not have a big area to govern".[493]

While theoretically the administration was meant to carry out the decisions of the political executive, as ever it remained "a centre which not only executes but which devises and proposes".[494] And certainly the powers of the Town Clerk to set the agenda of council were prominent. Moreover, given the intimacies of a small town, the Town Clerks were frequently embroiled in politicking of their own, forging backroom alliances with certain politicians and devising manoeuvres in Council to get their preferred programmes through. The position was a permanent one and this longevity also gave the Town Clerk the ability to play a much longer institutional game. As Hart writes:

> the central fulcrum of power in local government was not the mayor but the town clerk as the head of the executive branch of the local state. Town clerks and other senior local bureaucrats historically wielded enormous influence and sought to actively and aggressively create conditions for capital accumulation.[495]

The drive for investment occupied a central concern for both Town Clerks and Councillors, many of whom would promise the arrival of new industries in their election manifestoes. Competition developed between towns in the region hoping to woo investors to their locality. A particularly bitter rivalry existed between Pietersburg and Potgietersrus. According to the long-time President of the Mokopane Chamber of Business, Andy Goetsch, the Town Council adopted a singularly unwelcoming attitude to prospective industrialists, who were frequently derided as "outsiders". As early as the 1930s, Goetsch notes, the Council had refused to countenance the building of an airfield by the British Airforce outside of town: "Not a damn, we're not going to have those pilots coming to entertain our daughters in this town! Those English bastards".[496] (This, as an aside, points to a key aspect of the conceptions of whiteness in the town's imagination that will be explored more fully below: Potgietersrus was not only

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[492] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 9 March 2020.
[493] *Ibid.*
[494] G. H. L. Le May, 1955, "Local Government in the Transvaal," *The South African Journal of Economics* 23, 4, p.360.
[495] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis*, p.129-130.
[496] Interview with Andy Goetsch, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.

understood as a white town, but as a white Afrikaner town). The airfield would instead be constructed in Pietersburg, which would continue to seize the business opportunities that the Potgietersrus Town Council refused:

> So everything flew to Pietersburg. So that was just one of the many things that happened. Somebody would come here and say "This is a lovely little town, I'd like to build a factory here". But he was English speaking. So he went to the Town Council - and the oke says: "This place is going to cost you 5000 pounds. We don't really want you or need you".[497]

Pietersburg's flamboyant Town Clerk, Jack Botes, is especially credited with having lured a great many key industries to the town, at the expense of Potgietersrus.[498] It moreover appears that Pietersburg was better able to seize the advantages of the apartheid state's "industrial decentralisation" policies, through which white businesses were offered material incentives for opening industries in demarcated areas situated between white towns and the Bantustan boundaries; the industrial area abutting Pietersburg came to dwarf that of Potgietersrus. Goetsch describes Botes' approach:

> "You want to build a factory here? Come with me in my car, I'll *give you this ground* to build a factory. Come, I'll take you to the hotel, we're having dinner tonight". That was the difference. Businessmen weren't given a good reception here and then they'd go to Pietersburg and Jack Botes or one of his staff, as they were trained, took this person and Pietersburg flourished and this place went backwards. Coca-Cola wanted to come here. There are others too. They came here and they said what they wanted to do business, and the Town Clerk said to them "No, we can't have you, haven't got enough water". So they went to Jack Botes and he said that "You know what, we don't have enough water, but I'll make a plan to get you water". And then it was the South African Breweries, this and that and so on. Even the smelter for the mine, went to Pietersburg. It should be here. For the Anglo mine, it was put in Pietersburg![499]

Irene de Villiers says that since she arrived in the town in the 1970s, local businessmen and the municipality had promised that the area's rich mineral resources would bring a "boom", that "this place would be bigger than Pietersburg", but that never really materialized.[500] These sentiments of hope and disappointment would, indeed, be echoed in the 2000s over the ambiguous local benefits of platinum mining.

While officially responsible for basic service delivery and attracting investment, the role of the white Town Council in the imagination of small town life also held more symbolic value – as

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[497] *Ibid*.
[498] *Northern Review*, "Jack Maak sy Hart Oop", 17 October 1986.
[499] Interview with Andy Goetsch, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.
[500] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 9 March 2020.

the centenary album's portrayal of the development of white local government in the region suggests. Indeed, the Town Council assumed upon itself the role of the guardian of values, the anchor of decency, civility and Christian morality, and a protector of the town's sacred history. This role would, for instance, be reaffirmed once again with the reburial of the body of Piet Potgieter on the grounds of the municipality in 1964, monumentalized by a massive pile of stones in resemblance to Makapansgat. Councillors were cast as the standard bearers of the towns, community men (once again, almost exclusively men) carrying the responsibility of protecting and nurturing the town and its people from all manner of threats. In this, the upholding of modes of racial respectability and forms of division formed a key tenet of its approach to local governance. And the town council would come to be embroiled in the processes unleashed by the central state which sought to whiten the town.

The Central State and the Whitening of the Town

Norval writes about the shifting relationship to the urban form over the evolution of Afrikaner Nationalism in the mid-twentieth century. Earlier ideologues held that the city form posed a threat to Afrikaner identity in much the same way that ideologues spoke of the dangers of "detribalization" amongst Black people.[501] Urbanisation, Norval writes,

> was characterized as a process which marked both the urban and rural populations and which could lead to a loss of the *volkseie*, a loss of one's own religion, spiritual, moral and social values, and even one's own language. A set of equivalences were drawn between the city, Englishness, amorality, relativism, artificiality and atheism, while the platteland (countryside) was associated with a close communion with nature, God, around humanity, simplicity and resoluteness characteristic of Afrikaner life.[502]

Yet one of the interventions of DF Malan was to insist on the need for the Afrikaner to "conquer the city", to overcome "the perceived negative effects of modernity" – above all, "racial mixing" – and for Afrikanerdom to "develop its own positive conception of the city".[503] Apartheid would offer the legislative and administrative means to do so. While policies were being crafted to introduce sweeping changes to rural life, seeking to "retribalize" Black people under a system of "tribal authorities" and entrench the boundaries of the chieftaincy (Chapter 2), apartheid lawmakers were constructing legislation to transform the structure and everyday experience of the South African urban. The Group Areas Act of 1950 would allow for the entrenchment and massive expansion of racialised lagers within towns and cities – which were, to be sure,

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[501] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.18-24.
[502] *Ibid.,* p.20.
[503] *Ibid.*

already formally segregated – separating race groups through new techniques of urban planning. And the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 would bring life to so-called "petty apartheid", racially segregating the use of urban facilities.

If the purity of the platteland was to be recreated in the city, producing white enclaves in which Afrikaner culture could be preserved and the stability of the white family ensured, towns of the platteland would come to resemble their urban counterparts in the modes of segregated racial modernism that came to be applied by the central state. In Potgietersrus, the instantiation of the central state's enormous and wrenching plans of spatial segregation would take a circuitous and contested path, producing a great deal of destruction for those whose lives were thrown into uncertainty and precarity. The Town Council emerged as one of the key actors involved in the evolving administrative tug-of-war over the meaning and modalities of spatial apartheid in the Potgietersrus district. In what follows, I consider two dramatic episodes of uprooting and resettlement that took place simultaneously over the course of the 1960s: first, the destruction of the Old Location of Mokerong and the forced relocation to the new township of Mahwelereng; and second, the eviction of so-called "Indian" residents from areas classified as "white" and their resettlement in the new suburb of "Group Area" of Akasia.

(a) The Destruction of Mokerong, the Old Location

What the Potgietersrus Town Council called the Old Location was called "Mokerong" by its residents. Daphne Masenya was born and grew up in Mokerong in the 1950s. She remembers that her family house was large – "Everybody built [their own] houses". She attended classes at a school nearby, under the shade of jacaranda trees. And her parents both worked in Potgietersrus, walking to work every day. This all came to an end in 1969, when she and her family witnessed the destruction of their home and were forced to move to Mahwelereng. "And they didn't even tell us what was the problem. The problem was that we were near town, so they had to take us far, far away from town".[504]

Plans by the central government for the destruction of Mokerong, the Old Location, were initiated in 1961.[505] Locations like Mokerong, characterised by fairly unregulated forms of settlement and ways of life outside of chiefly rule, could be found in towns across the Northern Transvaal and were formally administered by local white Town Councils. In the account of the achievements of the Potgietersrus Town Council, it is noted that "The Town Council takes care

[504] Interview with Daphne Masenya and Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 30 March 2022.
[505] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A82/131/3 'Groepsgebiede: Potgietersrus', Letter from Department of Community Development, Pretoria, to the Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 6 November 1962.

not only of its whites but also of the natives of whom nearly 3,000 reside in the Location".[506] By "take care" was meant, it seems, ensuring control. It was stated that "The Council also controls the Native location and in January 1951 the registration of Native service contracts was taken over by the [local] Government. In 1953 a Native Labour Office was set up. In its Non-White Affairs section, the Council employs four whites". [507] It also attests that the location had been established by "sweeping up" areas of Black residence which had fallen in the area of the old mission station.[508]

These forms of settlement, territorially contiguous with the "white towns", created and administered by white Town Councils, were however deemed contrary to the segregationist dictates of the apartheid government, and were progressively disestablished from the 1960s under the direction of the Department of BAD – just as a crescendo of forced removals were taking place across the country's urban areas. In line with this, the old location outside of Potgietersrus was disestablished and so began the uprooting of its residents to a new township some 5 kilometers ("3 miles")[509] to the north-west of the "white town", in an area that fell within the Vaaltyn location set aside for the development of a so-called "Bantu town" formally proclaimed in 1962, Mahwelereng (Chapter 4).

In 1961, the BAD signalled its hopes for the removal of residents of the Old Location in phases. The Secretary of the BAD wrote:

> The [Department's] position in relation to the Bantu neighbourhood [Mokerong] at Potgietersrus is that, as soon as one or more nearby Bantu villages are developed in the Bantu homelands, the local management in consultation with the Department must take steps to evict all ethnically united families from the Location to homes that be made available within such towns. When a stage is reached that there are empty houses in the location as a result of the systematic thinning out, but after all houses that fall within the 300 yard border area along the Provincial road have been disposed of first, then the Bantu neighbourhood from the south-eastern point northwards to the being demolished to the reserve's side until it is just big enough to house the ethnically unrelated families.[510]

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[506] JJCJ Van Rensburg, 'Die Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van Plaaslike Bestuur: Stadsklerk, Potgietersrust', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.31.
[507] *Ibid*.
[508] *Ibid*.
[509] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1425, 'Groepsgebiede te Potgietersrus: 97e vergadering van 5 Februarie 1968', Letter from Secretary of the Department of Planning, Pretoria, to Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration, Pretoria, 27 December 1967.
[510] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1545 'Potgietersrust Munisipaliteit: Voorgestelde Groepsgebiede', Letter from PAG Gray, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development to the Secretary of the North Transvaal Committee of the Group Areas Board, Pretoria, 13 May 1961; *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1545. 'Potgietersrus: Groepsgebiede', Letter from Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, to the Under-Secretary for White Areas, Northern Transvaal Committee of the Group Areas Board, Pretoria, 28 April 1961.

A number of Mokerong residents appear to have moved willingly into the newly built houses of Mahwelereng, attracted by the comparative space, access to water and sewerage infrastructure. The CBAC reported in 1963 that while there had initially been some opposition from the Old Location residents, "the Superintendent informed me that when the first houses were ready to be occupied, in one weekend, while he was not there, 140 families from the old location illegally moved into the new homes. However, they all qualified to stay there and he then only helped them to settle properly. The prediction of opposition has therefore not come to pass".[511] Yet given the housing shortages in the years that followed, there remained significant intransigence on the part of many Old Location residents to move to empty plots. Another source of opposition, however, came from the Potgietersrus Town Council.

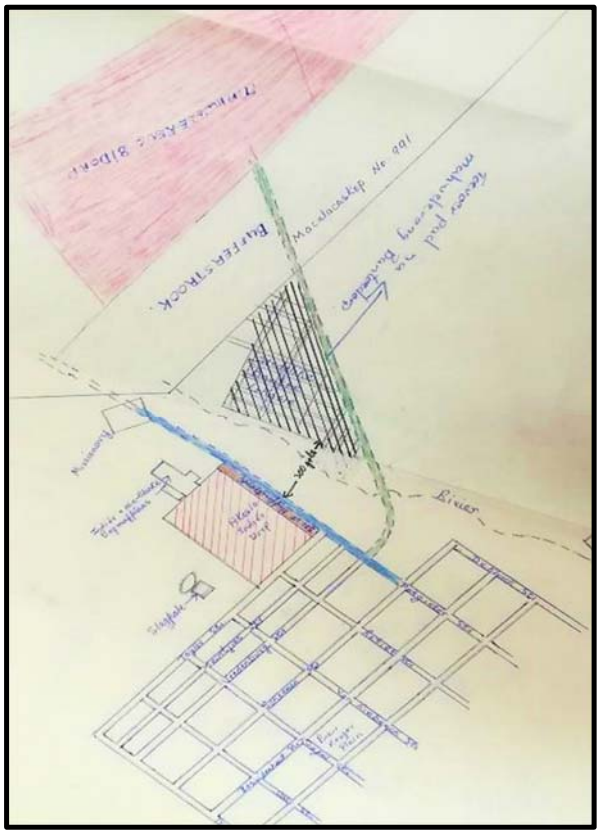


Figure 33: Map from the Town Clerk of Potgietersrus drafted in 1967 indicating the removal of the Old Location, the buffer zone between the Indian Group Area of Akasia and the more distant "Mahwelereng Bantu Town".[512]

[511] *NASA,* SAB BAO KGL 227 G57/2/1545/2 'Vaaltyn Bantoedorp', Internal memo from Administrative Assistant of Commissioner-General to WWM Eiselen, Commissioner-General of the Noord-Sotho Volkseenheid, 14 January 1963.
[512] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1545 'Potgietersrus: Verlening van handeslregte aan Indiërs binne die 300 voet bufferstrook Noord van die Indiërgroepsgebied', Letter from Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration and Development to Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 18 September 1967.

While in urban areas, Town Councils were primarily responsible for the formal disestablishment of old locations and the development of new areas, in the towns bordering Lebowa it would be the BAD that took the lead on both of these fronts. Nevertheless, the Town Council was drawn into processes around the disestablishment of the Old Location. As Nieftagodien has argued, local authorities did not simply operate as "conveyor belts" for central state policy, but were sites of contingency for the implementation of apartheid: while some Councils zealously implemented measures for spatial segregation, others resisted the impositions of the central state.[513] These antagonisms were not simply determined by political affiliation.[514] And despite its solidly Nationalist hue, the Town Council of Potgietersrus expressed significant antipathy to the processes that emerged around the disestablishment of the Old Location and the creation of Mahwelereng Township for this reason, as well as a concern over access to labour.

In the moves towards whitening the town undertaken by the central state, the Town Council voiced opposition not to the spirit of apartheid policies, but rather to some of their practical consequences. Access to a reliable labour supply was an issue of acute concern for the Council, even as it voiced stringent demands about achieving true racial segregation in town. The tone of the letters sent by the Potgietersrus Town Clerk to the BAD is one of apparent consternation, replete with accusations that the Department was ignoring the claims made by the Council that the scheme served primarily to benefit Black residents to the distinct detriment of the Council itself.[515] What emerges is a complex set of negotiations between Departmental officials and the local municipality over the question of compensation, the entrenchment of the racial boundary and the preservation of core economic relations in the process.

In 1967, while substantial portions of the Old Location remained, the Town Clerk of Potgietersrus wrote to the BAC of Potgietersrus, raising his concerns about the lack of available housing for the "Bantu employees of Potgietersrus" in the "Bantu Town", Mahwelereng even as the Department appeared to be accelerating its drive towards finalising the removal. The Town Clerk insisted that, as it was, the Council was faced with a chronic shortage of housing, and as such demanded that the Old Location remain in place as a site

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[513] Nieftagodien, "The Implementation of Urban Apartheid", p.147.
[514] The "liberalism" of the Johannesburg City Council, for instance, is often used to explain its opposition to apartheid urban policies). In some cases, as Nieftagodien shows in the East Rand, it was United Party-dominated councils which enthusiastically adopted the measures and developed townships, while National Party councils were reluctant to do so. While most accepted the ideology of segregation, some demurred when it became clear they were expected to carry the financial burden for the implementation thereof. *Ibid*, p.6.
[515] *NASA* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2 'Besoek aan Potgietersrus op 24 April 1967 in verband met die voorsiening van huisvesting aan Bantoewerknemers in Mahwelereng Bantoedorp', Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 24 April 1967.

for "single Bantu to reside", even if only temporarily.[516] The alternative, he warned, (borrowing from the parlance of urban politicians) were the so-called "locations in the sky" that were "currently found in town, such as in the backyards of hotels, boarding houses, slaughterhouses, schools, residences and the hospital".[517] The Department had made the unusual suggestion that some of these buildings be "licensed for the accommodation of non-exempt Bantu on a large scale", yet the Town Clerk rejected this out of hand: "My Council prefers that these types of Bantu employees spend the night in their own area at night. The experience is that when premises are licensed, the Bantu are tempted to let a friend sleep illegally with him or her … consequently, Bantu are then illegally housed in the white area of the town at night and are lured to stay overnight illegally".[518] The Town Council defends its position as one of true segregation, as against the policies of the central state. While the Town Clerk insisted on the preserving access to labour, this was conceived as orderly and disciplined labour that did accorded with the town's strictly segregationist character: "We would like to have the Bantu leave the White Town area at night".[519] As such, he demanded the acceleration of housing provision, and floated the possibility of hostel construction for single workers: "Accommodation for such Bantu will sooner or later have to be provided".[520] Yet the Town Council roundly opposed the dismantling of the Old Location, claiming that it would only exacerbate the already acute housing shortage and jeopardise the town's access to labour.

It is possible also that the Council feared the loss of control it exercised over the Old Location itself: for several decades its "Non-White division" had presided over and reshaped the location and controlled the registration of "Native service contracts". This was followed shortly by a Labour Bureau in 1953.[521] Notwithstanding its staunchly segregationist rhetoric, it seems

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[516] This echoes the shifts in approach in the urban areas to providing more accommodation for migrants, which resulted in a proliferation of hostels. As Bonner and Nieftagodien show in the case of Alexandra, the authorities at one point wanted to transform the entire township into a hostel township. Having largely settled the issues of segregation and control, the state moved to entrench migrancy. Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008).
[517] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 72/7/17, 'Voorsiening van Huisvesting aan Bantoewerk Werknemers', Letter from Town Clerk of Potgietersrus to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Potgietersrus". 8 February 1967.
[518] The Town Clerk further wrote: "There is also the case of the second and third housemaid, sometimes even more, who my Council also does not want to spend the night in the town, but who cannot be admitted to the Bantu town, due to a shortage of housing. In this regard, I would also like to point out that the Transvaal Education Department is currently obliging the local schools and residences not to house more than five Bantu, who work for them, on the relevant premises". *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 72/7/17, 'Voorsiening van Huisvesting aan Bantoewerk Werknemers', Letter from Town Clerk of Potgietersrus to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Potgietersrus". 8 February 1967. Emphasis in original
[519] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 72/7/17, 'Voorsiening van Huisvesting aan Bantoewerk Werknemers', Letter from Town Clerk of Potgietersrus to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Potgietersrus". 8 February 1967. Emphasis in original
[520] *Ibid*.
[521] JJCJ Van Rensburg, 'Die Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van Plaaslike Bestuur: Stadsklerk, Potgietersrust', in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.31

that the Town Council had envisaged some permanence to the Old Location. This was not, like some urban locations of the 1940s and 1950s, a site of political mobilisation and "racial mixing" – but had, in fact, been constructed by the Town Council itself. And it had invested in the building of infrastructure there. In 1954, we are told that "At the request of the Department of Education, the council erected a school in the Location at 2,075 pounds."[522] Moreover, the Council stood to lose a source of income from the various forms of taxation that its Native Affairs division collected from Old Location residents in the form of dog tax, "quitrent and squatters rent", and "sales fees and levies" collected from Black businesses.[523] In another exchange, the Town Clerk warned that the land upon which the Old Location presently sat "will be completely useless for use by the Council after the relocation of the inhabitants, as it is a very rocky terrain both above and below ground" and further that the relocation was "mainly in the interest of the Bantu".[524] This would be a recurrent theme of white right-wing ideologues throughout the apartheid era: that the Bantustan project, ostensibly fuelled by white taxpayers money, was benefitting Black people to the detriment of whites.[525] In another attempt, the Town Council requested that instead of removing the Old Location, the whole area be transferred to the Department of Bantu Affairs and administered by the Native Trust – a proposal which was rejected because it would essentially entail the "Bantu homeland being moved to virtually [adjacent to] the white town and forming an inlet in the White area". An inter-departmental deputation insisted that the Town Council itself would also benefit from no longer having to service the Old Location, and thus the Town Council was "pertinently told that [the Department] could not agree with their statement that the relocation was primarily in the interest of the Bantu".[526]

The issue of compensation emerged as a key bone of contention, especially as it was the Potgietersrus Town Council who was expected to foot the bill. While the central government

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[522] *Ibid,* p.32
[523] *NASA,* SAB BAO KOG 627 52/3/29/1 'Native Local Councils: Statement of Receipts and payments for the Year Ended 31st December 1952', Report of the Controller and Auditor General, 1952-53.
[524] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2 'Besoek aan Potgietersrus op 24 April 1967 in verband met die voorsiening van huisvesting aan Bantoewerknemers in Mahwelereng Bantoedorp', Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 24 April 1967.
[525] As was described in the Chapter 1, farmers expressed significant unhappiness that significant tracts of arable land next to the Mogalakwena River were included in the territory of the "native locations", yet their appeals for the chieftancies to be moved to the further (waterless) north failed. In the apartheid period, farmers would express the perception that the Bantustan policy, which put an end to some arrangements of labour tenancy, was robbing them of a cheap supply of labour. And the ire of farmers would be raised in later decades by the state's moves towards a policy of so-called "homeland consolidation", buying up land around Lebowa from white farmers to expand the boundaries of the Bantustan.
[526] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2 'Besoek aan Potgietersrus op 24 April 1967 in verband met die voorsiening van huisvesting aan Bantoewerknemers in Mahwelereng Bantoedorp', Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 24 April 1967.

would shoulder the costs of housing provision in Mahwelereng, the Town Council was meant to pay out evictees in the Old Location. The Town Clerk raised several objections to this stipulation, insisting that the Council's financial position was poor, and as such, the Town Clerk claimed, it would take between 10 and 12 years to complete the process. The Department insisted that the Council could not renege on its "financial obligations" with respect to the relocation, and should complete the process within 5 years. The Council countered that it could complete the process in 6 years if the total compensation costs (about R232,000) were drawn from the sale of "Bantoebier" in Mahwelereng – a tactic of indirect taxation which echoed the approach of municipal governments in urban areas. In the final instance, it appears that an agreement was struck whereby the Council would only contribute 30% of the costs of compensation, around 30% drawn from the sale of beer, and the remainder presumably being provided by the Department.[527] What compensation was paid was thus perversely to be drawn in part from the sale of alcohol to Black Africans – a pattern which has been described of township development more broadly, and characterised as means of forcing Black people to pay for their own oppression.

While these administrative negotiations took place, the residents of the Mokerong Old Location themselves were barely consulted. They experienced the hard edge of the brute decisions being debated in the paperwork that shuffled between white officials. Daphne Masenya recalls the process as having been incremental. First her school was demolished in 1968, forcing her to walk every day to the distant Gojela High School in Mahwelereng. And then, the following year, her parents were instructed to move:

> They did not even pay for those trucks, vans. We had to demolish them. And it was a bigger house. We had to come to these four-roomed houses… So can you imagine being taken by force there - from big houses to smaller houses… But at that time you couldn't really resist the government.

This would be among the last round of relocations that would take place from the Old Location. Masenya recalls that her family was among the last to leave Mokerong, and remembers the meagre compensation they received:

> we were only given R500 for them to destroy our houses. And after that, some couldn't even afford to build again, because you build a house, they demolish it, they give you a very small house. Wa bona. Where will you get money to build a bigger one again. You can't build a big house twice.[528]

[527] *Ibid*.
[528] Interview with Daphne Masenya and Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 30 March 2022.

For all the heated insistence of the Town Clerk that the destruction of the Old Location would jeopardise white access to labour, in reality what it meant was that Black workers had to traverse longer distances to work. Masenya's parents continued working in Potgietersrus, but were now forced to walk some 5km to work, or pay to take new forms of transport (buses and taxis). "I still don't understand why they took us from that place to here, because that place is still empty".[529] Today, the only reminders of the Old Location that remain are the purple jacarandas which once sheltered the high school that Daphne Masenya attended.

(b) The Creation of Akasia

While processes for the disestablishment of the Old Location were ongoing, moves were afoot for the relocation of Indian residents from Potgietersrus town. Unlike in many of the Transvaal towns, Indian people were not living or trading in a so-called "Asiatic Bazaar", but instead lived amongst white people and operated businesses in the central business district – a factor which is elaborated in greater detail in Chapter 6. From the early 1960s, however, the central government moved to change this. In 1961, empowered by the Group Areas Act of 1950 (as amended and consolidated in 1957), the Northern Transvaal Committee of the Group Areas Board notified the public that they would "investigate the desirability or otherwise" of constituting two Group Areas in the town of Potgietersrus: the first for whites, in the historical centre of the town; and the second for so-called "Indians", in an as yet unbuilt suburb on the town's western flank.[530] For those classified by apartheid as "coloured" – who numbered in the tens in the Potgietersrus area – the Board insisted on their complete removal from the district entirely, forced to move to the "coloured" Group Area of Westenburg in the town of Pietersburg some 60km away. As Derek Khaas attests, however, this system was full of inconsistencies. His father, who considered himself "coloured", was instead moved to Mahwelereng because he and his family were perceived as Black.[531]

The eventual proclamation of "Akasiadorp" as an "Indian Group Area" would take place in 1963. The Group Areas Board Committee was confronted by a range of obstacles from both within and outside of institutions of government. Given the slow pace at which the Old Location was being deconstructed, the BAD concluded in 1961 that there would likely be Black residents in the location for the foreseeable future within 500 yards of the proposed Indian

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[529] *Ibid*.
[530] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 'Potgietersrus: Adverteer van voorstelle vir die afbakening van Groepsgebiede', Letter from the Secretary of the Northern Transvaal Committee of the Group Areas Board, Pretoria, to Secretary of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 22 March 1961.
[531] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022.

Area.[532] It would take over a year for the Department of Planning to issue a reply, which would indicate that "from both a group area planning and a policy point of view there is no other suitable area that can be used for the Indians".[533] And the BAD would relent by the end of 1962,[534] but on one condition: "provided that no Bantu employees (including domestic servants) are housed in the proposed town".[535]

Yet several years later, the plan to move Indian families to Akasia remained stalled, principally by the realisation that the proposed area of land would not accommodate the 75 families that were meant to be relocated there. It is not clear how many if any families were living in Akasia itself by this point. It was reported in 1967 that no development had been undertaken except for the laying of sewerage lines. At this point, the Town Council was still waiting for tendering to be processed for the provision of water and electricity networks.[536] Nevertheless, a temporary primary school had been set up in the vicinity – (children of high school-going age would be forced to attend an "Indians-only" school in Pietersburg, taking a bus everyday which was organised by the community itself).[537]

[532] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1545 'Potgietersrust Munisipaliteit: Voorgestelde Groepsgebiede', Letter from PAG Gray, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development to the Secretary of the North Transvaal Committee of the Group Areas Board, Pretoria, 13 May 1961.
[533] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A82/131/3 'Groepsgebiede: Potgietersrus', Letter from Department of Community Development, Pretoria, to the Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 6 November 1962.
[534] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1545 'Potgietersrus: Groepsgebied vir Indiers', Internal memorandum from Administrative Assistant of Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, to the Minister of Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 9 November 1962.
[535] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A17/1545 'Potgietersrust: Uitbreiding No.4 (Indiërdorp)', Letter from Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, to Secretary of Department of Community Development, Pretoria, 21 November 1962.
[536] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1425, 'Groepsgebiede te Potgietersrus: 97e vergadering van 5 Februarie 1968', Letter from Secretary of the Department of Planning, Pretoria, to Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration, Pretoria, 27 December 1967.
[537] *Ibid*.

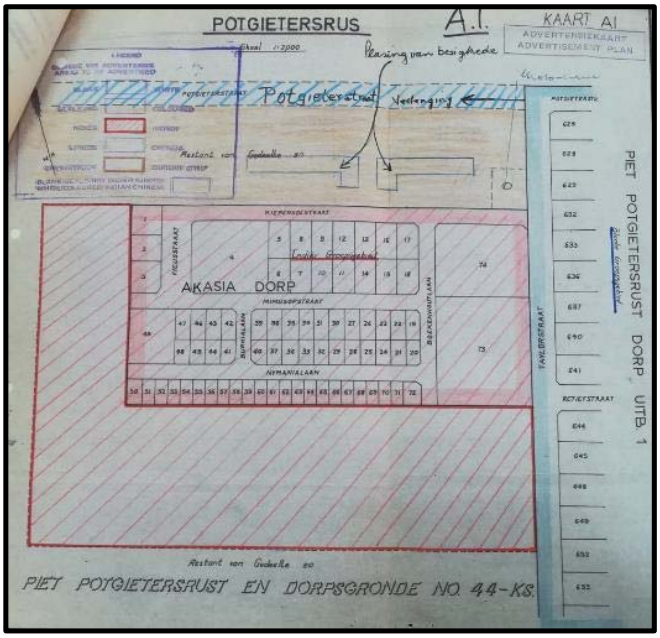


Figure 34: Proposal for the Expansion of Akasia Group Area from the Town Clerk of Potgietersrus Local Municipality, with the area of the proposed business complex shaded in orange.[538]

As such, the entire Group Area had to be replanned in 1967, prompting another "research" visit by the Group Area Board. The Town Council proposed that the Indian Group Area be expanded to include an additional 149 housing allotments of different sizes – as opposed to the original 67 proposed in the first scheme. In an indication of the class differentials at play within the Indian community, the Town Clerk also proposed to allow richer families to occupy more than one plot: "There are about six financially strong Indian families who will probably build their own houses in the area and who will purchase and consolidate more than one building site for this purpose".[539] Among these families would emerge the representatives of the so-called Management Committee, the local government structure appointed to nominally preside over matters in Akasia, and yet which answered directly to the municipality.

While residential segregation formed one aspect of the Group Areas recommendations, commercial segregation formed another. The central state hoped to have Indian business concerns swept out of the central business district. Yet, in 1967, the Town Clerk explained to the limited success that the Council had had in removing Indian businesses from buildings of "white" Potgietersrus. This was referred to as an "Indian occupation", which the Town Council was eager to have moved.[540] Ballim highlights that this concentration of Indian businesses in

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[538] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A25/2/1 'Handelsregte – Indiërs', Letter from the Town Clerk of Potgietersrus to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 3 October 1967.
[539] *Ibid*.
[540] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A25/2/1 'Handelsregte – Indiërs', Letter from the Town Clerk of Potgietersrus to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 3 October 1967.

the town center was historical, with many business owners having acquired trading licences before the Potgietersrus Town Council had begun taking account of licences after 1927.[541] The Group Areas Board wrote that "the Indian [businesses] in the White town are currently mostly gathered on Potgieter Street. However, there are also a number of Indian businesses on Voortrekker Road. Their patronage is mostly Bantu but some of the bigger businesses are supported to a great extent by Whites".[542] As explained in Chapter 1, white farmers were often dependent on the credit extended by Indian shopkeepers for basic goods, accounts which were repaid after the harvest. Yet the local Town Council appears to have repeatedly attempted to remove Indian traders from the town centre. Younus Cachalia, who ran a business on Potgieter Street for many years which had been started by his grandfather-in-law in the early 1900s, recalls:

> the guys in the municipality were all part of the apartheid regime. They didn't want to see Indians really progress, because they had maybe two, three or four hardliners there. They really hated the Indians, for that matter. And they made life very difficult.[543]

In a bid to finally begin the relocation of Indian businesses, the Town Council requested that, in the replanning of 1967, an area would be set aside along the main road immediately adjacent to Akasia for "Indian commerce" – a move which would echo the shift in other urban areas to create "Oriental Bazaars" to replace the Asiatic Bazaars deemed too close to white areas.[544] The Group Areas Board had endorsed the recommendation for the creation of the "Indian business complex". Younus Cachalia remembers the arrival of the Group Area officials:

> So the Group Areas guys came with a map, and said "These are the Indian businesses, and this is what we allocate". So they came with sketches etc. And said: "Okay, this is your shop, this is your shop, this is your shop". So I said, look, we're in business for more than 50 or 60 years, there's supposed to be growth [in the size of the premises]… They went back to the drawing board. They came back,

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[541] Ballim, "The Un-Making of the Group Areas Act," p.574.
[542] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A25/2/1 'Handelsregte – Indiërs', Letter from the Town Clerk of Potgietersrus to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 3 October 1967.
[543] Interview with Younus & Ahmed Cachalia, Mokopane, 5 March 2020.
[544] *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1545 'Potgietersrus: Verlening van handeslregte aan Indiërs binne die 300 voet bufferstrook Noord van die Indiërgroepsgebied', Letter from Secretary of the Department of Planning, Pretoria, to the Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 22 August 1967; *NASA,* SAB BAO 1250 A16/1545 'Potgietersrus: Verlening van handeslregte aan Indiërs binne die 300 voet bufferstrook Noord van die Indiërgroepsgebied', Letter from Secretary of Department of Bantu Administration and Development to Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 18 September 1967.Once again the issue of the "buffer zone" ("bufferstrook") emerged as a concern, with the Department of Bantu Administration inquiring as to the width of the "unoccupied boundary strip", and raising concerns about whether the proposed development might "conflict with any planning regarding the Bantu" and raise "frictions" between "Indians and Bantus". Yet the Town Council assured the Department that the buffer zone would be sufficient, and that the Old Location would, in any case, be demolished at some point in the near future.

> maybe it was 3 or 4 times bigger than [the original proposal]. And they gave me a bigger place, but when they came, we had a meeting at one of the municipality's buildings somewhere around here. And I can't remember his name, but he came and he said: "Today we want to know nothing, all we want to know: if you want a flat toilet or a high toilet"

Cachalia, along with a range of other business owners, then drafted a memorandum with the help of a local lawyer (and future Democratic Alliance councillor), Francis Barnard, which succeeded in halting the relocation. Cachalia insists that it was due to their obstruction that the relocation of Indian traders never materialised. Ballim further points to some resistance from members of the white community to the removal of Indian traders. In representations to the Group Areas Board, for instance, pre-typed petitions were signed by a range of white residents which read: "'[I would like] to express my gratitude to certain Indian traders of Potgietersrus who during my darkest days when I was in serious financial difficulties helped me tide over this period by aiding me financially".[545]

According to Cachalia, members of the Management Committee ("his master's voice") were disappointed at the failure of the business complex scheme. Given that they constituted among the largest businesses in town, the scheme would have disqualified a number of their smaller competitors from trading. As such, Cachalia argues that the Management Committee "worked with the municipality" out of "self-interest".[546] By the 1980s, he recalls that when on occasion the community would organise meetings to discuss some of the threats they were facing, members of the Management Committee would "call the Security Branch to intimidate us". This perspective was emboldened by the stance of anti-collaboration advanced by the Transvaal Indian Congress, which came to have an influence in the community, not least through families like the Cachalias.

From the late 1970s, as Ballim explains, businesses like that run by the Cachalias evaded subsequent efforts to squeeze them out through the use of the nominee system: "it became easier to register land in the name of white nominees and this sparked an entire industry of 'professional' white nominees. In 1977, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) remarked on the common occurrence of white nominees who were paid by Indian store owners to pretend they owned their stores in return for payments of up to R100 per month".[547] Nonetheless, Indian traders continued to face perennial calls for the removal of Indian traders well into the 1980s. One anecdote offered by Younus Cachalia neatly sums up the bad faith that underpinned calls for the banishment of Indian traders by the Town Council:

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[545] *Ibid.,* p.576.
[546] Interview with Younus & Ahmed Cachalia, Mokopane, 5 March 2020.
[547] Ballim, "The Un-Making of the Group Areas Act," p.574.

> There was a guy that hated the Indians, he was in the municipality, I can't remember his name. He was a very bad man. And he used to buy things from - when my brothers-in-law were there, he used to buy cold-drinks, cases and so on. And he owed, for a case of empties, when we came and asked him for the money, he said: "Jy kan jou gat steek". So we summonsed him, he had to pay. And then this guy, this is very interesting, in one of the churches, the NGK, on the pulpit he used to say, the priest: "Moenie van die k***ies koop nie". This that and the other. But he used to send his black guy to our shop to buy the groceries that were on sale."
>
> Ahmed: Ja, but "moenie van die k***ies koop nie" that kept you alive! So how is that for cutting your nose to spite your face.[548]

The Myth of the White Town and Local Racial Governance

For all the discourse about the town being white, Potgietersrus was in fact a space characterised by significant mixing on a daily basis between races because of the continuing dependence of white businesses and households on Black labour and purchasing power. In this context, everyday forms of racial policing came to be entrenched in towns of the Northern Transvaal to ensure that racial mixing remained purely economic – in line with what Swilling *et al* have described as "functional inclusion". [549] Managing interactions between races in line with apartheid discourses of separation thus came to assume a central animating feature of everyday life and, indeed, local politics. Over the course of apartheid, the town was to be characterised by ever stricter forms of racial policing, eradicating forms of residential and social "racial mixing", entrenching a strict master-servant relationship between white and Black, regulating the movement of Black people through pass books (dompas), and seeking to ensure that the town remained "white" after dark.

Black residents recall Potgietersrus as an intensely hostile and unwelcoming space. As if the pass system administered by officials, police and employers was not enough, there were also informal forms of everyday segregation, quotidian acts of brutality meted out by ordinary white residents to maintain racial boundaries on the streets, in the shops, and in homes. The racial frontier was thus not simply or even predominantly a physical geographical barrier which corresponded to cartographic boundaries, but rather a social one reproduced in face-to-face

[548] Interview with Younus & Ahmed Cachalia, Mokopane, 5 March 2020.
[549] Swilling et al, Apartheid City in Transition, p.175.

encounters and quotidian forms of surveillance in which police officers constituted just one set of eyes.[550]

Rahab Lebelo who worked at the OK Bazaar in Potgietersrus remembers: "If you walked [across the road] when the robot was still orange. They would beat you, any white person would beat you: "Het jy nie die rooi mannetjie gesien?!".[551] Joe Mashilela, who grew up in Mahwelereng and who would later become an Azanian Liberation Army (Azanla) militant, recalls having dogs set upon him by a white man and his children walking home towards the township on his way home after having completed a gardening shift.[552] In his autobiography, Tsoaledi Thobejane tells the story of two Black children who were attacked in the street by white boys after having finished a gardening shift for a white man in town:

> On this particular day after their long and painful shoveling in the garden, Nkhulu and Tshepho decided to walk back to Mahwelereng Township instead of taking a bus … As they were in the middle of the street, Nkhulu spotted two white boys coming from a house a few yards away. As they approached them, they started cursing them in Afrikaans: "'K***', 'K***', gaan terug na julle dorpie; they beckoned. Ons soek julle nie hier in onse dorpie nie" …[553]

A violent altercation ensues, and the two run back to Mahwelereng only to receive a scolding from their mother. Thobejane writes: "Why do these people employ us if they do not want us in their town?"[554]

Daphne Masenya, a resident of Mahwelereng, recalls an episode in which she was harassed for her *dompas* on the streets of Potgietersrus while helping her sister carry luggage to a hitchhiking spot:

> You know I was once arrested for not having a dompas. My sister was going to Nylstroom, so I had to go with her to help her carry bags, because she was starting a new job that side... Unfortunately I left my ID because I knew I was not going [to Nylstroom]… [And then] here comes a boy. It was a policeman with his friend, because that other one was not even a policeman. You know, they put us into a van. My sister had to leave everything to come and fetch my ID… And you know

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[550] This perhaps distinguishes the South African case from the kind of Manichaean colonial situation described by Frantz Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth (1963:35-36), where ghettoization was marked with a distinct and armed border in colonial Algeria – a physical barrier between the colonizer and colonized. I was surprised, for instance, how few Black respondents knew where the exact boundary of Lebowa was, even as it was meant to mark the limits of the racial boundary. What I have come to learn, however, is that it was not a border that was guarded by pass-seeking officials and policemen. I had been searching, it turns out, for the wrong kind of border. Instead, as is shown below, racial boundaries in South Africa were largely upheld through everyday interactions, quotidian and pervasive forms of policing that could potentially strike at any time.
[551] Interview with Daphne Masenya and Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 30 March 2022.
[552] Interview with Mr Joe Mashilela, Tshwane, 3 April 2019.
[553] Thobejane, *The Fight,* p.16-17.
[554] *Ibid.* p.17.

> what hurt me, and that I'll never forget: when they took us into the vans, there were some girls - because they were working for white people in town, they didn't have their dompas, but they left them because they'd say "I'm working for Baas so-and-so"… those who worked for white people, they left them, even if they didn't have the dompas. But because we were not working for them... And this one, who was not even a policeman, yooh he was harassing us. He was harassing us.[555]

Masenya's account indicates something of how white people were empowered at a young age to police racial boundaries – whether in an official or unofficial capacity. And, additionally, how the pass system put the power of mobility into the hands of the white "baas".

Members of the designated Indian community would be similarly subjected to everyday forms of discrimination, while having marginally more access to amenities within the town. Ahmed Cachalia recalls being routinely insulted on the streets, and his mother was subjected to racial slurs by white customers in their family shop (which, he explains, she responded to with righteous rage). Farouk Fakir remembers that a local white dentist would provide a tooth-removal service for Black and Indian people, but he would do it while leaning out of a window that opened onto the street.[556] Younus Cachalia remarks that there was one "more liberal" dentist which allowed so-called "non-whites" into his practice – but strictly after hours and only on a Wednesday.[557]

There also developed moments of spectacle in the event that everyday racial codes of life in Potgietersrus were broken, eliciting theatrical and dramatic responses from residents on the streets. In 1963, for instance, visitors from out of town reportedly caused a stir because:

> Police ordered a carload of young Whites and Africans to leave Potgietersrus yesterday because they were 'causing a disturbance' by eating together in their station wagon. 'South Africans do not like to see Whites eating with Natives', one policeman said… When the station wagon pulled up outside a café in Potgietersrus yesterday afternoon, a small crowd of Whites and Africans watched the people in the vehicle sharing pies and cool drinks. Two policemen arrived, saying that someone had complained… [They] also threatened to charge one of the White women with indecent exposure for wearing shorts in town.[558]

Norval argues that "the processes through which identities are discursively constructed always take a relational form".[559] And it was through the construction of "racial others" that white identity could be constituted through "a series of negative operations in which the true *volkseie,*

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[555] Interview with Daphne Masenya and Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng 30 March 2022.
[556] Interview with Farouk Fakir, Mokopane, March 2020.
[557] Interview with Younus & Ahmed Cachalia, Mokopane, 5 March 2020.
[558] *Rand Daily Mail*, 'Police tell 'mixed' carload to leave town', 16 January 1963
[559] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse,* p.8.

while remaining invisible, could be inferred *a contrario* by the alleged visibility of the 'other'".[560] It is through this light that one might consider the forms of lay-policing undertaken by ordinary white people; these processes of racial othering served to negatively affirm the superiority and substance of what it was to be white during apartheid. They came to form a basic tenet of the local white "culture of respectability" ("ordentlikheid").[561]

And, indeed, these notions of racial appropriateness came to be turned inwards as an ever-present gaze on white people too. Moodie refers to the tenets of discipline, hard work and ceaseless devotion to the Christian Nationalist vision of developing "die volk" into a self-reliant white community under God as the pillars of the "Afrikaner civil religion" which underpinned the apartheid project – themes of self-discipline and racial purity that underpinned small-town codes of appropriateness. These tenets were instilled through a range of disciplinary institutions. Norval argues that while the apartheid state sought to entrench a totalising system of "womb-to-tomb surveillance" on subjugated, racialised populations:

> this total system of regulation operated as much for the oppressor as the oppressed, albeit with very different effects. Under apartheid, the lives of white South Africans were equally subjected to a similar womb-to-tomb 'streaming', instituting different schooling, educational and other institutions for Afrikaans- and English-speaking whites".[562]

Roos has similarly pointed to the efforts of state institutions in small towns and cities "to 'sanitize' these landscapes of people who undermined the mythology of whites as middle class, respectable, God-fearing, sober, and straight."[563] Sparks' research on the white suburbs of Sasolburg, pointed to forms of horizontal policing within white communities, with neighbours denouncing violations of the "local code of respectability" – such as failure to maintain "neat gardens, clean yards and proper comportment".[564]

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[560] *Ibid.,* p.95.
[561] Sparks, "Apartheid Modern", p.17.
[562] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, 104.
[563] Roos, "South African History and Subaltern Historiography", p.139.
[564] Sparks, "Apartheid Modern", p.17.



Figure 35: The Dutch Reformed Church of Potgietersrus in 1953.[565]

Churches, with brutalist bell-towers that loomed above all other structures, were central institutions in Potgietersrus, and church pulpits hosted fiery sermons on the need for racial purity, the dangers of communism, and the importance of the stable patriarchal family. A number of church leaders would emerge as powerful politicians over the course of decades – including the controversial future leader of the CP, Andries Treurnicht, a pastor from Nylstroom. Schools proved another especially important site for the inculcation of white supremacy and discipline. The town was home to a host of Afrikaans-medium schools. Hoërskool Piet Potgieter, for instance, was modelled on military-style authoritarianism and traditionalism which characterised much white education across the country. Like many others, it espoused a Christian Nationalist education,[566] upholding rigid gender norms and preparing boy children for compulsory service in the military. “The Afrikaner child,” Fred Dube

[565] Combrink et al, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album*, p.63.
[566] In his contribution to the Potgietersrus Centenary album, the headmaster of Hoerskool Piet Potgieter drew on the sacred history surrounding the school’s namesake: “Piet Potgieter-Hoërskool waves a salute to the generation of heroes after whom it is named, he calls to mind the sacrifices of men and women, who toiled and fought for its existence and survival, he looks with gratitude at a young crowd that has left, and he faithfully looks up to God, the Lord, who will help the school to "do right"’. CJ Reinecke, ‘Die Piet Potgieter-Hoërskool, 1942-1954’, in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.85.

wrote in 1986, “is in fact the victim, privileged as he may be in other respects, of systematic indoctrination; and the correlative inhibition of critical or independent thinking”.[567]

Everyday life in Potgietersrus was, indeed, profoundly suffused with military ideology. In each town of the region were stationed commando groups (the “Voortrekkerkommando”), lead by local officers and drawing in reservists. In Potgietersrus, they were stationed in an old stone barracks at the centre of town. Local and regional newspapers are replete with militaristic imagery and celebrations of the achievements of various regiments. And this war-like orientation was complemented by images of heavily armed hunters – hunting forming a major pastime of the region. Local events would routinely be accompanied by military marches through the town. A former mayor, George Morkel-Brink, recalls how representatives of the municipality were embroiled in militaristic symbolism:

> The mayor at that point in time was the patron of the Commando. And then every year, 31 May, they had the freedom of the town march. At the end of that march, they came together in front of the municipal offices, the mayor was meant to give them a message, thank them for everything they're doing, and then after that the mayor - or the municipality actually - had a braai for them.[568]

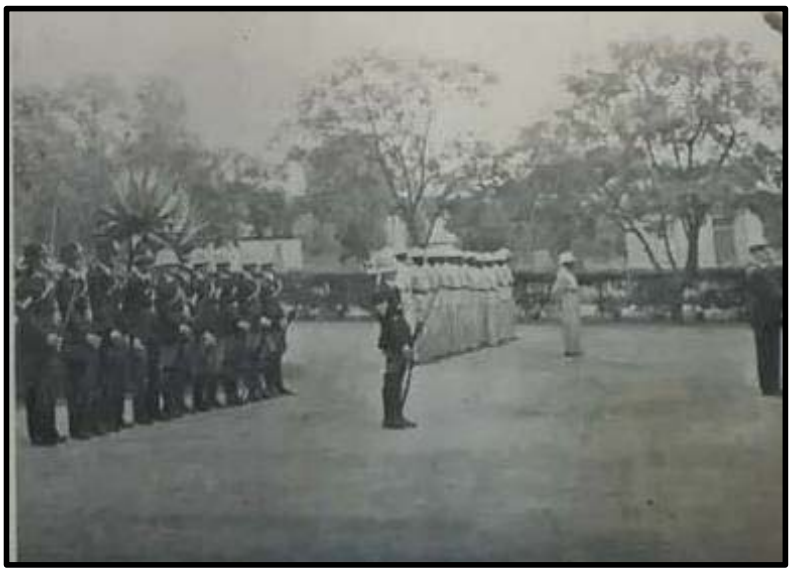


Figure 36: Medal parade in Potgietersrus, 1953.[569]

During apartheid, norms around gender roles and sexuality formed a key horizon of policing whiteness. According to Van der Westhuizen, at the centre of aims to protect “racial purity”

[567] E. Fred Dube, “Racism: Are There One or Two Categories of Victim?”, *Philosophical Forum,* 18, 2 (1986), p.138.
[568] Interview with George Morkel-Brink, Mokopane, 29 August 2019.
[569] GS Van Staden, ‘Die Polisiediens, Potgietersrust’, in Combrink, Mellet & Barnardo (eds), 1954, *Potgietersrus Eeufees Album,* p.39

was a strict gender hierarchy which severely circumscribed the role of Afrikaner women.[570] The newspapers detail the pervasive forms of gender segregation which operated in small town Afrikaner life. Agricultural unions, for instance, were constituted by an exclusively male membership. Farmers' wives were, however, encouraged to join women's organisations. "Women learned to cook, do needlework, all the household things", Irene de Villiers recalls, "And the men farmed".[571] De Villiers states that married women staff at the Northern Transvaal Cooperative (NTK), where she worked prior to taking up a job at the municipality, were barred from joining a pension fund – in addition, that is, to receiving a lower salary than men.[572] And similar patriarchal norms flourished at the Potgietersrus Town Council. De Villiers remarks that when she took up work as a junior clerk at the municipality in 1984, it was her responsibility to pour beers for councillors after the monthly sitting of council, having to listen to them repeat their stories late into the night as they got progressively more drunk. She agrees that the environment was, in many ways, a "boys club".[573] This conservative gender dynamic can also be seen in the expectations that were placed on the mayor's wife who, Morkel-Brink notes, was expected once a month to host a dinner for the exclusively male heads of department and councillors.[574]

Town life was also characterised by numerous associations and social organisations which structured the local social calendar around weekly meetings, occasions and festivities, and which strongly upheld notions of white discipline. Hofmeyr observed the growth of cultural organisations tied to the Afrikaner Nationalist upsurge in the 1930s, which continued over the course of the subsequent decades in the associational life of Potgietersrus. Some were, indeed, directly tied into the Broederbond, and according to several respondents, were given appointments in local institutions, including on a position on a church council or administrative positions in the municipality.[575] The Rapportryers was a youth group which functioned, as one put it, as a "Junior Broederbond". Meanwhile there were a host of other less political associations, such as the Lions, an association for men up to the age of 40. Thereafter, Morkel-Brink notes, one would be expected to join either the Round Table or Rotary Club.[576]

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[570] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.12.
[571] Interview with Irene de Villiers, 16 March 2020.
[572] *Ibid*.
[573] Interview with Irene de Villiers, 9 March 2020.
[574] In addition, she was once a year to organise a "ladies' day". Interview with George Morkel-Brink, Mokopane, 29 August 2019.
[575] Interview with George Morkel-Brink, 29 August 2019; Interview with Irene de Villiers, 16 March 2020; Interview with Lydia Laws, 12 January 2023.
[576] Interview with George Morkel-Brink, 29 August 2019

The town council, the business chambers, the schools, the police, the commando, and the many associations, along with the town's various institutions, formed the institutional nexus of local racial governance in Potgietersrus. Racial discipline and white respectability were, of course, also affirmed in the regional white newspapers. At their most occult pitch, public narratives spoke of the need to protect the white towns at all costs from the evils of "miscegenation", *swart oorstroming* (black 'swamping'), false *gelykstelling* (equalization), and, indeed, Godless communism.[577] These tropes can be found in the letters and columns which fill the *Noord Transvaler* and *Northern Review,* weekly papers delivered across the region. And, accentuating the rule of relationality, instances of deviance are covered in lurid detail. In 1959, for instance, a scandal erupted around a local farmer found guilty under the Immorality Act of having sex with a "servant girl". Newspapers had erroneously claimed that the culprit was the son of a notable local farmer nicknamed the "Tobacco King", who in turn sued the papers claiming to have been defamed and was duly awarded damages.[578] Numerous other such reports emerged over the decades.

Van der Westhuizen observes that over the course of apartheid, "the policing of thoughts had been refined down to micro-level in Afrikaner society in order to extinguish even the faintest hint of opposition".[579] Yet, once again, the upholding of petty apartheid was not premised simply on a pervasive state police presence, but rather more often on horizontal forms of surveillance amongst the citizenry. In one sense, what apartheid legislation did was to turn ordinary white people into lay policemen of each other.

This is exemplified in some of the experiences of the Antonopoulos family. After having emigrated from Greece to Potgietersrus, Lydia Laws (née Antonopoulos) explains, her father Angelo had opened up a corner café which became a popular venue for the residents of the town and farmers of the district:

> The farmers used to come in every Friday and have their meetings and lunches, and collect tools that were sent from the coops to my father's storeroom. It was quite a center of town, actually. Everybody just knew him. The kids would come and have milkshakes and read the comics and steal the pages. My dad was a real softy… They called him Angel because he just helped everybody, financially and with food or whatever.

Living in Potgietersrus and running a business in the "conservative and verkrampte town" in the 1960s, Laws explains, also meant reckoning with codes of racial respectability and policing. Despite their father's popularity, the family was still subject to forms of everyday

[577] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.12.
[578] *Rand Daily Mail*, 'Court dismisses application by newspaper', 15 November 1961.
[579] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.5.

discrimination and exclusion as Greeks. Angelo had in fact changed his surname to "Anton" to make it more palatable to the local community. Still, however, Laws recalls that the "Afrikaners would call us the sea-k****rs". While they would frequent the shop, Afrikaners would not generally socialize with the family, who instead found community with the much smaller English community, as well as the few Portuguese, Italian and Jewish families who lived in the town – "the English stuck to the English".[580]

Laws recalls the pervasiveness of everyday racial policing between neighbours. The shop was forced, by law, to have a "whites-only" front entrance, while Black workers were forced to use a door at the rear – "that was the rule, otherwise in Potties they would've closed the business". Laws describes one occasion in which they had experienced the full spectacle of neighbourly racial policing: "We were all swimming and the pool was in the front of our house. We told the [child of the family's domestic worker] to come and swim with us. Well, the cars queued up to look at us. And they then went to the shop and said 'If you do not get him out [of the pool, we will boycott the shop'. Well we all got out of the swimming pool, of course".[581]

Despite its obvious contradictions, segregated life in Potgietersrus over the course of the 1950s and 1960s came to be normalized and naturalized so as to appear unremarkable – sedimented into everyday life in ways, as Hart puts, that obscure "the traces of its own contingency".[582] Local apartheid, in other words, achieved a substantial degree of stability in its structuration of everyday life. As did episodes of routine, institutionalised violence and horizontal racial policing. This is profoundly revealed in a letter written by Peter Antonopoulos. While his sister Lydia left the town for the excitement of Jo'burg as soon as she finished school, Peter stayed to take over the running of his father's café. He describes his memories of everyday life in segregated Potgietersrus during apartheid as someone who operated a business which served as one nexus point of small-town relationality:

> [T]he Indian community … had their own suburb and their own school just outside of town. They owned most of the big hardware stores and a lot of small general dealer shops which were well supported by both whites and blacks. Their shops were mainly situated on the outer skirts of the business area.
>
> Black people also had their area just out of town which was referred to as the Location. A lot of them had their own means of getting to work by bicycle, there were also busses and slowly taxis were used. Black and white relationship seemed good; this was probably due to the black people working for the same employers

[580] Telephonic Interview with Lydia Laws, 12 January 2023.
[581] *Ibid.*
[582] Hart, *Disabling Globalization*, p.9.

> for many years. We all got to know the Mike that worked at the petrol station or Christmas, the waiter at the local café. There was no handshake just a hallo…
>
> The circus used to come to town once a year. Everybody was allowed to go, but all seating was separate even though all races mixed outside looking at the animals. There was always the one or two verkramptes that would make an issue of the whole situation and even sometimes become nasty.
>
> We had the town swimming pool which only whites were allowed to use. Most of the wealthier people had their own pools but occasionally we would go to the pool to play on the diving board.
>
> Old years evening was war night, Indians came into the town and positioned themselves on the opposite side of the road to our cafe and the whites were on the side by our café. At about 11pm they would start throwing crackers at each other across the road or shoot skyrockets towards each other. Our shop was like the ammo depot but all was done in good gest, if the Indians ran out of "ammo" they were allowed to cross over and come buy at the café …
>
> At 9 o' clock a bell was rung at the police station and all blacks had get off the streets or they got arrested. They were sometimes beaten up by the police or even the verkramptes. The black people had to have a pass which they needed to carry at all times. We would take our staff at home to make sure they got home safely.
>
> Once a month the staunch Afrikaner's would get together and do their traditional folk dance called the "Volk spellers - it was very much like a Waltz and the woman would wear long dresses and white gloves and the men would wear bowties and waist coats. …
>
> In general, life was good in Potties, the different communities lived their own lives. The blacks had their own hotel in the location, on weekend the Indians would come to our café and hang around on the pavement having ice-cream and chocolates, the whites would visit the roadhouse after the drive in. My parents went to the movies and dances over weekends. Some people would work on their cars, preparing for drag racing over took place over weekends when there were no police in sight.[583]

Antonopoulos still expresses strong affinity for the town, even after having left for Cape Town in more recent years. And there was, indeed, a profound sense of nostalgia that pervaded the recollections of the white residents who participated in this study, who remember life in the town as one marked by close-knit relationships, a "tuindorpie" (garden town) whose entry was lined with bougainvillea, a quiet and community-oriented life filled with peculiar characters where they had raised their families and advanced their careers. Many evinced only a cursory knowledge of what life was like in Mahwelereng or the villages (unless they worked at the

[583] Letter to author from Peter Antonopoulos, 23 February 2023, who has given me permission to quote its contents.

municipality), and tended to diminish the severity of apartheid racial division or the physical and symbolic violence that was meted out to maintain the boundaries between races.

Those residents classified as “Indian” also express some cherished memories about “Potties”, even amidst the pervasive structures of racism. Ahmed Cachalia and Younus Hassan recollected at length the good times and fun they experienced in their childhoods, about growing up in the bushveld. Friendships certainly existed across race groups. Some white people would “come for tea”, or would host those who were local traders for the night as they travelled across the region. Cachalia recalls fishing in dams as teenagers owned by white farmers who owed a debt to his father. This was, however, intermingled with traumatic memories of racist encounters and episodes of violence that took place on the streets of the town by the most hardline. And, of course, among the Black residents I interviewed, who were treated only as “temporary sojourners” in Potgietersrus, there were far fewer positive recollections of the segregationist town.

These experiences of everyday racism would engender a deepening sense of defiance among residents of the area over the course of apartheid. Daphne Masenya recalls what happened with the white children who would try to chase them out of town: “We used to fight with them. When we went to town, especially during holidays. When we used to walk to town from Mokerong. It was very, very near. They'd chase us back: "K***! Go back! Gaan terug!". But after passing the river, we'd pick up stones!”.[584]

Conclusion

As across the racially-divided zones of the region, the apartheid central state introduced far-reaching interventions in the town of Potgietersrus along the axes of space, administration and economic relationality. This chapter has shown that, while not without contest, processes of forced removal and administrative segregation largely succeeded in transforming apartheid’s vision of the “white town” into reality. It was perhaps amongst rural white communities that the apartheid state largely achieved what it had set out to do: structuring everyday life according to strict racial spatial segregation, producing a “whites-only” local authority, and reducing forms of relationality across racial boundaries to the realm of economic exchange (and, indeed, exploitation). Here, amongst the greatest beneficiaries of apartheid policies, the myth of the “white town” – one amongst an interconnected community of “white towns” in the Northern Transvaal – could come to structure everyday consciousness of white residents. Even as a sense of white fragility, fear and racial conflict remained, residents lived

[584] Interview with Daphne Masenya and Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 30 March 2022.

of Potgietersrus came to envisage an overall sense of stability to their way of life – a confidence which was buoyed by the apparent permanence of both "white space" and the relations of economic exploitation that nurtured this.

Between the 1950s and late 1970s, a sense of stability also pervaded the white local government system. Certainly, the local town councils were not without their politics – the contests that emerged between personalities within the municipality, in its day-to-day operations, and the frictions between ordinary townsfolk and their local authority. There were, of course, many competing visions over how Potgietersrus should be governed, and what its future should look like. There emerged a sense of competition between towns of the region. Nonetheless, the operations and political landscape of the town council remained predictable. The institution took on the characteristics of a civic centre, a bastion of local values and historical memory, led by the notable men of the town.

The town council was also a key anchor and upholder of the town's dehumanising racial landscape. Over the course of the high-apartheid era, the all-white Potgietersrus Town Council would remain directly implicated in upholding strict forms of racial discipline and respectability. It did so within the nexus of local and regional white state and non-state actors. Along with officials from other government structures, municipal staff remained in constant interaction with the businesses, church structures, social clubs, and prominent personalities that constituted local white civil society. Even councillors often wore multiple hats in the town. It was through this cross-cutting institutional nexus that local racial governance was entrenched, and through which a fierce sense of racial belonging was voiced. Racial norms were also upheld in everyday forms, not only through the technologies of spatial segregation and laws of petty apartheid, but through the routine violences meted out by ordinary white people – whether in the verbal exchanges through which everyday relations with Black people were carried out, or in more spectacular public forms of humiliation and physical assault.

As well as being a physical space, a built landscape of concrete, cement and tar, the town of Potgietersrus might also be understood as an idea – or set of ideas – a historical project of utopian white supremacy in the bushveld which was made possible by the sweeping interventions of the central apartheid state in the countryside, its wrenching processes of dispossession. Nonetheless, the relationship between the people of Potgietersrus, including those that serve on the Town Council, was marked with certain tensions. Even as local Afrikaner Nationalist discourse enfolded the history of the town and its people within the NP's mythology of Afrikaner *volkseenheid* that underwrote the slogan of apartheid, the town would retain a fierce sense of defence for its sense of identity and pride, and, indeed, autonomy from the dictates of the metropolitan-based central government. These tensions would later come

to erupt in shows of far greater defiance against Pretoria, with the Town Council emerging as a key site around which oppositional politics coalesced in the 1980s. During this period, the depths of the ideology of white, small-town utopianism which was allowed to take root over the first decades of apartheid would become increasingly apparent, as revanchist modes of white politics emerged in the town and across the region in opposition to attempts to reform apartheid.

Chapter 4: Mahwelereng and the "Bantu Towns"

"History is being made here today. The first deed of transfer in a bantu township is being officially presented to Mr JH Koos [an "African house owner"]. It is proof that he is the owner of site No. 2321. He has bought it and paid for it, and it is now his property"

Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, MDC De Wet Nel at the opening of the "Mahwelereng African township" on 1 October 1964.[585]

Introduction

On the 1st of October 1964, a ceremony to mark the official opening of the "Mahwelereng Bantoedorp" ["Bantu Town"] took place. The proceedings, presided over by JC Venter, the BAC for the Potgietersrus District, included appearances from a range of other state officials, including the CBAC who had made the journey to the new township from Pietersburg, as well as the famed state ethnologist, former BAD minister, WWM Eiselen, who was now serving in his capacity as the Commissioner-General of Lebowa. The keynote address, which took place after a choral item performed by the children of the Rooisloot Higher Primary school, was given by MDC de Wet Nel, the then minister of the BAD.

Two years previously, de Wet Nel had announced the plan for the creation of the new "town" outside of Potgietersrus, framing it as an opportunity for Black Bantustan residents to pursue a settled urban life of their own, away from the white cities. Mahwelereng would be one of nine "bantoedorpe" proclaimed across Lebowa in the early 1960s by the BAD, places, de Wet Nel promised, where Black people would be entitled to buy property, could make use of urban amenities which had hitherto only been available in white towns, and develop their own modes of local government. The minister explained that in "Bantu Towns", Black people "will be able to staff their own post offices and start their own secondary and tertiary industries and so become economically self-sufficient". [586] .

These towns were to be the centre-piece of "positive apartheid",[587] showcasing the promise of "separate development". Schools, hospitals, running water and electricity were to provide the

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[585] *Rand Daily Mail*, 'First deed of transfer to African', 2 October 1964.
[586] *Rand Daily Mail*, "De Wet Nel Explains Plans for Bantustans", 15 April 1962.
[587] T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p.267.

infrastructural anchors which would encourage Bantustan residents to build lives and invest in the Bantustan project. Moreover, they were to be spaces of modernity largely outside of chiefly rule – connected to chiefs only through higher structures of the Bantustan bureaucracy and legislature rather than through modes of direct local rule. These were to be, state officials promised, urban spaces adjacent to traditionalist rurality in which entrepreneurs and civil servants could establish the trappings of middle class life.

Yet for all these promises of self-sufficiency, the "Bantu Towns" were nonetheless envisaged to remain key economic appendages to the towns of white South Africa. In this, they closely resembled the "townships" of South Africa's urban centres in function. "Many, however, will always be dependent on the White towns for employment", De Wet Nel had explained. In this case, Mahwelereng would remain tied to Potgietersrus, situated some 5km away across a "buffer zone" of bushveld, a source of both labour and purchasing power which would form the bedrock of the local white economy. Yet the Minister had justified this through the euphemism of international relations: "But this is no different from, for example, the economic inter-relation between South African and the United States".[588] And, he insisted, genuine self-sufficiency would expand over time: "They too will eventually be able to develop their own secondary and tertiary industries and eventually evolve into fully-fledged towns and cities".[589]

The present chapter considers in the range of processes and sets of relations which were elaborated over the creation of Mahwelereng in particular, from its proclamation in 1962 through to the era of the Lebowa Bantustan which officially began in 1972. It considers how central-state led attempts at spatial reconfiguration, administrative elaboration and infrastructural development played out in the township to produce a new space of sociality, politics and economy in the Bantustan, a meeting point of actors from multiple levels of state, a regional condensation point for a multitude of different networks and organisations, and eventually a space of defiant local politics.

[588] *Rand Daily Mail*, "De Wet Nel Explains Plans for Bantustans", 15 April 1962.
[589] *Ibid*.

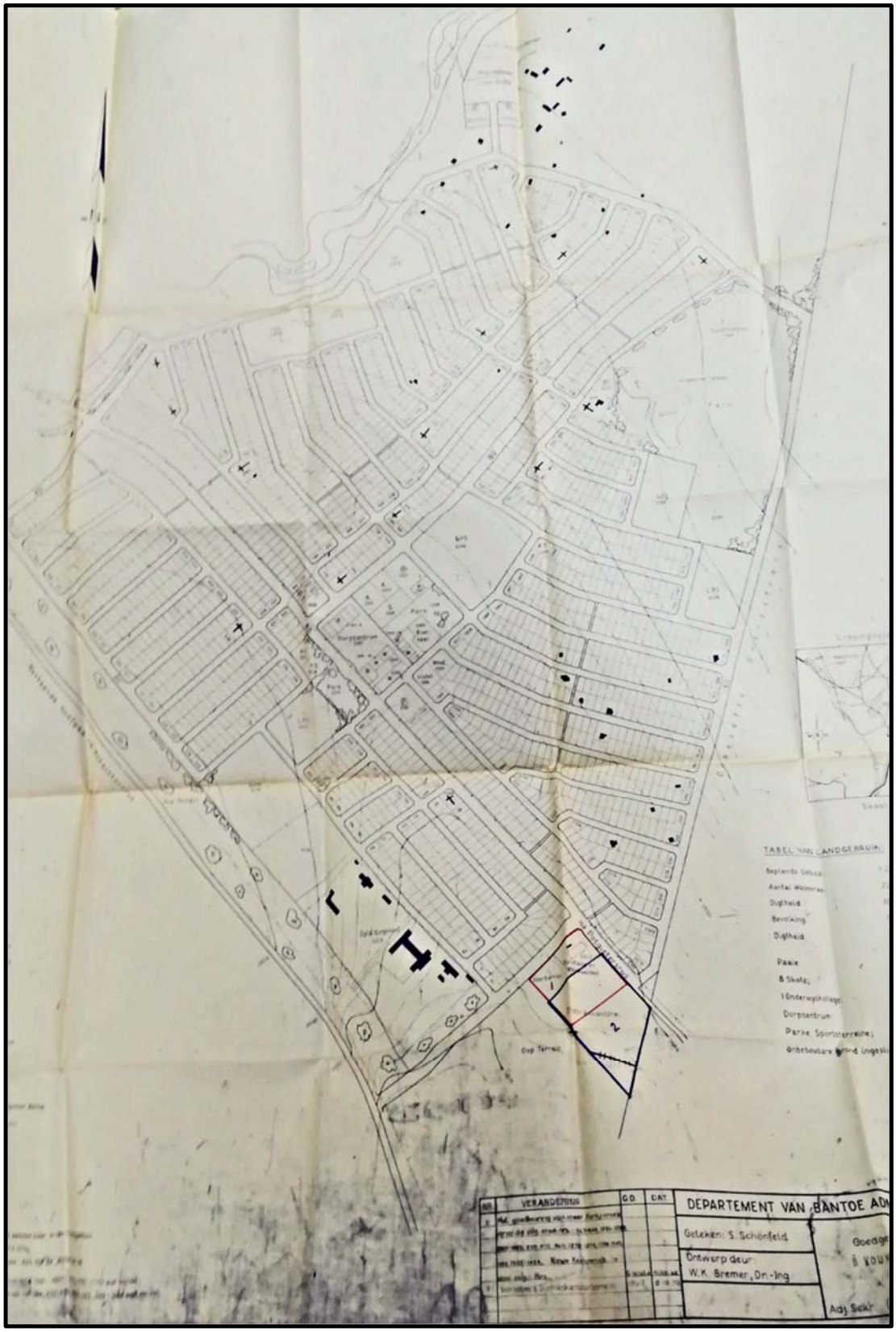


Figure 37: Map of the Planned Mahwelereng Township drafted in 1961 by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, detailing housing erven and amenities.[590]

Townships on the Racial Boundary

While apartheid townships have attracted significant scholarly attention, the bulk of these studies have focused on those built near the metropolitan centres (Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and the Witwatersrand especially). Despite the fact that these spaces were planned in much the same ways that townships in the metropolitan areas were, they are frequently neglected from urban studies scholarship. In much rural scholarship, little beyond passing mention is made of the so-called "Bantoedorpe", with greater attention fixed on areas under the chieftaincy, mirroring a broader spatial preoccupation. Little consideration is given to how the different infrastructural features and models of modernist subject creation deployed in these rural townships gave rise to distinct forms of politics, and made these spaces important nodes in the broader matrix of Bantustan politics.

Several authors have, however, detailed aspects of the "Bantu Town" scheme. Colin Murray characterized these spaces as constitutive of "displaced urbanization", which he described as "the concentration of black South Africans … in huge rural slums which are politically in the Bantustans and economically on the peripheries of the established metropolitan labour market".[591] Murray defined many of the residents of these spaces as "frontier commuters who live in a Bantustan and commute daily or weekly to work in a 'white' area … taking into account unofficial estimates from different areas and booming bus transport in the early 1980s on certain key routes, it is evident that commuters represent an increasing proportion of the black labour force as a whole".[592] The objects of Murray's study exhibited some key differences with Mahwelereng, however: Onverwacht/Botshabelo was an experimental township situated at the divide *between* the Bantustan and so-called "white South Africa"; and a series of settlements on the border of KwaNdebele. Both were established relatively late in the apartheid period.[593]

Sarah Godsell's PhD research into the creation of the Temba township in Hammanskraal is somewhat more comparable to Mahwelereng, created as it was in the 1960s as part of the former Bophuthatswana Bantustan. She aptly describes as an attempt to bring the "urban into [the] rural".[594] Considering Lebowa itself, Essy Letsoalo provides a relatively rich account of

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[590] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10302 G57/6/1545/2 'Insake: Gedeeltes 1-8 van perseel 2320 en gedeelte 1 van perseel 2293 van Mahwelereng', Letter from the Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development to the Director of Works, Lebowa Government Services, 16 March 1971.
[591] Colin Murray, "Displaced Urbanization: South Africa's Rural Slums," *African Affairs* 86, no. 344 (1987): p.312.
[592] *Ibid.,* p.315.
[593] *Ibid.,* p.313.
[594] Godsell, "Blurred Borders" p.6.

the processes of forced removal which were involved in the creation of "Bantu Towns", and gives cursory attention to each across the Lebowa Bantustan, including Mahwelereng.[595] Lacking a viable economic base, Letsoalo wrote, these townships remained largely dependent on employment in so-called "white South Africa".[596] It was for this reason that these spaces where characterized by Departmental officials as "commuter towns" or "slaapdorpe".[597] This new force of "frontier commuters" complicated the simple binary that had been drawn between black urban "insiders" with Section 10 rights in metropolitan areas, and rural Bantustan "outsiders": in fact a significant proportion of residents of the various Bantustan remained integrated in the white economy.[598]

The "Bantu Towns" were to be populated in great measure, Letsoalo explains, through the forced removal of thousands of people living in so-called "white South Africa" – so-called "Black spots". These included, firstly, the old locations of the white towns. As in Potgietersrus, for instance, Pietersburg's 'old location' had been deproclaimed in the early 1960s and 1,160 families were moved in 1966 to the new 'town' of Seshego.[599] Yet they also included various other villages and settlements across the region, in the deep rural hinterlands. It was for this reason that MC de wet Del described the new proclaimed settlements as functioning as "numerous little sponges" to absorb "reserve Africans".[600] We saw this, for instance, in the example of Mmamelete Location, whose residents were evicted and moved to Mahwelereng in 1963 (Ch. 2).

The largest and most dramatic of relocations in Lebowa took place between 1978/79, when 20 000 Africans from Ellisras, Vaalwater, Naboomspruit, Nylstroom and Louis Trichardt were moved to the dusty terrain of Steilloop, another smaller proclaimed township which had formed part of the Potgietersrus district.[601] By this point, Letsoalo notes that almost 1.5 million people were living in Bantustan towns across the country.[602] In Lebowa, population size according to statistics gathered in 1980 were: Seshego (45 000), Namakgale (25 000), Mahwelereng (16 000), Ga-Kgapane (11 000), and Lenyenye (8 000).[603] By the late 1980s, Phillips records

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[595] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies".
[596] *Ibid.* p. 70.
[597] Christian M. Rogerson and Essy M. Letsoalo, "Rural Underdevelopment, Poverty and Apartheid: The Closer Settlements of Lebowa, South Africa1," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 72, no. 6 (1981): 347–61.
[598] Murray, "Displaced Urbanization", p.316.
[599] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p. 62–63.
[600] *Rand Daily Mail*, "De Wet Nel Explains Plans for Bantustans", 15 April 1962.
[601] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.63. The township of Rebone was proclaimed on Steilloop farm, some 100km north of Mahwelereng. While this thesis has not been able to examine the making of Rebone in any great detail, it was similarly formed through processes of forced removal, and it forms a crucial part of the present-day settlement landscape of Mogalakwena.
[602] *Ibid.,* p.33.
[603] *Ibid.,* p.71–72.

that there were 16 proclaimed towns across the territory, with populations ranging from 2200 to 60 000.[604]

Letsoalo identifies two different categories: the first were the "slaapdorpe" which served urban centers, and were within daily commuting distance of the white towns: Seshego, Mahwelereng, Lenyenye, Ga-Kgapane, Namakgale, Motetema and Sebayeng; the second were those with a limited economic base such as Lebowakgomo, the administrative capital, and Mankweng, which served as the seat of the University of the North (Turfloop).[605]

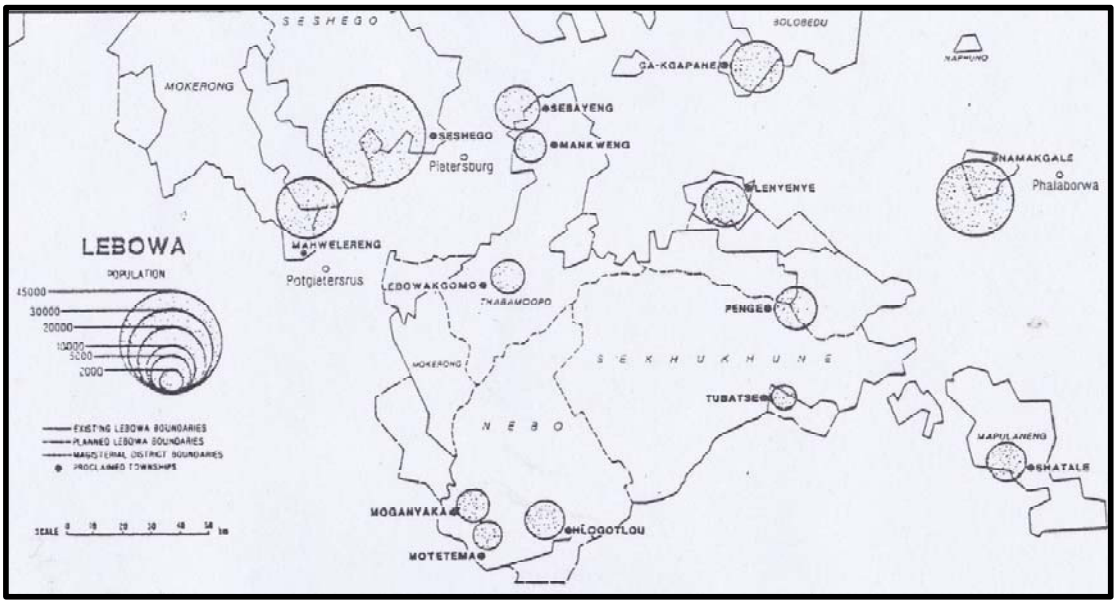


Figure 38: The proclaimed townships of Lebowa with approximate population sizes in 1982.[606]

Amidst waves of continual dispossession and relocation, the pace of housing provision in the earliest years of Mahwelereng's existence remained, however, cripplingly slow. As of 1962, it was reported that 450 houses were completed or in the last stages of completion in the Mahwelereng "Bantoedorp".[607] In 1967, the Superintendent reported 1,100 completed homes. However, a report by the interdepartmental deputation wrote that "No funds were made available for the erection of further ancillary houses in the Bantu town during 1967/68 and due to the limitation of funds, no indication can be given as to when further houses will be erected".[608] In the absence of houses, the process of removing the Old Location remained

[604] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.133.
[605] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.72.
[606] *Ibid.*
[607] *NASA* SAB KGL 151 PPN 1/1/2 'Kwartaalvergadering van Kapteins en Hoofmanne: Potgietersrus', Internal Memo drafted by Administrative Assistant of the Commissioner-General of the Noord-Sotho Volkseenheid to WWM Eiselen, Commissioner-General, 17 October 1962.
[608] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 G57/2 'Besoek aan Potgietersrus op 24 April 1967 in verband met die voorsiening van huisvesting aan Bantoewerknemers in Mahwelereng Bantoedorp', Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 24 April 1967.

halting. On 3 February 1967, the BAC reported that the "municipal location remains crowded [*stampvol*]".[609]

Writing of his visit to the Potgietersrus area in 1969, Cosmas Desmond reported how supply continued to be entirely outstripped by demand: "three miles from Potgietersrus a new township has been built and is still extending. From the plan I saw, it seems already to have exceeded the planned number of 2,300 families. Most of these come from the old location and from a 'squatter' settlement just outside the location".[610] In the same year, a BAD official wrote that "There are already 1,400 houses in Mahwelereng Bantu village, and all the houses are inhabited. According to the latest report (31/1/1969) the population of the town is 8,700 souls and it will increase to over 10,000 once all the families are moved from the municipal location".[611] Housing projections frequently overshot the capacity to deliver, as is evident in Departmental statistics over the period.[612] It is clear that some residents had the wherewithal the purchase and/or build their own properties in Mahwelereng. Archives contain collections of title deeds sold to both men and women for both houses and plots in Mahwelereng. Yet, as Desmond wrote in 1971, "for every person who benefits from the schemes … there are many others who are suffering, starving or dying in pursuance of the ideology of separate development".[613] Mahwelereng, like the other rural villages Desmond had visited, was "squalid, overcrowded [and] poverty-stricken".[614]

Murray observes that from the late 1960s, the central state diverted "expenditure on housing to the Bantustans, albeit on a grotesquely inadequate scale" while imposing a "deliberate freeze on black housing in the 'white urban areas'".[615] The shifting of housing development, combined with the impact of influx control mechanisms and forced removals, Murray argues, saw the displacement of urbanization that would have occurred in so-called "white urban areas" to the Bantustans. Simkins estimated that while 39.1% of South Africa's total black population (11.5 million) were living in the Bantustans in 1960, by 1980, this had increased to

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[609] *NASA,* SAB BAO 10216 13/2/4/10(1) 'Potgietersrus: Voorsiening van Huisvesting aan Enkelopende Bantoewerknemers', Letter from H. Gafney, Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 17 February 1967.
[610] Desmond, *The Discarded People*, p.161.
[611] *NASA,* SAB BAO 2/1909 T60/6/1/1545/2 'Mahwelereng Bantoedorp: Distrik Potgietersrus: Personeel', Internal memo by Adjunct-Secretary of Housing, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 2 June 1969.
[612] *NASA,* SAB BAO 2/1909 T60/6/1/1545/2 'Dienstaatbegroting: 1970/1971', Internal memo by Adjunct-Secretary of Housing, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 22 May 1969.
[613] Desmond, *The Discarded People*, p.163.
[614] *Ibid.,* p.162.
[615] Murray, "Displaced Urbanization," p.314.

52.7% (of 21 million).[616] Over the course of three decades, this was accompanied by what Murray describes as:

> massive 'urbanization' in the Bantustans, in terms of the sheer density of population now concentrated there. One recent estimate is that 56 per cent of the population of the Bantustans are now [1987] 'urbanized'… Some of the concentration has taken place in 'proclaimed' (officially planned) towns in the Bantustans, whose population was 33,500 in 1960, 595,000 in 1970 and 1.5 million by 1981. But most of the concentration has taken place in huge rural slums which are 'urban' in respect of their population densities but 'rural' in respect of the absence of proper urban infrastructure or services.[617]

Housing shortages would continue to mar life in Mahwelereng over the course of the apartheid period. In 1977, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that no new houses had been built by the state in the Northern Transvaal area since 1970, citing a ratio of 12.5 people to every home in Black settlements.[618] In 1982, Letsoalo reported that "more than 80 percent of the total population of Lebowa resides in settlements in which people have to provide their own homes. Even then the government has declared that because of its financial burden, it cannot provide more homes in proclaimed townships. The majority of people in these proclaimed townships are without houses".[619] It would only be in 1985 that plans for significant expansion would take place. "Mahwelereng B" would, however, take several years to develop, and as will be discussed in Chapter 8, it was still far from adequate to the needs of the township and attended by fierce contest over allocations.

The overriding approach in the design of the "Bantu Towns" was, as Murray puts it, "partial labour market inclusion and controlled residential exclusion. On the one hand, the rapidly 'urbanized' inhabitants of the rural slums have been integrated, to a degree, into metropolitan labour markets. On the other hand, they are kept at arm's length, as it were, from the major 'white' industrial and residential areas".[620] These dynamics are evident in the history of Mahwelereng, from whence most of the labourers in the homes and businesses of Potgietersrus would commute on a daily basis. In the course of his visit to Mahwelereng at the end of the 1960s, Desmond reported that "most of the men work in Johannesburg as there is no major industry in Potgietersrus. A monkey-nut factory employs over five hundred women who are paid R1.50 a week, the tobacco factory pays R1.80 a week; I am told that there are

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[616] *Ibid*.
[617] *Ibid*.
[618] *Rand Daily Mail,* "Overcrowding in Black homes is increasing", 21 February 1977.
[619] Letsoalo further reported that while residents could technically buy or lease houses and plots (20 x 30 metres), few could afford to purchase or build houses for themselves. However, the "majority of the population is forced to resort to buying a plot and erecting a shelter to live in has resulted in 'ghettos' or 'slum areas' in certain proclaimed townships". Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.55, p.72.
[620] Murray, "Displaced Urbanization," 316.

men who are employed for this amount; domestic and garden workers are paid R8 a month; garages pay R30 a month".[621] These continuing interconnections were indeed emphasised by state officials eager not to undermine the source of prosperity of local white residents.[622] In 1971, it was admitted that "Practically every White in the area directly or indirectly obtains his livelihood and his high standard of living because of the Bantu".[623] And in 1975, the Pietersburg Business Chamber was drawn to insist that "Black purchasing power in Pietersburg is one of its most valuable assets", and that "without it, Pietersburg would soon be a 'ghost' town" – a situation true of so-called "white towns" across the region.[624]



Figure 39: Aerial photograph showing the boundaries between Mahwelereng and Potgietersrus in 1987.[625]

[621] Desmond, *The Discarded People*, 161.
[622] One *Rand Daily Mail* article from 1962 told readers that the "bantoe dorpe" plans illustrated that the Bantustan project would not, contrary to popular opinion, signal immediate and complete segregation: "It is now clear that half of the big sum allocated to the 'development of the Bantustans' is to be spent on housing Africans on sites where they will be available as labour in White areas. In other words, there will be no very great change from the present picture of racial admixture… The money will go to creating African 'towns' near such European centers as Pretoria, East London, Durban and Potgietersrus, and the African inhabitants will commute to their jobs in European enterprises, just as they do now from their locations… In effect, a Bantustan will be any place where a reserve can be found conveniently adjacent to a European city". *Rand Daily Mail*, "A Changed Vision", 17 April 1963.
[623] *Northern Review, "*The Bantu Investment Corporation and White Trade and Industry in the North", 27 August 1971.
[624] See: *Northern Review,* "Chamber says: We need the Blacks", 14 November 1975.
[625] From Hofmeyr, "We spend our Years".

Like its township counterparts in South Africa's metropolitan centres, the infrastructure of Mahwelereng was designed to facilitate this channel of labour and consumer mobility. There was one major road to Potgietersrus, an artery than ran across the heart of the township and brought workers and customers into town. A natural "buffer" of vegetation signalled the dividing line between the township and the white areas, and so too did the "Lebowa" sign, guarded by police (both Lebowa Police and South African Police), which indicated the crossing of a boundary. Pass documents could be demanded at any time after crossing this line. The Magistrate's court also marked the perimeter. It was here that residents experienced the administrative machinery of the Bantustan state, the official interface between white and black worlds, where work-seekers would gather to apply for passes, where alleged criminals would be tried, and where the elderly would later come to collect pensions from the Lebowa state. If roads, border posts, guards, buffer zones, and the Magistrate's court were all intended to regulate the flow of people between the black and white towns, Mahwelereng's grid layout, its numbered houses, its aerial lighting, and its police station were designed to regulate life within the township, construct the sense of ever-present control through indirect, infrastructural means and direct coercion.

Governing the Township

The "Bantu Towns" were not locally governed by chiefly structures, but rather by institutions which closely resembled those deployed in South Africa's urban townships - though the range of government agencies with an eye on towns like Mahwelereng changed considerably over the decades. Initially it was the central state, principally the BAD, that played the dominant role in organising the spaces of the proclaimed towns, securing access to the town lands, planning their design and undertaking the major infrastructural work that this entailed. Funds for these developments were drawn from the South African Native Trust – established on terms similar to those specified by the Tomlinson Commission, although capitalized with only a fraction of the suggested amount.[626] The schemes were thus imposed over the heads of local or provincial government organs, as Godsell describes of Temba Township in Hammanskraal.[627]

While the local white town council of Potgietersrus was drawn into processes around the relocation of residents of the Old Location (Mokerong) to Mahwelereng (shown in Chapter 3), its mandate of control over black settlement in the area was curtailed over the course of the 1960s. In 1966, for instance, the Secretary of the BAD negated the attempt by the Chair of the

[626] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p. 71.
[627] Godsell, "Blurred Borders", p.125.

Town Council's "Non-White Affairs" division to serve as chair of the Bantu Advisory Council that was being established in Mahwelereng, and instead instructed the location Superintendent to take his place.[628] This was indicative of the strict segregation of administrative functions advocated in the Verwoerdian paradigm – dimensions which were also playing out in South Africa's major urban areas. The role of the white Council over black settlements was finally severed completely following the passage of the 1971 Bantu Affairs Administration Act.[629] The staff of the "Non-white affairs" division of the Potgietersrus Town Council were drawn up into the new Northern Transvaal Administration Board, created in 1972 principally to centralise labour bureau functions in a single entity, including questions of influx control to the white towns. [630] The Administration Board also appears to have provided certain services such as refuse removal and maintenance, until these were progressively taken over by Bantustan Town Councils.[631]

Local officialdom was expanded in a piecemeal fashion. Some of the earliest positions created for the town, alongside that of accountants, clerks and foremen, were those of "Superintendent (Dranklokale)" (liquor store) and "Bantoebieruitdelers" (Bantu beer distributors), indicative of the centrality that the sale of alcohol assumed in partly financing the developments in the town.[632] Letters from the Department indicate that as the population of Mahwelereng grew, new administrative positions were made available. Many of these requisitions appear to have been geared towards expanding policing, however.[633]

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[628] *NASA,* SAB BAO 9202 A14/1545 'Voorsitter: Bantu Adviserende Raad', Letter from Secretary of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, to Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus, 28 July 1966

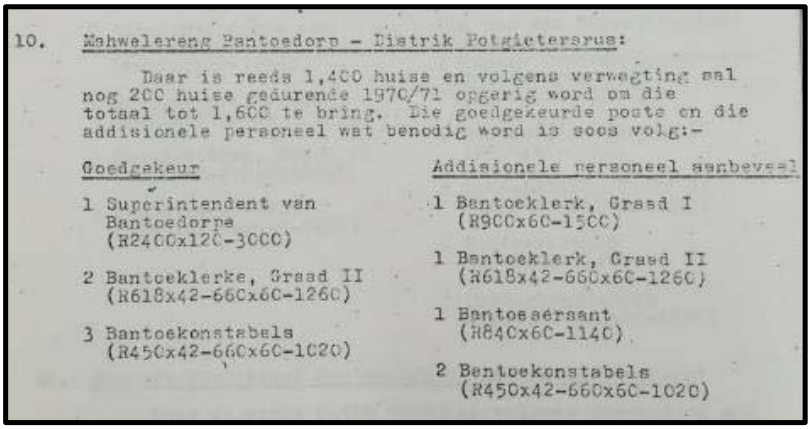
[629] Greenberg, *Legitimating the Illegitimate*, p.57. The Administration Board covered the areas of Ellisras, Waterberg, Groblersdal, Potgietersrus, Pietersburg, Soutpansberg, Messina, Tzaneen and Phalaborwa. *Northern Review,* "New Era in Bantu Admin", 14 April 1972.

[630] *Lebowa Times,* "Influx Control Controversy: Mothapo Speaks", 2 October 1976

[631] See, for instance, *Lebowa Times,* "Township was better under NTAB – Malatjie", 22 April 1988.

[632] *NASA,* SAB BAO 2/1909 T60/6/1/1545/2, 'Mahwelereng Bantoedorp: Aanstelling van meer personeel', Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Potgietersrus to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Pietersburg, 30 April 1969.

[633] Along with a new "Bantoeklerk Graad 1", for instance, the Adjunct-Secretary of the Department authorized the creation of positions for "1 Bantoesersant en 2 Bantoekonstabels". *NASA,* SAB BAO 2/1909 T60/6/1/1545/2 'Mahwelereng Bantoedorp: Distrik Potgietersrus: Personeel', Internal memo by Adjunct-Secretary of Housing, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 2 June 1969.



10. Mahwelereng Bantoedorp - Distrik Potgietersrus:

Daar is reeds 1,400 huise en volgens verwagting sal nog 200 huise gedurende 1970/71 opgerig word om die totaal tot 1,600 te bring. Die goedgekeurde poste en die addisionele personeel wat benodig word is soos volg:-

Goedgekeur	Addisionele personeel aanbeveel
1 Superintendent van Bantoedorpe (R2400x120-3000)	1 Bantoeklerk, Graad I (R900x60-1500)
2 Bantoeklerke, Graad II (R618x42-660x60-1260)	1 Bantoeklerk, Graad II (R618x42-660x60-1260)
3 Bantoekonstabels (R450x42-660x60-1020)	1 Bantoesersant (R840x60-1140)
	2 Bantoekonstabels (R450x42-660x60-1020)

Figure 40: List of Officials Employed by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in Mahwelereng, 1970.[634]

Following the declaration of self-governing status in 1972, various aspects of the governance of Mahwelereng came to be redirected towards the newly created Bantustan departments based initially in Seshego. Nevertheless, as with the traditional authorities, agents of the white state continued to exercise strong roles over specific aspects of governance in the Bantustan towns.

As in townships of the Rand, the office of the Superintendent was initially the most direct face of local government, and was occupied by a white man, Mr JD Nel, appointed in 1962.[635] It was here that rents were paid, where leases were sought and where home ownership was negotiated. His office worked with the existing network of Bantu Affairs Commissioners until they were replaced by Magistrates following the declaration of self-governing status of Lebowa in 1972. The office of the Superintendent was brought into the Bantustan machinery of local government, yet remained a relatively autonomous parallel institutional track, headed by a senior Superintendent for all Lebowa townships. Much has been written about the role of Superintendents in metropolitan townships. For instance, Hilary Sapire writes about the Superintendent of the Brakpan location, Dr FJ Language, a particularly inflexible and punishing segregationist with a history of loyalty to the neo-fascist Ossewabrandwag.[636] I could find comparatively little written about Nel, except for the letter cited earlier regarding the desperate housing situation in Mahwelereng. Oral interviews did not reveal any significant memories of either Nel or his successor, Mr Olifant. Nevertheless, there are distinct clues as

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[634] *NASA,* SAB BAO 2/1909 T60/6/1/1545/2 'Dienstaatbegroting: 1970/1971', Internal memo by Adjunct-Secretary of Housing, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 22 May 1969.
[635] *NASA,* SAB BAO KGL 227 G57/2/1545/2 'Vaaltyn Bantoedorp', Internal memo from Administrative Assistant of Commissioner-General to WWM Eiselen, Commissioner-General of the Noord-Sotho Volkseenheid, 14 January 1963.
[636] Hilary Sapire, 'Apartheid's Testing Ground', *Journal of African History,* 35, 1, 1994, p. 102.

to the continuing dominance that this office held over facets of everyday life and living conditions. Even after the creation of Town Councils, the Superintendents continued to set rentals and announce increases. And the Magistrates offices would be built within the townships in the early 1970s, exercising authority over a key set of documentary and legal processes of Lebowa citizenship, including job applications, pension applications and collections, and criminal and civil court proceedings. Because its mandate extended across the whole of the Mokerong District, his offices would be visited by residents of Mahwelereng as well as those living under Tribal Authorities.

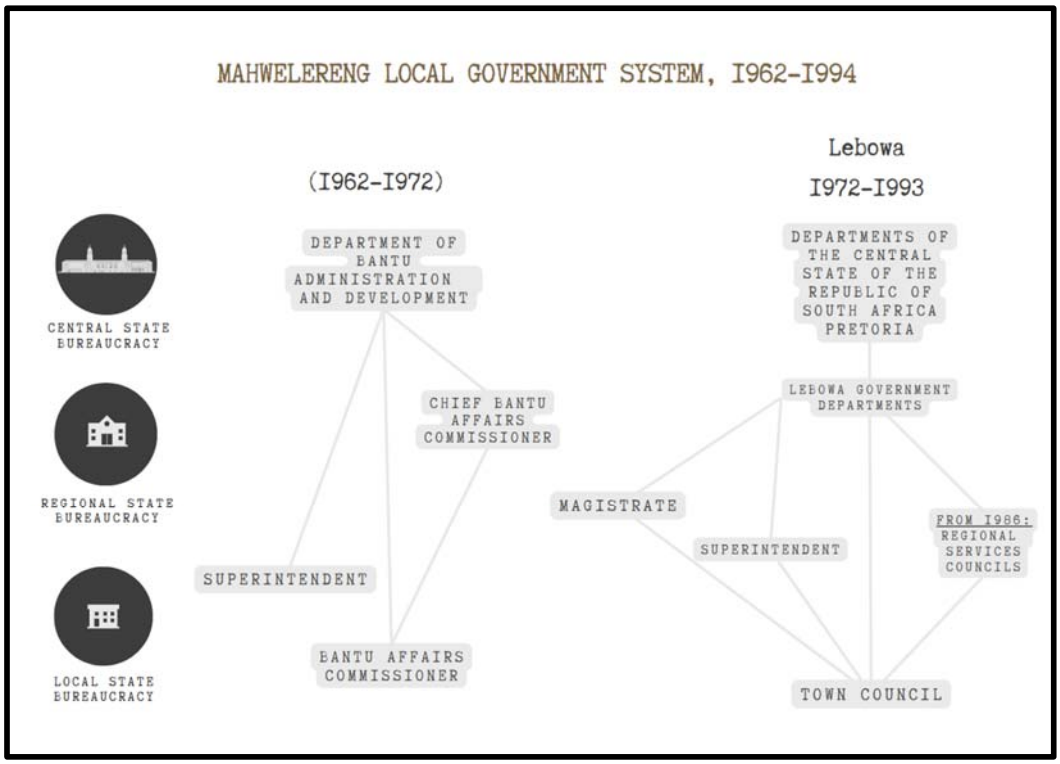


Figure 41: Changing institutional arrangements for local government in Lebowa's townships between 1962 and 1993.[637]

From the 1970s, there were also introduced new local government structures across the proclaimed towns of Lebowa. While empowered by law in 1971, the Mahwelereng Town Council was only formally established in 1974.[638] The creation of Councils for Lebowa's towns took place considerably earlier than similar moves in the urban locations outside of the Bantustans. While already township councils were authorized in law in Mahwelereng and

[637] Diagram created by author.
[638] *NASA,* BAO KGL 227 5/74 'Lebowa Legislative Assembly: Decision on Memorandum on Mahwelereng Township: Establishment of a Township Council', Memorandum from the Lebowa Minister of the Interior, Lebowakgomo, to the Lebowa Cabinet, Lebowakgomo, 28 January 1974.

Sibasa in 1971,[639] for instance, the Community Councils Act was only introduced in "white" South Africa in 1977, providing for the establishment of nascent local government structures with a representative element to replace the toothless Urban Bantu Councils brought into being in the early 1960s, and eight years before the Black Local Authorities Act which claimed to upgrade these to "full status" – that is, supposedly with equivalent powers to white Town Councils.[640]

Like those of the white towns, the Town Councils of Lebowa's towns were, as Duba explains, constituted by councillors who were elected every three years on a non-partisan basis to represent their ward (which varied between 6 and 11 across towns).[641] Unlike the white Town Councils, however, they were never accompanied by anything nearing a robust local administration. The vast majority of local government issues such as water, electricity, rents, and spatial transformation remained in the hands of the Superintendents, the Magistrates, and departments of the Lebowa state – departments such as education and public works, for instance, opened "circuit offices" in the towns to preside over these functions. Formally, the Town Councils were answerable to the Lebowa Department of Interior (later Home Affairs).

At the opening of the Lebowa Legislative Assembly in 1983, Minister of Cooperation and Development, Piet Koornhof, would celebrate the creation of Town Councils as an "important and historic step":

> Whereas adjoining and adjacent white towns and cities have since their establishment had the right to organise their own local government institutions on a democratic basis within the frameworks of the local government systems adopted by the provincial and central government, these black towns and cities were for many years governed and controlled from outside… We now have in sight fully fledged town and city councils in black urban areas. The power and functions of the black urban local authorities which are now envisaged will equal those of their white neighbours. [642]

Yet in 1984, a member of the Lebowa Legislative Assembly would remark that the Town Councils appeared to have no real powers, and demanded of the Minister of the Interior whose department oversaw the structures: "What role are the Town Councils fulfilling? Do they have ways of accumulating funds? Can one call the chairman of such a committee a mayor? Are these so-called Town Councils just an imitation?"[643]

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[639] *NASA,* BAO KGL 227 13/1/2(5) 'Bantoedorpe in die Bantoegebiede: Mankweng', Internal memorandum of the office of the Commissioner-General, 17 March 1973.
[640] *Ibid*.
[641] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.145
[642] *Lebowa Times,* "'We must continue to negotiate' says Doctor Koornhof" 17 June 1983.
[643] *Lebowa Times,* "Town council is under fire", 18 May 1984.

Even by the end of the 1980s, Duba explained that notwithstanding the state's claims of expanded local government authority,

> In practice, the legislative powers of a town council [remain] very limited. They have no absolute legislative powers, but are controlled directly by the Lebowa Government. The Lebowa Government must approve any regulations proposed by a town council. The Lebowa Government through its Department of Home Affairs actually administers the functions and duties of town councils, while the councils merely act in an advisory capacity, assisting town managers or superintendents. Although regulations exist which provide for more powers to be conferred upon town councils, this has not happened in Lebowa in practice. The government of Lebowa, through its Department of Home Affairs plays the most important legislative role in the governing of towns.[644]

Nevertheless, the Town Councils would form a crucial platform for the advancement of local elite interests and political careers. Positions in the council did allow for the monopolization of two major forms of economic accumulation and patronage: the awarding of business licences and (a portion of the state's) housing allocation.[645] A number of key Bantustan politicians would emerge through the Town Council structures, including Nelson Ramodike, CN Phatudi's successor as Chief Minister in 1987, had served as the mayor of the Lenyenye Town Council.[646] In what follows, I consider the trajectory of a local Mahwelereng politician.

Mahwelereng's First Mayor and Everyday Local Governance

The first mayor of Mahwelereng was John Henry Khaas, whose life would in many ways run across the institutional, political and economic landscape of the developing township over the course of apartheid, and reveal key dynamics of the state's project to foster a compliant and stable class of citizens in Lebowa.[647] Khaas was in fact the first to own a property in Mahwelereng in 1964. During his speech at the opening of the township, the MC de wet Nel would hand over the title-deed to Khaas (whom the newspapers incorrectly referred to as "Koos").

While the "Bantu Towns" were intended to serve as reservoirs of labour and consumer spending for the white towns, the apartheid state also came to envisage them as spaces to absorb the aspirations of a rising stratum of Bantustan society, and especially from the late 1970s, to craft a localized elite who would form the anchors of a stable order, a conservative bulwark against political radicalism. Rather than simply a coercive function, the township thus

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[644] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.184-185.
[645] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.108.
[646] Duba, "The Conversion Function", p.184.
[647] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo".

also encompassed a productive vision of homeowners, shopkeepers, teachers, nurses, policemen, town councillors, school principals, and office-bound bureaucrats maintaining the stability of Bantustan society. Lebowa's towns formed the primary administrative nodes of the 10 districts that constituted the Bantustan. Phillips has explored many dimensions of the state's project to foster a "modern middle-class" in Lebowa, which was to be spatially anchored in the Bantustan townships like Mahwelereng.[648] The roll-out of public infrastructure and facilities stood as one of the foundational pillars of this project, with homes, schools, hospitals, business precincts, running water and electricity intended to serve as "pull" factors. These were intended to cultivate compliance among the general population, and additionally foster the growth of a property-owning class of Bantustan civil servants and local entrepreneurial elites.

Khaas in many ways represents the opportunities that residents of the "Bantu Towns" could theoretically achieve. Working through the institutional channels and forms of associational life that came to characterise Mahwelereng, he grew to become a relatively prosperous businessman and politician embedded in the structures of the Lebowa state. In what follows, I consider the trajectory of Khaas, as narrated by his grandson Derek Khaas.[649] This narrative also reveals glimpses of the everyday institutional, infrastructural and associational life that characterised life in the township over the course of apartheid. Beyond state organs, a range of other local institutions, associations, infrastructures and amenities would shape the rhythms of everyday life in Mahwelereng, forms of accumulation and class consciousness, and modes of local politics. Together, these would constitute key sinews of everyday local governance in Mahwelereng.

Khaas had originally been drawn to the area after being headhunted by the Mokopane College of Education. He had been working as a principal at a school in Atteridgeville outside Pretoria before he was asked to take up a position as a lecturer. Khaas was, however, classified as a "Coloured" man according to the Population Registration Act of 1950 and was meant to have been forced to relocate to the only "Coloured Group Area" in the region: the planned settlement of Westenburg in Pietersburg. Derek Khaas notes that his grandfather "resisted" the move and was able to stay. The exact reasons for this were, however, not made clear to me, although his position at the College may have motivated the exemption.

The Mokopane College of Education, Bhyat observes, was founded in 1948 as a teacher training institute, aiming to instil the approach of Bantu Education in teachers which would be

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[648] *Ibid*.
[649] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022.

supplied to the expanding network of schools across the region.[650] This schooling expansion was, Bhyat observes, part of a drive by the government to address the growing labour crisis on farms, which had witnessed an exodus of potential workers to the mines of the Rand. "Bantu Education vastly increased a workforce prepared for semi-skilled labour", Bhyat states:

> From the 1950s, many thousands of students from the various schools around Potgietersrus demarcated region worked on citrus, peanut, tobacco and cotton fields as well as in related agro-industries. They were used in a labour cycle that involved planting, tending, harvesting as well as sorting and grading. Most of them worked during their school vacations which coincided with the agricultural cycle. They worked alongside both tenant labourers and part-time labourers trucked in during seasonal harvests from African reserves around the area".[651] [652]

In addition, school subjects were crafted to provide for the "needs of a changing local agrarian economy which was rapidly expanding, intensifying production and displaying a growing level of mechanization".[653] The curriculum emphasised "agricultural fundamentals", the inculcation of Afrikaans, the "language of the employer", and a "socially acquiescent ideology".[654] And the Mokopane College of Education, an institution which will recur at various points throughout this dissertation, was intended to play a role in training teachers to dispense this education in primary schools.[655]

Quoting Cross and Chisholm, Bhyat states that the establishment of teacher training colleges had also been seen to "provide a means of ideological incorporation in the Bantustans of an elite to staff its apparatus".[656] And, indeed, to begin to form something of a nascent middle class with conservative values. There were, in total, eight teacher training colleges across Lebowa, and almost all were situated in the "black towns": Mokopane College of Education (Mahwelereng); Dr CN Phatudi (Burgersfort); Kwena Moloto (Seshego); Mamokgalake Chuene (Motetema); Mapulaneng (Acornhoek); Modjadji (Ga-Kgapane); Sekhukhune (Motetema); Setotolwane (Seshego).[657] The University of the North (Turfloop), situated in Mankweng, was expressly conceived as serving a similar role of reproducing an educated

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[650] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.1
[651] *Ibid.* p.16..
[652] A number of those I spoke to recalled this system of 3-month temporary work, when farmers would move around the district picking up would-be labourers to complete a stint on a distant farm. Workers were not paid until they finished their service, and frequently were forced to buy supplies at inflated prices from the farm-run shop. [Interview with World Phago, Mokopane, 24 May 2019; Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019; Interview with Ernest Mkhari, Mokopane, 22 May 2019.
[653] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.19.
[654] *Ibid.* p.20.
[655] *Ibid.*, p.21.
[656] *Ibid.*, p.21.
[657] *Ibid.*, p.2.

Bantustan-bound elite to stream into the bureaucracy.[658] Yet like primary and secondary schools, these were facilities which were perennially under-funded, marked by a lack of adequate facilities and, in the context of limited employment opportunities in the Bantustan, continually oversubscribed, able only to accept a fraction of those who applied for enrolment.

Nevertheless, lecturers at the Mokopane College of Education enjoyed a sense of job security and income that few in Mahwelereng could claim. The neighbourhood which surrounded the College, in which Khaas lived, was developed as a "middle class" area for the lecturers and other better off residents. Bhyat observes that the "houses that had surrounded the College belonged to Lebowa Government bureaucrats and civil servants, thereby inhibiting the expression of protest. The police station was situated only meters from the College. The College was thus insulated from working class township life".[659] Many lecturers in addition joined the Transvaal United African Teachers Association (TUATA), a conservative body of teachers aligned to the Lebowa state which insisted on the professional identity of educators.[660] Ultimately, Derek Khaas claims, his grandfather would be worked out of the College for his refusal to teach the "authorised syllabus", which was being increasingly dulled through the impositions of Bantu Education. He would thereafter come to concentrate on his business ventures in Mahwelereng.[661]

In the meantime, Khaas had met and married a woman who worked as a matron at the Mokopane Hospital, another key institution in the life of the township which had been built by the central government. A sprawling institution adjacent to the Mokerong Magistrates Court, the Mokopane Hospital offered far greater access to healthcare in the region than had previously existed. Nevertheless, health provision in the region and in Lebowa more generally remained acutely inadequate and, once again, underfunded. Letsoalo noted in 1982 that "Lebowa has ±50 part-time doctors and ±50 full-time doctors. Some hospitals do not have a full-time doctor. The clinics cannot be visited by doctors on a regular basis. Attempts are made to make the people aware of health preventative measures – a difficult task due to the conditions of poverty in Lebowa".[662] In this context, nurses like Mrs Khaas would bear the brunt of healthcare responsibilities. Yet nursing would also open up possibilities for regular remuneration, state housing subsidies in the proclaimed townships and old-age pensions – along with forms of social differentiation and status. Phillips has observed how access to a

[658] Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy,* p.4.
[659] Bhyat, "The Mokopane College", p.31
[660] Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy in the Rural Northern Transvaal Community in Zebediela, 1986-1994," *South African Historical Journal* 58 (2007): p.230-231.
[661] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022.
[662] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.56.

family home allowed "gave some unmarried female civil servants [including nurses] in Lebowa a form of economic independence that may otherwise not have been possible".[663]

When the first Town Council was established in Mahwelereng in 1974, JH Khaas would serve as its first mayor – a position he held until the early 1980s, whereafter he would continue to serve as an ordinary councillor. Once again, it is clear that his primary interest was, however, commercial. Concomitant to his ascendance to the Town Council, Khaas was awarded a licence to run the local beerhall. In 1977, he would also undertake an unprecedented venture as a shareholder in a wholesaler based in the white town. "History will be made later this month when a group of about forty Black people take over half of the shares of a leading wholesale company in Potgietersrus", the *Lebowa Times* reported.[664] Derek Khaas explains that the new company, Marble-Mokerong, was constituted through a network of local Black businessmen and Indian traders from Marble Hall, and would go on to become a thriving company: "Nobody my age can claim not to know about it".[665]

Khaas represented a growing cohort of local Black entrepreneurs connected to structures of the Lebowa state in various ways. Another was Geoffrey Molala, the owner of the Mahwelereng Hotel which stood opposite Khaas' beerhall. Molala had built the hotel through funding provided by the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC) which, by 1977 had become the Lebowa Development Corporation (LDC). The BIC/LDC functioned as a "semi-autonomous arm of Lebowa's Department of Economic Affairs", Phillips explains, and was "run by a majority-white board of directors but with key positions occupied by Africans, usually in their capacity as representatives of the local Chamber of Commerce".[666] The Corporation spearheaded the fostering of a class of Black capitalists, catalysing investment in the Bantustans and "acquainting the Black man with sound business principles".[667] This formed part of the key drive of the central apartheid state to foster the growth of an "entrepreneurial class".[668]

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[663] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.105.
[664] *Lebowa Times,* 'Blacks venture into the business world', 17 November 1978.
[665] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022.
[666] Phillips, "Development and the Making of an 'Entrepreneurial Class' in Lebowa," p.12.
[667] *Ibid.*, p.7.
[668] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.111



Figure 42: Mahwelereng entrepreneur Geoffrey Molala and a BIC official attend the soil-turning ceremony of the Mahwelereng Hotel in October 1976[669]

According to Letsoalo, writing in 1982, "The LDC is contributing to the commercial sector by assisting Africans in business. This body runs various businesses in Lebowa on an agency basis. These business enterprises include general dealers, garages, restaurants, bottle stores and butcheries".[670] Mahwelereng was one of five townships in Lebowa which hosted the popular Lebaka bakeries, a subsidiary of the LDC which provided cheap bread to residents.[671] Nevertheless, Phillips notes, the LDC did also facilitate access to Lebowa's markets for white businessmen. Through the creation of Tripartite Companies (so-called "Tripcos"), white companies could be brought into an alliance with Lebowa politicians and the Black business class, and win tenders for development projects and resource supplies in the Bantustan.[672]

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[669] *Lebowa Times,* "Mahwelereng to grow vertically as hotel site started", 9 October 1976.
[670] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.55.
[671] *Lebowa Times,* "Lebaka: Bakers of Lebowa's Daily Bread", 6 September 1985.
[672] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.123-124.

Despite rhetoric espousing the development virtues of an "entrepreneurial class", in practice the instruments developed by the state to achieve it succeeded largely in enriching a narrow elite stratum. The patronage of the LDC, along with the Lebowa Tender Board, Phillips argues, opened up "new paths opened for business in the Bantustan, eclipsing independent traders and producing a tight-knit, politically connected business class who were tied into the upper echelons of the government of Lebowa."[673] The approach did little to stem the growing unemployment crisis in Lebowa. According to Letsoalo in 1982, "If one can speak of such a thing as the Lebowa economy, then it is one which shows all the characteristics of an underdeveloped Third World country".[674] And in 1985, a Lebowa MP complained that "the unemployment situation has reached grave proportions and unless something is done soon, the consequences will become unmanageable".[675]

While ostensibly open to all applicants, political connections facilitated access to the Corporation's capital facilities. This was emblematized by the membership of the Lebowa Chamber of Commerce (LEBCOC), an affiliate of National African Federated Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC), who were politically active and well-connected to the upper echelons of the Lebowa state. JH Khaas had been a founding member of NAFCOC, along with Geoffrey Molala, and was personal friends with its president Sam Motsuenyane and Richard Maponya. While NAFCOC businessmen were explicitly against apartheid racial discrimination, they tended to separate the evils of apartheid from capitalism. Successful Black businessmen could help uplift Black communities, foster "Black unity" and produce "greater bargaining power for the right of the Black man in this country," Motsuenyane had argued.[50] Such positions were also supported by top Lebowa politicians, including the Chief Minister Phatudi:

> the dream of a small businessman, in the face of great and crushing adversities that force him to fight to get out from under, is freedom to run his business, and private ownership and self-employment are symbols of this freedom… Our peoples must be allowed to participate not only in the selling of staples but in the development of the nation. They must participate in the construction of the infrastructure, in the supply of equipment, needs and services to the government. In fact, indigenous small business must receive its fair share of the official expenditure rand.[676]

And certainly, major Black businessmen like Motsuenyane, Maponya, and more regional players like Habakuk Shikoane and AMS Makunyane, expressed few qualms about operating in the Bantustans; on the contrary, they recognised these as key areas for doing business,

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[673] *Ibid.,* p.111–12.
[674] Letsoalo, "Survival Strategies", p.50.
[675] *Lebowa Times,* "R2m is too little", 3 March 1985.
[676] *Lebowa Times, "*Aim of Black business: private ownership, self-employment", 10 July 1976

even as they lobbied for greater access to finance and markets.[677] In 1975, NAFCOC had worked to establish the African Bank which would go on to finance projects of a range of Black capitalists across the country, and in Bantustan territories specifically. It was, indeed, a loan from African Bank which had facilitated Khaas' acquisition of shares in Marble-Mokerong.[678]

From the late 1970s and into the early 1980s, JH Khaas would be increasingly incorporated into the political structures of the Lebowa state, becoming a Member of Parliament representing the Mokerong Constituency, appointed as chair of the Public Service Commission, and, most notably, seconded as an advisor to the Chief Minister, CN Phatudi. At this point, Khaas would cede his role as mayor of Mahwelereng while still serving as a member of the Town Council. Derek Khaas says:

> My grandfather was attracted to Dr CN Phatudi [and] he was attracted by my grandfather because of the things that were done practically by my grandfather and his colleagues. Phatudi requested my grandfather to be his legal advisor. He advised him on so many things. [For instance,] he advised Phatudi not to allow Lebowa to be independent. Because Phatudi was in a dilemma about this issue. He nearly agreed, he nearly made Lebowa to be independent. But my grandfather advised him, he told him the repercussions that he would experience if he accepted independence. He said as Africans we must get a total liberation. We must [escape] out of colonialism, we must be self-centred, architects of our own life. He wanted things to move that way, and Dr CN Phatudi agreed.[679]

Phatudi had famously rejected independence in favour of a form of federalism that, he believed, would allow for the expansion of Black business opportunities into white South Africa. In this, Phatudi found common cause with liberal critics of apartheid, such as the Professor of Economics at the University of the North, André de Villiers. Like de Villiers, Phatudi had complained throughout the decades of the "leakage" of black consumer power to the white urban centres, a process which enriched white businessmen at the expense of economic growth in Lebowa: "The economy of South Africa is an integrated economy. There is no such thing as a black economy or a white economy."[680] And he once again reiterated this in 1982: "If you take out Lebowa from the Transvaal, there will be no Transvaal".[681] He did not thus support independence for Lebowa, but nor did he call for the complete dissolution of the Bantustan project. His federal solution envisaged far greater development financing for the Bantustans and economic integration with white South Africa, while fostering greater forms of

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[677] Sarah Bruchhausen provides accounts of women who worked at Habakuk Shikoane's famed cane factory, and they describe the harsh working conditions, meagre wages and the draconian anti-union stance imposed by Shikoane. Bruchhausen, "Women and Emancipatory Politics", p.177-183.
[678] *Lebowa Times,* 'Blacks venture into the business world', 17 November 1978.
[679] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022.
[680] See *Rand Daily Mail*, "Let's be partners – Phatudi urges whites", 19 September 1980.
[681] *Northern Review*, "Phatudi's Threat", 5 February 1982.

political self-determination.[682] When asked about his grandfather's perspective on Lebowa and the Bantustan project generally, Derek Khaas explains:

> My grandfather concentrated in the transfer of skills. He had a diplomatic thinking to say it is better for you to work with the enemy. He took many people to Phatudi himself to be given the Lebowa Bursary, to go and study. And then if you are far from your enemy, you won't be able to get that.[683]

Whatever their politics, the facilities created and run by these township businessmen developed into popular sites for both leisure gatherings and political meetings. Khaas' beerhall, which sold Chibuku beer, was a popular spot, as was Molala's Mahwelereng Hotel. They would form part of the landscape of a broader landscape of local sociality, playing host to forms of society, economy and politics beyond simply a pool for cheap labour, as "sponges" for surplus population, or a site of deprivation and state neglect. As Dlamini writes, one cannot think of South African townships simply as "problem areas, zones of lack".[684] Tsoaledi Thobejane, who grew up in Mahwelereng, describes how the township was always "bubbling with life":

> It was common practice in this township for residents to play their music stereos to full blast. The youth seemed to enjoy playing their music loudly, much to the disdain of their parents who always complained of lack of sleep because of the noise they were causing. Traditional doctors called Inyangas [were] a common sight in the township. Some of them claimed to possess super-natural powers, while some claimed the power to cast evil spirits from the sick. It was not a surprise to see a parade of church choirs in the streets. At least every street corner in this township has a small "spaza" (a make-shift store) that is constructed by plastic bags and rusted zincs. In some streets, you would be inundated with dancers who entertained onlookers.[685]

Peter Seko, who grew up in Phafola Village, recalls encountering "kasi culture" in Mahwelereng for the first time, enthused by the ready availability of commercial beer, the music of Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston ("In the village we listened to Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba"), sporting matches, beauty contests, and a vibrant night life.[686] The weekly editions of the *Lebowa Times* attest to the rich community life that came to develop in Mahwelereng, advertising theatre performances, church gatherings, and visiting musicians like Yvonne Chaka Chaka, at Shange and Stimela.[687] The township hosted a variety of popular

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[682] See for instance *Lebowa Times,* "Botha visits Lebowa", 6 September 1985; *Lebowa Times,* "European Leaders want Change – Phatudi", 25 July 1986.
[683] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022.
[684] Jacob Dlamini, 2009, *Native Nostalgia*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, p.112.
[685] Thobejane, "Fight for an Egalitarian South Africa", p.14.
[686] Interview with Peter Seko, Mokopane, 22 March 2020.
[687] *Lebowa Times,* "Yvonne Chaka Chaka at Mahwelereng", 5 December 1986.

sports. The Mahwelereng Motherwells and the Naughty Boys represented the township in soccer matches against rivals from other parts of Lebowa – such as the Turfloop Dynamic Bullets, the Seshego Hot Pirates, and the Great North Stars.[688] The Mokerong Golf Club hosted monthly tournaments which drew players from across the country.[689] Softball proved a particularly popular sport, and the Mahwelereng Spikes proved an especially formidable team.[690]



Figure 43: Marcom Mokoshene, the popular striker of the Mahwelereng Motherwells, playing at Mosesetjane stadium near Mahwelereng.[691]

Mahwelereng thus came to be animated by forms of society quite distinct from that which had hitherto characterised the rural villages under the Tribal Authorities. Hofmeyr observes that residents of the Vaaltyn Tribal Authority on whose land Mahwelereng had been built insisted "*Anthande lekeišeneng"* ("We don't like the location") at the time it was being laid-out and built.[692] In the years since, however, the spatial and social distinctions between the two spaces would become increasingly imperceptible. These nearby villages – Sekgakgapeng, Madiba, Vaaltyn (Moshate) – would in fact represent a fusion of both chiefly rule and township culture, and today they form a continuous urban corridor. The villages of Mapela and Bakenberg remained, however, somewhat more distanced from Mahwelereng both physically and socially. Further still were the villages of Lekalakala and Taueatsoala. In these hilly and often

[688] *Lebowa Times,* "Cultural Club meets Seshego Hot Pirates", 25 October 1985
[689] *Lebowa Times,* "Mokerong Golf Club's competition results", 18 October 1985.
[690] *Lebowa Times,* "Grensa needs sponsorship", 13 December 1985.
[691] *Lebowa Times,* "Narrow win for Motherwells", 10 January 1986.
[692] Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years", p.124.

isolated environs, far fewer amenities were made available, subsistence agriculture in the dry bushveld provided for minimal food needs while residents would still often be forced to travel some 50-70km to Mahwelereng or Potgietersrus in the infrequent taxis and busses that travelled the dirt roads, to access shops, pensions, or to engage with officials of the local state before returning later in the day.[693]

As it so happened, JH Khaas would come to evince a strong connection with the villages of Mapela in the early 1990s, when he was called upon by Atalia Langa to mediate with Anglo-Platinum mine for compensation for the encroaching open-cast platinum pit, whose blasting had shattered windows and walls of homes in the surrounding villages. Langa, Derek Khaas believes, had asked for his grandfather specifically, given the renown he had gained in Mahwelereng.

In 1986, JH Khaas would be arrested along with several key businessmen and notable figures of Mahwelereng, including the Geoffrey Molala, the owner of the Mahwelereng Hotel, local church men, doctors, and teachers in a sweep conducted by the security police of the apartheid state. Khaas would spend three months in Nylstroom prison without being taken to trial.[694] According to the *Lebowa Times,* the arrests formed "part of apparent campaign by the police to intimidate the Black community in the Northern Transvaal through the use of sjamboks, batons, birdshot, and rifles".[695] While he was in prison, the family received a letter from the office of the Chief Minister, informing Khaas that he had been fired as Phatudi's advisor with immediate effect without remuneration as a result of his detention. Three decades after taking occupancy of a new property in Mahwelereng to boastful government fanfare, Khaas would also come to experience prison at the hands of a state which supposedly was deeply invested in increasing the economic and political autonomy of Bantustan residents.

According to his grandson, JH Khaas was targeted by the police for his political sympathies, which he says lay with the ANC.[696] Other ANC activists of Mahwelereng, however, question this, and claim that he was just a businessman. Many Lebowa businessmen would claim a link to the liberation struggle after the arrival of democracy, as Phillips notes. And the local ANC in the post-apartheid era has bestowed liberation honours on these figures – such as the naming of JH Khaas Street in Mahwelereng. At the time, however, it was clear that Khaas benefited from his involvement in the Bantustan bureaucracy, even if he opposed its

[693] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Bakenberg-Mapela, 2 March 2019; Interview with Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[694] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022.
[695] *Lebowa Times,* "Nkadimeng condemns detention", 30 May 1986.
[696] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mahwelereng, 27 March 2022

underpinnings. This brings into view the complexity of "struggle credentials" and the ambiguities of involvement with the Bantustan state.

Nevertheless, despite his status and relative wealth, his proximity to the top leaders of the Lebowa state, Khaas was not exempt from the harsh realities of both state abandonment and repression that permeated Mahwelereng. Running a business in Lebowa was an incredibly difficult proposition because of the profound restrictions that were imposed on Black residents. Moreover, the impoverished realities of the Bantu townships profoundly limited their prospects – at the opening of Marble-Mokerong, Khaas himself insisted that it would be "suicidal to open a wholesaler" in Lebowa because "only local businessmen would [have the money to] patronise it… We shall consider going into the Homeland as soon as the economic climate is healthy enough".[697] In 1989, the president of LEBCOC and Lebowa's Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry, Derek Kobe, told a gathering in Potgietersrus that the Black businessman in South Africa "is gagged, blindfolded and immobilized by laws for which he was not responsible … [He is] a passenger in the economic mainstream of the country … Most blacks are deliberately excluded from the mainstream of economic activity by law. Those who are still aspiring to enter business have little prospect of becoming big business".[698] Derek Khaas further claims that part of the motivation for his grandfather's arrest was the hatred that the local white police had for Black businessmen in Mahwelereng. In many senses, Khaas thus represents the hard limits of the state's middle class project in "Bantu Towns" like Mahwelereng.

Conclusion

Christian Rogerson and Essy Letsoalo insisted in 1981 that despite the state's promises of transforming Bantustans into independent "homelands", "quintessentially, they continue to function as labour reservoirs meeting the exigencies of capitalist development in South Africa".[699] Nevertheless, the central state's creation of the planned townships all signalled profound transformations in rural society. In the creation of "Bantu towns" like Mahwelereng, impoverished though their landscapes remained, the apartheid central state introduced a spatial-administrative-economic form that diverged in many important ways from the terrain of chiefly rule, one that fostered new (though highly constrained) paths for local accumulation and upward mobility. The roll-out of Bantustan state institutions within these townships,

[697] *Lebowa Times,* 'Blacks venture into the business world', 17 November 1978.
[698] *Lebowa Times,* "Black business stifled", 30 June 1989.
[699] Christian M. Rogerson & Essy M. Letsoalo, "Rural Underdevelopment, Poverty and Apartheid: The Closer Settlements of Lebowa, South Africa1," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 72, no. 6 (1981): p.347.

including schools, hospitals, and the wide variety of other local institutions attached to the Lebowa state, produced new life paths, new career possibilities and new webs of local power relations. It was in the townships of Lebowa – in Mahwelereng, Seshego, Lebowakgomo – that something of a Black, home-owning "middle class" was fostered, even as it remained continually embattled. It was also in these spaces that a class of petit-bourgeois professionals and businessmen arose, forging political connections with Lebowa's nascent elite and securing some of the resources and benefits that these relationships offered. In Mahwelereng, local businessmen like JH Khaas, an ally of the Chief Minister, came to serve as the first mayor of the township, building his wealth through Bantustan business networks and access to exclusive business licences. Nevertheless, entrepreneurial ventures like those of Khaas remained prejudiced by the prevailing system of apartheid economic parasitism, through which the wealth of Black communities drained into the businesses of the white towns.

The local "elite" of Lebowa's townships should thus be understood as small and fragile. Similarly, the town council structures that many of them participated in can be characterised as weak, stricken by a chronic lack of resources, singularly unable to maintain and expand access to basic services or address the profound levels of poverty that surrounded them. As the case of Khaas also attests, the relative wealth of local township politicians meant little in the face of the repressive apartheid machinery; Khaas was subjected to the same brutal experiences at the hands of the racist state that many other Black people without his status were made to endure, those routinely described as "terrorists" by the white authorities and press.

While Khaas was quickly succeeded by other candidates for the position of mayor, they remained precarious and expendable. And the role that the Mahwelereng Town Council played within township local governance landscape was extremely circumscribed. Yet together they did form part of a broader multi-scalar state-institutional network concerned with governing the township; along with the offices of the superintendent and the magistrate, departments of the Bantustan state played a direct role in issues of township development. In these townships over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, there also emerged a growing associational and institutional nexus that spanned across the township. A small but vocal township civil society emerged which was broadly supportive of the Bantustan leadership, constituted by local notables, professional unions, church congregations, business networks; these networks also came to shape discourse in the public sphere and intervene in matters of local governance – issues of township space, administration and economy.

Across this growing institutional landscape there would also emerge forms of radical resistance that came to rebound on the Bantustan state. Across the schools, colleges,

hospitals, workplaces, and homes of Lebowa, new forms of challenge and defiance emerged imposed themselves in the terrain of local power relations. And as Tim Gibbs writes: “paradoxically, the expansion of the Bantustan state created new forms of dissent within its interstices”.[700] In the segregated racial enclosures that the apartheid central state had sought to imprint its totalising oppressive vision, in the administrative machinery it had willed into being, and across the relations of racist economic exploitation, a potent sense of revolutionary fervour grew and came to be channelled into organised forms of mass action. With the rise of robust, coordinated, and region-wide networks of resistance from the late 1970s, fuelled by ideologies of Black liberation and struggle, a new conjuncture of rural local governance began to take shape, one in which apartheid modes of space-making, administrative governance and economic exploitation were fundamentally challenged, one in which new visions of rural local governance came to be imagined and enacted.

[700] Gibbs, *Mandela’s Kinsmen*, p.5

PART II: RESISTANCE, REFORM, AND REPRESSION

By the early 1970s, the apartheid central state had, on its own terms, achieved remarkable successes. For all the variations and divergences that characterised the translation of central state policy into concrete realities, the fundamentals of spatial segregation, racially balkanised bureaucracy and entrenched relations of white economic extractivism had, from the perspective of state planners, been effectively instantiated in the Northern Transvaal and Lebowa. Among white residents of Potgietersrus and other towns of the region, apartheid came to form the naturalised backdrop of everyday life. Yet at the decade's close, the apartheid project was suddenly appearing far more fragile.

The rise of popular struggle, vividly demonstrated in the 1973 Durban strikes and the 1976 Soweto uprising, worsening economic conditions and growing disaffection from within Afrikanerdom suggested, by the end of the 1970s, that apartheid hegemony was coming apart at the seams. The Bantustans too witnessed escalating forms of defiance and popular struggle in the face of deepening immiseration. Through its schemes of audacious social engineering, fuelled by a zealous faith in the powers of centralised administration to remake the world, the apartheid central state had, in some senses, built the edifice within which would be incubated forms of radical, bottom-up challenge – including in the Bantustans. And these prompted profound changes at the heart of the white political establishment, ushering in an era of change for South Africa, and, indeed, for rural local governance.

The chapters that follow consider the period from the late 1970s through to the end of the 1980s, a period in which apartheid was, as O'Meara puts it, facing "terminal crisis".[701] This era also represented the rise of a new conjuncture or field of power relations for localities within the Northern Transvaal and Lebowa, one characterised by new forms of contest, crisis and contradiction over apartheid processes of spatial segregation, racial government and economic parasitism. Indeed, this period in particular demonstrated how these processes, initiated by the central state between the 1950s and 1970s especially, had so thoroughly transformed the landscape of rural power relations as to constitute the main underpinnings or substrates of local politics. These chapters show how, in other words, state-led spatial, administrative and economic processes had been transformed into the axes of rural local governance, and were coming to present seismic challenges to the apartheid order. In

[701] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years,* p.317.

response, the central government was forced to consider new means to sustain white minority rule.

In the face of growing revolutionary headwinds, the former defence minister, PW Botha, ascended to the leadership of the NP in 1978, and over the next decade he would come to impress his personal vision upon the state, marking a distinct departure from the previous era. Over the course of the 1980s, the central state introduced several reforms to the core tenets of apartheid. Over the course of his presidency, Botha effectively announced that NP was cutting loose of the grand apartheid concept of "separate political systems for myriad 'national groups'". He even went so far as to admit what had been denied by the NP over the last three decades: "We accept one citizenship for all South Africans… The people of South Africa form one nation'". However, Botha was quick to add that "our nation is a nation of minorities". And his position was expressly not for the abolition of Bantustan structures. Instead, what was envisaged was that different representatives of these "minorities" would be given more opportunity to meet together, in newly minted structures through which, it was promised, Black members of the South African nation could "themselves decide on their own affairs up to the highest level".[702]

These new structures were to realise a new form of so-called "consociational" government. At the apex of this new system was to stand the Tricameral Parliament, which would replace the whites-only parliament with three chambers, each still racially defined, however: a chamber of whites, one of so-called "Coloureds", and another for those designated 'Indian'. While Black people would not find representation in the Tricameral Parliament, they would, as Botha's Ministers would enthusiastically proclaim, be able to participate meaningfully at lower levels of government. Indeed, a strong focus of the Botha reforms was on local government. An array of legislation was introduced which promised greater Black involvement in local decision making. The so-called Koornhof Bills represented acknowledgement of the irreversibility of Black urban settlement in South Africa's cities, and sought to capture and tame the political energies of these areas by creating supposedly democratic structures of Black self-governance - the Black Local Authorities (BLAs).

Botha's government evinced continued faith in the Bantustan system, and indeed continued to encourage semi-independent Bantustans like Lebowa to accept full independence. The creation of KwaNdebele as a new Bantustan for "Southern Ndebele" in 1986 signaled this continued commitment. Nevertheless, there was to be found in the central government structures greater acknowledgment that economic development needed to be understood in

[702] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years,* p.348

a broader regional perspective which accepted the reality that Bantustan areas and those of "white" South Africa were economically integrated: the white town and the Black township were finally to be understood as codependent. Indeed, the Botha government's "deconcentration" espoused the principle of "economic interdependence [and] political dependence".[703]

Under Botha, there came to be growing acceptance that key tenets of spatial and economic apartheid had to be softened:

> [O]vert official racism gave way to a discourse of economic growth and the wonders of supply-side economics. Blacks would be given access to the system and its benefits… Now the old Verwoerdian maxim of "better poor and white than rich and mixed" was replaced by a vision of "power-sharing" and rapid economic growth.[704]

In part, these impulses stemmed, O'Meara argues, from emerging class dynamics within the NP itself. The NP rose to power on the back of a white Afrikaner class alliance, and entrenched itself in government through the dispersal of state employment opportunities and the distribution of welfare to poor white communities, producing a stable white middle class which delivered it successive electoral majorities. Yet by the late 1970s, with the rapprochement between Afrikaner and English capital represented in a powerful, politically-connected, outwardly-oriented white capitalist elite seeking access to international markets, and against the backdrop of a deepening economic crisis of world-historic proportions, this class alliance was in the process of disintegration.

In the Northern Transvaal, the NP's policies had produced a generation of businessmen and industrialists, many of whom also came to chafe at the hardest edges of apartheid's policies, and the chastening influence of the international sanctions regime that had been imposed on the country. Yet for the province's substantial white farming and petit-bourgeois strata, including those of Potgietersrus, Verwoerdian maxims remained sacrosanct. Botha's touted reform agenda quickly came to attract fervent criticism from the party's right wing, and precipitated major new splits in white politics which would profoundly shape politics of the era – and, perhaps especially, rural local governance in the Northern Transvaal. Moves towards power-sharing would prompt a walkout of hardline MPs and local politicians, who would form their own party in 1982. The Conservative Party (CP) was led by the charismatic and foreboding NGK *dominee* and MP of Nylstroom, Andries Treurnicht. Up until that point, Treurnicht had, moreover, served as the NP's Transvaal chairman. Espousing hardline opposition to any reform of apartheid, and particularly moves towards the repeal of the pillars

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[703] *Ibid.* p.275.
[704] *Ibid.,* p.266–67.

of spatial apartheid, the CP would sweep to power in town councils across the Northern Transvaal, including the Potgietersrus Town Council leveraging this support in a bid to halt the NP's reform agenda.

The concept of "power sharing" was also immediately rejected by representatives of the liberation movement, and opposition to Botha's window dressing of apartheid galvanized the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983, which would breathe new life into the struggle in South Africa, including in the Bantustans. Despite its promises of change, the central state remained essentially consistent on what had been the fundamentals of apartheid – the three axes of spatial segregation, of the Bantustan state-building project, and on the need to preserve relations of racial economic exploitation, even if through different modalities and forms. While the 1980s signalled the rise of an emergent conjuncture, it did not signal the beginning of a new order; to the contrary, Botha's government would preside over the slow demise of the apartheid regime, amid the stirrings of a new one.

By the mid-1980s, Tom Lodge writes that conditions in the Bantustans had grown to "explosive" proportions. These fractured statelets were suffering under the weight of "accelerating impoverishment accompanied by drought and unemployment, revenue shortages leading to deterioration of local government, and political fractiousness within the ruling groups of chiefs, bureaucrats and businesspeople". When waves of protest erupted across the Vaal Triangle and Soweto, especially in the wake of the formation of the UDF, "the parched ground of the homelands provided abundant fuel for the sparks generated by uprisings in the townships".[705] By 1984, Lebowa too was in the grip of widespread revolt, and the villages and townships of the Mogalakwena area proved key nodal points in this rising tide of popular protest.

Yet these initiatives prompted an enormous campaign of repression on the part of the central state, which revealed the second face of Botha's dual strategy for preserving white minority rule. While with one hand the administration promised reform and redress, with the other it ordered brutal clampdowns across the country. Over the course of the 1980s, Botha had also introduced reforms to the security apparatus which foregrounded their role in the apartheid state, and produced a militaristic machinery of repression whose tentacles reached into virtually every locality.

Chapter 5 details the rise of popular politics in Black communities of present-day Mogalakwena, and across Lebowa more generally, over the course of the late 1970s and

[705] Lodge, "Revolt in a Homeland" in Lodge et al, *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (London: Hurst 1992).

1980s. It considers how, in particular, the UDF came to rise to increasing prominence in Mahwelereng and in many of the villages, the nature and modalities of resistance undertaken, and the vision of the future advanced. And it considers moves by the state to clamp down on Black popular protest through naked repression. In 1986, a national State of Emergency was declared, which effectively banned Black political activity and unleashed the might of the security apparatus on Black communities across the country. Scores of Black activists were arrested without trial. Many were subjected to horrific forms of torture, and many were murdered by security police. In the Lebowa Bantustan, this would effectively smash local campaigns against the state, and drive what remained of liberation politics underground. Yet the repression campaign would come at significant cost to the legitimacy of the apartheid state at all levels – internationally, across South Africa, and in the Bantustans themselves.

In **Chapter 6**, I examine how the CP emerged as fierce defender of spatial and administrative segregation, espousing millenarian visions which called for the maintenance of “white” space, and seeking to preserve the relations of localised economic parasitism that had sustained the town’s prosperity. The CP would come to stonewall processes of national change over the course of the 1980s, and the constellation of “whites-only” towns of the Northern Transvaal would come to form the ground of a regional grassroots campaign by the CP which claimed autonomy from the dictates of the central state, and used the municipalities as a platform for bottom-up resistance.

Chapter 5: Liberation Politics and Popular Struggle

Introduction

This chapter constructs a picture of how the turbulent 1980s unfolded in Mahwelereng and the rural villages which have come to fall under the Mogalakwena Local Municipality. Relying on oral testimony, archival and newspaper sources, and secondary literature, I piece together a timeline of growing resistance, showing how liberation activism of varying political persuasions and forms of popular struggle came over time to fundamentally shape the ground of rural local governance, throwing down radical new challenges to forms of apartheid space, administration and economic relationality.

This chapter has benefitted from existing work on what Lodge called the "Lebowa Revolt". In these accounts, the role of the youth and UDF structures attracts a central place. In her chapter on the UDF in the Northern Transvaal, for instance, Van Kessel classifies the political struggles which took place in this period as one characterised by acrimonious and at times violent "generational conflict" – captured most starkly by the waves of "witch burnings" that gripped the villages of Sekhukhuneland especially. For Van Kessel, the period was marked less by the rise of "people's power" heralded in townships elsewhere, but rather more by significant "confusion" as "the youth movement escalated a revolt against all authority: chiefs, dingaka, teachers, and parents", and sought to pursue their own agendas which were not always neatly aligned with liberation politics.[706] And as such, in the 1990s, the incoming ANC experienced a challenge in transforming the UDF legacy into a vehicle for mass support, given its association with "rebellious youth".[707]

Delius provides a long historical account which shows the trajectory of political resistance between in Sekhukhuneland between the 1950s and 1980s. While migrants had played a prominent role in these struggles, and were centrally concerned with preserving their access to rural land, by the 1980s, political rebellion was undertaken largely by young secondary-school age pupils with distinctly different motives. In line with massive changes in local political economy, with agricultural subsistence becoming ever more remote, the protests of young people centered around access to education and employment. Like Van Kessel, Delius places generational revolt at the centre of his analysis. And he also similarly argues that while youth structures were broadly affiliated to the UDF, in terms of actual connections with other structures they often exercised a high degree of autonomy, and displayed a varying degree of

[706] Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, p.298.
[707] *Ibid.,* p.141.

ideological adherence, at times largely adopting symbols of the movement. This was, once again, most visible in the witch burning campaigns, which were explicitly opposed by the leadership of the UDF, especially Peter Nchabeleng.[708]

Both Delius and Van Kessel's research was based in Sekhukhuneland, and largely reported experiences of those living in villages under Traditional Authorities. Occasional mention is made of the role of students at the University of the North (Turfloop) in Mankweng township, which is also the focus of a book by Anne Heffernan.[709] Heffernan's work provides valuable insights into the organisational battles and horizons of student politics at the University, including in the 1980s. Turfloop would form a major connection point between regional activists of the UDF and the national liberation struggle.

Lekgoathi's work considers a different geography of resistance from 1976 especially in the more westerly areas of the Bantustan, and the Zebediela region especially – far closer to and more connected to Mogalakwena than Sekhukhuneland is. While still centering the role of "youth", Lekgoathi expands this concept to also include young people outside of secondary schools: the non-school going youth, as well as young teachers and trainee teachers who fought against conditions both at the Colleges of Education and the schools in which they taught. He links the formation of the Northern Transvaal Teachers Union (NOTTU) – a forerunner of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) – to the radical challenges laid down by the student mobilisations over the period 1985-1986. These would see alliances being formed between radical teachers from different areas, including, Lekgoathi shows, from Mahwelereng. Indeed, NOTTU was launched at the Mokopane College of Education. Lekgoathi once again affirms the powerful role that the UDF played in these struggles, showing, for instance, the influence of the South African Youth Congress Association (SAYCO) and one of its foremost leaders, Peter Mokaba, in inspiring the creation of structures and guiding the direction of youth politics.[710]

This chapter considers many of the same actors highlighted by previous scholarship, considering the role of school-going and non-school going youth, teachers in schools or receiving their training at one of Lebowa's colleges of education, UDF activists, including those who belonged to youth congresses and School Representative Councils (SRCs). But I also seek to bring into view a range of actors which have not received a great deal of consideration. I consider, for instance, the formative role played by the Azanian Peoples' Organisation (AZAPO), which emerged as a strong actor in local resistance politics in Mahwelereng and

[708] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*,
[709] Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy*.
[710] Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy"; Lekgoathi, "Ethnicity and Identity".

other townships across Lebowa, evincing a combination of Marxist and Black Consciousness philosophies. I also draw greater focus on the role of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA), an affiliate of the UDF which served as a catalyst for major episodes of revolt in Mahwelereng.

More broadly, I consider how the UDF managed to gain popular acceptance across these areas in the fight against apartheid. Far from emerging in the 1990s as a discredited force with a weak organisational presence that needed to work to win over sceptical residents, as Van Kessel notes of some of the villages of Sekhukhuneland, I argue that what was laid in the 1980s by UDF structures were the institutional sinews which spanned across geographies, which would cohere into the emergent parallel set of institutions which formed the basis for the ANC as it prepared for government in the 1990s. What emerged in this period were powerful forms of cross-geographical interconnection with institutions, actors and networks elsewhere. Across these geographies emerged a set of robust relationships which sought to challenge Bantustan modes of local governance, the segregationist spatial order, and the economic extractivism that persisted between the Bantustan and the white towns.

While in preceding decades, the central state might be characterised as a dominant actor in the production of space, by the 1980s, the activities of ordinary people and popular politics came to have a defining impact on the use of space, the nature of borders and patterns of mobility. Restrictive forms of apartheid spatiality which sought to hem black residents into their locality and entrench ethnic and racial boundaries came to be routinely subverted by activists who forged links across the Bantustan, the country and indeed beyond the borders of South Africa. While apartheid sought to engender a myopic form of localism, activists instead spoke of their horizons gradually expanding over the course of their political conscientisation. Activists rejected the concept of Bantustan nationalism in favour of a far more expansive geographical and social prospect: the national liberation struggle. Developments that unfolded in the villages or township were drawn into both imaginative and practical relations with people and places beyond. They worked to undermine the power of the white state and the Bantustan state alike to control basic aspects of everyday life and governance. And their regional reach was a key precondition for the ability of activists to advance coordinated political strategies which could bring daily life in the Bantustan towns, villages and white towns to a standstill across vast swathes of territory. This resonates with Hart's conception of the local "not as a bounded unit, but as always formed through relations and connections with dynamics at play in other places, and in wider regional, national, and transnational arenas".[711]

[711] Hart, *Disabling Globalization*, p.14.

Yet this chapter also highlights the similarly interconnected geographies of repression in Mogalakwena, many of whose settlements were effectively under military siege for prolonged periods from the mid-1980s, as security police were unleashed to conduct themselves with impunity, many of them young men from white towns across the region. The proximity of Mahwelereng and the villages to the white town, the relative ease with which the security forces could impose emergency conditions, and the infrastructural power that the state was able to impose on the region (with its accessible road networks, scores of police, permanently stationed army battalions and telecommunications networks) meant that revolt could largely be driven underground through the might of the central state for several years, even if only temporarily, until formal apartheid finally buckled from the 1990s.

Black Consciousness and the building of Azapo

In his autobiography, Black Consciousness activist Mosibudi Mangena describes arriving to a half-built house in a township he knew nothing about, accompanied by a security policeman:

> From the front, the house looked like an ordinary four-roomed township matchbox. It was only when he unlocked the door and we entered that I realised it was a matchbox cut in half – the normal two rooms at the back were missing, as if the house still needed to be completed.[712]

Born in the Tzaneen area of Limpopo, Mangena had been active in the South African Students Organization (SASO) at the University of Zululand, and was elected National Organizer of the Black People's Convention (BPC) in 1972. He had been arrested and sent to prison on Robben Island, and after his release he was banished to Mahwelereng.

The half-built house, an apt symbol of the neglect that characterised Mahwelereng in the late 1970s, was intended to serve as a prison for the banished Black Consciousness leader. And the fact that apartheid security officers selected Mahwelereng for Mangena's banishment further underlines how they viewed the Bantustan township as a space of relegation, marginality and social death. Mangena describes the cagey response he received from his neighbours, who confirmed that the police had warned them that a "*bandiet* was about to arrive in their midst".[713] Yet over the course of several years, despite severe restrictions on mobility (barred from leaving his home after 6pm, for instance), Mangena would develop strong relationships in the township, and play an active (if subterranean) role in township politics. By 1981, Mangena writes, "I had developed a circle of friends and a network of activists for Azapo

[712] Mosibudi Mangena. *Triumphs and Heartaches: A Courageous Journey by South African Patriots*. (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2015).
[713] *Ibid.* p.11.

to the extent that Sammy Tloubatla and Letsatsi Mosala had been able to come to Mahwelereng and launch a branch of the organisation [Azapo] in the township".[714] According to Tsoaledi Thobejane, this branch "was the first to be launched just after the banning of all Black Consciousness organizations in South Africa".[715] He described seeing activists from all over the country descending on "this tiny township… many of them wearing t-shirts emblazoned with a big fist at the front, and a chain that yearned to be broken".[716]

Mangena had been amongst those who had worked to establish Azapo in 1978 to fill the gap left in the wake of the banning of a range of organisations affiliated to the Black Consciousness Movement in October 1977. Azapo adopted elements of Black Consciousness philosophy and combined it with Marxist class analysis in the formulation of strategies of mass mobilisation. Fresh from the lessons learned from the 1976 Soweto Uprising, Azapo emphasised the power of the youth in leading the struggle against apartheid. Yet along with this was an understanding of the centrality of capitalism in fostering divisions amongst Black people. In a 1981 conference paper, for instance, Letsatsi Mosala stated that it was in the interests of upper middle class Black people to collaborate with the apartheid state.[717] As such, the Bantustan state and the rising political elite who controlled it were the targets of Azapo hostility, condemned as sell outs.

Azapo came to exhibit a significant presence in Mahwelereng politics, and in the region more generally. Mahwelereng, along with Seshego and Mankweng, were identified by respondents as the three major Azapo strongholds in Lebowa. Throughout the 1980s, the *Lebowa Times* is replete with articles announcing meetings of Azapo, as well as other formations in which Azapo activists played a role such as the Advice Offices (see below). In an interview conducted by Inneke van Kessel in 1990, Elleck Nchabeleng, the son of the UDF stalwart Peter Nchabeleng, remarked that "In the Northern Transvaal, it was important to work with Azapo, because it was relatively strong. Especially in Potgietersrus and Seshego, that was Azapo bastions".[718] Despite this, the role of Azapo in the Northern Transvaal has attracted relatively little scholarly attention.

Among those I interviewed, the popularity of Azapo in Mahwelereng was partly linked to the presence of charismatic individuals. Mangena proved an influential figure in the lives of many of the young people who would visit him in Mahwelereng, and run errands for him. Unlike

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[714] *Ibid.* p.14.
[715] Thobejane, *The Fight,* p. 30.
[716] *Ibid.* p.30.
[717] *South African History Online,* "Azapo", Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/azanian-peoples-organization-azapo. Accessed 22 March 2023.
[718] *Wits Historical Papers,* A2496, Inneke van Kessel: UDF Material. Interview Elleck Nchabeleng.

many of the adults in the neighbourhood, who kept a wary distance, Mangena writes that "the children, especially the primary school-going ones, were a different kettle of fish. They had no inhibitions about me at all. We carried on like a house on fire".[719] One Azapo activist, Isaac Nyoni, in his early teens at the time, recalls how he and his friends "wouldn't understand, why is he called a terrorist? And people started wanting to know more about him, that's where he got the opportunity of explaining some of these things. He would say: 'No I was just incarcerated for talking the truth, for doing the right thing'… so people started liking him around here".[720]

Mangena's house came to represent a space which linked high school students to the world of liberation politics beyond the township. Through Mangena, students learned about other anti-colonial struggles across the continent, and learned about the national liberation struggle. Tsoaledi Thobejane was another young man who was drawn to the former Robben Islander. He lived next door to Mangena, and was a frequent visitor:

> He used to invite me so that I could help him with some of the house chores … When he wanted to sneak out of the house to go and buy some newspapers, he would let me stay by the window side as a disguise to fool the cops that he was still in the house. At this time, he taught me to listen to Radio Freedom which was broadcasting from Zimbabwe and Zambia. He also taught me a lot about the dire effects of colonialism in the African continent. He made me to be proud of who I am, and encouraged me and my friends to go to school.[721]

Thobejane also describes how the contradiction between the comparative luxury enjoyed by the whites of Potgietersrus and the poverty that marked the Black township served to engender deepening political consciousness among young Black activists: "His understanding is constantly sharpened by the polarization he sees between the ghetto where he resides and the affluent white neighbourhood nearby. Potgietersrus, as it was commonly known, was a clean town. The houses were so huge. Every household seemed to boast of two or three cars in their garages. In contrast, Mahwelereng Township was a ghetto that always bubbled with life."[722] Another young student of Black Consciousness, Freddy Mayimela, recalls the indelible anger that this contrast in livelihoods evoked in him during his formative years: "I would always ask myself: Why do these white people have these nice houses? Have you seen our houses? They are just like tombstones in a graveyard".[723]

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[719] Mangena, *Triumphs and Heartaches*, p.12.
[720] Interview with Isaac Chittepo Nyoni, Mokopane, 6 March 2019.
[721] Thobejane, *The Fight*, p.26.
[722] *Ibid.,* p.14.
[723] Interview with Dr Freddy Mayimela, March 2019 at Maxis, Mokopane.

Mangena worked to keep young activists "in touch with Azapo activists in Seshego and other places", helping to solidify crucial links across the region.[724] For his part, Mangena describes how he "learnt how to manipulate and subvert [his] banning orders. With the active support of my neighbours, I would leave the half-matchbox house in which I was confined between sunset and sunrise, and visit faraway places to do political work".[725] Many of these trips were around the region. He describes visiting Mamphela Ramphele's house in Lenyenye township in Tzaneen on one occasion, which was the site of her own banishment.[726] Some of these trips were even further afield: "Under the cover of darkness we even drove in the same car to Soweto one time to scrum with other banned people, such as Drake Tshenkeng and Sedupe Ramokgopa".[727]

In these activities, Mangena was assisted by another prominent Black Consciousness figure in Mahwelereng, Dr Tshehla Francis Hlahla. After graduating from the medical school of the University of Natal, Dr Hlahla arrived in Mahwelereng in 1973, sharing a house in Blackrock section with his brother, a lecturer at the nearby Mokopane College of Education. He had been a contemporary of Steve Biko and Mamphela Ramphele at the University, and returned with a fervent political outlook. According to his niece, Nobi Hlahla, "they were the first people who started with this Black Consciousness…. and so he brought this here". By 1981, Dr Hlahla had established his role as a popular doctor who operated surgeries in both Mahwelereng and Moletjie, the village of his birth. [728]

The Hlahla family home served as a crucial space of refuge for Azapo members, as well as a hiding space for pamphlets and equipment. "[This] house where I was living was a political house", Nobi Hlahla recalls, "They were coming into my house, planning and doing stuff". It was Nobi Hlahla and her mother who were responsible for maintaining the running of the house, and for holding its many secrets. "This house was a house of many people", Nobi Hlahla remembers, "You wouldn't know that it was me and [my mother] only. The rest of the people were just coming and out, we didn't know where they were coming from. But we had to provide, make sure we do their washing, make sure that they eat and bath." Yet Nobi Hlahla says that she didn't really know the exact nature of all of the activities her uncle was involved in. "I realised that during the night, activities are going on around me that I'm not aware of". It

[724] Mangena, *Triumphs and Heartaches*, p.13.
[725] *Ibid.,* p.15.
[726] *Ibid*.
[727] *Ibid*.
[728] Interview with Nobi Hlahla, Mahwelereng, 14 March 2020.

was only later that she would learn that Dr Hlahla was actively training young activists to wield guns and shoot targets:

> Once a day I'd see him … He would run around. He knew how to train people how to use the gun. I didn't know all those things. And they were practising here - those people were coming into my house, sleeping, eating, and they were going out, practising how to shoot, but I was not aware … [Practising] in the mountains here, and I was not aware. I was so surprised that I ... I realised that the AK-47s were in this house, but I was not aware. Because we just took it for granted that those things are for the Azapo people, they are here in the house.

Nobi Hlahla explains how she and her mother were constantly confronted with the task of hiding objects and documents at the request of her uncle:

> This house was full of things, some we were hiding inside - we would dig holes and put them in the holes and close … without even looking. My mother would say "Let's just put them in the three-legged pot, and then dig a hole and … put those things inside the three-legged pot and close" … And then in our culture, if you are a real women, you must have three-legged pots so that when there is a function you can borrow the next door. And then we cook pap, we can also cook meat. But ours were hiding stuff, we were burying them to hide stuff. Mm.

It is clear that as political activities faced escalating repression over the course of the 1980s, homes came to function as crucial spaces for continuing "underground" activities. Nobi Hlahla recalls being told explicitly by her mother: "Never share what is happening in this house to anybody".

Emily Bridger highlights how "histories of township uprising have predominantly focused on the public spaces of protest and violence, ignoring how activism was lived day-to-day in the townships' private domains".[729] Neglecting the importance of the home, for instance, frequently obscures the crucial roles that women played in sustaining political activism.[730] Despite the fact that Nobi Hlahla and her mother did not consider themselves involved in politics, and at times resented the conditions of danger and material hardship that political activism visited upon their family, their actions helped sustain the connective tissue between local activists.

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[729] Emily Bridger, *Young Women Against Apartheid: Gender, Youth and South Africa's Liberation Struggle*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2021), p.22.
[730] Bruchhausen discusses the integral role played by women of the Nchabeleng family in maintaining an activist household in Apel, Sekhukhuneland over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. Bruchhausen, "Emancipatory Struggles", p.132.



Figure 44: The surgery where Dr Hlahla once practised and where the Mokerong Advice Office operated.[731]

Along with the Blackrock house, Dr Hlahla's surgery became an important sight of politics in Mahwelereng – and, interestingly, for activists of various political persuasions. It certainly was recognised as a key Azapo site: Hlahla hired Mangena to work at the surgery while he still lived in the township, and it was here that the BC activist would spend a great deal of time in conversation with young political recruits. Isaac Nyoni recalls that the surgery came to be known as "Azapo House" – "I literally grew up in that space". Nyoni recalls how the surgery was key to his own political conscientisation.[732] Yet Hlahla's support for Azapo did not signal an exclusivist political bent, a divisive form of antagonism that is often propounded in relation to the ideological divide between adherents of Black Consciousness and the Charterists. Thobejane describes how Hlahla's "activities in the township encouraged a lot of young people to stand up and be counted among freedom fighters", and supported activists of various political persuasions. "He supported every activity in this township, irrespective of whom. If there's going to be any activity somewhere around Mokopane, they will come for

[731] Photograph taken by author on 25 March 2022.
[732] Interview with Isaac Nyoni, Mokopane, 6 March 2019.

sponsorship".[733] Thobejane writes of the pivotal role that Hlahla played in the life of Dudu Madisha, for instance, a local teacher, UDF activist and member of Umkhonto weSizwe.[734]

The Azapo members I interviewed spoke of how the political education they received linked the experiences they had in the township to a sense of national and continental politics, helping them develop a relational understanding of the spaces in which they lived and the kinds of resistance that this necessitated. Isaac Nyoni recalls:

> With a shallow understanding, one grew interest in getting to know more about these things – more about this political situation … One realised that everything was wrong in our country, the system that was prevailing in our country, not necessarily in Mokopane or Lebowa in particular, because I had realised that there is racial discrimination in the whole country … Divide and rule was in place. So that in itself prompted us to want to get rid of it because without breaking the shackles of bondage, there is no way we can get freedom.[735]

Azapo must be understood as having a strong regional orientation. One Azapo activist, Khangale Makhado, who moved across Lebowa over the course of his political career, remarks that Azapo activists undertook what they called the "rural offensive", which involved going to villages across the region".[736] Nevertheless, while Azapo had a significant presence in Mahwelereng and the villages directly neighbouring the township, they struggled to make inroads in the more distant villages of Mapela and Bakenberg.

The United Democratic Front

From 1984, Azapo would come to be joined in the region by structures of the UDF. While the Front was formally launched in 1983, the Northern Transvaal Coordinating Committee of the UDF was only formed in May 1984, which, according to Van Kessel, set about trying to hem together existing organisations and activists scattered across the region.[737] The "backbone" was constituted by the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the Azanian Students' Organisation (Azaso), both student organisations which had expressed alignment with the ANC's Freedom Charter, along with the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), a general trade union which had an office in Pietersburg.[738] The inaugural rally of the UDF in the Northern Transvaal took place in August 1984 in Seshego township, which, Van Kessel writes, drew an attendance of over 5,000 – the biggest political rally ever held in

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[733] Interview with Nobi Hlahla, Mahwelereng, 14 March 2020.
[734] Thobejane, *The Fight*, p.70.
[735] Interview with Mr Isaac Nyoni, Mahwelereng, 14 March 2020.
[736] Interview with Khangela Makhado by Sarah Bruchhausen, 21 July 2021.
[737] Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, p.89.
[738] *Ibid.*

the history of the Northern Transvaal, claimed the UDF coordinating committee.[739] In 1986, the Northern Transvaal was declared a region of the UDF in its own right, under its own Regional Executive Committee (REC) which could now draw up a budget and hire a staff of organisers. The majority of the 63 affiliated structures were drawn from Lebowa, and included "women's organisations, parents' committees, civic associations, trade unions organised around a mining and quarrying work force as well as shop assistants in the main towns, and youth congresses … The youth congresses had the most extensive network, consisting of at least sixteen organisations, some of them quite elaborate". [740]



Azapo attempts to regain lost ground

MOKERONG – There is a need for people around Mokerong to be enlightened on the philosophy of Black Conciousness (B.C.), in order to clear up the confusion brought about by today's plethora of organizations and ideologies.

This was said by the chairperson of the Mahwelereng branch of AZAPO, Mr Tswaledi Thobejane, in a statement released early this week.

To address the issue, the branch plans to launch a campaign to clarify the mass on the basics of B.C.

"Our people here are clearly pro-BC, and Mahwelereng is one of our strong-holds, so we want to maintain contact with them and keep them abreast of events," Mr Thobejane said.

Indications are that the campaign will take the form of pamphlets, meetings and workshops, where people will be drilled in the finer points of "the struggle".

This bold drive by AZAPO is possibly a counter-campaign to neutralise the organization's detractors - last week a mysterious group issued anti-AZAPO pamphlets - as well as consolidate their already-strong support in the face of growing rival movement activities.

For starters, the organization this week distributed leaflets in the township, in which it is explained to the people that "Black Conciousness is a true Black man's philosophy."

Other points stated in the leaflet include:

• The meaning of the word "Black" as applied in the B.C. concept.

• The need for Blacks to define themselves in their own terms, not as they are perceived by others.

• The importance of believing in themselves and their past, yet abandon those traditional customs "which only serve to enslave the Black people more".

• Africa would have undergone a change even if other nations had not "imposed themselves upon this continent."

• The B.C. as "a quest for new values and definitions that are meaningful and appropriate for Black people and which give substance and significance to their lives".

The leaflets emphasise the nessecity of unity, and urged people

Figure 45: The Mahwelereng Branch Chairperson of Azapo, Tsoaledi Thobejane, insists in mid-August 1985 on the need to conscientise the youth through Black Consciousness philosophy in the face of a "plethora of organizations and ideologies" that had emerged in the township, especially under the banner of the UDF.[741]

Azapo's dominance would come to be significantly challenged by the rise of these structures and the ascendance of UDF-affiliated activists to leadership positions in schools, colleges, and unions. Tsoaledi Thobejane, former Chairperson of the Mahwelereng Branch of Azapo, confirms:

> Azapo and the Black Consciousness Movement did not bask in the glory for a long time since some of the activists thought that these movements did not fully engage the community in mass mobilization. Amongst a new crop of leadership that was disenchanted by Azapo's concepts without engaging the ordinary people in the streets were Mpei Kekana, Stan Matlaila, Sophonia Mamabolo and Dudu Madisha. These comrades were very much instrumental in the formation of the UDF and the popularization of the freedom charter in the township and Limpopo region

[739] *Ibid.* p.91.
[740] Lodge, "Revolt in a Homeland", p.119
[741] *Lebowa Times,* "Azapo attempts to regain lost ground", 16 August 1985.

> especially during the late 80's. The over 90% of ANC votes in villages around Mahwelereng and Mokopane in any elections can be attributed to the gallant work of these activists.[742]

Yet in the Mokopane area and Polokwane further north, Azapo-aligned student structures remained important participants in local political developments. Even as they perhaps attracted less numerical support, certain key figures continued to inspire and organise militant initiatives in their localities. The Charterist ascendancy thus remained uneven. Amongst school activists, Azapo members claimed spots in some school SRCs, for instance, and there arose complex relationships marked by both competition and cooperation between those aligned to Azapo structures and those affiliated to the UDF.

These experiences and a shared commitment to struggle would also forge a sense of solidarity between subjugated race groups, such that a strong cohort of so-called "Indian" activists across the region would come to identify with the Bikoist conception of Black, and forge strong roles in the liberation struggle, many as part of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) allied to the Congress movement. Families like the Cachalias, who lived in Akasia and ran businesses in Potgietersrus, would prove key allies in local organising. A member of the TIC, and the grandson of Amina and Yusuf, Ahmed Cachalia would attend political events in Mahwelereng as a young adult, and would, for instance, help with the logistics involved in organising events, along with several other local members of the TIC – the use of vehicles to transport people, the provision of food.[743] Ahmed's cousin Saad Cachalia was a prominent advocate who frequently defended those arrested by the apartheid police, and worked to free those who were kept in detention without trial. Ahmed Cachalia states that while "Indian" people were intended to serve as "the buffer between white comfort and the swart gevaar", what whites "didn't bargain for is that we would consider ourselves Black".[744]

The Beginning of the 1984 Phase of Revolt: Defiance in Educational Institutions

Malesela Abram "Staff" Tsebe's schooling experience was marked by drastic shifts. His first experience of schooling was under the violent and exploitative regime of the white farmer for whom his family worked. Tsebe, who would later serve as the ANC's Chief Whip in the Mogalakwena Local Municipality, was born on a farm in the Sterkrivier valley, some 20km outside of present-day Mokopane. Here, Tsebe describes how he "met the brutality of the

[742] Thobejane, *The Fight*, p.24.
[743] Interview with Younus & Ahmed Cachalia, Mokopane, 5 March 2020.
[744] *Ibid*.

apartheid system". The school he attended was owned by the farmer, and "after school, you'd go and work at the farm … They'd just come after school and collect you, they wouldn't pay you. And the school principal and teachers would come and monitor us on the farm". Tsebe recalls that even on his very first day of school, at the age of 8, he had been picked up by the farmer after the school day and taken 10kms away to work in his fields.[745]

In 1981, Tsebe recounts how he "managed to run away" from the farm, relocating to Mahwelereng township where his father had secured a stand. Tsebe arrived to a space that was radically different to the farm he had left: "for the first time I saw a lot of people in one group… in Mahwelereng, you'd find a lot people at the shopping complex. Something that you'd never see in the farms". Tsebe continues: "When you are in Sterkrivier, your culture is more of an Afrikaner culture, because you grew up in an Afrikaner way [rather] than in your traditional Black [way]". Yet in a few short years, Tsebe remarks that he "grew to be rebellious". Much of this politicisation occurred during his time at DG Tsebe Secondary School, which was animated by fierce political debate and deepening student agitation. It was while attending DG Tsebe Secondary School that Tsebe says he was "recruited" to join the ANC, and adopt as his *nomme de guerre* "Staff Radebe". This was through the influences of a range of older ANC activists, many of whom were teachers at the Mokopane College of Education. Staff would come to be a key activist in the school struggles which began in earnest in 1984.

To be sure, the events of 1984 had a much longer genealogy. A sustained history of defiance, particularly in schools across Lebowa, is captured in scholarship. Schools became ever more influential centres shaping local politics as education massification unfolded across the Bantustan, as conditions in schools deteriorated, and as post-school prospects of employment diminished considerably by the 1980s.[746] Sello Mathabatha has written of the appalling conditions faced by students at schools in Lebowa in the wake of "poorly planned and poorly resourced expansion".[747] Heffernan identifies how, in the midst of an economic depression and rising unemployment levels, future prospects for most young people were bleak, engendering a "generational consciousness" which provided the catalyst for radical politics.[748] While the years 1984-1986 represented the high point of student struggle, this had been growing steadily in the wake of the 1976 school uprisings which rippled across the country.

[745] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[746] Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy*, p.151.
[747] Sello Mathabatha, "Missionary Schools", p.151.
[748] Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy*, 151.

Already in 1977, the president of the conservative teachers union, TUATA, LM Taunyane, insisted that "walking into a school campus is like pushing your head into the lion's mouth".[749]

Lekgoathi identifies the rise of "a more uniform and militant youth culture" as having been being facilitated by the growth of school infrastructure and Lebowa's student population. Yet connections with the political ferment unfolding in urban schools also played a pivotal role. A significant and growing proportion of Lebowa's student body from the late 1970s were young people from the tumultuous schools of the Witwatersrand sent by their parents to complete their schooling in the rural Bantustan instead – a factor which Lekgoathi identifies as having accelerated after 1976 and which continued into the next decade. While parents had hoped that this would steer their children away from politics, this instead drew "urban and rural youths into closer contact" and helped spur the growing defiance in rural schools.[750] While he was at school in a remote village of Bakenberg, for instance, Hendrik Ngoepe remembers making friends with a child who had grown up in Soweto:

> Now, 1976, when there was Black Power in Soweto, most of these people who went there and got houses in Soweto and surrounding areas, then came back home. Ran away from that side. Others brought their children back and they were schooling with us. Then I started to be aware, moena, what is happening in Soweto?! Then I had a friend called Bhadzo, who came to stay next to my house, and then he started to talk about what is happening in Soweto. That interested me. Then I started to be enthused into politics.[751]

Similarly, Lucas Mabetwa, who schooled in ga-Matlala village, recalls the arrival of a new child on his doorstep:

> On one of the good nights in June 1976, my uncle came with that car, with the son of this pastor. And that young man slept with me on the same bed. We were like of the same age. Then I started to ask [questions]. Because his home is in Gauteng. Now because I did not know what was happening there - that's when they arrested bo Tsiesti [Mashinini] and others fled out of the country. …. [I asked] 'Ey, what is happening?'… He told me 'My grandfather and my father grew up here, but now

[749] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Education is State Duty – TUATA president", 5 September 1977.
[750] "Schooling increased contacts and interaction between students, and earlier divisions and attitudes among rural students reinforced through traditional institutions progressively vanished. Because of the relative stability of the schools in the Bantustans at a time when education had virtually collapsed in the townships after 1976, many black parents had begun to send their children to rural schools. The Soweto revolt had served powerfully to intensify fears among adults for their children growing up in the midst of the *tsotsi* (youth gangs) and the turbulence in the townships. The relative calm of rural schools and their expansion in the 1970s and 1980s set in motion a process which would draw urban and rural youths into closer contact in subsequent years" Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy", 2007, p.238.
[751] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Mokopane, 2 March 2019.

> there is Black Power in Joburg. My friends have been killed...' I started to hear about Hector Peterson who was shot.[752]

Many students had also visited urban townships themselves, often during school holidays. This, Lekgoathi writes, was "facilitated by a thriving fleet of Black taxis made possible by the government's relaxation of operating permits, together with improvement of the roads connecting the Bantustans and urban areas. These youths brought information about political struggles in towns to rural schools, as well as provided an important link between evolving urban and rural youth cultures".[753] And alongside the physical flow of people came the flow of newspapers and other media, especially radio.[754] Lucas Mabetwa, for instance, was one of the few who enjoyed a radio in his household in the village of ga-Matlala, and he would relate what he had heard about protests in the PWV area to his classmates.[755] Thus, while apartheid geography had sought to isolate rural localities and limit the horizons of Bantustan residents, by the 1980s, even the most distant of villages were being drawn into connection with the growing ferment of liberation politics.

The liberation organisations furthermore propagated a vision which was national in scope, and the growth of connected structures across the region would form another precondition for the 1984 schooling revolts. Schools served as recruiting grounds for liberation both Azapo and Charterist-aligned structures. Heffernan comments that the 1976 school protests had proven the potential power that students had in advancing the liberation struggle, and had since become a key constituency for liberation organisations to galvanise.[756] Yet this would also evoke a degree of competition and conflict between the two wings of the liberation movement.

Several respondents who became politically active during their school years said they were drawn to the UDF because it promised young people gains through direct mass action, and because of its wide range of romantic liberation symbols – the militancy of Umkhonto weSizwe, the bravery of Mandela, historical songs of struggle. While many UDF activists had been profoundly influenced by Black Consciousness, many of those interviewed reported feeling alienated by Azapo's heavy intellectualism which at times seemed to offer little remedy to the immediate challenges they faced. Staff Tsebe, a teenager in the 1980s, described how he attended Azapo gatherings in Mahwelereng township, but finally switched to the UDF after he encountered one of its charismatic local leaders, Sophonia Mamabolo: "The guy was singing songs about the revolution… Around 1985, I think they were starting the SRC there. That guy

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[752] Interview with Lucas Mabetwa, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 26 August 2019.
[753] Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy", p.240.
[754] *Ibid.,* p.240.
[755] Interview with Lucas Mabetwa, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 26 August 2019.
[756] Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy*, p.127.

was singing a song and I fell in love with that".[757] Yet Azapo too retained significant presence in schools, principally through their student formation, the Azanian Students Movement (Azasm). Over the course of the 1980s, these two wings would compete for membership in high schools across the region.[758]

By 1984, a number of schools across the region were engaging in boycotts, protests and episodes of stone throwing as part of a broader and widely supported atmosphere of institutional defiance.[759] In doing so, young people inserted themselves as increasingly important actors in rural local governance, seeking to bring change to local conditions through both real and imagined linkages with student struggles elsewhere. Some of the many demands which surface in reportage of the *Lebowa Times* over this period centered on the poor conditions at hostels, the defence of popular teachers or calls for the removal of unpopular ones, and the refusal to pay a levy for the construction of new school facilities. These emerged in both Bantustan townships and village settings, with the latter also embroiling chiefly representatives in demands. Lucas Mabetwa, who was active in the foment of Ipopeng High School in ga-Matlala, recalls how protesting students called for access to the school's financial statements, asserting that the Kgoši and the Tribal Authority were misappropriating funds collected by the community.[760] Among the most widespread, however, were demands for an end to corporal punishment and the creation of an SRC to replace the prefect system – campaigns which were taken up by both COSAS and Azasm structures.[761]

Schools and the schooling system established a crucial link between events happening on the Reef and those which unfolded in Bantustan schools. But they also established links between the rural townships and the villages. Ernest Mkhari, for instance, was born and raised on the Makapansgat farm owned by the Peppercorn family. Like Tsebe, he had been forced to work on the farm as a child, and had attended primary schooling there until he was sent to Gojela High School in Mahwelereng for his secondary schooling, given the absence of such facilities in his home village. He describes how during moments of protest, which increased over the years, he and his classmates from the village would take a bus to the township in the morning, participate in the "stone throwing" at the school, and return home in the evening.[762]

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[757] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[758] The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) only seems to have established an organisational presence in Lebowa in 1990, as per reportage of the *Lebowa Times.* See: *Lebowa Times,* "PAC for Turfloop", 16 March 1990.
[759] Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy*, p.159.
[760] Interview with Lucas Mabetwa, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 26 August 2019.
[761] Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy", p.239.
[762] Interview with Ernest Mkhari, Mokopane, 24 May 2019.

Forms of protest around education would continue over the next two years. Yet coverage from the *Lebowa Times* suggests that protests occurred periodically rather than continuously, and that they affected different regions of the Bantustan at different times. Some school management committees appear to have conceded to requests, which tempered protest, while others refused and remained the sites of roiling defiance. There were instances in which students from various schools showed significant unity in campaigning for specific goals. The successful campaign against the introduction of an examination fee for Standard 8 pupils in 1984 in the Mokerong District is one such example.[763]

The political mobilisation undertaken in schools across Lebowa cannot be understood without reference to the involvement of teachers. Lekgoathi describes how a "significant number of [teachers] became uncharacteristically militant and took radical political positions towards the end of the decade".[764] He attributes this both to the "infusion of younger and politicised teachers into the profession" and the "broader socio-political context that provided space to challenge the educational authorities".[765] Like students, many teachers were themselves enduring poor working conditions under authoritarian management. While an older generation of teachers retained a "professional", apolitical stance, "the younger generation" of teachers "were challenged by the school boycotts and their aftermath. Many had been students during the 1976 uprisings, and some had had their 'political baptism' at colleges and universities thereafter. They played a leading role in the formation of alternative teachers' unions", most notably, the Northern Transvaal Teachers Union (NOTTU).[766] NOTTU, whose inaugural ceremony took place at the Mokopane College of Education in 1989, would also later form a key organisational platform through which radical teachers positioned themselves against the Bantustan teaching establishment, and the respectability politics of the conservative teachers union, TUATA.[767]

One influential teacher and former UDF organiser in the region of present-day Mogalakwena is Godfrey Molekwa, who grew up in the village of ga-Molekwa in Bakenberg. He formed a key link between activists on the ground and higher structures of the UDF and student formations. A teacher trained at Setotolwane College of Education, Molekwa learned about the UDF from visits to the University of the North in Turfloop:

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[763] The Department claimed that the fee for this crucial milestone (a "Junior Certificate"), was necessary because the examination process was to be externally administered. The result was widespread boycotts of the examinations, which eventually prompted a reversal by the Education Department. *Lebowa Times,* "Fees Abolished", 15 March 1985.
[764] Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy", p.229.
[765] *Ibid.,* p.229–30.
[766] *Ibid.,* p.241.
[767] *Ibid.*

> We started now learning about the ANC, we got pamphlets. We started now getting books. Then when I came home here, I started interacting with young people. And first I taught them about the importance of establishing SRCs. You see, we started them from something simple. Talk about problems like corporal punishment, issues related to free books, textbooks. Issues like school fees… I was working from Mapela to this area. I went also to George Langa school, influencing the Bakenberg High School, influencing from the establishment of the SRCs. It's from the SRCs that you get the youth, then you start talking about the Youth Congresses, talking about the ANC, talking about the Freedom Charter. Giving them the Freedom Charter, giving the history of the Congress of the People. Why the Freedom Charter is a very important document. What kind of society we are envisaging.[768]

Molekwa used his position as a teacher at Mantutule Secondary School in Mapela to conscientise his students:

> During that time, but at least by virtue of being a teacher, reading, listening, it made me to be a good person to workshop the young people. I had some people I mentored … As a teacher, I was wearing t-shirts of the UDF: "UDF unites, apartheid divides".[769]

One of Molekwa's students was Lucas Lebelo, who recalls:

> Molekwa taught us a lot of things. Mandela, Slovo, all of them. So when we go on making events, you know, making people aware … Molekwa told us one day at a meeting that 'You see, when you are small [in number], the police will take you to arrest you or kill you, so you must go and hunt more people'. So that is when we started now spreading".[770]

According to Molekwa, Turfloop constituted the "nerve centre" of the UDF in the Northern Transvaal.

> Because if you wanted to go and see a flag of the ANC, you would see it there on top of the flats there at Turfloop. You feel strengthened at Turfloop, you get energised. They were openly defiant. You started knowing each other, once a month I will go there. When you went there, you were getting energized, your commitment was solidified. You got also materials, you got more information. In your bag you will be having cassettes [of prominent liberation activist speeches, including Tambo's January 8 statements], *Sechaba*, *SASPU*, newsletters of the UDF. I would get the t-shirts, buy them. Those youth that are supporting the idea of forming a youth congress, I would give them t-shirts. Because I was a teacher. When I got home here, I would dish out it. [771]

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[768] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[769] *Ibid*.
[770] Interview with Lucas Lebelo, Mapela, 22 March 2020.
[771] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Mokopane, 25 March 2022.

Heffernan has detailed the role of Turfloop and the many activists who attended the institution in the liberation struggle.[772] It was, as Molekwa puts it, a "liberated zone" – although it was subject to frequent police lockdowns.

Lebowa's many teacher training colleges also constituted important spaces in the shifting terrain of local politics from the late 1970s. The Mokopane College of Education was the oldest in the Bantustan, having been established in 1948, to be followed by the creation of seven other colleges in towns across Lebowa. The roll-out of these colleges was integral to efforts towards the massification of schooling. Yet these institutions would also serve as key nodes in the liberation struggle in Lebowa. Political developments at the Mokopane College have been carefully detailed by Bhyat, himself a student at the College at the height of the student rebellion from 1984-1986. Bantustan teacher training colleges were intended as "total institutions" which, as Chisholm describes, were "framed on the architectural principles of confinement and exclusion from the outside world and surveillance inside the institution".[773] As previously noted, the Mokopane College was also situated alongside the Mahwelereng police station.[774] And Bhyat reports that in the 1980s, two South African Defence Force (SADF) servicemen, "at all times in their military attire complete with pistols attached to their sides", were assigned in Mokopane College of Education.[775]

[772] Heffernan, *Limpopo's Legacy.*
[773] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.31.
[774] *Ibid.,* p.31.
[775] *Ibid.,* p.41.



Figure 46: The Mokopane College of Education today, taken by author on 25 March 2022. The statue on the right was created by students in 1977 channelling the spirit of defiance of the post-1976 era.

The future Mayor of Mogalakwena, Bob Mmola, attended the CN Phatudi Teacher Training College in Burgersfort and was elected to serve as its first SRC President in 1984. He recalls how the college was a similarly militarised space, with many lecturers adorned in military fatigues. The SRC had tried to change this:

> Well, we were transforming the institutions. We were now giving the students the right to say what they wanted to say. Because there were serious strict rules. As a student staying in the hostel, you were only allowed to go outside the yard once in a month. You were not even allowed to go visit your friend … We were not allowed to go to study anywhere except the domestic [quarters] which were congested …They were giving us [specific] times to study, and they said 8-11 in the evening … Then we break them [the rules]. [We were] saying that any person must study at his own time, at his own pace. Then we broke all those rules.[776]

Student activists at Mokopane achieved similar victories through mass action. In 1984, it was reported that "male students singing the African National Anthem, marched to the female section of the residence to enlist their support and a unanimous decision was taken to boycott classes" for a week. The protest was sparked by grievances over the allocation of food, the availability of lights and water supply.[777] As Bhyat writes, following Hyslop, these issues transcended their simple material significance, and they condensed "a host of issues relating to questions of authority, power and politics".[778] The following year, students successfully pushed through the formation of a democratic SRC, locking the doors of the hall and "seizing the space to address students".[779]

The links between the different teacher training colleges in the Bantustan were also successively strengthened, and the institutions in many ways provided the infrastructure for political mobilisation on a regional scale. Mmola recalls how students would organise sporting events which brought students together from the various colleges:

> if you ever wanted to visit other students, we'd just organise games. *As if* you are playing games. When the games are playing, us, we are here, talking ... Softball, netball, volleyball. While these were going on, we were busy with our activities. In people's rooms. … [Students from] the University of [the North] would then come to our College, supposedly for the games, but they knew why they should come ….[780]

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[776] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 12 August 2019.
[777] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.45.
[778] As part of the campaign, "prefects, who were perceived as tools of administrative surveillance, were stripped of their status and in a display of organisational ability, replaced by an elected interim committee. Permission was sought for a mass meeting during which the formation of an SRC was called for" – a demand rejected by the Rector. In response, students created a state of "lawlessness" on the campus and continue boycotting classes. *Ibid.,* p.45.
[779] *Ibid.,* p.46.
[780] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 12 August 2019.

Mmola recalls that at one such sporting event, representatives from schools and colleges across Lebowa came together to form an "SRC Confederation" in May of 1986, to coordinate activities across the Bantustan. Mmola was elected a coordinator of the Confederation, along with Vaaltyn Kekana and Godfrey Molekwa.[781] This provided an organisational mechanism for UDF leaders to coordinate mass shut downs of educational institutions across the region.

Through these developments, Bhyat observes that students at the Mokopane College came to be more actively involved in broader political activities beyond the confines of their institutions. According to Hendrik Ngoepe, a student at the College at the time:

> We were mobilising students, mobilising our communities from colleges. I was staying in the hostel. We could close the College, and then went out and mobilised this community around Mahwelereng to block the streets, to go on strikes, throw stones and everything else.[782]

Ngoepe notes once again how township and village football matches provided useful spaces to speak to young people about politics. Students at the College also facilitated the spread of reading material to students and the broader community. Copies of *SASPU National* and "Unzima Lomthwalo", a publication from the Detainees Parents Support Committee, were smuggled into the Mokopane College, for instance.[783] And Bhyat reported that students urged workers at the College to join SAAWU.[784] In Mahwelereng, Bhyat reports that by the end of 1985, student teachers had established links with trade unionists and high school students, using both the Roman Catholic Church and DG Tsebe High School in Mahwelereng as venues. It was at one such meeting that the formation of the Mahwelereng Youth Congress was decided, for instance, as will be further elaborated below. Staff Tsebe credits others who were at the College, including Sophonia Mamabolo, Vaaltyn Kekana, Ndo Mangala and Kiba Kekana (many of whom would later play a pivotal role in local government post-transition).[785]

While the role of liberation organisations proved important in shaping defiance, they were not always the chief architects or instigators of the many forms of protest that swept across educational institutions of the region. While school-based activists frequently sought to guide the energies of students towards their specified goals, for instance, they were often swept up in developments as they emerged, often over quite specific issues. This is evident in the

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[781] *Ibid.*
[782] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Mokopane, 2 March 2019.
[783] Bhyat,"Mokopane College", p.46.
[784] *Ibid.,* p.46.
[785] It was not simply college-educated teachers who were active. Lekgoathi indicates the prominence of so-called "private teachers", high-achieving matriculants who generally did not have the funds to study further, and who were hired to fill positions in the chronically under-staffed schools. Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy", p.234.

consistent reporting of events in schools across the 1980s in the *Lebowa Times.* At the start of 1985, for instance, it was reported that the call by Azasm in Seshego for students to continue boycotting classes had been "ignored", and principals had happily reported that "the situation is back to normal".[786] The internal political environments of schools and their connections with community politics were varied and changeable, and should not be understood simply as the domain of liberation organisations, prominent though their roles were.

Protests would reach a climax in 1985, declared "International Year of the Youth" by the United Nations. The concept was seized upon by liberation organisations to accelerate the struggle. At the end of the year, the *Lebowa Times* summed up the tumult that had taken place in schools:

> Class boycotts and disruptions plagued the education system throughout the year, and damages amounting to thousands of Rands were incurred as pupils at a number of institutions turned to violence and arson… The incidents precipitated numerous confrontations between pupils and the authorities, and hundreds of school children were involved in court cases, most of them on public violence. Things came to a head when even Pax, which is viewed as the cool spot of Catholic Sanity, and for years regarded as a model academic institution, followed suit and erupted.[787]

In this year, student mobilisation achieved some notable successes. Yet, as will be shown below, these struggles periodically converged with other campaigns and forms of popular protest which exceeded school politics.

The 1985 OK Bazaar Boycott

Drawing from her research in Sekhukhuneland, Van Kessel suggested that because trade unions were not recognised in Lebowa, they had a limited impact in shaping Bantustan politics of the 1980s. Organised worker initiatives were limited, she argues, to the industrial Steelpoort area of Sekhukhuneland and the "conservative white towns". Certainly, unionism in Lebowa did not reach the scale or might witnessed in the Rand, for instance. And this claim was indeed echoed by the Lebowa establishment. In 1983, the Chief Minister Phatudi assured potential industrialists and investors that the region was unmarred by strike action of any kind: "the people here are peaceful and we never have strikes by employees".[788]

Yet through interviews and reportage of the *Lebowa Times,* however, it becomes evident that over the course of the 1980s, a host of trade unions emerged in the Bantustan (these included

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[786] *Lebowa Times*, 'Pupils ignore boycott calls', 18 January 1985.
[787] *Lebowa Times*, "Boarding schools to close in Lebowa?" 6 December 1985.
[788] *Lebowa Times,* "'We are peaceful', Dr P tells visitors', 6 May 1983.

the Black General Workers Union (BLAGWU), Black Health and Allied Workers Union (BHAWU), Motor Industry Combined Workers Union (MICWU), the Domestic Workers Association, South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA), and the Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA)). And, indeed, the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA). And while their shop floors may indeed have been located in the white towns or the border industries, the campaigns they initiated directly contributed to a more general spirit of defiance in Bantustan townships especially, including in Mahwelereng.

The Northern Transvaal branch of CCAWUSA held its inaugural meeting at the Mahwelereng Hotel in March 1984, and it rapidly established local structures across the townships of Lebowa which initiated audacious campaigns against conditions in white-owned stores.[789] Celebrating the formation of the Mahwelereng branch, Regional Organiser Yasser P. Rasethaba praised the fact that "female workers [had] won a victory for CCAWUSA by having managed to sign a recognition agreement with companies such as OK Bazaars, Woolworths and Jet Stores which makes them qualify for maternity leave".[790] These victories had been hard-earned through shop floor mobilisation and the often brave actions of employees. This was particularly evident among the staff of OK Bazaar in Potgietersrus. Rahab Lebelo, who had worked at OK since 1982, recalls the racism that structured the everyday functioning of the store:

> When I started work there, there was a till for Black people and a till for white people. If you are a white person, you are going to pay where there is a white lady in the till... There were white toilets and the Black … I'm telling you. And when there is a telephone [call for me] in the store … There is a white lady who was sitting there, she'd saying "Rahab Lebelo", then you go there and take the phone and talk to the phone. After you speak with the phone, they took that phone and wiped it with a cloth.

Lebelo describes how the "Union came in and started to open our eyes" to ways of challenging these everyday oppressions. "We started to encourage people who came to shop there to break the rules: go stand in the white queue!".[791]

Lebelo believes that it was principally with the arrival of Boysea Thole at OK in 1983 that workers came to learn about CCAWUSA. Thole had worked at a chemical plant in Germiston, and, according to Bhyat, brought with him lessons from the "radical culture of trade unionism

[789] *Lebowa Times,* 16 March 1984.
[790] *Lebowa Times,* "CCAWUSA inaugurated", 16 March 1984.
[791] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020.

emerging within the Rand".[792] Lebelo also recalls having witnessed Emma Mashinini speak to a large crowd in Johannesburg, which had a powerful politicising effect on her.[793]



Figure 47: The inaugural meeting of CCAWUSA at the Mahwelereng Hotel in March 1984.[794]

After joining the union, Lebelo found herself increasingly drawn into activities at a regional level, travelling consistently to make contact with other activists – work which proved dangerous. She and her colleagues would go on to make a forceful push for recognition of CCAWUSA by the OK Bazaar management, in line with the national campaign underway. Yet Lebelo recalls how challenging the struggle for recognition was:

> It was *very* difficult that they should accept us to have the unions. But we managed, and we were being arrested in the store. They'd call the police to come and arrest us. They take us three days, four days, they bring us back. Because there was nothing that we have done [wrong]… And they'll come to an extent that if you go to another shop … wearing a [OK] uniform, they chased us from other stores … They were saying in Afrikaans "Jy sal leer ander mense slegte maniere. Jy kom nie so."[795]

The union gained a number of concessions over the course of the early 1980s. Bhyat reports, for instance, that the OK store was the first to remove petty apartheid signs from its buildings, to ban racist slurs against workers, to increase wages, improve basic working conditions and to reinstate workers who had engaged in a strike. Perhaps most memorably, CCAWUSA led

[792] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.49.
[793] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020.
[794] *Lebowa Times,* 'Hundreds Attend CCAWUSA Inauguration', 16 March 1984.
[795] "You will teach other people bad manners. You can't come here like this"

a boycott against OK Bazaar in 1985 against intolerable working conditions – the first occasion that the conservative town had witnessed a workers' picket.[796]

As was noted in Chapter 3, much of the money circulating in white communities was derived from Black spending power, a fact that Lebowa's Chief Minister, CN Phatudi, frequently railed against. He argued that it was absurd to suggest that there were any "white towns" in South Africa: "If you take out Lebowa from the Transvaal, there will be no Transvaal".[797] And he insisted that the economic fabric of the Bantustan could never be effectively developed on an autonomous basis as long as these parasitic relations continued. Yet while Phatudi and his ministers sought to lobby the white government for a more equitable arrangement, the facts of white dependence on Black commerce – the economic relations engineered by the white state and its Bantustan strategy – were directly weaponised by local union activists: a boycott proved an immediately effective and powerful instrument to wield against white businesses in Potgietersrus. This was, of course, not the first boycott that had taken place in the area: the tactic had been frequently deployed since the late 1970s against the rising tariffs of the (often white-owned) companies who operated bus routes in Lebowa.[798] Yet this was the first time it struck at the economic fabric of the white town itself.

While OK Bazaar was the most publicised target, the boycott came to be generally imposed on all white businesses in Potgietersrus. The *Lebowa Times* reported that the main issues of contention were "the searching of Black people, the behaviour of the manager and security staff, and the treatment of the Black staff and customers".[799] The boycott of OK Bazaar achieved considerable support, and prompted the head office to fire the branch manager and head of security.[800] "For a conservative town like Potgietersrus", Bhyat reports, "these concessions were perceived by workers all over town as a great victory, and this helped to swell the ranks of CCAWUSA".[801] CCAWUSA membership grew to include more than 60 percent of the Black workforce of the town.[802]

CCAWUSA's success and popularity are also partly attributable to the alliances and coordination its members undertook with activists beyond the ambit of the union itself. Lebelo speaks of the crucial interventions of a number of young UDF activists who were active in

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[796] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.49.
[797] *Northern Review,* "Phatudi's Threat", 5 February 1982.
[798] The *Lebowa Times* indicates that the tactic of the mass boycotting of bus companies became much more regularly deployed from the late 1970s onwards, growing to become one of the longest standing issues around which liberation organisations campaigned.
[799] *Lebowa Times*, "Boycott to Continue Until…", 5 July 1985.
[800] *Ibid*.
[801] Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.49–50.
[802] *Ibid.,* p.50.

Mahwelereng (many of whom would come to lead the Mahwelereng Youth Congress) in galvanising her towards conceiving of the possibilities of a mass based community struggle:

> In this town, everything started at OK Bazaar. When we were there - Staff Tsebe and Sam Montane and Thomas Matlaila, and many more. They were young, young, young. But they were trying to come to us as workers. As workers we were just focusing on union … So these young boys were trying to teach us politics, and after work we managed to sit with them - but during the night, at some corners - to teach us politics and what is happening in this world… Initially, in fact, they were saying [that our] struggle shouldn't end at work, it must also come to the community. And that's where we understood that we should join the struggle from the union… Ja, that's where we, we started to understand politics and what is the African National Congress.[803]

Lebelo recalls how the UDF activists' emphasis on mass popular action immediately resonated with her: "That's why I just jumped quickly [*clicks fingers*]. I didn't even look back". Her home would come to function as a safe house for young UDF comrades, much like the Hlahla household did for Azapo activists: "By that time I was older than them, so they used to come to me, they used to come here. After doing some other things, sometimes they want to eat, they used to come here. Even if I'm not here, they cook for themselves, just take anything, whatever, they eat and off they go".[804] Lebelo's activism thus took the form of both direct organisational involvement and a duty of care towards the many young activists of Mahwelereng who looked upon her home as a safehouse.

While Lebelo and many of her colleagues came to be drawn into the UDF circles, there remained significant Black Consciousness support within the ranks of CCAWUSA.[805] As such, its campaigns were styled locally as non-partisan structures. In the organisation of the boycott of 1985, for instance, a broad cross section of actors had come together at the Mahwelereng Hotel to form a temporary organising committee, the Mahwelereng Action Committee (MAC).[806] Publicly, the MAC styled itself as a community-driven, apolitical organisation providing logistical support to the unfolding events.[807] When charges of public violence were instituted against school children in Mahwelereng who had stoned buses of Lebowa Transport

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[803] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020
[804] *Ibid*.
[805] A prolonged tussle would eventually come to ensue over the course of the late 1980s over the question of whether to align with the Freedom Charter.
[806] In the 1980s, according to Van Kessel, Lebowa did not see the creation of Civics to the same extent witnessed in townships of the Rand and the Eastern Cape, for instance. This appears to have been largely true of the Mokopane region, where, barring a few exceptions, formal civic associations were only formally launched from 1989, and really grew as an organisation form in the early 1990s. It seems that it was youth congresses that instead predominated. Yet this should not be mistaken for an absence of issue-oriented organisations, as the example of the MAC demonstrates. (Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*).
[807] *Lebowa Times*, "Boycott to Continue Until…", 5 July 1985.

in the midst of the boycott, the MAC undertook to obtain legal assistance to them, for instance.[808] While Tsoaledi Thobejane claims that it was Azapo who initially spearheaded the tactic of boycotts, he argues that committees like the MAC were constructed on a non-partisan basis:

> We wanted those boycotts to be as democratic as possible, so that the community members should have a say into how they should be handled and all that. So that's where eventually the community would elect what we called Consumer Boycott Committees, and those Committees constituted members of the UDF and Azapo. I took part in many of those committees… And that was maybe cooperation between the UDF and Azapo at that time, such that the community would eventually not separate between the two.[809]

So widespread was the support for the boycott campaign, that the MAC could genuinely claim that: "it is not the OK staff who are boycotting the shop, nor is it the Action Committee members, but the people at large". [810]

On a more everyday basis, there were strong organisational links at the local level between union structures and the spaces created by Azapo activists. Among the most important alliances that developed between CCAWUSA – and indeed other unions in Lebowa – was with the constellation of advice offices that were created from 1985 across the Mokopane-Polokwane-Lebowakgomo triangle by local leaders affiliated to Azapo, for instance. In 1985, the Northern Transvaal Advice Office (NTAO) was founded with offices in Pietersburg, run and managed by a number of key Azapo activists – including Monhla Hlahla (Nobi's sister), Thabo Montjane and Khangale Makhado.[811] In the same year, a back room at Dr Hlahla's surgery in Mahwelereng had been turned into the Mokerong Advice Office (MAO), while in Seshego a Community Advice Bureau (CAB) had been established at the Phodisaditshaba Lutheran Church – another pivotal site of politics. These offices served as "branches" of NTAO, which would organise various seminars and meetings.[812] The advice offices were explicitly created as non-partisan spaces in which community issues could be tackled with common purpose.

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[808] *Lebowa Times,* "Public violence charges against youths", 12 July 1985.
[809] Interview with Tsoaledi Thobejane via Skype, 28 May 2019.
[810] *Lebowa Times*, "Boycott to Continue Until…", 5 July 1985.
[811] "Although the advice office was our formation, as the BCM", Makhado states, "it had broader eyes: the vision was to try and intervene and assist communities, to hold workshops". Makhado would for many years served as the director of the NTAO, and it was in these structures, he argues, where Azapo's strategic emphasis on the Black worker would find expression. Telephonic Interview with Khangale Makhado by Sarah Bruchhausen, 21 July 2021.
[812] The subject of the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) attracted significant attention, Makhado states, given that many unemployed workers were not being informed about how to claim these benefits. But there was also a distinct focus on fostering trade union membership. It was reported that one of the roles of these offices was to "advise workers on how to join trade unions". *Lebowa Times*, 'Workers get free advice', 19 July 1985; Telephonic with Khangale Makhado by Sarah Bruchhausen, 21 July 2021.

Lebelo recalls, for instance, how CCAWUSA activists would come to frequent the Advice Office at Dr Hlahla's surgery to plan some of its campaigns – including the OK Bazaar boycott.[813]

State Repression and Internecine Conflict

The OK boycott formed part of an upsurge of protest activity in Mahwelereng, which quickly prompted a growing backlash from the Lebowa and South African states. Even as it was ongoing, security personnel descended on Mahwelereng and meted out vicious reprisals. While the consumer boycott was ongoing, the MAC had encouraged the boycotting of Lebowa Transport buses too because of their poor service and rising fares. In response, the Mokerong branch of the company arranged for a police escort for their buses. It was then reported that the buses were "stoned by some youths, who later fond asylum at Hotel Mahwelereng when the law enforcers retaliated".[814] In the week that followed, 17 pupils were arrested on charges of public violence for this stoning incident, in what signalled the beginning of a concerted clampdown on popular activities.[815]

Levels of repression would meet new heights at an ill-fated meeting called by the MAC to launch what they described as a civic organisation. The OK victory spurred the leadership of the MAC to consider the formation of a Mokerong Civic Association to create an "umbrella body which will conduct the affairs in areas such as Mahwelereng, Sekgakgapeng, Vaaltyn, Ga-Madiba and others" and to "work hand in hand with workers' unions and other community organisations to smooth out difficulties experienced by the residents".[816] Yet on the weekend that the civic body was due to be launched, the Lebowa state initiated a sweeping campaign of repression, which was recalled time and again in interviews with Mahwelereng activists. A report, likely by the Azapo-affiliated journalist for the *Lebowa Times,* Makompo Kutumela, most vividly captures these "two days of violence in Mahwelereng":[817]

> On Saturday July 21 [1985], a large contingent of policemen barged into conference room of Hotel Mahwelereng, disrupting meeting held by residents. People had to smash windows with their bare hands and jump from height of 12 m to escape from the police, many injured, either in direct contact with police or in their attempts to break away. Then next Tuesday, police dispersed group of youths who were manning roadblocks on the main street. Thereafter, police made an almost house-to-house raid. Scores received medical attention, with a number

[813] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020.
[814] *Lebowa Times*, "Lebowa Times, Buses stoned" 5 July 1985.
[815] *Lebowa Times*, 'Public violence charges against youths', 12 July 1985.
[816] *Lebowa Times*, 'Civic association for Mokerong', 19 July 1985.
[817] This event was frequently recalled in interviews with former political activists of the era.

> being admitted to hospital. Some seriously injured had to go to Ga-Rankuwa. True to the pattern of the current nationwide unrest, policemen may have to contend with retaliatory action from bitter residents hellbent on "revenge". This was demonstrated last week when, hardly a day after the cops' reign of terror - a policeman's house was attacked and burned…
>
> The legacy of Lebowa Police actions in Mahwelereng is only beginning to emerge and another confrontation between the residents and the force seems likely. Although the situation has now returned to a tense, uneasy lull, last week's showdown is clearly neither forgotten or forgiven.[818]

Yet the repression would only grow in the following weeks. On 23 July, police conducted house-to-house raids of high school students demanding the creation of SRCs.[819] It was then reported that:

> The list of people charged with public violence in township grows rapidly. Police continue to snap up people at slightest indication of unruliness. In the latest round, at least 14 pupils were held last Friday after disquiet at a number of local high schools. Released on free bail earlier this week, they will appear in Mokerong magistrates court on 27 August. These charges follow alleged unruly behaviour at their schools, where student body is demanding the establishment of SRCs. This brings the number of people held for public violence in the past two months to more than 30. Since June this year, things are rarely quiet in Mahwelereng and every now and then batches of people are scooped up on one security related charge or another.[820]

And then, on 23 August, it was reported that the meeting to create the Mokerong Civic Association had been declared illegal, and an estimated 150 people were now facing charges.[821] Amid the relentless clampdown, the MAC urged residents to stand down, issuing a pamphlet, co-signed by local Azapo and Azasm branches, which was distributed across Mahwelereng urging pupils to refrain from boycotting classes on days when those arrested for public violence were appearing in court.[822] This was reported as an attempt to "break the endless spiral in which people are arrested when protesting against the detentions of others, which gives rise to more protests and more arrests".[823]

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[818] *Lebowa Times*, 'Uneasy calm in Mahwelereng, 2 August 1985. Bhyat (1995:51) recalls that "Both students and members of the community, young and old, were baton-charged and tear-gassed. In the ensuing panic people jumped out of the second floor windows and many elderly citizens were injured, some critically".
[819] *Lebowa Times*, 'Pupils urged to refrain from boycotts', 6 September 1985.
[820] *Lebowa Times*, '30 Charged with public violence', 16 August
[821] *Lebowa Times*, '150 charged for attending public gathering', 23 August
[822] *Lebowa Times*, 'Pupils urged to refrain from boycotts', 6 September 1985.
[823] *Ibid*.



150 charged for attending meeting

MAHWELERENG – An estimated 150 people are facing charges for attending an "illegal meeting" at Hotel Mahwelereng on July 21 this year.

Colonel Phillip Moloto of Lebowa Police confirmed this week that the meeting, which was disrupted by a contingent of policemen, was considered unlawful and all those who attended will have legal steps taken against them.

The gathering was called by the Mahwelereng Action Committee in order to launch a new community body, Mokerong Civic Association. However

The broken first floor window of the Hotel Mahwelereng through which residents had to jump in their flight from the police. 150 Residents are facing charges of attending an "illegal" meeting.

Figure 48: Report in the Lebowa Times of the chaos that ensued on 23 August 1985 when police raided the Mahwelereng Hotel to break up a meeting called to instantiate the Mokerong Civic Association.

The clampdown in Mahwelereng coincided with a range of arrests and repressive actions on the part of police across the Lebowa Bantustan more generally. In October 1985, the President of the SRC at Modjadji College of Education, Ngoako Ramalepe, was murdered by police while hitchhiking and dumped on the side of the road.[824] The event sent shockwaves through the student activist networks. In the same weekend, Azapo leaders in the Northern Transvaal received death threats, and pamphlets were mysteriously distributed across Lebowa which called on the state and police to crack down on Azapo because "they are agitating our children to violence".[825]

In a bid to stem what was described as the “schools crisis”, the Lebowa Education Department issued a circular in December 1985 which announced the scrapping of school hostels to combat “the problems that follow and accompany the countrywide student unrest”.[826] It furthermore empowered *magoši* to decide on enrolments to the village schools under their

[824] *South African History Online,* “Ngoako Ramalepe dies”, 18 October 1985. Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/src-president-ngwako-ramalepe-dies.
[825] *Lebowa Times,* “Phasha receives death threats”, 25 October 1985.
[826] *Lebowa Times* “Boarding schools to end in Lebowa?”, 6 December 1985.

jurisdiction. Kgoši Dennis Langa of Bakenberg was among the first to implement the call, demanding that all pupils who did belong to his "tribe get out of my land right now".[827]



Figure 49: *A Lebowa Times photograph is captioned: "Visitors to Bakenberg are forewarned by this sign on the outskirts of villages under Kgoši D Langa. If you have any mischief in mind, then stay out, or face the wrath of the villagers. No mercy is shown to any visitor who disturbs the peace.*[828]

Several other chiefs worked with the security branch to halt the activities of rebellious youth. Kgoši BK Matlala, for instance, had long rail against "bloodthirsty revolutionaries", whom, he said, "are not wanted by all the people who want to see Lebowa progress". And he warned other chiefs against those who sought to "sow disunity".[829] Lucas Mabetwa, a student leader who went on to become a teacher in a ga-Matlala, recalls:

> We were persecuted. We were refused to get ID books. All the children who belonged to that other group. I was a teacher. I spent about three years, because of the lack of ID books, I could not get paid. The school children were putting money [together] so that during break I can buy a half-bread - brown half.[830]

Ernest Mkhari describes how, even in the small farming settlement in the Makapans Valley, security police would go in search of those who had been throwing stones and inciting revolt, arriving late at night along the dirt roads that led to the village:

> Police were looking for us during the night, beat us in the night. It was tough that time. Sometimes you'd sleep on top of the roof of the house, in order that when the police come they mustn't see you. But sometimes they came with dogs…

[827] *Ibid*.
[828] *Lebowa Times,* 'Welcome to Bakenberg but behave yourselves', 4 March 1983.
[829] *Lebowa Times,* 'We want peace and progress, says Matlala', 31 March 1983.
[830] Interview with Lucas Mabetwa, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.

In response, Mkhari states, he and his friends would make their way every evening to the same mountains in which Kgoši Mokopane and his followers were besieged in the 1854:

> Every night, maybe around 6 o' clock, we'd be moving out from [the village]. We came and ate and from there we'd go to the mountain. And from there we'd stay on top, the top of the mountains. You'd see all the cars, when they come with the lights... Maybe sometimes they'd come without the lights, they'd use the torch. They'd just park the car somewhere… We'd see the torches coming to our homes. But we were there, on top of the mountain.[831]

Despite the escalation of police repression, liberation organisations would step up their engagements the following year. At the close of 1985, the UDF-affiliated Mahwelereng Youth Congress (MAYCO) was launched. It was through meetings held in a classroom at DG Tsebe High School that the logistics around MAYCO's formation were discussed. According to Bhyat, the founding members of MAYCO represented "the broad range of social forces involved":[832] These linkages with other social formations and institutions in the region provide a clear sense of how student politics came to be enveloped in a larger political campaigns, and broader social groupings. In the subsequent months, Youth Congresses were launched in the village of Sekgakgapeng[833] and the "Indian" Group Area of Akasia[834] – areas which directly border Mahwelereng. And in June 1986, the Mapela Youth Congress was formed which sought to direct political activities in the villages of this Tribal Authority and beyond.

Staff Tsebe served as General Secretary of MAYCO and was drawn into broader networks of the ANC underground. He describes how they came to know Peter Mokaba, the charismatic president of SAYCO, through his frequent visits to the region. Lekgoathi reports that Mokaba was a regular guest at Zebediela. And activists from Phafola village in Mapela recall the late-night discussions he led with them before he left as rapidly as he had arrived.[835] Tsebe confirms that they affiliated to SAYCO at its launch in Cape Town in 1987, where representatives of MAYCO were in attendance.[836] Many of the activities of the Congress

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[831] Interview with Ernest Mkhari, Mokopane, 22 May 2019.
[832] Joyce Mabudhafasi (a member of the Northern Transvaal UDF and National Education Crisis Committee); Boysea Thole and James Scota (activists and organisers of CCAWUSA); Sophonia Mamabolo (student activist at Mokopane College of Education); Ndo Mangala (student activist at DG Tsebe High School); Imraan Loonat and Sa'ad Cachalia (members of UDF and representatives of the Transvaal Indian Congress in the township of Akasia). Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.47.
[833] Interview with Enoch Manamela, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 20 May 2019.
[834] *Wits Historical Papers,* AK2117 J2-3-C132 "UDF Northern Transvaal: Programme of Action", ND. Available at: http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/inv_pdfo/AK2117/AK2117-J2-3-C132-001-jpeg.pdf
[835] Interview with Lucas Lebelo, Phafola, 22 March 2020. One teacher from Zebediela reported to Lekgoathi that Mokaba would pay regular visits "to give us some materials like pamphlets … the "Preamble to the Freedom Charter", and we used to dish them out to the students of the schools". Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy", p.240-241.
[836] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.

remained centered on educational demands. MAYCO would play an active role in facilitating the creation of SRCs at secondary schools, for instance.[837] Yet it was styled as a "cultural body involved in community affairs", an apolitical body.[838]

Against the backdrop of heightening repression, the relationship between MAYCO and Azapo structures proved capricious. This can be seen in the examples of DG Tsebe and Gojela High Schools. Staff Tsebe states that "Azapo was a dominant force at Gojela and the Mahwelereng Youth Congress was a dominant force at DG Tsebe".[839] Between these two schools, often held up as the most disruptive in Mahwelereng, there developed complex forms of both collaboration and contest. The SRCs of Gojela and DG Tsebe at times coordinated their activities and launched joint initiatives, including class stayaways, and bus and consumer boycotts. In January 1986, for instance, the *Lebowa Times* reported that "youngsters went on a rampage" against the Mahwelereng bookshop owned by the Lebowa Education Minister, SP Kwakwa, also a resident of the township.[840] The crowd included both Azapo and UDF activists. According to Enoch Manamela, then a UDF youth activist from Sekgakgapeng village bordering Mahwelereng, such collaboration was a feature of liberation politics of the time: "It's not like this current moment we are in… There was this strong [sense of] organisation ... We were working together, whereby we are having our common goals".[841] Both Azapo and MAYCO were involved in the creation of so-called "People's Parks" around Mahwelereng and some of the neighbouring villages, transforming derelict pieces of land into commemorative

[837] In early 1986, MAYCO organised a march to demand the building of a new high school in light of intolerable overcrowding, calling on student teachers at the Mokopane College to join them (reportedly with a degree of intimidation). Bhyat, "Mokopane College", p.51. Learners were assaulted by police, who retaliated with stones before a number were detained. (This episode resulted in the creation of the Ebenezer Secondary School, according to Mr Mabje, a long-serving teacher). Interview with Mr Mabje, Mahwelereng, 18 August 2019. See also *Lebowa Times* "Schools to reopen on January 28", 24 January 1986.

[838] *Lebowa Times,* "Youth Movement to be launched", 5 July 1985.

[839] Personal Correspondence with Malesela Staff Tsebe, 22 October 2020. The SRC President of DG Tsebe, Thomas Matlaile, was aligned to the UDF, while Paledi Selolo, the influential Azapo activist, was SRC President of Gojela.

[840] It was reported that "trouble erupted early on Monday morning" after students from Gojela and DG Tsebe High Schools had marched to the Education Circuit Office and handed a list of demands to the inspectors: "The slogan-chanting, placard wielding mob then descended on the bookshop … smashing all the windows in the building". *Lebowa Times,* "Minister's wife escapes injury", 17 January 1986. In the aftermath, it was reported that the Mahwelereng Branch of the Azanian Students' Movement (Azasm), with the support of Azaso, released a pamphlet listing their grievances, which included the continued closure of school hostels and the dismissal of students from DG Tsebe and Gojela. Indicative of the links that the organisation evinced with the rural villages, the pamphlet insisted that Chief Dennis Langa of Bakenberg "stop poking his nose in education matters", referring to his expulsion of pupils from the Rand. *Lebowa Times*, 'Azasm calls for boycott', 17 January 1986

[841] Interview with Enoch Manamela, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 20 May 2019.

spaces of leisure and sport for residents. These were perceived as “liberated zones” which police and agents of the Bantustan state were not to enter.[842]

At other times, however, there was fierce and occasionally violent contest between the rival organisations. Respondents recall in particular a “war” that erupted for a period in 1986 between Azapo members and the MAYCO. Staff Tsebe, who served as General Secretary of MAYCO, explained that

> the hostility was very serious. We didn't agree on anything. They said that we are selling [out], they said that we are stupid, that's why we are fighting. If you make a boycott, they would join. [But we could not agree when it came to the] contestation of ideas, and how do you recruit people. Azapo would take our members, the ANC/UDF would take their members - I think the conflict was there.[843]

Tsoaledi Thobejane similarly recalls that when:

> the UDF was really taking a foothold in the township, it was really becoming very, very tense. And I know most of my members were harassed for being members of Azapo, and espousing a different ideological outlook as opposed to that of the ANC. But we regret that that happened, but I guess it was another side of the struggle. My branch suffered a lot … many of our comrades, because of that contestation fled from their homes. So they had to go and live in mountains, and some went to the neighbouring townships and villages to escape the wrath of the Mahwelereng Youth Congress. And also the wrath of the South African Police and South African Defence Force. So you would run away from the enemy, and also run away from people who were supposedly part-and-parcel of the revolution. It was a mixed bag.[844]

In the midst of the repressive context, Thobejane talks about the rise of “third force” narratives directed against Azapo activists by members of the UDF – claims that Azapo was acting as a proxy for the state.[845]

Rahab Lebelo believes that the tensions between the two wings began after their erstwhile Azapo comrades began to realise that “we’ve moved from them, that we started to do things alone”. But she adds that these ideological conflicts were also inseparable from fraught interpersonal relationships and loyalties. “They once argued, and then they started fighting”, Lebelo recalls, “And this one from UDF, others help this one, this one from Azapo, others help that one … So after that argument of two boys, and fight also. There was this comrade called

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[842] Interview with Tsoaledi Thobejane via Skype, 28 May 2019; Interview with Isaac Nyoni, 6 March 2019.
[843] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[844] Interview with Tsoaledi Thobejane via Skype, 28 May 2019.
[845] *Ibid*.

Steve Lekalakala... Eish. When he died, he was badly being beaten by the Azapo members. So then there started to be a war. It was not nice by that time, not nice at all". [846]

Yet she also describes how key individuals worked to halt incidents of violence between the groups. On one occasion, when they were being advanced in the street by Azapo members, Lebelo recalls how a community member intervened: "He just stood in the middle and said "Peace". He even kneeled down and said "Peace, peace". Then they took it from that level. They started negotiating and make sure that we make peace with the community".[847] Finally, a peace was brokered between Staff Tsebe, representing MAYCO, and Tsoaledi Thobejane on behalf of Azapo: "[We] said we must make a truce. We discussed until we managed to break the hostility".[848] And Thobejane states that despite the "internecine warfare … many of us [Azapo members] in various regions continued to host cadres of the Umkhonto we Sizwe knowing full well the risks involved in this gesture".[849]

In concluding this discussion of political violence, it is worth noting that communities of Mogalakwena experienced far fewer incidents of witchcraft-related violence than was reported by scholars elsewhere in Lebowa. While the *Lebowa Times* and the range of former activists interviewed noted sporadic incidents of witch burning, these appear not to have reached anywhere near the scale and frequency described by Delius in villages of Sekhukhuneland, or Edwin Ritchken and Isak Niehaus in Bushbuckridge.[850] These findings caution against the over-representation of certain geographically-delimited studies in drawing out general tendencies of liberation politics in the region over this period.

Political Killings and the State of Emergency

The state crackdown on activists would only intensify as the months proceeded, especially over the course of 1986, as security forces became regular features in both townships and villages across Lebowa, and could act with virtual impunity. Thobejane believes that "there were a lot of undercover agents of the government all over the place".[851] One particularly chilling event was the murder of the *Lebowa Times* journalist and member of the Azapo-aligned MWASA, Makompo 'Lucky' Kutumela in April 1986. Kutumela was killed in police

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[846] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020
[847] *Ibid*.
[848] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[849] Thobejane, *The Fight,* p.36.
[850] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle,* p.172-215; Edwin Ritchken. 'Comrades, Witches and the State: the case of the Brooklyn Youth Organization'. Unpublished paper (African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987); Isak Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power & Politics* (Johannesburg: Pluto Press, 2001).
[851] Thobejane, *The Fight*., p.50

custody. Numerous sources speak about the events which surrounded his killing, including testimony from policemen at a subsequent inquest held at the Magistrates Court, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) testimony and a memoir by Thobejane, who had been arrested with Kutumela and lost an eye as a result of police brutality during the episode.[852] In the subsequent inquest into Kutumela's death, a Warrant Officer would testify that the assistant station commander of Mahwelereng police station had ordered the assembled policemen to arm themselves with sjamboks and raid the township in search of "Comrades" found drinking in shebeens. They were to be beaten and killed, the commander alleged, because they were preventing police from buying goods from township stores or using taxis.[853]

Mathatha Tsedu reported that Kutumela's death sent a wave of outrage across the townships of Lebowa, and some 40 000 people came from near and far to attend his funeral.[854] Just days later, Nchabeleng, the president of the UDF in the Northern Transvaal and Umkhonto we Sizwe commander, was murdered by police officers in Schoonoord Police station in Sekhukhuneland. Godfrey Molekwa notes that after Nchabeleng was killed, "everything came to a standstill in the political setup of the Northern Transvaal". Molekwa recalls the massive attendance at Nchabeleng's funeral, with taxis transporting people from even distant villages to ga-Nchabeleng. He continues: "Since he was assassinated at the end of April, in May there was no schooling. It was resumed around the first week of June. And then everywhere you go you can see that now the UDF has touched the ground in the Northern Transvaal. There was ungovernability in 1986."[855] In May 1986, the offices of the Mahwelereng Superintendent were gutted by fire reportedly started by "a group of youth". On the same day, it was reported that five houses belonging to policemen were also pelted with petrol bombs.[856] Daphne Masenya recalls that a towering plume of smoke coming from the Superintendent's offices were greeted with elation by many ordinary residents of Mahwelereng.[857] These events brought reprisals from the security police in turn, who, among other things, burned some of the "peoples' parks" created by MAYCO. [858]

[852] Mathatha Tsedu, 'Day order to kill comrades was given out', *Sowetan* 5 April 1989.
[853] *Ibid*.
[854] *Ibid*.
[855] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[856] *Lebowa Times,* "Offices destroyed in bomb attack", 2 May 1986.
[857] Interview with Daphne Masenya and Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 30 March 2022.
[858] SASPU National Press, 'Nchabeleng's death sparks boycotts', *SASPU National*, 3 June 1986.

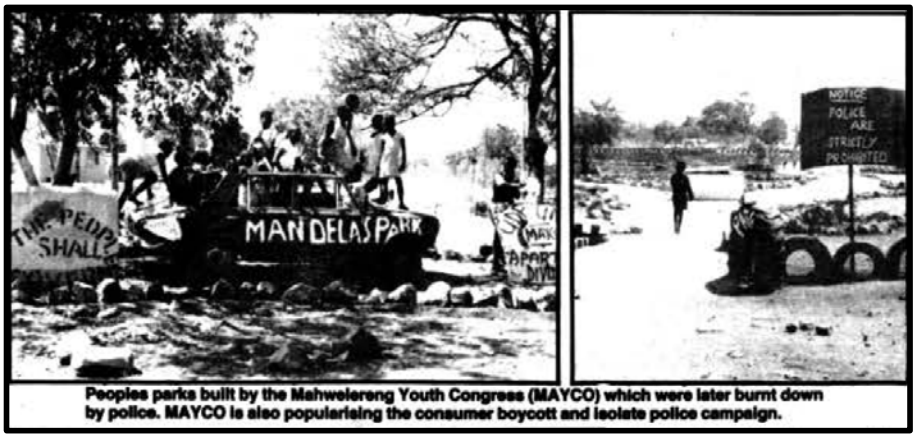


Figure 50: Photographs showing the burnt remains of the "people's park" created by the Mahwelereng Youth Congress, destroyed by security police in the wake of the murder of Peter Nchabeleng.[859]

In June of 1986, the national State of Emergency was declared, which respondents describe as having had a crushing effect on their activities of mass mobilisation. Molekwa, who was at Turfloop on the day that the Emergency was declared, remembers that the university "was [suddenly] militarily occupied by the SADF, special branches were there. People were arrested and detained there. I managed to get out by claiming I visited my brother there".[860] Ngoepe recalls how "comrades who were very [politically] active were arrested during mid[-year] exams" at the Mokopane College.[861] Ngoepe would evade arrest, as would Mmola, the coordinator of the SRC Confederation, who hastily made his way from CN Phatudi College of Education in Burgersfort to Port Elizabeth after he received a tip-off from a lecturer that he would be arrested after writing a Biblical Studies exam. Mmola escaped in a getaway car midway through the exam, climbing through a bathroom window.[862]

It was also at this point that many activists from both Azapo and UDF structures left the country to join liberation armies in exile. Two Azapo activists from Mahwelereng, Isaac Nyoni and Joe Mashilela, recounted their stories of being smuggled out of the country to join Azanla – a long and dangerous journey that began with a trip to a hide-out in Soweto with Dr Hlahla's car, and then ultimately across the border of Botswana which served as the headquarters of the Black Consciousness Movement in exile.[863] Nyoni, a teenager at the time, would go as far as Libya to receive military training.[864] Peter Seko further notes that the N11 road passing through Mahwelereng to the Groblersbrug border crossing would be used by a number of UDF activists

[859] *Ibid*.
[860] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[861] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, 2 March 2019.
[862] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 12 August 2019.
[863] For more on this, see: Mangena, *Triumphs and Heartbreaks.*
[864] Interview with Isaac Nyoni, Mokopane, 6 March 2019.

escaping into exile, including Carl Niehaus.[865] Here, one sees again how apartheid spatial and mobility restrictions came to be radically flouted, and the local politics of the Mogalakwena region came to be cross-cut by transnational forms of relationality.

A range of other prominent activists who had been operating in the area would, however, be arrested. After his initial escape from Turfloop, Molekwa was detained at his parents' home in Bakenberg. He describes his experiences:

> during the night I was in that Potgietersrus police station, and they started interrogating me. They asked me questions. From there, then I was taken the following day to Pietersburg prison, where they had detained many people there under the emergency. Trade unions, shop stewards, youth, doctors - Dr Hlahla was there. Lawyers like [Richard] Ramodipe were there. And then Boysea Thole was there. James Seota. Ntate Mangane was there. Then we stayed there, towards the beginning of July [1986] the students of Turfloop were not there. They were kept somewhere separate. Then they transported us to Nylstroom prison.[866]

This was around the same time that Mahwelereng's prominent businessmen, Geoffrey Molala and JH Khaas, would also be arrested, as noted in Chapter 4. Many of those arrested served their sentences at the Nylstroom prison, which was strategically placed far from any black settlements. Yet as so many activists have testified, the prison also served to bring together a range of activists who forged intellectual and strategic links that would come to span across the boundaries drawn up by the white state.[867] Molekwa recalls:

> There we met people from KwaNdebele there, met people from Moutse, yes. And one day they were bringing the whole village where Ephraim Mogale was staying. The whole village. All the young people were brought there. Towards the end of the year, they brought also the Mahlangus. Those sons of Ngwenyama Mahlangu. James Mahlangu and his brothers. I met them there. And then Tsoaledi [Thobejane] was there from Azapo. And then Eliah from Azasm, George Mpja from Azasm, they were there. Then in 1987, we were joined by the students from Turfloop. And also they brought in Frans Mohlala. And Louis Mnguni.

After his harrowing ordeal at Mahwelereng police station, where he had witnessed the death of Makompo Kutumela, Thobejane had been transferred to Nylstroom Prison where he would stay for the next three years. He described the facility as a "dungeon". Yet he also highlights how the experience only deepened the political commitments of prisoners and links between liberation structures.[868] One respondent, who had been arrested for possessing copies of *New*

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[865] Interview with Peter Seko, Mokopane, 22 March 2020.
[866] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[867] In Nylstroom prison, Thobejane describes forming friendships with Godfrey Molekwa (ANC), Luis Mnguni (ANC), Tebogo Moloi (ANC) Tebogo Dami (Azapo), Pule Dami (AZAPO), Jones Matlou (AZAPO). Thobejane, *The Fight*, p.70.
[868] *Ibid.,* p.65.

Nation, recalls an atmosphere of intense political fervour: “All day we’d talk politics. During the night, we’d sing political songs. Then the police would say: 'You are making noise! Ey sleep!’. We’d just be silent for now, and when they go, we started singing [again]”.[869]

While activists whiled away their time in prison, life under emergency conditions for those outside was extremely difficult. While Dr Hlahla was in Nylstroom Prison, Nobi Hlahla and her mother were left with the burden of maintaining his surgery and household in his absence. Contrary to the heroic narratives frequently espoused about the 1980s and the era of “people’s power”, Nobi Hlahla narrates this time as one of incredible hardship and scarcity: “And then here at home, you have trouble… And it was just terrible. And [Dr Hlahla] didn't worry to bother about how you are managing”. [870] Hlahla also remembers keeping the fact of his arrest and that of her sister a secret from her church congregation:

> My mother told me never to say anything at church because they'd say "Aowa, if they made themselves terrorists, let them deal with the situation". In our local radio, people who were active in politics were called "*batjosedi*" – terrorists. … Every mother would believe a terrorist would be somebody ugly, somebody funny, somebody from somewhere else, and not their own children. When they pray at church, they will never pray as though they are praying for their own children. They shift the blame to some people they've never seen. We don't address it as a community thing. We believe there are some people coming from somewhere who are doing these things, whereas it is our own children who are doing those things.[871]

Hlahla’s testimony speaks to the dynamics of conservatism, fear of authority and the narratives of external terrorist subversion that still held powerful sway in the social fabric of Mahwelereng. Many ordinary residents rejected the activities of liberation activists. To be sure, Nobi Hlahla herself did not agree with everything that young people were doing in the name of the liberation movement, even as her own family was deeply involved in activism. She condemned the burning of the homes of certain police officers who, she argues, where just trying to earn a living and support their families. Yet she also reveals that when the State of Emergency “took root”, people started to “see things differently”. The arrest of her pastor, for instance, shocked the otherwise apolitical congregation:

> They would say: "But he isn't a part of anything. And then if they took our *moruti*, it means they took innocent people there". And then they started to pray about it. Otherwise, when somebody commented about it at church, they comment about it to say "We don't care about the terrorists who come and disrupt our country" …

[869] Interview with Anonymous, Bakenberg, 25 May 2019.
[870] Interview with Nobi Hlahla, Mahwelereng, 14 March 2020.
[871] *Ibid*.

> Yes, they realised that "Oooh. Those people are not people from somewhere [else]. They are just ordinary people, innocent people".[872]

Staff Tsebe similarly notes that activists were lent increasing forms of support in the face of escalating repression:

> When there were riots, whole families would put buckets filled with water it in front of their gates [to wash out our eyes when the police] fired tear gas. You'll find that across the whole township, there are buckets in front of the gate. So that is how people supported the people in struggle. If you ran into a family [home], they'd put you under the bed and tell the police 'He has passed!'. That is how that was... the secret life that we lived. It was a complex relationship with the community. They will assist, but they won't come in the open to assist.[873]

The Struggle Continues Underground

In 1987, Cedric Phatudi died, and his successor, the former police minister Nelson Ramodike, intensified the repression meted out by the security organs of the Lebowa state, in partnership with the apartheid Special Branch. For those activists who continued their work outside of prison, despite the deepening levels of repression, the job of organising was also exceptionally hazardous. Members of the South African Police, the Group 14 Commando of Potgietersrus, and other elements of the security police staged a virtual occupation of Mahwelereng several villages. The relative proximity of the military base to the township and villages, and the deep and established road networks, allowed for fairly rapid interventions by the security forces and forms of surveillance of totalitarian dimensions.

Emergency regulations banned meetings of more than two people, and drove forms of organisation underground. According to Molekwa, the activities of the MAYCO and Vaaltyn Youth Congress, for instance, slumped after the arrest of their key leaders. And he describes the period of 1986-1989 as one of "political lull" in the region: "most of the structures were moribund, because the activists were arrested and the coordination was no longer very good".[874] Staff Tsebe recalls:

> During the height of 1986, where the State of Emergency was declared, it was a total shutdown, you could not come to town. They'd just arrest you for no reason. A lot of comrades were arrested and sent to prison. You'd be in prison for three years without trial.[875]

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[872] *Ibid.*
[873] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[874] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[875] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.

Although he escaped long-term imprisonment, Tsebe was subjected to brutalities of the security police, who had established an interrogation site at the kraal of Kgoši Kekana in Vaaltyn (Moshate). Tsebe describes his captors as “young white boys” from Potgietersrus who would bring along their girlfriends to participate in the violent interrogations.[876] This testimony points to direct collusion between the white security apparatus and the Tribal Authorities in repressing local activism.

Lebelo recalls how her home in Mahwelereng was routinely invaded by security police:

> The police used to call this house the Charge Office… Because in most cases, when they need these young people, young comrades, they found them here… [The police] came here often, shame. There was another structure there at the back, they broke that structure because they said there were comrades at the back. And there's no way that you can say I'm going to report [this to] the police because they've done this and this in my house. Mm-mm [no]. They do whatever they want.[877]

Nonetheless, Lebelo continued her work recruiting and organising initiatives under the mantle of CCAWUSA. She describes this as a cat-and-mouse game against detection from the police:

> So to us, as women when we started to mobilise women, we started by saying "No let's come together [one on one] as women and have tea - 4 o clock tea". We'd go to another house then we'd sit down as women, as if it's a tea party! Then we'd talk politics there. Until the police realised that we talk politics under tea time break! Until they realised that "No, this is not just a tea party - under the tea party is something else". Then at the back of the Mahwelereng Hotel, there was a place where they sell this *umgqombothi*. Ja. So we went back to that place with Sophonia Mamabolo… Then we'd go to the back of the Hotel, wearing clothes as if we were just grannies. Even men - Sam Montane wearing clothes like a woman! Sophonia, Staff. Then we'd sit at the back, then we'd talk politics. We'd put *umgqombothi* in front there. We changed that one for tea party, then you went to another strategy as we are there to drink *umgqombothi…* then we'd sit down there and we'd talk politics. Until [the police] also realised that "No there is something we are doing -- there are things here".[878]

[876] *Ibid*.
[877] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020.
[878] *Ibid.*



Figure 51: Hotel Mahwelereng today is in a derelict state after it was closed by the owner who cited continued police repression as having destroyed his business. Photograph taken by author on 2 March 2019.

Lebelo also recalls how in the run-up to boycott initiatives, she would dress up as an "old gogo", padding herself with flyers calling for the stayaways, sit at the back of a bus to a distant rural village and flutter the pamphlets out of the back window when the bus would arrive at each stop. Reaching a distant village in the early hours, she recalls knocking on the doors of strangers to ask if she could sleep on their floor until a return bus arrived in the morning.[879]

Activist work in the more remote villages also continued, although under severe limitations. Bob Mmola and Hendrik Ngoepe were by this time both teachers working in village schools in Bakenberg and Mapela respectively, and continued trying to conscientise youth and agitate against the repressive conditions in which they lived. However, the limitations on gathering sizes meant that meetings had to be held in secret, and generally at night. Mmola recalls that if a meeting was called for 10am, and not everyone was present at the appointed time, they'd rapidly disperse: "We don't know whether you're coming with police or what".[880] Ngoepe describes how activists in the villages would walk throughout the night, strictly avoiding roads which were seen as arteries of police surveillance. At times, they would seek refuge from certain izinduna (headmen) and magoši who were regarded as supportive of the liberation struggle. These so-called "progressive" traditional leaders stood in stark contrast to

[879] Interview with Rahab Lebelo by Joel Pearson and Sarah Bruchhausen, 14 March 2022.
[880] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 21 August 2019.

authoritarian chiefs.[881] One among these was Phuti Matlala, the Kgoši of the Bokoni Matlala, whom Ngoepe regards as having been broadly supportive of the liberation movement.

There was considerable variation in the strength of the UDF presence in different villages. While some were marked by a virtual absence of mobilisation, activism in others grew to become relatively robust largely thanks to the tenacity of particular individuals. Phafola Village in Mapela is an example of the latter, where youth structures of the UDF were fostered by another key local activist, Tlhalefi Andries Mashamaite. Somewhat neglected from the "generational revolt" understanding of activism in Lebowa is the fact that organisational work was often underpinned by strong relationships between youth and older adults like Mashamaite. Having worked for many years on the Rand and witnessed the birth of the Atteridgeville-Saulsville Residents Organisation (ARO), Mashamaite had returned to his home village of Phafola in Mapela and begun work as a teacher at Mantutule Secondary School, finding an immediate ally in his colleague Godfrey Molekwa. Shortly before his arrest in June 1986, Molekwa had worked with Mashamaite to form the Mapela Youth Congress – a structure which Mashamaite came to lead, cultivating a crop of young activists who continue to shape local politics today.[882] Numerous respondents attested to Phafola's reputation as a centre of defiance amidst the crippling conditions of the State of Emergency – another "liberated zone". Peter Seko, a member of the Youth Congress, recalls:

> I spent most of my youth days as a security guard here [at the Mashamaite household]. We were organising in such a way that we were able to defend ourselves in this village. We had an "Invisible Army". We would patrol the whole village throughout the night, but we knew that there were certain houses that must be protected 24 hours, like this one.[883]

Mashamaite adds that young people of the village would rapidly relay information they heard back to those at the household, including the imminent arrival of security police. The Youth Congress foot soldiers were, indeed, frequently harassed by the police – especially, Lucas Lebelo says, what was called the Mankweng Riot Squad. Lebelo, a teenager at the time, remembers how on one occasion they surrounded the whole village and "they took every boy in the village - *every boy* - whether you are active or not active – to the N11 [road], and when we reached there they made us do push-ups, they beat us". Many young people were repeatedly arrested and taken to a remote police station 40km away, forced to walk back once they were finally released.[884] Kiba Slatjile from Phafola village also recalls being picked up on

[881] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Mokopane, 8 March 2020.
[882] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022; Interview with Tlhalefi Andries Mashamaite, Mapela, 22 March 2020.
[883] Interview with Peter Seko, Mapela, 22 March 2020.
[884] Interview with Lucas Lebelo, Mapela, 22 March 2020.

the side of the dirt road by white policemen some 60kms from town and taken to a butchery in Potgietersrus where he was interrogated by members of the special branch.[885]

Molekwa explains that the area was “tight with security”. He continues:

> That was the Gilead area of the ga-Matlala area. If you go to any shop, they have a person in that shop who was coopted in the Joint Management Committee of the Special Branch. It was Lebowa Police, but they were working in that area.... I still know many people who were working for the Special Branch. They were highly tight, going to Rebone there. When you arrive there, they don't know you, but they will inform you. If the people from the Special Branch, will ask you: "You were there in Rebone". There were people on their payroll. In every village, in every shop. Because if you get a lift, the only place you can buy bread, you must go there. People who were selling dagga, also they were part of the Special Branch”.[886]

It was not only the police that posed a problem for the young activists. Respondents explain how Kgoši Langa of Mapela sought to crush the Phafola subversion through the creation of a vigilante organisation funded through the Lebowa state and local businessmen who were being threatened with boycott by the comrades. The so-called Mapela Youth Development organisation started by Kgoši Langa was far better resourced than the Phafola Youth Congress, and attracted new members with t-shirts, participation in sporting tours and other regional competitions, and promises of future employment. As another Phafola comrade, Kiba Slatjile recalls:

> the vigilante group was *also* now for rich people. Remember the system, whenever it enters a place like Mapela, it will pick up the shop owners, big people, so that those people have got influence. Then everybody went there. You cannot finish the day without going there, even if it's just to sit there. And the Lebowa Government that time, it was having this Bantu Investment Corporation. They were building them big buildings and they were paying them little bit by little bit. So they were all aligned to the system.[887]

Peter Seko recalls running battles that broke out between the comrades and the vigilante group, with Phafola virtually split down the middle by stone-throwing youth.[888] Comrades would plan activities or undertake training in the dry riverbeds or small hills that surrounded the village. Here, and in villages across the present-day Mogalakwena, there were sporadic incidents of witch-burning reported in the *Lebowa Times* over the course of the 1980s, yet not nearly on the scale Delius describes in certain settlements of Sekhukhuneland.

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[885] Interview with Kiba Slatjile, Phafola, 22 March 2020.
[886] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[887] Interview with Kiba Slatjile, Mapela, 22 March 2020.
[888] Interview with Peter Seko, Mapela, 22 March 2020

By 1989, even as the cycle of resistance and repression continued to unfold with damaging consequences for those involved, broader developments in the national liberation struggle brought renewed vigour to the task of organising. The release of some political prisoners, including Walter Sisulu in October 1989, and the tentative moves towards negotiations between NP leaders and the liberation movement spurred what Molekwa describes as “the revival”.[889] Some months earlier, several local activists had also been released, including Godfrey Molekwa. Bob Mmola recalls his first engagement with Molekwa after his three years of imprisonment:

> When he got released from detention - late at night – I was not aware. Someone knocks on my quarters. Godfrey! Where are you coming from?! Then he explained to me that he is under restrictions. He is not allowed to stay here. Then he says: 'I've been sent to tell you xyz'. He gives me a list 'Go there. Tell them to establish abc” ... Go to Louis Mnguni for such and such. That is when I started to move around Bakenberg, to know that area, know the comrades, to search for them somewhere. I've been told to establish our unit. Go and see [Elias] Mahaoi, go and see Parks [Sebatjane], go and see Mabitsi, go Mahwelereng and see Eric Gwangwa.[890]

Mashamaite recalls how, in 1989, shortly after they had formed the Mapela Civic Association, he received a communique from the ANC which instructed local structures to: "Prepare organisers to work for the ANC on a full-time basis". Mashamaite was thus elected as a regional organiser for the ANC.[891] In November 1989, Molekwa recalls, buses took crowds from Mahwelereng to FNB Stadium in Johannesburg for the Welcome Rally: "The commanders are released".[892]

Conclusion

Over the course of the 1980s, forms of popular rebellion and organised resistance developed in the villages and townships of Lebowa that would set the stage for the coming political era. Out of the struggles in Mahwelereng and the Tribal Authorities of the Mogalakwena area would emerge many out of the generation of local politicians and administrators that would come to define municipal, regional, provincial and national politics from the early 1990s. This was a form of resistance characterised by intensely local forms of mobilisation which were nonetheless connected to people, places and ideas elsewhere. Borrowing from Von Schnitzler, localised struggles in Mogalakwena would come to be “subsumed” by the liberation

[889] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.
[890] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 12 August 2019.
[891] Interview with Tlhalefi Andries Mashamaite, Mapela, 22 March 2020.
[892] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, Bakenberg, 25 March 2022.

movement "within the larger progressivist *telos* of liberation" – even as the calls for better conditions of life may not always have been issued with this broader national political horizon in mind.[893] Relations between activists and organisations spanned the Lebowa geography and beyond, and provided the sinews for mass coordinated episodes of struggle.

Popular struggle and initiatives of liberation activists produced a profound new landscape of governance in the villages and townships of Lebowa over the course of the 1980s. Firstly, Bantustan modes of spatial enclosure came to be challenged and subject to reformulation, whether through the ceaseless movements of activists who routinely crossed racial boundaries, in the peoples' parks, or in the so-called "liberated zones" that took root in spaces of the townships and villages like Phafola.

Secondly, the rise of local structures of national liberation organisations represented the emergence of nascent system of community welfarism and decision-making that ran parallel to, and often in direct conflict with, the institutional matrix of Bantustan local government. Liberation activists grew to become outspoken advocates for issues afflicting their communities, establishing structures of representation tasked with mobilising around particular concerns. Azapo activists invested in the building of local clinics and advice centres. Both Azapo and UDF local structures worked especially to conscientise young people and encourage them to challenge relations of oppression in schools, colleges and the broader social field, whether in townships or villages.

Thirdly, and using the strength of these emergent organisational networks, prevailing relations of economic exploitation came to be subject to challenge. The advice centres agitated Lebowa's workers towards pursuing forms of unionism. And the emergence of CCAWUSA represented a new threshold for labour struggles in the region. The OK Bazaar boycott, for instance, directly weaponised the Potgietersrus' extractive dependence on Mahwelereng and the villages of Lebowa; this and many other such actions showed how mass defiance mobilised in the Bantustan could directly threaten the white towns of the region.

One should not, however, exaggerate the degree to which entrenched modes and relations of governance were disrupted in this period – or the extent to which local struggle in Lebowa reflected Tambo's memorable call to "make South Africa ungovernable". While the period bore witness to increasingly fearsome challenges to the legitimacy of the Tribal Authorities, even the most reviled magoši of the Mogalakwena area remained in power, crushing local dissent and persisting in forms of rent-seeking.

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[893] Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure*, p.16.

And even at the height of the school strikes and the consumer boycott in Mahwelereng, the established institutional field of township governance continued to operate, even as it was forced to reckon with the growing power of local activist structures. The burning of the superintendent's office in 1986 represented a major symbol of rejection of a system premised on extortionate rents and infrastructural neglect. Yet activists did not succeed in completely supplanting or overriding Bantustan structures of local rule. While marked by low voter turnout elections for town council that took place across townships of Lebowa in October 1988, including Mahwelereng; and while suffering from acute challenges in fulfilling their basic mandate, these structures continued to serve as nodes within broader Lebowa elite politics.[894]

The interconnected nexus of conservative Bantustan politics – constituted by local businessmen, Bantustan officials, establishment unions, church groupings, and societies of various forms – continued throughout the tumultuous period to issue stern rebukes of the liberation movement and advocate for gradualist forms of respectability politics. If is perhaps noteworthy that almost a million voters participated in Lebowa's 1989 general election out of population estimated to stand at 2.2 million in 1986; if official figures are to be believed, some 145,000 people from the Mokerong district participated.[895] While mortally wounded, the Lebowa Bantustan was, however, by no means in a state of total collapse.

Yet a key pillar propping up the continued operation of the Bantustan was the brutal regime of repression entrenched by the emergency conditions imposed by Botha's government from the mid-1980s. What kept the liberation networks underground and prevented their emergence as permanent features of the rural local governance landscape were the swift and heavy-handed actions of the apartheid security forces and their Bantustan proxies. Yet this situation would ultimately prove temporary. While the repressive machinery of the state succeeded for a while in driving these regional and national activist networks underground, they would ultimately swing right back into political agitation from 1989, followed by above-ground forms of organisation from the early 1990s after the announcement of the end of the State of Emergency. In the years that followed, the seeds of coordinated regional organisation planted by liberation activists from the late 1970s and germinated through the era of mass action in the 1980s, would burst through the parched ground to form a thicket of above-ground structures on the rural local governance landscape.

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[894] *Lebowa Times,* "Vote for municipal elections", 20 May 1988; *Lebowa Times,* "Councils to face elections snags", 16 September 1988.
[895] *Lebowa Times,* "Election upsets", 28 April 1989.

Chapter 6: White Politics at the End of the World: The Potgietersrus Town Council and the Coming Transition, 1980-1990

Introduction

The course of PW Botha's presidency would be marred by significant fractures within the Afrikaner nationalist alliance. Among the most notable was the 1982 split by the CP under Andries Treurnicht and a cohort of hard-right acolytes. The CP campaigned on the preservation of rigid social and territorial segregation, and advanced an absolute refusal to participate in the structures of "consociational government" that the Botha administration advanced. It also sought to capitalise on the collapse of the class alliance that had propelled the NP to power in the first place, with Botha's administration signalling its increasing unwillingness to pursue the kinds of white welfarist strategies that had consolidated apartheid over the previous decades – not least because of the increasingly critical financial position of the central state. For communities of the Northern Transvaal, this would be felt perhaps most acutely in shrinking state agricultural subsidies in the midst of a devastating and prolonged drought, and murmurs about the reduction of benefits for civil servants.

The CP would marshal these dark tides of generalised economic hardship, stoke fears about the threat of "terrorism" at the hands of the ANC, and advance an apocalyptic vision of the future if apartheid was reformed. The party's leaders insisted on the need to defend apartheid in all its manifestations to preserve the "white way of life" and prevent a descent into barbarism and atheistic communism – the fall of little white Edens like Potgietersrus. And around these messages, it galvanised a white reactionary grassroots movement across communities of the Northern Transvaal which resisted the interventions of the central state and the NP leadership in Pretoria who spoke increasingly in the language of reform. Town councils proved central organisational platforms in the CP's campaign. Over the course of the 1980s, the CP would gain increasing control over the town councils of the Northern Transvaal, including that of Potgietersrus, and use this leverage to resist change.

This chapter explores how the town councils of the Northern Transvaal, and the Town Council of Potgietersrus in particular, were enveloped within the millenarian ideology of the CP, coming to function as a bastion for the defence of apartheid, petty and grand. It shows how councillors and administrators made a desperate bid for autonomy from the dictates of the central government, which was moving towards dismantling key pieces of apartheid legislation. And it shows how the CP's regional network of resistance profoundly shaped the course that the

reform process would take in the town and the region more broadly over the future of racialised space, segregated bureaucracy and local economic exploitation, even as it became increasingly evident that the national government was veering towards negotiations. It galvanised action around these three axes to gain significant political support in the Northern Transvaal, and attain an oversized role in rural local governance in the period.

The Far-Right Defection

In advancing their agenda to bring nominal reform to the apartheid system, the Botha government and his faction within the NP were to "fight a constant battle in both state and party" from 1979, when Botha ascended to the party's leadership.[896] And this battle would be fought principally in the Transvaal, the heartland of *verkrampte* (conservative white) politics.[897] At the NP caucus gathering of 1982, the fiery MP from the Waterberg District, Andries Treurnicht, rebuked Botha's reform initiatives, insisting that it was "Prog policy" (in reference to the opposition Progressive Federal Party).[898] "Even tinkering with the white monopoly of political power was seen as a betrayal of scared principles," O'Meara writes.[899] The Treurnichtites were given the option to "submit or leave", and the Treurnicht stormed out of the NP caucus telling journalists that they were "finished with that Prog[ressive] PW Botha!"[900] In total, 18 MPs would leave the NP to form the CP, along with other elements of the right.[901] In addition, "almost a quarter of Transvaal NP district and branch committee members defected to the CP".[902]

According to O'Meara, the politicians who joined Treurnicht represented rural constituencies, particularly in the Northern Transvaal, as well as those areas "populated by state officials and/or Afrikaner workers. Those strata of the Afrikaner population who had not shared in the thoroughgoing embourgeoisement of their Afrikaner confreres".[903] Indeed, the CP split was underpinned by a strong class element. By the late 1970s, the NP had all but shed its role as

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[896] O'Meara, Forty Lost Years, p.277.
[897] As Van der Westhuizen writes, "Willem de Klerk [FW's older brother] coined the terms *verligte* and *verkrampte* in 1972, when he was still an academic… *Verkrampte* he described as an attitude and school of thought hostile to anything new and determined to perpetuate the patterns of the past. Regarding race relations, *verkramptheid* was a traditionalism that sought to entrench the master/slave relationship". By contrast, the term '*verligte'* was used to denote those with an 'open-mindedness… tending towards compromise and pragmatism'. Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.87.
[898] *Ibid.*, p.117.
[899] O'Meara, Forty Lost Years, p.277.
[900] *Ibid.,* p.302.
[901] *Ibid.,* p.307. Members from Connie Mulder's NCP, the neo-Nazi AWB and the Broederbond political outfit, *Aksie Eie Toekoms.* Not, however, with the HNP, whose leadership still expressed anger at Treurnicht's earlier betrayals, and who regarded the CP as "Johnny Come Latelies"
[902] *Ibid.,* p.312.
[903] *Ibid.* p.295–96.

principal saviour of the white poor.[904] Botha's NP effectively cut loose from the Afrikaner lower classes, signalling that his faction's power stemmed from a rather different social base. Alongside Afrikaner capital, Botha would undertake a rapprochement with English capital. In keeping with the growing neoliberal paradigms emerging across the world at the time, O'Meara describes the NP of the 1980s as "[n]o longer speaking for the 'small man' against the monopolies… Botha's government espoused stridently capitalist, indeed Friedmanite ideologies and spoke of building bridges across language and racial barriers".[905]

This shift was also ostensibly dictated by the woeful economic context that gripped South Africa. The Financial Mail declared in 1983 that the economy was in a "winter trough".[906] Between 1981 and 1987, real annual growth fell to just 1.8 percent.[907] Under Finance Minister Barend du Plessis, the state would vigorously pursue austerity measures.[908] O'Meara explains part of the CP's support was derived from farmers who faced potential ruin in the tumultuous 1980s. Throughout the recession, agriculture was hardest hit. He describes how many farmers, particularly in the Transvaal, felt abandoned by the NP and it's growing free market ideology. Farming subsidies were reduced at a time when the country was gripped by the worst droughts since the 1960s, one which hit the Northern Transvaal particularly viciously. The Potgietersrus District was among the worst affected. Meanwhile interest rates increased precipitously and the value of the Rand dropped. "By 1986 the total farming debt of R11.2 billion exceeded gross agricultural income (R9.9 billion) and was ten times total agricultural profits", O'Meara writes, "leading Assocom to warn that 'the banking system itself' was threatened... the number of white-owned farming units continued to decline rapidly".[909]

It seems that conditions for farmers had become increasingly dire as the long and devastating drought dragged on. According to Andy Goetsch, the long-standing president of the Mokopane Chamber of Business:

> Now, slowly but surely, it became unprofitable to plant goods because we used to rely on the rains to plant mielies and tobacco and everything… And the rains got scarcer. More and more people came into the area, more boreholes were put down and then the people started pumping water to plant to plant mielies and everything. And then that the boreholes got deeper and more expensive. And then it became totally unproductive to plant anything.

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[904] In 1979, Gerrit Viljoen, an NP minister and Broederbond leader had bemoaned the "artificial self-protection and self-preservation" with which the state was making "it easy and almost hazardless … for the weak and faltering among us to maintain their position". Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.3.
[905] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.308.
[906] *Ibid.,* p.320.
[907] *Ibid.,* p.354.
[908] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.169.
[909] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.357.

Richer farmers were able to withstand these challenges by drilling ever-deeper boreholes on their comparatively larger properties. Those farmers who were less well-capitalised, by contrast, were driven out of business. Goetsch explains that these farmers "were not very happy with the situation and they blamed the government. They blamed the NP and that's why there was that big split".[910]

The support of the CP cannot be explained solely in class terms, however. While the CP cultivated a support base amongst the lower classes (both Afrikaans and English) who feared, amongst other moves, the complete scrapping of white job reservation, this was not simply the party of the economically marginalised: the party found fertile ground amongst the conservative Afrikaner middle classes, especially in the small towns of the Transvaal. The CP was quite unlike Jaap Marais' Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP), another much earlier right-wing breakaway (1969) from the NP, which had presented an idealized vision of the solitary *boer*, uncorrupted by modern influences. The HNP had styled itself as an anti-capitalist, "poorer white protest party".[911] By contrast, the CP was a party which appealed to a suburban life of upward mobility and consumerism, of manicured lawns and sprinkler systems, of take-aways and home video rentals, of swimming pools and braais on Sunday after church. It was the very strata of upwardly mobile Afrikaners that the NP's policy's had indeed produced, but the CP now stirred up long-held fears of "oorstroming", that all of this was threatened by the prospect of racial mixing – indeed, a tactic that was from the playbook of the NP too. It was from amongst the petty bourgeois of small towns that the CP would predominantly draw its local leadership. And it was this appeal that saw it eclipse the HNP's support rapidly.

While the CP blamed the dire economic circumstances on the NP's heartless fiscal conservatism, it offered little real substantial alternative to the country's economic crisis. Instead, the focus of its energies would be directed at what was held to be proof that the NP was leading the Afrikaner down the road to ruin: the gradual dismantling of spatial apartheid and "separate development". CP politicians recycled a time-worn Afrikaner nationalist narrative which held that white communities, their way of life, their Christian ethic and their close-knit family culture were under siege – but this time, they were being betrayed by an Afrikaner government that was reforming away the pillars of segregation, diluting white political power and accepting racially "mixed" forms of government which would ultimately lead to the domination of white people by the Black majority. In Potgietersrus, this saw the invocation of

[910] Interview with Andy Goetsch, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.
[911] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.310.

the "sacred history" of the Voortrekkers in the bushveld, who had battled to secure their hold on the land and pursue their manifest destiny (as discussed in Chapter 1).

The CP claimed that it had inherited the mantle of the Afrikaner Nationalist tradition, working to protect their historical claims to "our own [Afrikaner] people's particular identity, our right to a separate future and our right to self-determination".[912] Janis Grobbelaar wrote that the CP seemed to offer "a way back. It provided psychological security, a familiar group consciousness, and the conviction that the dream of white Afrikaner self-determination was, notwithstanding, defensible and viable".[913] The CP championed the maintenance of rigid social segregation and the removal of all reforms introduced or contemplated by Botha's government since 1979.[914]

In his 1975 autobiography, Andries Treurnicht explained his defence of the need for petty apartheid as the means which

> guarantees and protects against social equality [*gelykstelling*], and flowing from that, against political equality and biological mixing of white and non-white. The awareness of different-ness [*andersheid*] and the will to maintain this determines action in many situations through which the own-nature [*eie aard*] and the different-ness is guaranteed. It's almost like clothing: with that, distance is created between the person and his fellow man and through that … the most intimate things of the person is made safe against the outside world … From personal experience, as well as happenings elsewhere, it is clear to us that we cannot and do not wish to assimilate the non-white Volk, or want to be assimilated or ruled by them. We want a white Volk with self-determination within our own living space [*leefruimte*]. Therefore we set boundaries. Therefore we not only avoid points of conflict, but also places that put us on the same level and [promote] mixing. And it's this basic life attitude … on which the policy of separate political self-expression in own homelands or areas is based.[915]

The protection of petty apartheid and "white space" would prove a central rallying cry of the CP.[916] It would seek to defend apartheid in its most local manifestations, and a nostalgic vision of white Afrikaner purity and local self-determination became a central element of the CP's strategy to winning state power.

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[912] *Ibid.,* p.307.
[913] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.176.
[914] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years,* p.307–8.
[915] Andries Treurnicht, 1975, *Credo van 'n Afrikaner,* Cape Town: Tafelberg, p.22.
[916] Massey describes how in "reactionary" renderings of spatial belonging, the "local" is said to presuppose an innate essence ordained by history – the "real character" of a place that must be defended. In the face of impending change, the CP "searche[d] after a non-existent lost authenticity" – or, perhaps more accurately, sought to defend a presumed sense of racial authenticity and community tied to a space which was portrayed as being under existential threat. Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p.151-152.

The CP also capitalized on the climate of fear cultivated in no small measure by the militaristic paradigm of the Botha government, which induced amongst white South Africans what has been termed a "security psychosis".[917] Norval identifies "attempts to foster a sense of 'vigilance' within white communities": "the discourse of the total onslaught did not function only at the level of overt attempts to eliminate the enemies of the state. A far more insidious logic was at work here, one which increasingly normalised … a series of practices aimed at exposing the enemy within".[918] She describes how women were encouraged to serve as "soldiers", an "invisible weapon" in the fight against the Total Onslaught. They were told: "You cannot fight against your foe unless you know him. Make a study of Marxism in your own family, social or political circles and you will be shocked to learn under what guise the enemy works in the circles in which you move".[919] Furthermore, women were encouraged to take "counter-offensive action" against domestic workers by scrutinising their identity documents for falsification, by "visiting" their "dwelling places" regularly to establish whether "strangers" were "harboured" there.[920]

In the midst of these fears, the militarism which had long been a feature of bushveld towns and white South African society more broadly came to assume an even greater ferocity, promising to defend the territory and hold the terror at bay. Each town had a Commando structure (named after the Commandos of the Voortrekkers) manned by local volunteers but coordinated by a regional command. In the bushveld region, Group 14 was the structure that presided over five different Commandos. The Potgietersrus Commando was intensely active, and as attested to by local activists, carried out a reign of terror and torture of their own in Mahwelereng and the villages. Once a year, the Commando would march through town and receive medals for their "service". "There are forces at work in the world again today," Minister of Defence Magnus Malan told the Potgietersrus Commando at one such gathering in 1983,

> Their main goal is to break our courage, sow uncertainty and unrest as well as arouse suspicion and mistrust among our people … The result of a victory of our enemies, the SACP and its allies the ANC, PAC and SWAPO, need not be speculated about. We only need to look at the disorder in the political, social and economic spheres in Africa states in which Soviet imperialism was the driving force behind their independence.[921]

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[917] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.203.
[918] *Ibid.,* p.202.
[919] *Ibid.,* p.203.
[920] *Ibid.,* p.204.
[921] *Northern Transvaler,* 'Vyande wil SA se moed breek', 2 September 1983.

The *Noord Transvaler* the event under a sensational frontpage headline: “Enemies want to break SA’s courage”.[922] Weekly newspaper in the Northern Transvaal emanated intensifying fears about security, about the threat of “terrorism”, about violent crime, and about the prospect of a “Communist revolution” – a terrifying lens through which Black subversion was generally characterised in public discourse. “The Terrorist is Here, in our Midst” ran one headline from 1983.[923] Police frequently issued instructions on what to do in case of a bomb incident.[924] Depictions of crime were highly racialised, with alleged perpetrators identified often only as “swart man[ne]”.

“Swart-“ and “Rooi-gevaar” narratives evidently seeped deep into the fabric of white society. Staff Tsebe relays how he first heard about Nelson Mandela as a child from the white farmer’s children who used to play “catch the terrorist” games. He was told to play the role of Mandela, while the white children would play the roles of soldier, magistrate and executioner: he was to be captured, sentenced and “hanged”.[925] Van der Westhuizen points to the “cyclical reinforcement of white fear as one of the vital ingredients in keeping the NP in power”. [926] Yet in towns like Potgietersrus, on the “racial frontier” with the Bantustan, the CP manipulated this fear as a key ingredient in community cohesion.

The white right wing would come to be a fixation of the NP, particularly for the Transvaal structure and its new leader. Treurnicht’s replacement as head of the NP Transvaal was FW de Klerk, described as “a man with impeccable Transvaal nationalist credentials”.[927] De Klerk would maintain one eye on the right-wing tendencies within and outside of the NP throughout, and worked tirelessly to assure white voters that his party would not compromise white political and economic power. Indeed, by the 1980s, the NP was confronting a resurgent right-wing threat that went beyond party politics, with even paramilitary outfits like Eugene Terreblanche’s Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) growing steadily throughout the decade. A propaganda war was launched by NP-aligned newspapers in a bid to halt the growth of support for the right.[928]

Yet the effect was to shift the NP and its provincial leader rightwards. Of his younger brother, journalist Wim de Klerk wrote that FW “was still apt to make ultra-conservative noises in his attempt to halt the growth of the Conservatives”.[929] Thus, in 1984, the SAIRR reported on a

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[922] *Ibid*.
[923] *Noord Transvaler,* “Die Terroris is hier in ons midde”, 9 September 1983.
[924] *Noord Transvaler*, “Bom-insidente – Polisie gee leiding’, 17 October 1983.
[925] Interview with Malesela Abram Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[926] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.163.
[927] O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.303.
[928] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.296.
[929] O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.384.

speech by De Klerk in which he insisted that the NP stood “unashamedly for the maintenance of white vested interests” but warned that white security could “not be built on the domination of others”. De Klerk said that the NP would proceed along the road of reform yet remain faithful to its principles of self-determination, preserving “own community life and the maintenance of group rights”.[930] After Pik Botha had indicated in early 1986 that South Africa could one day have a Black president, “at the insistence of an outraged FW de Klerk, President Botha delivered a crushing public repudiation in Parliament of his loose cannon of a Foreign Minister”.[931]

The battle between the NP and the conservative hardliners would persist throughout the 1980s, and grow in intensity in the Northern Transvaal as the CP appeared to make inroads into areas of traditional NP support. Town councils would become one of the first battlefronts between the NP leadership and the CP, which sought to defend Verwoerdian apartheid in white towns, to obstruct the reform path of the central state and to galvanise calls for local self-determination.

The Battle for the Town Councils

In the early decades of apartheid, a convention had emerged – indeed, an item of decency and good taste – that the office of councillor was not to be attached to party politics. Councillors were to serve as members of their community, not as members of political parties. As Heymans states, “While the political leanings of candidates were often known, they were not predominant issues in election campaigns”.[932] Indeed, the pamphlets distributed by candidates for Council in election campaigns did not bear any political party insignia. According to Irene de Villiers, an administrator at the municipality between 1984 and 2015:

> They were all local people applying on their own name. You are a teacher or maybe an attorney or somebody, and then you get elected from the town - not representing any political party. There were no political parties at that stage in the council. Of course, they did form some alliances. But not based on any political party or anything. You know: "You support me when I want to push this through, and I'll support you when you do that".[933]

While councillors were formally apolitical, their support for the NP was largely unquestioned. This was an NP stronghold. According to Ray Bossenger, a former councillor and one-time mayor, explains that “the farmers were all NP”, and that they were “”very Afrikaans here,

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[930] ‘Race Relations Survey: 1984’, Report by the South African Institute of Race Relations, p.51
[931] O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.335
[932] Chris Heymans, “Local Government in a Changing South Africa,” in *South Africa in the Nineties*, ed. DJ Van Vuuren et al. (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1991), p.264.
[933] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 9 March 2020.

conservative". There was only one staunchly United Party (UP) adherent in Potgietersrus, he explains, "but he was accepted in the community". The Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP), the party formed in 1969 after Albert Hertzog's breakaway from the NP, achieved negligible support.[934]

With the rise of the CP, however, this non-partisanship in local government elections would be dramatically challenged, such that by the 1988 municipal elections, CP-aligned councillors had begun to run explicitly as party candidates. Heymans attributes this to the fact that the

> government placed various constitutional changes, many of which affect local politics, on the agenda. Second, the rise of the Conservative Party introduced a new emphasis on politics in local elections. The CP sees in control of local authorities an opportunity to implement its own policies, and to place obstacles in the way of government reforms… Whites fight intense political battles at this level around segregation and desegregation and the broader ideological divisions which underpin these differences.[935]

Indeed, prior to the CP split with the NP, the question of political party affiliation barely emerged, given the extent of NP hegemony in the North Transvaal. And Jaap Marais' HNP never presented any great electoral threat to the NP.

The first signs that town councils were being politicised could be seen in the 1982 Municipal Elections, held just one week after the Treurnichtites had left the NP fold. At this stage, the CP had not even been formed, yet the *Northern Review* reported a "swing to the right" in councils across the Northern Transvaal. Candidates who had come out in support of Treurnicht staged surprise defeats of long-time incumbents across the province. In Pietersburg, Tjol Lategan who had held his seat in Ward 4 for the past 10 years was unseated by Prof. Willie Botha, an ardent Treurnicht-supporter. "Everyone knows I support the Prime Minister," Lategan wrote in a fairly hysterical concession statement, "My defeat can be directly linked to the turmoil in the National Party… The time has come for people in leadership positions to say unqualifiedly whether they want to live the path of balanced, rational politics, or live in dream worlds… if the right direction is not followed, PIETERSBURG IS GOING TO BECOME POLITICALLY IRRELEVANT".[936] In Potgietersrus, it was reported that the conservative FW Kelder (33) defeated sitting councillor Mr JS Coetzee and became the youngest town councillor in the town's history. Another established councillor, Dries Van der Walt, lost to a younger conservative up-start, G van Rooyen.[937]

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[934] Interview with Ray Bossenger, Mokopane, 20 May 2019.
[935] Heymans, "Local Government in a Changing South Africa", p.264.
[936] *Northern Review,* "Swaai Na Regs?" 5 March 1982.
[937] *Northern Review,* "Shocks in Northern Transvaal", 5 March 1982.

When in the subsequent weeks Treurnicht announced the formation of the CP, these Councillors made no secret of joining, and indeed set about campaigning for the next strategic target of the Treurnicht backlash: the referendum on the Tricameral Constitution. The CP ran advertorials in the local newspapers which insisted: "Reject mixing - vote for separation! Vote no!" [938] The Northern Transvaal would be the only region in the country to vote against the proposed Constitution, albeit with a slim 53%. The next shock for the NP came with the provincial by-elections of 1984. A complex constituency system had operated in South Africa since 1910. During general elections, voters directly elected politicians to represent their constituency in parliament and in the provincial council. There were five constituencies across the Northern Transvaal: Waterberg, Soutpansberg, Pietersburg, Lydenburg and the largest, Potgietersrus. The 1984 by-election resulted from the vacation of the Potgietersrus seat in the province, and was seen as a key battleground constituency by the NP to halt what was described as the "snowballing super-Afrikaner 'volksbeweging' [volk movement] in the north" which was "making dialogue politics with Black states in the region increasingly difficult". Four cabinet Ministers were "committed to the fray in various parts of the Potgietersrus constituency".[939] The result, however, was a stunning loss to a CP candidate, which the *Daily News* described as confirmation that the Northern Transvaal had become the "bastion of verkramptheid [conservatism]", and a personal setback for FW de Klerk.[940]

One early controversy of the now-confirmed CP-dominated council of Potgietersrus emerged over its decision to once again uphold a ban on other races participating in the marathon which formed part of its much-celebrated annual Biltong Festival. The *Sunday Times* reported that the "Council stressed in no uncertain terms that 'people of other colours' would not be allowed to take part and that no racial mixing would be allowed in any of the events".[941] One angry letter to the *Beeld* told the council to "just eat your biltong alone and swallow it with the milk of the holy cow of so-called conserving separateness". [942] Koos Meyer, a local businessman, announced that he would be withdrawing his sponsorship for the event: "The event is supposed to be a town festival and all race groups in town should have the right to participate. Blacks are an integral part of our community and groups like coloureds and Indians also pay

[938] *Noord Transvaler,* "Advertorial: 'Verwerp vermenging – stem vir skeiding! Stem NEE", 14 October 1983.
[939] *Sunday Tribune, '*Closed door bargaining leads to pact between the CP and HNP', 6 May 1984, *SA Media Online*.
[940] *The Daily News,* 'The By-Elections', 28 June 1984, *SA Media Online.*
[941] *Sunday Times,* "Business Ban on Biltong Beano", 12 August 1984.
[942] *Beeld*, "Vier 'n Fees in so a Gees Liefs Alleen' *15 August 1984.*

taxes". He insisted that the majority of the townspeople found the whole saga "disturbing and hurtful".[943]

The entry of the CP onto the scene was not, as is to be expected, universally welcomed. Indeed, it evoked fractious debates in white communities. For the many of the bigger local industrialists seeking an end to sanctions and re-entry onto the world market, as well as freer movement of labour, the CP's backwards looking policies threatened to lock in isolation and economic irrationality. For the more liberal-minded strata amongst white society, the CP's philosophy flew in the face of the realities of economic interdependence. For example, André de Villiers, a professor from the University of the North, was outspoken against the CP's attempts to salvage petty apartheid. Nevertheless, the CP continued to gain traction in the white towns of the Northern Transvaal as the decade wore on.



Figure 52: Potgietersrus Town Council in 1986

From 1985 onwards, support for the far-right and the CP in particular only grew, coming to thicken into a regional power bloc with significant organisational power. As O'Meara points out, continuing austerity measures by the NP government resulted in the "alienation of core elements of the historic Afrikaner nationalist alliance": "A public sector pay freeze and reduction and elimination of other benefits reinforced the growing discontent of state functionaries", the "dramatic collapse of farm income, soaring agricultural indebtedness and the April 1985 reversal of the decades-old practice of increasing the maize price" all resulted in "thousands of former NP members joining Treurnicht's CP. The neo-Nazi [AWB] began to

[943] *Sunday Times,* "Business Ban on Biltong Beano", 12 August 1984.

break up NP meetings, proving itself capable of preventing event the NP big guns being heard in public meetings in the rural Transvaal'.[944]

In Potgietersrus, the growing popularity of the CP would be accompanied by what Ballim identifies as rising "anti-Indian sentiments". Even before formally claiming any positions in the Town Council, the CP began "stirring up the debate of resettling Indian traders".[945] This proposal would, however, be once and for all shelved, this time by the central government. In 1987, the Group Areas Board ruled to declare the town of Potgietersrus a "free trade area" (*vryhandelsgebied*), and pulled the plug on any possibility that a separate shopping complex would be built for Indian traders outside of town.[946] These moves had the support of the Town Council and the local Business Chamber. Ballim observes that part of the motivation for this declaration was to allow white traders to occupy shops in what had been the Indian-designated Akasia, what turned out to be prime locations for attracting foot traffic from the neighbouring communities of Lebowa.[947] Yet the stirrings of the CP politicians were an indication of attempts to galvanise anti-Indian feelings towards electioneering ends.

The announcement of a State of Emergency in 1986 seems to have done little to halt the right wing spread in the Transvaal. In the run-up to the 1987 General Elections, the NP campaigned on issues of security, and indeed reduced the space for the CP to critique the NP "without being seen to question white power itself".[948] Nevertheless, in the 1987 General Elections, the CP won "three votes for every four cast for the Transvaal NP".[949] It had won four out of the five constituencies in the Province. Beyond the Northern Transvaal, the CP was able to gain significant support in working and middle-class white neighbourhoods of the Witwatersrand, winning seats in, for instance, Rosettenville, and gaining enough support to eventually take control over councils in Vanderbijlpark and Boksburg.

In the Potgietersrus constituency, Schalk Pienaar, a young rising star in the CP had secured the constituency seat, and would become a preeminent voice in both the national parliament and in innumerable public gatherings for conservative causes, campaigning for, amongst others, the protection of segregation, farming subsidies, and municipal autonomy. Under Pienaar, a CP Youth Branch was established in Potgietersrus.[950] And his wife was involved in the establishment of a branch of the party's women's wing, Vroueaksie [Women's Action], in

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[944] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.337
[945] Ballim, "The Un-Making of the Group Areas Act", p.580.
[946] *Ibid*.
[947] *Ibid.,* p.581.
[948] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years,* p.376.
[949] *Ibid.,* p.375.
[950] *Noord Transvaler,* "Reuse fees gehou", 9 July 1989.

Potgietersrus, stating: “women should be activated to become politically aware and to be actively involved in party management, especially in light of the fact that children of today and tomorrow are affected by the political setup in the country”.[951]

In the 1988 elections, Councillors were openly running on a CP ticket: indeed, the party fielded in virtually every ward in towns across the province. The CP even printed advertorials which stated CP intentions towards the local elections, and ended with their slate of names for each municipality. The CP’s violation of the convention against open political party affiliation was voiced frequently in the run up to the elections by independent candidates and in the *Noord Transvaler’s* letters column. In Pietersburg, one man insisted that “a Christian with principles does not need to act on behalf of a political party, … as soon as you act on behalf of a political party, our (the voters') interests are set aside and you become like 'robots' controlled by the CP and its leaders”.[952] A Potgietersrus resident who had worked for 17 years in the Potgietersrus Municipality, including as Town Clerk and Treasurer, wrote: “The municipal elections in October are being fought on party-political grounds… There is no party politics in the services of delivering electricity [for instance]. Some politics have nothing to do with all these matters”. Further, he implied that the CP Councillors were exceeding their mandate in the range of issues they campaigned on: “Army matters, police matters and education matters fall outside the jurisdiction of a municipality. The Group Areas Act remains in force. No, listen to a candidate's experienced judgement on his competence and vote for the best man, who will work for his town and the happiness of the residents.”[953] Another Potgietersrus resident exhorted voters to follow the “the path that has been laid our for us by our President” in navigating what all were realizing was “a new era in the history of our land”.[954]

[951] *Noord Transvaler,* ‘Distriksraad Vroue-Aksie van Stapel Gestuur’, 30 September 1988.
[952] *Noord Transvaler,* ‘Jan Moolman is ‘n aanwis’, 21 October 1988.
[953] *Noord Transvaler,* “Stem hiermee saam”, 7 October 1988.
[954] *Noord Transvaler,* “We must follow the right path”, 9 September 1988.



Figure 53: Andries Treurnicht visits Potgietersrus, pictured with Mayor Morkel-Brink (back middle) and Deputy Mayor Van der Merwe (front right). [955]

Yet the CP leadership insisted that given the urgency of the situation in which the Afrikaner now found themselves, which they characterised as the brink of losing their identity and place in the world, municipal elections were an important platform to fight against NP reformism. Treurnicht visited Potgietersrus in the run-up to the 1988 elections and insisted that "The upcoming municipal election could be one of the most important battles in the current political struggle, laying an enormous foundation for what the CP envisions". He continued: "a nation's politics is an inseparable part of its culture and that it is not only about political power or whites' survival, but about the Afrikaner people's right to its own nationhood and to rule its own people".[956] The following week, Treurnicht proclaimed that "Town Councils will have to make political decisions", and, ominously, "If the Transvaal comes, it comes by force".[957] When the CP took over national government, he promised, effective power would be given to local authorities to "ward off malpractices in its midst", such as "the opening up of residential areas [to other races]".[958] The sense of foreboding that gathered around the election was not helped by a visit from the HNP's Jaap Marais, who claimed that "Communists are making ready for war" and that it was "scarcely necessary to say that the Afrikaner Volk faced one of the biggest crises of its life".[959]

Interviews were carried with each of the different Ward Candidates by the *Noord Transvaler* in the run-up to the 1988 under the weekly column: "Ken u kandidaat" ["Know your candidate"]. These columns offer useful glimpses into the topics of debate that gripped local politics, and a sense of the key issues that the CP was campaigning on – many of which were underpinned

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[955] *Noord Transvaler*, 'Stadsrade sal politieke besluite moet neem' 15 October 1988.
[956] *Noord Transvaler,* "Munisipale verkiesing baie belangrik" 7 October 1988.
[957] *Noord Transvaler*, 'Stadsrade sal politieke besluite moet neem' 15 October 1988.
[958] *Ibid*.
[959] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Kommuniste maak gereed vir oorlog', 16 September 1988.

by a refutation of central state authority. In Potgietersrus, Katie van der Merwe, CP candidate for Ward 8 (and the only woman running in for Council), insisted that Town Councils now "carried a political significance to an unprecedented extent". She warned against the "sidelining of Town Councils" through the creation of multiracial Regional Services Councils (RSC): "Mixed RSCs are the lowest rung [*onderste vlak*] of the Government's constitutional plan … that are an attempt to use white tax money for other population groups". [960]

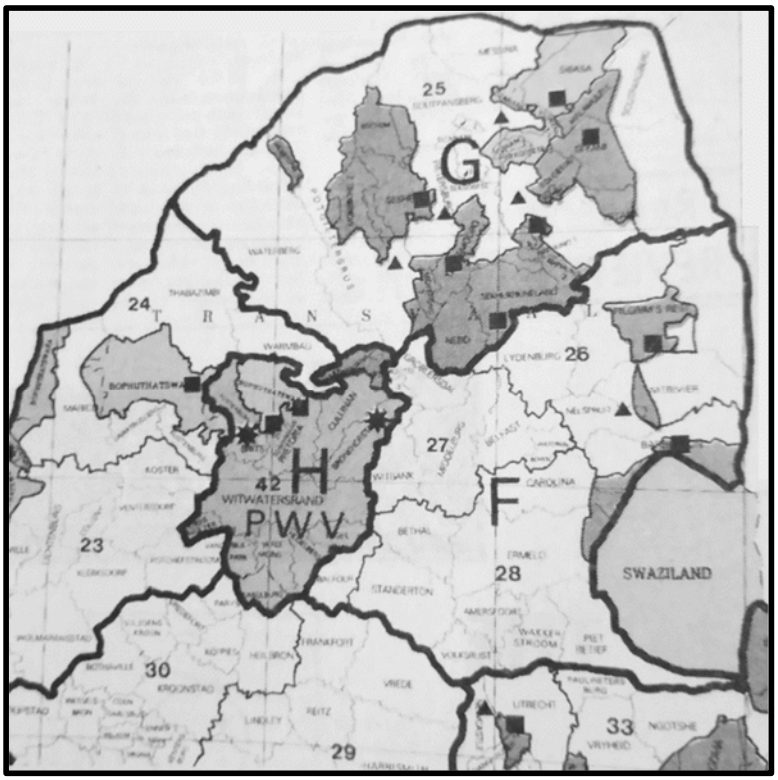


Figure 54: The demarcation of the new regions undertaken by the Botha administration, with Region G constituted by the Northern Transvaal and three Bantustan territories.[961]

In accordance with the Botha government's moves towards acknowledging "economic interdependence", the country was divided into eight (and then 9) "development regions" which were to be managed by an array of "multilateral" decision making systems. The Northern Transvaal was classified as 'Region G'. In addition, from 1985, a new system of Regional Services Councils (RSCs) was rolled out in the Northern Transvaal, which for the first time saw members from Black town councils of the Bantustans sitting in a regional council with representatives seconded from white councils to decide on how to spend a budget drawn from a collective pool. While local municipalities were still to deliver most municipal services, infrastructural projects with a more regional footprint (roads, water, sewage, lighting etc) were

[960] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Die einskappe nodig in raadsake', 16 September 1988.
[961] *Northern Review,* "An open invitation", 8 January 1982.

to be funded through the RSCs. The RSC budget was raised from new 0.1 percent turnover and 0.25 percent payroll levies on all business undertakings.[962] This was to be the vehicle through which a measure of "redistribution" of resources from white areas would be effected to Black townships. And they were to form a central institutional element of the "power sharing" that Botha framed as the pivot of his reform efforts.[963] Thus, in the Bosveld RSC, councillors from Potgietersrus, Warmbad, Nylstroom, Naboomspruit and Ellisras would now be expected to sit with representatives from Lebowa town councils, including Mahwelereng. Further north, the Northern RSC would include representatives from Pietersburg, Louis Trichardt, Messina and Tzaneen, alongside representatives from, amongst other townships, Seshego, Mankweng, Lenyenye.

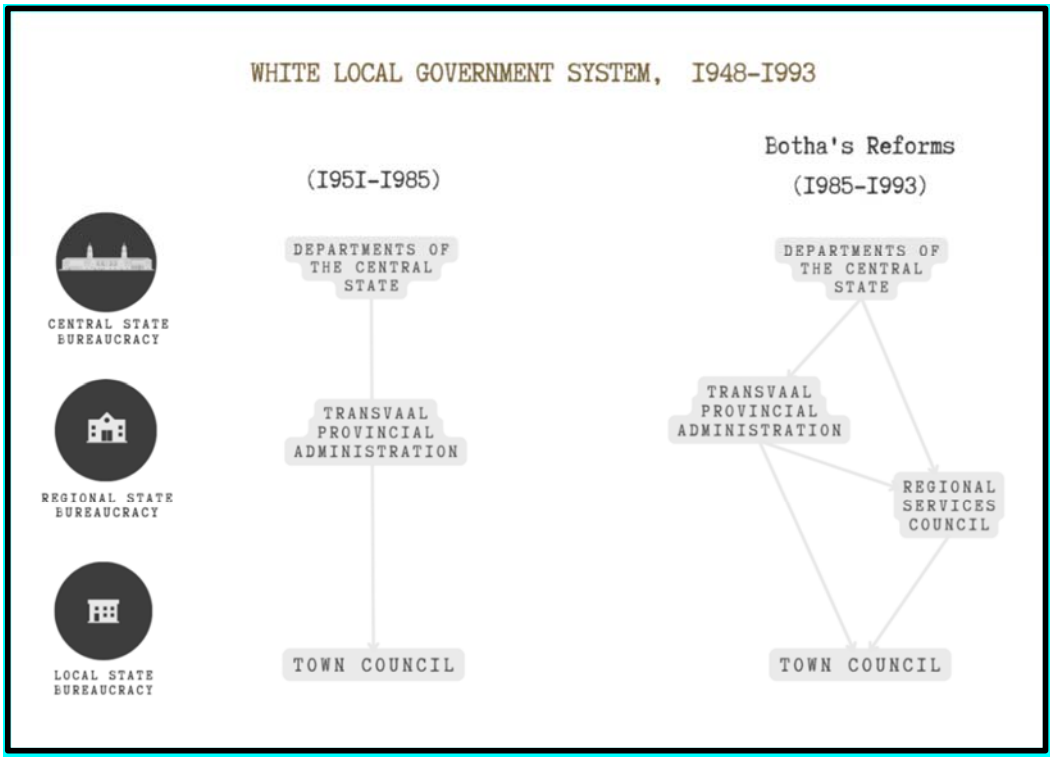


Figure 55: Changes to the system of white local government from 1985

Yet these structures nonetheless remained dominated by white authorities, given that the scale of a municipality's representation on the RSC was determined by the size of their tax base rather than their population.[964] Moreover, the RSCs were to serve as building blocks of a new regime of securitized, technocratic management that Botha introduced. The new president and his cohort of securocrats designed a grand security system called the National

[962] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years,* p.347.
[963] *Ibid*.
[964] *Ibid*.

Security Management System (NSMS), with the president's State Security Council (SSC) at the top of sprawling, interlocking network of institutions that reached down to the local level.[965] The RSCs were hemmed into this security apparatus, ostensibly as a useful arena for both gathering information on security developments in localities and directing strategy.[966]

RSCs had, however, become a lightning rod for conservative acrimony against the central state since their roll out was announced. In August 1986, the Potgietersrus Town Council (along with every other council in the Northern Transvaal) had already staked its opposition to the structures, both because they involved representatives from municipal structures of different race groups and because they were intended to distribute funds raised partly through taxes on whites. [967] They had been joined in their opposition by the Pietersburg Council, also dominated by the CP. Several other candidates running for office in 1988 similarly signaled their intention to fight the RSCs. Tobie van Wyk, Ward 6 CP candidate told the *Noord Transvaler:* "I feel very strongly for the abolition of [RSCs] because it is political power sharing with Blacks, Indians and Coloureds at municipal level. It is a very expensive system through which white's tax money is collected to provide services for *kleuriges* [people of colour]*".* He was reported to be standing "for white municipal authorities, a white community life and a white government in a white fatherland".[968] George Morkel-Brink, CP candidate for Ward 5, railed against the RSCs as "Mixed form of government and the contribution of the whites is used for people of colour [*kleuriges*]. I think the time has come for each group to make its own contribution to its own community".[969]

Virtually every CP candidate staked their opposition to the possibility of repealing the Separate Amenities Act, as well as the creation of mixed residential and business areas. Van der Merwe believed that "opening public facilities to their races, mixed neighbourhoods or so-called grey areas" would signal that "power is no longer executed from town councils". Nantes Kelder, CP candidate for Ward 3, stood for "white sovereignty and that the whites of Potgietersrus will live close to each other as a Christian people [Christenvolk]".[970] Pieter van Niekerk, CP candidate

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[965] O'Meara describes the creation of "parallel administrative structures" that effected the "the slow extension of SSC supervision of the overall administration of government departments and local government". By 1988, a National Joint Management Centre presided over 12 Joint Management Committees (JMCs), 60 sub-JMCs, and 448 mini-JMCs covering local municipalities – structures which had been most forcefully put into operation after the nationwide State of Emergency was declared in 1986. These structures gathered intelligence and filtered it upwards to the SSC, formulated local strategies, coordinated the local implementation of broad policy directives and presided over the functioning of all local branches of govt and the state bureaucracy". *Ibid.,* p.344

[966] *Ibid.,* p.285.

[967] *Noord Transvaler,* "Stadsrade Hoef Nie SDR'e te gebruik', 22 August 1986.

[968] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Ken u kandidate: Voel sterk vir afskaffing van die SDR'e', 21 October 1988.

[969] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Moet na kieser se belange omsien 23 September 1988.

[970] *Noord Transvaler,* "'n Raadslid moet balans handhaaf", 30 September 1988.

for Ward 7, promised that CP Town Councillors would “fight against the oppression [*verdringing*] of whites in their own areas” and work to stop the “process of impoverishment [*verarming*] among the whites”.[971]

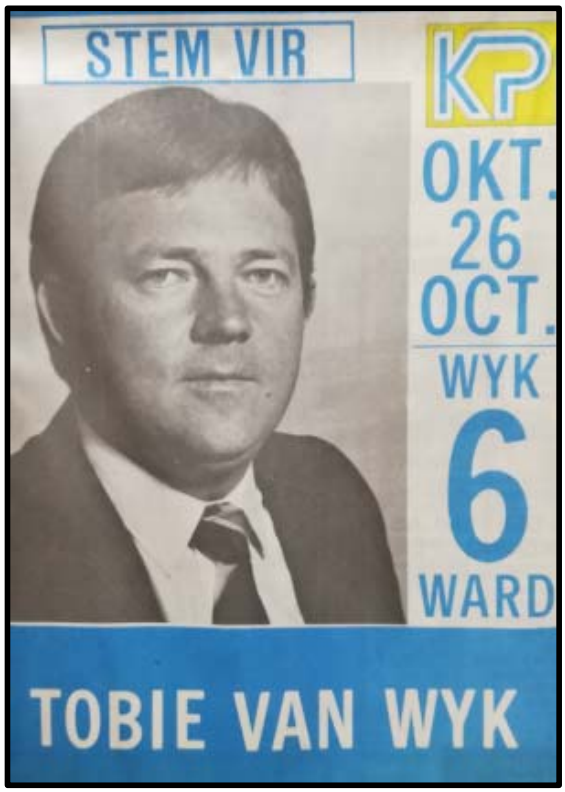


Figure 56: Election advertisement for a CP candidate for the Town Council elections of 1988.

There were strong appeals to the economic conditions of the day, and promises to attract more investment. The CP’s candidate for Ward 1, businessman Bernard van der Walt, said that “the success of any ruling party's policy can be measured by the prevailing economic prosperity in a country", and while he did not want to “pretend that the country will recover such a current weak economy through a municipal election … it is at least a start, a foot in the door”.[972] He advocated for the creation of an investment committee to woo investors to the town. Similarly, Charl van Rooyen, CP candidate for Ward 4 insisted on a “a new approach that will make it favourable and attractive for the industrialist to come and settle here”. [973] But both advocated continuing segregation and spoke against the possibility of “free trade areas” that were being discussed in other localities. “Maintaining the character of Potgietersrus'

[971] *Noord Transvaler,* ‘Ken u Kandidaat: Jy moet onwrikbaar wees”, 7 October 1988.
[972] *Noord Transvaler,* ‘Ken u candidate: Verkiesing is ‘voet in die deur’, 15 October 1988.
[973] *Noord Transvaler,* ‘Ken u kandidaat: Verkeerbeheer moet aandag geniet”, 14 October 1988.

neighbourhoods and limiting the commercial area to the traditional white business center is a priority for him", the newspaper reported. [974]

Days before the election, the 150th Anniversary of the Great Trek was celebrated in Potgietersrus. A wreath was laid at the monument to the slain Boers of 1854, a parade marched through town featuring young people bedecked in Voortrekker outfits, Laerskool Krugerpark drum majorettes, and the Voortrekkers [young cadets] dragging an oxwagon through town.[975] The following week, the CP swept the Council, taking all but one of the nine seats. The single independent seat was filled by Pieter Breytenbach of Ward 3, who was no less insistent on the need for "the preservation of our own residential areas".[976] The Potgietersrus victory for the CP was the most convincing in the region, but the party secured a majority in virtually every town of the northern Transvaal.[977] In the Transvaal, the CP garnered 53.3% of the municipal vote, while the NP trailed with 38.5%. Humphries reported that "The party did best in the northern mining and industrial areas of the province". By contrast, the CP gained just 18% in the Orange Free State, 3% in the Cape, and zero in Natal.[978]

The week after the election, the Town Council of Potgietersrus issued a statement expressing support for the moves of the CP-controlled Boksburg City Council to reintroduce racially segregated facilities. George Morkel-Brink, now Chairman of the Council's Management Committee, declared "This Town Council appreciates the way in which the City Council of Boksburg protects the interests of its inhabitants". In his statement, he suggested that the council approach the architect who was designing new municipal buildings and request that he "make a submission regarding separate payment points for the different racial groups in the payment hall as well as toilet facilities, with associated cost estimates".[979] The following year, the Town Council indicated its dismay that the Attorney General had decided not to prosecute cases in which the Group Areas Act was violated in the town. Councillor Van Eck reaffirmed the council's policy of pure residential segregation: "where the law is violated in the future, the council will report it again. The police will also be asked to investigate such cases".[980]

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[974] *Ibid*.
[975] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Various Pictures', 9 September 1988.
[976] *Northern Transvaler,* 'Ken u kandidate: Nuwe waterbronne sy prioriteit", 30 September 1988.
[977] Naboomspruit: 5 out of 9; Ellisras: 7 out of 9; Duiwelskloof 5 out of 5; Messina 4 out of 6; Louis Trichardt 6 out of 9. Pietersburg: 5 out of 9.
[978] Richard Humphries, "New White Municipal Politics," *Indicator SA* (1989), p.14.
[979] *Northern Transvaler,* 'Potgietersrus steun standpunt', 9 December 1988.
[980] *Northern Transvaler,* 'Raad misgenoegd oor PG se besluit', 3 February 1989.

It was clear that however decisive the local victories of the CP, the national tide had turned against intensified segregation, especially following the appointment of FW de Klerk as NP *Hoofleier* in early 1989. The "activism" of the CP Councillors often amounted to little more than publicity stunts. Thus, for instance, in February 1989, despite all their protestations over the structure, CP councillors from across the region attended a meeting of the Bosveld RSC. They nonetheless still refused to attend the dinner that followed. The *Noord Transvaler* reported that Councillor Van Eck "stated pertinently during the meeting that he will not attend a dinner of the council where people of other colours are also present". His opinion was shared by about fourteen other CP members who also did not attend the dinner, and another Potgietersrus CP councillor was reported to have said that "it is bad enough that seats in the assembly hall have to be shared".[981] Similar stunts had been undertaken by the Pietersburg CP Councillors, who had some months prior issued an ultimatum to the Northern RSC to vacate the offices they rented from the council in the town center on the pretence that the municipality required more office space.[982]

During 1989, however, the CP garnered what was perhaps unprecedented publicity, owing in no small part to the unrelenting organisational work of its leaders. Schalk Pienaar had emerged as a leading voice fighting against the announced scrapping of the monthly Area Grant that had been provided to farmers just as the long-standing drought had reached its worst levels in years. Along with Dries Bruwer, long-time President of the Transvaal Agricultural Union (*Transvaal Landbou Unie, TLU*) (and indeed soon to be CP Member of Parliament for the Lydenburg constituency), Pienaar championed the cause of farmers who, by some reports, were "on their knees" and facing unprecedented bankruptcy. In the National Parliament, "Mr Pienaar appealed to the leader of the NP, FW de Klerk, to respond to numerous requests from the CP to design a plan of action and implement it so that the white farmers in the Northern Transvaal regain their place of honour on farms". In conclusion, Pienaar stated: "The Bushvelders are proud people. They do not ask for alms. They ask for the preservation of their soil".[983]

By this point, Andy Goetsch explains, the struggling tobacco farmers who had come to form a key source of support for the CP "took over many things, and one of the big things they took over was the tobacco coop" – the PTK. He continues:

> It was controlled like the business chamber, there were members and they voted in directors - 10 or 12 directors that ran the whole business. Now the old Afrikaans

[981] *Northern Transvaler,* `Weier om saam met anderskleuriges tee eet", 17 February 1989.
[982] *Northern Transvaler,* 'Wye reaksie oor SDR-mense ander kantore moet soek', 9 December 1988.
[983] *Northern Transvaler,* 'Droogte eis sy tol: Plan van aksie vir boere dringend nodig", 3 March 1989.

> system is that the older person must be the leader, even if he's not the best person. The older people were all directors, they were better-off farmers. They were mainly Nationalist Party. But the younger group [of embattled farmers] became CP and AWB. They had been sidelined, but they decided they were going to take over this [PTK]. So they all worked together, they all voted that old bunch out and they put in all the youngsters in… Within a few years, the rich coop, which had a lot of money in reserve in the bank, it was all spent and the tobacco coop closed down.[984]

Ballim notes the PTK's controversial and costly decision to invest in the failed Euro Bank in 1988, but explains a range of other factors which oversaw the decline of the tobacco industry in Potgietersrus, including broader moves towards market liberalisation.[985] And Goetsch agrees that at the most fundamental level, the "ground was drying up", ultimately making it impossible to continue to cultivate tobacco.[986] Nonetheless, the CP takeover of the PTK should well be considered as part of the party's defiant campaign for self-determination and autonomy.

Yet the CP nonetheless did not enjoy unchallenged support in the Northern Transvaal. The PTK episode did little to assuage the fears of bigger businessmen about the trajectory proposed by the CP. The proposition of a return to strict petty apartheid invoked the ire of businessmen in Pietersburg, a historically more industrialised town where already moves had been undertaken for multiracial trading areas (or "grey" zones). In 1989, 360 businessmen of the town took out six pages of advertorials in the *Review* and the *Lebowa Times*: "This action is seen as a mustering of power and an early warning by businessmen to the Town Council and buying public (whites and Coloureds alike) that a return to petty apartheid will not be tolerated by them. Businessmen want to prevent the possibility of a boycott action such as for example Boksburg".[987] Here, the NP enjoyed comparatively greater support, eventually flipping the Council from the CP in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, in the smaller towns like Potgietersrus, the CP continued to predominate.

[984] Interview with Andy Goetsch, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.
[985] Ballim, "Pre-History of Neoliberalism", p.1249-1250.
[986] Interview with Andy Goetsch, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.
[987] *Lebowa Times,* "Businessmen's warning to Council", 3 February 1989.



Figure 57: Offices of the old Tobacco Cooperative stand empty today. Photograph taken by author on 4 March 2020.

When it became clear that the NP under De Klerk was deeply engaged in moves towards negotiating with the ANC, the CP grew ever more stark in its public pronouncements. At a gathering in Potgietersrus, Treurnicht's Deputy, Ferdie Hartzenberg told the audience that it was "naive for any person to think that a nation that has had to sacrifice so much over the years and pay so dearly for what it has promised, must sacrifice everything, without even blinking an eye", and he linked the "impoverishment of whites" that had ostensibly occurred since 1983 directly to the government's policy of integration. He claimed actions in the City Council of Boksburg had shown that growth rates could be reversed while segregation was maintained: "Millions of Rands for building projects have already been approved for the town". Moreover, house burglaries in Boksburg had apparently decreased drastically, while in the NP-controlled Hillbrow many business stood empty because "it is simply no longer safe there". The choice, as Hartzenberg framed it, was between a CP-controlled Boksburg or an NP-controlled Hillbrow.[988]

The CP's obstructionist strategy paid dividends in the 1989 General Election, once again increasing its majority. Schalk Pienaar was reelected as MP for Potgietersrus with a

[988] *Northern Transvaler,* 'Boksburg Vertoonvenster vir CP', 25 August 1989.

substantially increased majority: from 1,238 to 3141,[989] In addition, the CP now controlled all five constituencies in the Northern Transvaal.[990] The newly established Democratic Party (DP), by contrast, managed to garner just 332 votes across the whole province. Celebrated the party's Transvaal victory, Pienaar declared that "this election has once again proved that the CP is the fastest growing white political party in SA nationwide".[991] Willie Snyman, the CP MP for Pietersburg, said that the election proved that support was evaporating for

> the NP's philosophy of unitary state in which the status of the whites will be reduced to a minority group whose rights must be protected against black domination. This process of disintegration will inevitably continue until the ideal of Freedom of a people, as in the past, once again prevails in the land that belongs to us historically and in law. This ideal has now been fully achieved here in the Northern Transvaal… This is now CP world.[992]

Conclusion

By the end of the 1980s, it had become clear that Botha's reforms were ultimately unable to stem revolutionary action, as they had hoped. Of Botha's Generals, O'Meara wrote that "perhaps their own deeply ingrained racism blinded them to the fact that it was not enough to *reform* apartheid: the minimal compromise which would have 'undercut the demands [of the revolutionaries]' required *scrapping* apartheid".[993] While the *verligtes* of the NP had introduced policies which had diverged from the hard Verwoerdian paradigm, these had not fundamentally broken with the three basic pillars of spatial segregation, administrative balkanisation and economic extractivism upon which the apartheid order was built.

Perhaps especially in rural areas, the fundamentals remained. While there was acceptance of the permanence of Black urban settlement in the country's metropolitan areas, a relaxation of both petty apartheid and the systems of influx control which had sought to constrain the mobility of Black people across segregated spaces, there was no talk of repealing spatial segregation as such. The racial spatial boundaries were to remain, as indeed were the borders of the Bantustans. And while there was greater acknowledgment of the need for greater forms of cooperation and shared funding formulas between institutions of the Bantustan state and "white South Africa", and moves towards the establishment of joint bodies to consider developmental matters of mutual concern, there was no serious apprehension that the Bantustan bureaucracies would be dissolved. And state reforms were careful to avoid

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[989] *Northern Transvaler,* 'LVs Tevrede met Uitslag', 8 September 1989.
[990] *Noord Transvaler,* 'CP maak skoonskip in Verre Noord', 15 September 1989.
[991] *Northern Transvaler,* 'LVs Tevrede met Uitslag', 8 September 1989.
[992] *Ibid*.
[993] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.321.

disrupting the exploitative relations of capitalist accumulation and economic parasitism that had been entrenched between white towns and Black settlements. While urban areas saw the proliferation of structures of organised labour, unionism remained formally proscribed in the Bantustans. And while the state invested aggressively in policies of "industrial decentralisation" to lure white businesses to "border areas", conditions for Black businesses in the Bantustans themselves remained constrained. The NP promised the dawning of a new era, yet, in many senses, its leadership doubled down on the core tenets of the Bantustan strategy. Yet these initiatives only

Nevertheless, even the nominal reforms undertaken by Botha's administration precipitated profound splits within Afrikaner Nationalism. When Treurnicht and his supporters staged their dramatic walk-out in 1982, they revealed a core fracture in white politics which, especially in the rural towns of the Northern Transvaal, grew ever wider over the course of the decade. The CP refused to accept any measure of "mixing", however superficial. CP politicians described the defence of "white space", racially segregated institutions and petty apartheid in terms of the survival of white Afrikaners – their values, identity and culture, and, as Treurnicht's political sermons insisted, their divine destiny.

The CP's ardent defences of Verwoerdian precepts, seasoned with invocations of apocalyptic, *swart gevaar* imagery, earned the party ever-increasing electoral majorities across towns of the Northern Transvaal. With significant success, and buoyed by broader rising currents of white right-wing sentiment, the CP used the town councils as platforms for galvanising white communities against the national government, puncturing its reform initiatives through appeals to regional sovereignty. Over this period, the party also worked to stimulate grassroots forms of organisation, creating a range of youth, women's and cultural associations which spanned across towns of the region. CP party activists worked both through and outside of formal institutions of state to stimulate a bottom-up network of white activism over questions of space, administration and economy. The emergence of the CP thus signalled the rise of a profound new force in the rural local governance landscape of the region. By the end of the 1980s, the party had entrenched itself in positions of power across the Northern Transvaal, insisting in self-assured tones that the CP and its apartheid values were here to stay. Yet beyond calling for a return to the past, the CP had little answer to the multifaceted crises facing the white state by the end of the 1980s. Nor could the CP turn the tide against the dramatic change that was to follow.

PART III: TRANSITION AND AMALGAMATION

The period between 1989 and 2000 was one characterised by a range of dramatic transformations of the terrain of rural local governance, amidst profound developments of both national and global scope.

South Africa came to witness seismic shifts during this period, spurred by the country's political and economic elites. At the highest levels of the political establishment, moves were afoot which signalled an opening towards talks between the apartheid government and the ANC. On 5 July 1989, Nelson Mandela was brought from Victor Verster prison in Cape Town to meet President Botha in an historic first encounter. After the aging Botha was replaced by FW de Klerk as party president in late 1989, moves towards formal negotiations accelerated. At the opening of parliament on 2 February 1990, De Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC and other liberation organisations, the release of Mandela and other political prisoners, and the opening of a process towards a formal transition towards multiparty democracy.

On the global front, the collapse of the Soviet Union signalled the dawning of an era of Western capitalist triumphalism. The end of the Cold War saw the rise of profound optimism about the future of liberal democracy, with the United States as its exemplar. And Von Schnitzler points to the rise of a liberal democratic theory of change promoted by Western scholars, development experts and politicians which placed at its centre the notion of transition. What "transitology" promised was the possibility of a "a clear-cut shift from an authoritarian regime to liberal democracy" through organised forms of negotiation between political elites.[994] Pointing to the wide range of countries in which liberal democracy had successfully taken root, the field of transitology came to insist that historical context and structure mattered less than "elite pacting", reducing "democratic transitions to a process involving interactions among a handful of political elite".[995] And, Von Schnitzler continues, this elite conception of transition came to shape not only the analysis of what took place in South Africa in the 1990s, but the institutional modalities and aims of the democratisation process:

> From conflict resolution and trauma experts, to legal and constitutional reform initiatives, transitional justice mechanisms and numerous consultants working out the reform and restructuring of governmental institutions, "transition" enabled and

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[994] Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure,* p.23.
[995] Valerie Bunce, "Should Transitologists Be Grounded?," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 1 (1995), 121; See also: Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 1 (1994): 173–85, https://doi.org/10.2307/2500331;.

> produced reality, rather than merely describing it. In South Africa, a whole array of NGOs and development consultancies sprung up while older organizations of the liberation movement were retooled toward new goals … Transition expertise shaped not just the discourses of the futures available for the new South Africa, but also its political and legal institutions and the organization of "civil society".[996]

Yet what these elite-centred processes ran up against over the course of the country's transition were precisely the structures and relations that had become entrenched over the course of South Africa's apartheid past: its geographical unevenness, local specificities, the peculiarity of institutional histories, and the inertia of local entrenched interests.

There was, in short, a "sharp disjuncture" between national imaginings and local realities – [997] a disjuncture that was also apparent in the areas of present-day Mogalakwena. The period between 1990 and 1994 was one marked by intense new forms of instability and uncertainty in Lebowa, the Northern Transvaal, as the old order crumbled and those who had built their political and economic careers – and worldviews – upon apartheid structures undertook strategies to secure their futures. Some clung doggedly to the old order, while those who were more perceptive began to recalibrate towards a possible ANC-led future. The contests that arose in this tumultuous period would have profound consequences for the path that the transition took in the region – including the local government transition between 1995 and 2000.

When consulting existing scholarship about the transformation of South Africa in the 1990s, one is once again struck by an elite-centrism. The transition to democracy is frequently explored largely in terms of a high-level national events which unfolded in the orbit of the negotiations table, and many scholars accord processes of elite pacting an overwhelming place in explaining processes of change over this period.[998] In ways that echo the transitologists, the negotiations table is described as the crucible of the new nation, the actors seated around it wrestling over the future of the country. Relatedly, the limits of South African post-apartheid democracy are described overwhelmingly in terms of elite self-interest and betrayal. Yet rarely do these scholars consider how this elite domain of negotiations politics articulated with places, people and institutions in other parts of the country. As Burawoy and Verdery have noted elsewhere:

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[996] Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure,* p.18.
[997] *Ibid.,* p.19.
[998] Among the most promiment critics who describe an "elite transition", see: Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000); Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002).

> In conventional portraits of the "transition" the micro is determined or is an expression of structures, policies, and ideologies of a macro character, with little theorization of the unintended consequences brought about locally by political and cultural contestation intertwined with economic struggles.[999]

Here we see, once again, what Hart would describe as the erroneous "impact model" of change – in which localities are merely passive receptors of broader processes. By contrast, the chapters that follow seek "to attend much more to how the unfolding uncertainties of macro institutions affect practices within micro worlds" and consider the "day to day realities" of processes of transformation as they unfolded in the areas of present-day Mogalakwena.[1000] They emphasise how national political developments came to articulate with local historical realities – the entrenched axes of space, administration and capital accumulation – to produce a distinct new era for rural local governance. While certainly the old was in decline, the new struggled to emerge.

Rather than simply filtering down unilaterally from the negotiations table or the constitutional dispensation that followed, the nature (and limits) of change was also shaped at the local and regional levels; dynamics in these spheres rebounded upon the national political field, and shaped the menu of possibilities that confronted national leaders. In exploring how the transition was experienced and reformulated in the settlements of present-day Mogalakwena, these final chapters bring to light a range of actors, institutions and ideas beyond the ambit of the national leadership. Once again, these chapters show how the networks of power relations that came to structure rural local governance over this transitional period were materialised through spatial, administrative and economic processes which structured the terrain of rural local governance over the course of the 1990s, and fed into high-level processes of change.

In **Chapter 7**, I examine how settlements across Lebowa witnessed the efflorescence of new popular structures between 1990 and 1994. A cascade of new civic associations, union branches, and youth congresses emerged even in places that had remained largely inactive over the previous decade. De Klerk's 1990 announcement radically changed the conditions of possibility for organising in the rural localities of Lebowa. By the late 1980s, the spatial boundaries and institutions of local governance in the Mokopane region and the Lebowa Bantustan more broadly had come under intense challenge from popular forms of mobilisation. Yet still, popular mobilisation remained spatially bounded, largely confined within the borders of the Bantustan. Even as boycott activity reached into the economic life of the white towns, spatial and political segregation remained as entrenched as ever. And the conditions of the

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[999] Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery, eds., *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p.1.
[1000] Burawoy and Verdery, 6–7.

State of Emergency had imposed intense restrictions on the possibilities of mass action, with the pervasive presence of security personnel across the settlements of Lebowa imposing a chilling effect on political activities. Yet with the unbanning of liberation organisations, the release of political prisoners and the lifting of emergency regulations in 1990, profound new possibilities for mass mobilisation arose which challenged apartheid's racial boundaries and localised forms of administration.

New local structures held the very real promise of democratising aspects of local government in the Bantustan, directly challenging the Lebowa's system of local governance. Yet this was also an era characterised by highly effective manoeuvres by the ANC to monopolise modes of popular struggle, to absorb a wide range of local organisational forms, people, and classes under its umbrella, and to position itself as a government-in-waiting. From 1990, the leadership of the ANC set about establishing itself as an above-ground organisation, building a multiscalar party bureaucracy that reached from branch level, through to regional, provincial and national structures. This saw the party undertake a complex dance with existing popular structures of the UDF, with activists on the ground increasingly drawn into formal positions in the party. Local civic activists and unionists who were at the forefront of popular struggles in Lebowa came to publicly align with the ANC over the course of the early 1990s following mass conferences or mergers with COSATU-aligned unions.

This process was not, however, without tensions. As negotiations for a new constitutional dispensation proceeded in fits and starts, and the prospect of a future multiparty election began to emerge more clearly over the horizon, the national ANC leadership remained uncertain about the depth of popular support the party enjoyed, particularly in rural areas. With the ANC's return, its top structures would encourage a strategy of coalition building with Bantustan structures. Regional ANC leaders worked to hedge their bets with Bantustan elites and the *magoši,* who positioned themselves as key allies in shoring up the rural vote. Out of the ANC's engagements with the Lebowa government and its chiefs, there emerged a working relationship which would be carried through to the negotiations table. Yet while continuing to champion local issues, the leadership of the ANC came to increasingly assert a top-down line of command – an authority that the party could claim from the popularity of its national leaders, and the image it had built over the years as the true heir to a new South Africa. While in Lebowa, as we will see, the national ANC's decisions at times attracted some consternation from the rank-and-file, cries of protest were largely muted by a longing for an end to apartheid repression and the euphoria of the prospect of the entry of a Black government. This centralisation of power and demobilisation of bottom-up democracy would prove a defining feature of rural local governance in this historical conjuncture.

If the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 and the move towards multiparty negotiations had attracted celebrations from supporters of the liberation struggle, it had earned the outrage of white conservatives in the Northern Transvaal. The CP charged De Klerk with betraying the Afrikaner people, and the white right-wing more generally sought tooth-and-nail to disrupt the transition. While groups like the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) embarked on a violent public campaign to prevent the repeal of apartheid, the CP sought to use its control of town councils (which was especially concentrated in the Northern Transvaal) to protect spatial, political and economic apartheid on the ground. While apartheid laws which upheld segregation were rapidly dismantled by sittings of parliament, the CP promised to retain racial divisions on the ground in the municipalities it controlled.

In **Chapter 8**, I examine the last-ditch attempts of the right-wing in Potgietersrus, and across the region more broadly, to stonewall the unfolding of democratisation. These appeals once again took on distinctly localised spatial, administrative and economic dimensions: when it became clear that a new national dispensation was in the offing, the white right-wing appealed to notions of local autonomy, the protection of Afrikaner identity through the protection of "white space", the right to white self-government, and the preservation of "white taxpayers' money" for the exclusive development of white towns. This was crystallised most clearly in the notion of the Volkstaat, which essentially thought in the very same terms of the apartheid Bantustan strategy, seeking to re-instantiate spatial, administrative and fiscal segregation, without offering a feasible means of sustaining the relations of economic parasitism that facilitated this over the apartheid period.

Relative to their limited numerical strength, the far-right would present an oversized challenge to the transition process, which remained largely confined to conservative towns on the Rand and those of the Northern Transvaal. The CP would work to directly constrain the possibilities of change at the local level, and constituted a key shaper of the landscape of rural local governance in the period. Yet while fixing to be the spoilers of the democratic transition process, the white far right were ultimately outmoded and their Volkstaat project had no prospect of being realised – even if the concept continued to hold significant sway. At the same time, the NP's attempts to galvanise Black support in its direction failed miserably, opening the way for the ANC to undertake profound restructuring after the 1994 elections.

In the early democratic period, departments of the former white state would come to be merged, reconfigured, and recalibrated through new scripts of governance devised through the negotiations process and enshrined in the laws of the new constitutional democratic order. New powerful institutions would be constituted at the political centre: a non-racial, democratic national parliament and a reformed judiciary at the top of which sat a Constitutional court. The

economic cluster was recalibrated and overhauled, precipitating the rise of a new and emboldened National Treasury.[1001] And in place of the divided Bantustan and white bureaucracies would emerge new provincial governments. These processes of bureaucratic amalgamation and deracialisation would prove another key conjunctural shift, introducing a profoundly new institutional landscape within which local government would be situated.

Yet the process of amalgamating and democratising local government structures in the early democratic era would prove far more challenging. Sakhela Buhlungu and Doreen Atkinson explain that the formulation of local government reform began in 1991 with CODESA 1, which initiated a separate negotiation process after the "passing of the Interim Measures for Local Government Act which allowed local communities to negotiate from a range of institutional options, from total amalgamation to various forms of resource sharing or the establishment of joint service bodies". These local negotiating forums allowed for dialogue between so-called "statutory" actors of local government (that is, apartheid-era administrators and politicians) and "non-statutory" actors (principally, community organisations and civic associations). Thereafter, local government reform was to proceed in two phases, as per the Local Government Transition Act of 1993: an interim phase (1993-5) ending with the first local government elections; and a final phase (1995-2000).[1002] Yet while significant scholarship has emerged from the field of public administration which details the formal processes through which local government was to be reformed,[1003] however, few have considered the political challenges that were encountered in the roll-out of the reforms.[1004]

In **Chapter 9**, I consider the tumultuous processes of local government transition that began in 1994 in the areas that would come to be amalgamated into the Mogalakwena Local Municipality in 2000. Once again, issues of apartheid space, administration and economic relationality between the "white town" and areas of the former Bantustan would emerge as

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[1001] See Joel Pearson, Sarita Pillay, and Ivor Chipkin, "State-Building in South Africa after Apartheid: The History of the National Treasury," PARI Working Paper (Public Affairs Research Institute, January 24, 2016).
[1002] Sakhela Buhlungu and Doreen Atkinson, "Introduction," in *State of the Nation: South Africa 2007*, ed. Sakhela Buhlungu et al. (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007), p.29.
[1003] Jaap De Visser, *Developmental Local Government: A Case Study of South Africa* (Antwerpen : Holmes Beach, Fla: Intersentia ; Distribution for North America, Gaunt, 2005); Glenda Fick, *Local Government: A Review of Selected Legislation* (Auckland Park (South Africa): Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, 2001); Susan Parnell, Edgar Pieterse, and Mark Swilling, *Democratising Local Government: The South African Experiment* (Juta and Company Ltd, 2002); Mirjam Van Donk et al., eds., *Consolidating Developmental Local Government: Lessons from the South African Experience* (Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press, 2008).
[1004] With the exception of: Gillian Hart, *Disabling Globalization*; Brij Maharaj, "The Politics of Local Government Restructuring and Apartheid Transformation in South Africa: The Case of Durban," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 15, no. 2 (July 1, 1997): 261–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/02589009708729614; Luvuyo Wotshela, "Long-Term Struggles for Land and Related Services".

central axes around which municipal politics of the era played out. This took place as global discourses of austerity, cost-recovery and managerialism came to suffuse the post-apartheid institutional reform agenda, married with notions of the developmental local state. Yet rather than wiping the slate clean, the outcome of these new policies came to articulate with far the longer histories of racialised dispossession, state neglect and economic extractivism that underpinned modes of apartheid rural governance.

Chapter 7: The ANC, People's Power, and Lebowa's Collapse (1990-1994)

> [C]elebrations echoed in all townships in the far north in similar fashion to those in townships on the Reef, in Pretoria and the Cape. After the announcement on Saturday of Mr Mandela's imminent release, the streets of Seshego swarmed with crowds chanting freedom songs and shouting the name of Mandela … Thousands of jubilant youths marched through the streets of Lebowakgomo carrying placards that read: "Mandela is free". The march was halted at intervals while speakers gave instant addresses on the history of the ANC. Parents were urged to join the marching parties in order to be updated on history. It was the same at Mahwelereng where marches also went on late into the night.[1005]

Introduction

Following the unbanning of political parties in 1990, a flurry of popular campaigns over basic services, working conditions and political rights swept across the Lebowa Bantustan, spilling over into the towns of the Northern Transvaal. This was a period in which the lines dividing segregated spaces and apartheid-backed forms of local government came under unprecedented challenge, swept up in campaigns for greater popular decision making in how everyday life was to be governed.

In this Chapter, I examine this heady period of contingency, considering what it meant for local governance in the Mokopane region. I identify several key elements which emerged out of this conflictual crucible and which brought seismic change to the nature of local political competition. I consider attempts towards the democratisation of local governance that came with the lifting of formal restrictions on political organisations and the efflorescence of popular campaigns around various "bread-and-butter" issues, including housing and basic services, education and working conditions for public servants. These campaigns produced ties of solidarity between various organisations and unions, representing an unprecedented challenge to the Bantustan state and putting the Lebowa political elite on the backfoot.

Crucially, the organisations that rose to greatest prominence during these struggles – the civic organisations, the education union and the public servants union – came to align themselves with the ANC, which was transforming itself from an underground organisation into a government-in-waiting. The affiliation of the civic movement, the South African Democratic

[1005] *Lebowa Times,* 'So it was the marchers' day', 16 February 1990.

Teachers' Union (SADTU) and the public servants' union (the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union, NEHAWU) would profoundly boost the ANC's imprint on popular struggle and its claims as the historic vanguard of the revolution – a legacy which would prove vital in securing party support in the decades that followed. Yet it would also bring the rhythms of local activism into direct conversation with national-level leaders and the negotiations process that was unfolding in Pretoria and Kempton Park over the course of the early 1990s. This was not without a degree of consternation from local leaders, however, particularly as the ANC made increasing efforts to court key leaders of the Bantustan, including members of the Lebowa Cabinet and magoši, into supporting their bid for power in the unfolding negotiations.

The Promise and Limits of Local Democracy

The celebrations that gripped the townships and villages of Lebowa following the release of Mandela were interpreted as a show of strength for the ANC, with crowds holding aloft the party's green, gold and black colours.[1006] In the months that followed, the ANC would seek to bed down this support by rolling out new structures throughout the region. No longer restricted to underground activities, activists set about creating an organisational scaffolding that reached from the local level through to regional and national structures. At the same time, this era would cement many of the repertoires of above-ground local political organisation and protest that became a persistent feature of the post-apartheid era, now increasingly unrestrained by the spatial boundaries imposed by apartheid to limit Black political aspiration to the Bantustans. These factors would directly shape the character of the emerging ANC.

ANC activists proceeded to rapidly establish an elaborate party machinery which connected even remote villages to the currents of ANC politics, and, through their connections to mass-based campaigns, firmly planted party officials in the rhythms of local governance – as will be elaborated below. Among the first priorities was the creation of branch structures, which were rapidly rolled out across the region, often through the tireless legwork of local organisers. And many of these organisers had proved key figures in UDF politics and structures in the 1980s. Tlhalefi Mashamaite, for instance, the Chairperson of the Mapela Civic Association, was appointed a regional organiser for the ANC. He explained the process of establishing a branch:

> You must first establish a contact in that village … make him understand. Maybe four, five young people - you bring them along. You explain to them what you want. Already people did know that there is ANC, Mandela has been released, so that makes our work very easier. Ja, the release of Mandela made our work very, very easy. And then [as] the ANC - we built branches *per village.* Just imagine how

[1006] *Ibid*.

> many villages are in this region. So that is how the ANC in Limpopo, in our region, came alive.[1007]

Godfrey Molekwa was also drawn into these initiatives. He explains how "we were establishing a branch of the ANC in every village because South Africa was not demarcated into wards"

The ANC's Mokopane branch, for instance, was established in October 1990. Vaaltyn Kekana claimed that the ANC had over 1,000 members in the area, and the branch would bring together members from Mahwelereng, Sekgakgapeng, Moshate, Madiba, Tshamahansi and other villages in close proximity to township.[1008] Other branches would be established in the more distant village clusters of Mapela and Bakenberg. New Youth Congresses were established in a wave across the region, affiliated to SAYCO lead by Peter Mokaba.[1009] From late 1990, the Congresses would be transformed into branches of the ANC Youth League. The ANC-aligned COSAS now also established an above-ground presence, with new branches launched across the region.[1010] And the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) created local offices, encouraging active participation of women in local politics and community-based organisations.[1011] And a new meso-level of ANC administration was created in the form of six sub-regions across the territory.[1012] The party would crown the end of 1990 with the holding of the first regional conference at Turfloop, at which a new structure, the ANC Region, was formed to preside over ANC activities across Region G - a territory which included all of the Northern Transvaal and the Bantustans of Lebowa, Venda, Gazankulu, and KwaNdebele. Its first president would be Joel Netshitenzhe, flanked by Aaron Motsoaledi as deputy, Collins Chabane was secretary, and Edgar Mashiane as Treasurer.[1013] This leadership would remain largely stable over the course of the early 1990s, with the exception of its chairman: Netshitenzhe would be seconded to the National Executive in 1991, and replaced by Ngoako Ramatlhodi, the man who would become the first premier of the Northern Province after 1994.

[1007] Interview with Tlhalefi Mashamaite, Mokopane, 22 March 2022.
[1008] *Lebowa Times,* 'Launch ANC', 5 October 1990.
[1009] Mokaba was released from detention in February 1990, just one week after Mandela. *The Star,* 'Leader of 'Young Lions' is released', 19 February 1990.
[1010] See, for instance, *Lebowa Times,* 'COSAS launched in Seshego', 31 August 1990.
[1011] See, for instance, *Lebowa Times,* 'Get involved, Women – Khanye', 23 November 1990.
[1012] These would align with the sub-regions mapped out by administrators of Region G, and included the Far North (Venda, Louis Trichardt), North East, Central (Pietersburg, Seshego), Eastern (included Jane Furse, Tafelkop), Southern (KwaNdebele), and Western (Mahwelereng, Mapela, Potgietersrus, Bakenberg, Ellisras, Bochum, and surrounds). In the post-apartheid era, these structures would be reconfigured to align with the new jurisdictional boundaries of district municipalities, and would be renamed "regions", with what was called the "region" named instead the "province". And within each sub-region, new zonal structures were created which encompassed a number of branches.
[1013] Other members of the executive included politicians who would continue to play a pivotal role in post-apartheid provincial politics: the future Premier of Limpopo, Cassel Mathale, George Mashamba, Joyce Mabudhafasi, Nelson Diale, Lawrence Phokanoka, M Phala, M Fenyane and Dr Kgapule. *Lebowa Times,* 'Mankweng ANC Region formed', 7 December 1990.

A new multiscalar intra-party system would see channels of communication and exchange established, drawing in all structures to a thick and dynamic web of interconnection. Members of the National Executive were, for instance, often travelled to the region to address ANC branch structures or to participate in local initiatives. December 1990 marches in Matlala, Bochum and Seshego to protest police harassment, for instance, were led by members of the ANC National Executive and the regional office.[1014] Members of the ANC's national top six would make periodic visits to the region too. Mandela had made his first visit to the region with a massive gathering at Turfloop in March 1990. In January 1992, he was appointed as Chancellor of the University of the North.[1015] And in the run-up to the elections of 1994, he had visited Seshego, Mahwelereng and Moria. In January 1991, Oliver Tambo would speak at Turfloop to a crowd of thousands, alongside Elias Motsoaledi and John Nkadimeng.[1016] In February, SACP General Secretary, Chris Hani, would lead a march in Pietersburg.[1017]

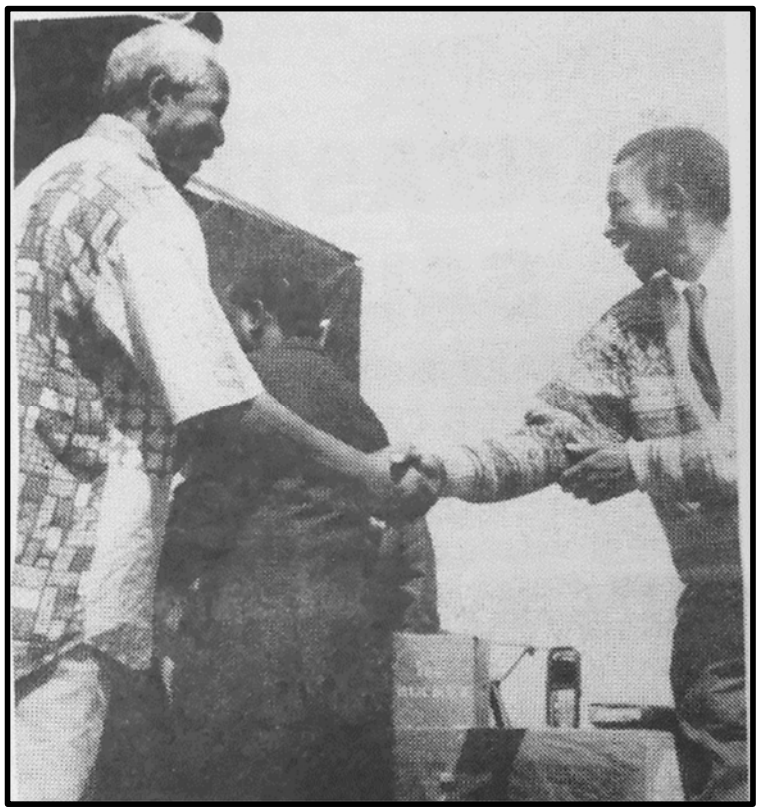


Figure 58: Mandela arrives in Mahwelereng and meets Bob Mmola, the then ANC Western sub-regional chairman and future first mayor of Mogalakwena Local Municipality.[1018]

[1014] *Lebowa Times,* 'March to police', 21 December 1990.
[1015] *Lebowa Times,* 'Chancellor Mandela', 17 January 1992.
[1016] *Lebowa Times,* 'Thousands of people gather at Turfloop to hear Tambo say: People must govern", 11 January 1991.
[1017] *Lebowa Times,* 'Hani's march was peaceful', 8 February 1991.
[1018] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mandela meets the people of Mahwelereng', 8 April 1994.

The broad networks that had operated often in covert form in the 1980s were thus now brought into the light of day and given institutional character which increasingly resembled a government-in-waiting. Yet there remained distinct challenges on the ground in bringing these structures to life and organising party activities. While the unbanning of liberation organisations offered the promise of free political activity, in practice, political organisations continued to experience significant repression throughout the early 1990s. The call for freedom to organise and an end to repression would serve as a major rallying cry throughout the era.

Even after the formal lifting of emergency regulations, a significant SADF presence remained in villages and townships across the region. In April 1990, for instance, members of the Moletsie Youth Congress complained that they were being harassed by soldiers stationed at the Kgoši's headquarters, and prevented from holding meetings.[1019] At the launch of the Mankweng ANC branch in November 1990, Seth Nthai (one of the branch executive) condemned the "intimidatory behaviour of members of the defence force during the launch", and criticised the "continuing presence of soldiers in our townships and villages".[1020] The ANC regional leadership maintained that the SADF was engaged in a concerted campaign to "destabilise the area through secret consultations with a few individual chiefs". The SADF was flooding the villages with pamphlets calling on people to "say no to the ANC", labelling it a "destructive party … out to create chaos and the downfall of the Republic". These actions, the ANC claimed, made their work "virtually impossible".[1021] The SADF in response denied repressing "free political activity aimed at a peaceful transition".[1022] The Lebowa Police were also accused of continuing repression In January 1990, a crowd of nearly 2,000 protesting against conditions in schools were dispersed after shots were fired and teargas thrown by a contingent of police in Seshego – ostensibly on the orders of Ramodike.[1023] In May 1990, the Matlala Youth Congress called on Chief Minister Ramodike to "stop the brutal actions of the security police who interfere in the political activities of the people actively organising for the new South Africa".[1024] Ramodike would insist that security forces of the central state were the ones orchestrating the repression, and that his government had no control over their actions.[1025] The Matlala Youth Congress accused the Chief Minister of speaking with a forked tongue.[1026]

[1019] *Lebowa Times,* 'Moletsi youths cry: Soldiers raid us', 20 April 1990.
[1020] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mankweng complains about presence of the army', 23 November 1990.
[1021] *Lebowa Times,* 'Counter-accusations by ANC and SADF', 19 April 1991.
[1022] *Ibid*.
[1023] *Sowetan,* 'Shots fired at protestors', 25 January 1990.
[1024] *Lebowa Times,* 'Youths appeal to Ramodike: Stop police harassments', 11 May 1990.
[1025] *Lebowa Times,* 'Chief Minister Reacts', 11 May 1990.
[1026] *Lebowa Times,* 'MAYCO claims Lebowa Police harassment', 15 June 1990.

Respondents from settlements around Mokopane report similar levels of repression, citing the presence of police vehicles (*nyalas*) in the villages, and routine raids and arrests. On the eve of the lifting of the State of Emergency in June 1990, a popular Mahwelereng teacher, ANC activist, member of NOTTU, Dudu Donald Madisha, was arrested by the South African Police.[1027] He later died in detention at the Potgietersrus police station – an event which activists describe as having shattered any illusion that apartheid security forces would let go of power willingly and peacefully. Madisha had been detained under the Internal Security Act, and his official cause of death was classified as "suicide". Yet, as was later affirmed at the inquest into his death, there were no indications that Madisha was suicidal.[1028] Pamphlets issued by the ANC, calling for a consumer boycott of white businesses in Potgietersrus, insisted that Madisha had been "murdered by the racist apartheid regime of terror".[1029] The event attracted significant media coverage, with one national newspaper declaring that "The Old South Africa flourishes in Potgietersrus".[1030]

Yet over the course of the early 1990s, a groundswell of mass-based protests would challenge the conditions prevailing in Lebowa – against the backdrop (and occasionally in concert with) similar popular movements in Bantustans across the country. The period after 1990 witnessed an efflorescence of popular community-based organisations in townships and villages across the region. Civic associations launched campaigns for basic services: housing, water, electricity. Students and teachers deepened their protests against poor conditions in educational facilities. And public servants in the Lebowa bureaucracy staged increasingly crippling strike actions against their employer. Crucially, the ANC would seize the mantel of these struggles, and the last vestiges of competition to the ANC within the broader ranks of the liberation movements would decisively fall away.

Like the ANC, Azapo seized the opportunities presented by the ending of emergency restrictions to create a host of new branches across the region.[1031] Yet it remained profoundly suspicious of the course that the ANC had taken with the apartheid state. Azapo activists were particularly enraged by the inclusion of Bantustan parties like that of Ramodike in the negotiation process. From the outset, the organisation had called for the ANC to "abandon talks altogether and instead seek unity with organisations of the oppressed people, instead of meeting the enemy".[1032] Azapo accused Ramodike of having "one foot in the ANC and another

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[1027] *Weekly Mail,* 'Old SA flourishes in Potgietersrus', 26 July – 1 August 1991.
[1028] *Sunday Times,* 'Mystery of detainee's jail suicide', 13 January 1991.
[1029] *Lebowa Times,* 'Thousands bury NOTTU man', 15 June 1990.
[1030] *Weekly Mail,* 'Old SA flourishes in Potgietersrus', 26 July – 1 August 1991.
[1031] See, for instance: *Lebowa Times,* 'Mokaba Azapo Launched', 25 October 1991.
[1032] *Lebowa Times,* 'Azapo praises stalled talks', 6 April 1990.

in the National Party".[1033] Azapo also resented the ANC's increasingly monopolistic claims over the liberation struggle. On one occasion, Azapo called on the "ANC/UDF/COSATU alliance not to regard themselves as the only spokesmen of the people", and demanded that their "young lions" be warned against "attacking members of other black organisations".[1034] When CODESA began in December 1991, Azapo insisted that it "would never deliver a democratic constitution".[1035]

Rejecting the negotiations process, Azapo and its military wing maintained that the struggle would continue in all its dimensions, including its strategies of sabotage. This resulted in some dramatic showdowns in the Mokopane region between members of the Azanian Liberation Army (Azanla) and the security forces. In the early hours of the 5th of February 1991, a storage facility of the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) several kilometres away from Potgietersrus was bombed, billowing smoke across the horizon.[1036] In response, security personnel were deployed across townships and villages in the area. Azanla claimed responsibility for the attack. The following month, what was described as "the bloodiest shooting in Mahwelereng" took place at a local church.[1037] Two members of Azanla, Thabang Mohlodisi and Mashapu Ronald Malatji, were allegedly involved in the killing of a suspected police informant at a shebeen in Mahwelereng.[1038] The two were then tracked to the African Methodist Episcopal church by security forces, where a gunfight ensued. It was reported that Malatji ran into the hail of bullets and detonated a hand-grenade, killing himself and a policeman. Mohlodisi was also killed in the skirmish.[1039]

Throughout the early 1990s, Azapo sought to continue its activities as if the moves towards negotiations had not at all changed the nature of the struggle. As late as November 1993, Azanla militants were found in a cave outside Lebowakgomo with weapons and munition; the state claimed that the thirty cadres were undergoing military training to "overthrow" the government.[1040] Yet it's role in local politics diminished enormously over this period in the face of the ANC and its mastery of mass-based politics. Azapo's decision to abstain from transitional processes also saw it increasingly distanced from the pulse of popular activity, which came to be increasingly tied to the dynamics that were unfolding at the national

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[1033] *Lebowa Times,* 'Azapo no to UPF', 8 November 1991.
[1034] *Lebowa Times,* 'Azapo praises stalled talks', 6 April 1990.
[1035] *Ibid*.
[1036] Thobejane, *The Fight,* p.45.
[1037] *Lebowa Times,* 'Bloodiest shooting in Mahwelereng', 8 March 1991.
[1038] Thobejane, *The Fight,* p.44. See also: *The Citizen,* 'Grenade kills terrorist and police officer', 6 March 1991; *Sowetan,* 'Slain Azanla cadre named', 7 March 1991.
[1039] Tsoaledi Thobejane, who had helped house Malatji (whom he infers had played a role in the sabotage), describes how he learnt of the event in Thobejane, *The Fight*, p.42–43.
[1040] *Lebowa Times,* "Azanla Cadres to Appear Next Year", 21 October 1994.

negotiating table. Azapo activists today readily admit that the decision to not participate in the negotiations process and the subsequent elections was a profound misstep for the party.[1041] While the PAC also sought to establish a presence in the Lebowa region over the course of the 1990s, it struggled to create any deep organisational impression given that it had little historical connection to the region.[1042]

The success of the ANC in imprinting itself on bread-and-butter struggles and drawing structures of "people's power" into its fold would prove essential to its growing hegemony. Yet this process was not without tensions, as the goals and tactics undertaken by local structures at times ran up against the imperatives of the national ANC, which emphasised the need to build as large a coalition as it could muster in the context of the negotiations – one that included even the Bantustan leaders widely reviled on the ground.

The Civic Movement

A great deal has been written about the role of the civic movement in "democratising local government".[1043] In the Chapter 5, the relative scarcity of civic associations in the Lebowa region in the 1980s was noted, with the civic movement only really taking off in 1990.[1044] It was instead Youth Congresses which predominated as the local forms of UDF structures. Other groupings and organisations that were not explicitly aligned to the UDF such as the local advice offices, the Mahwelereng Action Committee, Seshego Action Committee, and the Seshego Village Committee – most of which were led by a nucleus of key Azapo activists – would continue to operate with varying degrees of effectiveness in the early 1990s, involving themselves in the key material issues afflicting everyday life in the Bantustan. Yet in the 1990s,

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[1041] Thobejane writes: "The continuous 'boycott of elections' seems to have disadvantaged the entire Black Consciousness Movement in the long term". Thobejane, *The Fight,* p.6

[1042] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, 210.

[1043] Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991* (David Philip, 2000); Jeremy Seekings, "From Quiescence to 'People's Power': Township Politics in Kagiso, 1985–1986," *Social Dynamics* 18, no. 1 (June 1, 1992): 20–41; Swilling *et al, Apartheid City in Transition*.

[1044] Van Kessel, 2000. *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p.98. This may be contrasted to other parts of the country, especially the Witwatersrand and the townships of the Eastern Cape, where, as Seekings notes, the growing popularity of the United Democratic Front (UDF) came to be evidenced in the formation of civic associations which "took action over material grievances such as rent increases and inadequate infrastructure or services, and over overtly political grievances concerning democracy and freedom" (2000, 13). Instead, it had largely been the Youth Congresses which formed the rump of UDF activity in the region. The Mankweng Civic Association, formed in [1984], stood as one of the exceptions. There were distinct generational dynamics at play here, as has been described by Van Kessel, Delius and Lekgoathi, with high school students or those attending tertiary institutions playing the most active role in the local political ferment. One can infer from these works that the absence of civic structures constituted by adults was a symptom of the generational divisions that reflected in mixed support for the UDF. The Mankweng Civic was lead by prominent UDF activists Joyce Mabudhafasi and others with close connections to the University of the North (Turfloop); their connection and support for the student struggle may explain their singular emergence.

these forms of organisation found themselves rapidly outpaced and displaced by the civic movement which spread across the region, and many struggled to adapt to the rapidly changing climate of the early 1990s which saw an unprecedented eruption of popular discontent expressed through mass action.

By the end of 1990, a host of new civic associations had emerged in Seshego, Lebowakgomo, Mashashane, Matlala, Zebediela and Mahwelereng, joining the existing Mankweng Civic Association. And in 1991, *Lebowa Times* coverage mentions civic structures being created in Moletjie, Kgapane, Nobody, Mothiba. These structures continued to proliferate, such that by 1992, the Northern Transvaal Civic Association (NTCA) was reporting attendance of delegates from over 400 civic bodies across the Northern Transvaal.[1045] The rapid emergence of civic organisations across the Lebowa Bantustan in the early 1990s would bring a new tempo and organisational form to existing struggles over local material conditions, capitalising on the new mood of open defiance to ramp up their own campaigns of mass action.

Conditions in the villages and townships of Lebowa by the early 1990s were extremely arduous. The economic recession continued to creep into the new decade, producing mass worker layoffs in metropolitan centers, slashing remittances and sending many back to their homes in South Africa's rural areas. One article from the period outlined the dire situation faced by many in the Mokopane area in the wake of the unrelenting drought: "the population is facing a critical situation as many have been at home due to recent retrenchments which took place over last few years, more have depended on farming. Moving back to town by breadwinners has been unprofitable as there are hardly any new jobs. Even farmers are retrenching workers due to drought, with less work to be done on farms".[1046]

The townships and villages also suffered under the deteriorating state of infrastructure amid steeply declining state budgets and a rising population seeking access to housing and basic services. Since the 1980s, affordable housing had been sorely lacking. Backyard shacks had emerged in this context, with often onerous rents charged by landlords.[1047] In 1990, SAYCO president Peter Mokaba insisted that, as it currently operated, "housing is not a right, but a privilege, with teachers and civil servants being the privileged while the masses live in shacks".[1048] Even those who lived in houses were subject to increasingly extortionate service charges. In February 1990, new increases were announced across Lebowa's townships for electricity (from R4 to R10 per month), water (a new service charge of R3, as well as an

[1045] *Lebowa Times,* 'N Tvl Civic body to meet', 6 March 1992.
[1046] *Lebowa Times,* 'First rains are welcome', 9 October 1992.
[1047] *Lebowa Times,* 'We are powerless, Councillor Tsheoga says", 26 January 1990.
[1048] *Lebowa Times,* 'Don't pay! Increased service charges, residents are told", 2 February 1990.

increase from 18c to 27c per kl), refuse removal (R1 per rubbish bin), and a general service levy (from R2 to R6.80 per month).[1049]

These conditions sparked fierce popular campaigns, which took the form of greater mass action in an era of comparative relaxation of the conditions around gatherings and protests. And they represented a profound new challenge for the formal institutions of local government in Lebowa – principally, the town councils and the tribal authorities, alongside other departments of the Bantustan state. The civics evinced a far higher degree of regional coordination than previous popular organisations. And unlike the existing organisations, whose reach remained limited to the townships (notwithstanding some concerted attempts to expand to the rural villages),[1050] the civics brought new forms of connection between the townships and villages. The civics operated effectively to galvanise popular discontent in framings beyond the local, tying campaigns and activities to regional and national campaigns of protest, and frequently in connection to ANC-led campaigns.

Among the most prominent campaigns pursued by the civic movement was the dissolution of the structures of local government in the Bantustan townships. In light of the continuing rental and service hikes in the townships, civic associations across Lebowa instigated a payment boycott that would continue for many months.[1051] Most immediately, the Town Councils were held responsible for deteriorating conditions. In turn, town councillors and mayors would insist that they were "powerless" to do anything about the state of services.[1052] They would frequently refer to the failure of the Lebowa government to provide adequate funding for development and maintenance of infrastructure.[1053] The Lebowa cabinet in turn would point to the fact that the Bantustan's budget was perilously squeezed by continuing cutbacks of the central state. Nevertheless, officials of the town council were finding it ever more difficult to justify their continued roles in the township. At an angry community meeting in Seshego in February 1990, for instance, it was reported that speakers from the floor called on the Lebowa government and local councillors to resign "as they have failed to be of service to the people. These bodies were not chosen by the people, the speakers said, but they are Pretoria's foremen".[1054]

Calls for the dissolution of Town Councils were strengthened by the encouragement of prominent ANC liberation heroes like Nelson Mandela, who on his first visit to the region

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[1049] *Lebowa Times,* 'The new rates', 2 February 1990.
[1050] Telephonic Interview with Khangale Makhado by Sarah Bruchhausen, 21 July 2021.
[1051] *Lebowa Times,* "Tariff Boycott Goes On", 1 June 1990.
[1052] See, for instance, *Lebowa Times,* 'We are powerless, Councillor Tsheoga says', 26 January 1990.
[1053] On one occasion, the Mayor of Mahwelereng told angry crowds who were calling for his resignation that his "council had been advised that the government has no money to fund services" and that they had been "advised to find sponsors to help". *Lebowa Times,* 'Mayor told to resign', 9 March 1990.
[1054] *Lebowa Times,* 'Don't pay! Increased service charges, residents are told", 2 February 1990.

echoed Oliver Tambo's call to "bury the corpse of the Bantustan system". Speaking at the Turfloop stadium in March 1990, he called on those working in Bantustan structures to "abandon apartheid structures and align themselves with the course of liberation movements".[1055]

Controversies around housing would finally push the town councils of Lebowa into oblivion. The civics in Mahwelereng, Seshego, Lebowakgomo and Namakgale seized on the deepening housing crisis with vigour, emboldened by allegations of corruption around private housing developments.[1056] In 1989, the Lebowa government had signed an agreement for the development of housing in Mankweng by a consortium which included LTA Comiat Homes, based in Johannesburg, and East & West Investments, part of the Moolman Group of Companies based in Pietersburg.[1057] By this point, the consortium had already begun similar projects in Ellisras and Venda.[1058] And in the early 1990s, it would also be tasked with the building of homes in Lebowakgomo, Seshego and Mahwelereng, in conjunction with the local town councils and the Department of Home Affairs.[1059] The civics associations accused government officials of presiding over "mass exploitation by town developers in Seshego, Mahwelereng, Lebowakgomo, and Namakgale".[1060] There were widespread complaints that the developers priced many out of the housing market, especially the lowest income groups.[1061] The Lebowakgomo Civic condemned private developers for buying stands for

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[1055] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mandela Show at Turf', 30 March 1990.
[1056] As explained in Chapter 4, the Lebowa government had prioritised the provision of houses to civil servants in a bid to create a stable township population with middle-class lifestyle aspirations. The roll-out of housing was also driven by the goals of the apartheid government to discourage settlements in metropolitan townships, and as such, the East Rand Administration Board was a major builder of housing in Lebowa townships. While initially civil servants had rented these houses, in 1981 the Lebowa Cabinet issued a resolution to allow occupants the possibility of purchase. From 1986, however, the Bantustan government undertook a radical change in housing policy, informed by the belief that the state should extricate itself from the responsibility. It decided no longer to provide housing but offered civil servants subsidies to purchase or build their own houses instead. Into this breach were inserted a range of developers and construction companies, who seized the opportunity to develop township housing for handsome profits. These private developers would purchase land from the Lebowa government, and resell the property after completing construction of a house. Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.91.
[1057] *Lebowa Times,* 'Big housing schemes for North', 28 July 1989. Laura Phillips has explained the role of the Moolman Group, headed by Jannie Moolman, who undertook the expensive construction of the Lebowa government offices and homes in Lebowakgomo. Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.257.
[1058] *Lebowa Times,* 'Big housing schemes for North', 28 July 1989.
[1059] The Department of Home Affairs was signatory to these contracts, and its Secretary, Dr PP Pheme, lauded the initiative, stating: "private sector involvement was ideal in a territory that was capitalist … The project will relieve the government of the cost of building". *Lebowa Times,* 'Lebowa Towns Get big Developers', 9 June 1989. The private sector too relished the opportunity. An advert from 1989 promised "lucrative opportunities" for sales consultants in the "black housing" market. *Lebowa Times,* 'Black Housing', 3 February 1989.
[1060] *Lebowa Times,* 'Another inquiry goes on: housing 'swindle' investigated', 13 July 1990
[1061] *Lebowa Times,* 'Backlog in Zone 4', 13 April 1990.

R445 each and selling them as serviced properties for R13,000.[1062] They demanded the immediate withdrawal of the consortium, and encouraged the homeless to seize control of unoccupied plots. The civics voiced particular anger over the perceived collusion between town councillors and private developers. Similar frustration was voiced about the development of Zone 2 in Mahwelereng by private developers.[1063] The issue, along with the service charge increases and continued exasperation at a lack of basic services, galvanised opposition to the Town Councils, and provoked renewed calls for their resignation.



Mayor told to resign

MAHWELERENG - The mayor of Mahwelereng, Mr. R M Segooa was challenged at a meeting at Mahwelereng stadium last week to resign his post because of the failure of his council to satisfy the needs of the people of Mahwelereng.

This was at a residents meeting attended by teachers, pupils and community organisation leaders. The education crisis was the main topic of discussion.

The meeting, chaired by an official of NOTTU, a new teachers' body, was diverted when a letter was presented to the chairman, Mr. Fanyane calling for the resignation of Mr. Segooa.

In his response Mr. Segooa said at the meeting that he was shocked and pained to find the residents turning against him. He told the meeting his council had been advised that the government has no money to fund services. The council had been advised to find sponsors to help with the funding of the services.

At another meeting in Sekgakgapeng to commemorate the release of Nelson Mandela, a working committee was established to form a youth congress in line with others at various schools under the youth organisation, SANSCO.

The meeting was addressed by Casatu and Cosas. There were also complaints about lack of home building sites and streets that are not maintained.

Mr. R M Segooa (left), the Mahwelereng mayor told to quit. With him is one of his councillors, Mr. Jerry Masingi.

Figure 59: At *a gathering in early March 1990, civic organisations, in partnership with teachers unions and other community organisations, call for the removal of the Mayor of Mahwelereng.*[1064]

[1062] *Lebowa Times,* 'Increases are slammed', 16 March 1990.
[1063] *Lebowa Times,* 'More squatting', 13 July 1990.
[1064] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mayor told to resign', 9 March 1990.

The Seshego Town Council was the first to capitulate, with councillors resigning *en masse* in May 1990.[1065] In Mahwelereng, Mayor RM Segooa was challenged to resign at a meeting at Mahwelereng stadium in March 1990.[1066] By July, the *Lebowa Times* reported that the Mahwelereng Civic Association had forced the whole Town Council to resign.[1067] And finally in November 1990, the Lebowakgomo Town Council stepped down.[1068] In all three townships, the civics eventually gained begrudging recognition from the Department of Home Affairs as a partner in determining housing allocations in new areas under development. This prompted the outrage of Ramodike, who condemned the "forced resignations" of councillors in Seshego and Mahwelereng "engineered" by the civic bodies. While his government wanted to "talk to civic associations, because they put themselves forward as representatives of and chosen by the people", it was "wrong to threaten others".[1069] Affirming a position he would hold throughout the early 1990s, Ramodike said "We know these Bantustans are on the way out. But we must follow the right channels in the process to end them, without interfering with others' lives and properties".[1070] Nevertheless, his Cabinet was forced to reckon with the civics as popular organs of local governance. The Lebowa Cabinet reluctantly affirmed that settlers on the unoccupied plots would be provided with basic amenities – roads, sewerage, and water – to "ease [their] living conditions", signalling that the Lebowa administration at large was being forced into an accommodation with the civic movement.[1071]

The dissolution of the Bantustan Town Councils – even in the capital – represented an important victory for the civics in affirming their place in the formal institutional landscape of local township government, particularly in decision-making around the production of space. In the months that followed, various squatter movements would gain steam in townships around the Bantustan which local civic associations would take credit for. Shortly after the resignation of the Mahwelereng Town Council, it was reported that a "shushumela move" was underway in Zone 2 of the township, as "hundreds of youths took to the unoccupied area that was meant for development by a private consortium and claimed plots by erecting signposts on them". A show house built by the developers was transformed into "an office from which to run the affairs of the youth organisations", as the developers swiftly tried to remove all the doors of

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[1065] *Lebowa Times,* 'Seshego town council resignation not recognised', 25 May 1990.
[1066] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mayor told to resign', 9 March 1990.
[1067] *Lebowa Times,* 'Another inquiry goes on: housing 'swindle' investigated', 13 July 1990.
[1068] *Lebowa Times,* 'Council resigns: Home Affairs officials charged with alleged irregularities', 2 November 1990.
[1069] *Lebowa Times,* 'Another inquiry goes on: housing 'swindle' investigated', 13 July 1990.
[1070] *Ibid*.
[1071] *Lebowa Times,* 'Water, sewerage, roads for Zone 8', 29 June 1990.

the house "fearing that they might be forcibly removed".[1072] In Lebowakgomo, the civic undertook a resolution to support the creation of a squatter settlement.[1073] And similar forms of rapid settlement would continue in Seshego, with the emergence of "Mandela View" in the township.[1074] As 1990 drew to a close, the Mankweng Civic Association advanced plans to allocate plots for occupation on empty land in the township, heralded as an opportunity to begin "the transfer of power to the people's structures".[1075]

In the rural villages, the presence of civics brought new visibility and forms of mobilisation to old struggles. While civic structures in the township set themselves in opposition to the Town Councils, those that emerged in the villages came to blows with Tribal Authority structures, demanding access to resources monopolised by cliques around the *magoši.* Land and access to agricultural commons formed one key aspect. In July 1990, for instance, the Moletjie Civic Association, supported by the local Youth Congress, presented a memorandum to Kgošigadi Agnes Moloto, insisting that she refrain from interfering in a land occupation in Makgofe, and "to stop applying the Black Local Authorities Act … designed for oppression".[1076] As in the townships, the Civics seized responsibility of land allocation from the Tribal Authorities in a number of villages. Another of the preeminent issues which fuelled the civic movements in these areas was that of water. With persistently poor rains, by 1993 it was reported that water reservoirs had dried up, with the township of Mahwelereng and the villages of Mapela, Vaaltyn, Bakenberg and Phalala the hardest hit. Emergency supplies were tanked in for immediate relief.[1077] On one occasion, Ramodike was drawn to insist that it was "not the Kgoši's fault that there is an acute shortage of water".[1078] Yet civics frequently accused the cliques around the tribal leaders of monopolising boreholes. In ga-Matlala, Lucas Mabetwa remembers that the primary borehole was situated in the yard of the Kgoši, who locked the gate at 6 pm and barred access to villagers seeking water.[1079]

The issue of tribal levies also attracted the ire of communities. In Ga-Dikgale, for instance, residents unaffiliated to any specific organisation marched to the local tribal office to demand the dismissal of Kgoši LW Dikgale, and the appointment of a new ruler. They alleged that Dikgale had charged R100 for a site allocation, an annual R10 school levy despite negligible improvements in school infrastructure, R5 ostensibly to settle an account for the purchase of

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[1072] *Lebowa Times,* 'More squatting', 13 July 1990.
[1073] *Lebowa Times,* 'Squatting in Leb'kgomo', 9 November 1990.
[1074] *Lebowa Times,* 'Seshego meeting about 'Mandela View', 23 November 1990.
[1075] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mankweng complains about presence of the army', 23 November 1990.
[1076] *Lebowa Times,* 'Moletji Leader told: hands off squatters', 20 July 1990.
[1077] *Lebowa Times,* 'Water reservoirs dry up: Mokerong needs drought relief', 7 May 1993.
[1078] *Lebowa Times,* 'Ramodike calls for tolerance', 7 June 1991.
[1079] Interview with Lucas Mabetwa, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 26 August 2019.

a tractor (which had in fact been given by the Lebowa government), and a fee of R10 for signing official documents.[1080] In several communities, the civics began leading the charge to remove the incumbent chief, and replace them with a more popular functionary.

The civic movement, as it grew to increased levels of coordination first under the NTCA, and later SANCO, provided something of a bridge across the divides between activists in the rural villages and the Bantustan townships, and provided activists in the remote villages with far greater leverage in dealing with local issues, as demands were merged in regional campaigns.[1081] Yet the effectiveness of the civics in rural villages remained decidedly uneven. While in ga-Matlala, the civic succeeded in pushing for the removal of the unpopular BK Matlala, who was ultimately forced to leave the area, in other places the success of the civic campaigns was more muted. In Sekhukhuneland, Delius reported that civic structures remained "sparse and weak".[1082] He attributes this to the opposition of the *magoši* in the area, who "complained to both the Lebowa authorities and the ANC that civics were malignant growths and threatened to activate vigilante groups to cauterise them".[1083] In August 1990, Ramodike described the growing tendency to call for removal of chiefs as "going in the wrong direction". While the creation of civics to run parallel with structures like town councils, school committees and others was to be welcomed, he rejected the shift towards "a complete replacement of magoši".[1084]

By this point, the ANC was actively courting the Bantustan leadership: the national ANC was intensely cautious about alienating the Lebowa political elite, and particularly its chiefs. This was repeated in speeches by national leaders.[1085] As such, the ANC's response to the upsurge of civic action in the villages was one of containment, working to tame the demands of civic activists on the ground. In September 1990, the ANC would conclude the "Lebowakgomo minute" with Ramodike and his cabinet, which committed the ANC national executive to inform its Northern Transvaal regional office, zones and branches of the need to:

> Refrain from interfering in matters relating to traditional leadership; ensure that freedom to organize politically is not misused by its youth wing as a right to

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[1080] *Lebowa Times,* 'Away with the chief, cry residents', 20 July 1990.
[1081] This was also highlighted by Luvuyo Wotshela, 'From Afflicted Black Local Authorities to Integrated and Contested Municipal System: Two Decades of Civic Action and Governance Realignment in the Border Kei's Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1985-2005', *Paper presented at the History Workshop*, 13 October 2021.
[1082] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.207.
[1083] *Ibid*.
[1084] *Lebowa Times,* 'Leave magoshi alone, says Ramodike', 24 August 1990
[1085] Mandela and John Nkadimeng would emphasise the heroism of chiefs in the struggle against apartheid was emphasised, citing the example of the role they had played in resisting betterment in the 1960s, yet they tended to evade just how much the chieftaincy had changed in the decades since. Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.207.

> intimidate people holding different views; ensure that the use of its flag must not be an authority to cause anarchy; and ensure that the cordial relationship between the ANC and the Lebowa Cabinet is maintained.[1086]

Laura Phillips describes this alliance as having been built on "very thin grounds", however, and Ramodike's relationship with the ANC remained tumultuous.[1087] According to Delius, Ramodike saw in the alliance with the ANC an opportunity to steer "his foundering administration into calmer waters" and salvage his own political career.[1088] And his public statements would hit all of the right notes, signalling unwavering support for the ANC. The Chief Minister publicly espoused a fervent anti-apartheid stance, calling for the dissolution of the Bantustans and support for the ANC in its negotiations with the apartheid state. Shortly after Mandela's release, Ramodike called for a "single parliament in a unitary, non-racial, democratic South Africa".[1089] Addressing the annual congress of the Lebowa People's Party in 1990, Ramodike announced that "the homeland system is illegitimate as a form of government", and insisted that the "ANC cannot be ignored as a major mouthpiece in the leadership of black people".[1090] And Ramodike and his cabinet also took the lead in trying to create a consultative forum with other homeland leaders to formulate a plan for the dismantling of the Bantustans.[1091] Sharing the stage with Mandela at the FNB stadium to commemorate June 16th in 1991, he insisted that the "Bantustan structures will have to go with the demise of the apartheid system", and spoke out against those who sought to "turn the clock back": "They seem to be afraid of true democracy, which can only come into being when popular leaders are elected through a ballot which has no racial smell".[1092]

Yet Ramodike and the Lebowa cabinet more broadly evinced a contradictory stance towards the prospect of democracy. The repressive arms of the Lebowa state continued to stifle popular organisation, arresting prominent local political organisers and halting marchers in their tracks. For those who had been actively organising against the Bantustan state, Ramodike's latter-day conversion as a member of the ANC was thus read as opportunistic. While the top ANC leaders continued to embrace the Chief Minister, local leaders greeted the alliance with less enthusiasm. Delius reports that "long-standing Congress supporters were dismayed by the persistent courtship of Ramodike by national ANC leadership".[1093] Because

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[1086] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.158.
[1087] *Ibid*.
[1088] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle.* p.208.
[1089] *Lebowa Times*, "Scrap homelands ahead of talks, Lebowa leader urges", 22 February 1990.
[1090] *Lebowa Times,* 'Ramodike declares: LPP Out! ANC in!', 13 April 1990.
[1091] Kaizer Nyatsumba, 'We will ask to be dismantled – Lebowa', *The Star* 23 March 1990.
[1092] *Lebowa Times,* 'Form united front – Ramodike', 21 June 1991.
[1093] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.208.

of his contradictory stance, Mathatha Tsedu reported, Ramodike had earned the nickname of "Comrade Puppet".[1094]

Certainly, the historical relationship of the institution of chieftaincy to the ANC was more complex. Magoši were seen as key anchors of support in the region, and in the run up to the 1994 elections, frequent attempts were made to court the chiefs.[1095] The ANC was actively concerned about the prospect of chiefs being wooed by the NP with promises of expanded power and enticements, including land. Ramodike was himself closely allied with a core group of chiefs, and claimed to protect their interests – a relationship which went both ways, with some making spirited defences of the Chief Minister when he was criticised. As a result, the ANC leadership sought to downplay the fervent anti-chief rhetoric espoused by several of its leaders, and insist on the need to protect the institution. ANC leaders like Mnguni urged chiefs who were "patriotic and love their people to join and control Contralesa, their only true and progressive home". [1096]

The Lebowa College of Magoši signalled their support for the ANC in the month after Mandela's release, issuing a statement which affirmed the "need to have apartheid and man-made ethnic boundaries dismantled". Nevertheless, they insisted that "a new constitution for this country should not temper [*sic*] with Bogoshi… Bogoshi should remain the pillars of any government that will rule in a new South Africa".[1097] The chiefs therefore sought to maintain a position of leverage, offering qualified support to the ANC and its affiliated Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa). Contralesa had been formed in 1987 as an ANC-aligned organisation which claimed to represent "progressive chiefs". This was the vehicle through which the ANC could embrace the chieftaincy while erasing its historical complicity in the Bantustan project. In his March 1990 visit, in which he called for the burial of the "stinking bantustan corpse", Mandela lauded the formation of Contralesa, encouraging traditional leaders to join the body and "repent of their participation in the government's oppressive policies".[1098] Delius argues that "many chiefs in the region remained apprehensive about the ANC, but some of the more prescient were quick to grasp the hand of friendship that was being offered to them" and they "hurried to join the ranks" of the organisation.[1099]

Within this landscape of strategic collaboration, local ANC activists were discouraged by their own organisation from pursuing outright confrontation with the chiefs. Mnguni was drawn to

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[1094] Mathatha Tsedu, 'Comrade puppet or Mr Clean?', *Sowetan,* 3 April 1989.
[1095] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.153.
[1096] *Lebowa Times,* 'ANC will boycott – Louis Mnguni', 28 September 1990.
[1097] *Sowetan,* 'Pledge for support of ANC', 15 March 1990.
[1098] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mandela Show at Turf', 30 March 1990.
[1099] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.207.

insist that "it is not true that civic and village committees are established to destroy or fight against chieftainship. The UDF, ANC and SASCO [South African Civics Organisation] are involved in an earnest struggle to save the institution of chieftainship from abuse and mischief in the hands of apartheid and its agents".[1100] This position came to be echoed by civic leaders, who emphasised that they were not aiming to supplant magoši, but called on them to align with the ANC.[1101] Nevertheless, despite top-level support for the chiefs, popular actions in the traditional areas continued to bubble.

The actions of the civics met with significant contest and state repression. Members of Civics continued to experience periodic arrests and police harassment. In 1990, three leaders of the Lebowa Civic Association had been arrested.[1102] In January 1992, the ANC in Moletsie expressed alarm at the "continued arrest of people who are active in the Civic Association, the ANC branches and the trade union movement". Six members of the Civic had been arrested on charges of intimidation in connection with allocation of sites in the villages of Moletsi, following a reported confrontation with the Kgošigadi who had ordered the newly settled villagers to vacate their dwellings.[1103]

Yet the civics faced other forms of contest, besides direct attempts at repression by state functionaries. In particular, the claims that the civics made to being genuine representatives of the people – a "people's parliament" as leaders of the Seshego Civic Association had put it[1104] – were certainly not without challenge. It had been an explicit ANC mandate to set about creating the civic structures – one inherited from the UDF campaigns which had begun from the 1980s in other parts of the country. And the involvement of the ANC would hang over these structures from the outset – a point of particular contention for some involved in other political organisations like Azapo, who repeatedly criticised the civics for their proximity to the ANC. In many cases, the connection to the ANC was evident in overlapping membership and the revolving door that operated between civic and ANC branch leaderships.

In Phafola village, Tlhalefi Mashamaite explains, the Mapela Civic Association was formed through essentially threatening and coercing school principals and local businessmen, whom they strong-armed into becoming members of the executive committee.[1105] Mashamaite would go on to play a prominent role in regional structures of the ANC. When the Seshego Civic Association was formed in 1990, two local ANC heavyweights, David Nkoana and Thabo

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[1100] *Lebowa Times,* 'ANC will boycott – Louis Mnguni', 28 September 1990.
[1101] See, for instance: *Lebowa Times,* 'ANC to work with chiefs', 16 November 1990.
[1102] *Lebowa Times,* 'Lebowakgomo Protest', 23 March 1990
[1103] *Lebowa Times,* 'Moletsi rocked by spate of attacks', 17 January 1992.
[1104] *Lebowa Times,* 'Civic body not for political parties', 29 June 1990.
[1105] Interview with Tlhalefi Mashamaite, Phafola, 22 March 2020.

Makunyane, served on the committee as Chairman and Publicity Secretary respectively.[1106] Nkoana was also Chairman of the ANC branch of Seshego, and Makunyane its General Secretary.[1107] In Lebowakgomo, it was reported that the Lebowakgomo Youth Congress (LEYCO), a UDF-affiliate, had initially run the Lebowakgomo Civic Association.[1108] In Mankweng, the leadership of the Civic Association was virtually entirely constituted by ANC notables, including Louis Mnguni, Seth Nthai, George Mashamba and Louis Pilusa.[1109] Enoch Manamela, who was part of the executive of the Sekgakgapeng Development Committee and helped build the first ANC branch in the village, insisted that the civics, in which he included his own structure, were ANC in all but name.[1110] That the civics emerged in the 1990s, after the ANC was unbanned and had set about forming branches across the country and was establishing itself as a "government in waiting" is important in understanding the contests and suspicion that sometimes loomed around these structures. There seemed to be a revolving door between ANC branch and civic leaderships – often leaders would wear both hats.[1111]

There was a significantly more complex relationship between the civics and the ANC than can be captured by the allegations of fronting, however, and the civics drew a range of different actors beyond the ANC – at least initially. In 1992, Khangale Makhado, regional General Secretary of Azapo and an organiser for the Northern Transvaal Advice Office, joined the Lebowakgomo Civic Association executive committee.[1112] A member of the Lebowa Legislature and outspoken conservative, Mabel Chueu, formed part of the leadership of the Seshego Civic Association.[1113] Commenting on the Mahwelereng Civic Association, Staff Tsebe observes that while it espoused an apolitical stance, the Civic nonetheless "was political", in that it was a forum influenced by the politics and contests of the liberation organisations.[1114] Frequently, civics were joined by ANC structures (especially branches and Youth League groupings) in their initiatives around basic services.[1115]

[1106] *Lebowa Times,* "Seshego Civic meeting this Sunday", 4 May 1990
[1107] *Lebowa Times,* "Seshego Branch Chair', 29 November 1991.
[1108] *Lebowa Times,* "Cllr Tsheoga Reacts to suspension: It is unjust, he says", 23 February 1990; *Lebowa Times,* "Lebowakgomo civil servants strike', 23 March 1990.
[1109] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mankweng complains about presence of the army', 23 November 1990.
[1110] Interview with Enoch Manamela, Mokopane, 20 May 2019.
[1111] However, responding to allegations that the civics were aligned to the ANC, Nkoana insisted in 1991 that this was an "assumption of non-members of the ANC": "while civic associations are an integral part of the liberation struggle, they are not and should not be political organisations. Their involvement in the politics of the liberation struggle should not imply that they should align themselves with any political organisation… The civic bodies wage their struggle within the local context… [they] can deal effectively with local problems and issues". *Lebowa Times,* "Civics not politics", 10 May 1991.
[1112] *Lebowa Times,* 'New civic committee', 15 May 1992.
[1113] *Lebowa Times,* 'Moningi new civic head', 15 February 1991.
[1114] Interview with Malesela Staff Tsebe, Mokopane, 28 August 2019.
[1115] See, for instance, *Lebowa Times,* 'Youth League will discuss services', 1 May 1992.

The accusations that the civics were operating according to mandates from the ANC persisted, however. In October of 1992, for instance, local Azapo politicians were joined by the Secretary of the Mahwelereng Civic Association, James Seota, in alleging that the local ANC branch had highjacked the process of housing allocation, insisting that people had had to buy ANC membership cards to qualify for a plot. Seota had himself been the media liaison officer of the ANC branch.[1116] In response, the branch spokesman denied that any coercion was involved, and that people were joining the ANC of their own accord because they see the organisation as protecting them".[1117] Seota was then suspended from the Civic by the Chairman, BA Sithole, who distanced the civic body from the allegations, insisting that Seota spoke without consulting the members of the Civic.[1118]

Nevertheless, the allegations that the civic was operating as a political body seeking to use site allocations in a "fight for popularity" came to be increasingly condemned by other community groups and the Department of Home Affairs. In November 1993, the Deputy Minister, MA Tshwaale, insisted that superintendents should be solely responsible for the allocation of sties. A host of formations, including the Mahwelereng Action Committee, Mahwelereng Residents Committee and a Crisis Committee (the latter two having sprung up in the early 1990s), had lodged complaints with the Superintendent about the involvement of the Civic in the allocation of sites. While the Superintendent's office operated according to its own allocation list, the Civic had drafted its own, and was allegedly promising sites that had already been allocated.[1119] The new formations called for the creation of a new apolitical coordinating committee, which would include two members from each of the concerned groups: the Civic, the Action Committee, the Crisis Committee, the Residents' Committee, as well as the office of the Licencing Board.[1120] In a "well-attended forum" the following week, the Mahwelereng Civic Association was itself dissolved, and replaced by a new transitional coordinating committee which would oversee elections for a new committee. The incumbent Civic chairperson, Sithole, reportedly disrupted the meeting, insisting that the coordinating committee included members of Azapo. Yet the committee included prominent local ANC personalities, like Eric Gwangwa, indicating that unhappiness with Sithole cut across party affiliation. Sithole was in turn rebuked as an outsider to Mahwelereng, and the meeting resolved that only "citizens of the township" take up positions in the Civic.[1121] Finally, the

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[1116] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mahwelereng ANC meets', 30 August 1991.
[1117] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mahwelereng tension: Tussle over issue of sites", 30 October 1992.
[1118] *Lebowa Times,* 'J Seota suspended', 13 November 1992.
[1119] *Lebowa Times,* 'Allocation of sites to be adjudicated', 12 November 1993.
[1120] *Ibid*.
[1121] *Lebowa Times,* 'New leaders meet', 19 November 1993.

meeting resolved to initiate new talks with the Superintendent to resolve the housing crisis which the previous Civic leadership had apparently only succeeded in exacerbating.[1122]

While the newspapers allow little view into the behind-the-scenes determinants of these contests, and invite further speculation as to the stake that each of these various actors had in the allocation processes, what little we know of this episode nonetheless shows something of the complex interpersonal dynamics which attended civic structures. Certainly, one can infer that the civic associations were not simply unproblematic representations of "people's power", as has sometimes romantically been asserted. Nor is the story of the Civics in Lebowa one of ruthless cooptation by an incoming ANC hostile to popular participatory politics. Rather, the civic structures were complex terrains of struggle in which various personalities fought for dominance.

It seems, however, that the zone of local autonomy exercised by the civics would gradually shrink over the course of the early 1990s, as they were drawn into greater organisational strictures. The first signal of this, perhaps, was the Northern Transvaal Civic Association which was created in late August of 1990. But more decisive was the formation of the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) in 1992, whose top leadership was "dominated by activists from the Southern Transvaal and Eastern Cape".[1123] The civics would, however, come to play a key role in the Local Government Negotiation Forums which were created after 1993, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Education Crisis and the Teachers' Union

While the call for the provision of housing and basic services condensed a range of material issues afflicting residents in Lebowa's townships, serving as the *raison d'etre* for the civics, the call for quality education contained another stringent critique of the Bantustan state and its local government structures, and offered opportunities for broad-based mass action which became a persistent feature of the local governance landscape. Perhaps no other issues provoked the extent of popular action as those related to education, in both townships and villages. Virtually every political organisation in the region was drawn into questions around how to ameliorate the so-called "education crisis".

In the early 1990s, many of the same afflictions that had prompted student and teacher action in the previous decade remained unresolved. There were routine complaints about high pupil-to-teacher ratios. In the Mahwelereng circuit, Departmental statistics show a pupil/teacher

[1122] *Ibid*.
[1123] Seekings, *The UDF*, p.283.

ratio of 41/1 at primary school level.[1124] This was combined with a chronic shortage of classrooms. In the 1990 Annual Report of the Education Department, the Pupil/Classroom ratio in secondary schools across Lebowa was 63.6/1.[1125]

Throughout the early 1990s, there were continuous demands for new schools, libraries and other facilities. The continued presence of authoritarian and sometimes violent principals, perceived to be protected by Bantustan education authorities, was another source of contention, as were the activities of some school committees, who were accused of profiteering from school funds and resources. The imposition of examination fees for certain grades, especially Standard 10, was a source of intense anger. In schools under Tribal Authorities, officials of the chieftaincy (and often the *magoši* themselves) were frequently accused of corruption. And the repressive conditions in many schools and tertiary institutions furthermore stifled learning, with the Lebowa Police and members of the SADF still periodically staging crackdowns, despite the lifting of the State of Emergency. The comments by Louis Mnguni of the ANC that the government should fund schooling instead of security forces resonated with a common sentiment.[1126]

The poor state of education was reflected in the declining pass rates: in 1989, 54.6% of those who wrote their final matric examinations passed; while only 29.7% passed in 1990. The Lebowa Education Department broadly attributed these poor results to massive underfunding in the education sector, which was reflective of the broader pattern of chronic underfunding to the Bantustans by the central state.[1127] They also took aim at the waves of political action that continued to grip schools, "events such as examination boycotts, stay aways, work stoppages, sit-ins, go-it-slow, intimidation".[1128] So widespread were the boycotts in 1990 that Phuti Matlala of Azapo suggested that the year be declared a "non academic year, in view of the fact that there has been no meaningful class attendance since the beginning of the year".[1129] The teacher training colleges, including the Mokopane College of Education, also remained a site of vigorous protest. There was, for instance, intense frustration at the limited intakes, with thousands of applicants turned away each year.[1130]

[1124] Lebowa Department of Education, 1990, 'Annual Report', *Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand,* p.25
[1125] *Ibid*., p.26
[1126] *Lebowa Times,* 'March for funds', 12 March 1993.
[1127] See, for instance, *Lebowa Times,* "Budget should uplift quality of life – Ramodike", 23 March 1990.
[1128] Lebowa Department of Education, 'Annual Report', *Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand,* p.91
[1129] *Lebowa Times,* 'Azapo speaks on education option', 30 March 1990.
[1130] *The Star,* 'Thousands turned away', 15 January 1990. [SALDRU Lebowa General 1989-1992 p.48]

Mathatha Tsedu identified the shortage of textbooks as a major point of contention in the early 1990s which galvanised a broad section of political actors in mass action against Ramodike's government.[1131] Despite promises of free text books by the Education Department, they frequently arrived late, if at all, and then in insufficient quantities. The lack of textbooks came to stand not just as a symbol of the Lebowa state's lack of resources, mismanagement, but also the crass corruption of its political class. The De Meyer Commission, appointed in 1989, showed that senior officials and the former Education Minister had colluded to steal textbooks from government stores and resell them at their personal bookshops. This was, indeed, the reason why the bookshop in Mahwelereng belonging to the then Minister of Education, SP Kwakwa, had been the target for arson by high school students in 1986, as detailed in Chapter 5. Kwakwa was found guilty of corruption by the De Meyer Commission as a result, as were his top administrators.[1132] In January 1990, Ramodike assured the public that all schools would promptly receive books for free, and that "local bookshops will not be used to supply books".[1133] Yet in the years that followed, schools continued to complain about a lack of text books.[1134] And in the sporadic protests that continued to roil through schools in Lebowa in the early 1990s, the lack of text books and other teaching resources continued to emerge as a key demand.[1135] According to Tsedu, "the public outcry over education was just too much" – especially against the backdrop and a new wave of "extravagance of the Lebowa government on ministerial cars and houses costing more than R300,000".[1136]

The education crisis galvanised a broad range of actors across the Bantustan into action – teachers, parents, pupils, the civics, public servants, and a host of local committees. Leading the campaigns for improved conditions in schools and colleges was the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), which, over the course of the 1990s, cemented its role in local politics in the region.

[1131] Mathatha Tsedu, 'Book shortage stayaway enters second week: Ramodike's future still hangs in the balance', 25 March 1990.
[1132] *Lebowa Times,* 'Book scandal – fake bookshops, lack of control revealed', 24 November 1989.
[1133] In November 1989, this had led to the resignation of the former Secretary of Education, Derek Kobe (who was serving as Minister of Commerce, Industry and Manpower), as well as the suspension of the then Secretary of Education, Dickson Mphahlele. *Lebowa Times,* 'The supply of books: will they … won't they?', 19 January 1990.
[1134] *Lebowa Times,* 'Books in short supply', 21 February 1992.
[1135] See, for instance: *Lebowa Times,* 'Books or we stay away', 9 March 1990; *Lebowa Times,* 'Show: call for boycott', 7 September 1990; *Lebowa Times,* 'Books in short supply', 21 February 1992; *Lebowa Times,* 'Install new government to save education – SADTU', 8 January 1993; *Lebowa Times,* 'SANCO must vet funds – sec', 19 March 1993; *Lebowa Times,* 'Students in court over COSATU march', 26 March 1994; *Lebowa Times,* 'Schools clamour for books', 25 February 1994.
[1136] Mathatha Tsedu, 'Book shortage stayaway enters second week: Ramodike's future still hangs in the balance', 25 March 1990.

Formally, unions were still banned in the Lebowa Bantustan, despite lip-service commitments from members of the Lebowa cabinet that they would soon receive state recognition. The relative opening up of political space in the early 1990s would, however, allow for the deepening of union activity across the Bantustan. CCAWUSA, for instance, continued to operate across Lebowa; having agreed to join COSATU in late 1989, it was recrafted into the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) under the ANC's Tripartite Alliance umbrella in 1992, constituting one of its largest union affiliates.[1137] Similarly, Congress-aligned teachers unions across the country, including NOTTU in Lebowa, came to be folded within the ambit of SADTU when it was launched as a national union in October 1990.[1138]

Following unbanning, NOTTU had set about building branches across the region. Yet these radical teachers were subject to "detentions, transfers and expulsions".[1139] This was chillingly demonstrated in the case of Dudu Madisha, who had been a founding member of NOTTU. Yet NOTTU had continued its campaigns of "chalks-down", withdrawing teachers from classrooms "in order to participate in demonstrations whenever the educational authorities threatened or used repression against teachers".[1140] These campaigns were continued under the mantel of SADTU, which furthermore provided even greater forms of regional and national coordination, and extended activism in educational facilities across Lebowa.[1141] According to Delius, "SADTU provided a liferaft to teachers trapped in the rapidly deteriorating conditions which had prevailed in Lebowa schools … it also gave them a place and a voice in the process of making a new order".[1142]

SADTU's actions would find swift condemnation from the Lebowa Department of Education, which still refused to recognise the union. The conservative (and recognised) teachers union, TUATA, would also vociferously oppose any class boycotts or chalk downs, and opposed SADTU for what it perceived as the politicisation of teachers.[1143] Azapo structures also strongly criticised the tactics employed by SADTU, and like TUATA accused the union of sacrificing the futures of children. Several Azapo activists had in fact launched their own "education watchdogs" in 1990 in townships across Lebowa to look into problems at schools. Yet these were ultimately short-lived, and Azapo's connection to the education crisis came to

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[1137] Kally Forrest, *Asijiki: A History of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union,* (Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2005) p.106.
[1138] Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy", p.249.
[1139] *Ibid*.
[1140] *Ibid.,* p.246.
[1141] *Ibid.,* p.249.
[1142] Delius, *Lion Amongst the Cattle*, p.209.
[1143] As Lekgoathi has extensively described, TUATA insisted on a professional identity for teachers untainted by party politics. See: Lekgoathi, "Teacher Militancy".

be outflanked by SADTU. Azapo leaders in Lebowa took aim at the UDF, which it blamed for abusing the tactic of class boycotts. [1144] In the Mokopane region, it was reported that only 25% of the syllabus was covered in schools in the 1990 academic year due to constant boycotts.[1145] And over the next years, Azapo would repeatedly insist that the education crisis needed to be resolved "politically".[1146]

While periodic boycotts had gripped different schools over the course of the 1980s, SADTU's mass campaigns would see simultaneous actions across the region. In August 1991, for instance, SADTU initiated a week of sit-ins, sparked by the decision of the Lebowa Education Department to penalise teachers for staying away from schools during boycotts. SADTU members attempted to occupy circuit offices of education across the region. A "strong show of police" was seen at the head office in Lebowakgomo, while teachers were turned away by police in Mahwelereng.[1147] The initiative was underpinned by solidarity with the plight of teachers in other parts of the region: SADTU demanded an end to harassment, intimidation and the laying off of teachers across the Bantustan; the reinstatement of 42 lecturers dismissed from CN Phatudi College of Education in Burgersfort; the withdrawal of the transfers of 3 lecturers of the Naphuno College of Education; and the resignation of Ramodike and three top education officials.[1148] The action would last for 26 days, with the government deadlocked in negotiations with SADTU, particularly over the "no work no pay" principle which the government was insisting would be applied.[1149] In these and other actions, SADTU would receive support from a range of other organisations involved in mass action, including the ANC, the civics, and other unions aligned with COSATU.

[1144] *Lebowa Times,* 'Azapo resolves: No to negotiations", 6 April 1990.
[1145] *Lebowa Times,* 'Supp exams: SADTU, COSAS differed' 22 February 1991.
[1146] For instance: *Lebowa Times,* 'Back to classes at Gojela', 8 March 1991.
[1147] *Lebowa Times,* 'Week of sit-ins', 30 August 1991.
[1148] *Ibid*.
[1149] *Lebowa Times,* 'NOTRAPSU: Govt. intransigence caused huge social cost', 11 October 1991.



Figure 60: The Mokopane Branch of SADTU participates in a march on Lebowakgomo in mid-September 1993, on the way to the stadium for a rally organised by regional structures.[1150]

These initiatives would show the growing strength and coordination of the multisectoral, Congress-aligned organisational network across the region in the early 1990s. And SADTU would make its presence felt in not only in the townships of Lebowa, but also in its distant villages. Hendrik Ngoepe, who taught in a village in Mapela in the early 1990s, remembers how they used their union strength to change conditions in their schools, and to resist the intrusions of Education Department Officials.

> The main issues were teachers' welfare in general. And also, you know, remember most of these schools, in our villages, were built by communities. They were just fighting to say "Let's decentralise the resources. Let government build schools for our communities. Let's provide all implements, even in the rural areas. Let's empower the teachers. Let's workshop them. Let's make sure that whatever teaching that they give, they give - let's transform the education system". We were fighting for all those things … We defied [the teacher inspectors] because we said to them "You can't inspect us under these horrible conditions, where there are no libraries, there are no laboratories, there are no facilities for athletics, sports, and everything else. There are no teaching aids, there is nothing. But you expect us to..." - we defied them, we defied them. We marched a lot. I led many marches.

[1150] *Lebowa Times,* 'Refund teachers, say all fronts', 17 September 1993.

> You know our Circuit Office was in Mahwelereng. We could march to Mahwelereng.[1151]

Ngoepe would come to serve as the Secretary of SADTU's branch in Mapela. He described how union-affiliated teachers took advantage of the more open conditions of the early 1990s and the regional scope of SADTU's organisational capacity to advance changes in their schools. Ngoepe details how he worked under a deeply unpopular and authoritarian principle who was infamous for his violent temper. He carried a gun to school. On one occasion, Ngoepe recalls, the principal "thrashed" a teacher who had joined SADTU. In response, Ngoepe and his colleagues staged a walk-out, refusing to return to teach until the principal had been removed. When negotiations between the Education Department and the principal were unsuccessful, Ngoepe and his colleagues organised, through SADTU, for teachers from across the region to descend on the school, break open the gate and chase the principal away.

SADTU would form a key springboard for many local activists, including Ngoepe, into positions of government in the years that followed. Indeed, a great many teachers who had served in leadership positions in the union would go on to take up positions in various levels of the state and the party after 1994 – particularly in structures of local and district government.[1152]

The Public Servants Revolt

While Ramodike had publicly accepted that the Bantustan system was on its way out, he and his political allies in Lebowa continued to insist that the reincorporation of the state administration and territory had to be done slowly. A committee constituted by the Lebowa cabinet to speak to the ANC in the early 1990s insisted that the "proposed phasing out of Lebowa government service should be done in a gradual manner, so as not to leave a vacuum".[1153] Yet in the years that lead up to the formal dissolution of the Bantustans, Lebowa was brought to the brink of collapse by several factors – a significant number of which were endogenous. The popular struggles around services and education had put the Lebowa state on the back foot, and had seen what little legitimacy remained of the project largely evaporate. Yet it was dynamics internal to the state and bureaucracy itself which finally brought Lebowa to its knees.

Details of fraud and corruption uncovered by the De Meyer Commission appointed by Ramodike in 1989 that were publicly ventilated over several years dealt enormous damage to the credibility of Bantustan leaders. The Commission sought to investigate the disappearance

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[1151] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Mokopane, 25 May 2019.
[1152] For a nuanced account of SADTU's post-apartheid trajectory, its role in local school governance and broader politics, see Meny-Gibert, "State Capacity and Governance in South Africa".
[1153] *Lebowa Times,* 'Lebowa on negotiation stance', 25 May 1990.

of R98 million.[1154] Witnesses testified about the details of widescale graft, and the findings were detailed in a series of devastating reports. Ramodike tried to portray himself as a corruption buster. He claimed credit for appointing the De Meyer Commission in the first place, and insisted that the corruption being uncovered was the work of the previous administration of Phatudi. Yet he was himself tied to allegations of corruption. Among others, claims surfaced that he and his relatives had been irregularly awarded liquor licences.[1155] Ramodike's administration was also rocked by evidence that he and his Cabinet had cultivated corrupt relationships with white businessmen.[1156]

Details of dysfunction within the lower levels of the administration would also be revealed at the De Meyer Commission, as allegations of fictitious salary and wage payments and ghost employees were revealed. In the Department of Water Affairs, it was reported that officials had hurriedly burned most pay-sheets kept in their records "for fear that the irregularities would be checked".[1157] Testimony also claimed that while 10,000 pensioners remained on the waiting list to receive welfare assistance, thousands of people had been claiming payments every month, with some even claiming double pensions. In Seshego, an investigation revealed that up to 37% of pension payouts were given to those who did not qualify.[1158] Claims of nepotism were routinely aired in the columns and letters of the *Lebowa Times.*[1159]

The early 1990s also witnessed sharpening factionalism from within Ramodike's administration. Since Ramodike had taken power, the highest rungs of the Lebowa government had been wracked by in-fighting. There was routine mudslinging between leaders of both the Lebowa Legislative Assembly and cabinet, and Ramodike engaged in periodic purges of his rivals in both. Ramodike's cabinet changed substantially every year. This only

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[1154] *The Star,* 'Lebowa cheques bounce', 5 December 1989.
[1155] *Lebowa Times,* 'Ministers' liquor licence scandal', 26 July 1991. Ramodike's rather unconvincing response was that it was not he but his company, Porcupine Enterprise, who was the licence holder. *Lebowa Times,* 'Licences: why only us? – Chief minister", 9 August 1991.
[1156] Allegations surfaced that the Chief Minister had orchestrated the dismissal of the Lebowa Tender Board because they had sought to block contracts to white businesses. The Board Chairman, Joe Mogodi (also a prominent businessman and member of the NIC, who's continued dealings with post-apartheid politicians is detailed by Phillips), claimed that he and several other members of the Board had been pushing for preferential contracts for black businesses in Lebowa, and had been summarily fired as a result. He cited instances in which his Board had recommended the hiring of a Black applicant, and had then been pressured to give it to a white company instead. When the Board was reconstituted, the former mayor of Mahwelereng, LL Mpya, was installed as Chairperson. *Lebowa Times,* 'Tender board axed: fight over allocation of business', 8 November 1991.
[1157] *Lebowa Times,* 'Commission hears of faked salaries, wages', 9 August 1991.
[1158] *Lebowa Times,* 'R8.5 million pension money lost, commission hears', 28 February 1992.
[1159] *Lebowa Times,* 'Fair appointments, Mr Minister!', 31 July 1992.

added to the paranoia that seeped into the atmosphere of the Lebowa administration.[1160] Ramodike frequently claimed that assassination plots were afoot. Even within the Chief Minister's own office, mistrust reigned.[1161]

In the face of a deepening crisis at all levels of the Bantustan state, Ramodike deferred blame on the apartheid state. He insisted that De Klerk set up commissions of enquiry in all the homelands and the central government itself, which he believed would prove similar widescale corruption.[1162] And insisted that the "Nationalist Party cannot escape responsibility for the administrative mess found in the homelands", because it had "continued to feed homelands with seconded officials who were only there to further the idea of apartheid without any real regard for sound financial management". He claimed that when his Cabinet had tried to act against white officials caught in corrupt activities, "it was painful to note that they were given sanctuary by the central government, and rendered immune from prosecution".[1163] These defences notwithstanding, Ramodike came to face public ridicule from structures of the liberation movement. In April 1993, Ramodike was publicly booed and prevented from speaking at a service organised to commemorate the death of Chris Hani. A COSATU spokesperson defended the heckling, insisting that "Ramodike heads an unpopular, ineffective and unrepresentative Bantustan. The De Meyer Commission … implicated him in corruption".[1164]

Meanwhile, Ramodike and his cabinet were struggling to deal with a rising tide of protest from within the public service itself. Public servants had periodically joined in the mass protests that had roiled across the region virtually unceasingly from 1990, many under the banner of the newly formed union, the Norther Transvaal Public Servants' Union (NOTRAPSU). The union had emerged in 1990 to spearhead issues around government workers' salaries and terms of service, and despite expanding a branch presence to most of Lebowa's townships – including

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[1160] In 1989, Ramodike claimed that a man found in possession of a tape recorder at one of his rallies had been sent by the former Police Minister, MJ Duba, who had run as an independent candidate. Mathatha Tsedu, 'Uproar at Lebowa rally – Ramodike attacks Sowetan; reporter is threatened', *Sowetan* 10 April 1989.
[1161] In 1993, it was discovered that listening devices had been placed in Ramodike's office. Enraged, the Chief Minister accused "some white groups and individuals in Lebowa" who aim at "overthrowing my administration and substituting it with a puppet". Top of his list of suspects was his long-standing Chief Director, Boet Fick, an official seconded to his office from Pretoria. *Lebowa Times,* 'My office was bugged: They want to assassinate me – Ramodike', 2 April 1993.
[1162] *Lebowa Times,* 'Investigate all homelands and Central Govt, says Ramodike', 13 November 1992.
[1163] *Lebowa Times,* 'Nats to blame, says Ramodike', 20 November 1992.
[1164] *Lebowa Times,* 'Cosatu spurns association with Ramodike and the UPF', 23 April 1993.

Mahwelereng. Despite failing to gain recognition from the Lebowa state for many years,[1165] NOTRAPSU would undertake effective initiatives of disruptive mass action which won some begrudging concessions for improved working conditions from the state. Yet it would also give broad support to Congress-aligned mass campaigns. NOTRAPSU had, for instance, made a call for solidarity with the education stayaway in 1991, and in total it was estimated that some 25,000 public servants had participated in the action.[1166] In the years that followed, stayaways and strikes by government workers grew to become more sustained and crippling.

NOTRAPSU would initially claim to be "non-aligned and non-political",[1167] and its leadership would attend meetings across the political spectrum. In a 1991 Sharpeville commemoration hosted by the PAC and Azapo, for instance, NOTRAPSU Secretary Cibile Khanya was invited as guest speaker, and she insisted that "workers problems transcend ideological boundaries".[1168] At a meeting at the Mahwelereng Hotel in May 1991, however, the leadership agreed to take steps to affiliate to COSATU, and expand its recruitment drive to the whole of the Northern Transvaal.[1169] They participated in the COSATU national congress in July of that year, and accepted the principle of non-racialism.[1170] And would involve themselves in actions of other affiliated unions, such as SADTU.[1171] Later, NOTRAPSU would make efforts to unite workers across different sectors of the public service, including social workers, magistrates, private secretaries, agricultural advisers, town managers and superintendents.[1172]

NOTRAPSU would prove a key participant in the campaign of rolling mass action that followed the withdrawal of the ANC and its negotiating partners in the Patriotic Front from CODESA in the wake of the Boipatong Massacre on 17 June 1992. While Ramodike publicly welcomed the ANC's strategy, "to force the regime to refrain from resorting to a double agenda in the negotiating process",[1173] in practice, Ramodike's rhetorical commitment to mass action would be severely tested. The ANC region outlined a wide array of tactics to be used over the course of a week, including "the occupation of government buildings, the occupation of unused land

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[1165] In 1992, for instance, despite assurances of recognition, the Lebowa Legislative Assembly insisted that the Union show a membership of 50% + 1 of the public service before they would be recognised officially. NOTRAPSU argued that this was unattainable, and insisted on 33% instead. See: *Lebowa Times,* 'A fuss, says NOTRAPSU – Labour relations committee consultation', 10 July 1992.
[1166] *Lebowa Times,* 'NOTRAPSU: Govt. intransigence caused huge social cost', 11 October 1991.
[1167] *Lebowa Times,* 'Aligned or not?', 23 November 1990.
[1168] *Lebowa Times,* 'Sharpeville was remembered', 29 March 1991.
[1169] *Lebowa Times,* 'NOTRAPSU resolution supports: work with liberation groups', 10 May 1991.
[1170] *Lebowa Times,* 'NOTRAPSU exec to meet', 12 July 1991.
[1171] In one action in September 1991, NOTRAPSU lead a march to the office of the Lebowa Chief Minister, demanding that government address SADTU grievances. *Lebowa Times,* 'NOTRAPSU march stopped by Lebowa Police', 6 September 1991.
[1172] *Lebowa Times,* 'NOTRAPSU Summit: 39 panels meet', 5 June 1992.
[1173] *Lebowa Times,* 'Don't blame ANC – UPF', 10 July 1992

for cattle grazing and human settlement, and marches to SADF bases".[1174] Along with the public servants, the programme was supported by a "broad front" consisting of the ANC, SACP, COSATU, civics, church organisations, teachers and student organisations.[1175] SADTU urged teachers to observe the stayaway too.[1176] The action was widely supported, with the *Lebowa Times* claiming a "90% response recorded in Northern Transvaal towns".[1177]

Despite some disagreement within its top echelons, NOTRAPSU finally decided to dissolve and join NEWAWU, which was characterised as a "monolithic union that will effectively look after the interests of all public servants".[1178] This was finally effected in early 1993, just as a new and decisive round of public service strikes was on the horizon.[1179]

What would develop into the most widespread crisis to grip the Bantustan public service would begin with a go-slow at the Groothoek Hospital near Zebediela. In May 1993, nurses affiliated to NEHAWU demanding promotions and salary increases began boycotting night-shifts, forcing the Health Department to enlist the services of SADF servicemen to help with the over 400 patients.[1180] In what was described as a show of solidarity, nurses at the Mokopane Hospital began turning away patients too. [1181] And the protests spread to Jane Furse hospital in Sekhukhuneland, where nurses voiced anger against the corruption of the state: "'big thieves" go unpunished", they complained, "whilst those who commit petty cases are dealt with within a wink of an eye".[1182]

In June, NEHAWU members in hospitals across Lebowa were joined by other public servants in a march to the Lebowa government offices in the capital – including from Mokopane. SANCO was reported to have coordinated the protest.[1183] As the strike entered its third month, sporadic work stoppages were reported by officials in head and local offices of the Bantustan Departments in townships and villages, and the *Lebowa Times* reported that "services were particularly interrupted at magistrates' and superintendents offices … as clerks and officials put their pens down in protest against delayed promotions affecting lower and higher levels of employment'.[1184] The following week, the government made an undertaking to effect all arrear

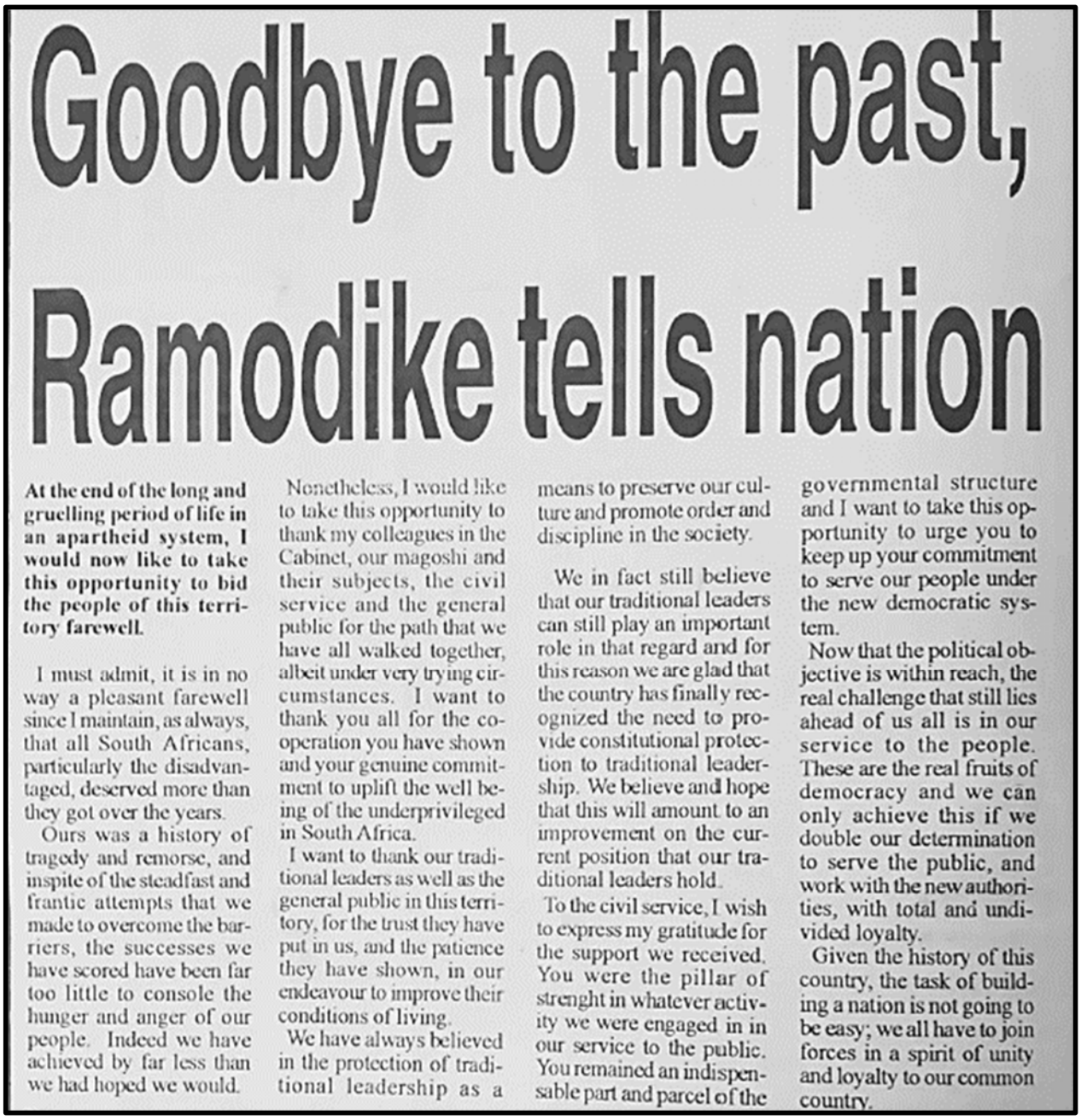
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[1174] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mass action goes to all the homelands", 31 July 1992
[1175] *Ibid*.
[1176] *Ibid*.
[1177] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mass action: 200 arrested in P'burg', 7 August 1992.
[1178] *Lebowa Times,* 'Union will dissolve', 21 August 1992.
[1179] *Lebowa Times,* 'Action not fair – NOTRAPSU', 21 May 1993.
[1180] *Lebowa Times,* 'Groothoek pricks the boil: health services to collapse?', 14 May 1993.
[1181] *Ibid*.
[1182] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", 169.
[1183] *Lebowa Times,* 'Meet nurses demands by July 1, says SANCO', 18 June 1993
[1184] *Lebowa Times,* 'Civils back at work', 16 July 1993.

promotions and salary adjustments, and officials began returning to work.[1185] Yet the damage had been done, and Ramodike's administration had begun its death spiral.

The new salary agreements that emerged after the public servants' strike had created a wage bill that could not be made up by Lebowa's budget. The central government rejected Ramodike's pleas for more funds, and in protest, the Lebowa Legislative Assembly refused to pass the 1993/1994 budget.[1186] This triggered an intervention from the central state: André Fourie was appointed as an administrator to take charge of Lebowa's finances on 1 September 1993. The move was condemned by Ramodike and his cabinet, as well as the ANC leadership, who pushed for the creation of a new transitional structure for the region, in line with the model of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC).[1187] Yet the regional ANC chairman, Ngoako Ramatlhodi admitted that the strikes had put the ANC in a difficult position, with disgruntled public servants having demanded the ANC sever links with Ramodike.[1188] Yet he claimed the National Party's intervention was an attempt to "undermine the ANC while projecting itself as the real liberator" – a strategy being pursued in other Bantustans too.[1189] Fourie had overseen a large cash injection into the Lebowa coffers by the central state, who had then authorized backpay for civil servants.[1190] This signalled the end of Ramodike, who was a lame duck until the Lebowa Bantustan was finally dissolved after the 1994 elections.[1191]

[1185] *Ibid*.
[1186] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.170.
[1187] *Ibid.,* p.172.
[1188] *Ibid.,* p.173.
[1189] *Ibid.,* p.173–74.
[1190] *Ibid.,* p.171.
[1191] For a more detailed breakdown of the factors which propelled the disintegration of Lebowa, see: Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo."



Goodbye to the past, Ramodike tells nation

At the end of the long and gruelling period of life in an apartheid system, I would now like to take this opportunity to bid the people of this territory farewell.

I must admit, it is in no way a pleasant farewell since I maintain, as always, that all South Africans, particularly the disadvantaged, deserved more than they got over the years.

Ours was a history of tragedy and remorse, and inspite of the steadfast and frantic attempts that we made to overcome the barriers, the successes we have scored have been far too little to console the hunger and anger of our people. Indeed we have achieved by far less than we had hoped we would.

Nonetheless, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues in the Cabinet, our magoshi and their subjects, the civil service and the general public for the path that we have all walked together, albeit under very trying circumstances. I want to thank you all for the co-operation you have shown and your genuine commitment to uplift the well being of the underprivileged in South Africa.

I want to thank our traditional leaders as well as the general public in this territory, for the trust they have put in us, and the patience they have shown, in our endeavour to improve their conditions of living.

We have always believed in the protection of traditional leadership as a means to preserve our culture and promote order and discipline in the society.

We in fact still believe that our traditional leaders can still play an important role in that regard and for this reason we are glad that the country has finally recognized the need to provide constitutional protection to traditional leadership. We believe and hope that this will amount to an improvement on the current position that our traditional leaders hold.

To the civil service, I wish to express my gratitude for the support we received. You were the pillar of strenght in whatever activity we were engaged in in our service to the public. You remained an indispensable part and parcel of the governmental structure and I want to take this opportunity to urge you to keep up your commitment to serve our people under the new democratic system.

Now that the political objective is within reach, the real challenge that still lies ahead of us all is in our service to the people. These are the real fruits of democracy and we can only achieve this if we double our determination to serve the public, and work with the new authorities, with total and undivided loyalty.

Given the history of this country, the task of building a nation is not going to be easy; we all have to join forces in a spirit of unity and loyalty to our common country.

Figure 61: A reproduction of Nelson Ramodike's public farewell as Chief Minister of Lebowa from the 29th April 1994, while the Bantustan system was being formally dissolved.[1192]

Conclusion

The early 1990s must thus be understood as an era in which the prospects of a democratic future remained acutely uncertain. It was an era of continuing repression, violence and economic hardship for most of the residents of Lebowa. It was an era of turbulence,

[1192] *Lebowa Times,* "Goodbye to the Past", 29 April 1994.

contingency and disorder as the old fell apart and its remnants were reconfigured in surprising and volatile ways. The new South Africa appeared a fragile possibility, and in this context the ANC undertook delicate strategies of coalition building to secure support and temper down possible sources of instability.

This narrative distinctly unsettles existing historical analyses of the transition that focus predominantly on national-level events. What emerges in this Chapter are the complex forms of interconnection between struggles on the local political terrain and what was happening between national leaders in the negotiations processes. Here, Hart's "relational comparison" once again emerges as central in understanding how developments in the high-level political processes both shaped and were reshaped by local political currents in the Lebowa Bantustan and the Northern Transvaal more broadly. Events in the villages and townships of Lebowa, and in the white towns across its borders, would respond to national-level developments, while creating new contingencies which directly affected national political leaders, even at the negotiating table. It is only by understanding these forms of interconnection that we can apprehend the full complexity of the transition era and its legacies for South African politics.

Examining these episodes surfaces an emerging tension between lower and higher structures of the ANC structures which would only deepen in the years that followed. It reveals something of the authoritarian streak of top-down management that became a subject of intense resentment within the party which would be galvanised in later internal political struggles.

Chapter 8: The Last Stand of the Far-Right (1990-1995)

Introduction

The Separate Amenities Act of 1953 and the Group Areas Act of 1950 had together formed the bedrock of spatial apartheid. It was through the legal backing of these laws that the small town bushveld town of Potgietersrus (now Mokopane) had remained a 'whites only' town, like so many others across the Transvaal and the country more generally. Over the course of 1990, the NP under FW de Klerk announced that these laws would be repealed as part of a wider rolling back of formal apartheid. And this in turn triggered a sense of crisis in the segregationist towns of the Northern Transvaal under the CP.

In September 1990, an urgent community meeting was called by the CP mayor of Potgietersrus, Koos Meyer, to discuss the turn of affairs. A number of residents rose to voice their opposition to the prospect of a racially integrated future. One said that it would not be tolerated inside and outside Potgietersrus: "This is blood-bought land that has been prayed for". Another insisted that the facilities of Potgietersrus had been erected by money from the white taxpayer and the white taxpayer alone, and as such "the government of the day has no mandate to take the money of the white taxpayer of Potgietersrus and do what it likes".[1193]

CP councillors explained that the municipality had been doggedly working to fight reforms towards ending segregation, and would maintain the resistance. Chairman of the municipality's Management Committee, Pieter van Niekerk, claimed that the council had "made numerous representations" to the central state and now requested "the assistance of the residents on these matters". One of the Council's most vociferous advocates for continuing segregation, George Morkel-Brink, told the audience that he had been granted an interview with the State President only two days after the law was abolished, and confirmed that any control or ordinance that the Council might seek to introduce to uphold segregation would be illegal. Yet he voiced his appetite for continuing intransigence.

The CP MP for the Potgietersrus, Schalk Pienaar, reportedly "praised the Town Council for the courageous struggle they are waging". He reminded the gathering that after the official scrapping of the Separate Amenities Act came into effect on 15 October, the Council would have no means "within the law" to provide whites only facilities at Potgietersrus, "however much it wishes". But he said that the time had come for residents to "send a clear message to the government and others to say that Potgietersrus is a white community in a white area. If

[1193] *Noord Transvaler* 'Inwoners is gekant teen oopstelling van geriewe', 21 September 1990.

other races are going to try to use it, they will lay claim to white possessions. It will signal conflict and serious racial clashes".[1194]

What emerged from the meeting was a set of resolutions which were to be conveyed to departments of the central government and NP leaders in Pretoria alike, as reported by the *Noord Transvaler:*

> The Town Council is requested to contact the necessary government bodies and to inform them that the white taxpayers of Potgietersrus instruct the Town Council to do the following: Firstly, that the Town Council does not give in to pressure from the government to open white facilities to Potgietersrus created by money from white taxpayers to other races. Second, that all accumulated funds from the municipality, which are also only white taxpayers' money, are used only for white facilities and for the whites. Third, that the white Town Council of Potgietersrus will not integrate and act only on behalf of the whites of Potgietersrus.

Yet not every resident of the town was in attendance. One of the speakers reportedly insisted that the decisions taken at the meeting would be regarded as those of all the residents of the town: "The meeting could be attended by any resident and it is assumed that the residents who are not at the meeting will also be bound by the decisions made here". [1195]

This chapter considers the period of the early 1990s from the vantage point of the town of Potgietersrus, and other white towns of the region. This period would see the far-right in white communities and town councils of the Northern Transvaal staging their own forms of activism against the prospect of a democratic, multiracial future. This would see the proliferation of a range of local organisations across the region, which connected with broader networks of white supremacists across the country. In the months that followed the September 1990 meeting of residents in Potgietersrus, the streets of the town would come to be punctuated by rising forms of white vigilantism, spearheaded by neo-fascist groupings like the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). While their support among ordinary residents proved variable, these initiatives would receive the tacit endorsement, and in some cases the active participation, of some members of the Potgietersrus Town Council and the CP in the Northern Transvaal more broadly. The CP would, in addition, come to join the far-right umbrella organisation, the Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF), formed in 1993 to ostensibly sought to preserve Afrikaner identity. As the end of apartheid appeared increasingly inevitable, the AVF would call for the creation of a "volkstaat", which included the territory of Potgietersrus and all other towns of the Northern Transvaal.

[1194] *Ibid.*
[1195] *Ibid*.

White right-wing resistance would present a looming danger to the transition process which both NP and ANC leaders were forced to confront and try to tame. At times, leaders from both parties would cooperate in a bid to defuse the right-wing threat. Meanwhile, the NP on its own sought to woo white opinion away from the far-right and convince prospective white voters that the path of reform was rational and ultimately in their best interests – as it embarked, at the same time, on a reinvention of itself as a party in a bid to attract Black voters.

The Call to Arms

On 12 February 1990, the AWB had held a gathering in Pretoria. Journalist Shaun Johnson reported:

> In Cape Town, Nelson Mandela's imminent release was being announced. In Pretoria, thousands of [AWB] supporters were gathered under a placard bearing a crude drawing of the African National Congress leader. 'Wanted for target practice,' it read". "From today", thundered Eugene Terre'blanche in a voice which carried eerily through the empty streets beyond Church Square, "Pretoria will never be the same. The hour of resistance is here. The boer nation is on the march. This is a revolution that De Klerk is bringing on". "Hang Mandela, hang Mandela, hang De Klerk", screamed the crowd… A group of men just below the statue of Paul Kruger snapped to attention with Nazi salutes… The far-right is in a snarling, frothing, dangerous mood.[1196]

Terreblanche's voice did indeed echo far beyond Church Square and found particular resonance in the bushveld region – across what was described by one respondent as the "AWB Belt".[1197] The undisputed stronghold of the AWB was Ventersdorp, but towns across the Northern Transvaal would see the rise of forms of violent white vigilantism, some of which was carried out by local members of the AWB – including in Potgietersrus. In June 1990, the ANC regional office announced a consumer boycott in Potgietersrus to protest "right wing assaults" on black people in town.[1198] In May 1991, it was reported that the AWB held a confrontational march through Potgietersrus, and "allegedly assaulted black people and distributed pamphlets accusing them of barbarism".[1199] In November 1990, a group of about 25 white men, most members of the AWB, reportedly attacked a group of Sunday school children having a picnic in a park in Louis Trichardt. They were armed with sticks and sjamboks, and their group included an ex-policeman. They had apparently believed that an ANC rally had been planned

[1196] Shaun Johnson, Strange Days Indeed: Tales from the Old, and the Nearly New South Africa (London: Bantam Press, 1993), p.90.
[1197] Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019.
[1198] *The Star,* 'ANC seeks shop boycott in two towns', 18 June 1991.
[1199] *The Star,* 'Threats will worsen N Tvl Boycott', 3 July 1991.

there, yet even when they were told by the SAP captain that the event had been called off, they went ahead and attacked the group anyway.[1200]



Figure 62: An advertisement for an appearance by AWB leader Eugene Terreblanche in Pietersburg.[1201]

Groups like the AWB represented a particularly militant response to the proposed end of apartheid, echoing Nazi iconography and styles. Yet the right-wing more broadly attracted enormous support, and organisations seeking to cling to the segregationist past and reject the processes of negotiation gained enormous traction here. The CP positioned itself as the party political wing of this obstructionist movement. Following De Klerk's February 1990 speech, CP leaders issued increasingly strident proclamations. Treurnicht insisted on "the right to use whatever is necessary, including violence, to protect our volk and our property", and threatened to launch a "third liberation struggle".[1202] If militant right-wing groups like the AWB undertook fairly direct methods of obstruction against processes of democratisation, the CP, installed in virtually every town council across the Northern Transvaal, would use their institutional power towards similar ends. Councillors and Town Clerks across the region sought to put a brake on Black political organisation, for instance, routinely refusing to grant permission for the ANC and other political organisations to stage marches. Black activists

[1200] *Lebowa Times,* 'L Trichardt 5 found guilty', 12 June 1992.
[1201] *Noord Transvaler,* 12 September 1993.
[1202] *O'Malley Archive,* 'Conservative Party', Available at: https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv02730/05lv03188/06lv03198.htm.

accused white municipal officials of ordering police to arrest those who participated in "illegal marches". The Potgietersrus Town Council was among the worst offenders on this score, using its administrative powers to strangle local political campaigns.[1203] The Town Council also refused to recognise the repeal of petty apartheid legislation. Four months after the scrapping of the Separate Amenities Act, the *Star* newspaper found that most facilities were still being reserved for whites only in several towns: "Whites-only signs remain at hospitals in Louis Trichardt, Phalaborwa and Potgietersrus".[1204] This, as well as the Town Council's refusal to accede to requests for peaceful marches, would prompt recurrent boycott actions organised by the local ANC.[1205]

The CP formally had no relationship with the AWB, and it was on occasion drawn to publicly distance itself from some of the violent activities the neo-Nazi group had staged, cognisant that they threatened to alienate some white voters. One CP candidate for local government claimed in 1990 that "It is a myth that the CP is far right. The AWB is far right, the HNP right, the CP middle-of-the-road, the DP left, and the NP far left".[1206] Yet the CP's pronouncements dovetailed with the actions of these more extremist groupings, and contributed to a broader atmosphere of white fear. "The *Afrikanervolk* have come to a crossroads in their lives", the Potgietersrus MP, Schalk Pienaar, intoned weeks after Mandela's release, "either they will have to shed the yoke of the NP or be condemned to the yoke of the ANC. The struggle for the soul of the Afrikaner- and Whiteness [*Blankedom*] has now entered a decisive phase."[1207] And elsewhere, Pienaar declared: "The promised land is becoming a nightmare".[1208] Pienaar's foreboding tone resonated with the intense climate of fear that prevailed in towns like Potgietersrus. In the weeks following Mandela's release, a gun salesman in the town reported a sudden increase in the purchase of handguns especially, which he attributed to the "political climate in the country".[1209]

As early as February 1990, the CP was making public pronouncements about the need for a "eie vaderland", a "volkstaat" or a "boerestaat".[1210] With the segregationist tide on the retreat, the CP believed it could anchor a localized version of apartheid through appeals to local autonomy. As Heymans wrote, "The CP sees in control of local authorities an opportunity to implement its own policies, and to place obstacles in the way of government reforms" –

[1203] See, for instance, *The Star,* 'Nationwide marches, stayaway planned', 1 February 1991; *Beeld,* 'ANC wil optree teen dorpe in die Noorde', 4 February 1991.
[1204] *The Star,* 'Segregation by euphemism: summary of lingering discrimination in Tvl', 4 March 1991.
[1205] See, for instance, *The Citizen,* 'Potgietersrus boycott to continue for a week', 10 December 1992.
[1206] *Pretoria News,* 'Aspirants set for Randburg scrap', 31 October 1990
[1207] *Patriot,* 'Afrikaner by kruispad – Pienaar', 16 February 1990
[1208] *The Natal Witness,* 'Battle on for Umlazi seat', 6 April 1990.
[1209] *Die Beeld,* 'Mense koop meer vuurwapens', 20 February 1990.
[1210] *Finansies & Tegniek,* 'Wat regses nou behoort te doen', 16 February 1990

particularly around questions of "segregation and desegregation and the broader ideological divisions which underpin these differences". [1211] The CP had staked its opposition to the negotiations process early on, insisting on the need for an independent Afrikaner homeland – a call that would echo through the pronouncements of right-wing Afrikaner groups throughout the early 1990s. The CP made it clear that "unless the government acknowledges that self-determination will prevail, there is no question of the CP participating in negotiations".[1212] And this took place against the backdrop of rising displays of public rejection by the white right wing of the NP and central government. In September 1990, a group of so-called "regses" [right-wingers] in Potgietersrus disrupted a meeting chaired by the NP's Leon Wessels (Deputy Minister of Law and Order and later NP negotiator) by throwing tear gas in the hall.[1213]

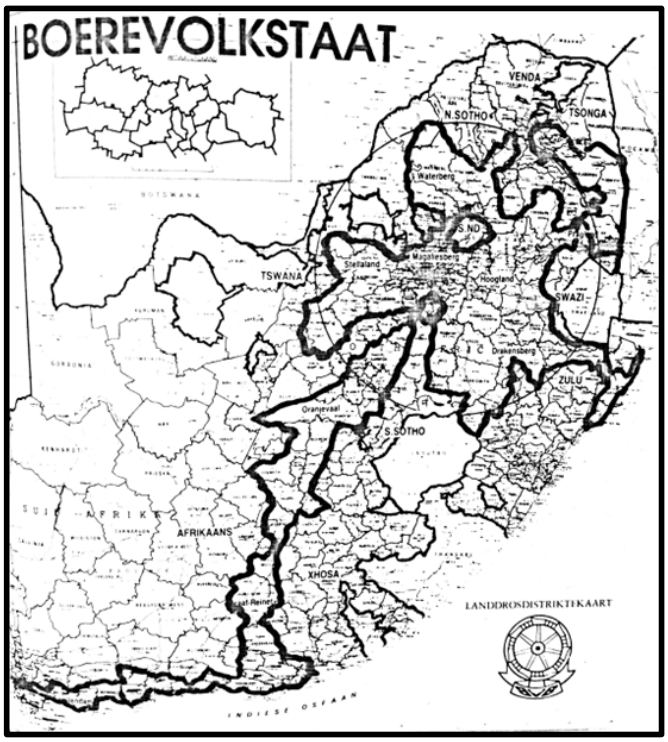


Figure 63: Borders proposed for a "Volkstaat" by the right-wing grouping, Boerevryheidsbeweging in March 1991.[1214]

The CP also sought to capitalize on deepening anger and insecurity amongst farmers in the area, ravaged by nine years of drought. Farmers expressed anger at the policies of the NP central government, which they blamed for rising interest rates and farmer bankruptcies.

[1211] Heymans "Local government in a changing South Africa", p.264.
[1212] *Die Burger*, 'CP sal onderhandel oor toekoms, mits…', 7 February 1991.
[1213] *Die Beeld,* 'Leon Wessels uitgejou', 17 September 1990.
[1214] *Northern Review,* 'Só gaan BVB se volkstaat lyk', 1 March 1991.

These material hardships came to be married with rhetoric about the loss of Afrikaner political rights and land: “One wonders if South Africa is still a Western country”, an inflammatory article of *Die Afrikaner* decried, now that white “voting rights are being watered down, and [their farms are becoming sites of] squatter camps”.[1215] The prospect of land reform under an ANC government also evoked anxiety which the right-wing sought to enflame.[1216] In January 1991, a gathering of 5,000 farmers took place in Church Square, Pretoria, in protest against the conditions faced by farmers. The group was reportedly led by the Potgietersrus-based Farmers’ Crisis Action (FCA). Many were seen “openly wearing firearms, while at least two men had the AWB Aquila badges on their shirts”.[1217] The event had commentators puzzling over whether to call it “a farmers protest” or a “right-wing mutiny”.[1218] The CP clearly tried to capitalize on the event, with Andries Treurnicht and 18 CP MPs reported to have visited the gathering in a show of support.[1219]

The Northern Transvaal wing of the farmers union, the Transvaal Landbou Unie (TLU), appears to have driven support for the CP – an accusation levelled time and again by the NP in the province against its conservative chairman, Dries Bruwer.[1220] The vice president of the TLU at Potgietersrus, Leonard Venter, would insist that the farmers were becoming “squatters in their own country thanks to government policies”. Farmers were demanding greater financial assistance from the state against the backdrop of continuing drought and a depreciation of crop prices. And Venter once again pinned this decline on the NP’s negotiations with the ANC: “The new mealie price is a disgrace. The ANC now has more say in product prices than farmers themselves”. And he added: “Who is the government to ask us to remove the word 'white' from our constitution”.[1221] Later, he sounded alarm at the growing farm insecurity, claiming that it was a “time bomb”, and noting that farmers were arming themselves “for a fight that could break out any day”, and noted that farmers stood ready to fight back as part of the commando and police reservist structures.[1222]

[1215] *Die Afrikaner,* ‘Boere nou militant’, 7 February 1990
[1216] *The Sowetan,* ‘Land reform on the cards’, 25 June 1990.
[1217] *Pretoria News,* ‘City furious at farmers’, 29 January 1991.
[1218] In the view of one observer, some participants insisted they were merely protesting against high interest rates and government action, others echoed right-wing slogans about the frightening future that awaited them under the ANC. *The Sunday Star,* ‘Dual agenda protest’, 3 February 1991.
[1219] *The Star,* ‘Farmers head home as protest fizzles out’, 31 January 1991.
[1220] Yet there were divisions even within the CP – the TLU’s Bruwer regarded the idea of secession, for instance, as being “only to the detriment of agriculture” *Beeld,* ‘Regses rangeer NP-boere hier uit’, 8 March 1991.
[1221] *Beeld,* ‘Boere moet hul kos dan aan rake ‘onttrek’’, 7 May 1993.
[1222] *Ibid*.

The NP's Fight Back and the 1992 Referendum

Throughout the early 1990s, the NP worked to try and break the back of conservative support in their strongholds in the Northern and Eastern Transvaal. The Transvaal NP Regional Secretary, Danie Botha, was among those tasked with finding ways to defuse the right-wing threat in the province. A personal friend of FW de Klerk, Botha had long served in structures of the NP in the province. Yet he recalls the early 1990s as the most difficult period of his political career. Botha, who was living in Nylstroom (now Modimolle) at the time, was on occasion advised by state intelligence officials to sleep elsewhere, because they had received warnings of a possible attack. And he recalls how he would frequently avoid driving through white towns out of fear for his life, electing instead to travel along roads that went through the townships and villages of Lebowa.[1223]

Botha describes how, among the most important showdowns between the NP and the far-right in the Transvaal was the so-called "Battle of Ventersdorp" – a rally he helped organise in the political "fortress" ("vesting") of Eugene Terreblanche. FW de Klerk was to give the keynote address as proof of the strength of the NP in the face of their right wing antagonists.[1224] "If they managed to let FW de Klerk not speak there," Botha explains, "that would be the breaking point of the National Party". The event was due to take place just two months before CODESA was due to begin, and was thus intended to drive a message home to conservative Afrikaners that negotiations were not only desirable, but indeed unavoidable. Time and again, De Klerk and his allies would insist that white voters had nothing to fear from the negotiations process. "We were still saying: Don't be worried we are not going to hand over power", one NP leader told Van der Westhuizen, "We will entrench minority rights".[1225]

In the run-up to the meeting, Botha recalls, the AWB scattered spikes on the roads with the aim of puncturing the tyres of the presidential cavalcade. These had to be hastily cleaned up by the South African Police (SAP) in the early hours of the morning. The assembled crowd included rowdy members of the AWB. Just before De Klerk was due to speak, Botha recalls, Piet "Skiet" Rudolph began shooting live rounds in the direction of the police, where Botha was standing. Rudolph was quickly arrested, and Botha had to personally escort him to the police station. Police shot and killed two members of the AWB over the course of events, yet the meeting proceeded and De Klerk spoke. This was declared a victory for the NP.[1226]

[1223] Interview with Danie Botha, Zebediela, 27 August 2019.
[1224] *Ibid.*.
[1225] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.182.
[1226] From Danie Botha's personal collection.


Beeld

Mnr. Louis Botha, oud-Administrateur van die Vrystaat, word 'n direkteur van die Nasionale Pers – 2.

weer die kans om al die plakstukke vir ons wedstryd te kry. Plakstuk op bl. 3.

FINALE UITGAWE

Drie sterf in bloedbad

Minstens 48 beseer in geweld op Ventersdorp ■ Regses val polisiemanne aan by FW-vergadering

Figure 64: Front page cover of the Beeld newspaper, reporting on events at Ventersdorp in August 1991.[1227]



Figure 65: President FW de Klerk is delivered in an armoured personnel carrier to speak at Ventersdorp. Far-right graffiti identifies the NP with communism.[1228]

[1227] *Ibid*.
[1228] *Sunday Times,* "Open War", 11 August 1991. From Danie Botha's personal collection.

Certainly, the sight of De Klerk having to be transported in an armoured personnel carrier to avoid the threats of the white right-wing did not inspire confidence in the strength of the reformist leader's support in the rural towns of the Transvaal. This perception was deepened after the NP experienced two by-election losses to the CP in late 1991, and then again in early 1992 when the party also lost a seat in their stronghold of Potchefstroom.[1229] These victories emboldened the CP, whose leader insisted that De Klerk did not have a mandate to scrap apartheid legislation. "People are moving to the right," proclaimed Treurnicht, "They are moving in the direction of true nationalism". The party called for a general election, which it believed it would win.[1230]

Instead of a general election, the NP leadership opted to call for a whites-only referendum in March 1992: a "yes" vote would signal support for the reform process, a "no" vote would precipitate De Klerk's resignation.[1231] In leading the charge against the continuation of negotiations, the CP's Treurnicht earned the moniker "Dr No".[1232] The announcement prompted a flurry of activities organised by the NP. Danie Botha was responsible for arranging speeches by key national leaders across the towns of the Northern Transvaal, and he explains how he had to consider the choice of speakers carefully depending on the particularities of each town. The blustering and big talking Pik Botha went down fairly well in the ultra-conservative Ellisras, for instance – "He would say all sorts of nonsense, even if he knew the NP had no intention of doing it. [He was] a bit like [Donald] Trump. And the people of Ellisras related to him".[1233] The choice of Leon Wessels to speak in Potgietersrus was, however, a poor fit, given that he had become an increasing figure of scorn among the white right, along with the *verligte* Roelf Meyer who would lead the NP's delegation in the negotiations.

In the weeks before the referendum, the NP ran a series of full-page advertorials in which they ridiculed the position of the CP as one which flew in the face of reality. Change was coming, the NP insisted, and those who refused to accept it would be left behind. One advertorial portrayed a white man in an unkempt suit begging on a pavement, holding a sign that read "No work, no money, no food". The text read: "Don't vote yourself out of a job. Vote yes for a solution that will work".[1234] Others sought to emphasise the links between the CP and the far-

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[1229] *The Citizen,* "South African conservatives win by-election, want general election, 23 May 1991; O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years,* p.410.
[1230] *The Citizen,* "South African conservatives win by-election, want general election, 23 May 1991.
[1231] *South African History Online,* "The 1992 Whites only referendum 'For' or 'Against' a negotiated constitution", available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/1992-whites-only-referendum-or-against-negotiated-constitution.
[1232] *Ibid*.
[1233] Danie Botha adds that Pik often arrived to these events having already consumed several whiskies. Interview with Danie Botha, Zebediela, 27 August 2019.
[1234] *Noord Transvaler,* NP Advert, 13 March 1992.

right AWB with a large picture of a militant in a balaclava brandishing a gun, emblazoned with the Nazi-like insignia. “With whom is the CP’s head always in one beanie?”, it read, “The CP and the AWB shook hands on an alliance. An alliance they will have to live with in the future. The question is, can you live with that? You don't have to. Vote yes.” And alongside a picture featuring Andries Treurnicht seated next to Eugene Terreblanche, the text read: “Not family, only blood brothers”.



Figure 66: A full-page advertorial taken out by the NP prior to the referendum of March 1993.[1235]

In the same issue, the CP ran its own advert which read “During Codesa, the Christian faith was equated with idolatry. That is reason enough for me as a Christian to say no”. One issue on which it focused in particular was the idea of “mixed schools”, which it claimed would also

[1235] *Noord Transvaler,* “Met wie is die KP nog almal kop in een mus?”, 13 March 1993.

increase costs for white parents massively. It included a letter supposedly written by a child which read: “Dear dad and mom, don’t let me grow up under the ANC please. Vote NO!”. And it ended with the statement: “Your vote can prevent SA from becoming an African state like Mozambique. So vote no!”[1236]



Figure 67: Conservative Party Advertorial in the Noord Transvaler Newspaper calling for whites to vote “No” in the 1992 referendum.

On the ground in conservative towns, the CP undertook a vigorous campaign to agitate for a “no” vote. A journalist from the *Sowetan* visiting Potgietersrus during a CP rally described how “’No’ placards line the highway” towards the town.

> Local experts say at least 80 percent of voters in this region, devoutly Christian and immersed in a tradition of white supremacy, will vote no and demand a return to grand apartheid – separate states for white and black… In interviews at a rugby

[1236] *Noord Transvaler,* CP Referendum Advertorial, 13 March 1992.

> field alongside the Great North highway, where 3,000 of the town's white community of 10,000 cheered right-wing leaders, people spoke not just of fighting for a referendum win, but for the religious and family value they have cherished amid considerable adversity for 300 years… [Said one local architect:] "We will fight till we die against the communist, the anti-Christ [Mandela]. We will fight to the bitter end"… [And a local journalist stated:] "They are voting no because they believe, rightly or wrongly, they are going to lose all"… One poster [at the rally] read: "Say no to De Klerk and cANCer".[1237]

Days before the referendum to decide on whether to continue with negotiations, Danie Botha's office in Nylstroom was the target of a bomb attack which ripped through a side wall. The incident occurred just a day before De Klerk was due to speak in the home town of Treurnicht, who was also expected to hold his own rally.[1238]

At the national level, 68% of South Africa's whites voted "yes" in the referendum. Yet the Northern Transvaal vote delivered a 57% "no" vote – the only province to have rejected the NP's path for reform. While the town of Pietersburg marginally voted in support, the rest of the conservative towns of the region, including Potgietersrus, rejected the negotiations process with fervour. The CP leadership celebrated the result as proof of a further "right-ward shift" in the province.[1239] But the Transvaal NP emphasised the overall national result as confirmation that the right-wing were on the losing side of history.[1240] With nearly seven out of ten whites endorsing the notion of a non-racial constitution, De Klerk had a real mandate [for negotiations]", O'Meara explains. Yet he goes on to argue that De Klerk squandered this opportunity:

> The president could have seized this opportunity to move ahead quickly. Instead he chose to interpret the vote as a mandate for a white veto in the new constitution. He stressed *ad nauseam* the NP "bottom line" that "power-sharing" not majority rule was the only form of democracy acceptable to the NP … This obstinacy quickly shattered the huge sentiment of goodwill the referendum victory for negotiations had elicited in the black population… [and suggested that] the NP reverted to all of its "old arrogance". But de Klerk's stance had even more dangerous consequences. By stressing "group rights" and ethnic fears, he played right back into the hands of the far right. Now they could claim that even De Klerk supported the view that each (ethnic/racial/whatever) group had the right to 'self-determination'.[1241]

[1237] *Sowetan,* "Inside the white Afrikaner laager: right prefers death to black rule", 10 March 1992.
[1238] *Beeld,* 'Dr T moet terrorisme nou reguit veroordeel', 14 March 1992.
[1239] *Northern Review,* "Skuif na regs: KP", 20 March 1992.
[1240] *Northern Review,* "Our wildest expectations were exceeded", 20 March 1992.
[1241] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years,* p.410-411.

In May 1992, CODESA II collapsed amidst the onset of one of the most violent periods of the transition era.

The Volkstaat, the Volksfront, and White Vigilantism

In February 1993, Potgietersrus once again made headlines when the property of André van den Berg, a local doctor, was the target of attacks. His vehicle was set alight and a petrol bomb thrown at the stoep of his house on Hoogstraat, reportedly following threats by members of the "far right".[1242] Van den Berg had referred three Black patients to the Voortrekker Hospital, following the formal opening of hospitals to all races. *Beeld* interviewed other doctors in the town, who had similarly reported receiving "threatening calls" if "they would dare to have Black patients admitted to the white hospital ward".[1243] One doctor said that he was too scared to refer Black patients to the facility, and stated that he was afraid to give his name out of fear that his children would be harassed by the right-wingers of the town. In attributing blame for the attack on his practice, Van Den Berg pointed a finger at Dr Johan Lets Pretorius, described as an outspoken right-wing doctor who had previously led a march against a planned ANC protest in town and had allegedly made inquiries about Van Den Berg's referrals.[1244] Pretorius was also an official in the Potgietersrus Town Council, heading up the Health portfolio.[1245] Pretorius distanced himself from the attack, and denied being a member of the AWB.[1246] But he told the *Beeld: "*Would you now like the place to be flooded from far and wide by hundreds of thousands of black people while an equally well-equipped hospital just 4 km from the town was set up especially for them?".[1247] The following month, three members of the AWB were arrested and found guilty of intimidation.[1248]

In the wake of the attack on Van Den Berg, the doctor requested help from both the ANC and the Mahwelereng Civic Association, who touted the idea of a consumer boycott in retaliation.[1249] Plans for a boycott were given added impetus when the Town Council refused an application for a memorial service to be held for the slain Communist Party Secretary General, Chris Hani, in Potgietersrus. Hani was killed in April 1993 by a group which included the Clive Derby Lewis, a founding member of the CP. With the Potgietersrus council the only in the whole of the Northern Transvaal to bar such a commemoration service, the ANC branch

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[1242] *City Press,* 'Get out of town, you democrat!', 7 February 1993.
[1243] *Beeld,* 'Arts gedreig oor swart siekes in dorpshospitaal', 2 February 1993.
[1244] *Rapport,* 'Swart babas in hospital laat regses brand', 7 February 1993.
[1245] South African Association of Municipal Employees. 1989. *Official South African Municipal Yearbook.* Craighall: Helm Publikasies.
[1246] *Rapport,* 'Swart babas in hospital laat regses brand', 7 February 1993.
[1247] *Beeld* 'Artse is haaks na swart pasiente se opname', 5 February 1993.
[1248] *The Star,* 'AWB men guilty of intimidation', 15 March 1993.
[1249] *Lebowa Times,* 'Civic body discusses beleaguered doctor', 26 February 1993.

spokesperson was quoted as saying that Black residents have concluded that "if their presence in Potgietersrus is not good enough, their money is not good enough either".[1250]

In the aftermath of the referendum, the white right-wing had, however, gravitated ever further towards extremist positions, railing ever more forcefully about the idea of a volkstaat against the backdrop of growing veiled threats of armed insurrection, and actual episodes of violence, such as that which befell the unfortunate doctor in Potgietersrus. The former South African Defence Force chief, Constand Viljoen, would later confirm to the TRC that he had planned to establish a volkstaat by force. In May 1993, he constituted a "committee of generals", which included former SADF and SAP leadership. This would draw in a range of other right wing organisations in the months that followed, van der Westhuizen notes, which would include the CP, the HNP, the "Ku Klux Klan-like" Church of the Creator, the AWB, and the Boere-Weerstandsbeweging (Boer Resistance Movement).[1251] Together, these organisations would constitute the founding members of the Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF): an umbrella organisation which, according to Norval, aimed to "coordinate right-wing attempts to establish a volkstaat". Norval continues:

> The presence of a significant number of generals in these ranks led to a sea-change in the manner in which right-wing ideology was perceived. No longer regarded as the delusions of a conglomeration of marginal, bearded, noisy fanatics, the volkstaat idea gained greater legitimacy under the mainstream right … [The AVF's] vision for a future South Africa [echoed] the CP's proposals for a confederation of Southern African states [and was] based on the rejection of both apartheid and a unitary state as a solution to the plight of Afrikaners… It argue[d] that peace and stability can only be gained in a context where peoples (*volkere*) are separated.[1252]

While the CP's ideology would prove central in directing the energies of the AVF, the party had, however, lost its primary torchbearer. Andries Treurnicht had died shortly after the referendum, and was replaced by his deputy, the bespectacled Ferdi Hartzenberg – a man whom Morkel-Brink regarded as lacking in charisma and political nous.[1253] Hartzenberg would, however, continue to insist that "the people who negotiate and make decisions for us must take note that we will lay everything on the altar for a Volkstaat".[1254] Yet the NP's Lategan insisted that a return to the "Verwoerd model according to which all areas outside of the

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[1250] *Beeld,* 'Boikot dreig op Potgietersrus', 15 April 1993.
[1251] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power,* p.206.
[1252] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.284-285.
[1253] Interview with George Morkel-Brink, Mokopane, 29 August 2019.
[1254] *Noord Transvaler,* "Net selfbeskikking en nie anders nie", 27 August 1993.

Bantustans will be part of an Afrikaner Volkstaat" was, as "every right-thinking person knows … impossible".[1255]

Negotiations had resumed in March 1993 under the mantle of the "Multi-Party Negotiation Process". Concerted efforts were made to draw the right-wing into the negotiations process. Norval notes, for instance, the creation of a "Conservative Dialogue programme" created by the Institute for a Democratic South Africa (IDASA).[1256] Yet parties to the AVF, including the CP, pointedly refused to participate in the national negotiation process. In June 1993, about 3,000 AWB members invaded the World Trade Centre where the Multiparty Negotiation Process was underway. They drove an armoured police vehicle through the glass entryway, shouted racial slurs, urinated on furniture, sang the national anthem and prayed.[1257] Among those who stormed the proceedings were AWB members from the Northern Transvaal, including Johannes Viljoen of Potgietersrus, Alwyn Wolfaart from Naboomspruit, Pieter Bornman and Johannes Britz from Nylstroom, and Gerhardus Jacobs from Ellisras.[1258]

Local Government Negotiations

In some towns of the Northern Transvaal, engagements between white local administrators and representatives from Lebowa had gradually increased over the early 1990s, seeking to forge greater administrative integration in delivering services to neighbouring areas which fell under the Bantustan. This was first pushed at the level of provincial and regional government. In March 1990, the Administrator of the Transvaal and his Executive Committee met the Lebowa Cabinet in Lebowakgomo to discuss potential cooperation in matters related to road works, road traffic, nature conservation, physical planning, community development and health.[1259] And it formulated a plan to create a committee manned by representatives from both "regional governments".[1260] In the same month, the chair of the Northern Regional Services Council, Jack Botes, insisted that "our divided, duplicated, unnecessarily costly structures" were hampering growth and development. He called for a "multiracial regional authority" with "joint legislative and planning machinery".[1261] This was echoed by Ramodike, who insisted that the future economic development of Lebowa could only take place in a

[1255] *Noord Transvaler,* "NP sê KP skep net verwagtinge", 15 October 1993.
[1256] Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.284.
[1257] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power,* p.207.
[1258] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Noorde se man voor hof oor betreding van handelsentrum', 14 January 1994.
[1259] *Lebowa Times,* 'Common planning discussed', 2 March 1990
[1260] *Lebowa Times,* 'Common planning discussed', 2 March 1990
[1261] *Lebowa Times,* 'Mr Botes says development needs one authority', 9 March 1990.

regional context,[1262] and who called for the "homeland system" to be reduced to "the rendering of developmental and administrative services on a regional basis".[1263]

These processes would be mirrored at the level of local government too. In April 1990, in what was billed as a "historic meeting", the Pietersburg Town Council met with the Lebowa cabinet for the first time to discuss housing, urbanisation and industrial development. The meeting was advertised as an opportunity to "remove the gulf of difference between white and black in this region, to build goodwill, mutual understanding and trust".[1264] And in Potgietersrus, a new joint structure was formed to discuss areas of "common concern" between the town and the Lebowa district which neighboured it. In May 1990, the Potgietersrus/Mokerong liaison committee held a joint meeting with representatives of Lebowa government departments to consider initiatives for "joint development" in the district, including the upgrading of roads, and the creation of a "proper taxi rank in town with all facilities like rubbish bins, shelters, toilets".[1265] With the continuation of the devastating drought, it was reported that representatives from both Potgietersrus and Mahwelereng local government structures had "agreed in principle to draw water from a common source".[1266]

While municipal administrators had begun forging closer links with Bantustan officials involved in service delivery, yet the CP-controlled councils initially remained ardently against the creation of any joint political forum – a political manifesto of the party generally. Yet from 1993 there were some signs that the party was reconsidering this hardline stance. While the CP had refused to participate in national negotiations, the party had, however, attended one key platform: the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) held in Kempton Park in March 1993.[1267] The inclusion of the CP in the LGNF was reported as "a major breakthrough" since as CP councillors had "threatened to resist any attempts to integrate white towns".[1268] Yet they had gained powerful concessions in the process. The strong commitment to local "consociationalism" that emerged from the LGNF and found its way into the Local Government Transition Act of 1993 has been attributed to the intransigence of the CP and the CP-aligned Transvaal Municipal Association. [1269] It was agreed that 30% of negotiating forums would be reserved for "minorities" (that is, white interest groups) – a move which the ANC agreed they

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[1262] *Lebowa Times,* Ramodike says of negotiations: Compromise, 4 May 1990.
[1263] *Lebowa Times,* "Break up homelands and develop regions – Ramodike', 4 May 1990.
[1264] *Lebowa Times,* 'Leb Govt, Pietersburg council in historic meeting', 20 April 1990.
[1265] *Lebowa Times,* 'Tourism, roads, deregulation discussed by committee', 25 May 1990.
[1266] *Lebowa Times,* 'Water main priority', 26 July 1991.
[1267] Buhlungu and Atkinson, "Introduction", p.29.
[1268] *Ibid*.
[1269] Richard Spitz and Matthew Chaskalson, *The Politics of Transition: A Hidden History of South Africa's Negotiated Settlement*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2000), p.184.

would push their constituencies to go along with it.[1270] There were also concessions towards the later phase of transitional local government which CP vested "elected representatives of white residents with an effective veto over local government decisions."[1271] Resolutions in the Transitional Local Councils constituted after 1995 would require a two-thirds majority. Thus, until the end of local transitional arrangements in 2000, "in most areas local government could not take any significant decisions without the consensus of councillors representing white residents".[1272] The ANC had accepted these concessions "in view of the threat of white right-wing resistance to local government transformations in the towns currently controlled by the CP".[1273]

Yet even after the Local Government Transition Act of 1993 mandated the formation of such negotiating forums, and as other towns in the region moved to establish them, councillors in Potgietersrus refused to do so. In Pietersburg, for instance, with a narrow majority of NP councillors, such a forum was created in July 1993 – a move hailed by the Town Clerk, Attie Vermaak, as recognition that the "City of Pietersburg and adjacent Seshego have traditionally and historically been interdependent for decades".[1274] In Phalaborwa, the Greater Phalaborwa Development Forum was launched as a means by which the "entire community… will participate in the development planning process".[1275] Yet in Potgietersrus and in other CP-dominated councils (Groblersdal and Louis Trichardt, in particular), the political establishment remained singularly hostile to the prospect of a joint forum, even after this was mandated by agreements reached in the negotiations process, maintaining an insistence on the need to establish an autonomous, white Afrikaner Volkstaat.

In February 1994, an exasperated NP provincial politician, Tjol Lategan, said he would try to "hold talks with the CP and the AWB in [Potgietersrus] to persuade them to accept the idea of a single, non-racial municipality".[1276] Behind the scenes across the Northern Transvaal, the ANC was undertaking its own initiatives in a bid to defuse the right-wing threats of sabotage. Across South Africa, 38 municipalities were, as Bob Mmola recalls, identified by Thabo Mbeki as "strategic municipalities" owing to its far-right complexion. Potgietersrus was one of those identified. The future first MEC of local government, John Dombo, recalls being tasked with

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[1270] *Business Day,* 'CP and ANC in local govt talks', 22 November 1993.
[1271] Spitz and Chaskalson, *Politics of Transition*, p.186.
[1272] *Ibid.* p.184.
[1273] *Ibid.* p.190.
[1274] A steering committee was constituted, which included representatives from the City Council, the Seshego Civic Association, the TPA, the Regional Services Council and the Lebowa government, and tasked to consider the boundaries of a new transitional municipality, rates and taxes and the extension of expertise and infrastructure. *Lebowa Times,* 'P'burg, Seshego come closer', 30 July 1993.
[1275] *Lebowa Times,* 'Launch of Development Forum: communities will plan', 17 December 1993.
[1276] *Lebowa Times,* 'Will CP and AWB accept single body?'. 25 February 1994.

holding face-to-face talks with members of the far-right, often making perilous entries to their farms and undertaking stilted discussions over cups of tea – or brandy and coke:

> We were talking [to say] that there is a need to have an inclusive government, look we are not going to take away their language. If they want to express themselves in Afrikaans, they will still. Their churches were not going to be razed … Some of them saw the light.[1277]

In arranging these meetings, Dombo was aided by Danie Botha, and through this process each describe forming an unlikely bond of friendship which would see the two work together into the democratic era.

Yet the far-right attitude of dogged obstruction married with vigilante attacks in many small towns across the Northern Transvaal continued. And this position formed within a broader climate of fear that pervaded discussion in the regional and local public spheres. In January 1994, the *Noord Transvaler*[1278] ran an editorial under the headline "My land [country] is my land is my land":

> Never before have we lived in such an era. In our history there was the era of enlightenment, the era of so-named progressiveness, and without doubt the present era can be described as the era of anxiety. If the dark clouds of doom gather on the horizon, many of us doubt whether South Africa is still our country to live in. That's when you think about packing and moving… In our region, we have seen people move away, but not overseas. The Cape is now the bait… [M]any people see those in positions of power as people who are unsure of the path to take. It seems like decision-making has become a nightmare for some of them. On the ground level, many of our people have reached a point of despondency, and throwing in the towel. People who until some time ago were still courageous and saw a future for themselves and their families here now only see darkness. Even their right to exist feels affected. A right every person in the world has… But think carefully. We were placed in this sunny land of ours for a purpose… [N]o one should get discouraged or give up their property. It's our country, my country, your country and here lies our future.[1279]

Here we see described an atmosphere of acute uncertainty, cut through with a righteous sense of defiance. And among far-right politicians, this defiance was directed towards the preservation of white space.

In the following months, vigilante activities under the mantel of the AVF had been stepped up in Potgietersrus in defence of separate amenities – this time around the formerly "whites-only"

[1277] Interview with John Dombo, 27 May 2019.
[1278] In contrast to the Pietersburg-based *Northern Review,* the *Noord Transvaler,* which circulated between the smaller towns of the Northern Transvaal like Potgietersrus, was awash with articles of a dire tone, including numerous statements of CP politicians.
[1279] *Noord Transvaler,* "My land is my land is my land", 21 January 1994.

Voortrekker Hospital. In the wake of the continuing strike by NEHAWU at the Mokopane Hospital, Black patients had sought treatment at the hospital in Potgietersrus from January 1994. The controversial local doctor, Lets Pretorius, had helped create a local "Health Care Group" under the mantel of the AVF in Potgietersrus, and claimed that staff at Voortrekker Hospital refused on principle to serve Black patients. Pretorius organised a public meeting during which, it was reported, "the community expressed their support for the staff". The meeting resolved that "Several members of the AVF and also members of the community will guard the entrances in turn", armed with two-way radios "should a confrontation arise". Ambulances were instructed "not to try to bring black patients to the hospital for treatment".[1280] Despite insistence by the local police chief that the initiative was "illegal", the move had the express backing of the local Conservative Party politicians. Schalk Pienaar declared to the gathered crowd that "This is just a small example of what's still to come".[1281] In the same week, a new office of the AVF was opened at the Afrikaanse Protestante Kerk (APK), the right-wing breakaway of the NGK. The CP Mayor George Morkel-Brink delivered a speech at the event.[1282] Mrs. Caroline du Toit, regional leader of the Volkshulp stakeholder group, explained that the office would address "the needs of the Afrikaner Boerevolk in a new era in SA history".[1283]

In March 1994, a broadcasting antennae was erected on a hill near Potgietersrus which would begin transmitting Radio Ysterberg, described as the "country's newest right-wing network". The AVF leader Constand Viljoen attended the opening ceremony. "Right-wingers believe the fact that the new station will transmit from the Ysterberg is symbolic as they regard the Potgietersrus district as an Afrikaner heartland," the *Star* reported.[1284]

The "New" National Party

While the right-wing in the Northern Transvaal was digging in to its oppositional stance against the mandates of the central government and the democratic negotiations, the NP was trying to reinvent itself as a party not only for white people, but for Black voters too. In preparation for the coming general elections, the party had sought to prepare the ground for an NP victory. The campaign of the NP sought both to discredit the ANC as a party without the experience or credibility to govern, and to project the NP as a changed party which cared about the

[1280] See also: *Beeld,* 'Honderde regses betoog teen Lebowa-pasiente', 25 January 1994.
[1281] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Groot Steun vir Hospitaal', 28 January 1994.
[1282] *Noord Transvaler,* 'Volkshulp kom onder AVF-vaandel tot stand', 28 January 1994.
[1283] *Ibid*.
[1284] *The Star,* "Right-wing Radio Ysterberg 'on track'", 2 March 1994.

interests of the Black electorate, shedding off the image of Verwoerd and PW Botha to claim that it was a "New National Party".

In June 1993, the *New York Times* reported on a rally organised by the NP in Pietersburg at which De Klerk spoke. The NP national leader made his entrance with a "pageant of ostrich-plumed dancers and thundering drums", which the reporter described as the beginning of "his improbable campaign for votes of South African blacks". Introduced as a "strong chief" who had "liberated South Africa", De Klerk is said to have tried to convince the crowd bussed in from various parts of Lebowa, Gazankulu and Venda that the party was being reborn "from the white oligarchy that invented apartheid to a rainbow coalition of peace-loving, prosperity-seeking moderates". Yet the *New York Times* journalist expressed doubts as to whether the crowd would translate neatly into electoral support, citing one respondent who claimed that he had been bussed in by his farmer employer on the promise of day off from work.[1285] And similarly, the *Lebowa Times* reported that "Blacks who attended were mostly farm workers who were under the impression that they were accompanying their employers to a show".[1286]

This period marked the beginning of attempts by the NP to hastily create local party structures and recruit Black local politicians to stand as local representatives – those described in regional newspapers as the "Black Nats".[1287] The party made marginal inroads in Black communities of Lebowa, thanks in part to the work of recruiters like Danie Botha who had already established contacts with local leaders from the early 1990s. Additionally, the NP would draw in some former Bantustan politicians into its structures, including the disgraced former minister Chris Mothiba and a dismissed deputy minister L.A. Mamabolo.[1288] Lebowa's Chief Minister, in the midst of the ongoing takeover of his administration by the NP's regional leader, André Fourie, was meanwhile drawn to insist that "there is nothing new about the Nats", citing the party's continued intolerance and suppression seen in retrenchment of government employees, the withdrawal and suspension of funds earmarked for purchase of medicines of Black patients, the withdrawal of old age pensions and funds earmarked for additional teachers, the suspension of funds meant to assist magoši, and the failure to provide drought relief. In particular, Ramodike voiced anger at the NP's attempts to recruit from within the ranks of his own party, the UPF.[1289]

[1285] *New York Times,* "South African leader's unlikely target: black votes", 20 June 1993.
[1286] *Lebowa Times,* "NP support claims false, says ANC", 25 June 1993.
[1287] See, for instance: *Lebowa Times,* "We are the black Nats, say the two", 25 February 1994;
[1288] *Ibid.*; *Lebowa Times,* "Mamabolo jilts UPF, jumps into Nat bed", 25 February 1994.
[1289] *Lebowa Times,* "Nothing new about the Nats", 25 August 1993.

The *Lebowa Times* reported on some of those who chose to join the party. Daniel Chokoe was a former police major and station commander at the Gilead Police Station in the Potgietersrus district who had turned full-time NP organiser. Nathaniel Makhura was a matric pupil who said, “I realised that NP’s policies are not empty promises because they have experience of running a government”, and insisted that he “won’t hide his NP membership even if fellow pupils call him a puppet”.[1290] Yet the NP would rapidly reach a ceiling in its support in the province. Party leaders would cite the disruptions of the ANC as being the reason behind its inability to extend its reach. Chokoe spoke of an abortive meeting at Taueatsoala’s kraal in the Potgietersrus district at which “ANC youth came to the meeting and chased the old people away. They insulted us and ordered us to leave as we were wasting our time”.[1291] At one event organised on the Sapekoe plantation, it was reported that by the time NP representatives “BA Mashamba and Loreka Maguga took the platform, the workers were queuing for ANC flags, while those who remained drowned their voices in boohs”. Thelma Mabasa is then said to have stood up and insisted that the ANC was “an immoral organisation that was responsible for the necklace and other atrocities. The ANC had taken in corrupt homeland leaders, whose problem was that they were out to eat alone… The new black and white NP had admitted its past wrongs”.[1292]

With just weeks to go before the 27 April 1994 elections, the NP staged one of its final events in the Potgietersrus area, this time hosted by the president’s wife, Marike de Klerk, at the Park Hotel. The *Lebowa Times’s* report on the event offers a glimpse into something of the farcical theatre that the NP’s latter-day conversion could produce:

> In broken Northern Sotho, Mrs De Klerk greeted her audience ("Peace be with you") before lashing out at the right-wingers and the ANC for fomenting racial hatred and raising unrealistic expectations in the country. "Dr Ferdie Hartzenberg and General Viljoen contradict themselves on the boundaries of the Volkstaat. They don't even agree with each other on where such a state should start and end. A Volkstaat has no chance, after April 27 where will they get all the spare parts they will need and the rims for Dr Ferdie's spectacles", she told a crowd of predominantly black and white women. Turning to the ANC, she charged: "How can the ANC promise people freedom while they intimidate innocent people? A stone was even thrown at my husband when he wanted to hold a political meeting. Communism which the ANC supports, has brought hardships and poverty in Europe and Africa. Therefore the ANC is bad news. The alternative is the New National Party" … The highlight of the night came when after being given a North Sotho traditional dress, Mrs De Klerk sent her audience into giggles when she attempted two or three dance steps to the live performance by Alex Mathunyane

[1290] *Lebowa Times,* “We are the black Nats, say the two”, 25 February 1994.
[1291] *Lebowa Times,* “Negligence, says Lategan; concerned, says Ramatlhodi”, 25 February 1994.
[1292] *Lebowa Times,* “Farm workers make their mark”, 22 April 1994.

> and Dinakangwedi traditional band. Smiling NP Women's League Chairperson in Region G, Mrs Maggie Ramphisa, said to Mrs De Klerk: "Tonight we are giving you the name Pheladi, because you are the mother of the nation. On top of the dress we are giving you this clay pot for your husband to drink umqombothi from, after negotiating peace at the World Trade Centre for us. When all your children drink clean water make sure that our children drink the same clean water too". Traditional dancer Mr Mathunyane nearly caused an embarrassment when he interrupted his performance to tell the Nats: "I belong to no one's politics. I am an artist who performs at ANC, PAC and NP gatherings. I can even perform for the right if they dare to invite me. Music has a cooling effect which can heal all hatred"

Ultimately, the NP's furious campaigning bore little success in garnering Black support. The NP would garner just 3.3% of the provincial vote in the 1994 elections.[1293]

While the NP sought to contrast themselves with the right, portraying themselves as moderate and sensible pragmatists, the numerical strength of the right-wing in the Northern Transvaal drew the NP into attempts to woo conservative voters. Wessels, for instance, would later admit that the efforts to combat the right-wing had been disproportionate.[1294] And Van der Westhuizen argues that "the far right, donning the neo-Verwoerdian nationalism, charged the NP with 'betraying' the Afrikaner, and the NP went all out to disprove this".[1295] Nevertheless, as will be explored in the next chapter, the NP's fairly close cooperation with the CP and other right-wing organisations after their stunning loss in the 1994 election suggested that the NP's conflict with the white right wing in the Northern Transvaal was rather less about deep ideological disagreement than short-term pragmatic concerns about sustaining its grip on power – it was, in other words, largely an exercise in democratic costuming. In the aftermath of the elections, Danie Botha recalls, a number of so-called "Black Nats" would leave the party citing experiences of racism from white provincial leaders.[1296] In 1996, the NP's youth leader, Wilson Mukhari, resigned from the party, which he described as "trapped in racism", and he insisted that "a black person will not lead the NP in the Northern Province, despite the fact that the majority of the party's members are black". In response, the party's provincial leader, André Fourie, retorted: "The fact that he argues that the NP should have a black leader in the province is clearly reflecting his own racist attitudes".[1297]

[1293] Election Resources, available at: http://electionresources.org/za/provinces.php?election=1994&province=NP.
[1294] Van der Westhuizen, *White Power*, p.297.
[1295] *Ibid*.
[1296] Interview with Danie Botha, 27 August 2018.
[1297] *Northern Review,* "NP rejects statement by former youth leader about racism in the party", 8 November 1996.

Conclusion

The early 1990s would see the emergence of extreme and public spectacles of right-wing violence and resistance to the mandates of the central state. The activities of the AWB have perhaps garnered the most scholarly and media attention, given the extremity of their activities. Nevertheless, the CP also contributed to this climate of white fear and vigilantism – not least through its control over the Town Councils of the region, which it used to obstruct processes of reform and maintain the pillars of segregation. As part of the AVF, CP ideologues were also instrumental in pushing for the creation of an independent volkstaat. Yet as an organised grassroots movement calling for self-determination, the AVF would come to disintegrate along with the mass-based support that right-wing groups had at one point been able to command. The AWB's disastrous invasion of Bophuthatswana in March 1994 – once again including members from the Northern Transvaal – had proved a watershed moment, prompting Constand Viljoen to resign from the alliance and agree to participate in the elections under the mantle of the newly-formed Vryheidsfront (VF) – also called the Freedom Front (FF).[1298]

Nevertheless, right-wing agitation continued in Potgietersrus. Just two weeks before the elections, it was reported that cries of "Volkstaat" rang through the town, with a rag-tag collection of right-wing militants in the town claiming that Potgietersrus had been "annexed from South Africa on March 29". The ANC's local information officer told the *Lebowa Times:*

> Those chaps (not so many) passed here in a convoy of cars. It is how they staged their march as they passed next to our office here at Potgieter street, some raised their thumbs at us. Later a group of them returned on foot and occupied a building opposite our office until we felt intimidated and telephoned the police who came and asked them to leave.

A flag emblazoned with the word "Volkstaat" was also hoisted at the entrance to the town. The ANC and NP both reported that their posters had been torn town, while the local NP offices were reportedly scrawled with the words "Hierdie is ons eie volkstaat".[1299] And on the eve of the elections, a bomb ripped through offices belonging to the home affairs department. Reacting to the event, the then ANC sub-regional chairman, Bob Mmola, stated: "It is the work of cowards who have no future in the new society. It is clear those elements were targeting

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[1298] Peter Harris, *Birth: The conspiracy to stop the 1994 elections*, (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2010), p.134. However, the VF would continue to insist on the need for a territorial federation in which Afrikaners could exercise a measure of self-determination in line with "Christian values". It's four election pillars were Vrede (peace), Vryheid (freedom), Voorspoed Prosperity, and Volkstaat. See *Noord Transvaler,* "Vryheidsfront: Openbare vergadering", 15 April 1994.
[1299] *Lebowa Times,* "Cries of "Volkstaat" ring through streets of Potties", 8 April 1994.

the voting booth but they have failed. Nothing will stop our people from attaining their hard earned freedom".[1300]

The ANC swept into power with a landslide in the province: it won just under 92% of the vote in the now renamed Northern Province, and came to occupy 38 of the 40 seats in the provincial legislature. The remaining two seats were claimed by the FF and the NP, signalling the end of the CP's last vestiges of provincial power. Yet the advent of democracy would not, however, signal an end to the intransigence of the white right-wing in Potgietersrus, however. CP politicians remained in the Town Councils across the region, and they would continue to use these platforms to obstruct the course of change at the local level.

[1300] *Lebowa Times,* "Bomb blast rocks Potties office", 29 April 1994.

Chapter 9: “The Real Beast” - Reforming Local Government in Limpopo (1994-2000)



Figure 68: ANC supporters take to the streets of Potgietersrus to celebrate the party’s election victory.[1301]

Introduction

In the week after the ANC’s thunderous victory in the 1994 elections, the *Lebowa Times* reported “wild street celebrations” across the Bantustan. Revellers from Mahwelereng marched and drove in cavalcade through the township and into the white town to the new ANC sub-regional offices:

> Traffic snarled up briefly as more people joined in the toyi toying and shouted “The ANC is government!” at the ANC offices, in the middle of the street, and opposite the party’s offices. White motorists who found themselves caught up in Potgieter Street during the excitement closed their car windows. Some whites just watched through windows from top buildings. When it became clear that the situation was getting out of hand, as some “revellers” had started knocking on cars belonging to whites while shouting verbal abuses, the ANC regional MP designate Dr Aaron Motsoaledi and sub-regional information officer Mr Sentle Fenyane intervened. The two leaders managed to get the crowd to gather at a taxi rank just behind the

[1301] *Lebowa Times,* “Elections followed by wild street celebrations”, 6 May 1994.

> ANC offices… "Don't disturb the traffic and never abuse them (whites) because today you are the government. We don't want any confrontation, each one's life is important. You must respect all the policemen because now they are under the president, Mr Nelson Mandela", [said Motsoaledi].[1302]

The ANC's victory at the polls would signal a profound transformation in the terrain of local politics. If there were any doubts as to the ANC's ability to manoeuvre through the negotiations process and establish a new constitutional order, these were now thoroughly discredited. And the peaceful transfer of power worked to undermine some of the right-wing's most potent bogeymen. The end of the world did not materialise for white communities, and indeed, the ANC's powerful campaign of nation-building, underpinned by messages of forgiveness, reconciliation, racial harmony and Rainbowism had a strong demobilising effect across the political spectrum.[1303] While the spectre of violence pronouncedly diminished after the ANC's ascent to the national government, incoming officials and politicians now faced the task of reforming state institutions and delivering on promises of redressing apartheid's spatial, administrative and economic legacies. This enormity of this challenge was perhaps nowhere more acutely felt than at local government level.

In this chapter, I explore the trajectory of local government reform from 1994 to 2000, the year in which Mogalakwena Local Municipality was formally constituted, absorbing Potgietersrus, Mahwelereng and 178 villages under a single municipal authority. This is a story of the achievements and limits of institutional change, of how formerly segregated racial bureaucracies came to be reconfigured in the early democratic era amidst the lasting legacies of the apartheid order, the gross racial disparities in living standards and the unresolved violence and trauma produced by the white supremacist state over decades. We see the coming together for the first time within the walls of the municipality of local political actors who had previously operated in officially segregated spaces: liberation activists, white right-wing local politicians, and officials from racially divided bureaucracies would come to confront each other, seated within the same council chamber, working within offices of formerly whites-

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[1302] *Ibid*.

[1303] The previous foreboding of the *Noord Transvaler* editorials, for instance, gave way to a more optimistic tone: "We have been knee-deep in the new South Africa for several weeks now", wrote the commentator who had at the year's beginning warned of "clouds of doom". The writer continued: "How different from the past things now seem… [We] never thought it could change. But now that some of it has changed and you as a person in the middle of the change are experiencing the 'new' of it, you feel it deep inside you never thought it would happen, but it is happening now and suddenly you go with it and it feels good". And the writer described the banquet held in Pietersburg to celebrate the inauguration of Ngoako Ramatlhodi as premier in glowing tones: "So many different kinds with each other and from each radiates a mood of congeniality, brotherhood, joy and even relief… This is where two cultures suddenly, without any fuss, come together, become intertwined". Yet this tone of optimism would not last long, not least in conservative mouthpieces like the *Noord Transvaler. Noord Transvaler,* "Dit is nou alles ons s'n", 27 May 1994.

only institution, deciding on matters of collective importance, on questions of development and spatial integration in an area deeply scarred by the legacies of conquest, colonialism and apartheid. This era witnessed a host of different recombinations in local politics, resulting in some remarkable and previously unthinkable outcomes. Yet it was also a period of continued contest, obstruction and sabotage, against the backdrop of a regime of austerity imposed by the new overseers of the central state. It is for this reason that the first democratic MEC for local government, John Dombo, describes the task of democratising municipalities as "the real beast".

Bringing to Life the New Local Government System: the Provincial Department and the District Councils

Democracy brought with it enormous expectations to address the profound developmental challenges facing the majority of Black residents of South Africa – effects that were perhaps particularly acute in areas of the former Bantustans. In the aftermath of the 1994 election, the *Lebowa Times* revealed an array of different local expectations among residents of Mahwelereng about what an ANC electoral victory would mean. Lina Mokwena, described as an "unmarried mother of three who sells herbs in the streets of Potties" was quoted: "I am very happy the old man [Mandela] is going to be our president … I don't expect the government to dish out money to us, but at least there must be a way in which people are given loans to build their own houses". A 26-year-old shop assistant, Joel Mphahlele, said: "I have voted for the ANC and I believe they will improve the life of a person like me who too wants a decent wage and fringe benefits". A local high school teacher expected the ANC to work to bring an end to overcrowding in schools, and that the student protests would calm down: "Things like chalk down strikes and class boycotts will subside". And another expressed hope that the new government would provide running water to everyone: "The last time water flowed from my tap at Zone 2 was in August 1993".[1304]

The areas of the now-dissolved Bantustan were afflicted by chronic under-development and a lack of basic services. In 1993, it was estimated that of 360,000 households in Lebowa, only 60,000 had electricity.[1305] In 1994, the provincial Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education Aaron Motsoaledi stated that "40 years of apartheid have created such a backlog in education that the new government will not know where to start in its bid to repair the damage".[1306] In January 1995, it was estimated that there was a shortage of 35,000

[1304] *Lebowa Times,* 'All happy with ANC win', 6 May 1994.
[1305] *Lebowa Times,* 'Eskom power brings relief to people', 4 June 1993.
[1306] *Lebowa Times,* 'School marks start of development – Motsoaledi', 2 September 1994.

classrooms in the Northern Transvaal.[1307] And in 1996, an unemployment rate of 47% was estimated across the Bantustan.[1308]

Against the backdrop of a devastating drought that had remained virtually unbroken since the late 1980s, the issue of water assumed significant urgency for the incoming government. In 1994, it was estimated that over two thirds of rural dwellers did not have access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation.[1309] The new premier of the now-renamed Northern Province, Ngoako Ramatlhodi, insisted that water provision occupy the top priority of the new government, and scolded those who claimed that the scale of the water crisis was exaggerated, insisting they "do not understand the gravity of the situation".[1310] Even by 2001, it was estimated that only 8.7% of the population in the Mokopane area had access to piped water in their dwellings.[1311] The area was also characterised by sharp inequalities in access to basic services across racial divides, and between rural and urban areas. The white town of Potgietersrus enjoyed vastly better and more consistent services than Mahwelereng, characterised by water shortages and electricity cuts. Yet Mahwelereng was in a far better position than most villages, which languished without access to even these most basic of amenities. The same situation was mirrored in settlements across the Northern Province, and it unleashed a powerful motor force within the newly reconstituted state towards the redress of these basic infrastructural deficits.

What emerged from 1994 onwards was an increasingly integrated, multiscalar local government system. It would begin with the constitution of the new provincial government, the creation of a Department of Local Government, the ratification of new district councils, the creation of local transitional government structures – Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) or Rural Local (Transitional) Councils (RLCs) – and the holding of local government elections in 1995 to decide on representatives who would lead these structures. Between 1995 and 2000, it was envisaged, councillors elected to the transitional councils would then oversee a process of administrative reform and desegregation in line with the prescripts of national government and the instructions of national leadership. Yet the trajectory that this plan towards the creation of a new local government system took was nonetheless fraught with the difficulties of bringing something new out of the wreckage of the past.

[1307] *Lebowa Times,* 'Govt approaches SANDF for tents for temporary classrooms', 6 January 1995.
[1308] *Northern Review,*, Portfolio committee wants former homelands buildings sold', 13 September 1996.
[1309] *Lebowa Times,* 'Villages will have clean, safe water', 29 July 1994.
[1310] *Lebowa Times,* 'Premier announces 10 year plan: "Serving our own with pride and dedication"', 3 February 1995.
[1311] Hildegard Rohr et al., 2020, "Framework towards Water Sensitive Spatial Planning and Land Use Management", *Water Research Commission*, p.93.

"We didn't even have offices. We had an old, old structure … and we would all cram in there", John Dombo recalls of the new Northern Province Department of Local Government that he would be appointed to lead as political head after the elections of 1994.[1312] Dombo had been seconded by the ANC in the early 1990s to act as Ramodike's advisor during the negotiations, steering the Chief Minister towards an acceptance of the ANC's vision.[1313] Now, as the first MEC of Local Government, Dombo would be tasked with building a new department from the fragments of the old structures of the former white government and the Bantustans of Lebowa, Venda and Gazankulu. The new department would be based in Pietersburg (which in 2002 would be renamed Polokwane). Among the first priorities of the new department, Dombo remembers, was shifting attitudes:

> We had all these officials coming from various governments, because we could not throw them away … But the issue was to change their thinking and say "This is a new government. It's a non-racial government. It doesn't look at ethnicity and all that. It's got a policy perspective to assist the people of the province also to understand what democracy means, and we must serve them without any form of discrimination". Well, it's just like any aeroplane... you will have turbulence.[1314]

Alongside Dombo was assembled a team of other administrators who would oversee the tumultuous portfolio of local government as municipalities were undergoing their transition. One of those recruited to work in the Department at the time was Nkaro Mateta. Mateta had been a leader of the UDF-affiliated Phalaborwa Development Forum in the early 1990s, and had opened up negotiations with the white town council in this most easterly area of Lebowa. Tipped to take up the position of mayor at the Phalaborwa Transitional Council, Mateta was instead coopted to work at the department during a crucial phase of local government institution and system building. Among the first order of business was the need to forge a new organisational culture at the department. She recalls:

> There was resistance as well, because the building we occupied belonged to this Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA), so it was mainly white Afrikaners, males in the main. And so you can imagine there was a kind of resistance, and they did not want to disclose [key institutional information] … I think it was an attitude, ego thing. All of a sudden, they owned this building, and now they are invaded! … And they were serving only white people. So all of a sudden Black people have arrived, the MEC is Black, and change was just on their doorstep. So it was very, very difficult for them.[1315]

[1312] Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019.
[1313] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.156
[1314] Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019.
[1315] Interview with Nkaro Mateta, Polokwane, 12 August 2018.

Some, Dombo recalls, “could not accept” the new system, and either resigned or took early retirement. Yet equally there were a number of white politicians and officials who underwent what Mateta describes as something of a “conversion”:

> I think they could see that the tide was turning, whatever they were taught. I think they were beginning to understand that these people are not monsters - these are people like us. They're human beings like us. And as we continued to negotiations and talking to each other, they then realised that there was nothing [to fear]... I think they were led by fear. You know when you raise your child to say when you see a Black person, you must just see something that you should be scared of. Yes. And then when you come into contact with that person, all the things in your head about what you learned about Black people are then [challenged] ... Yes! And eventually you begin to understand that I was misled. Yes![1316]

There were even some white politicians of the old order who joined the ANC – and who came to play important roles in refashioning the local government system. One of these was Danie Botha, the former NP provincial secretary. Botha recalls having considered leaving the party as early as 1990, when his friend and fellow NP provincial politician, Manie Kriel from Phalaborwa, encouraged him to join the party, not least because of the new business opportunities that were opening up through connections with the party as it entered government: “Business is great in the ANC”, Botha recalls Kriel enthusing.[1317] Phillips has detailed how, with the elaboration of the new democratic government, new connections were formed over the tendering possibilities offered by the administration, resulting in new alliances between politicians of all stripes, constituting a new provincial economic elite.[1318] Botha was not, however, a businessman, but rather a proficient administrator and politician who had cultivated working relationships with people across the regional political scene, growing a network of contacts spanning the province. The work he undertook with Dombo in the early 1990s to defuse the right-wing threat and in building connections across the province’s different communities made him an obvious choice for the job, the former MEC recalled.[1319]

The growing relationships between Botha and the leadership of the ANC showed something of the changed political era that had dawned in the Northern Province. The strict social boundaries of race which had been entrenched to a puritanical degree over decades in the region were now publicly subverted in the alliances that were forged between the provincial

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[1316] *Ibid*.
[1317] Interview with Danie Botha, Zebediela, 27 August 2019.
[1318] See the chapter entitled “From Bantustans to Black Economic Empowerment: Business in Limpopo, 1994 – 2009” in Phillips, “From Lebowa to Limpopo”, p.228-262.
[1319] Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019.

ANC and white politicians – although Botha's defection nonetheless caused a stir in the white media and provincial political establishment, and he remained the subject of some derision.[1320]

After Dombo had assembled this new team of administrators in the Department, they could set about bringing to life the new local government system. Among the first priorities that Botha and Mateta would oversee were processes of district government reform. Change was coming to the old RSCs, refashioned into District Councils following the 1994 elections, and Botha would be appointed to take over the chair of the old Northern RSC from Jack Botes. He recalls the repellent attitude that he encountered from Botes, and remembers entering the offices of the RSC to find virtually no official paper records: "When I took over, there was *nothing* you could start [with] - I don't know if Jack Botes have removed things … There was no papers, no accounts. Nothing. So we had to start blank".[1321] In addition to chairing the Northern RSC, Botha was tasked with a team from the Department to create the Bosveld District Council. Its institutional predecessor, the Bosveld RSC, which included Potgietersrus and other town councils in the region (Nylstroom, Naboomspruit, Thabazimbi, Warmbad, Ellisras), had remained largely moribund from its inception in the late 1980s. Botha recalls the work that he and the team undertook at the District Council:

> We started there and said, what is our target? What is worth doing? And we were sitting with John Dombo and Nkaro [Mateta], and we said: first is water for the [Black] communities. Because in the old National Party, there was no worries about them. Jack Botes was only worried about Polokwane [Pietersburg]… The whole process was [concerned with] schools, water, roads… Because there was nothing, *nothing.* So we were starting with that. John Dombo always [after travelling around the province over the weekend and observing conditions] … on Monday, he would say: "Danie, there's a school, with no windows there. There's a school, there's not a door on it". And then I get my stuff. I haven't got much, I've got only 13 people. [1322]

Many of the new entrants to the Department had been experienced activists who had campaigned for basic services and the improvement of local conditions, and who brought into government first-hand knowledge of the material hardships of life in the Bantustans. Mateta recalls:

[1320] By the time of the 1994 elections, Botha recalls, he had established relationships with a range of provincial ANC politicians, and by the time of the 1994 elections, "Ramatlhodi, Seth Nthai, Saad Cachalia, Edgar Mushwana - all those guys, we were already house friends". Rumours about his imminent defection swirled after he attended a gathering of the ANC at the Ranch Hotel and had begun working in the Department of Local Government. When Botha finally resigned from the NP in the aftermath of the party's dismal electoral performance in 1994, he recalls, the party's provincial leader, Andre Fourie, responded with intense outrage. Interview with Danie Botha, Zebediela, 27 August 2019.
[1321] *Ibid*.
[1322] *Ibid*.

> Water, electricity. It was unbelievable - I mean you could not compare the development in the township and in rural areas [with the towns]. The towns were well established and all other related matters, and nobody took care of development in rural areas and the townships… People were living in the dark… At one stage we studied with candles. And it was normal, you know, you'd never imagine that one day there'd be electricity.[1323]

Activists like Mateta brought the urgency of the imperative for development into the daily operations of the bureaucracy. Yet in seeking to transform local municipalities, the new provincial local government department often met institutional inertia and the wilful obstruction of those who worked within them.

The Transitional Councils

Of all the work that was undertaken in reconfiguring and democratising state institutions, John Dombo describes the level of local municipalities, and the transitional councils, as presenting the most acute challenge. In the post-1994 ferment, each new day brought forth a litany of new unforeseen problems to deal with. Dombo describes how, from the very beginning of his tenure as MEC, his life was spent largely on the road, travelling from one area to the next, consulting with local council officials and politicians, traditional leaders, community structures and ordinary people about the reform process:

> Your task as MEC is to oversee, yours is to make sure [things] are functional and sustainable. And things do run. You will have all those people who don't understand, but you never run out of patience … Everyone expects this much from you - as if you're a machine… But burnout, it's a sure thing, because remember we are starting from scratch. So you must understand the pains and burdens you go through. It was not all that easy. I think after 5 years I could feel that I have done a marathon, from Cape to Cairo and back.[1324]

A significant source of this difficulty emerged from the conflict and bad faith that conservative white politicians brought to the transitional government structures – including the very same CP local councillors who had fought doggedly to resist the reform efforts introduced by the NP government ever since the early 1980s. Mateta points out that forms of backroom sabotage were widely suspected across municipalities of the region during the period. She noted the disappearance of asset registers in many, which she suggests might have been destroyed in order to cover up the theft of key municipal assets. She recalls how on one occasion, a farmworker had reported that his employer had dug large trenches on his farm in which he was parking municipal vehicles in collusion with officials to prevent the theft from being

[1323] Interview with Nkaro Mateta, Polokwane, 12 August 2018.
[1324] Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019.

discovered.[1325] Dombo describes how, from the very beginning of his tenure as MEC, his life was spent largely on the road, travelling from one area to the next trying to resolve issues, consulting with local council officials and politicians, traditional leaders, community structures and ordinary people to resolve conflicts.[1326]

The Potgietersrus Town Council presented significant resistance to the path of transition early on. It had only been in the week after the 1994 elections that the Council had finally acceded to the negotiating forum that it should have constituted in 1993, as per the Local Government Transition Act. 37 parties and organisations had attended the first meeting of the local forum (among them, the AWB, Freedom Front and CP).[1327] These talks had been intended to determine the roadmap towards the creation of the Greater Potgietersrus TLC after the 1995 elections. Yet by June 1994, the talks had already stalled. The bone of contention had remained the question of which areas were to fall under the new multiracial council. While ANC and civic representatives had insisted that all villages in the greater region fall under the ambit of the new council, white conservatives insisted that only the immediate township be included. All that could be agreed was the appointment of a 5-member committee drawn from the Mahwelereng civic organisation, a taxi association, business, traditional leadership and the town council. Elias Mahoai, the sub-regional head of the Local Government Commission of the ANC, accused some organisations of "deliberately having dragged their feet during the meeting in order to delay the formation of such a forum". He also voiced objection to the holding of the meeting in Mahwelereng rather than Potgietersrus: "The sitting should take place right in the town to reflect the spirit of reconciliation in the country".[1328] Yet in the aftermath of the forum, Black residents interviewed by the *Lebowa Times* expressed scepticism that the "attitudes of many whites in the town would ever change". "Even under this so-called New South Africa, you cannot enter the Voortrekker hospital, no matter how sick you are", one respondent argued.[1329]

[1325] Interview with Nkaro Mateta, Polokwane, 12 August 2019.
[1326] He described one particularly difficult ordeal in the face of white right-wing threats in Groblersdal. As he was about to leave to return to Polokwane, he was advised by state intelligence that his life would be under threat if he used the road northwards. As such, he opted to wait several hours at the municipality, raiding the town clerk's liquor cabinet, before taking a different route home. Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019. And on another occasion, Danie Botha describes being effectively held hostage along with John Dombo by both Black taxi operators and members of the AWB, who had found curious common cause to detain the MEC and his lieutenant: while the taxi operators rejected the proposal for the area to be absorbed into the Northern Province, the white right-wing insisted that Groblersdal would be an autonomous white space. The result was that the two officials spent the night in a locked hall, being berated by both groups before finally being allowed to leave. Interview with Danie Botha, Zebediela, 27 August 2019.
[1327] *Lebowa Times,* 'Non-racial council: talks are stalled', 3 June 1994.
[1328] *Ibid*.
[1329] *Ibid*.

Various afflictions attended the province's other negotiating forums. In Pietersburg, prolonged wrangling ensued over, among other issues, the question of Dalmada, an area that the white right-wing demanded be seceded as a Volkstaat area, free from the new government control. Only in September 1994 was it announced that a TLC would be launched in Pietersburg.[1330] However, in January 1995, the ANC expressed frustration that it had still not been constituted.[1331] In Duiwelskloof, the formation of the TLC was stalled once again by the question of the inclusion of the villages, which the old guard had wanted to exclude, while the ANC alliance advocated for inclusion – the latter was demanded by the MEC, to overcome massive disparities in income between the villages and the town.[1332] Nonetheless, in January 1995, Dombo stated that his department was processing documentation for the establishment of 40 TLCs across the province.[1333] Notwithstanding the "rural nature of most of the province, its vastness and the new concept of rural local government", he insisted that the process would be completed soon.[1334]

In February 1995, in anticipation of the first local government election scheduled for the end of the year, the "Greater Potgietersrus/Sefakoala TLC" was finally inaugurated – soon shortened just to the "Greater Potgietersrus TLC".[1335] Included within its boundaries were Potgietersrus, Mahwelereng, and the most immediate villages that surrounded these areas, Sekgakgapeng, Moshate (Vaaltyn) and Madiba.[1336] Villages of the more northerly Tribal Authorities would, by contrast, be included in two separate Rural Local (Transitional) Councils (RLCs). The Greater Bakenberg RLC would broadly encompass the areas of Bakenberg and Mapela, while the Koedoesrand-Rebone RLC would cover the small and remote Rebone township and the villages of Nkidikitlane, Taueatsoala, Batlokwa, Bokone and Mašašane. (See map below).

[1330] *Lebowa Times,* 'First mixed council gets off the ground', 9 September 1994; *Lebowa Times,* 'Greater P.burg council kicks off', 30 September 1994.
[1331] *Lebowa Times,* 'ANC concerned over city's TLC', 20 January 1995.
[1332] *Lebowa Times,* 'No solution yet for Duiwelskloof TLC', 3 March 1995; *Lebowa Times,* 'Local governments have to clarify disparities', 23 June 1995.
[1333] *Lebowa Times,* 'Forty TLCs are being processed in the North', 20 January 1995.
[1334] *Lebowa Times,* 'Majority of Far North Transitional Councils established', 27 January 1995.
[1335] *Lebowa Times,* 'Ismail Hassim inaugurated as Potties' new mayor', 24 February 1995.
[1336] Sekgakgapeng, Vaaltyn and Madiba were the closest villages to the town of Potgietersrus, and all had a view of the Sefakoala mountain. This explains the initial decision to name the TLC the Greater Potgietersrus/Sefakoala TLC.

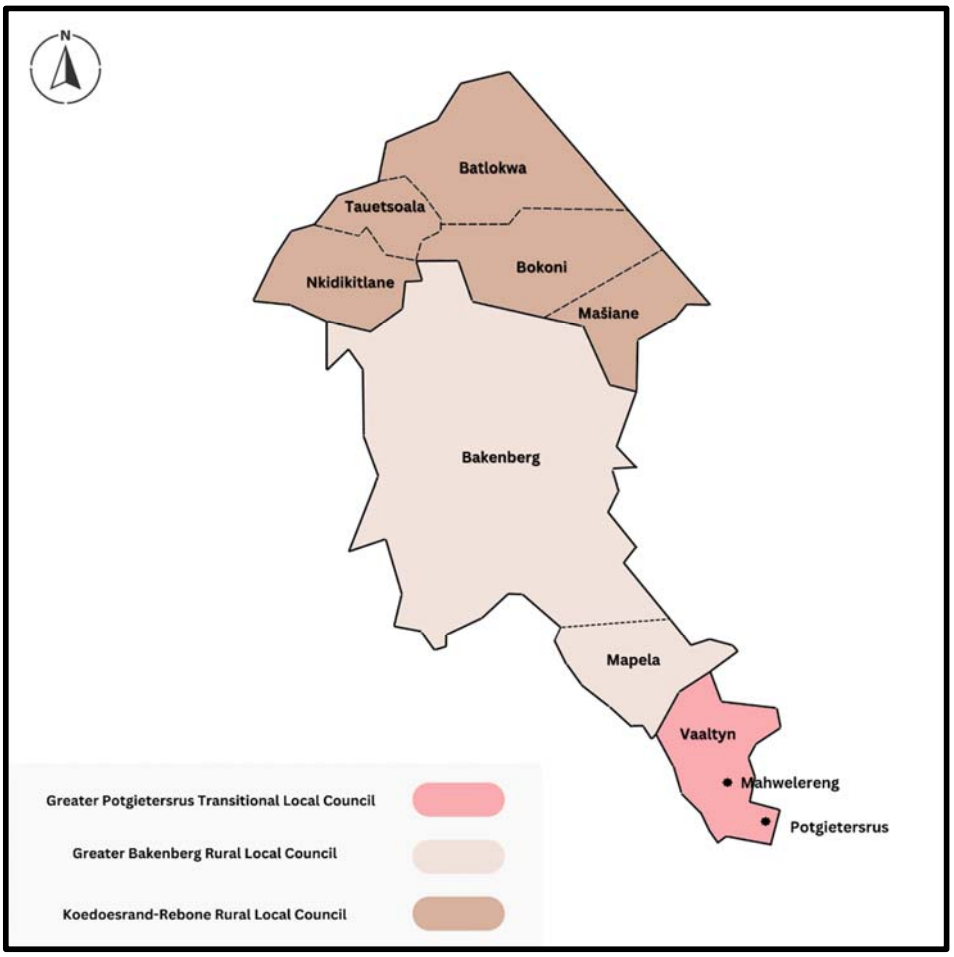


Figure 69: The Transitional Local Councils devised for the period 1995-2000.[1337]

Political representatives for these structures would be elected through the local government elections of November 1995. Despite some objections over ward delimitation, and massive logistical difficulties (including the running out of ballot papers), Mateta, Botha and Dombo recall that the elections were ultimately successful in all but three municipalities in the Northern Province (elections in Louis Trichardt, Marble Hall and Groblersdal had to be postponed until 1996 because of white right-wing threats, a court interdict, and, in the case of the latter, an unresolved provincial boundary dispute).[1338] The ANC's victory across the country proved somewhat less decisive at the local government level, having garnered just 58% of the vote overall. Yet in the Northern Province, it once again delivered a resounding majority of 86%.[1339]

[1337] Created by author using maps from the Mogalakwena Local Municipality.
[1338] *Lebowa Times*, 'Election talk with Malose Monama', 27 October 1995; *Lebowa Times*, 'Election round-up: ANC are overall winners in the North', 3 November 1995.
[1339] Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 'Election Results 1995', Available at: https://www.eisa.org/wep/sou1995results2.htm

Yet this did not neatly translate into hegemony within the institutions themselves, nor unchallenged authority in the localities over which they formally governed.

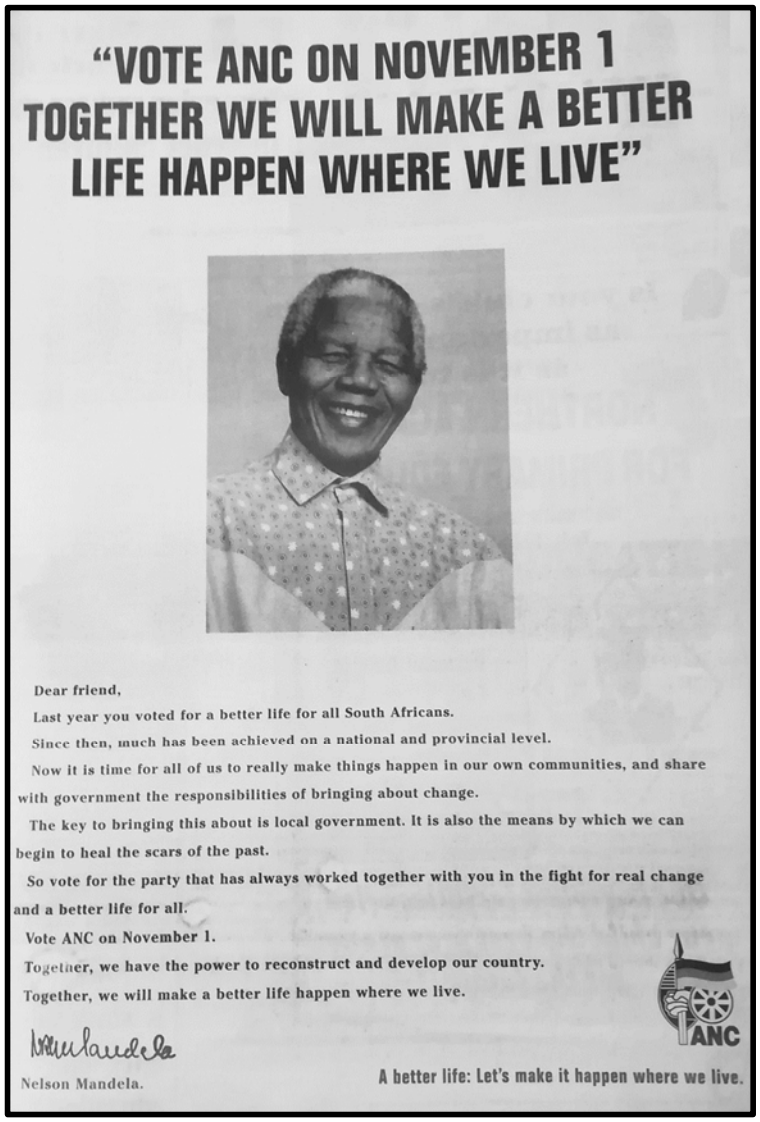


Figure 70: ANC Election advertorial in the run-up to the 1995 local government elections.[1340]

Ambiguity and Incapacity in the Rural Local Councils

The RLCs would operate on chiefly terrain, producing a range of new tensions. Significant work has been produced over the vexed question of the chieftaincy as it was debated over the

[1340] *Lebowa Times,* "Vote ANC on November 1", 27 October 1995.

transitional era.[1341] Oomen and Van Kessel reported in 1998 that at the time of the local government elections, "there was no clarity about the functions of elected and traditional authorities, and therefore a great potential for conflict about the role of the chiefs".[1342] Technically, chiefs were granted *ex officio* status on the transitional councils, or alternatively they could seek representation as an "interest group" on the council. Yet both of these options raised the ire of the chiefs, consternation which was voiced through Contralesa.[1343] Ekkert has written about some of the confusion that stemmed from the introduction of the new Bakenberg RLC and its relationship vis-à-vis the Tribal Authority:

> After 1994, the situation became even more unclear when the then newly established [RLC] also started to stake a claim on funds from people for the development of the area, or, more likely for the allocation of sites. As far as could be ascertained those people who gave money to the [RLC] stopped paying funds to the tribal authority. The councillors of the tribal authority do not understand why the [RLC] encourages people to deny customary money for the administration of tribal land to the chieftainess. They state that "they (the [RLC representatives]) spread the information that the chief was stealing the money from people. But now they claim this money. We don't understand this".[1344]

Challenges also arose around the issuing of Permissions to Occupy (PTOs) by the RLC for residents on newly demarcated lands of the former trust, which was now partly administered by a reformed Department of Agriculture. The chairperson of the Bakenberg RLC expressed acute frustration in 1998:

> The problem is that some people occupy a piece of land, without a PTO or any other title deed. We want all the land being demarcated and numbered for easier control. The Department of Agriculture is ignored by many people at the moment. Someday in future, when the Department co-operates with us, they will regain some influence. At the moment the people from Potgietersrus (the officers from the Department of Agriculture) send applicants to us and vice versa. There is no co-operation. This has to change. It is planned that the [RLC] is going to be a full-time job for us next year. At the moment, our councillors only work part-time. In future, all the land is going to be converted to communal and private land.[1345]

[1341] See, among many others: Lungisile Ntsebeza, Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of the Land in South Africa (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Barbara Oomen, Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power & Culture in the Post-Apartheid Era (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Ineke van Kessel and Barbara Oomen, "'One Chief, One Vote': The Revival of Traditional Authorities in Post-Apartheid South Africa," African Affairs 96, no. 385 (October 1, 1997): 561–85.
[1342] Kessel and Oomen, "'One Chief, One Vote,'" p.575.
[1343] *Ibid.*, p.575-576.
[1344] Britta Eckert, "Natural Resource Management and Local Knowledge in Transition: An Anthropological Perspective from the Laka Of Mapela," 2000, p.115.
[1345] Cited in *Ibid.,* p.115

This also points to the lack of real capacity that the RLC in constituting itself as a force of local administration. The RLC actually came to play only a very limited role over the course of the local government transition, hamstrung by administrative protocol and a lack of resources. Lucas Mabetwa would serve as a councillor on the Bakenberg RLC, and he describes how there was no office for the council initially, and most power remained with the District Councils that had been refashioned from the old RSCs:

> We were not allowed to administer any form of funds. The Bosveld District Council [handled it] at that time. So money coming from government for development would go through the District, the District officials would come down and have meetings with the rural councils, and decide on the immediate needs of the people. At that time, like it is still now, it is *water,* roads, and electricity. And that's where we began to understand how development is all about… [But] rural Councils did not have any form of administration. Ja. So our administrations were done at the District level. Every department, if they want to implement a project, it should go through the District. And our role was just to be said, "Well here are three contractors, which one do you prefer?" And we were told we must take the lowest bidder. So that's what we were, we were not very much conversant with the laws and so on.[1346]

According to Bob Mmola, who would become the mayor of the amalgamated Mogalakwena in 2000, it would only be after the amalgamation that relations would be formally established between the chieftaincies of Bakenberg and Koedoesrand-Rebone RLCs and the municipality based in town.[1347] Meanwhile, between 1995 and 2000, enormous contestation unfolded at the Greater Potgietersrus TLC.

Struggles in the "White Elephant"

The municipal buildings in Potgietersrus were chosen as the seat of the Greater Potgietersrus TLC. Sandwiched between Van Riebeek and Retief Streets, the municipal complex was, at that time, constituted by a three-storey complex that was built around the original Cape Dutch chamber that housed the first town council in the early 1900s, which leads out onto the square which houses the grave of Piet Potgieter, buried under a monumental display of rocks. When the first cohort of ANC councillors entered the building for the first time following the November 1995 local government elections, the "slegs vir blankes" signs had only recently been removed. The feeling of entering a hostile white space, a former bastion of segregationist oppression, earned the building the nickname "The White Elephant" among those who worked there.[1348]

[1346] Interview with Lucas Mabetwa, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.
[1347] Interview with Bob Mmola, 12 August 2019.
[1348] Marlene Roefs, 2001, "Mogalakwena Municipality: Assessment of Information: Access & Quality," *Human Sciences Research Council,* p.11.

The TLC's first Deputy Mayor, Rahab Lebelo, recalls the difficult experiences endured by ANC councillors in the first months of their entry to the municipality. Having just come from working as a CCAWUSA shop-steward at OK Bazaar, a site of intense daily racism, she describes many of the encounters at the new council as dehumanising: "What we went through, it was not nice, I'm telling you ... When I came from OK [Bazaar] going to the TLC, it was just the same. I fought that side, this side I also fought".[1349] Lebelo describes how a great deal of energy had to be spent on bringing cohesion within the municipality and working to bridge racial divides: "we needed to clean our house [the municipality] first, before we went outside [to deliver services to the community]".[1350]

Lebelo reports that the Town Clerk, Karel Liebenberg, did not arrange any kind of induction for the newcomers, and they were left on their own to figure out how systems within the municipality actually worked – the location of offices, descriptions of processes, roles and mandates. Lebelo highlights the help they received from Black municipal service staff, which led to threats from management:

> If they can see the workers talking to us, when we were a member of the TLC, they would fire that person. So because we didn't want them to be fired, we waited for them outside - outside the yard of the Council, and we said "Tell me, what about that white box that was sitting there? What about...? What about this?" Then they helped us. We got the orientation outside.[1351]

After the 1995 elections, the municipal council had been expanded to 17 positions. Of these, 11 were ANC councillors, 2 were NP, 3 were CP and one stood as an independent. Mayors were to be elected every year through a simple majority. Yet given the concessions obtained by the CP in the LGNF of 1993 to "consociational" governance, a two-thirds majority was required to pass key resolutions (such as the budget), and the ANC thus required the support of at least some of the 6 white councillors. Another former CCAWUSA unionist, Boysea Thole, was elected as Mayor. In his maiden speech, Thole emphasised the need to reconcile all parties in council. "This is important if we are to deliver", he said.[1352]

[1349] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020
[1350] *Ibid*.
[1351] *Ibid*.
[1352] *Lebowa Times,* 'Former Unionist is new Mayor of Potgietersrus', 24 November 1995.



Figure 71: The first Transitional Local Council of Greater Potgietersrus.[1353]

Yet not long after issuing this plea, it was reported that "the NP and CP councillors walked out before there could be elections for the chairman of the executive."[1354] At issue was the size of the Executive Committee (Exco), a key command post which draws up agenda items and recommendations for adoption by the full sitting of council. While the ANC suggested an Exco of 6, NP and CP councillors demanded only 5 – ostensibly on the grounds that an extra member would cost the Council an additional R160,000 per annum.[1355] Finally the ANC relented and agreed to five positions.[1356] Yet this would only be the beginning of white hostility in the council chambers.

The use of Afrikaans as the official language of exchange proved a particular sticking point – a battle that would tap into broader public conflict advanced in the name of preservation and protection of the language. Leading the charge in Council was George Morkel-Brink, who had long staked his opposition to the use of English. As early as 1990, Morkel-Brink had told the public gathering in defence of petty apartheid described in Chapter 8 that "no one would

[1353] From the personal collection of Rahab Lebelo.
[1354] *Lebowa Times,* 'The city's new mayor is a woman', 24 November 1995.
[1355] *Lebowa Times,* 'Former Unionist is new Mayor of Potgietersrus', 24 November 1995.
[1356] *Lebowa Times,* 'Councillors nearly in dispute about languages', 1 December 1995.

prevent him from speaking his mother tongue".[1357] Now, at the second meeting of the multiracial council, it was reported:

> The Conservative Party's Cllr Morkel-Brink caused a stir when he insisted on using Afrikaans even when the other councillors had made it clear that they did not understand the language. Cllr Ramaru also stood up and addressed the house in Northern Sotho. An ugly situation was averted when the mayor intervened: "I admit all the languages are official but it would cost the council a lot of money to get an interpreter for all the languages", he said. He ordered that the council use English as everyone understood the language. When Cllr Morkel-Brink rose later and spoke in English, it was to the relief of the ANC councillors and many in the public gallery.[1358]

Yet Rahab Lebelo states that fights continued over the drafting of the council meeting minutes and agendas in Afrikaans: "We took close to 4 or 5 months discussing the language, not discussing development".[1359]

Similar shows of controversy over procedural issues were reported in municipalities across the region. At one of the earliest meetings of the Pietersburg-Seshego TLC, for instance, white NP and CP councillors had staged a walk-out after an ANC councillor had called for the scrapping of the opening prayer. "This is pure communism. We are not prepared to govern the city without the presence of God", said the CP's Koos Kemp. The walk out was condemned by the ANC as a "smokescreen" to resist more substantive change: "It has become very clear to us that the NP, FF and CP are bent on resisting transformation in local councils in the province."[1360] A lengthy piece of political analysis in the *Northern Review* described the emergence of a clear alliance between white parties in the Pietersburg/Polokwane TLC:

> In the national political debate, the NP is ideologically much closer to the ANC than to the CP, but on a local level the party relies heavily on the conservative flag bearers. In terms of socio-economic status, the NP and the CP have a lot to say to each other and the merging of the traditional white municipalities and the townships emphasizes the class differences between whites and blacks. The black members of the NP cannot sleep too peacefully when they realize how snugly the interests of the purebred CP and the liberal NP [align]… [and] are elevated to the community interest.[1361]

[1357] *Noord Transvaler* 'Inwoners is gekant teen oopstelling van geriewe', 21 September 1990. Polokwane City Library.
[1358] *Lebowa Times,* 'Councillors nearly in dispute about languages', 1 December 1995.
[1359] Interview with Rahab Lebelo by Joel Pearson and Sarah Bruchhausen, Mahwelereng, 14 March 2022.
[1360] *Northern Review,*, 'Alliance bent on resisting transformation: ANC', 9 February 1996.
[1361] *Northern Review,*, 'Politici boesem nie meer onwrikbare vertroue in', 26 January 1996.

The same seems to have broadly held true for the Potgietersrus Municipality. According to Lebelo, Councillors George Morkel-Brink (CP) and Pieter Van Niekerk (NP) worked strongly together in council, and were the “attackers”. Yet not all white councillors were as invested in obstruction. Ray Bossenger of the NP is remembered, for instance, as a far more amenable actor in the council, and it was to him that the ANC would turn to lobby for support. Additionally, the NP’s Francis Barnard is remembered by ANC councillors as a bridge-builder who shifted to the DA in the early 2000s.[1362] It should be noted that a great many of the CP councillors of the former era had in fact left municipal politics in the wake of the multiracial elections, and most of the incoming white councillors were local businessmen with little real experience in party politics, and who were broadly committed to the transition process – even if they disagreed about many of its modalities and practical outcomes. Nevertheless, hardliners like Morkel-Brink and Van Niekerk had remained, and their activities proved significantly disruptive to council proceedings. According to Johan Fourie, who worked in the electrical services department of the municipality between 1988 and 2019,

> The TLC had *very, very stormy* issues and so on. Council meetings were not very easy to go to and not very nice to go to. There was infighting there … lots of words flying around and so on. Accusations and all of those things, which was to my opinion one of the worst eras in the municipal era, since I've worked here.[1363]

If council proved one battlefield, then the administration was another. The new officials and councillors had entered a close-knit and highly personalised institution in which, like the white town itself, everybody knew each other. Lesiba Sebola was the first Black person appointed to a managerial position after the 1995 election to the administration of the Greater Potgietersrus TLC – initially in the health services department. “You can just imagine entering an environment where you are just alone”, Sebola recalls. He had worked in various Bantustan administrations over the course of his career (Bophuthatswana, Lebowa and KwaNdebele), even setting up the entire environmental health services division in KwaNdebele at its inception in the mid-1980s. But during the transitional phase, Sebola had wanted to return to his home turf, despite knowing that it would be difficult:

> One of the guys who was interviewing me said: "Do you know that you are coming to a *very verkrampte area?"* I said, "yes, I know. Because I was born and bred here, I know these people here. I want to be involved in the transition! From what it is now, to the new one".[1364]

[1362] Interview with Ahmed Cachalia, Mokopane, 5 March 2020; Interview with Bob Mmola, 12 August 2019.
[1363] Interview with Johan Fourie, Mokopane, 21 May 2019.
[1364] Interview with LJ Sebola, Mokopane, 30 March 2022.

Sebola reports that from the outset, the Town Clerk Karel Liebenberg made his intense displeasure known about moves towards deracialising the administration. Halfway through his own interview, Sebola recalls, Liebenberg had left to go home in what Sebola perceived was an attempt to hold up the process. As a result, the interview was drawn out over the whole day. Nevertheless, Sebola managed to win over the rest of the panel:

> The interview was in both English and Afrikaans. And then some of them, that is why they wanted to know: "Where did you learn your Afrikaans?" I said, "No, because I was born and bred here, I know everything". They were surprised. Sometimes when you were addressing them, you had to do both languages. That was fooling them, you see.

Sebola says that speaking Afrikaans, adopting a stance of openness and approachability, and working towards defusing tensions helped to “pull in these whites”:

> To win their trust, that's exactly what I did. And then if there was any change - if you wanted to change, you must first look at those people, knowing that I must [set about] chang[ing] this and this from the way it is more indirectly. You see, you should not be antagonistic when you are dealing with them. I remember I had one secretary, a white lady. She was selecting people who were there to come and see me. You know, sometimes she told me: "I don't know how you are dealing with these people!". When they come in, they are *fuming!* But coming out of your office they have changed altogether.

These shows of generosity, openness and trust-building were a common strategy among many of the incoming councillors and administrators, who sought to defuse white fears and defy their stereotypes.[1365]

Deferral to the prescripts of policy and appeals to the Weberian division between politics and administration also proved another means of dealing with conflict. In approaching right-wing politicians and administrators at local government, Dombo states:

> You always have to deal with them in terms of principle, not in terms of their thinking. I always said to them “Look I'm not dealing with you in terms of your political thinking. That's your democratic right. But once we are here, these are the policies and we need to work along those policies”. I didn't care whether they were angry or whatever - whatever they could say - but I always said it's important to respect them. I have never shouted at anyone. It used to talk to them and say: “But this is what we have going”. That's what you need to do. You cannot use government fiat just to bulldoze your way. Because in the end, those people will sabotage you. You won't even know.[1366]

[1365] Interview with Bob Mmola, 21 August 2019; Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019; Interview with Nkaro Mateta, Polokwane, 12 August 2019.
[1366] Interview with John Dombo, Mokopane, 27 May 2019.

Some white officials were, however, never willing to accept the change, and resigned. Johan Fourie recalls:

> Some of the colleagues did not do the adaption, and they left. They had to leave, because they could not stay here, being this one-minded creature. And whilst the municipality is serving everybody, you cannot do that. Obviously you will not fit into the environment and you will not be welcomed by everybody.[1367]

While there was a significant atmosphere of trepidation amongst white staff, Fourie describes the process as having been personally transformative:

> One had to adapt to the new systems and everything like that, but it was not that bad. It was very easy to do that. The Black councillors accommodated us white people. There were mostly managerial positions and middle management, and those were occupied by white people… They accepted our advice and so on. It was actually a very nice period to work in. [1368]

Similarly, Ronel Venter, who had started work as an administrator at the municipality in 1992, recalls how even as councillors were arguing over the use of Afrikaans in Council, incoming Black councillors and administrators would "come and talk to you in Afrikaans. They wouldn't force you and tell you we are in a new South Africa, we must speak English. You know. [The change] was really slowly, you know".[1369]

Irene de Villiers remarks that one outcome of the democratic transition for women like herself working in the municipality is that they could attain a position in management (although only Deputy Manager, given that she was not part of the ANC).[1370] She also welcomed the fact that the ANC passed laws which banned smoking in public buildings, which also made working at the municipality more pleasant:

> Previously everyone smoked everywhere. You sat in a meeting and everybody smoked, when the ANC came in they banned smoking, and I said: "I like the ANC!". They gave women rights and they gave non-smokers rights. That is the two things I always say that the ANC did for me![1371]

Mateta describes on the patriarchal atmosphere they encountered when dealing with the white municipal officials. When she had led the civic organisation involved in the local government negotiations forum in Phalaborwa, she recalls how their white counterparts were surprised at the presence of women representatives: "[T]hey were all males. We never saw a woman - a white woman coming to our meetings! [*laughs*]. So we were setting an agenda for *them,* to

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[1367] Interview with Johan Fourie, Mokopane, 21 May 2019.
[1368] *Ibid*.
[1369] Interview with Ronel Venter, Mokopane, 20 May 2019.
[1370] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 16 March 2020.
[1371] *Ibid.*

show them an example that women can become leaders".[1372] Despite the fact that Rahab Lebelo served as Deputy Mayor, she describes being treated by many white officials in a patronising manner, made to feel that she was a "little girl". Yet she also points out that some members of the ANC also cast aspersions on her ability to lead: "They would say: 'Ah, how are you going to do it?' I would just say 'Yes! I will do it'". Nevertheless, both Mateta and Lebelo condemn the ways that patriarchal attitudes have continued well beyond the transition era.[1373]

Redressing Legacies of Apartheid Space and Underdevelopment: Masakhane and the Defence of Fiscal Apartheid

The ANC had campaigned for the 1994 and 1995 elections with promises of addressing the massive developmental needs left behind by decades of apartheid under-development. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) promised to begin to deliver on the ANC's national democratic revolution.[1374] Yet, as Hart argues, the RDP's focus on meeting "basic needs" through a "people-driven", redistributive approach was quickly watered down after the 1994 elections.[1375] The adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy in 1996, Hart argues, signalled that the hardest neoliberal edges within the RDP had won out over its promised social democratic concessions. Presented as "a *fait accompli*" by the Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, GEAR imposed tight fiscal austerity, the reduction of corporate tax, trade liberalisation and the removal of exchange controls.[1376]

While the central state announced a sharp circumscription of government spending, local government was being refashioned to bear an ever greater burden in addressing the legacies of the past. Early in South Africa's democratic transition, local municipalities were described as the "key instrument of the government in the implementation of the RDP".[1377] Driven by the model of the "developmental local state", municipalities were to assume enormous – indeed, disproportionate – responsibility for delivering services to areas scarred by decades of colonial and apartheid forced removal, underdevelopment, impoverishment and unemployment. There were several guiding rationales behind the turn towards greater devolution of power to the

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[1372] Interview with Nkaro Mateta, Polokwane, 12 August 2019.
[1373] Lebelo characterises the subtle ways that men sought to undermine her in her subsequent role as Council Speaker: "Men they have their own style of discouraging women… and if you are not aware, you'll think they're in sympathy with you, meanwhile they're discouraging you. Mxm. When we chair the Council there, they will say "No no, madam speaker, that thing is not the correct thing there". So you must know your things. If you don't know your things, they will run with you, in the meantime they think they're helping you, but deep in their heart they're misleading you. They are cruel, men sometimes, *very cruel".* Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020
[1374] Hart, 2000, *Disabling Globalization*, p.17.
[1375] Adelzadeh and Padayachee, 1994 cited in Hart, *Disabling Globalization*, p.18.
[1376] Hart, Disabling Globalization, p.18.
[1377] *Lebowa Times,* 'About 1,300 local councillors inaugurated', 3 March 1995.

local level, not least the ANC's anchoring in the grassroots struggles which had unfolded over the previous decade around demands for housing and basic services. The new constitutional dispensation emphasised the importance of local democracy and community participation in the redress of apartheid's destructive experiments in spatial segregation and uneven "separate development".[1378] Yet this was to be achieved, the central state insisted, through local sources of revenue. A regime of austerity settled into the bones of the TLCs.

Yet, as Hart details a decline in local government budgets over the period of the TLCs: while in 1996/97 the "equitable share" directed to local government amounted to R5.6 billion, but between 1998/99 and 1999/2000, "the local government (in)equitable share actually fell from R2.3 billion to R1.7 billion".[1379] The imperative for expanded development with reduced financial means led Hart to characterise the local state as "the key site of contradictions in the neoliberal post-apartheid order":

> local government has become the impossible terrain of official efforts to manage poverty and deprivation in a racially inflected capitalist society marked by massive inequalities and increasingly precarious livelihoods for the large majority of the population.[1380]

One commentator highlighted something of this impossible terrain in 1996, describing how council chambers across the Northern Province grappled with a crippling shortage of funds amidst the challenges of deracialisation: "Those [councillors] among them who once slavishly smeared the rhetoric of apartheid on the door frames are reluctant to associate with the dirty laundry of yesterday, and the new order decision-makers storm and wrestle clumsily at the pit of our austerity. The question now is, will the new occupiers of the city square be different?"[1381]

While the period of transition from the 1980s through to the late 1990s may have seen seismic political shifts, Von Schnitzler points to profound continuities in the realm of local administration – and, in particular, the techno-political modalities of rule between the state and a citizenry. From the late 1970s, she suggests that globally-circulating "neoliberal ideas were explicitly taken up by apartheid-era economists and officials in a search for solutions to the multiple crises that confronted the apartheid state".[1382] And these came to manifest in the modes of urban reform undertaken by the Botha administration, particularly in the

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[1378] Jaap De Visser, "Developmental Local Government in South Africa: Institutional Fault Lines," *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, no. 2 (January 2009): p.9, http://repository.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10566/1251/DeVisserDevelopmentalLocalGovernment.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
[1379] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis.*p.99.
[1380] *Ibid.,* p.5.
[1381] *Northern Review,*, 'Politici boesem nie meer onwrikbare vertroue in', 26 January 1996.
[1382] Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure,* p.23.

infrastructural terrain, in a bid to shift “some of the most contentious political questions raised by the antiapartheid movement (regarding citizenship, political rights, and urban belonging) to an administrative, technical terrain”. The move away from “the macro-techniques of grand apartheid” towards “micro-political techniques” of counterinsurgency were emblematised, for Von Schnitzler, in the technology of the prepaid water meter. By cultivating individualised administrative linkages with the state, the apartheid state hoped to delink the provision of services from grander questions about its legitimacy and defuse the potential for service protests to be spun into national anti-apartheid struggle narratives.[1383]

As in urban areas, efforts to roll-out prepaid meters were largely stillborn in Lebowa, halted by popular campaigns. Nevertheless, the discourses of “individual responsibility”, “cost recovery” and the “user pays principle” remained salient features of local state responses. In 1990, for instance, at the height of a new round of rent and service boycotts, the Transvaal Provincial Administration had taken out double-page advertorials in the local newspapers calling for residents to pay for services: “Whoever you are, wherever you live, if you want something, you pay for it. Or you don’t get it. Simple as that”.[1384] Yet this stance had completely ignored the reality of years of grossly underfunded service provision in much of the Bantustan, where refuse removal, electricity infrastructure, sewerage services, access to water and general housing conditions were generally in a poor state – and, moreover, where household incomes had declined precipitously over the course of the economic depression of the 1980s and 1990s.

[1383] *Ibid.,* p.123.
[1384] *Lebowa Times,* TPA Advertorial, 17 August 1990.



Figure 72: Full-page advertisements from the Transvaal Provincial Administration in the Lebowa Times, 17 August 1990

These conditions had changed little over the first half of the 1990s when the new TLCs started echoing the very same lines. The ANC government too came to insist that residents of the former Bantustans who had not paid or paid very little for (generally inadequate and inconsistent) services were now to be shepherded away from their so-called "culture of non-payment" and recast as fiscally-responsible citizens – even as the means to do so grew ever more remote for many rural citizens as the bite of deindustrialisation was felt in small towns across the region. Under the euphemistic mantle of the "Masakhane" ("Let us Build Together") programme, the new government pursued campaigns focused on "educating" residents about the need to pay. President Mandela, in 1995, spoke about the need to "break the culture of non-payment" and reward communities which worked as the "torchbearers" in this struggle, which, he said, would "further enhance their development programmes" and "encourage those lagging behind to emulate their examples".[1385] This language filtered into the rhetoric of provincial politicians, inflected with neoliberal jargon about "growth" and "good governance". The MEC of Finance and Expenditure, Edgar Mushwana, insisted in 1996:

> Most people see Masakhane as a political campaign, but that is not so. It should be seen as a business strategy that will lead to economic growth. It is about the responsibility of all the people to ensure a better life for themselves Councils should

[1385] *Lebowa Times,* 'Community organisations play critical role: Mandela', 4 August 1995.

> keep trying until the communities have started paying. All of us are master of our own destiny and we cannot keep blaming apartheid for everything. Apartheid cannot be used as justification for things that are not being done.[1386]

And at a ceremony for the swearing in of new municipal councillors from across the province in December 1995, MEC John Dombo emphasised the realities of austerity and spoke in terms eerily reminiscent of the Bantustan era's rhetoric of "self-help":

> We know the history of our communities and we know the backlogs that have developed. Do not betray the confidence that the community has in you. With the limited resources at our disposal, we know that you will not always succeed in the services you wish to render… The payment of services is the only way that … water and electricity supply, recreational facilities, library and other services can be sustained. It is the only way that the council can improve on and expand services to other areas which were until now deprived.[1387]

This also took place against concerted moves by the incoming regime to delegitimise the forms of popular protest that had come to suffuse the local governance landscape in the past. As Von Schnitzler puts it, "the liberation movement expected that such illegalities and protests would end or could simply be switched off after the first election".[1388] On another occasion, Dombo had condemned the tactic of the boycott, which came to be touted in the wake of continued rises in service fees by the new provincial government, as a tactic that was no longer applicable in the context of democracy, and to demands for further writing off of municipal service debts, he insisted: "We regard the boycott of the past years as part of a national campaign against the past system, and as such, in line with the national policy, the writing off of arrears is applicable in the province up to the end of January 1994, but not beyond".[1389]

Yet for local ANC councillors, it was far harder to uphold this new austere turn in the face of brute economic realities and the poor status of service delivery at the local level. Appeals for payment were met with intense anger by residents of the Bantustan townships and villages. To make matters more complicated, many councillors had in the past lead campaigns for non-payment against Bantustan authorities when they were members of civic organisations or unions – platforms which had, in many instances, catapulted these activists into a seat in council in the first place. The *Lebowa Times* editorial summed up the conundrum facing these local councillors succinctly:

> The new ANC-led local governments are facing a difficult task of convincing township residents that it is necessary to pay for services in order to ensure

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[1386] *Northern Review,* "Mayors commit themselves to the Masakhane project", 8 March 1996.
[1387] *Lebowa Times,* "Dombo urges councils not to let down their supporters", 15 December 1995.
[1388] Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure,* p.16.
[1389] *Lebowa Times,* "About 1,300 local councillors inaugurated', 3 March 1995

> provision of good quality services by the local government. This is likely to touch the raw nerves of consumers … An attempt to enforce payment for services may lead to the new councillors being labelled “traitors” of the liberation struggle. The civic associations, whose members are now mostly the new councillors, who foresaw chances of being incumbents of the new local governments tried in vain to persuade consumers to resume payments for services, as there is now a new ANC led government ... If they are not careful, they may find themselves on the same scrapheap as the discredited councillors of the past era.[1390]

Yet the ANC’s discourse around the non-payment of services also proved a weapon in the hands of the white right-wing, who voiced their opposition to democratic transformation in the language of fiscal fairness. The insistence that “white taxpayer money” would not be used to develop “black areas” was a common refrain across white councils of the province – and an issue which the CP had directly campaigned on. In the run-up to the 1995 elections, CP rally slogans centred around opposition to the idea of redistributing the budgets of white towns with areas of the former Bantustan, and insisting that Black residents pay for services. The Pietersburg CP councillor, Koos Kemp, insisted "We claim equal rights and equal rates for services and tax”. Kemp and the CP were outraged at the proposal that residents of the former Bantustan continue to pay a flat rate for services: “One flat rate for all, or no flat rate at all!"[1391] These kinds of campaigns repeated the fiction that the Bantustan had enjoyed enormous resources under the previous regime which had simply been squandered by an incompetent government. And, moreover, they perpetuated the myth that white communities had built themselves up through their contributions alone, denying the extractive economic relationships which constituted one of the main axes of rural apartheid.

These campaigns were given an even sharper edge by the discourse of corruption that swirled around the new provincial government, and which took on distinctly racialised tones. The NP’s provincial chairperson, André Fourie, issued virtually weekly condemnations of the administration of Ramatlhodi in the press, advancing a litany of vague and unsubstantiated corruption allegations. He raised frequent comparisons with the Bantustan era:

> If the numerous allegations of maladministration and misappropriation of money by the government in the Northern Province are true, we can be warned: Lebowa, here we come… In the past we have had objections to Ramodike of Lebowa, but what about Ramatlhodi of the Northern Province? Yet the people still vote ANC.[1392]

Commissions of inquiry into corruption in Lebowa from the late 1980s had been widely reported in the regional white press, dripping with shock and scandal. In public

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[1390] *Lebowa Times,* ‘Comment’, 1 December 1995.
[1391] *Lebowa Times,* ‘Premier pleads for violence free elections’, 27 October 1995.
[1392] *Northern Review,*, ‘Regering moet nou reageer op bewerings van wanbestuur – Fourie’, 12 January 1996.

pronouncements, Fourie transposed this history of Bantustan corruption scandals onto the new provincial government, implying that this was to be expected from any Black government – never mind the fact that white administrators seconded from Pretoria had also faced accusations of looting the coffers of Lebowa,[1393] and a range of white businesses had developed close relationships with key members of the Bantustan cabinet and been enriched through state contracts.[1394]

In the Greater Potgietersrus TLC, the issue of "non-payment" was galvanised by the old guard in a bid to prevent the extension of services to former Black areas. It will be remembered that even during the Local Government Negotiation Forum, the issue of the inclusion of Mahwelereng and the villages proved a key sticking point. In the first months of entering council, the incoming councillors and administrators were confronted with an institution which had little sense of the struggles of the communities of the former Lebowa Bantustan, and who clung to preserving the status quo, servicing the white town above all:

> Sometimes they'd just bring the Agenda, when you read the Agenda, there's nothing you'd read in terms that would involve the community. Nothing at all. It's just inside, or the street Potgieter there, lights in Herman Street, lights where... Nothing included of Mahwelereng, nothing in the villages ... The TLC was very bad.[1395]

The preservation of white space proved a key element of contest between ANC councillors and the white old guard. The motion by the ANC to allow the passage of donkey carts in town, a widespread mode for carrying goods in Lebowa, was fervently rejected by white councillors, as were moves to grant hawkers the right to sell their wares on Potgietersrus' streets.[1396] Yet convincing the council and administrators to extend services to the villages of Madiba, Sekgakgapeng and Moshate would be a fight that seized the TLC to the point of paralysis – and the issue of payment served as central ammunition by the right-wing in their campaign to deny services to the villages.

[1393] *Lebowa Times,* 'Nats to blame, says Ramodike', 20 November 1992.
[1394] See Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo: Differentiation, Stratification and Class Formation in South Africa, 1972 – 2009," p.256-262.
[1395] Interview with Rahab Lebelo, Mahwelereng, 13 March 2020
[1396] Enoch Manamela recalls: "at the end of the day, we fought until we resolved with the new government that the donkeys are a source of income in Mokopane. So that's why you can see, even when you drive a big car, you will get donkeys in front of your car". Interview with Enoch Manamela, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 20 May 2019.



Figure 73: Satellite image of present-day Mokopane indicating approximate boundaries of the Greater Potgietersrus TLC (1995-2000).[1397]

Sebola recalls the protestations of the Town Clerk, Karel Liebenberg:

> He was saying: "Those people are not paying anything there, why should we take services to them?". But you must prove that by taking the services, you are improving their living standards. They cannot just pay if they are not receiving anything.[1398]

As the manager of health services in the community development department, Sebola recalls how his plans were constantly stonewalled with insistences on non-affordability. Even the suggestion that they hire consultants to undertake research into waste management was met with resistance:

> When I approached the Town Clerk, he said: “You know that this thing is going to be very, very expensive?” … I had to come up with a Master Plan. And then to

[1397] Adapted from Google Earth by author. Note that this is a recent image, and so settlement growth since 2000 should be taken into account.
[1398] Interview with LJ Sebola, Mokopane, 30 March 2022.

> improve waste management, unfortunately it was implemented only a bit. Just because of the money. Because they said it was too expensive - the white councillors.[1399]

Sebola also describes encountering obstruction to his proposal that the sports complex in Mahwelereng be developed: "'Developing that area is expensive', [they said]. No one was interested". The fact that money had been poured into developing Potgietersrus over the decades into a "tuin dorpie" (residents recall beautiful, well-maintained gardens along the sidewalks) while Mahwelereng was deprived of some even basic facilities was a source of intense anger amongst ANC councillors.

The Town Clerk, Liebenberg, and others in council once again rejected the notion that so-called "white taxpayers money" should go towards developing areas that ostensibly would not be able to pay for them. And this fight would culminate in the budget crisis of 1997, when white councillors refused to assent to a budget that would finally extend the finances needed to develop services in the villages and the township under the TLC's jurisdiction from the municipal pot. ANC councillors were appalled to read the budget prepared by municipal administrators and find that there were no funds included "for the installation of essential services like water and electricity in the areas of Vaaltyn, Sekgakgapeng and Madiba".[1400] The provincial ANC issued a statement which described the move as "completely incongruent with the transformation programme put forward by the newly-established democracy in South Africa".[1401] Liebenberg told reporters that while "it was negotiated that the areas be included in Greater Potgietersrus … the exco is not authorized to provide services there in terms of the law".[1402] In response, the ANC councillors refused to ratify the budget, which threatened to bring all basic service provision to a halt. This in turn prompted Liebenberg to take the matter to the High Court, with both the council and the MEC of local government as respondents – Liebenberg sought to compel the latter to intervene to have the budget passed. The MEC then accused the town council of "practising racial behaviour" and "especially […the] chief executive officer [Liebenberg] who took the council to court" – a statement which Liebenberg called "libellous".[1403]

While Liebenberg insisted that the real reason was that the exco was uncertain whether the council "could lawfully and/or without proper safeguards supply services to the area" which fell under the traditional authority of Kgoši MJ Kekana, [1404] respondents interviewed regard this as

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[1399] *Ibid*.
[1400] *The Citizen,* "Court orders MEC to intervene in budget row", 14 July 1997.
[1401] *City Press,* "The battle for control in two divided towns", 20 July 1997.
[1402] *Beeld,* "Potgietersrus begroting steeds nie goedgekeur", 15 July 1997.
[1403] *The Citizen,* "MEC's statement libellous: official", 30 July 1997.
[1404] *Ibid.*

a technicality evoked to obstruct the broader aims of extending services. Irene de Villiers, who worked in administration at the time argues:

> if you receive guidelines from provincial about how you should do it, how can it be [that you don't]... I mean, it's true, there's no legislation that empowers you to do it. But nobody would've queried or taken you to court about that. Now you have it in black and white [in the guidelines].[1405]

The following month, while the budget issue had still not been resolved, the municipal Exco suspended Liebenberg from the position of Chief Executive pending an investigation by the office of the MEC for local government into what was described as Liebenberg's "activities". The move earned the criticism of the CP's Morkel-Brink, who insisted that the decisions taken in committee by the exco be shared. Liebenberg meanwhile ignored the suspension, and continued to report to the office, insisting that the investigation against him was "illegal and unfounded".[1406] The following week, the full council voted to withdraw the suspension and offered Liebenberg an apology for having followed the "wrong methods in his suspension".[1407] Nevertheless, Liebenberg resigned shortly after this incident, which one ANC councillor, Max Molomo, claimed came as a result of him wanting to "apply the ideas of the old South Africa to the current situation".[1408] Liebenberg would be replaced by Lesiba Sebola as CEO of the TLC, who is remembered by several respondents as being an effective and creative manager to deal with the exigencies of the era, "accommodating everybody, trying to establish a managerial system that included everybody".[1409]

The departure of Liebenberg, however, did not put an end to ructions in the council. In a sensational piece published in the right-wing paper, *Die Afrikaner,* Councillor Morkel-Brink claimed that in the wake of the continuing crisis over the budget, Max Molomo had stated that "if there are obstacles in our way, we will physically remove those obstacles" – a threat that the paper claimed jolted the whole white community of the town. Morkel-Brink told the paper that he had "challenged him to try to carry it out, as the whites would not allow themselves to be threatened in this way".[1410] In respect of the ongoing budget crisis, Morkel-Brink insisted that the areas should instead have been incorporated into the rural councils, and refuted the allegation that white councillors sought to deprive Black areas of clean drinking water. The paper reported Morkel-Brink's defence:

[1405] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 9 March 2020.
[1406] *Beeld,* "Potgietersrus se stadsklerk is geskors", 29 August 1997.
[1407] *Beeld,* "Potgietersrus skors stadsklerk nie meer nie", 3 September 1997.
[1408] *Die Afrikaner,* "ANC-dreigemente in Potgietersrus ruk gemeenskap", 21 November 1997.
[1409] Interview with Johan Fourie, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 21 May 2019.
[1410] *Die Afrikaner,* "ANC-dreigemente in Potgietersrus ruk gemeenskap", 21 November 1997.

> The answer to this was not that clean drinking water is not provided, but that the blacks do not pay for the drinking water that is provided to them. Mahwelereng already owes R6 million, while Extension 17 is already R540 000 in arrears with the payment of their services. They could not insist on the provision of services if they were not prepared to pay for them.[1411]

To this, Molomo replied that "there are some whites in the white area who do not pay for their services". [1412]

George Morkel-Brink would then face an attempt to remove him by the TLC CEO Sebola on the grounds that he had not paid the municipal rates due on his own properties – a scandal that would reveal the messy new realities and odd relationships that unfolded within the recently multiracial council. Morkel-Brink stated that he had refused to pay for his services because the budget had not been passed on the required date, owing to the standoff over the villages. He thus relied on a procedural technicality:

> The [budget] estimate had to be finalised by the last day in June every year. And then rates and taxes on property, it could not be determined after the end of June. If it wasn't determined by end of June, there are no rates on property the next year… I refused to pay it. And then eventually they wanted to suspend me.[1413]

According to De Villiers, it had been two aggrieved white administrators who had in the first instance encouraged the TLC CEO to investigate the matter; they had long had an acrimonious relationship with Morkel-Brink, and they had hatched this plan in the hope of removing him.[1414] Yet in the process, Sebola had discovered that several other councillors of the ANC had outstanding rates on their properties, and he was forced to institute disciplinary proceedings against them too. Morkel-Brink had then taken the municipality to court, and brought on board the accused ANC councillors as co-defendants. The municipality lost the case.[1415] In the wake of the reinstatement of the councillors, De Villiers recalls, the two white officials were fired.[1416] Yet, she argues, the miscalculation also had consequences for Sebola, who was effectively passed over for the position of Municipal Manager after the Municipality was amalgamated in 2000.[1417]

Another incident reveals schisms within the local ANC, and between the party's representatives in council and superior party structures. In 1997, the provincial ANC had

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[1411] *Ibid*.
[1412] *Ibid*.
[1413] Interview with George Morkel-Brink, Mokopane, 29 August 2019.
[1414] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 9 March 2020.
[1415] *Ibid.*; Interview with Rahab Lebelo, 13 March 2020.
[1416] One, who had allegedly been a member of the Broederbond, would later take up the position of Municipal Manager at the Hermanus Local Municipality.
[1417] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 16 March 2020.

decided that Obed Mathiane retain his position as the ANC's candidate for mayor, yet it was reported that the majority of ANC councillors had instead voted to return Boysea Thole to the position "after what was suspected to be an internal coup".[1418] In 1999, a grouping of 8 ANC councillors once again defied the instruction of the ANC province to return Mathiane as mayor by spoiling their ballots, allowing for the NNP's Ray Bossenger (who had been nominated by CP councillors) to ascend to the position by default – much to his surprise.[1419] Bossenger recalls his disbelief after receiving a call from Councillor Van Niekerk, insisting that he cut short his holiday in Durban and return to be sworn in as mayor.[1420] This time, the provincial ANC took disciplinary action against the recalcitrant councillors: Thole and others were suspended for a period of two years, while the then Deputy Mayor, Andrew Debeila, was expelled from the organisation.[1421]

Respondents recall the period of the TLC as a tumultuous and uncertain time in the history of the municipality, dealing both with the pains of austerity and forms of white old guard obstructionism. The battles between the right-wing hardliners and incoming democratic government within the building formed, however, just one element of broader contests over white space unfolding in the town, and across the region more broadly. One key event which emblematised this was the debacle around Laerskool Potgietersrus which erupted in 1996.

Laerskool Potgietersrus and Struggles over Racial Boundaries

Alson Matukane had chosen to move to Potgietersrus in 1996 out of convenience: the town was situated halfway between his two places of work, Pietersburg and Centurion, where offices of the Northern Province's Department of Water Affairs were based. Matukane, who had previously worked for the Gazankulu Bantustan government as a civil engineer, had been appointed the new Chief Director at the Department in 1994, and like so many other incoming Black administrators, had undertaken the difficult task of organisational reform in department steeped in apartheid.[1422] After having spent many months living at the Ranch Hotel while the department was being reformed, he and his family moved to a house in Potgietersrus:

> So we got a house next to the Laerskool Potgietersrus. We chose a school where we thought our kids could just walk - they were all in primary school. That December, my wife went to the school to register the children - three of them. The

[1418] *Northern Review,* "ANC may reclaim mayoral post", 12 November 1999.
[1419] *The Star,* "ANC officials defy party", 12 April 1999;
[1420] Interview with Ray Bossenger, Mokopane, 20 May 2019.
[1421] *Northern Review,* "ANC may reclaim mayoral post", 12 November 1999.
[1422] He recalls how he was continually searched by security officers manning the front door, until Black security guards informed him that he was being specifically targeted. He learned that the white head of security had ordered the guards to target him, and Matukane had him fired shortly afterwards.

> school refused to register the children. They said: "No, there's lots of schools in Mahwelereng they can go to". My wife refused: "No, no. I want this school here"… When they refused, we came to the MEC of Education, Aaron Motsoaledi. He said "It's impossible, they can't do that. They have to admit these kids". So they got inspectors to get the kids registered at the school. So they reluctantly registered the kids. After the registration, there was the day of opening. So we took the kids there. Ha! And then when the principal saw them, there was a big altercation. She said I must bring them tomorrow. Right. So then the next day, when my wife took the kids there, the principal fainted and fell down. She fell, and then they chased the kids away...[1423]

This would be the beginning of a dramatic, months-long battle which would involve school management, local political party representatives, provincial politicians and administrators, and opposed groupings of the local community. It would also attract a flurry of journalists from national media houses. Laerskool Potgietersrus would come to be understood, in the words of one journalist, as "symbolic of problems in the second phase of South Africa's transformation"; the saga was nicknamed South Africa's "Little Rock" in reference to the Ohio school that had been the test case of desegregation in schooling in the United States in the 1960s: "South Africans may well discover what proved to be a bitter and oft repeated lesson for American blacks, who believed that discrimination would vanish once their constitutional rights were protected".[1424] *The Star* reported that it was the school governing body that had vetoed the Matukane children's enrolment. They justified their decision in terms of the preservation of language, insisting that the school was Afrikaans-medium – even though it had operated as a dual-medium school up until 1996.[1425] The Matukanes and observers from the ANC and national media saw this as an attempt to preserve the institution as "whites-only".[1426]

The white right-wing across the region took up the issue as an emblem in the preservation of Afrikaner culture against forces which wished to see it destroyed. And the CP praised the actions of the governing body, insisting that "similar actions across South Africa can stop the ANC in its tracks and ensure that our children are taught in our own religion, culture and language".[1427] The issue brought local groupings of the far-right to the school, who would stand guard over the next weeks to prevent the Black pupils entry. It was reported that on 23 January 1996, Alson Matukane and his three children were prevented from entering the school grounds by "hundreds of men in khaki clothes".[1428] Matukane told reporters that one of the men had approached him and spoke in North Sotho: "Sir, you are black and I am white. God made us

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[1423] Interview with Alson Matukane, 21 March 2020.
[1424] *The Star,* "Potgietersrus could become Little Rock of SA", 9 February 1996.
[1425] *The Citizen,* "Race deadlock: School may be closed down", 27 January 1996.
[1426] *Ibid*.
[1427] *Beeld,* "Rasmoles by skool: Noorde-regering 'sal nie kopgee nie'", 27 January 1996.
[1428] *Beeld,* 'Hoë swarte en sy kinders in rasmoles by 'wit' skool', 25 January 1996.

different. This school is for whites. Go find a school for blacks".[1429] A scuffle reportedly erupted between the parents and an SABC television crew, and parents broke a camera.[1430] On 30 January, it was reported that "the parents under the guidance of several members of the school governing body indicated that they were only doing their Christian duty by guarding the gates at the school grounds".[1431] Ultimately, the barricades would be broken through the interventions of the Premier Ngoako Ramatlhodi, who personally escorted the children into the premises at the beginning of the school day. Adding greater drama to the event was the fact that the ANC had organised a major display of mass action in the town, the first of such scale to proceed beyond the boundaries of the former Bantustan and into Potgietersrus itself:

> [The ANC] had mobilised the whole of Mahwelereng, and they came marching into town. The white parents were *many.* They were joined by the commandoes there. But the ANC too had a contingent. The ANC [militants] came there, you know black people that time didn't have nice cars, all the skorokoros [old cars]. So they parked some skorokoros way down there. And they said: "No, we see". Because these commandoes have guns. But if a war should start, this is how it'll start. So in those old cars there was maybe AK-47s. If those Boers start shooting, they said, the only thing they have to do is just to lie down … But fortunately I think the Premier was very diplomatic. Ngoako was very, very diplomatic. He came in, stood in between us. It was literally a street like this, the school on the other side. He went there, he spoke with them in Afrikaans, he spoke with us on the other side. The meeting was a shambles. It was terrible. For a long time, no agreement at all. Some of the whites who were with them on the other side walked over to our group, and they said: "You can't have your separate CODESA! This thing was agreed in CODESA that side. There is a new CODESA here, no man".[1432]

The Star reported published comments from several residents of the town which showed that the white community was far from united on the issue. Said one: ""Afrikaners are now the dogs of this country. The blacks have everything". Said another: "They want to force the school open to show us who is the boss. We can't accept that. We are boere. We will stop them if they try to force us". Yet one white manager whose shop had been forced to close retorted: "I would estimate that 90% of the white community is against the school's action. If you look at the business side, this is not good news. It can't be". And the ANC mayor of the Greater Potgietersrus TLC, Boysea Thole, stated:

> I am shocked and embarrassed. We are looking for peace and stability. People should be united so investors will come to our area. We must deliver, not get side-tracked in a racial situation. No one is above the constitution. If we don't respect the constitution, we will never have a normal society. Many of the white people are

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[1429] *Ibid*.
[1430] *The Citizen,* 'White parents bar black children', 25 January 1996.
[1431] *Beeld,* 'Spanning by die skool terwyl polisie die hekke bewaak', 30 January 1996.
[1432] Interview with Alson Matukane, 21 March 2020.

> against what the khaki-clad whites are doing. Sometimes you have to understand that change cannot come overnight… It will be a long process to achieve real change.[1433]

Even after the Matukane children began attending school, the family continued to face problems. A separate class was created for them and other Black students who had reapplied in the wake of the Premier's intervention.[1434] The governing body took Matukane and the provincial government to the high court, defending their stance with appeals to the constitutional rights to language and culture. They called for the creation of a "separate English-medium school for Black pupils on nearby grounds" which the provincial department roundly rejected.[1435] And the Matukane family endured constant threats of violence and intimidation. While attending a court hearing over one weekend, Matukane recalls returning to their rented home to find that it had been invaded and vandalised:

> [T]hey had smashed everything. And on the walls inside every room, they had written: "K*****r, what what what". I mean, they had spent the whole weekend writing all sorts of racist things you can ever think of… But outside, they didn't do anything. Everywhere, the kitchen, they broke everything. Smashed.[1436]

Matukane told the *Beeld* newspaper that he was concerned for the safety of his children, "afraid the right-wing will kill them". "I don't know the people", he said, "I don't know what they are capable of. I want to leave the town as soon as possible".[1437] Instead, the Matukane family was convinced by the provincial ANC to move into the nearby Park Hotel. He describes this period as exceptionally troubled:

> A fence was put up around the Hotel for our safety. What those white people used to do: in the morning, outside, they would come there and make a huge prayer. We were sitting this side. They would make a huge gathering, pray and go to work. Right. [*Laughs*]. And then, think of it: in the evening, there was a swimming pool inside, all of them would come inside there to have dinner with their kids, and my kids are there, swimming there, up and down. And these guys are coming to see these few "bobbejane hierso" ["baboons here"]. And remember my kids don't know Afrikaans, but I know Afrikaans better than anything. So I would make sure I'm around there, maybe point fingers.[1438]

His children would be taken to school and back every day in an armoured police vehicle. Matukane describes how, in the face of ongoing harassment, "the people of Mahwelereng got

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[1433] *The Star,* "Potgietersrus could become Little Rock of SA", 9 February 1996.
[1434] Interview with Alson Matukane, 21 March 2020.
[1435] *The Citizen,* "Race deadlock: school may be closed down", 27 January 1996.
[1436] Interview with Alson Matukane, 21 March 2020.
[1437] *Beeld,* 'Spanning by die skool terwyl polisie die hekke bewaak', 30 January 1996.
[1438] Interview with Alson Matukane, 21 March 2020.

fed up with it, right". The tipping point was when one of his children had his bicycle confiscated by a white man while he was riding in the streets. He continues:

> Potties is a small town. Most of the people there, they know each other. So they knew the post office is a den of racism. The tobacco factory. Nissan. Other companies which were there, [their owners] were the ones organising all these [right-wing] things. So these people in Mahwelereng, they organised very young people. So now each person whom they suspected or knew is a racist – I don't know how many – but hundreds. They would write a letter to the wife of that person, and deliver it at the same time everywhere. Small children like this one [would deliver them]. And in the letter it would be written: "Mevrou, if you go or anyone of you kill Matukane or his children, we will come and kill your husband there at Post Office" or wherever… So these letters were delivered to these women at home at the same time, and the children disappeared back to Mahwelereng. So what she does when she reads the letter, she phones the husband... The whole of Potties was [frightened]. And I was at the center of the war. So from that day onwards, they never came back to me, they never attacked me. I even built a new house. I have never even untangled now who did what, but that's how we defeated some of the racists. Then when they lost the case, they removed all their children to the school across the railway line. Now they're in the bush somewhere.

Matukane here refers to the creation of a new "Volkskool" in the wake of the high court defeat, which reportedly absorbed most of the white children who had attended Laerskool Potgietersrus. Built some 5km outside of town, the school would continue to attract controversy for its whites-only complexion, for flying the old South African flag and singing the old anthem. In 1998, it was reported that while the school was theoretically open to Black pupils, none had applied.[1439] Columnist Jon Qwelane believed that the decision of the provincial government to grant the new Christelike-Volkseie Skool (CVO)[1440] a licence (after having long insisted that it would not) signified that the government "virtually gave in to racists in Potgietersrus".[1441]

The Laerskool Potgietersrus issue highlights how right-wing campaigning for self-determination had retreated in the wake of the 1994 elections to the domain of individual institutions, including schools. Indeed, this was not the only school in town which sought to preserve its white character. The following year, it was reported that Hoërskool Piet Potgieter and Laerskool Kruger Park were still using Afrikaans as a barrier for entry to Black children –

[1439] *Beeld,* "Potties is a 'volkstown' en 'gestigmatiseer deur rassisme'", 3 March 1998.
[1440] The naming of the school resonates profoundly with Norval's elaboration of the ethnologically-inflected Kuyperian-Calvinist notion of "Volkseie" as a central ideological pillar of apartheid. It is worth noting that following the creation of the Potgietersrus CVO, other CVO schools emerged in Groblersdal and Louis Trichardt.
[1441] *The Saturday Paper,* "Echoes of Sharpeville at Vryburg", 21 March 1998.

"they are forced to learn everything in Afrikaans".[1442] This took place against wider discussions around the privatisation of facilities which recurred in newspapers from the early 1990s.[1443] And far less regularly, the notion of a "volkstaat" would continue to emerge time and again in public discourse through the late 1990s. In October 1996, a civil society grouping calling itself the "Volkstaatraad" (Volkstaat council) proposed a new set of borders within the boundaries of the Northern Province.[1444]



Figure 74: Borders proposed for a new Volkstaat by the Volkstaatraad in October 1996.[1445]

The period saw generalised white fears ventilated in the public sphere of what change was going to look like, about what "affirmative action" and "transformation" meant – fears which

[1442] *Sowetan,* "Afrikaans used as a 'barrie'", 31 January 1997.
[1443] One story in the *Noord Transvaler* insisted that "privatisation preserves culture". *Noord Transvaler,* "Privatisasie behou kultuur", 4 February 1994.
[1444] Yet, perhaps speaking to a minimal acknowledgment of white economic dependence on Black labour and purchasing power, the new borders now included one area of the former Lebowa Bantustan, Mokerong 1, the remote villages of Seleka and Shongoane, See *Northern Review,* "Volkstaatraad wys eie gebied in provinsie aan", 25 October 1996.
[1445] Digitally traced from the image provided in *Ibid.*

conservative politicians sought to enflame. The NP's Burger Lategan insisted in 1998 that the ANC was "waging war on whites", citing low numbers of white officials in the provincial government.[1446] As the ANC's leadership in the Northern Province frequently decried, it was a period marked by, at best, a lukewarm embrace of reconciliation and redress by white communities, and little acknowledgment of apartheid injustices. "True reconciliation does not consist of merely forgetting the past. It does not rest with black forgiveness, sensitivity to white fears and tolerance of an unjust status quo … [and] a tenacious clinging to exclusive privileges", Ramatlhodi told an ANC birthday gathering, "A serious challenge faces especially our white compatriots to grasp fully the importance of their role in the efforts to achieve national reconciliation".[1447] On a number of occasions, charges of racism were publicly leveled against both white and Black members of the provincial legislature.

The renaming of the towns of the former Northern Transvaal in the early 2000s proved another flashpoint. Potgietersrus was the first among them, changed to Mokopane in honour of the Kgoši that fell in the 1854 Gwaša cave episode. The name was chosen at a sitting of the local council in 2002, and prompted a backlash among both townsfolk and national Afrikaans commentators. An editorial of *Die Beeld,* for instance, published a rebuke:

> If the name Potgietersrus was inappropriate, insensitive, or whatever, exactly the same applies to the name Mokopane. The new name is just as politically charged as the current one. It would appear that reconciliation played no part in the municipal council's decision. Rather, there seems to be a good deal of petulance and an attitude of "now it's our turn and we'll do as we please".[1448]

The national leader of the FF condemned the action as an exercise of "singling out Afrikaners for the purposes of political mobilisation by the ANC".[1449] Some twenty years later, the choice of names that residents use when referring to the town, especially among the older generations, often still denotes a political stance towards the transition process more broadly. In a telephone exchange, one former conservative councillor from the era of the whites-only town council sardonically insisted that he was glad that the name had changed, so that Potgietersrus' identity as a community-oriented, close-knit Afrikaans town could be preserved, while Mokopane was associated with the era in which it "all fell apart".[1450] "Potgietersrus" is at

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[1446] *Northern Review,* "Province 'waging war on whites'", 24 July 1998.
[1447] *Northern Review,* "Premier says true reconciliation is not just about forgetting the past", 12 January 1996.
[1448] *Beeld,* "Mokopane", 12 February 2002.
[1449] *Volksblad,* "Naamsveranderings rym nie", 7 February 2002.
[1450] Telephonic interview with Pieter Van Niekerk, Mokopane, 16 March 2022. This line was, incidentally, repeated almost verbatim by a former manager at the Ellisras-Onverwacht Town Council we interviewed in Lephalale in 2015, suggesting that this form of reaction came to be widely used in collective conversations in the region.

times still invoked as a defense of Afrikaner identity against a perceived cultural and racial onslaught – a tendency that can be detected in other towns of the region.[1451] In an interview with George Morkel-Brink, the former CP firebrand insisted that the town's new name did not carry legal weight:

> The post office is still Potgietersrus. It's not Mokopane, that name hasn't been registered for the town yet. Not one of these towns in the north, not Pietersburg [Polokwane], not Naboomspruit [Mookgophong], not Nylstroom [Modimolle] - those are just names they gave them just to satisfy the people.[1452]

One should not, however, overstate the extent to which this kind of perspective is shared among white people of the town and the region more broadly. Many clearly adapted to and accepted the new realities of multiracial democracy, albeit perhaps to varying degrees. Yet the white community in the town continues to be punctuated by hardline racist tendencies and sentiments which, in moments of local political crisis especially, have reemerged in public discourse, as is discussed in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

Democratisation processes of the 1990s in many respects mirrored the instantiation of apartheid from the 1950s – although in ways that sought to directly reverse the fundamental precepts of the NP's policies. Where the apartheid state had sought to entrench spatial segregation, its democratic successor spoke of racial integration; rather than administrative balkanisation, the idea of a unitary state was expounded; and in place of unilateral relations of white extractivism, Mandela's government spoke in terms of redistribution and equity.

In bringing to life these aspirations on the ground, the ANC government was similarly driven by a top-down vision of change: organs of the central state, including the national parliament and reformed departments of the central state, would initiate policies and processes to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights", to "improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person, and to "lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people".[1453]

Yet democratisation in South Africa would take place in entirely different circumstances from those which had prevailed in the 1950s. The once overwhelming faith placed in the power of

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[1451] We encountered this during our research in Lephalale in 2015, for instance, where Ellisras was invoked in opposition to Lephalale.
[1452] Interview with George Morkel-Brink, 29 August 2019.
[1453] Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

the modern centralised state to reorder the world had by the 1990s been all but extinguished. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western-sponsored democratic orthodoxies called for the diminution of state intervention in society in favour of the invisible hand of the market. South Africa's transition to democracy would also take place amidst the wreckage of the past, and processes of spatial integration, administrative amalgamation and economic redress would run against the intransigent legacies of apartheid's grandiose experiments of social engineering.

In the country's rural areas, marked by especially acute forms of racial division, Bantustan underdevelopment, exploitation and impoverishment, the transition to democracy proceeded with far less confidence than the stories of national change told about the period. And the story told about local government reform in Mogalakwena in this chapter is one "in which time proceeds less linearly, where change is less dramatic, more piecemeal and often murky, and where apartheid's material intransigence continue[d] to shape daily life in a multiplicity of ways".[1454] In particular, apartheid's legacies of spatial segregation, administrative transformation and economic extractivism continued to form the axes through which local politics played out, and through which processes of top-down change were refracted.

Certainly, the ANC government achieved remarkable successes in amalgamating the multiplicity of racially segregated bureaucracies that had once governed in Lebowa and the Northern Transvaal. The newly devised local government system was largely constituted by the end of the 1990s. Yet thorny processes involved in effecting institutional transformation tended to predominate over efforts to address the other two intertwined axes of rural local governance. The production of space formed one key axis of political contest over the course of this period, and the question of racialised spatial boundaries continued to attract fierce antagonism, as was demonstrated in the white conservative furore over the issue of the inclusion of the villages and township into the new TLC, for instance. The obstruction encountered over the question of extending municipal finances to these areas also pointed to the limited extent to which apartheid relations of economic extractivism could be challenged in the early post-apartheid period.

While processes of amalgamation at the local, district and provincial level represented the crossing of a major threshold in undoing the segregated administrative landscape of the Bantustan era, their coincidence with the adoption of new forms of austerity and codes of neoliberal governance saw the incoming governors echo many of the same tropes of "self-help" that underpinned the justifications that the Lebowa state, and it's handlers in Pretoria,

[1454] Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure,* p.29.

used to rationalise state neglect and abandonment. The increasingly managerial turn that local administration took, and the emphasis placed on notions of “local economic development” through the creation of a “business friendly environment” and the cultivation of a paying base of “consumers” would only be entrenched further over the course of the following decades. This, as Hart recognises, placed the local municipality at the crossroads of two competing imperatives which were impossible to reconcile: first, the demand for expanding services to the historically dispossessed and redressing years of extractive underdevelopment and parasitism (the imperative of redress); second, the imposition of neoliberal techniques of statecraft premised on cost recovery and self-sustaining consumers.

The period between 1990 and 2000 might thus be understood as one in which administrative transformation unfolded alongside the persistence of key processes of the apartheid order. This took place within a context in which the central state enjoyed renewed legitimacy and authority to undertake top-down change, circumscribed though these initiatives remained. In the years that followed, centre-led reforms of the local government system would, however, articulate with apartheid legacies of spatial dislocation, administrative neglect and economic extractivism to produce bold new challenges to the central state and the democratic order more broadly would emerge in the sphere of rural local governance.

Chapter 10: Post-Apartheid Mogalakwena and the Three Axes of Rural Local Governance

This study has considered the shifting landscape of rural local governance over three key historical conjunctures over the course of the apartheid and early democratic period. The term "conjuncture" has been used to denote the field of power relations constituted by a wide array of actors, institutions, and ideas which together structured the domain of local governance over particular periods. The thesis developed over the course of the last chapters argues that what started as processes of spatial, administrative and economic extractivism unleashed by the apartheid central state in the countryside were developed and bedded down to become key determinants or axes of the field of rural local governance in the decades that followed. More concretely, the field of power which came to structure everyday life in this rural/small town municipality – and the operations of local authorities within it – has historically been instantiated and materialised through specifiable relations over spatial transformation, administrative government and economic accumulation.

The chapters of Part I showed how, in the policies and plans devised by the central state to realise apartheid in the countryside, spatial segregation, administrative balkanization and sustained white economic extractivism formed foundational elements, conceived as mutually supporting pillars of the "Bantustan strategy". In each of the official rural planning typologies devised by state technocrats – the villages, the "Bantu town", the "Indian" Group Area, the "white town" – specific forms of spatial engineering, state administration and economic relationality were conceived. To realise these plans, the machinery of state was put into action, buoyed by an overwhelming modernist faith in the powers of centralised state administration to change the world. The state's unprecedented interventions to restructure the countryside would be initiated and realised through official processes, carried forward by a chain of officials along the hierarchy of the white bureaucracy. The task of implementing these policies frequently ended at the door of local agents of the white state, who were at the forefront of enacting the kinds of violent social upheaval that the plans dictated, and in dealing with their many consequences and contradictions.

There remained significant variance in the outcomes of these state interventions, and considerable divergence from official formulae: in their implementation, state processes of rural transformation articulated with existing geographies, administrative histories and economic realities. Nevertheless, by the early 1970s, state intervention had succeeded in instantiating many of apartheid's fundamental tenets at the local level. Spatial segregation was

decisively entrenched, and articulated at the most granular everyday level through practices of petty apartheid. The Lebowa state, which was first declared in 1963, grew to become a pervasive feature of the rural governance landscape, anchored in an expanding civil service and growing multiscalar bureaucratic presence, even as the state was mired in a lack of resources and underlying conflicts. While contested and frequently lacking in popular legitimacy, the local government institutional system devised by the central state in the Group Areas, the villages and rural townships was nonetheless largely brought to life. And relations of economic extraction were cemented between Lebowa and white towns like Potgietersrus. Amongst Town Council officials and ordinary residents alike, the idea of the "whites only" town came to obtain considerable stability, materialised in its modern infrastructure, its gardens, and its many opportunities. The period between the 1950s and 1970s might be described as a historical conjuncture in which the central state played an overwhelming role in shaping the ground of local power relations. The central state could not, however, have predicted the tumultuous trajectory that these processes of rural reengineering would traverse in the decades that followed.

Part II of this thesis argues that the predominance of the central state in structuring the rhythms of everyday rural life would come to be significantly challenged over the course of the decades that followed. The period between the late 1970s through to the 1980s might be described as a historical conjuncture in which spatial, administrative and extractivist processes came to draw in forms of bottom-up organisational challenges, spearheaded both by the Black liberation movement and reactionary white political forces. As such, this represents the period in which these three state-led processes came to form the axes of rural local governance.

The rise of the liberation movement and the upsurge of mass struggle brought radical changes to everyday life and the terrain of governance in the villages and townships of Lebowa, encouraging defiance of racial boundaries, local authorities and the white extractivist economic system. The liberation movement's organisational muscle and popular support, which extended across the Bantustan and reached into the Northern Transvaal's Group Areas, fuelled by the call for freedom and the building of new, emancipatory spatial, administrative and economic relations, would together grow to present an existential threat to the apartheid central state.

Black struggle activists recognised that for all PW Botha's promises of the end to Verwoerdian apartheid, the NP leadership never declared anything near a complete break with the fundamentals that had informed the state in the era of high apartheid. The white state was instead merely tinkering with apartheid's constitutive pillars. The liberation movement would, however, come to build an opposing ideological and organisational order across Lebowa,

constituting an interconnected network of people and organisations that spanned across geographies, and which came to directly challenge processes of apartheid spatial segregation, Bantustan state administration, and modes of economic extraction. To this Botha's government was only able to answer with repression.

By the late 1980s, the apartheid project had run its course, and its foundational logics could no longer be sustained. Yet in the face of growing class and ideological schisms within Afrikanerdom, white conservatives of the Northern Transvaal called for a doubling down on the three pillars of apartheid. Over the course of the 1980s, the CP grew to become a major new presence both in white towns and in the landscape of rural local governance across the region more broadly. While the breakaway CP could never muster majority support across the country, it was able to build a solid popular base in the white towns of the Northern Transvaal by defining its opposition to the central government and NP leadership in terms of the protection of white space and white local authorities, and preservation of the parasitic economic relations that had sustained the prosperity of the white town. Where liberation activists called for the dismantling of racial boundaries, the CP called for their reinforcement, insisting on the need to preserve the "Volkseie". The party's electoral support only increased as the apartheid project appeared increasingly unworkable, and its organisational strength across the region deepened. Along with its control over the town councils, the party worked to build a substantial grassroots institutional presence in white communities, in tandem with other organisations of the far-right. Together, these networks sustained defiance against gestures towards even nominal spatial and administrative desegregation, and rejected proposals for greater fiscal distributions towards areas of the Bantustan right through to South Africa's transition to democracy.

Yet up until the end of the decade, these two upsurges had remained largely contained within apartheid racial divisions and territorial boundaries. As emergency conditions were relaxed and the key tenets of spatial apartheid repealed in the early 1990s, however, the politics that had been incubated within the white towns and the Bantustan territories came into direct confrontation. This was perhaps best emblematised in the contests that unfolded within the council chambers of the Greater Potgietersrus TLC between incoming ANC officials and the white conservative old guard who sought to obstruct processes of spatial, administrative and economic redress.

As the chapters of Part III demonstrated, the new constitutional dispensation would encounter significant challenges in its unfolding in localities like those of Mogalakwena, especially from members of the white right-wing. Nevertheless, if the authority and reach of the late apartheid central state had come into profound question at the local level, the new democratic state

constituted after the 1994 elections would come to exert renewed central authority. The ANC enjoyed strong political hegemony and obtained an overwhelming electoral mandate, not least because of the popularity of its national leadership. The governmentalization of the ANC had the effect of significantly tempering (if not fully taming) bottom-up challenges, those that had been advanced so fiercely by both the white right-wing and Black popular organisations in the preceding years. And the central government took the commanding lead in reordering the country, including in rural areas. Over the course of the early post-apartheid period, parliament, departments of the central state and the national political executive came to exercise significant top-down interventions in the rural governance landscape, dissolving Bantustan boundaries and bureaucracies, working to desegregate and amalgamate apartheid's racial bureaucracies, and introducing a fiscal regime intended to better redistribute public monies across once-divided communities. Despite forms of obstructionism from the white right, the local government system was enormously transformed over the course of the late 1990s, culminating in the creation of amalgamated municipalities.

Despite these seismic changes, post-apartheid South African democracy would, however, be characterised by significant continuities with the past era – not least the fact that the field of power relations continued to be materialised through processes of spatial transformation, administrative government and economic extractivism. In the concluding section of this dissertation, the salience of these three historical axes of rural local governance is shown to extend to the present day, albeit in changed forms. In what follows, a fourth epoch is analysed, a new historical conjuncture of rural local governance that took shape following the amalgamation of the municipality – and one which, it is argued, largely still prevails today, even as significant changes appear on South Africa's the political horizon. In seeking to understand the underpinnings of municipal crisis today, this study thus concludes that processes of spatial change, administrative government and economic extractivism, whose threads extend well back into history, must be empirically specified and analysed.

Reconsidering Post-Amalgamation Mogalakwena

The data presented below does not aim to provide an exhaustive chronological account of the municipality's post-apartheid history, nor present the same level of sustained empirical depth as the previous chapters. Rather, it offers suggestive paths for situating and analysing the conflictual politics that we are witnessing in rural municipalities like Mogalakwena today historically. Between the year 2000 and the present, three interconnected developments or conjunctural shifts which took hold in Mogalakwena are identified. First, the instantiation of the system of wall-to-wall local government. Second, the fragmentation and factionalisation of the ANC, especially from the mid-2000s. And third, the entry of (multi)national extractive industries

in the region. These shifts have brought significant change to the field of power relations within which municipalities like Mogalakwena operate; yet, once again, these relations have come to be materialised through the three axes identified.

The Wall-to-Wall Municipal System

In naming the Mogalakwena Local Municipality after the river that connects many of its formerly segregated areas, the council voiced an aspiration for uniting divided communities and bridging racial boundaries. The Congress Alliance had established itself in the new democratic order with the explicit task of undoing the three foundational pillars of apartheid: it sought to integrate racially segregated space, to amalgamate divided bureaucracies, and to redress prevailing conditions of economic exploitation. With the lapsing of transitional arrangements in 2000, and the amalgamation of the Greater Potgietersrus TLC with the RLCs of Mapela, Bakenberg and Koedoesrand-Rebone, there emerged new possibilities for realizing these aims. No longer would white conservatives hold the veto power over council resolutions. And the massive expansion in the number of local councillors in Mogalakwena's council chambers (from 17 to 63 councillors) provided the ANC with an overwhelming majority with which to institute change.

If the transitional period between 1995 and 2000 was considered an exceptionally stormy one in the history of the municipality, the years between 2000 and 2006 are regarded by many of the councillors and administrators interviewed as something of a golden age. With the large-scale departure of the old conservative guard from the halls of the municipality (with the exception of some figures), far greater space existed to bring change to the areas of Mogalakwena, which had long been marked by a patterns of state provision that were "fragmented, fractious, [and] deeply unequal".[1455] Not only was there greater determination from within the municipal administration and council chambers to expand basic services to deprived areas of the former Bantustan, more money was made available by the central state in the form of increased equitable share and ring-fenced development grants, as the era of acute GEAR austerity somewhat softened over the course of the 2000s. Hart describes how the equitable share to municipalities continued to hover around R2-3 billion between 2000 and 2002, and then grew "quite vigorously" from 2003/04 onwards.[1456]

[1455] Timothy Gibbs and Laura Phillips, "Revenue, Rule and Redistribution," *Transformation Special Issue: Revenues, Rule, Redistribution* 110 (2022): p.6.
[1456] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis,* p.102. The quantum of transfers from the National Treasury to local government is still, however, fiercely debated. In the 2018/2019 budget, for instance,

Yet the task that lay ahead of the incoming local government was nothing less than monumental. The new municipality faced the full enormity of years of systematic underdevelopment, racialised economic parasitism and the stark inequalities entrenched between formerly segregated spaces. The TLC era had done little to change the realities which prevailed after decades of Bantustan underdevelopment. A researcher from the UNDP stated in 2001 that "the Mogalakwena municipal area is predominantly rural with no signs of formalized urbanization associated with facilities and municipal services such as tarred roads, water borne sewerage, well defined shopping nodes and street lights".[1457]

In addressing these challenges, the new municipality also confronted new forms of obstruction from institutions of chieftaincy that had until 2000 fallen under separate RLCs. As Rahab Lebelo states of the post-2000 era that while the intransigence of white CP councillors was no longer an obstacle in local government, now obstruction was emanating from the chiefs. In the roll-out of services to what were then renamed "traditional authority" areas, Mmola describes attempts to encourage ongoing dialogue, including the creation of a consultative forum which included the nine *magoši* of Mogalakwena and the distribution of cellphones.[1458] While mandated to attend monthly council meetings, officials state that all but one Kgoši ever regularly did so. There remained, as Ntsebeza has noted elsewhere, continuous tensions arising as a result of the overlapping mandates between local government officials and the chieftaincy.[1459] In ways that echoed the boundary disputes that took place in the constitution of the Lebowa Bantustan, tensions also surfaced over post-apartheid municipal boundary

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they amounted to just 8.3% of the national budget, which the Financial and Fiscal Commission has described as a "bone of contention", especially given that local demand for basic services has increased significantly over the last two decades (National Council of Provinces 2022).

[1457] Marlene Roefs, "Mogalakwena Municipality: Assessment of Information: Access & Quality," 2001, p.14, https://repository.hsrc.ac.za/handle/20.500.11910/7100.

[1458] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 12 August 2019.

[1459] Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised.* The magoši of Mogalakwena entered the 21st century on an uncertain footing, as did all traditional authorities; the Constitution of 1996 "recognises the status and role of traditional leadership", yet the substance of their role and responsibilities at local government level was to be developed through new national legislation, which was the subject of continuing contest and controversy for what Claassens defined as a reaffirmation of core principles of the Bantustan. In this midst of this, the magoši of Mogalakwena sought to affirm their roles of land allocation and the dispensing of customary law, maintaining also the forms of paper-based rule (which had begun with the Tribal Authorities reforms) in its relations with so-called subjects, who fell under the ambiguities of the dual legal system. There remain, however, divergences in the character of chiefly rule across the different traditional authorities of Mogalakwena. And, moreover, chieftaincies do offer a source of protection of subsistence-based livelihood strategies – as does access to customary land and commonages in many areas. As Sarah Bruchhausen has found in the Sandsloot village of Mapela. See: Bruchhausen, "Women and Emancipatory Politics", p.215

demarcations, as Skosana has detailed.[1460] And, as is elaborated further below, in areas where mining has been introduced, significant contest and corruption has emerged across the nexus of relations between mining capital, traditional authorities, and departments of the central state.[1461] While Mamdani described apartheid's interventions of the 1950s as having produced "decentralised despots", it is really in context of the post-apartheid mining boom that this appellation appears apt to describe those of Mogalakwena's *magoši* that came to be embroiled in mining deals.

Among the greatest achievements of the Mogalakwena municipality in these years was the rapid roll-out of electricity, in partnership with the state electricity provider, Eskom. The new municipality's first mayor, Bob Mmola, recalls how, when the municipality was constituted, "there were only 40-something villages which had electricity. But we managed to electrify nearly 100% of the villages" –[1462] a figure that is borne out in the municipality's internal reports, which suggests in 2023 that 91.3% of population of the municipality have access to electricity for lighting.[1463] Several high-traffic roads that extended deep into the municipality's rural areas also came to be tarred.[1464] There were also a range of other developments undertaken by the municipality. "If you look at Mahwelereng," LJ Sebola states, "during our time we developed that area". Appointed as manager of developmental services at Mogalakwena after amalgamation, Sebola points to creation of the sporting facilities at the Mahwelereng stadium as something he was especially proud of.[1465] Ahmed Cachalia also recalls the creation of the Hewlett Packard computer training centre and research laboratory through a partnership negotiated by the municipality – a high-profile facility which received a visit from Thabo Mbeki in 2004.[1466]

While the municipality achieved some quick successes in the early 2000s, it also continued to buckle under the weight of the spatial legacies of the past. When the municipality was formally amalgamated, it entailed a massive expansion in the geographical mandate of the municipality, which under the TLC had only covered the town of Potgietersrus, Mahwelereng,

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[1460] The Municipal Demarcation Board had to mediate in situations where subjects of one chieftaincy found themselves split between two municipalities, for instance. Skosana, "Why are chiefs recognised", p.50-p.66. This situation was also echoed by Danie Botha, who noted the delicate work that provincial department officials had to undertake to assure chiefs that municipal demarcations would not entail a loss of authority over their subjects. Interview with Danie Botha, 27 August 2018.
[1461] As has been extensively detailed in Mnwana, Mtero and Hay, "Dispossessing the Dispossessed" and Skosana, "Why are chiefs recognised".
[1462] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 21 August 2021.
[1463] *Mogalakwena Local Municipality* [Hereafter *MLM*], Integrated Development Plan, 2022-2027, p.45
[1464] *MLM*, Integrated Development Plan 2006/2007, p.61.
[1465] Interview with LJ Sebola, 30 March 2022.
[1466] Interview with Ahmed Cachalia, 6 March 2020. See also "Mbeki Inspects HP i-Community project", *ITWeb,* Available at: https://www.itweb.co.za/article/mbeki-inspects-hp-i-community-project/Olx4zMkydy9v56km

and the villages immediately abutting them. The municipality now spans an area of some 6,200km^2, which, as the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) notes, "has a diverse socio-demographic profile underscored by the spatial and physical diversity reflected in all aspects of local development".[1467] Successive IDPs argue that "current land use patterns are largely a reflection of historical processes",[1468] and they have continued to highlight the "necessity for spatial restructuring" and "land reform".[1469] While the municipality notes that "a number of land claims have been lodged with government within the Mogalakwena Municipal area of jurisdiction, none of these claims are finalized."[1470]

It is no exaggeration to suggest that the stage upon which rural local governance plays out in Mogalakwena today largely remains that which was produced through the audacious racialised spatial engineering schemes of the apartheid era especially. Settlement patterns remain, as the IDP acknowledges, "widely dispersed", often a product of colonial and apartheid-era forced removal and resettlement.[1471] And this has important implications for the roll-out of basic services. Some settlements remain incredibly difficult to reach, accessible only by sandy roads that require four-wheel drive capability. IDP's have repeatedly listed the "vastness of the municipal area" as a major obstacle in effective service delivery.[1472] Providing bulk services to these scattered villages is expensive and uneconomical in the context of the profit-driven user-pays principle that structures local government service provision.

Inequalities in access to basic services in Mogalakwena can be mapped spatially onto areas of the former Bantustan. Municipal documents state, for instance, that the "status of water quality varies demographically" and geographically across the municipality: While "urban Mokopane receives treated bulk water from Lepelle Northern Water", [1473] areas classified as "rural Mogalakwena" source some 75% of their water from boreholes.[1474] Moreover, the municipality notes that "only 42,3% of Mogalakwena's households have access to piped water in the yard, and only 20,2% of households have access to piped water in their dwelling – is the lowest figure in the Waterberg District Municipality".[1475] According to Irene de Villiers, who continued in the role of deputy manager of corporate support services until 2015, the sheer scale of the geographical mandate arguably renders to the municipality "unviable".[1476]

[1467] MLM, Integrated Development Plan, 2022-2027, p.75
[1468] *Ibid*., p.79.
[1469] *Ibid*., p.63
[1470] *Ibid*., p.82.
[1471] *Ibid*., p.72
[1472] See, for instance, *MLM,* Integrated Development Plan 2005/2006, p.34
[1473] MLM, Technical Services Quarterly Report, 24 June 2009.
[1474] *Ibid.*
[1475] MLM, "Integrated Development Plan, 2022-2027", p.66.
[1476] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 16 March 2020.



Figure 75: ga-Molekwa, one of Mogalakwena's many difficult-to-reach settlements

Apartheid-era settlement patterns furthermore continue to limit livelihood strategies. While in many villages, such as ga-Molekwa, where Godfrey Molekwa resides, there are no job opportunities available for local residents, many cannot afford the transport to and from town some 71km away – where, in any case, job prospects remain limited. During a visit in March 2022, Molekwa pointed to scores of unemployed, post-school youth drifting around with few prospects.

If the post-apartheid municipality has struggled to overcome the developmental chasms that divide town from village, it has also faced the challenges of overcoming racialised spatial boundaries within Mokopane town, and between Mokopane and Mahwelereng. There has been significant development in Mahwelereng since the end of apartheid, including the development of Extension 19 as an RDP settlement in the 2000s, and the creation of a shopping complex. Yet while the sign that once announced the border of Lebowa is no longer visible, the greenbelt that was created as a buffer between Mahwelereng and Potgietersrus in the service of apartheid's segregationist plans has remained vacant.[1477]

[1477] Even as the former Old Location remains entirely unoccupied, a fact that is hurtful to some of those who were forcibly removed from their homes there in the 1960s. Interview with Daphne Masenya

Over the course of the 2000s, the provincial government worked with the municipality to create a new working class neighbourhood alongside the former whites-only suburbs of Nyl Park and Impala Park, which was called Extension 14. According to Mmola, the decision to create the new area, which was to be constructed with RDP homes, raised the ire of homeowners in the established suburbs, and he was on one occasion mobbed by angry residents at the municipality who claimed that the value of their homes would slide.[1478] These protestations did not stop the new neighbourhood from being built. Yet in a 2015 study, Emma Monama emphasises the limits of integration between Extension 14 and its neighbouring suburbs:

> Residents of Impala Park and Nylpark perceive Extension 14 residents as a threat to their neighbourhoods, not only to their "property values", but also to their moral values and their perceived symbolic order attached to their neighbourhoods, their sense of place.[1479]

Affordable housing needs continue to fall well short of demands. The IDP notes, however, that while 21,187 houses have been built to date, the backlog currently still stands at 32,882.[1480] Meanwhile, the municipality has seen the growth of informal settlements and so-called "land invasions".[1481]

The development of Extension 12 in a once vacant area between former white suburbs has come to represent another node of racial integration, but one aimed at middle- and upper-class residents. With its streets named after local struggle heroes (intersecting with JG Strydom and Pretorius Street, which form its outer boundaries), the area has come to be predominantly populated by Black residents who have built new homes.

[1478] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 21 August 2019.
[1479] Monama, "Emerging Patterns of Social and Spatial (Dis) Integration", p.74.
[1480] MLM, Integrated Development Plan, 2022-2027, p. 126.
[1481] *Ibid*., p.85.



Figure 76: Satellite image indicating new post-apartheid neighbourhoods.[1482]

The racial complexion of the formerly whites-only suburbs of Mokopane has also markedly changed. It is no longer unusual to see neighbours of different races living alongside each other here, nor to witness Black children attending the formerly whites-only schools. Hendrik Ngoepe, who now lives on Hendrik Verwoerd Drive in Chroompark, comments that his children play with the white kids of the neighbourhood – a phenomenon which would be unthinkable two decades ago.[1483] Among the white administrators I interviewed who had continued to work in the institution beyond amalgamation, it was clear that many had developed friendships with people of varying races, and that the municipality had, at least for a time, functioned as a melting pot of cultural exchange. Nevertheless, there remain considerable racial schisms at the social level in town, which were expressed throughout the interviews undertaken for this research. In a study conducted by Sahba Shaker entitled "Race and Space in the Small Town Context of Mokopane", a wide range of respondents noted that while there were less public

[1482] Adapted from Google Earth by author.
[1483] Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Mokopane, 2 March 2019.

displays of racism, "masked racism" continued.[1484] In a study conducted by Sahba Shaker, for instance, a local white Methodist minister described Mokopane as "not a happy town, quite dark", and went on to state:

> I think that when there is integration, it is still on a very superficial level. I can see it in the church... Let me say this, informally speaking, you hear a lot about hate for Blacks… you can hear it in the language, because there is this thing that somehow we are superior.[1485]

"The prospect of racial contact," Shaker noted, remains characterised by "fear and tension".[1486] Some social institutions remain marked by *de facto* segregation. One Black respondent described certain bars in town as still virtually having an entirely white clientele. And in relating how, in the past, one was expected to show the "dompas" to get into town, a Black resident of Sekgakgapeng who had long worked in gardens of homes in the white suburbs told Monama: "They (Afrikaners) have locked themselves in their houses and they are scared of Black people. They still don't want Black people. This is apartheid".[1487]

The municipality's ability to bring redress to its historically divided and impoverished territory has also continued to meet sharp limits of the market-driven development models and regimes of austerity imposed from above – especially the emphasis on municipality's largely funding themselves from local revenue sources. While the quantum of transfers to municipalities did increase to realise the state's new policy of free basic services (water, electricity and sanitation) up to a minimum level from 2001, most of these funds were instead directed "to fund a far wider array of municipal functions, including salaries for councillors".[1488] While new ring-fenced grants for infrastructural development were made available by National Treasury, however, budgetary shortfalls were still expected to be made up from collecting debts from non-paying consumers.

In ways that are eerily similar to the Bantustan model, an ethnic of "self-help" came to be emphasised early on in the new municipality's history. Reminiscent of the "Rand-for-Rand" schemes imposed by Lebowa, Mmola describes how in the early 2000s, the local state demanded R10 from each household in Bakenberg to go into a "development fund": "With that

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[1484] Shaker, "Race and Space", p.16.
[1485] *Ibid.*
[1486] Monama, "Emerging Patterns", p.17. See also: Sahba Shaker, "Understanding Informal Segregation : Racial and Spatial Identities among the Indian Minority of Mokopane" (Master Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2010), https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/18375; Sahba Besharati and Don Foster, "Understanding Informal Segregation: Racial and Spatial Identities among the Indian Minority of Mokopane," *UNESCO Diversities* 15, no. 2 (2013).
[1487] Monama, "Emerging Patterns" of Social and Spatial (Dis) Integration in Suburban South Africa: The Case of Mokopane," p.81.
[1488] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis,* p.104.

money, we could build some little development in the traditional areas".[1489] And this overwhelming emphasis on locally-derived income remains today. Municipal officials interviewed repeatedly emphasised the levels of poverty and unemployment that stalk the social landscape, and make the prospect of accruing sustainable levels of revenue untenable. Data from the 2011 show a dramatic increase in the number of people without an income between 2001 and 2011 in Mogalakwena:

Table 6: Annual household income

	No income		R1 - R400		R401 - R800		R801 - R1 600		R1 601 - R3 200		R3 201 - R6 400	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Number of residents per income type	1 028	132 367	7 158	83 069	8 135	8 658	7 240	41 578	6 146	10 729	4 958	7 126
	R6 401 - R12 800		R12 801 - R25 600		R25 601 - R51 200		R51 201 - R102 400		R102 401 - R204 800		R204 801 or more	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
	1 711	6 660	466	4 110	144	975	65	229	18	149	11	120

Source: Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), Census 2011

Figure 77: Table depicting annual household income in Mogalakwena between 2001 and 2011.[1490]

And of Mogalakwena's 78 647 economically active persons[1491] 40,2% were classified as unemployed. Of the 39 515 economically active youth (15–35 years) in the area, 51,7% were identified as unemployed, the highest in the Waterberg District."[1492] These figures have not improved since 2011, and the municipality estimates that unemployment continues to "vary between 45% and 70% of the economically active population". It continues: "Women, and especially rural women, form the greatest number affected by the lack of job opportunities as well as other social problems".[1493] The municipality further states that "despite having electricity, most households continue to use firewood in order to cut their electricity costs", contributing to deforestation in the area.[1494] Poverty, the IDP insists, thus remains the "one of the key social problems" facing the municipality – a factor which only sharpened with the onset of the Covid pandemic.[1495]

The vast majority of municipal revenue today is still received from the town. In 2009, for instance, it was noted that some R7,9m was received in payments for services from Mokopane town, while just under R1m was received from Mahwelereng and R1,5m from the rural villages in total.[1496] The officials interviewed were emphatic in insisting that most residents, especially in the rural villages, simply cannot afford to pay. It is not a "culture of non-payment" that stops

[1489] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 12 August 2019.
[1490] From MLM, "Integrated Development Plan 2021-2022", p.50.
[1491] Employed or unemployed but looking for work
[1492] MLM, "Integrated Development Plan, 2022-2027", p.66
[1493] *Ibid.,* p.72.
[1494] *Ibid.*, p.100.
[1495] MLM, "Integrated Development Plan, 2022-2027", p.35
[1496] MLM, "Financial Indicators Report", 24 June 2009.

many residents from paying, but, as Ashwin Desai has elsewhere described, an "economics of non-payment"[1497] within the context of apartheid's systematic, state-led underdevelopment in the era of Bantustan governance. Yet even as officials may exhibit their own personal empathies with the straitened conditions of life for most residents of the municipality, the funding model of the local state remains one which enforces debt collection, essentially ignoring histories of dispossession in the name of entrenching a liberal democratic, consumer-based mode of local government.

Certainly, in some senses, the amalgamation process had produced a very different institutional landscape, producing new municipal, district and provincial government structures governed by the principles laid out in the new democratic constitution. Yet, as Von Schnitzler has argued, "new set of reforms and state projects are built on the ruins of the old".[1498] Not only does the municipality operate within and across physical infrastructures built in the colonial and apartheid eras, it continues to operate according to modes of localised techno-administrative rule and discourses of individual responsibility devised and entrenched over the late apartheid period. While "the relation between the administrative and the political has been reconceived in a liberal frame", "apartheid's debris" still serves as "democracy's infrastructure".[1499]

If these constraints have proved a significant obstacle in the municipality's ability to effect direct redress in communities scarred by the material realities bequeathed by apartheid, the municipality itself has, however, come to offer narrower modes for upward mobility among those who live in the area. A job at the municipality can create radical change in the lives of individuals and their families. More generally, the post-apartheid rural state – its local, district and provincial structures – like the Lebowa bureaucracy before it, has remained the largest employer in the rural areas.[1500] As is noted in the 2022/2023 IDP: "government the single biggest employer in the municipality".[1501] According to the Census 2022 findings, some 54% of total household income in Mogalakwena comes in the form of government transfers and subsidies.[1502]

With managerially-inspired reforms having transformed local government institutions into sites for the outsourcing of key services and projects to the private sector (transforming "the role of

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[1497] Desai, *We Are the Poors,* p.17.
[1498] Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure,* p.30.
[1499] *Ibid.,* p.1.
[1500] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.30.
[1501] MLM, Integrated Development Plan, 2021/2022, p.113
[1502] StatsSA, "Census 2022: Provinces at a Glance", Available at: https://census.statssa.gov.za/assets/documents/2022/Provinces_at_a_Glance.pdf.

public servants … from that of administration to that of managing contracts"),[1503] municipal tenders have also offered the means through which many local businesses survive. The enlarged mandate of local municipalities in the post-2000 era saw an increase in the resources that Mogalakwena came to be allocated by the National Treasury from the 2000s, now commanding an annual budget of over R1 billion.[1504] Alongside changes to the local government fiscal regime and the expanded autonomy accorded to local government (a "sphere" not a "tier"), have together precipitated a profound change in the place of local municipalities in the regional political economy.

Yet they have also presented the opportunity for the expansion of networks of political patronage, used as a political instrument for the building of parallel extractivist networks which have come to represent a bottom-up challenge to the authority of both the central state and national party leadership. Against the backdrop of declining local economic conditions, the uninterrupted entrenchment of poverty and unemployment, regional networks have drawn on the expanded resources offered by local municipalities to leverage power within the ANC as a whole and shape the national political terrain – a phenomenon which has both emerged from and contributed to an increasingly fractious local political environment. In ways that echo the 1980s, state-led local government reforms have thus produced new forms of bottom-up challenge to the central state and national party structures.

ANC Fragmentation and Regional Patronage Politics

If the introduction of the amalgamated local government system introduced profound shifts in the terrain of rural local governance, these articulated in complex ways with growing ructions within the ruling party over the course of the 2000s. While ANC hegemony reigned particularly powerfully in the period after the 1994 elections, and was broadly characterised by a sense of unity, by the mid-2000s, divisions within the Congress Alliance were coming to a head.

At the ANC's 52nd National Elective Conference held in Polokwane in 2007, Thabo Mbeki was unceremoniously ousted as ANC president in favour of Zuma. The support that Zuma received especially from rural provinces has been interpreted partly as backlash to the kind of top-down, centralised control that became a feature of the Mbeki years.[1505] In Limpopo politics specifically, there had been several occasions in which national leadership had intervened strongly against the expressed wishes of provincial structures, among the earliest of which

[1503] Ryan Brunette et al., "The Contract State: Outsourcing and Decentralisation in Contemporary South Africa" (Public Affairs Research Institute, 2014), p.9.
[1504] MLM, "Integrated Development Plan", 2021/2022, p.147.
[1505] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis,* p.135.

took place in the wake of the Provincial Elective Conference that took place at Tivumbeni in 1996, in which George Mashamba narrowly beat the incumbent, Ngoako Ramatlhodi, to assume the role of provincial chairperson. The matter had seen significant splits emerge between different regional structures of the ANC and the national leadership. While the province insisted that Mashamba take over the role of premier, this decision was rejected by the ANC's national executive under Mandela.[1506] Ironically, in giving the closing address at the conference, Jacob Zuma spoke out against division, insisting on the need for the party to remain "solidly united", and warning that "it is unlikely that the ANC can be destroyed by external forces, but it is possible for it to destroy itself from within".[1507]

By the mid-2000s, it was already clear that local and regional party structures had grown increasingly resistant to forms of unilateral control, and that regional politics was already beginning to spin beyond the direction of the central leadership. The provincial regime of Ramatlhodi had by this point come to be increasingly mired in corruption scandals, which Phillips identifies as having emerged out of the confluence of both old networks of Bantustan-era businessmen (both black and white) and new emergent political elites.[1508] And at the local level, intra-party competition had taken on violent dimensions. In Mogalakwena, the Chief Whip of the ANC, Lleka Lekalakala, was gunned down in 2006 ostensibly for threatening to expose corruption at the municipality – an event that signalled that regional ANC politics had crossed a horrifying new threshold.[1509]

The scale and severity of intra-ANC conflict undoubtedly accelerated after the Polokwane Conference in 2007, and this has come to thoroughly permeate institutions of the state, including local municipalities, as numerous authors have noted.[1510] Godfrey Molekwa, who left the ANC to join COPE in the wake of Mbeki's expulsion, states emphatically: "when we left Polokwane were not happy because we were aware that the ANC would change. And we told them that this conference has endorsed corruption".[1511] Both Molekwa and Ngoepe describe money changing hands between delegates at the conference, and claim that the result was bought.[1512] For Molekwa, who had proved instrumental in galvanising young people across

[1506] *Northern Review*, "Provincial Congress of the ANC: It's not a motion of no confidence", 13 December 1996.
[1507] *Northern Review*, 'We can implement clear policies without division', 13 December 1996.
[1508] Phillips, "From Lebowa to Limpopo", p.31
[1509] Interview with Bob Mmola, Mokopane, 21 August 2019;
[1510] Booysen, *Dominance and Decline;* Beresford, "Power, Patronage and Gatekeeper Politics"; Olver, *How to Steal a City;* Gibbs, "Anatomy of a Municipal Meltdown".
[1511] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, ga-Molekwa, 25 March 2022.
[1512] *Ibid.,* Interview with Hendrik Ngoepe, Mokopane, 2 March 2019.

the region towards participating in the liberation struggle, Polokwane signalled the beginning of the end for the party:

> Today the ANC is no more the same ANC. And those ghosts of the ANC, the ghosts of the leaders of the ANC will haunt them until the ANC is finished. That glorious movement of the people. The movement that liberated the people of South Africa. I am what I am because of the ANC. Yes. And today, the Polokwane conference is haunting the ANC. We told them, we told them. They were not prepared to listen. ... And corruption has finished the ANC.[1513]

In the wake of the conference, networks allied to the incoming president set about purging rival factions from structures of both the party and state – including across party structures in Limpopo Province. What emerged particularly strongly after 2010 in the province was the growing role of regional party structures; all five of Limpopo's regional structures[1514] took increasingly strident stances against the then provincial government by voting in politicians that had allied with the Zuma coalition.[1515] At the 2010 Waterberg Regional Elective Conference, nicknamed the "Christmas conference", a slate of regional pro-Zuma politicians made a successful bid for the top six positions of the Regional Executive Committee – one respondent alleges that the clique "bought" the contest). In the years that followed, these regional office bearers built a political fortress through which they have claimed increasing autonomy from the ANC's processes of "democratic centralism". Through coercive control over networks of so-called "service providers", municipal councillors and managers, regional politicians in Mogalakwena have constituted powerful new actors in rural local governance.

Regional structures were formed as a meso-level between branch and provincial structures to guide administrative processes of lower structures, including processes for the selection of councillors, nominations for the positions of municipal mayor, speaker and chief whip, and the vetting of branch delegates for internal party elective conferences (provincial and national). Yet over the course of the 2000s, these structures abrogated to themselves greater responsibilities over basic aspects of municipal governance: principally, appointment

[1513] Interview with Maesela Godfrey Molekwa, ga-Molekwa, 25 March 2022.
[1514] The Mogalakwena Local Municipality falls under the ANC's Waterberg Region, which presides over 5 other municipalities that make up the Waterberg District.
[1515] The province had been under the leadership of Cassel Mathale, yet significantly directed by the then ANCYL President, Julius Malema, whose relationship with Zuma soured in the years after Polokwane, such that by 2012 the Mathale-Malema grouping that controlled the provincial structures of the ANC were calling for the removal of Zuma and his replacement by Kgalema Motlanthe at the 2012 Mangaung Conference.

decisions and the allocation of municipal tenders.[1516] And in Mogalakwena's case, key regional politicians worked to entrench control over municipalities in the Waterberg.

The PARI study described how, over the past decade especially, the intrusions of the Waterberg REC into the flow of contracts and appointments at Mogalakwena have resulted in an entrenched cycle of instability and violence at the municipality.[1517] And in the conflictual relations that developed between the competing factions of the ANC, precipitating the 2014/2015 meltdown at the municipality, regional politicians played were key antagonists. We also showed how the actions of the regional syndicate have, however, provoked challenge of various forms. Many within ANC structures tried to obstruct their strategies, and officials in municipality resisted certain of their demands – yet often at significant risk. There also emerged forms of community protest. In the wake of growing corruption scandals at the municipality, the Mogalakwena Residents' Association (MRA) was formed to organise protests, sit-ins, and town shut-downs in support of the municipal manager. The MRA styled itself in both organisational form and repertoires of protest as the reincarnation of the spirit of apartheid-era mass action, a non-partisan body in the same vein as the Mahwelereng Action Committee which had led boycotts in the mid-1980s. It was, moreover, constituted directly by local politicians who had played active roles in these earlier campaigns, including members of Azapo such as Isaac "Chittepo" Nyoni and Tsoaledi Thobejane.[1518] It also included prominent ANC politicians, who had played an integral role in establishing the UDF's presence in the region.

At the public forefront of the MRA's was Piet Pale, a member of the ANC, who spoke out ardently against the arrival of the "cabal" and the "thugs" that were taking over the municipality – including in widely-shared Facebook posts.[1519] He led marches to the premier's office calling for the dismissal of the mayor, and he took the provincial government, the premier and the municipality to court, insisting that the municipal manager, who had been suspended by the

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[1516] These decisions were, however, generally taken in consultation with the ANC's provincial leadership. A former mayor explained the "tradition" that surrounded the selection of Municipal Managers, for instance, with the Region selecting three names for selection by the provincial ANC Yet these established (if uncodified) conventions of the party hierarchy came to be thoroughly challenged as competing factions worked to shore up power in different command posts of party and the state. Interview with Bob Mmola by Mosa Phadi, Mokopane, April 2015.

[1517] The position of Regional Secretary commands perhaps the greatest power in the REC, and a great many aspirant politicians have used the position as a springboard to a provincial and national political career. Along with power to draw up proportional representation lists for elections to local council, another key source of administrative power that the position offers is control over the processes through which delegates to leadership conferences are decided.

[1518] Interview with Isaac "Chittepo" Nyoni, Mokopane, 6 March 2020.

[1519] Facebook posts of Madimetja Piet Pale, 24 February 2014; 10 March 2014

mayor's faction for a time, be reinstated to his position.[1520] On the 28th June 2014, Piet Pale was gunned down outside his home in Mahwelereng.[1521] And while no one has ever been charged for the murder, there is widely held suspicions that regional politicians were involved.



Figure 78: Faded posters of the Mogalakwena Residents Association

The results of this predatory politics have been devastating for the functioning of the municipality, which has bled funds to corrupt patronage networks through tenders for basic service provision, which are frequently awarded at massively inflated costs, often with little outcome to show for it. Service delivery has declined across the board, and is visible in the physical deterioration of infrastructure across the breadth of the municipality. Former administrators decry how the advances made in the early amalgamation period have fallen into disrepair. In Ga-Molekwa, for instance, a tar road built with much acclaim to the village in the early 2000s, has deteriorated into a concrete moonscape of tyre-ripping potholes. And the

[1520] See Piet Pale vs. MEC Coghsta, Premier of Limpopo, Mogalakwena Municipality (10200/2014)
[1521] *The Beat,* "Reward for Info on the Murder of Piet Pale", 15 August 2014. Available at: http://thebeat.linmedia.co.za/articles/crime/26248/2014-08-15/r100-000-reward-for-info-on-the-murder-of-piet-pale

sports centre that Lesiba Sebola pioneered now lies disused and vandalized, a point of pain for the former manager of community services.[1522]



Figure 79: The road to ga-Molekwa 80km from Mokopane which has not been maintained for several years. Vehicles now drive on the side of the road to avoid potholes.

If the post-apartheid municipal landscape was already an enormously complex political field, these fractious political dynamics have come to directly shape the daily environments of local government officials. Over the course of interviews, it has become clear that many administrators have developed incisive modes of political analysis to navigate the intensely contested and labyrinthine bureaucratic world of everyday decision-making in post-apartheid municipalities. In the extension of a water pipe to a rural village, for instance, administrators detailed the broad array of spatial histories and actors that came to bear on the trajectory of the proposed development: representatives from formal structures of government (traditional leaders; the district municipality, provincial and national departments); those from structures of the party (branch, regional, provincial, national); the range of contractors drawn into the

[1522] Interview with Lesiba Sebola, Mokopane, 30 March 2022.

development; individuals and groups from local communities. They also detailed the technical dimensions: geographical and climatic factors; engineering possibilities and constraints; material dimensions. And they spoke of the host of competing political designs which were brought to bear, including those which sought to extract resources from the project.

In their understanding of the vast array of shifting and contested relations that come together over spatial, administrative and economic processes to constitute the terrain of rural local governance, seasoned municipal administrators in many senses understand Hart's analytical imperative most acutely, most intuitively. This world of interconnection forms the parameters of survival in municipalities, a game of multi-dimensional chess: the clarity with which one apprehends this shifting landscape of interconnection and the mechanisms of power through which one can influence it in many ways determines one's chances of continued employment. The fall of a great many local politicians or administrators in the hurly-burly contests that afflict municipalities can be explained by their being blindsided or outmanoeuvred in this merciless war of position.

This points to significant limitations in the proposals for "professionalisation" frequently advanced in policy discussions. Certainly, one cannot fault initiatives which seek to ensure that administrators display competence in their jobs. Yet time and again in Mogalakwena, academic qualifications alone have proven insufficient to advancing the functioning of the municipality. On one occasion, a qualified chartered accountant was appointed as municipal manager, following a string of acting functionaries. Having moved to the town especially from Johannesburg, the incoming manager was thrown into a political environment without any sense of its politics, the interpersonal histories or the historical processes which shape the field of local power. To try and rapidly learn the who's who of Mogalakwena, the networks which have operated through it and around it, how things are done, and the sea of tacit meanings and hidden subtexts, the new manager sought the guidance of the long-standing chief operations officer, Ngoepe, who spent long evenings at the municipality offering detailed explanations. Still, however, the manager was outmanoeuvred by the predatory politics that pervades the local governance landscape, and left after just a few months. Academic qualifications cannot substitute for political nous; in the absence of this, to butcher the proverb, local history will eat highly qualified managers for breakfast.[1523]

[1523] In any case, academic qualifications are no guarantee of ethical behaviour. It was, for instance, qualified chartered accountants that orchestrated the string of corrupt investments by municipalities across Limpopo into the ill-famed VBS Mutual Bank. See *Mail & Guardian,* "SAICA to take action against accountants implicated in VBS bank heist", 12 October 2018. Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2018-

In order to stem the continual turnover of managers at Mogalakwena, the prevailing conditions which sustain predatory politics must be addressed. Yet over the course of the conflict, and despite the many interventions in Mogalakwena, there has been a marked inability on the part of national ANC and government leaders to restore order and rein in competing factions. Yet the resources that have accrued to this select clique of regional politicians from their control over municipal resources seems to have provided them with considerable political room to manoeuvre. Control over internal election processes, the significant material resources accrued through access to municipal funds and appointments, and the use of coercion and violence have, it seems, given a regional bloc in Mogalakwena inordinate powers over both provincial and national structures of the ANC.[1524] Alienating regional power brokers can spell disaster in electoral competitions, and thus despite narratives of rooting out corruption, ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa and his allies have been slow to act against them, even as service delivery continued to deteriorate in the wake of the 2015 political crisis. Given that high-level party leaders are implicated in these networks of patronage, respondents described this state of affairs as "the [regional] tail wagging the [national] dog". As several respondents attest, the Waterberg ANC was a strong supporter of Ramaphosa in his 2017 campaign for party leadership against Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma; Ramaphosa's "new dawn" was delivered on the back of numerous regional syndicates like that which siphons the resources of Mogalakwena.

There have, however, been renewed attempts under the Ramaphosa administration to remove key members of the regional bloc. The so-called "step aside" rule, introduced by the incoming ANC leadership under Cyril Ramaphosa after the 2019 Nasrec Elective Conference, has come to present a powerful challenge to regional power blocs of the ANC, including those which have dominated the political landscape of the Waterberg – and Mogalakwena Local Municipality in particular – over the past decade. Key players in the regional bloc have been issued with instructions to step aside by provincial leadership of the ANC, after they were arrested along with numerous service providers and municipal officials on charges of fraud and corruption over the course of 2022. While initially ignoring the party instruction, all have since agreed to vacate their political positions until the charges are tested in court. Additionally, in 2021, 8 suspects were arrested for the 2019 murders of Kekana and Kanyane, including a

10-12-saica-to-take-action-against-accountants-implicated-in-vbs-bank-heist/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20forensic%20report,receiving%20R34%2Dmillion%20from%20VBS.

[1524] The Waterberg, for instance, commands the greatest number of delegates for conferences in the province, and the ability of the REC to coordinate these towards support for a particular candidate (through various means of vote-buying, ghost branch members, disqualification of opponents etc) has seen national and provincial aspirants seeking to maintain favour with the Waterberg bloc – what some respondents described as "the tail wagging the dog"

prominent regionally-linked ANC politician and Mogalakwena official. Yet charges were withdrawn against the latter in 2023 owing to a lack of evidence.[1525]

For all the party's talk of "organisational renewal", prospects of change coming from within the ruling party appear remote. Over the course of its entrenchment over the last 15 years, the predatory politics which pervades the ANC has come to all but destroy whatever potential remained within the party for deep socioeconomic transformation and the redress of apartheid legacies. Processes of internal democracy have been hollowed at virtually every level, with local ANC respondents across the board describing how party elections – even at the branch level – are bought with the resources of regional power blocs. Money rather than ideas forms the lifeblood of the organisation. And the 1980s generation of activists that led revolts and campaigns across the Bantustan today express profound dismay and disbelief at the path that the organisation has taken in the post-apartheid era.

In virtually every interview with those who had been part of the ANC or continued to consider themselves a member, irrespective of their current proximity to the levers of power or their affiliation with particular political networks, concluding reflections centered on the profound deterioration of the party, the extreme levels of distrust that plague the organisation, and the dissolution of the powerful bonds that had been forged during the liberation struggle – to the extent that comrades have been directly linked to the assassination of other comrades. Across this generation (50-60 year olds), a sense of betrayal, guilt and mutual recrimination pervades. Yet in attributing blame for the current state of affairs, many point to a lack of political education and morality which allegedly afflicts the younger generation. Certainly the party no longer functions as the knowledge-centred organisation that it once was, and the covert reading groups and ideological debates that took place with such vigour in the 1980s appear to have almost completely fallen away. Yet younger activists point fingers in the opposite direction, blaming the older generation for having sold out. Yet it is not only young people who voice criticism of the processes of the democratic transition. One anonymous former MK member who today remains a member of the ANC expressed intense frustration at the lack of local consultation:

> the way the CODESA was structured, and the time for consultation in terms of representation, communication – between our formations, our structures, our

[1525] *Capricorn FM,* "Charges against Mashamaite and Chuma withdrawn in Mogalakwena murder case", 10 March 2023. Available at: https://www.capricornfm.co.za/charges-withdrawn-against-mashamaite-and-chuma-in-mogalakwena-murder-case/#:~:text=Charges%20against%20Mashamaite%20and%20Chuma%20withdrawn%20in%20Mogalakwena%20murder%20case,-Published%20by%20Itumeleng&text=The%20Polokwane%20High%20Court%20has,of%20two%20Mogalakwena%20municipality%20councillors%20.

> community – consultation was not enough, it was not done properly. It was just, you will recall, there was just talks, and then the talks collapsed, then CODESA 2. After that, rush, rush, rush, rush, elections. That period, it made us compromise 60% of what we were supposed to get…. It was a failure. It compromised our efforts. It was just rush, rush because we are avoiding war, we are avoiding blood, whatever – so then there would be a date for elections.[1526]

This respondent describes being blinded at the time by the euphoria of democracy, the charisma of the ANC's national leaders and the message of reconciliation they preached. Today, it seems, the illusion that liberal democracy would deliver freedom has, however, virtually evaporated, and the hegemony of the post-apartheid Rainbow Nation project is under significant question.

This does not suggest, however, that the ANC as an organisation will disappear any time soon. The party's majority in Mogalakwena, and in Limpopo more generally, does not, at this point, appear assailable by opposition parties, demonstrating something of how the party is able to absorb forms of internal contest. The party and its discourses, in many senses, still represent the parameters of contest. And many former activists still regard the prospect of leaving the ANC unthinkable. This is borne out by the example of the involvement of long-standing local ANC members (some former municipal officials) in initiatives like the Strategic Dialogue Group, an internal yet parallel activist structure that seeks to change the party from within, drawing especially on the ideological direction of Thabo Mbeki.[1527]

The ANC's fragmentation and its weakening hegemony, and that of the post-apartheid dispensation more broadly, has, however, brought forth resurgent forms of reactionary white politics, which has come to play a peculiar role in the rural local governance landscape of Mogalakwena. In the early 2000s, regional newspaper coverage suggests that white opinion in Mokopane remained largely conservative, and often highly critical of the new government more generally. Nevertheless, it appears that impulses towards right-wing mobilisation had largely been demobilised through the democratic transition. Even members of the former CP appear to have adapted to the new democratic realities. For instance, following his exit from formal politics in 2000, the former firebrand CP MP, Schalk Pienaar, established a local firm of attorneys which received work from the Mogalakwena Local Municipality.[1528] One might recall the prominent role that Pienaar played in campaigning against the desegregation of white town councils in the early 1990s.

[1526] Interview with Anonymous, Mokopane, 8 March 2019.
[1527] Interview with Ahmed Cachalia, Mokopane, 6 March 2020.
[1528] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 16 March 2020.

Pienaar would also come to be embroiled in the 2014/15 meltdown: he served as the attorney that consulted Piet Pale on his seeking to have the municipal manager reinstated. This in part speaks to just how enormously the nexus of local political and economic relations changed since the end of formal segregation. And yet, against the current crisis, some of the core beliefs in the settler-colonial and apartheid racial ontologies that lay at the heart of white politics in the region have resurfaced in white political discourse. In an email exchange, for instance, Pienaar wrote:

> Potgietersrus was one of the model towns during the 1994 period with farmers and the mining community offering job opportunities and a booming economy. The takeover of the town by the ANC has not been beneficial to any community in town… Look at the rest of the country for an explanation why it has become dysfunctional and violent. It has become a country like the rest of the countries in Africa, corrupt, racist and chaotic… Most governments in Africa, that have come to power in the name of democracy, so also in South Africa, have destroyed the infrastructure, devoured the finances and have governed with fear and intimidation. This is a fact of Africa![1529]

According to one respondent, the declining level of services in the town have emboldened the voices of those who long criticised the democratic transition, drawing white opinion towards more reactionary views and interventionist methods. When Piet Pale filed his lawsuit, Afriforum filed its own separate application to order the high court to protect the municipal manager and institute investigations into corruption at the municipality. In the wake of declining service delivery, Afriforum has proved a growing force in uniting local Afrikaans residents around initiatives to protect "Afrikaner civil rights" – resonant of the era of grassroots Afrikaner mobilisation, although employing a language that diverges from the hard segregationist tone of the past.

While the idea of the Volkstaat may have faded from conceptual use, its foundational elements of spatial segregation, administrative autonomy and economic extractivism have continued to animate local white politics in new forms, through new mobilisations and technologies, within the context produced over the course of the past thirty years of ANC rule, and within a broader global milieu of white right-wing resurgence within the era of late-stage neoliberal capitalism.[1530] "While in white majority contexts, [Donald Trump's style of] national populism seeks to capture formal political power," Van Zyl-Hermann has recently written, "the white

[1529] Email exchange with Schalk Pienaar, 9 March 2020.
[1530] See, for instance: Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*, 1st ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (Columbia University Press, 2019).

minority's lack of political leverage in post-apartheid South Africa sees an assertion of white autonomy emerge in the civil society arena".[1531]

Yet white politics has not completely exited formal institutional offices of the state. While Pienaar exited local politics, George Morkel-Brink continued to serve as a councillor at Mogalakwena until 2016, representing the Freedom Front (FF+) until he opted to finally retire in his 80s. He had attended all of the contentious special council meetings that took place, and he supported resolutions which protected the municipal manager. Yet it seems that Morkel-Brink's generation of late apartheid politicians have largely given way to a younger generation of white local politicians who have adopted more robust political strategies, which often involve significant spectacle. The current provincial chairperson of the FF+ in Limpopo, for instance, is the town's former sheriff, Marcelle Maritz. Over the course of the Mogalakwena meltdown, Maritz recalls how she organised for members of a private security company (run by a former Potgietersrus policeman) to park their bakkies on corners around the former white suburbs as a defensive measure; on one occasion, she recounted, they assembled a "lager" of bakkies around the council chambers at the municipality to protect the municipal manager's supporters in council, who were holding a special council meeting to continue strategising their next moves in the deepening crisis.

The violent competition that has ensued between different actors in the ANC has thus not only created a climate of insecurity within the daily functioning of the municipality: its effects have spilled out into the broader community, which has come to be marred by political assassinations, and which has provoked disruptive forms of protest and a resurgence of white reactionary politics. As such, the fragmentation of the ANC and the concomitant rise of regional networks of patronage and coercion have instilled profound changes to the realm of rural local governance. Yet while these forms of predatory politics are without a doubt regressive, they must be seen within historical context and within the broader field of power relations. In the context of weak state capacities to effect redistribution and address the

[1531] Van Zyl-Hermann considers the role of the Solidarity Movement, a white union with long roots in South Africa's segregationist past which, in its reinvented form as a "broad-based social movement which claims to represent the white minority", has experienced renewed popularity in the post-apartheid era. While aspirations for the kind of "formal political or territorial autonomy" captured in Volkstaat project have fallen away, Solidarity emphasises the forging of "institutional, community and even virtual spaces in which Afrikaners and whites [can] organize their own affairs, self-sufficient and free from black, majority intervention. Several initiatives evoke welfare state resonances as the Movement sought to advance the well-being of its members and broader target constituency in a privatized capacity, itself performing state-like functions it [has[accused the majority-run state of neglecting. These efforts [run] together with market-based forms of commercial service provision targeting a particular ethnic and racial constituency. Neoliberal logics of responsibilization and freedom therefore [have] facilitated a populist community-focused response to protect white interests and privilege."

legacies of the Bantustan era, inclusion in these networks represents one of the few avenues for upward mobility for many who live in these devastated areas – perhaps especially disaffected youth. Certainly, as has been described of systems of party patronage elsewhere, what minimal welfare distributions are dispensed are combined with forms of ongoing coercion and violence. Yet the building of such predatory extractive networks represents a strategic (if callous) course of collective action to conditions marked by deep histories of spatial upheaval, state violence and neglect, and entrenched forms of exploitation and impoverishment – processes of dispossession which, indeed, have continued through the post-apartheid era.

The Mine and the Rise of Extractive Industry

The post-apartheid local government system was mandated with a particular role in "local economic development": the creation of a climate attractive for investment and friendly to business. In the context of Mogalakwena, this has entailed providing "enabling conditions" for mining operations and extractive industry more broadly – language which was similarly used in the Lebowa era. Yet, as will be described below, many of the touted local economic benefits of mining have not materialized in Mogalakwena. The municipality itself has been forced to bear many of the externalities of mining in the area, which has introduced profound new distortions along the three axes of rural local governance.

In describing what she calls processes of "denationalisation", Hart points to the highly-advantageous terms through which multinational capital renegotiated its reconnection to South Africa after the end of apartheid, with post-apartheid state neoliberal concessions sustaining its highly concentrated character while facilitating massive capital flight, import tariff reductions, and the off-shoring of operations and financial flows.[1532] The liberalising reforms introduced by the post-apartheid state in the early years of democracy resulted, *inter alia,* in deindustrialisation across several manufacturing sectors. The reach and power of offshored multinationals and finance capital has extended not only throughout major urban centres, but into small towns and rural areas across the country. Indeed, the centre of economic gravity in Mokopane and numerous other rural towns has overwhelmingly shifted towards extractive industries in the post-apartheid era. And, as this final section shows, the entry in particular of platinum mining in Mogalakwena has produced radically new forms of spatial change and ruptures in the field of administrative government. The entrenchment of mining has, in particular, unleashed new forms of extractivism which have in many senses supplanted those of the apartheid past, profoundly reshaping the terrain of rural local governance today.

[1532] Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis,* p.6-10

Over the last two decades, in the wake of a massive increase in global demand for Platinum Group Metals (PGMs), major platinum multinationals have massively expanded their operations in rural South Africa. In particular, operations around the so-called "Bushveld Igneous Complex", which runs across vast swathes of the North West and Limpopo provinces, including large portions of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality, have come to be developed. The area is said to hold about 75% of the world's platinum resources and 50% of the world's palladium.[1533] Plans to develop platinum mining in Mogalakwena emerged in the early 1990s, yet actual extraction would only truly begin in the early 2000s, accelerating enormously over the next decade, and seeing the entry of a range of new multinational conglomerates.

Phillips has observed generally that significant mining deals across the Lebowa Bantustan were struck in the 1980s, and explains how these deals were conducted through the formation of the Lebowa Minerals Trust, providing great detail into the negotiations which facilitated the entry of the Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) and later Anglo-American Platinum into region, including in the Potgietersrus area in the early 1990s, as the Bantustan state was in the process of accelerating fragmentation.[1534] She observes that the Potgietersrus mining "deal was not made with the consent of the larger community, and in subsequent years, many of the original residents on the land complained that they were not consulted, nor did they reap the benefits of the compensation package".[1535]

Kgošigadi Atalia Langa of the Langa-Mapela community would assent to the deal with JCI for "exclusive right" over the leased land (surface rights, that is, the mineral rights had already been ceded in the 1980s), with the community receiving a once off payment of R1.2 million and R5000 annual rent, while a small portion of operating costs would be invested in a trust controlled by the local magistrate for "community development".[1536] By the time this deal was signed in 1993, Mnwana, Mtero and Hay state, "mining operations were already underway. The process of extracting the 'highest grades' of ore out of the open pit on Sandsloot farm had already begun".[1537] Allegations (many of them proven) of collusion and self-enrichment on the part of chiefs have continued to swirl around the chieftaincies drawn into mining operations, and this has prompted forms of popular action – including the burning of traditional authority

[1533] RP Schouwstra and ED Kinloch, 2000, "A short geological review of the Bushveld Complex", *Platinum Metals Review,* 44, 1: 33-39.
[1534] *Ibid.,* p.266-267.
[1535] *Ibid.,* p.280.
[1536] Mnwana, Mtero, and Hay, "Dispossessing the Dispossessed", p.12.
[1537] *Ibid.*

offices in Mapela in 2017.[1538] The mine now operates as a major element along the administrative axis of rural local governance.

The development of open-cast mining operations has also brought enormous changes to the spatial landscape of Mogalakwena. The first blasting took place on 12 February 1992[1539] - a day which Derek Khaas remembers intimately. He recalls that he had been driving with his grandfather, JH Khaas, who was now serving as an advisor to Kgošigadi Langa:

> We heard a sound. A sound "wheeeeeee" [alarm]. I even stopped the car, and fortunately the ringing stopped. And then immediately after stopping, we heard a very serious blasting. I thought maybe SA was attacked. Seriously so. I saw a lot of dust. Little did we know, the Anglo Platinum delegation had earlier gone to the community, discussed with them and reached such a notorious conclusion with them, by saying "we are going to give you food, and what you must know is that if you hear a ringing sound, then there will be blasting. You must take all your children and your belongings to your house, so when we blast, it mustn't damage anything". But houses were cracking there! They were cracking! The vibration was very serious. They even affected the walls. The photos that were hung by the household, or maybe calendars, watches, they fell down as the result of the blasting.

The expansion of the mine would only prove more disruptive of established living arrangements, as several villages of Mogalakwena were forced to relocate. Khaas explains that his grandfather would encourage Langa to negotiate for the relocation of residents from the area in what would come to be known as the ga-Pila relocation scheme. This would only really begin in earnest in the early 2000s, yet these forms of displacement have continued until the present day. The Bench Marks Foundation noted in 2008 that in Mokopane:

> there has been mining-induced displacements of communities; where communities have resisted, corporations have resorted to using both public and private security forces and the courts of law to force communities to comply with the wishes of the corporation. Many of those who have been relocated at … complain about the collapse of cultural institutions, a loss of respect for elders, [and] a loss of economic well-being. [1540]

[1538] *Sowetan,* "Protests in Limpopo over Mogalakwena mine jobs 'heading for disaster'", 7 September 2015, Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1CD06A/
[1539] *Ibid.*
[1540] Bench Marks Foundation, "The Policy Gap (2): Review of the Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes of the Platinum, Coal, Gold and Uranium Sectors in South Africa", *SADC Research Report,* 2008. p.34-35.

One elderly community member from Mothlotlo who was removed to Armoede reported to Bench Marks that while he was not physically removed, he was essentially forced to relocate, reporting:

> the destruction of his grazing lands and his ploughing fields; the deliberate closure and destruction of water sources such as windmills and pumps, and the closure of water infrastructure which had been supplied by the local government; a feeling of insecurity as more and more of his neighbours and relatives gradually succumbed to pressure and moved. [1541]

And when asked about his new accommodation in the relocation village, he described to Bench Marks conditions which were strongly reminiscent of apartheid-era resettlement camps:

> the new house was built from inferior materials; although the house was less than three months old, it was already cracking up; there was no water in the new house and electricity was supplied by prepaid meter; the "enviroloo" was considered unacceptable from a hygienic and operational perspective". He voiced other complaints: "the loss of land for ploughing; the loss of land for grazing; the relocation did not include moving his herd of cattle and he had to sell that herd at a loss; he is no longer able to supplement his meagre pension income from farming.[1542]

And these findings were echoed by Mnwana, Mtero and Hay in 2016, who described the land surrounding Armoede as "not only mall in extent … but open bushveld with relatively infertile soil, which has not been developed for cultivation".[1543]

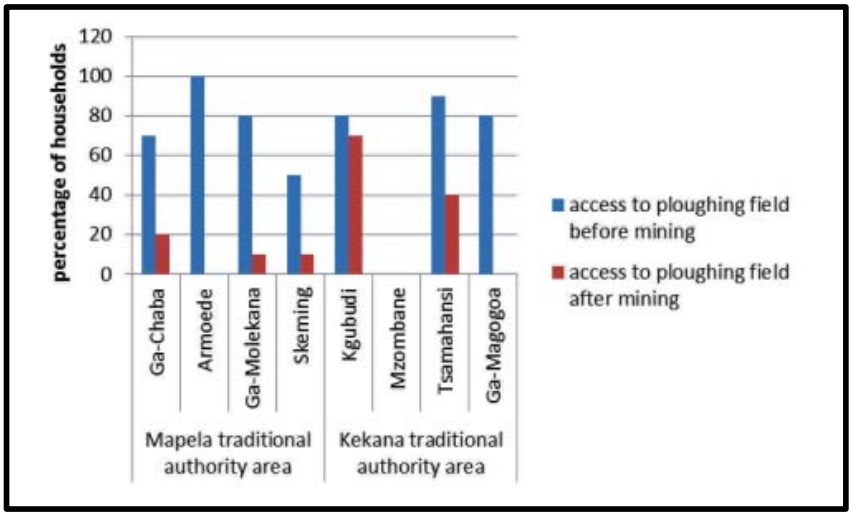


Figure 80: Access to ploughing fields in Mapela and Kekana villages[1544]

[1541] *Ibid*., p.77
[1542] *Ibid.,* p.77
[1543] Mnwana, Mtero, and Hay, "Dispossessing the Dispossessed", p.17.
[1544] From *Ibid.*, p.17.

Over the course of the mid-2000s, new mining conglomerates have entered the fray, including the Canadian multinational, Ivanplats. In the development of the new Platreef mine, similar dynamics of dispossession and local contest have unfolded.[1545] During these past few years of research in Mogalakwena, walls of rubble produced through the open-cast extraction have crept ever-closer to other villages, announcing their inevitable relocation.[1546] And in visiting these communities, one gets the same impression expressed by Bench Marks researchers in 2008: that of "a space age, almost science fiction, operation clashing with a feudal farming community. The visible impact is enormous".[1547] And researchers found high levels of nitrates seeping into the groundwater and killing community livestock, and which threatens to do lasting damage to the long-term ecological prospects of the area.[1548] The threat of both removal and further ecological destruction has only increased over the years, especially with the development of another mine much closer to town, the Ivanplats operation near Tshamahansi, which falls on land belonging to the Vaaltyn Traditional Authority.



Figure 81: A villager from Motlhotlo herds goats with the encroaching mine dump in the background.[1549]

[1545] See *Ibid.,* p.5; Skosana, "Why are chiefs recognised", p.
[1546] It is not only households that have been forced to move; mining companies have also demanded the relocation of graves. In the Motlhotlo relocation, Bench Marks observed how "members of the community are given a pittance for the relocation of each grave. Community members mentioned amounts of between R1,000 and R5,000 per grave". Bench Marks Foundation, "The Policy Gap (2)", p.74.
[1547] *Ibid.,* p.54.
[1548] *Ibid.,* p.57.
[1549] From Lucas Ledwaba, "Bidding farewell to the gods as village makes way for mine", *Daily Maverick,* 24 January 2020. Available at: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-24-bidding-farewell-to-the-gods-as-village-makes-way-for-mine/



Figure 82: The Anglo-American Mogalakwena Platinum Mine produces large mounds of rubble, which are packed into sloping dumps. Photograph taken by author, 22 March 2020.

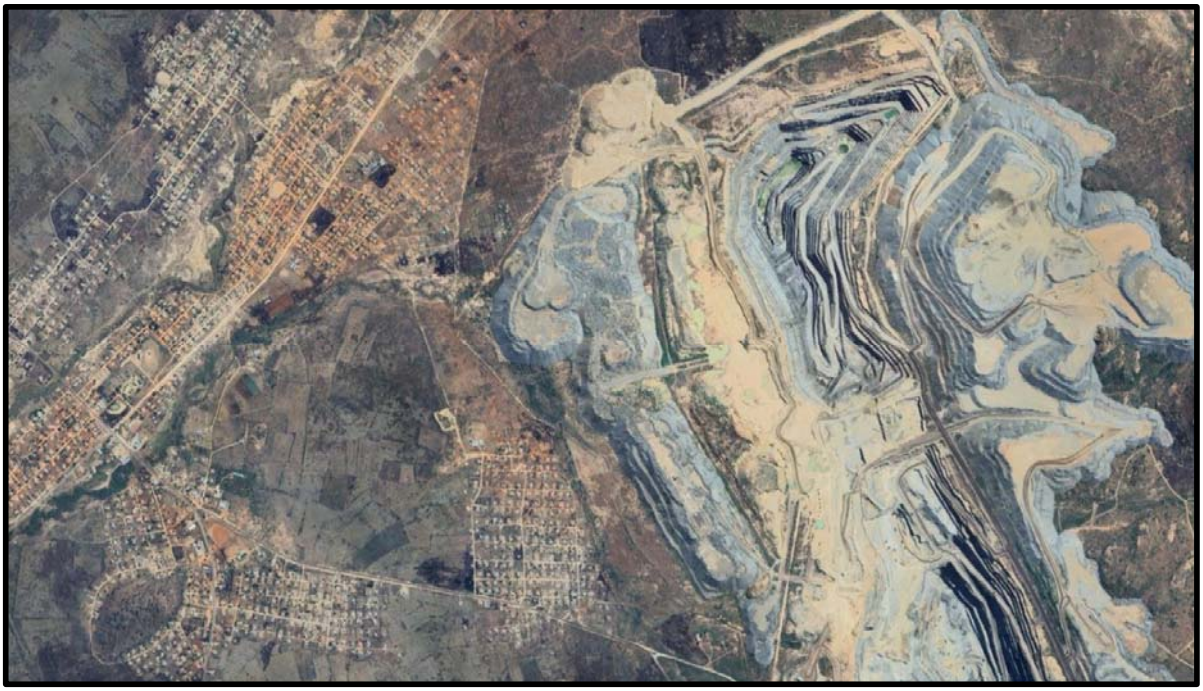


Figure 83: Aerial view of the mine encroaching on Mapela villages[1550]

[1550] Screenshot from Google Maps.

The arrival of platinum mining in the area has thus signalled a profound new force of geographical reengineering and social displacement, just as the era of formal apartheid was coming to an end. The Bench Marks Foundation report pointed out the irony:

> The government is involved in processes of land restitution and redistribution in order to address the inequities of apartheid on the one hand, while on the other it is taking away land from the very same Black majority for purposes of mining.[1551]

For Mnwana, Mtero and Hay, this amounted to "dispossessing the dispossessed".[1552] There have been some signs of improvement in relocation processes through the interventions of public interest litigation.[1553] Nevertheless, given the extent of the mineral deposit in Mogalakwena (see Figure 84 below), future relocations are, indeed, inevitable.

The local economic paradigm that came to suffuse post-apartheid local government after 2000 was one which emphasised the need to create an "attractive climate" for business and investment. Yet, ironically, the expansion of mining has not always improved the revenue prospects of the local state. While a rhetoric of "individual responsibility" pervades the municipality's dealings with poor citizens, the same logic has not always been applied to corporate interests in the area. According to Irene de Villiers, for instance, the mine did not pay rates for many years:

> At one point they had to transport water to the mine. They drove through the town, we had the biggest potholes that you ever could imagine. Wherever they went with those big water tankers, they don't care, they don't pay assessment rates. At that point, the mines were not taxed. Remember it only came with the Property Rates Act that rural people also had to pay property tax. In 2004, that's when that came in. They weren't paying any tax. They never contributed to roads, us town people paid for the roads.[1554]

Beyond the range of environmental externalities and spatial upheavals introduced by mining, thorny issues have emerged over the question of water provision in the context of the drought-prone region.[1555]

[1551] Bench Marks Foundation, "The Policy Gap (2)", p.29
[1552] Mnwana, Mtero, and Hay, "Dispossessing the Dispossessed"
[1553] In 2020, for instance, the remaining households of Mothlotlo community, which had refused to move since 2005, finally agreed to relocate after a deal which was welcomed by both residents and the public interest lawyers who took up their case as a marked departure from past practices. Attorney Johan Lorenzen, who described the earlier attitude by Anglo as a "here is R2,000 [or] R5,000, good luck and have a nice life" approach, characterised the new settlement as setting a powerful precedent for future relocations. From Ledwaba, 'Bidding farewell'.
[1554] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 16 March 2020.
[1555] Following the end of apartheid, it was recognised that the town's water purification plant would have to be expanded to cater for the needs of the wider population, beyond just the residents of the white

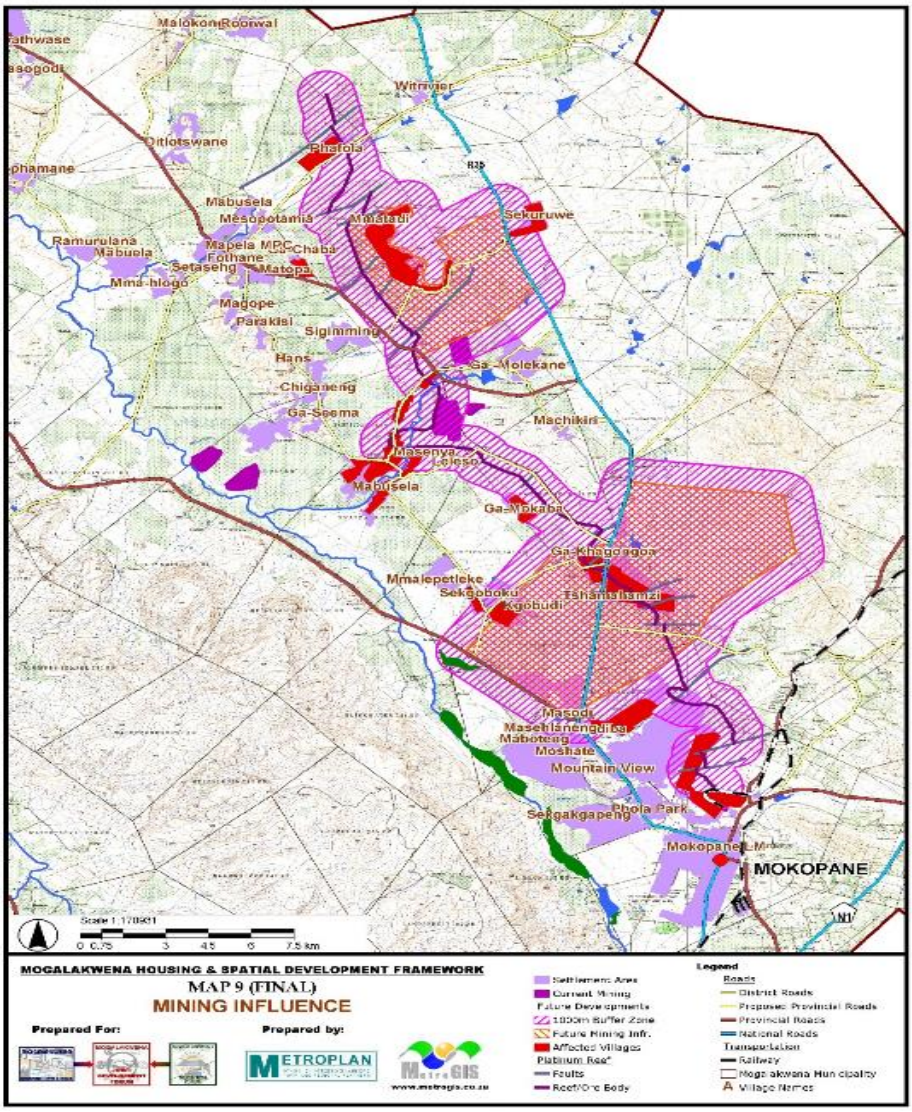


Figure 84: Influence of mining in Mogalakwena Local Municipality.[1556]

town. The purification plant furthermore served as a conduit for providing the mine with large amounts of water. According to Bench Marks, "in 2007, it took 7.19m^3 of water to produce one fine ounce of platinum", and "the mining operation at Angloplats PPRust operation … [thus] consume[s] huge amounts of water annually". Bench Marks Foundation, "The Policy Gap (2)". According to De Villiers, who effectively served as the manager of corporate support services (which includes, crucially, the records division) between 2000 and 2014, managers at the municipality had conducted a feasibility study wherein it was found that the municipality could finance the upgrade itself by raising sewerage tariffs, and benefit from the expanded revenues. Instead, the political management team at the municipality opted for the solution proposed by the mine itself: a so-called Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) agreement whereby the mine would finance the costs of the refurbishment in exchange for a set daily amount of water. In addition, De Villiers recalls, the agreement included the transfer of some 600/700 ha of municipal land – erven in Extension 12 which the mine wanted to house its employees. This agreement not only starved the municipality of potential revenues from water sales to the mine but also saw the townlands and villages losing out on a potential source of water in the midst of escalating demand and dwindling supply.

[1556] From MLM, "Mogalakwena Housing and Spatial Development Framework", 2013.

The entry of the mine was welcomed by the state with promises of large-scale job creation. Yet what has become clear is that nowhere near the scale of jobs has been produced for local residents than what had been hoped. A common refrain amongst local protestors is the lack of jobs produced for local residents, and the tendency of the mine to draw in extra-local workers to fulfill the specialised work. The community outreach offices of the mining firms are the site at which long queues of prospective local job-seekers queue up with their resumes, seeking the few short-term, menial "job opportunities" that are available.

The arrival of platinum mining has taken place against the backdrop of a period of halted industrialisation in Mogalakwena. Across industrial zones of the former Lebowa Bantustan, apartheid-era incentives for industrialists along the border zones fell away with the decline of the Bantustans themselves.[1557] Yet the closure of a key set of industries also hit the former white town – including the tobacco coop, whose demise was detailed in Chapter 6, and a range of related manufacturing industries, such as Slattery. There has also been a marked decline in the agricultural industry, and many farms have converted from crop and domestic livestock farming to game farming. Mogalakwena's electrical manager, Johan Fourie, described how this was reflected in electricity consumption patterns:

> Electricity wise, our demand actually decreased. Because the municipality is supplying in town, and the farms get from Eskom. Our area used to be an agricultural hub. There was lots of tobacco, peanuts, mielies, cotton have been grown in our area. And the Doorndraai dam at that stage still had water, so the irrigation at Sterkrivier was still working. People could irrigate their crops and so on. Then the dam level dropped at some stage, the municipality applied for some water quotas from the dam, because of the population growth in the municipal area, and the farmers realised they weren't going to have water for much longer. They changed their whole farming operations… due to the agricultural factories closing down, our demand has dropped just like that. It had a huge impact. And it affects revenue for the municipality, definitely.[1558]

The chairperson of the Mokopane Business Chamber, Andy Goetsch, describes how hopes that the mine would boost local manufacturing and business more broadly have proved misplaced:

> the mines get most of their stuff from the Rand – Pretoria, Johannesburg. Now some of those businesses that are doing on a big scale, they can open an office here. Doing business on the mine, it's not worth it. Now the mines told us many times at meetings – the trouble is that we should go into business and do what the

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view of the Bushveld Complex", *Platinum Metals Review,* 44, 1: 33-39.
period in which factories were closing down in the metropolitan areas, and yet those returning back to their rural homes found that there were even fewer jobs.
[1558] Interview with Johan Fourie, Mokopane, 22 May 2019.

> people in Johannesburg are doing so they can do business with us. That's what they told us. They want to do that, so many of our people tried it – it doesn't work. Years ago people opened a business to do business with the mine. At the time there was only one big mine. You're doing business with them, you've changed your system to work with the mine. Now you've only got one customer. And if he says he doesn't like you, you're bankrupt… Now they tell us they use so many of these bolts and nuts and all these things. Where do they get these? They come from China… China supplies the whole world … So the business people of this town have not benefited much from the mine.[1559]

And Irene de Villiers insists:

> They've done a lot of damage in town… I always said I don't want to live in a mining town. Look at all those towns, what happened to them eventually: they are like ghost towns. Old, neglected, and nothing there.[1560]

If white businesses established in the protectionist era of apartheid have struggled to adapt to the changed conditions, the prospects for under-capitalised Black-owned businesses in this climate have proven even more arduous. While, as Phillips shows, certain high-flying Lebowa businessmen adapted favourably to the post-apartheid context, more localised enterprises have struggled in the context of the "free market". Derek Khaas explains, for instance, how their family business in Mahwelereng could not survive the end of apartheid. With the scrapping of the need for municipal business licences, the monopoly that the Khaas beer hall enjoyed ended, and its profitability sunk as a host of new taverns emerged across the township.[1561] A similar fate has befallen Geoffrey Molala, whose once thriving Mahwelereng Hotel still lies as an empty shell. In this harsh economic context, one in which new enterprises are frequently starved of access to credit, that access to municipal tenders can provide a lifeline – principally, construction, maintenance, cleaning and security tenders. Yet it is also precisely this dependence that has come to be weaponised by regional politicians, who come to exert significant power over so-called "service providers" desperate for continued work. Like its Bantustan predecessor, the post-apartheid state insists that "entrepreneurialism" represents a panacea for local conditions of socioeconomic devastation, even as the means for doing so remain remote for most.

While the internationally extraverted, profit-driven operations of platinum mining represent one new set of extractive relations which have come to sap the economic fabric of Mogalakwena, another is represented by retail shopping outlets, which have come to dominate consumption patterns in the area – as indeed they have across South Africa. While the rise of shopping

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[1559] Interview with Andy Goetsch, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.
[1560] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 16 March 2020.
[1561] Interview with Derek Khaas, Mokopane, 25 March 2022.

chains certainly did not start only after the end of apartheid, as is exemplified in the case of OK Bazaar which was operating in Potgietersrus from the late 1970s, there has been a marked growth in the number of chain stores since 1994; Pick 'n Pay, Shoprite Checkers, and Woolworths now loom over the local grocery market. "You want the big supermarkets for the variety, lower prices", De Villiers argues, "but they take their money out of town".[1562] Similarly, Goetsch stated:

> money is spent at Pick n Pay, that money goes to Cape Town. The man that's got a shop here, he buys his shop from the motor industry here, he services it here, if he needs a lawyer he uses this man here. If he needs a bookkeeper here, everything is done here. The money stays here. Pick n Pay will never buy a car from here, they buy at head office. They don't use our lawyers, they don't use our bookkeepers, they use nothing of the town, they take the money and the money goes out.[1563]

The reach of supermarkets is no longer limited to the main town centers, however. The rapid roll-out of Usave stores (Shoprite) in villages across Limpopo has come to represent a major threat to the spaza shops that have historically served rural customers.

The rise of the supermarkets has also brought new challenges for workers. While in the 1980s, CCAWUSA succeeded in bringing marked improvements in working conditions – in, reshaping the terms of local economic relationality across segregated spaces – for its successor, SACCAWU, the post-apartheid trend era has proved even more difficult. In an interview with Bruchhausen, the Mokopane Branch administrator of SACCAWU, Malebo Mphahlele noted the new range of issues that workers at major retailers experience:

> The issues of casuals, retrenchments, and so on. That one we are dealing with it every single day. You know, like, all these companies, they want to do that [casualisation] because, eh, most of the time they want to get rid of the old ones [employees]. Ja, they are busy getting rid of them and the ones that they are employing, they tell them straight away, "here, we employ you as a part-timer, there is no more permanent work", they don't want permanent workers. It used to just be the big companies but now even the smallanyana companies they have joined now…"

And while there are no longer any restrictions on union activity, Mphahlele describes the apathy they encounter amongst their members in the face of the overwhelming power of capital:

> [M]ost of them [the members], you know what they do, they just join and sit there, they are having problems and they don't even bring their problems to us, and at

[1562] Interview with Irene de Villiers, Mokopane, 16 March 2020.
[1563] Interview with Andy Goetsch, Mokopane, 26 August 2019.

> the end of the day you hear them say, “Ay, ay, it’s useless for us to join the union. Ay, ay, I am resigning”. So, it’s a problem to us. How can you call on the community to support strikes or whatever when you can’t even get your workers on board”[1564]

While economic opportunities for those who reside in areas of the former Bantustan have changed markedly in many respects in the post-apartheid era, in other respects their relations with the capitalist system strongly resemble the modalities of the apartheid past, marked by racialised exploitation, a loss of time, a loss of autonomy, and an ever-pervasive sense of insecurity.

Dispossession should not be understood as a once-off event. Instead, as Hart argues, processes of “primitive accumulation” through which the life worlds, strategies and institutions that sustain and “protect society from the market, and the associated struggles between capital and labour” are taken apart, should be understood as “ongoing processes”.[1565] Over the course of this dissertation, we have seen how the Mogalakwena area has been subject to more-or-less continual bouts of dispossession since the late 19th century – whether in the form of state-led land grabs, forced removals and resettlement, or the exploitation and appropriation of Black labour and wealth. The modes of accumulation that have come to predominate in Mogalakwena in the post-apartheid era bear witness to how, through global processes of capitalist mutation, apartheid forms of extractivism have come to be significantly supplanted by new economic relations which extend across geographies which are truly transnational – or, as Hart might put it, “denational” – in scope. And yet, in many senses, the effects of the intrusions of extractive multinational capital on the communities of Mogalakwena continue to powerfully resemble the modes of dispossession that underpinned the apartheid past.

Once again, the conception of “extractivism” proffered in this study denotes the array of processes of capitalist accumulation sustained through “self-reinforcing practices, mentalities, and power differentials” which rationalise “socio-ecologically destructive modes of organizing life through subjugation, violence, depletion, and non-reciprocity”.[1566] Where once the apartheid state sought to protect parasitic relations through which labour and purchasing power from the Bantustan settlements sustained the prosperity of white businessmen in the small towns of the region, the democratic era has seen the rise of forms of destructive wealth extraction which have come to exert a parasitic effect on settlements of the municipality as a whole, jeopardising their economic and ecological sustainability. Not only has the entry of

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[1564] Bruchhausen, “Women and emancipatory politics”, p.201.
[1565] Hart, “Denaturalising Dispossession”, p.982.
[1566] This term is used in the sense intended by Chagnon *et al*: “Extractivism as a concept forms See Christopher Chagnon, Francesco Durante, Barry Gills *et al,* “From extractivism to global extractivism: the evolution of an organizing concept”, *The Journal of Peasant Studies,* 49, 4 (2022): 760-790.

mines and supermarkets largely failed to provide the scale of promised employment opportunities for local residents, they have entrenched the channels through which forms of local wealth are depleted and drained upwards, out of circulation within local communities and into the circuits of globalised financial capital.

Yet if the profits of these extractivist industries rise upwards, well beyond the localities which host them, the destructive effects of these profit-maximising processes are profoundly local – in the case of mining, materialised in the physical destruction of the landscape and what remained of its life-sustaining potential in the aftermath of apartheid's catastrophic experiments in the countryside. And underneath the anodyne descriptions of "relocation" and "community beneficiation" espoused by platinum mining firms, one cannot escape comparisons with the campaigns of forced removal undertaken with such brutality by the apartheid state.

Phafola village in Mapela is among those settlements that are destined to be demolished in the short term to make way for the expansion of the Anglo mine. In an interview conducted at the home of Kiba Slatjile, an Umkhonto weSizwe veteran and long-time Phafola resident, and with the approaching wall of rubble in sight, Slatjile stated:

> [Phafola] was started around the time of Group Areas Act, so all people were supposed to… You see, most of the people staying here, somewhere in this farm, some we we–e – you see, where the mine is [points to mine dump 500 meters away], before, there was a river there, over the river, but other people were staying that side. Grazing cattle and all those things. When I came here, I think I was about 8 years myself. I was coming from over the river that side. I was 8 years old… But now we are no more in control of that. Every time we are fighting with this mine. It's already encroaching into our yards... And we do have grave sites and lots of things there. I think last week, or last of last week, they went there to stop them again but you see it's not going to help, because they're not properly consulting, and they're not prepared because they are hiring consultants to do their job and go. But life is… Now, the struggle continues! You don't stop, you see, life is not good.[1567]

In this context of continuing dispossession, state transfers – whether in the form of grant distributions or tenders – represent one of the few remaining economic inputs sustaining rural livelihood strategies. And it is within this context that the violent competition which has arisen around the resources of the local state should also be analysed. The sense of outrage directed against the predatory networks which sap the resources of rural municipalities, while justified and indeed necessary, should be extended more broadly to the array of other non-

[1567] Interview with Kiba Slatjile, ga-Phafola, Mapela, 22 March 2020.

reciprocating extractivist relations which uproot communities, leach the socioeconomic landscape, and leave a trail of ecological destruction in their wake.

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In 2017, we argued that the Mogalakwena Local Municipality was in the "grip of perpetual instability", which we traced to "routine and competing political intrusions" at the municipality, which had resulted in "an entrenched spiral of institutional damage, rising securitisation, protest and violence".[1568] At the heart of the crisis, we argued, was the "recurrent and hastening splintering" of the ANC, which had seen "intensifying factionalism" since the 2007 Polokwane Conference, and which had only deepened over the course of the presidency of Jacob Zuma. This earlier study showed some of the complex political webs of interconnection that had come to saturate the municipality, and emphasised that the dramatic events that had unfolded at Mogalakwena in 2014/2015 needed to be understood in broader terms; the municipality, we argued, serves as one theatre within a broader field of political action, one node within a nexus of party-state power relations, a vantage point from which to understand not just local issues, but regional and national political processes. Yet our analysis was limited in several respects: even as we sought to challenge overly agential diagnoses which hold that the cause of South Africa's local government crisis is largely a matter of individual leadership, corruption, and incompetence, our analysis largely began and ended with factionalism within the party.

The present study thus sought to both broaden and deepen the scope of investigation into Mogalakwena, extending Hart's relational method of studying the local state to consider a broader set of processes extending far further back into the area's history. What this endeavour has made clear is that the variables involved in Mogalakwena's present-day local government crisis lie far beyond just present-day dynamics within the ANC, or the quality of individual officials or politicians in the local state. The factionalism that currently grips the ruling party and the violent competition that has ensued over the municipality should instead be read in longer historical terms, and as integrally enmeshed in the current conjuncture of rural local governance, both shaped by and a shaper of the broader field of power relations.

The emphasis on understanding these three axes together demands avoiding simple reductionism in making causal claims about the roots of local government crisis. The present thesis precisely militates against identifying any one cause, and instead urges a view of rural local government authorities as situated within a nexus of continually shifting power relations

[1568] Mosa Phadi, Joel Pearson, and Thomas Lesaffre, "The Seeds of Perpetual Instability: The Case of Mogalakwena Local Municipality," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2018, p.1, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2018.1464301.

constituted by a wide range of actors, institutions and ideas. Yet this approach need not collapse into the sea of innumerable relations that unfold on an everyday basis in and around a locality.

The method undertaken here suggests a systematic means of approaching the messy realities of contemporary local government, cutting an analytical path through some of the thicket of interpersonal, inter-institutional and multiscalar complexity, and illuminating the field of power relations within which municipalities like Mogalakwena operate. The relational and historical perspective pursued places processes of spatial transformation, administrative government and economic extractivism within the same analytical frame, conceived as three historically entwined yet distinct axes which together structure rural local governance. And the tools of social history, the collection of detailed archival sources and oral history interviews, allowed for perceiving of these axes in their empirical manifestations, as sets of relationships between specific people, places and institutions rather than abstracted "social forces".

As Hart long recognised, this ethnographically-driven, empirically-grounded relational approach can produce analysis important for understanding the grounds of political action – for what progressive change might look like and how it might be achieved. In the first instance, it challenges modes of local government reform which focus only on change along one axis while ignoring how it is intertwined with others – say, in seeking to reform the administrative axis through "professionalising" the civil service or introducing more robust buffers along the "political-administrative interface", while ignoring the broader spatial and economic contexts within which local municipalities operate, and the historical terrain of rural local governance as a whole.

While this dissertation has emphasised the need for scholars of local government to consider the three axes together, considering the overall structuring and destructuring effects that their shifting articulations have produced over the course of history, it has also strongly emphasised the need for local historians to analyse racialised spaces together, in relation to each other. While the apartheid state had conceived of these as politically segregated spaces, and significantly succeeded in containing political contention through the creation of segregated state structures, these areas nonetheless operated in many senses as an interconnected bloc, cut across by thick and ongoing relations – a sense of *de facto* (albeit partial) integration that was indeed acknowledged in the form that post-apartheid municipal boundaries took. One might describe the politics that developed at the intersections of these spaces as greater than the sum of its parts. And as such, one cannot approach the history of a once segregated space without considering its relations to other apartheid spatial-administrative-economic typologies.

Finally, this study reiterates the insight long emphasised by Hart: that local municipalities offer a unique vantage point from which to understand national processes of change in South Africa; they are sites at which broader forces come together to shape reality, and function both as receivers and participants in the shaping of processes spanning varying scales and geographies. In municipalities like Mogalakwena can be seen "processes of [the] restructuring [of] South African society".[1569] The chapters of this dissertation have shown how the places, people, institutions and events of the areas of present-day Mogalakwena have long been enveloped within concentric and overlapping local, regional, provincial, national and transnational networks of relationality. And as this concluding chapter has shown, the material realities produced at local level through the operation of the three axes has fed back into the national political arena, presenting distinct new challenges for the authority of the central state and the ruling party in ways starkly reminiscent of the bottom-up challenges of the 1980s.

This thesis presented remains limited in several respects, however. It has resisted offering precise diagnoses of how the interactions of the three axes are actually productive of contemporary local government crisis, for instance. What remains to be explained are the specific dialectical relationships that prevail between the axes identified and broader conjunctural periods: how is the shifting trajectory of these three axes more precisely influenced by conjunctural conditions; how, in turn, do the political relations which are instantiated over processes of space, administration and economy at the local level articulate with broader conditions, forces, and prevailing tendencies; and what gives these axes their persistent power in shaping historical conjunctures as such.

Relatedly, this thesis has desisted from proffering predictions on the future trajectory of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality or of rural local governance more broadly. Certainly, the salience of space, administration and extractivism remains clear, yet how these might be feeding into broader political conditions remains uncertain. Writing before the 2024 national government elections, an event which will mark 30 years since the formal end of apartheid, it is tempting to suggest that the country is on the verge of major change, especially if pollsters are correct in their predictions that the ANC's electoral support will drop below 50%. Yet, as this thesis has shown, the significance of national milestones for everyday life in rural localities like Mogalakwena are far more opaque than they first appear. It is indeed from within these spaces, that a far less linear story can be told about national politics. While rural municipalities like Mogalakwena are often considered as peripheral to the national trajectory, this study has reiterated that they must be understood as its constituent elements. To borrow the words of

[1569] Bonner, "History and the Here and Now", p.165-166.

Phil Bonner, “until we have serious investigation of these, we will have little idea of what South Africa is”.[1570]

[1570] *Ibid.*

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