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Author(s): Paul Maylam

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THE RISE AND DECLINE OF URBAN APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

PAUL MAYLAM

IN DECEMBER 1919 a deputation, representing the residents of Ndabeni, an African township in Cape Town, met the Minister of Native Affairs to discuss the future of the township. The residents of Ndabeni faced the prospect of relocation to a new township. A spokesperson for the delegation, expressing dismay at the impending move, told the minister that it appeared that Africans were not wanted in Cape Town:

that only their hands were needed at work, and that if some mysterious arrangement could be devised whereby only their hands could be daily brought to town for purposes of labour and their persons and faces not seen at all, that would perhaps suit their white masters better.¹

This spokesperson, unnamed and forgotten, was touching upon both the essential objective and the fundamental contradiction of urban segregation and apartheid. Much of state urban policy in South Africa has been directed towards attaining the unattainable: the securing of labour-power without labourers. Out of this fundamental contradiction has arisen many further contradictions, conflicts and struggles.

It is the aim of this article to show how the policy and practice of urban segregation, control and apartheid have evolved (insofar as those policies and practices have affected Africans), and to examine how the system has begun to show signs of collapse in more recent years. The first part of the article tries to periodize the evolution of the apartheid city and to explain why and how it emerged in specific forms at certain times. In this section the focus will be on four main centres: Kimberley, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The second part examines both the primary mechanisms and the contradictions of urban apartheid. It considers how the urban African labour force has been reproduced over time, and who has borne the costs of reproduction. These issues gave rise to considerable debate among state policy-makers, and to divisions and conflicts within and between the central state, the local state and capital. Indeed, much of state urban policy over the years has had to be concentrated on managing the contradictions, conflicts and struggles that have developed around urban apartheid. This task of management has been achieved more successfully at certain times

The author lectures in history at the University of Durban, Natal.

1. B. Kinkead-Weekes, 'The development of popular resistance among local Africans 1918-1935' (unpublished paper, Workshop on the History of Cape Town, 1985), pp. 8-9.

than at other times. In the 1960s, for instance, the system held together. However, in the last decade or so the inherent strains and contradictions have shown up more starkly, and today the crisis of apartheid is in many ways most apparent in the urban arena.

The first phase in the emergence of the apartheid city

Urban policies and practices in South Africa can be said to have developed and changed over four main phases: (i) pre-1923; (ii) 1923–1950/52; (iii) 1950/52–1979; and (iv) post-1979 (this last phase to be considered at the end of the article). These phases should not be demarcated too rigidly. There are threads of continuity that tie all four phases together. In some cases a new phase merely marks a tightening of these threads; in other cases there are more distinct breaks with previous patterns.

In the first phase, before 1923, there was a relatively low level of African urbanization. In 1904 the total urban African population of South Africa was officially estimated to be about 337,000; by 1921 this figure had risen to about 587,000. During these first two decades of the twentieth century the percentage of urbanized Africans remained fairly constant at 12 to 13 per cent of the total African population.² There was also a high proportion of African males to females in urban areas.

This demographic pattern reflected the fundamental character of the South African political economy at the time. Although the African rural economy had been experiencing stresses and strains since the late nineteenth century, it was still able to provide a relatively stable subsistence base. The manufacturing sector had not yet developed on any significant scale, and the urban economy rested largely on mining and commerce. The low level of African urbanization was not a result of state enforcement. Indeed, the state apparatus for controlling the African urban presence was largely undeveloped before 1923. A high degree of regional autonomy existed, as each province or municipality tended to devise its own regulations for controlling urban Africans.

Although no centralized state control was exercised over African urbanization before 1923, there were regional trends towards segregating and controlling urban Africans. It therefore becomes important to consider the dominant interests and concerns that gave rise to these trends in our four main centres, and to examine the specific forms of segregation and control that emerged in these centres. In two cases the particular needs of mining capital seem to have been decisive; in the other two, social considerations were important.

In the diamond-mining town of Kimberley there emerged one of the earliest and most rigorous forms of urban labour control in South African

2. See H. A. Shannon, 'Urbanization, 1904–1936,' *South African Journal of Economics*, 5 (1937), pp. 164–90.

history. Closed compounds, accommodating African migrant workers, were introduced in Kimberley in the 1880s. Gaol-like institutions, they were actually modelled on the De Beers convict station. The closed compounds were established at a time when diamond prices were falling and the mineowners were struggling to reduce production costs. The compounds enabled them to exercise tighter discipline over their unskilled labour force, preventing desertion and diamond theft, and to ensure a more certain supply of labour. As Turrell has argued, the compounds helped to resolve a fundamental dilemma for the mineowners: 'On the one hand, they wanted experienced labourers in their mines. On the other hand, they did not want an organized working class in their town. It was this contradiction that was bridged by the closed compound system.'³

This is not to say that all Africans in Kimberley lived in compounds. By 1892 about half of the town's African population were accommodated in compounds, the other half living in the town or in locations.⁴ Thus Kimberley did not represent an early model of rigid urban segregation. Its significance lies in the development of the compound as a model mechanism of labour control. Mabin has noted how the Kimberley pattern was followed elsewhere: 'The strict separation of African and white workers both in the hierarchy of labour and in their residences became the model for mines and mining towns throughout southern Africa'.⁵

Johannesburg was one of these towns to follow the Kimberley model. Johannesburg's mining compounds did not follow the exact model of the Kimberley 'closed' compound. Before the South African War Johannesburg's compounds developed along rudimentary lines, but in the conditions of severe labour shortage after the war they came to be more tightly controlled to curb absenteeism and desertion. The white compound manager played a key role in trying to enforce strict discipline among the migrant workers accommodated in the compound. He was assisted by a group of African compound 'police'.⁶ Compounds also housed other Africans, apart from mineworkers, in Johannesburg. By the early 1920s about 5,000 municipal employees were housed in compounds, and another 6,000 African workers lived in private compounds attached to factories and warehouses.⁷

3. Rob Turrell, 'Kimberley's Model Compounds', *Journal of African History*, 25 (1984), pp. 73-4; see also Alan Mabin, 'Labour, capital, class struggle and the origins of residential segregation in Kimberley, 1880-1920', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12 (1986), pp. 7-13; and William Worger, 'Workers as criminals: the Rule of Law in early Kimberley, 1870-1885', in Frederick Cooper (ed.), *Struggle for the City: migrant labor, capital and the state in urban Africa* (California UP, 1983), pp. 80-2.

4. Mabin, 'Kimberley, 1880-1920', p. 18.

5. Mabin, 'Kimberley, 1880-1920', p. 22.

6. Sean Moroney, 'The development of the compound as a mechanism of worker control 1900-1912', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 4 (1978), pp. 30-1, 34-5.

7. Noreen Kagan, 'African Settlements in the Johannesburg Area, 1903-1923' (unpublished MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978), p. 177.

There were still, though, about another 60,000 Africans living in Johannesburg outside the compounds at this time. A small proportion of these, about 5,500, were housed in the municipal townships, Kliptown and Western Native Township.⁸ Another 6,000 resided in Sophiatown, Martindale, Newclare or Alexandra, private freehold or leasehold townships that had been developed on privately owned land in the early twentieth century.⁹ Thousands more lived as tenants on white-owned properties, occupying shanties, out-rooms or disused warehouses or workshops. These were the slumyards, exploited by rackrenters and slum landlords.¹⁰

A fundamental feature of early Johannesburg was that outside the compounds there was no strict pattern of racial segregation. Sophiatown and Martindale, for instance, in 1921 provided homes for 1,457 Africans and for 557 whites.¹¹ The Vrededorp-Malay Location and Doornfontein were also multi-racial communities. Early Johannesburg was thus characterized by tight control exercised over mineworkers and some other sections of the labour force, but also by the absence of such control over a large proportion of its African population. Johannesburg followed the pattern of early Kimberley, but it did not presage the later era of tight segregation and control.

Spatial patterns and control mechanisms in early Kimberley and Johannesburg were largely shaped by the original material base of the two towns, the mining economy. Cape Town and Durban, both older towns, developed from different foundations. In this early period merchant capital predominated in each centre, and their labour needs were rather different from that of the two mining towns.

In the late nineteenth century Cape Town still remained primarily a commercial centre, an administrative capital and a military headquarters. Industrial production was minimal; factories were few in number and small in size. Cape Town's labour market had a highly seasonal and casual character. The town's economy centred very much around the docks; and the labour requirements of the docks tended to fluctuate significantly from day to day. Similarly, the labour needs of the fishing and building industries varied from season to season.¹² At the turn of the century there was a growing demand for unskilled labour in Cape Town. Thousands of Africans came to the town, especially after 1898, so that by 1901 about

8. Kagan, 'African Settlements', pp. 91-110.

9. Kagan, 'African Settlements', pp. 25-43.

10. Kagan, 'African Settlements', p. 43; Eddie Koch, ' "Without visible means of subsistence": slumyard culture in Johannesburg, 1918-1940', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* (Johannesburg, 1983), pp. 153-54.

11. Andre Proctor, 'Class struggle, segregation and the city: a history of Sophiatown 1905-40', in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Labour Townships and Protest* (Johannesburg, 1979), p. 58.

12. Vivian Bickford-Smith, 'Cape Town on the eve of the mineral revolution (c.1985)', (unpublished paper, Cape Town, 1985), pp. 1-13.

10,000 Africans lived there.¹³ Although the predominantly white bourgeoisie tended to live an exclusive suburban existence, rigid patterns of racial residential segregation had not been historically entrenched in Cape Town. Central Cape Town, for instance, had long been racially integrated. District Six, later to become a 'coloured' area, housed a large proportion of whites at the turn of the century.

The beginnings of residential segregation in Cape Town coincided with the arrival of large numbers of Africans. In 1890 the Dock Native Location was opened, providing compound-type accommodation for African dockworkers.¹⁴ It was designed, in Bickford-Smith's words, 'to protect the worker from other social evils of the town, to protect the town from the workers'.¹⁵ A stronger imperative towards segregation came in the first years of the twentieth century, and it arose, not from the dictates of capital but from the social concerns of middle-class residents.

In 1901 Cape Town was hit by the bubonic plague. The outbreak was immediately associated with the growing African presence in the town. In 1899 delegations of white residents from Woodstock, Mowbray, Rondebosch, Claremont and Maitland called for the establishment of an African location. The Cape Town Council soon decided that a location should be built so that Africans could be housed under controlled and sanitary conditions. The outcome was the rapid construction of Ndabeni location, which was soon to accommodate about 7,000 Africans. Ndabeni, unlike the Kimberley and Witwatersrand mining compounds, was not the creation of capital. Indeed, some employers were critical of Ndabeni as they found it inconvenient to have their workers living out of town. Ndabeni was more the product of social pressure, exerted through the rhetoric of disease and sanitation.¹⁶ As we shall increasingly see, urban segregation was often a source of contradiction, and it was not always functional to capital.

There were some similarities between Cape Town and Durban before 1923. Merchant capital predominated in both towns, although there was some industrial growth in Durban towards the end of and after World War One. The economies of both towns centred around the docks, and in each case the labour force was largely casual and seasonal. The great difference was Durban's relative proximity to African reserves, making for a large proportion of male migrants among the African labour force.

13. Vivian Bickford-Smith, 'The economic and demographic growth of Cape Town, 1880-1910, (unpublished paper, Cape Town, 1985), pp. 16-17.

14. John Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (London, 1981), p. 45.

15. Vivian Bickford-Smith, 'Black labour at the docks at the beginning of the twentieth century', *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 2 (1980), p. 95.

16. Christopher Saunders, 'The creation of Ndabeni: urban segregation and African resistance in Cape Town', *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 1 (1979), pp. 172-76; M. W. Swanson, 'The sanitation syndrome: bubonic plague and urban native policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909', *Journal of African History*, 18 (1977), pp. 392-93, 409.

If a segregationist impulse was to be found in early Durban, it was directed more against Indians than Africans. As Swanson has shown, in the late nineteenth century Indians competed with whites for 'space, place, trade'. The local state's response was patterned on a threefold approach: 'residential segregation, political exclusion, and commercial suppression'.¹⁷ The first failed to materialize as a scheme for an Indian location fell through. The third objective was more successfully attained, through the 1897 Licensing Act which gave municipalities arbitrary powers to issue or withhold trading licenses.

The local state in Durban was more concerned about controlling than segregating its African population. By its very nature the town's casual, or 'togt', labour force possessed a great deal of freedom and mobility. Regulations requiring 'togt' workers to register were first introduced in 1874. These were tightened in 1903, doubling the monthly registration fee to five shillings and compelling 'togt' workers to live in municipal or private compounds.¹⁸ By 1921 about 13,500 African workers (out of Durban's total African population of about 37,500) lived in such accommodation. Another 9,000 domestic workers, predominantly male, lived on their employers' premises, while about 15,000 Africans were without any formal accommodation.¹⁹ In 1904 the Natal Parliament had passed a Native Locations Act, enabling municipalities to establish segregated locations. But Durban did not follow the example of Cape Town in constructing such a location, except to build, rather belatedly in 1915–16, Baumannville, a small location comprising a mere 120 'cottages' for family occupation.

More significant in Durban's case was the development of a local bureaucratic structure of control. The key to this structure was the revenue derived from the municipal monopoly of the manufacture and sale of sorghum beer for African consumption. Such were the profits from this monopoly that the local state was able to finance the creation in 1916 of its own Native Administration Department, which would exercise increasing control over Durban's African population.

Of the four towns that we have examined, Kimberley may have had the tightest form of labour control, in the shape of the closed compounds, but Durban had the most developed form of administrative control over its African population. Indeed, many of the practices that were evolving in Durban were to be borrowed by other municipalities or incorporated in subsequent parliamentary legislation. If one is seeking to discover the

17. Maynard W. Swanson, "'The Asiatic Menace': creating segregation in Durban, 1870–1900' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16 (1983), pp. 401–17.

18. D. Hemson, 'Class consciousness and migrant workers: dock workers of Durban' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1979), pp. 24–25, 95–96.

19. Paul La Hausse, 'The struggle for the city: alcohol, the Ematsheni and popular culture in Durban, 1902–1936' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), pp. 119, 320.

origins of urban apartheid practice, Durban probably provides the likeliest source.

The particularity of the practices and structures that evolved in Durban reflected the relatively high degree of municipal autonomy that existed during this early phase. Intervention by the colonial state, or later by the central or provincial state, was minimal. Local administrative systems and housing policies therefore tended to be diverse, and were to a large extent shaped by the nature of the local economy. In Kimberley and Johannesburg housing policy, with its emphasis on the compound system, was partly determined by mining capital. In the ports of Cape Town and Durban the pools of seasonal and casual labour were less easily controllable, although in both towns attempts at control were made through the establishment of compound-type accommodation. But in all four towns, apart from the compounds housing workers at the mines, docks, factories and commercial businesses, there was no developed policy or system for housing the urban black population. The segregated townships, which were to become such a prominent feature of the South African landscape later in the twentieth century, were few in number during this early phase. One peculiar feature of the few municipal townships that had been built was their siting. As the 1914 Tuberculosis Commission noted, sites were often ill-chosen, 'generally . . . not far from the town sanitary tip, the refuse dump, and slaughter poles . . .'²⁰ Kliptown, Western Native Township and Eastern Native Township in Johannesburg were just three examples of townships located next to sewage farms.²¹

Generally, though, these few townships accommodated only a small proportion of Africans who lived outside the compounds. Many lived in private leasehold or freehold townships; others rented backyard quarters in central areas of the town. The degree of control exercised over their lives by the local state was small compared with the tight restrictions that were to come later. The relative absence of control (outside the compounds) in this early phase partly reflected the limited size of the urban African population at the time. However, from the 1920s the picture was to change significantly.

The second phase

Our second phase covers three key decades: the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. It is marked by certain crucial developments and trends. First, there was a significant shift in the nature of the South African economy, with the growth of a manufacturing sector. Second, the deterioration in the economies of the African reserves gained pace. Third, and closely connected with

20. T. R. H. Davenport, 'The beginnings of urban segregation in South Africa: the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and its background' (Grahamstown, Institute of Social and Economic Research Occasional Paper, 1971), p. 7.

21. Kagan, 'African Settlement', pp. 178-79.

these trends, there was a dramatic growth in the size of the urban African population. And fourth, the central state increasingly intervened in the sphere of urban policy and practice. All of these developments were to have significant implications for urban Africans.

A variety of factors encouraged the growth of manufacturing industry in these three decades: the stimulus of two world wars, state protectionist policies, the diversification of mining capital, and an influx of foreign capital. Between 1921 and 1959–60 there was a doubling of secondary industry's relative contribution to the gross national product. Employment in the manufacturing sector as a whole grew at an average rate of 5.3 per cent per annum between 1925 and 1939, and at a rate of 6.0 per cent for Africans. Accompanying this growth was a shift in the labour process. Mechanization increased the number of semi-skilled operative jobs, many of which were filled by African workers. This trend not only altered the old division between skilled white and unskilled African workers, but also affected local and central state policies for administering and controlling urban Africans.²²

Contemporary observers gained a strong impression that the economies of the African reserves were deteriorating drastically. The report of the 1930–32 Native Economic Commission, for instance, drew attention to the 'under-development of the Reserves'.²³ A rather less drastic picture has been painted by Simkins, who argues that between 1918 and 1954 the reserves went through a period of 'fragile productivity maintenance'. However, he goes on to say, this was not a case of the reserve economies being buoyant, but rather a case of an unstable equilibrium being made possible by massive outmigration which limited overcrowding in the reserves.²⁴

There is evidence of considerable outmigration from the reserves to urban areas. Between 1936 and 1946 the total population of the reserves increased annually by only 0.9 per cent, the small increase suggesting substantial outmigration.²⁵ Between 1921 and 1951 the total size of the African urban population rose from 587,200 to 2,329,000; and during the same period the percentage of urbanized Africans out of the total African population almost doubled from 14 per cent to 27.9 per cent.²⁶ At the same time the character of the urban African population was changing. The proportion of urban Africans living under family circumstances in 1936 is estimated to have been about 30 per cent, rising to 38 per cent by 1946.²⁷

22. D. C. Hindson, 'The pass system and the formation of an urban African proletariat in South Africa: a critique of the cheap labour-power thesis' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1983), pp. 67–68, 125–28.

23. *Report of the Native Economic Commission, 1930–1932*, UG 22, (1932), part III, p. 80.

24. C. Simkins, 'Agricultural production in the African Reserves of South Africa, 1918–1969', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 7 (1981), p. 270.

25. Hindson, 'Pass system', pp. 129–30.

26. P. Maylam, 'Strategies of control and evasion: African urban history in South Africa c.1900–1950' (unpublished paper, Durban, 1981), p. 2.

27. Charles Simkins, *Four Essays on the Past, Present and Possible Future of the Distribution of the Black Population of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1983), p. 22.

The rapid growth of African urbanization in these three decades drew greater state intervention in the whole urbanization process. However, throughout this second phase there was considerable uncertainty and debate among policy-makers, state ideologists and other opinion-formers as to what form this intervention should take. There were two poles of thinking. At one extreme was the view put forward by the Stallard (Transvaal Local Government) Commission of 1922 that the right of Africans to be in urban areas rested solely on their willingness 'to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man'.²⁸ At the other pole was the liberal view that the stabilization of the urban African population should be encouraged in preference to the continuation of the migrant labour system.

The dominant view of the time among state ideologists and policy-makers was one that fell between these two poles. This compromise, reflected in the reports of various government commissions that sat in the 1930s and 1940s, recognized the impracticability, and to some extent the immorality, of Stallardism, but also stopped short of recommending wholesale stabilization. This position was adopted in the 1932 Native Economic Commission Report. The Commission argued that it was 'undesirable to encourage the urbanization of the Native population', but went on to say:

It is perfectly clear that a considerable number of Natives have become permanent town dwellers. No good purpose is served by disregarding this fact, or by acting on the assumption that it is not a fact. In the interest of the efficiency of urban industries it is better to have a fixed urban Native population to the extent to which such population is necessary than the present casual drifting population.²⁹

This view was endorsed by the 1935 Young-Barrett Committee, and by the 1948 Fagan (Native Laws) Commission. The latter concluded that 'the policy should be one of facilitating and encouraging the stabilization of labour; but on the other hand, migratory labour cannot be prohibited by law or terminated by administrative action'.³⁰

Thus the dominant official view was pragmatic: the reality of stabilization had to be recognized, but migrancy would necessarily have to continue. This view reflected not only the realities of the urbanization process, but also the particular labour needs of different capitalist sectors. Secondary industry demanded a more skilled, and therefore more stabilized, labour force, while the mining sector continued its dependence on migrant labour.

From 1923 the central state began to intervene more in the business of regulating and controlling the urban African population. But it did so in

28. Rodney Davenport, 'African Townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) Legislation through the Years', *African Affairs*, 68 (1969), p. 95.

29. *Report of the Native Economic Commission, 1930-1932*, UG 22, (1932), part III, p. 72.

30. *Report of the Native Laws Commission, 1946-1948*, UG 28, (1948), p. 50.

the context of ideological uncertainty and debate (just described), a change in the supply/demand pattern in the labour market, and a continuing variety of local practices from one urban area to another. The state's growing intervention in the urban sphere in the three decades after 1923 laid the foundation for the era of 'high apartheid' and rigid labour control that was to follow from the 1950s. A legislative framework was established; and, although local state autonomy was not overridden, the trend was towards that greater central state control which was to become more entrenched in the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act represented the first major intervention by the central state in the business of managing the urban African labour force and ensuring its reproduction. The Act empowered municipalities to establish segregated locations for Africans, to implement a rudimentary system of influx control, and to set up advisory boards, bodies which would contain African elected representatives and which would discuss local issues affecting Africans, but without any power to change policy. The Act also required municipalities to institute native revenue accounts, into which would be paid all income derived from beer-hall sales, rents, fines and fees levied from Africans.³¹

The short-term significance of the 1923 Act was limited. Most of its provisions were not obligatory, and few municipalities wished to implement the Act. Segregation was gradually introduced as certain sections of municipal areas were proclaimed as 'white', compelling all non-exempted Africans and those not living on their employers' premises to move into a municipal location or hostel. Johannesburg and Kimberley began proclaiming segregated areas in 1924, Cape Town in 1926, and Durban in the early 1930s.³² Whole-sale segregation was impossible because the proclamation of segregated areas could only be enforced if alternative accommodation was available for those Africans being forced out of their existing quarters. The availability of such accommodation was severely limited as municipalities were unwilling to make substantial investments in the construction of townships. Other provisions of the Act also had a minimal short-term impact. Many municipalities did not establish advisory boards while others did so belatedly. And few local authorities used the power granted to them to institute influx controls; by 1937 only eleven towns had systematically implemented such controls.³³

The significance of the 1923 Act lies more in its broader, long-term implications. It represented the first major intervention by the central state in

31. Davenport, 'African Townsmen?' p. 99.

32. Kagan, 'African Settlements', p. 182; Mabin, 'Kimberley, 1880-1920', p. 21; Christopher Saunders, 'From Ndabeni to Langa', *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 1 (1979), p. 205; Paul Maylam, 'Shackled by the contradictions: the municipal response to African urbanization in Durban, 1920-1950', *African Urban Studies*, 14 (1982), p. 11.

33. Michael Savage, 'The imposition of pass laws on the African population in South Africa 1916-1984', *African Affairs*, 85 (1986), p. 194.

the process of African urbanization. It also provided a framework and foundation upon which subsequent legislation and policy were to be built. The key elements of later, more refined, urban apartheid practice were to be found in the 1923 Act in embryonic form. These included the principle of segregation and the ensuing practice of relocation that arose out of that principle; influx control mechanisms; a self-financing system which shifted as far as possible the burden of reproduction costs on to urban Africans themselves; and an institution for coopting potential collaborators in the shape of the advisory board. During the following decades all of these mechanisms were to be tightened and refined, and the process of central state encroachment on municipal autonomy was to gain ground.

The tightening of control and the process of centralisation were both taken further in the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act. The major concern of this measure was influx control. It provided for the removal to rural areas of Africans surplus to labour requirements in any particular urban area; it made it more difficult for African women to enter an urban area and for work-seekers to remain in an urban area. The Act increased the influx control and expulsion powers of local authorities, but it also increased the powers of the Minister of Native Affairs, who could now compel a local authority to implement any section of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act or have the section implemented by his own department.³⁴

The 1944 Housing Amendment Act set up the National Housing and Planning Commission. This body was to have powers to intervene in local housing policy, further weakening municipal autonomy.³⁵ And the following year an act was passed to consolidate legislation governing urban Africans. Influx control mechanisms were strengthened, and the central state's powers of intervention were further enhanced. So, by the time that the National Party came to power in 1948, a whole apparatus for regulating and controlling the movement and daily lives of urban Africans had already been constructed. However, while the machinery had been created, it was not yet well-oiled or functioning as efficiently as it was designed to. It was in our next phase that this optimal efficiency was to come closer to being achieved.

The third phase

During the third phase, from the early 1950s until the late 1970s, there was an intensification of the patterns that had evolved in the second phase. In particular more and more power to control the lives of urban Africans came

34. Hindson, 'Pass system', pp. 95–98; Davenport, 'African townsmen?', pp. 102–103.

35. Robin Bloch and Peter Wilkinson, 'Urban control and popular struggle: a survey of state urban policy 1920–1970', *Africa Perspective*, 20 (1982), p. 21.

to be vested in the central state and its agencies, further weakening municipal autonomy in this sphere. At the same time the actual controls themselves that were imposed on urban Africans came to be tightened even further.

The 1948 election victory of the National Party did not represent such a major turning-point in South African history as it is often made out. Certainly there were continuities in policy and practice predating 1948. However, it is also true that under the new Nationalist government there were shifts of emphasis and changes of approach in the whole sphere of 'native policy'. One important shift, at the level of policy and ideology, was away from the Fagan Commission's view that the growing permanence of the urban African population had to be officially recognized, and back to the old Stallardist notion that Africans could only be temporary sojourners in urban areas outside the bantustans. This was the view put forward by the 1947 report of the Sauer Committee, which set out National Party policy on the 'colour question'.³⁶

Accompanying this shift of emphasis was a greater centralization of power. From the 1950s the central state increasingly took upon itself the task of regulating the presence of Africans in urban areas in accordance with government policy. Local authorities found their autonomy undermined as the Department of Native Affairs intervened more and more. Many local authorities were compliant, others were less so, leading to conflicts between the central state and local state. Such a dispute arose in the 1950s between the Johannesburg City Council and the government over the latter's plan to uproot and relocate long-established African communities in the western areas of the city (Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare). The United Party-dominated City Council opposed both the planned removals and the manner of their implementation, objecting to the way in which Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs, bulldozed aside municipal opposition in carrying through the operation.³⁷

Centralization of state power was further advanced with the establishment of Administration Boards in 1972. The country was divided into twenty-two regions, in each of which an Administration Board was set up. The Boards were to take on most of the functions previously exercised by municipalities in the administration of urban Africans. The Boards became responsible for housing, influx control, and the regulation of African labour. They were to derive revenue from rents, levies on employers, and profits from liquor sales (the Boards took over municipal

36. Peter Wilkinson, 'Providing "adequate shelter": the South African state and the "resolution" of the African urban housing crisis, 1948-1954', in D. C. Hindson (ed.), *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, vol. 3 (Johannesburg, 1983), pp. 69-70.

37. Gordon H. Pirie and Deborah M. Hart, 'The transformation of Johannesburg's black western areas', *Journal of Urban History*, 11 (1985), pp. 397-400.

liquor monopolies); and they were expected to finance all their operations out of this revenue.³⁸

At the same time as this process of centralization was occurring, controls over the presence of Africans in urban areas were steadily being tightened in accordance with the Sauer recommendations. Stricter influx control was to be the chief mechanism for achieving this. A key measure was the 1952 Native Laws Amendment Act. This restricted the right of permanent urban residence to Africans who had either been born in the particular urban area and had lived there continuously since birth, or had resided legally in the area for fifteen years, or had worked for the same employer for ten years. The Act also made stronger provision for the expulsion from urban areas of Africans who were surplus to labour requirements. Even tougher restrictions upon entry into urban areas and more severe expulsion powers were introduced in 1964.³⁹

Implementation of these measures was uncompromising. For instance, prosecutions under the pass laws increased from a total of about 280,200 in 1951 to about 631,300 in 1970. And the overall demographic impact of tighter influx control was significant. From the early 1950s, although the size of the urban African population continued to grow, the *rate* of growth declined. At the same time the proportion of Africans living in the bantustans was increasing.⁴⁰ Both of these demographic trends were largely the product of tighter influx control and the state's removals and resettlement programme.

Hindson has argued that influx control after 1952 was not simply designed to enforce temporary migration. It also aimed to stabilise a section of the urban African proletariat, thereby reinforcing the differentiation between migrants and those with more permanent (Section 10) urban rights. This stabilisation went hand-in-hand with another dimension of the state's attempt to tighten control over urban Africans, its housing policy.

The short-term aims of state housing policy in urban areas in the 1950s have been outlined by Morris: 'to remove black freehold rights in these areas, segregate the races, control movement and reduce the economic burden of blacks on the state and on local authorities'.⁴¹ The principle of residential segregation was entrenched and rigidified in the 1950 Group Areas Act, which made compulsory what the 1923 Urban Areas Act had recommended. The principle was put into practice with the construction of vast African townships. According to the apartheid 'ideal' these townships were to be sited as far as possible from white residential areas, but

38. Simon Bekker and Richard Humphries, *From Control to Confusion: the changing role of Administration Boards in South Africa 1971-1983* (Pietermaritzburg, 1985), pp. 7-20.

39. Savage, 'Pass Laws', pp. 194-95; Doug Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat* (Johannesburg, 1987), pp. 61, 68-69.

40. Savage, 'Pass Laws', pp. 190-91.

41. Pauline Morris, *A History of Black Housing in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1981), p. 69.

reasonably close to industrial areas. Spatial separation was to be reinforced by buffer zones and by natural or other barriers. And townships were to be designed and sited in such a way that they could be cordoned off in the event of riot or rebellion, and the resistance suppressed in open streets.⁴²

In the 1950s and 1960s construction of such townships in many urban areas proceeded on a considerable scale. From the late 1960s the provision of housing in urban areas outside the bantustans was slowed down as the state looked to ways of confining as many Africans as possible within the bantustans, without upsetting the labour supply. Two main strategies were devised. In cases where industrial centres were close to bantustans, townships would be relocated in the bantustans and the workers would commute daily to their workplaces. The other strategy was to try to induce industries themselves to relocate to border areas close to bantustans.⁴³ These strategies were to represent a last attempt to implement the ultimate aim of Stallard and later apartheid planners, namely to allow Africans into urban areas outside the bantustans only for the purpose of selling their labour.

Overwhelmed by contradictions and crises the state has since been forced to abandon this objective. The contradictions inherent in the whole urban system of control gradually became more unmanageable from the early 1970s. And other developing crises further undermined the apparatus of urban apartheid. The continuing collapse of the bantustan economies seriously weakened the base of the migrant labour system. Apartheid barriers like job reservation and influx control aggravated the growing shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labour in urban areas. And, most significant of all, black workers and urban black communities in the 1970s mobilized and organized themselves with greater vigour and militancy than ever before. The 1973 strikes and the 1976 uprising were probably the key events leading to the eventual near collapse of the main pillars of urban apartheid in the 1980s. That collapse will be examined later. Before that it is necessary to analyse more closely those longstanding strains and contradictions that prevented the system, as idealized by Stallard and Sauer, from ever becoming fully workable.

Contradictions and crises in urban apartheid

The central contradiction in the whole system of segregating and controlling urban Africans arose out of the unattainable objective of trying to secure the labour-power of Africans while minimizing their presence as people. This objective was derived from the interests of two constituencies: capital's

42. Western, *Outcast Cape Town*, pp. 74–5.

43. Hindson, *Pass Controls*, p. 71.

need for labour, and the perceived need of most whites for protection against the supposed dangers to their health and security arising from the urban African presence. The effort to realize this objective entailed certain basic policies. One was to channel and allocate labour according to demand and thus limit the urban African presence according to labour needs. Another was to ensure the reproduction of labour under controlled conditions at minimal cost to both capital and the central and local state.

Implementation of these policies was to be problematic. Both the quantity and quality of labour demanded by different capitalist sectors could change over time, both in the short term and the long term, complicating the task of channelling labour. Moreover the measures and mechanisms of channelling labour were often ignored or defied by the people over whom control was being sought. Nor could these control measures do anything to stall the process of African rural impoverishment which was a significant factor in determining the movement of people to urban areas.

As the size of the permanent African urban proletariat grew, so did the cost of reproducing that proletariat become more of an issue. The provision of accommodation and transport facilities for urban Africans became a financial burden. The question of who should be primarily responsible for bearing this burden gave rise to struggles and conflicts between capital and labour, between the state and capital, between the local state and central state, and between Africans and the state. These divisions invariably arose out of efforts to shift the burden of reproduction costs from one to the other.

There is a great danger in slipping into a teleological and functionalist interpretation of the evolution of urban apartheid, tracing the gradual development of a monolithic, smoothly functioning system of control. (Indeed, the first half of this article, taken by itself, might seem to fall into that trap.) Although urban apartheid might have taken on a monolithic appearance in the 1960s, it was always riddled with contradictions. As Cooper has noted, '[t]he ambivalence and inconsistency that run through the history of urban policy reflect the complexity of the issue of social reproduction'.⁴⁴ It remains for us to examine these contradictions, inconsistencies and complexities.

They are to be found, for instance, in one of the key elements of urban apartheid, the pass system. As Hindson has shown, the main function of pass controls has changed over time. From the late nineteenth century they were used to maintain the migrant labour system; after the Second World War the controls were geared to the growth of an urban African proletariat; later the controls were aimed at limiting the size of the 'surplus' population in urban areas.⁴⁵ But at no time did the pass system have a single function;

44. Cooper, *Struggle for the City*, p. 8.

45. Hindson, *Pass Controls*, pp. 10-11.

its purposes were always varied. It has been designed primarily to control the movement of Africans into urban areas, and to channel workers into those sectors where their labour has been most needed. The system has also been used for curbing crime, identifying political activists, and assisting tax collection.⁴⁶

The pass system represented a major intervention in the labour market. It has been argued that the chief purpose of influx control was to perpetuate migrant labour. But Hindson shows that this is a misleading view: influx control was aimed at producing a system of 'differentiated labour-power', in that it simultaneously enforced temporary migration and promoted the stabilization of a permanent urban African proletariat.⁴⁷

Influx control was a key mechanism for trying to cope with that fundamental contradiction stated at the outset: the need to secure a suitable supply of labour while minimizing the presence of Africans in urban areas. It was a contradictory objective, calling for both the inclusion and exclusion of urban Africans.⁴⁸ And the functionality of the system was always limited. Although the apparatus of pass control was adapted from time to time in response to shifting demographic patterns or changing labour demand, it was often unable to cope with short-term or seasonal fluctuations in labour demand.

There was, though, a much more fundamental contradiction. The whole system of influx control came to be inherently unstable, particularly in its later phase. From the 1950s a vicious cycle developed. The increasing displacement of the 'surplus' urban population to the reserves/bantustans aggravated overcrowding and rural impoverishment in those rural areas. This in turn put pressure on people to defy influx control by moving to urban areas, where there was a better chance of earning a subsistence. As Greenberg has put it, 'control has made necessary more controls; the successful damming up of labour [sic] in the African rural areas has created inducements to burst the dams'.⁴⁹ Although influx control has limited the growth of the urban African population, especially during the 1960s, it has never been able to achieve an optimal limitation on growth. Africans constantly violated influx control by moving where they wanted to go. The vast number of pass law prosecutions is a measure of this. And the more the controls were violated, the more costly it became to maintain the machinery of control, in Greenberg's words again, 'the greatly expanded coterie of clerks, managers, magistrates, inspectors and police'.⁵⁰ The ultimate

46. Hindson, 'Pass Systems', p. 5.

47. Hindson, *Pass Controls*, p. 10.

48. Savage, 'Pass Laws', p. 181.

49. Stanley, B. Greenberg, 'The state in contemporary South Africa: the contradictions of control' (unpublished paper, 1984), p. 25. See also Savage, 'Pass Laws', p. 205; Hindson, *Pass Controls*, pp. 47-48.

50. Greenberg, 'Contradictions', p. 8.

tendency was for the whole system to break down, a tendency that will be examined in the final section of this article.

Attempting to control the movement of Africans has been one key element in the apartheid system. Another has been to exercise tight control over the daily lives of Africans in urban areas, while at the same time ensuring the reproduction of the labour force. Both of these objectives were to be served at minimal cost to the state and to capital. But again efforts to realize these aims were to give rise to further contradictions and conflicts. In particular the imperative towards control was often contradictory to the cost minimization imperative.

At the centre of this contradiction was the whole housing question. The maintenance of control was closely linked to the nature of the accommodation provided for urban Africans; and housing represented the major component of reproduction costs. Moreover the whole debate about whether to opt for a migrant or a stabilized labour force—the Stallard/Fagan/Sauer debate—had significant implications for African housing. As we have seen, migrancy and stabilization were not stark alternatives; a combination of the two produced a system of differentiated labour-power. And differentiated labour-power necessitated a policy of differentiated housing. Although it was never fully realized, the aim was to accommodate *migrants* in compounds or hostels, and *stabilized families* in formal townships.

Another contradiction hinged around the question of where accommodation for urban Africans should be sited. Many employers preferred to accommodate their workers close to the workplace in compounds. Workers were kept under tighter control; they were more immediately available; and eliminating the need for transport to the workplace reduced reproduction costs. In some cases, as we have seen, compounds were not just preferred by employers, but deemed to be an absolute necessity. This was the case at the Kimberley diamond mines and Rand gold mines. It was also to a lesser extent true for the Cape Town and Durban docks where short-term fluctuations in labour demand necessitated having the work-force living close at hand. However, compounds and hostels, which were often located in central areas of cities, seemed to pose problems of social and political control. Enclaves of single African males were anathema to segregationists who wanted as far as possible the African presence removed from central business and residential areas outside of working hours.

During the course of the last fifty years or so the imperative towards segregation and control has gradually come to weigh more heavily. It has led to the construction of more African townships. And, as the central residential and business districts have grown, so have these townships been removed further and further out to the urban peripheries. This peripheralization of African living space is well illustrated by the Cape Town example. As Cape Town expanded in the early twentieth century it began

to impinge on Ndabeni, sited on what came to be desirable industrial land. Langa, the new township built in the 1920s, was sited further out of town. By the 1950s white areas were again impinging on Langa, so a new township, Nyanga, was established even further out.⁵¹ In recent years with the building of Khayalitsha, the siting of living space has been made yet more remote. This has been the general trend in many of South Africa's urban centres. It has been taken to an extreme in some areas where commuter townships have been built, often in bantustans, as an effort to ensure not only the physical and social distance of Africans but also their political distance.

The issue of siting living space has thus given rise to one central contradiction, between the imperative towards segregation and control, on the one hand, and the necessity to minimize reproduction costs on the other. The peripheral siting of townships raised the cost of transporting Africans to their workplaces. And the building of a more formal style of housing to accommodate African families involved an investment of capital. This in turn gave rise to divisions within the state, and between the state and capital as to who should bear these costs.

Both the state and capital were concerned to minimize the cost of reproducing the African labour force. The main component of reproduction costs was accommodation, and the question constantly arose as to who should bear the main responsibility for housing costs. The central state, unwilling to burden taxpayers, tended to argue that the responsibility lay with the local state and with capital, both being the chief beneficiaries of cheap labour in any particular urban area. The local state, unwilling to burden ratepayers, claimed that capital benefited most from cheap African labour and should therefore either contribute directly to housing costs or give workers a high enough wage to enable them to pay economic rents. Capital, naturally unwilling to burden itself with these costs if at all possible, and the central state argued together that *all* ratepayers benefited from cheap African labour and that *they* should therefore carry the main burden of housing costs.⁵²

Who was to bear the burden in practice? During the 1920s the responsibility lay mainly with the local state. Both the 1920 Housing Act and the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act imposed on local authorities the obligation to provide housing. But generally municipalities failed to fulfil this obligation. In the case of Durban this was very much an evasion of responsibility, arising from the municipality's unwillingness to draw on the general borough fund for African housing. In the case of Johannesburg it was due more to the city's weak financial base. The city derived little direct financial advantage from the mining industry as mining land was not subject

51. Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje, *Langa* (Cape Town, 1963), pp. 5-6.

52. Maylam, 'Shackled by the Contradictions', pp. 6-7.

to rates. Taxes on the profits of mining and manufacturing went to the central state.⁵³

The upshot was that the African housing question became a source of tension between the central state and the municipalities from the 1920s. Municipalities like Johannesburg called for more effective influx control measures in order to reduce the size of the city's African population that required housing. While this was not immediately forthcoming, the municipalities remained reluctant to shoulder the responsibility for housing. An official government report gave an indication of the situation in the 1920s:

Demands for more adequate and effective government of the urban Native population and for an improvement in their conditions of residence led to the passing of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923. Under this Act the obligation was fairly placed on the municipalities to shoulder the financial burden of providing adequate housing and urban amenities for the Natives; but in the absence of any effective machinery to ensure the proper carrying out of the intentions of Parliament by the municipalities, progress was neither uniform nor spectacular.⁵⁴

This was certainly the case in Durban where the first township to be built under the 1923 Act, Lamont, was only opened in 1934.⁵⁵

While the central state was placing the burden of African housing on municipalities, capital was also evading the financial responsibility in this sphere. The low wages paid to African workers meant that municipalities could not charge economic rentals for their housing. As it was, in the 1920s and 1930s Africans in Johannesburg often paid between one-third and a half of their income in rent.⁵⁶ Municipal sub-economic housing schemes were in effect subsidizing capital. Municipalities resented having to play this role, as a Durban City Council memorandum of 1947 shows: 'As a housing subsidy is in fact a wage subsidy the Municipality is subsidizing Native Wages, and, by housing Native employees on a sub-economic basis, the Council is subsidizing in every case the employer of that labour'.⁵⁷

Municipal sub-economic housing schemes for a long time subsidized not only the wages of African workers, but also, in a sense, the wages of white building workers. Before the 1950s, according to the 'civilized labour'

53. Eddie Koch, 'The destruction of Marabi culture—urban segregation in Johannesburg, 1932–1938' (unpublished paper, University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 1984), pp. 187–89; A. W. Stadler, 'Birds in the cornfield: squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944–1947', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6 (1979), pp. 116–17.

54. Quoted in Koch, 'Marabi Culture', p. 187.

55. Lousie Torr, 'The social history of an urban African community: Lamont c.1930–1960' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1985), p. 44.

56. Koch, 'Marabi Culture', p. 189.

57. Durban Town Clerk's Files, Judicial Commission on Native Affairs in Durban, vol. I, Durban City Council's Memorandum, ch. 8, p. 13.

policy the use of cheaper African labour in building projects was prohibited. The employment of more expensive white builders in township construction raised costs by over 100 per cent.⁵⁸ Artificially high construction costs and the low rentals emanating from poor wages put the squeeze on municipalities which became increasingly unable to meet the growing demand for African housing.

By the late 1940s, as vast squatter settlements mushroomed around urban centres, the central state began to recognize the seriousness of the African housing crisis and the predicament of the municipalities. Accordingly it began to devise ways of reducing housing costs. In 1951 a Bill was passed permitting the use of African artisans in building townships. This was to contribute in the 1950s to a considerable reduction in the costs of constructing African housing.⁵⁹ It was also in the early 1950s that the site-and-service approach was officially adopted. Controlled and serviced self-help housing schemes for Africans reduced the financial burden while at the same time avoiding the dangers seemingly posed by the uncontrolled squatter settlements.⁶⁰ In the meantime, the National Building Research Institute, set up in 1946, had been trying to design new forms of standardized, low-cost, mass housing for low wage-earners, again with a view to minimizing costs without endangering control.⁶¹

It was also in the early 1950s that the state attempted to shift more of this cost burden on to capital. An earlier effort to do this had failed. The 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act had permitted municipalities to compel employers to accommodate their black workers.⁶² However, the implication of this would have been more centrally sited compounds and hostels, conflicting with the segregationist imperative. So the strategy subsequently developed in the early 1950s was not to compel employers to provide accommodation for black workers, but to make a direct financial contribution towards reproduction costs. This was the principle embodied in the 1952 Native Services Levy Act. This measure obliged employers in eighteen major urban areas to pay to the local authority 2s.6d. for every six days worked by an adult male African; employers of domestic workers and employers who accommodated their own workers were exempted. These contributions would be paid into local native revenue accounts and be used to finance housing and services.⁶³

58. See Koch, 'Marabi Culture', pp. 190-91; Saunders, 'Ndabeni to Langa', p. 211; Torr, 'Lamont', p. 114.

59. Bloch and Wilkinson, 'Urban Control', p. 25.

60. Wilkinson, 'Adequate Shelter', p. 78.

61. Bloch and Wilkinson, 'Urban Control', p. 26.

62. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 124-25.

63. Wilkinson, 'Adequate Shelter', pp. 79-80. In the early 1970s the Native Services Levy Act was superseded. From 1974 employers were compelled to pay a monthly contribution to help finance the administration boards. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 136-37. More recently the same principle of employer levies has come to be embodied in the emerging system of regional services councils.

In this examination of the long-standing struggle between the central state, local state and capital to shift the burden of reproduction costs on to each other, one important point has been obscured. That is that urban Africans themselves bore the major part of this cost burden. The crucial mechanism here was the self-financing system of native revenue accounts. Durban was a pioneer in this system, instituting a native revenue account in 1908. The system came to be formalized at a national level by the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act. Native revenue accounts were sub-accounts of general borough accounts. Accruing to them were rents paid by African tenants in municipal housing, revenue from municipal beer sales, and other fees paid by Africans. This money was to be spent on administration, the provision of services, and housing for Africans. Although native revenue accounts often derived a substantial income, it was never sufficient by itself to ensure the requisite provision of housing for Africans; hence the massive housing shortage that had developed by the late 1940s.

Given this weak financial base, along with the unwillingness of the central state, local state or capital to bear the cost burden, thousands of urban Africans were forced to devise their own forms of shelter. By the 1940s vast shack settlements had emerged around many of South Africa's urban areas.⁶⁴ Inherent in the growth of these settlements were further contradictions. On the one hand they relieved the central state, local state and capital of the considerable financial burden that would have been involved in providing more formal housing for shack-dwellers. On the other hand, the shack settlements were zones that largely fell beyond the control of the local state. The settlements, lacking basic water and sanitary services, were considered to be health hazards. And they were deemed to be havens for criminals and political activists. Although more research is required into the social history of squatter communities before we can obtain a clearer picture, there is little doubt that their existence seriously weakened local state control over urban Africans. The state itself was well aware of this; hence there followed the massive programme of urban removals and relocation that began in the 1950s.

As we have seen, the exercise of control over urban Africans involved costs, which the various parties wanting control were generally unwilling to bear. This was one of the major contradictions in the urban apartheid system. Moreover, control not only involved large financial costs; it also generated resistance, giving rise to further contradictions.

Urban struggles have many facets. As Cooper has put it,

Conflict over work discipline and housing, over what kinds of conduct would be legal or criminal, over what forms of social relations could

64. See, for instance, Stadler, 'Birds in the Cornfield', and Maylam, 'The "Black Belt": African squatters in Durban 1935-1950', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 17 (1983).

develop in workplace, urban residence, and rural village, and over the values and cultures that could develop inside urban space all shaped the city and further patterns of struggle.⁶⁵

This has certainly been true of twentieth century South African cities, where many such struggles have been played out. In some cases the city has simply been the arena in which struggles that were not specifically related to urban issues, have been waged. But in many instances the struggles have been in and *of* the city. They have been fought over issues connected to the reproductive sphere or arising out of the urban apartheid system.

The pass system has been one such issue giving rise to struggle. This struggle has generally taken two forms: first, defiance of the pass laws, and, second, campaigns for the removal of the laws. As we have already seen, defiance of the laws occurred on a massive scale. Between 1916 and 1984 nearly eighteen million Africans were arrested or prosecuted under the pass laws and influx control regulations.⁶⁶ Millions more must have evaded arrest.

Since 1910 there have been several organized campaigns against pass controls. In the 1910s there was a campaign in the Free State directed against the issuing of passes to women. In 1919 there was an anti-pass agitation on the Rand. In December 1930 hundreds of Africans in Durban burnt their passes. There were attempts to organize anti-pass campaigns in 1944 and 1946. The pass system was one of the targets of the 1952 defiance campaign. In the mid-1950s there was a massive nationwide protest against passes for women. And in 1960 both the ANC and PAC launched large-scale anti-pass campaigns.

Other forms of resistance have centred around the housing question. Urban removals and relocation in particular provoked resistance. When Africans were ordered to move from their existing homes in townships or shack settlements to remote, bleak townships, they often resisted the order. Hundreds of Africans in Cape Town, for instance, refused to move from Ndabeni to Langa in the late 1920s and 1930s until eventually forced to.⁶⁷ Squatting in a shack settlement could itself be a form of resistance. Certainly shack settlements arose partly out of a housing shortage, but there is evidence to show that shack-dwellers often preferred to live in areas which were largely free of strict state control. Stadler has shown how squatter movements in Johannesburg in the 1940s repeatedly defied or circumvented the local state's attempts to remove them.⁶⁸

Transport, another element in the reproductive sphere, was also a site of urban struggle. As Pirie has observed, '[o]n a material plane, transport was

65. Cooper, *Struggle for the city*, p. 44.

66. Savage, 'Pass Laws', p. 181.

67. Saunders, 'Ndabeni to Langa', pp. 214-19.

68. Stadler, 'Birds in the Cornfield'.

an instrument of marginalization and domination via its underwriting residential segregation, and via the time and financial sacrifices it imposed'. As an instrument of domination it also became a focus of resistance: 'Covert resistance to transport inadequacies featured fare evasion and disregard for travel rules. Boycott of bus services was considerably more spectacular and threatening'.⁶⁹ Of the latter, perhaps the best documented examples are the bus boycotts at Alexandra and Evaton in the 1940s and 1950s.⁷⁰

State urban policy and practice has thus been riddled with contradictions and inconsistencies. At the root of these was one fundamental contradiction: the attempt to attain the unattainable, the securing of labour-power with the minimal presence of people. Out of this arose further contradictions, divisions and struggles. Urban apartheid became an issue around which various contestants, the central state, local state, capital and labour, all sought to further or protect their particular interests. In the 1960s, when the urban apartheid system reached the peak of its functionality, many of the contradictions and conflicts were submerged or contained. From the 1970s, however, the system became increasingly dysfunctional. In the 1980s it has shown signs of breaking down.

Epilogue: the breakdown of urban apartheid

During the course of the twentieth century the evolving system of urban apartheid came to rest on four main pillars: control over the movement of Africans into urban areas; the regulation and regimentation of the lives of urban Africans through such mechanisms as segregation, curfews, and controlled housing; the development of a self-financing system whereby Africans came to bear a large share of their own reproduction costs; and the cooptation of members of the urban African petty bourgeoisie through the creation of local institutions, such as advisory boards, community councils, and black local authorities, institutions that provided a thin veneer of participation and democracy. Although these pillars have never rested on firm foundations, there have been phases when they have looked very solid. However, in the last seven or eight years more and more cracks have begun to appear and there are signs that the pillars, and the whole urban apartheid edifice, are crumbling.

The formal operation of influx control, as exercised through the pass laws, was abandoned by legislative enactment in 1986. This did not mean that all control over the movement of Africans into urban areas was removed, but it

69. G. H. Pirie, 'Johannesburg transport 1905-1945: African capitulation and resistance', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12 (1986), p. 51.

70. See A. W. Stadler, 'A long way to walk: bus boycotts in Alexandra 1940-1945', in P. Bonner (ed.), *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, vol. 2 (Johannesburg, 1981), pp. 228-57; and Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg, 1983), pp. 153-82.

did reflect a shift in state urbanization policy. This shift had begun in the late 1970s with the report of the Riekert Commission. This report represented in part a return to the thinking of the Fagan Commission of the late 1940s. The Riekert report departed from rigid Verwoerdian ideology by recognizing the existence of a permanent urban African proletariat. This permanent proletariat would constitute a class of 'urban insiders' who would be given preferential access to employment and housing. At the same time stricter control would be exercised over the 'outsiders', those without permanent urban rights.

The pass laws survived the Riekert report. But during the early 1980s, there was growing pressure even for the abolition of the pass system. This pressure came from sections of capital and from organizations like the Urban Foundation. It was argued that the reality and inevitability of African urban migration had to be accepted and that the market mechanism should be left to determine the movement of labour.⁷¹ For its part the government probably believed that abolition of the pass laws may have served as a sop to international opinion. Furthermore the machinery of pass control was becoming increasingly costly to maintain during a time of fiscal constraint. So in 1986 the notorious pass was formally abolished, to be replaced by the single uniform identification document carried by members of other race groups. It would probably be a mistake to overemphasize the significance of this change, as regulation of the movement of Africans into urban areas would still be exercised in more indirect ways, through control related to employment and housing. However, the abolition of passes is an indication that state policy has failed in its ultimate objectives. It has been unable to construct that watertight dam to block the flow of 'surplus people' from impoverished rural areas to the cities. With the dams constantly bursting, state policy has now become concerned more with channelling the flow of people than halting it.

If influx control was one of the more brittle pillars of the urban apartheid edifice, the whole apparatus of segregation and control has been rather less so. The basic infrastructure of urban apartheid remains intact. Millions of Africans are still forced to live in segregated townships on the outskirts of towns and cities. And during the past few years of large-scale urban unrest one of the key strategic functions of these townships has proven to be largely effective. One objective in the planning of townships was to site them in such a way that unrest and rebellion could be contained within them. Another was to make them easily accessible to the police and troops. The fact that there has been a minimal spill-over of violence outside segregated black urban areas during the past four years suggests that these objectives have largely been realized.

71. See, for example, *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 April 1983, 31 October 1984, 6 November 1984, 6 December 1984.

There have, though, also been strong signs that the level of control over urban Africans is weakening. Whereas once control could be exercised administratively through municipal officials and, later Administration Board personnel, now control depends heavily on a military presence in the townships. And even that military control has at times and in places been tenuous. At the height of the township rebellion in 1985 and 1986 the state lost control of some black urban areas. Liberated zones were created, and local administrative power was taken over by street committees. Although state control has largely been regained, it has only been regained by force, and it seems unlikely that it can ever be regained by administrative means.

A further symptom of weakening state control is the massive growth of shack settlements around the major urban areas. As we have seen, housing represents a form of control in itself. In the 1940s shack settlements had mushroomed in South African cities. From the 1950s the state began to clear these uncontrolled living zones by moving their occupants into newly built townships. In the 1980s, there is a return again to the situation of the 1940s, although now it is on a much larger scale. It has been projected that by the year 2000 there could be almost three million black people living in shack settlements in and around greater Durban alone.⁷² The state has lost control of the black housing situation, and in losing that control another pillar in the urban apartheid edifice is crumbling.

The fiscal base of urban apartheid has also been weakening. Until the 1980s this had generally been strong. Revenue, accruing first to municipalities and then to Administration Boards, was derived from a number of sources: the profits from beer and liquor monopolies, rents, state subsidies and employer levies. The Administration Boards, when they were instituted in 1972, took over municipal native revenue accounts which at the time mostly carried healthy surpluses. And for most of the 1970s the Administration Boards themselves continued to record surpluses.⁷³

From the early 1980s, however, revenue from these sources has been declining. First, profits from beer monopolies began to drop drastically, as more and more Africans shifted away from sorghum beer consumption and bought liquor at commercial outlets. Then the government decided to privatize the township liquor trade. In 1983 some Administration Boards began to sell their own liquor outlets to black businessmen. Many Board officials much resented the government's new privatization policy because it weakened the Boards' financial position.⁷⁴ The second most important source of Administration Board revenue in the 1970s was the levy on employers, who, since 1974, had been required to pay a monthly contribution to the Boards to help finance the administration of influx control and

72. *Natal Mercury*, 26 September 1984.

73. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, p. 132.

74. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 37–38, 132–36.

other labour allocation functions. During the early 1980s surpluses from this contribution also declined.⁷⁵

Deficits from housing have also been rising. Expenditure on black housing increased in the 1970s, partly under the pressure of inflation, but also as a result of a government commitment to improve facilities after the 1976–77 urban unrest. African wages were not high enough for these increased costs to be passed on to residents.⁷⁶ More recently this component of the fiscal base has come under even further pressure in the shape of widespread rent boycotts. By August 1986 about 300,000 households countrywide were involved in the boycott, which was costing the state about R30 million a month.⁷⁷

The deteriorating fiscal base of African local government has come to have serious implications for another dimension of urban apartheid, the structures of cooptation and collaboration. Like some other elements of the urban apartheid system, these structures can be traced back to the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act. This act made provision for the establishment of Native Advisory Boards. Although municipalities were not compelled to implement this provision, the idea was that each township would have its own Advisory Board, comprising at least three township residents, elected or appointed, as members. Even where they were established, the Boards were largely powerless. The Board chair was always held by a white person; the Boards themselves were nothing more than advisory bodies (they could make recommendations to municipal councils, but the latter could, and often did, ignore those recommendations if they chose); moreover, the Boards tended to be dominated by members of the African petty bourgeoisie who used their position to further their own interests. In 1968 the government provided for the creation of Urban Bantu Councils. The only apparent difference between these and the Advisory Boards was the name. The Councils were equally powerless. And municipalities were not compelled to establish them; by 1977 only twenty-four Councils had been created.⁷⁸

Urban Bantu Councils were superseded by the 1977 Community Councils Act. Unlike their predecessor, the Community Councils were entrusted with some powers; the allocation of accommodation and trading sites, and the maintenance of essential services were the most important ones. But the position of the Community Councils was severely circumscribed. Their powers were subject to the will and decisions of the minister. There was an uncertain division of power between the Community Councils and the Administration Boards. The fiscal base of the Councils was weak, as employer levies and liquor profits still went to the Administration Boards.

75. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 136–39.

76. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 139–47.

77. *Weekly Mail*, 15–21 August 1986.

78. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 96–97.

And the Councils, which tended to be dominated by businessmen and traders pursuing their own interests, lacked any real popular legitimacy, especially in the larger urban areas where council election polls often fell below 10 per cent.⁷⁹

The 1982 Black Local Authorities Act, without abolishing Community Councils, provided for four categories of local authority to be established. Town councils in the larger centres, and village councils in the smaller centres were the two most important of these. Although the councils were entrusted with slightly enlarged powers under the 1982 Act, they were still subject to absolute ministerial authority. And they still suffered from a weak financial base and a lack of popular legitimacy.⁸⁰ These latter two problems tended to be mutually aggravating. The weak financial base forced the black local authorities to increase rents, which in turn fuelled popular hostility to the councils. In the past few years several black councillors have been murdered or have received death threats; and their homes have been attacked. In many areas the black local authorities system has completely collapsed in the face of popular resistance; in other areas the system only survives with the councillors being given police and military protection.

The black local authorities faced popular rejection because they have been widely perceived as an attempt by the state to force urban Africans to accept a form of sham democracy as a substitute for full participation in a genuine national democratic system. In some respects the black local authorities are the bantustan governments writ small. And they have increasingly come to perform some uncomfortable tasks on behalf of the state, such as removing illegal squatters from townships and evicting rent boycotters.

Local government in African urban areas has in recent years increasingly become a site of struggle. Community organizations have grown up all over the country to challenge a system based on puppet institutions and sham democracy. So strong has been this challenge that yet another pillar in the urban apartheid edifice has cracked and crumbled. The whole edifice had always been brittle, liable to break down under the strain of its own internal contradictions. When faced with widespread popular opposition and resistance, it began to buckle and collapse.

The breakdown of urban apartheid has in part reflected the wider failure of the whole apartheid system. The ultimate objective of the apartheid blue-print was to create politically and economically viable 'homelands', each characterized by a particular ethnic identity. The official hope was that, as the economies of the 'homelands' developed, more and more

79. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 99–107; Heather Hughes and Jeremy Grest, 'The local state', in *South African Review*, 1 (Johannesburg, 1983), pp. 123–29.

80. Bekker and Humphries, *Administration Boards*, pp. 110–15; Jeremy Grest and Heather Hughes, 'State strategy and popular response at the local level', *South African Review*, 2 (Johannesburg, 1984), pp. 52–55.

Africans would move from 'white' areas to the particular 'homeland' that was ethnically appropriate, thereby reversing the direction of African migration. In their own 'homeland' Africans would be able to exercise political rights, and in so doing they would lose any claim to the franchise in greater South Africa.

It is well known that the grand apartheid model has never worked in practice. The economies of the 'homelands' have become steadily more impoverished, let alone economically viable. Far from Africans moving voluntarily into the 'homelands', massive outmigration has occurred on an ever-increasing scale. This has put enormous pressure on the urban apartheid system and rendered many of its control mechanisms ineffective. African people have shown that they will move to those areas where they have a best chance of obtaining a subsistence, regardless of the measures restricting their freedom of movement. At the level of daily existence Africans have, on a huge scale, defied the apparatus set up to control their lives. At a wider political level they have organized themselves and engaged in concerted resistance to the apparatus of control. There can be little doubt that the township uprising of 1976 was a shattering blow to an urban apartheid system that was already weakened by its own contradictions. The township revolt that began in 1984 has further hastened the breakdown of urban apartheid.