

**South Africa's Resurgent Urban Social Movements
The Case of Johannesburg, 1984, 1994, 2004**

by

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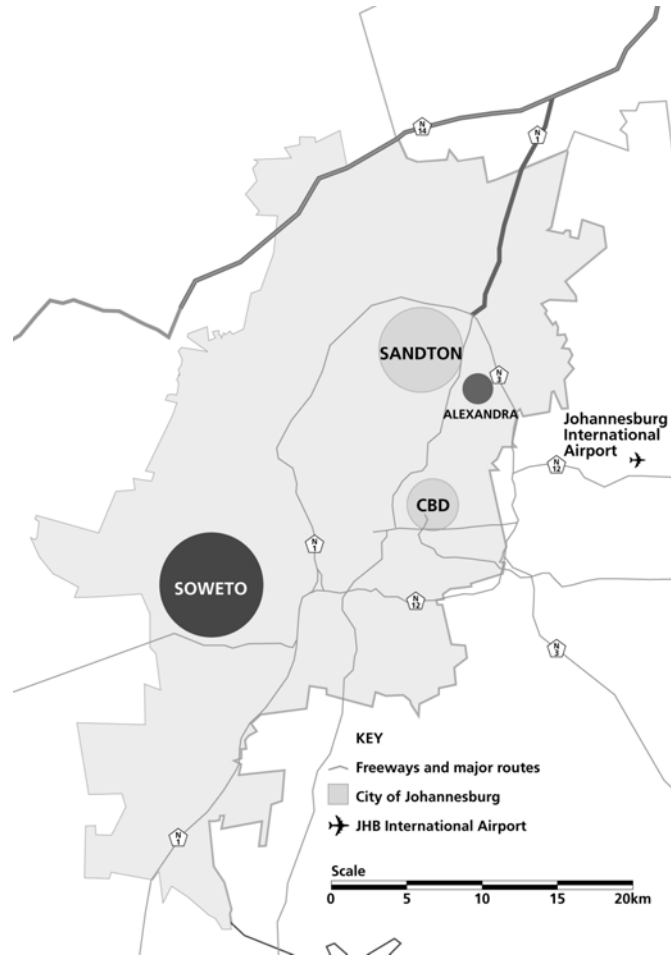
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1. Introduction

This year is important in part because we commemorate the liberation of South Africa from apartheid ten years ago. However, if we go back another ten years, to 1984, we may learn a great deal more about prospects for more thorough-going social justice, here in South Africa and globally. As is well known, the resurgence of anti-apartheid struggle after the dark years of the 1960s began here in Durban with the trade union upsurge of 1973, and simultaneously moved through black consciousness student/community organising and the Soweto youth revolt in 1976. The protest movement took an explicitly urban form through the example of civic associations in Port Elizabeth townships during the late 1970s, inspired in part by Saul Alinsky's 'people's power' model of ghetto organising, translated by Manila-based organic intellectuals and Jesuits.

But I will focus on experiences I am more familiar with: within South Africa's primary megalopolis, in the spirit of commemorating the 1984 Vaal civic battles that catalysed the formation of hundreds of similar social movements in Gauteng and across the country. As a site to consider civil society's recent development, greater Johannesburg is notable in many respects, not least because the specifically 'urban' and 'global' come together through challenges to municipal, national and even international socio-political processes.

South African civil society has long been deemed a highly contested terrain, not amenable to the traditional liberal definitions, such as: 'the non-market sphere of organisational life lying between the family and state.' From the early 1990s, attempts to add radical analysis via a reading of Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* – specifically, his concern that civil society, endowed with *status quo* features because of capitalist hegemony, acted as the outer trenches protecting the fortress of the bourgeois state -- led to the idea of 'working-class civil society' more consistent with the traditions of 'dual power' and 'organs of people's power' provided by the 1970s-80s anti-apartheid movements.² It is in this spirit that the following pages unfold, although obviously there have been many more attempts to understand South African civil society through existing literatures of social movements, civil society and the 'third sector,' as noted below. Invariably, South African politics and ideology overwhelm the typical institutional and functional considerations that are more common within international civil society debates.

One reason is that since even before coming to power in 1994, important factions within the country's ruling party -- the African National Congress (ANC) -- attempted to use civil society for its own ends or to demobilise grassroots organisations, and when that did not uniformly succeed, to demonise them as reactionary (as was common in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands during the early 1990s) or more recently as 'ultraleftists' or 'popcorn civics' (that pop up suddenly and immediately fall back). However, the most crucial basis for the politicisation of civil society in Johannesburg was the late 1990s decision by city managers to welcome corporate globalisation and all that it entails, after several difficult years in which central government in Pretoria had subjected the economy to trade and financial liberalisation. Civil society critics allege that because more privileges were given to investors and wealthy residents as a function of

² Gramsci, A. (1971 edn), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London, Lawrence and Wishart. In addition to academic discussions footnoted below, see especially the early 1990s civil society debates between organic intellectual activists in *Mayibuye* and *The African Communist*, reviewed in Mayekiso, M. (1996), *Township Politics: Civic Struggles for a New South Africa*, New York, Monthly Review Press.

the desire to be a world-class city, the material grievances of low-income people were not only mainly ignored, but their organisations were actively demobilised and then repressed.

The context is worth dwelling upon, even briefly. Our focus is on uneven access to municipal services, a problem that has, recently, generated enormous ferment amongst the citizenry (Section 2). Then, after an international and local literature review (Section 3), the story of Johannesburg's resurgent civil society must be told dating from the upsurge of urban social movement mobilisation in the mid-1980s (Section 4).

Following a period of mid-1990s civic movement decay, the resurgence of Johannesburg residents' organisations in the late 1990s was correlated to global pressures on city finances and policies, especially in relation to the distribution and regulation of housing, water and electricity. The city's 'Igoli 2002' strategy caused massive conflict with trade unions and a new generation of community groups that came to be federated in the Anti-Privatisation Forum. The single most spectacular event that reflected the contemporary tensions between Johannesburg's world-city aspirations and local civil society activists was the August 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. Because of split loyalties between important civil society groups, including nationally-headquartered trade unions and NonGovernmental Organisations, the story is complex, but nevertheless crucial to evaluating how Johannesburg municipality might fare when seeking not only future events of such global stature, but also the desired status of 'world city' (Section 5).

So too are the political implications of the ruling party's increasing distance from its base. This distance portends problems in maintaining hegemony for many years to come, and helps explain the virulent reaction by government officials to the resurgent civil society activism – a phenomenon which is probably best conceived as being for the 'globalisation of people', and against 'the globalisation of capital' (Section 6).

2. Johannesburg context

Municipal services for local/global consumption

Understanding the local implications of global processes is a prerequisite to exploring the resurgence of civil society in Johannesburg, so is worth a review with that specific aim in mind. Johannesburg is the largest metropolis in South Africa, and responsible for producing 16% of the country's economy.³ The immediate Johannesburg metro area (not including the Vaal, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni or the West Rand) has a population of 3.2 million people, according to the October 2001 census,⁴ of whom 72% are black 'Africans', 6.5% 'coloured' people, 3.7% 'Asians' and 17% 'white' people.⁵ Given the uneven development of Johannesburg, inequality and poverty are explicitly reflected in infrastructure and related services, as explored in more depth below. The municipality offers this denial: 'only 16% of household receiving services below the

³ For background on contemporary processes, see Beaugard, R. L. Bremner, X. Mangcu and R. Tomlinson (Eds) (2003), *Emerging Johannesburg*, New York, Routledge. For details on the debate over water privatisation in Johannesburg, see Coalition Against Water Privatisation in South Africa, Anti-Privatisation Forum and Public Citizen (2004), 'Nothing for Mahala,' UKZN Centre for Civil Society Research Report 16, April.

⁴ Thale, T. (2003), 'Census gives Joburg a Clearer Picture', <http://www.johannesburg.org.za>, July 11.

⁵ Johannesburg (2001), 'Budget 2001-2002: City Development Plan 2001/2002', Johannesburg.

minimum statutory standards. Services is not the greatest challenge facing Johannesburg in its drive to become a “better” city.⁶ Yet officials also concede that low standards of infrastructure and services in informal settlements were a conscious policy adopted shortly after national liberation, in the City’s 1995 ‘Strategic Initiative’, just before the first democratic municipal elections: ‘The service level for this purpose had been set at one standpipe per twenty dwellings for the water supply and one chemical toilet per seven dwellings for sanitation. The emergency measures have not been phased out as anticipated...’⁷ (What was true in mid-1999 remains true in 2004.)

Indeed, given not just access but also municipal services quality (e.g., regularity and pressure), many residents argue that services are indeed the ‘greatest challenge’ to living a decent life in Johannesburg. An official survey conducted in 2000 measured citizen satisfaction with municipal services, and it was not flattering: ‘There is a strong indication that residents from all areas are beginning to feel a heightened sense of frustration and decreased sense of control that they have over their communities and the city generally due to perceptions of the council’s decreasing ability to manage the services under their jurisdiction.’⁸ Amongst their top five complaints with council, pluralities of residents chose electricity (48%), water (42%) and toilets (33%) as three of the five worst problems (the other two were the city’s failure to create jobs and maintain health clinics). For black (‘African’) Johannesburg residents, the figures were, respectively, 58%, 53% and 45%, ranking as the first, second and fourth worst problems.⁹ Most of the dissatisfied residents live in the low-income townships, including 83 informal settlements.¹⁰ Most lack piped water/sanitation, electricity and other municipal services such as solid waste removal, stormwater drains, street lights, fire and emergency services, libraries, recreation. Johannesburg engaged in services disconnections that regularly reached 20,000 households per month.¹¹

Johannesburg’s servicing of these townships has, in recent years, followed global-scale processes associated with intensified competitiveness and decentralisation of services, as well as with social grievances and protest. This global/local interplay should not be surprising. Johannesburg is the only African ‘world-class city’ typically included in such lists.¹² Jennifer Robinson

⁶ Johannesburg (2002), *Joburg 2030*, p.14.

⁷ Minutes of the Southern Metropolitan Local Council Executive Committee, 21 June 1999.

⁸ Johannesburg (2001), ‘Johannesburg Metropolitan Council Attitude Survey,’ pp.8-9. A subsequent (2003) survey reported in the city’s 2004-05 Integrated Development Plan (section 1.21) records satisfaction levels of 86% with water and 73% for sanitation, but is so dubious as to be easily dismissed. SA Municipal Workers Union researcher Rob Rees asks, ‘Is it really possible that such problem priorities have been solved in just three years, given the limited delivery and the lowering of standards, the problems with billing, cut-offs and pre-paid meters?’ (Rees, R. (2004), ‘Review of Johannesburg Water,’ Unpublished paper, Samwu, p.9.

⁹ In contrast, Johannesburg’s white households ranked as their main grievances job creation, community litter, emergency services, pollution and parks/public transport. Johannesburg, ‘Johannesburg Metropolitan Council Attitude Survey,’ pp.14-17.

¹⁰ The formal settlements, including the townships of Soweto, Alexandra, Ivory Park and Orange Farm, house 192,000 dwellings. So-called ‘RDP houses’ -- which in fact are below the standards advocated in the ANC’s 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) campaign platform -- are included in this category. These houses include land and a low-cost permanent structure (typically costing R16,000) provided through the assistance of a state subsidy scheme, which have legal property status. The informal settlements in greater Johannesburg host 189,000 dwellings. For details, see Johannesburg Water (2001), *Business Plan*, p.26.

¹¹ *Sunday Times Gauteng Metro*, 19 May 2002.

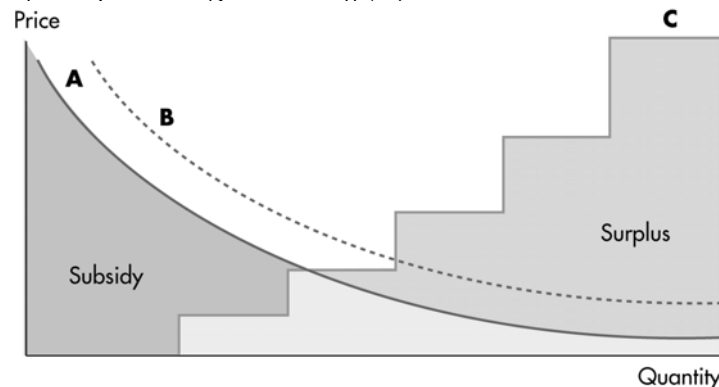
¹² See, e.g., Simon, D. (1995), ‘The World City Hypothesis: Reflections from the Periphery,’ in P.Knox and P.Taylor (Eds) *World Cities in a World-System*, London, Routledge; Rakodi, C. (Ed)(1997), *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of its Large Cities*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press; Smith, M.P. (1998), ‘The Global City -- Whose Social Construct is it Anyway? A Comment on White,’ *Urban Affairs Review*, 33, 4; Beaverstock, J., P.Taylor, and R.Smith (1999), ‘A

laments ‘the fact that the world cities literature, even in its most nuanced form, persists in defining some cities out of the game, as “excluded from global capitalism” and therefore as irrelevant to their theoretical reflections. Writers on cities in Africa, for example, asked to consider world cities in their region, conclude dismally that there are no world cities on the continent -- although they point to Cairo and Johannesburg as potentials.’¹³ However, as regards vital municipal services which today are the main site of civil society struggles, Johannesburg is by no means excluded from global capital flows or ‘best practice’ knowledge, as is recognised in international media reports about the resulting conflict.¹⁴ One reason is the adoption of cost-recovery principles, which are better termed ‘commodification,’ even in as vital an area as water supply.

The neoliberal logic of water commodification

The Economist mid-2003 survey of water declared that ‘Throughout history, and especially over the past century, it has been ill-governed and, above all, colossally underpriced... The best way of solving [the problem of residential access for poor people] is to treat water pretty much as a business like any other.’¹⁵ The impact of such advice is to reduce cross-subsidisation within the pricing system, as suggested in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Three ways to price water: marginal cost (A), for-profit (B), and cross-subsidized lifeline plus rising block tariff (C)



Behind the advice from *The Economist* and the World Bank is a simple agenda: the water supplier should avoid distorting the end-user price (the ‘tariff’) away from its ‘natural’ market level (marginal cost, namely, the operating and maintenance costs), as indicated in Line A. This strategy would seek to match the customer tariff to the short-run marginal cost, and then add a

Roster of World Cities,’ *Cities*, 16, 6; Sassen, S. (2001), *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton, Princeton University Press; Robinson, J. (2003), ‘The Urban Basis of Emancipation: Spatial Theory and the City in South African Politics,’ in L. Lees (Ed), *Emancipatory Cities*, London, Sage.

¹³ Robinson, J. (2002), ‘Global and World Cities: A View from Off the Map,’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, 3.

¹⁴ Johannesburg water conflicts have, since 2001, been profiled in high-profile articles in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *London Observer*, *Boston Globe*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Mother Jones*, *L’Humanite* and other outlets supplied by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, as well as in major television investigations aired by the US Public Broadcasting System, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and British Broadcasting Corporation.

¹⁵ *The Economist*, 19 July 2003.

price mark-up to incentivise profitability (Line B), which in turn would attract a private-sector investor. While this applies particularly to water, the lesson is more general, and typifies the conflicting incentive structures between neoliberalism (Lines A and B) and social justice (Line C).

The main criticism of a free lifeline and rising block tariff (Line C) offered to the South African government by the World Bank in 1995 was that it would disincentivise privatisation. The propensity of a private firm to provide cross-subsidies and lifeline tariffs is extremely low, as the World Bank's main Southern African water official, John Roome, explicitly warned water minister Kader Asmal in 1995. That advice formed part of a lobbying campaign to dissuade him from invoking cross-subsidies and arose from the belief that sliding-scale tariffs favouring low-volume users 'may limit options with respect to tertiary providers... in particular private concessions [would be] much harder to establish' if poor consumers had the expectation of getting something for nothing.¹⁶ The Bank's 1999 *Country Assistance Strategy* for South Africa termed this advice 'instrumental' in the 'radical restructuring' of water pricing policy.¹⁷ This was especially true in Johannesburg, a key site for establishing private concessions. The company that the Johannesburg Council ultimately invited to manage the corporatisation of water was Paris-based Suez, whose record of aggressive commodification across the Third World has been the subject of extensive criticism.¹⁸

As three authors of the most rigorous recent analysis of Johannesburg -- Jo Beall, Owen Crankshaw and Susan Parnell -- concluded in 1999, 'There are opportunities to address urban poverty, inequality and environmental management in an integrated way. However, these are predicated on the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council and its advisers understanding the ways in which pro-poor and social justice strategies interface with urban services and the urban environment.'¹⁹ Did those advisors understand this dilemma? Unfortunately, many explicitly neoliberal aid agencies (e.g., USAID and British DFID) played important roles in both Johannesburg and national infrastructure design. The institution that perhaps best illustrates these links is the World Bank, which 'has worked with the City [of Johannesburg (CoJ)] in recent years to support its efforts in local economic development and improving service delivery,' according to Bank staff and consultants. 'This began with a 1993 study of services backlogs in conjunction with USAID, and in 1994 included a municipal finance study and Municipal Infrastructure Investment Framework.' More recently, 'The 2030 strategy (popularly called

¹⁶ Roome, J. (1995), 'Water Pricing and Management: World Bank Presentation to the SA Water Conservation Conference', Unpublished paper, South Africa, 2 October, pp.50-51.

¹⁷ World Bank (1999), *South Africa: Country Assistance Strategy*, Washington, DC, 2 March, Annex II.

¹⁸ Just at the point that water privatisation was being debated in Johannesburg, Suez subsidiary Dumez was alleged by state prosecutors to have bribed the Lesotho Highlands Water Authority's manager Masupha Sole. The latter allegedly received \$20,000 at a Paris meeting in 1991 to engineer a contract renegotiation providing Dumez with an additional R2 million profit, at the expense of Johannesburg water consumers. Johannesburg officials were asked by Samwu to bar Suez from tendering, but they refused (*Business Day*, 5 August 1999; *Washington Post*, 13 September 1999). Most of the Suez and other municipal pilot water commercialisation projects were suffering severe problems by 2003: Nkonkobe (contract cancellation due to Suez's nonperformance), Stutterheim (cherry-picking of wealthier residents by Suez), Queenstown (protests against poor service by Suez), Dolphin Coast (contract rewriting due to Paris-based Saur's desire for greater profits), and Nelspruit (widespread and growing social resistance to London-based Bewater).

¹⁹ Beall, J., O.Crankshaw and S.Parnell (2000), 'Victims, Villains and Fixers: the Urban Environment and Johannesburg's Poor,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 4. This chapter and much other information about Johannesburg can be found in Beall, J., O.Crankshaw and S.Parnell (2002), *Uniting a Divided City: Governance and Social Exclusion in Johannesburg*, London, Earthscan.

Vision 2030) draws largely on the empirical findings of a series of World Bank reports on local economic development produced in partnership with the CoJ during 1999–2002, and places greater emphasis on economic development. It calls for Johannesburg to become “*a world-class business location.*”²⁰ In turn, the Bank insists, ‘The ability of the city to provide for services is related to its tax revenue base or growth. *The CoJ does not consider service delivery to be its greatest challenge to becoming a better city.*’ Bank staff continue by citing ‘the World Bank’s local economic development methodology developed for the CoJ in 1999,’ which ‘sought to conceptualize an optimal role for a *fiscally decentralized CoJ* in the form of a regulator that would seek to alleviate poverty... through job creation by creating *an enabling business environment for private sector investment* and economic growth in Johannesburg’ (emphasis added).²⁰

Based upon its privileged policy advisory location in both national and municipal government, the Bank advocates a minimalist approach to urban infrastructure and services. This entails, firstly, decentralisation and corporatisation, as discussed below; secondly, a lack of urgency in dealing with those Johannesburg residents who lack services; and thirdly, the promotion of ‘competitiveness,’ which often translates into business self-interest. The first point codifies the Igoli 2002 restructuring of most public utilities (and the outright privatisation of several other major assets, such as an airport and an enormous produce market). The second point reflects the Bank’s -- and some in Johannesburg municipal government’s -- own satisfaction with ‘basic’ levels of services that are, in many cases, deemed unsatisfactory by many residents. The third point implies that the needs of private investors to become internationally competitive -- in part through inexpensive infrastructure and services (such as cheap water and electricity tariffs), which is the main short-term technique for municipal entrepreneurialism -- might override the needs of poor people for higher cross-subsidies.

The Bank’s role in Johannesburg infrastructure investment dates back several decades. Even after then-ANC president Albert Luthuli and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. had called for financial sanctions against Pretoria, the Bank continued lending, ultimately providing Eskom \$100 million in credit from 1951-68.²¹ There was no direct benefit for black consumers, who because of apartheid were denied Eskom power financed by the Bank and whose rail transport prospects were mainly linked to their migrant-labour employment -- if they possessed a pass book -- in urban centres. The Bank discontinued lending to South Africa when the last Eskom loan (for a coal-fired power station) was repaid, because per capita GDP rose to levels that disqualified access by Pretoria. However, the Bank still contributed to apartheid infrastructure financing, via the \$8 billion first phase of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which dammed rivers and tunnelled through mountains to supply Johannesburg -- especially the large-scale consumers amongst white households, white-owned farms and white-owned mines -- with water notwithstanding huge social and environmental costs. In October 1986, following a coup in which prime minister Leabua Jonathan was ousted with Pretoria’s support, and at a time of harsh repression in South Africa after the foreign debt repayment ‘standstill’ of September 1985, there was little chance of South Africa getting access to fresh foreign funds. The Bank chose that

²⁰ World Bank (2002), ‘South Africa: Monitoring Service Delivery in Johannesburg,’ Washington, Southern Africa Department, Africa PREM1, April.

²¹ Darrow, M. (2003), *Between Light and Shadow: The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and International Human Rights Law*, Portland, Hart Publishing, p.151.

moment to begin the project; it lent Lesotho -- with its \$600 per capita income, and reliant upon foreign aid for 20% of its GDP -- \$110 million, solely because of South Africa's ability to stand surety.²²

Bank infrastructure and other loans then ceased altogether, because of anti-apartheid movement campaigning, a reflection of progressive global-local pressure. However, during the early 1990s numerous Bank studies of urban retail infrastructure in several cities were undertaken, with the permission of the then-opposition ANC once it was unbanned in February 1990. However, these were controversial insofar as they promoted mainly market amplifications of existing apartheid settlement patterns. For example, in 1992, Bank local economic development expert Kew Sik Lee advised that 'low income housing development in the "available land" between the Johannesburg central city and townships should be avoided.' The Civic Associations of Johannesburg were demanding, at the time, that Johannesburg free up buffer-strip land for new low-cost housing. Lee went so far as to suggest 'densification should take place within the existing townships' instead of through a more compact city, an argument that left white suburbs free from demands for restructuring.²³

By November 1994, several Bank economists joined the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Framework team which envisaged supplying 'basic' services -- communal standpipes, pit latrines and no electricity -- to low-income households.²⁴ The Bank hoped to fund the programme through a \$750 million loan that was often discussed in 1995, though only brought to fruition in late 1998 indirectly, via the Development Bank of Southern Africa and African Development Bank. A further disincentive to cross-subsidisation of low-income people through higher-volume charges emerged with South Africa's move towards export-led growth in its 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy. By December 1996, Chippy Olver, the government's chief infrastructure official, explained to the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper why he and Department of Finance officials refused to consider widescale redistributive national tariffs through RDP-style cross-subsidies: 'If we increase the price of electricity to users like Alusaf, their products will become uncompetitive and that will affect our balance of payments... It's a fact that international capital holds sway as we come to the end of the 20th century.'²⁵ But, as argued below, Johannesburg civil society soon negated Olver's argument, as social struggles threatened the interests of international capital in the field of water pricing.

Apartheid as race, gender and class exploitation

Finally, by way of introduction, it is crucial to specify the multiple ways in which South

²² Horter, K. (1995), 'The Mountain Kingdom's White Oil: The Lesotho Highlands Water Project,' *The Ecologist*, 25, 6 and (1996), 'Making the Earth Rumble: The Lesotho-South Africa Water Connection,' *Multinational Monitor*, May; Potts, M. (1996), 'Presentation by the DBSA to the Lesotho Highlands Water Workshop,' in Group for Environmental Monitoring (Ed), *Record of Proceedings: Lesotho Highlands Water Workshop*, Johannesburg, 29-30 August; Bond, P. (1997), 'Lesotho Dammed,' *Multinational Monitor*, January-February; and World Bank (1998), *Lesotho: Lesotho Highlands Water Project -- Phase 1B: Project Appraisal Document*, (17727-LSO), R98-106(PAD), Water and Urban 1, Africa Region, Washington, DC, April 30.

²³ Bond, P. and M. Swilling (1993), 'World Bank Report Ignores Complexities,' *Work in Progress*, April.

²⁴ Ministry of Reconstruction and Development (1995), *Urban Infrastructure Investment Framework*, Pretoria, 23 March. For more detailed critiques, see Bond, P. (2000), *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal*, Trenton, Africa World Press, Chapters Three-Five.

²⁵ *Mail and Guardian*, 16 November 1996.

African exploitation was constructed during the apartheid era, and beyond, because only by delving widely and deeply into various resistances will civil society maintain its oppositional strength.²⁶ It is not widely acknowledged, but the system of racial oppression perfected in the middle of the 20th century was also, primarily, a system of *gender*-based super-exploitation that made possible migrant labour throughout the Southern African region. South Africa's urban capitalist managers designed a subsidy from the rural areas so as to lower the cost of workers to Johannesburg's mines and factories. Economic development was, according to the Chamber of Mines, dependent upon this system. As a leading mine official testified to a 1944 Pretoria commission, 'The ability of the mines to maintain their native labour force by means of tribal natives from the reserves at rates of pay which are adequate for this migratory class of native, but inadequate in practice for the detribalised urban native, is a fundamental factor of the economy of the gold mining industry.'

How did this work? Thanks to apartheid, migrant 'tribal natives' were not, when young, supported by companies in the form of school fees or taxes for government schools to teach workers' children. When sick or disabled, those workers were often shipped back to their rural homes until ready to work again. When the worker was ready to retire, the employer typically left him a pittance, such as a cheap watch, not a pension that allowed the elderly to survive in dignity. From youth through to illness to old age, capitalists were let off the hook. The subsidy covering child-rearing, recuperation and old age was provided by rural African women. The central lesson from this crucial aspect of apartheid was that capitalism systematically looted the 'bantustan' areas, especially women, which supplied such a large proportion of workers. The system of migrant labour continues, as do various forms of subnational and regional resource flows associated with ongoing gender, class and racial superexploitation.

More generally, this 'articulation of modes of production'²⁷ – of which apartheid was only one moment – has much broader relevance, as do the contemporary struggles aiming to reverse the logic of what David Harvey has termed 'accumulation by dispossession'.²⁸ It is in this sense, as Rosa Luxemburg put it in her book *Accumulation of Capital*, that 'Capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist organisations, nor ... can it tolerate their continued existence side by side with itself. Only the continuous and progressive disintegration of non-capitalist organisations makes accumulation of capital possible.'²⁹ If gender, race and class all contributed to apartheid's super-profits, then these factors are also crucial to global apartheid's uneven prosperity, as we will conclude.

Are Johannesburg's urban social movements up to such a world-historic challenge? To answer

²⁶ Bond, P. (2000), 'From Reconstruction and Development to Neo-Liberal Modernisation in South Africa,' in H.Othman (Ed), *Reflections on Leadership in Africa: 40 Years after Independence: Essays in Honour of Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday*, Dar es Salaam, University of Dar es Salaam Institute of Development Studies and Brussels, VUB University Press.

²⁷ The seminal studies are Wolpe, H. (1972), 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power,' *Economy and Society*, 1; and Legassick, M. (1974), 'South Africa: Capital Accumulation and Violence,' *Economy and Society*, 3. See O'Meara, D. (1996), *Forty Lost Years*, Indiana, Indiana University Press, for a wider analysis of gender issues drawn from a growing feminist literature.

²⁸ Harvey, D. (2003), 'The 'New' Imperialism: On Spatio-temporal Fixes and Accumulation by Dispossession,' in L.Panitch and C.Leys, *Socialist Register 2004*, London, Merlin Press and New York, Monthly Review Press. A longer version is elaborated in Harvey, D. (2003), *The New Imperialism*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

²⁹ Luxemburg, R. (1968)[1923], *The Accumulation of Capital*, New York, Monthly Review Press, p.396.

requires backtracking at least to the mid-1980s, and foregrounding our investigation with international comparisons.

3. Civil society and urban social movements

The (global) rise of urban protest

This paper builds upon critical studies of civil society conducted over the past decade or so, beginning during the early period of democratic transition when the lessons of East Bloc ‘socialist’ repression of civil society were most important for South Africa’s own social change trajectory.³⁰ The last quarter-century’s democratisation wave, from Southern Europe to the Cone of Latin America to East Asia to Africa to Eastern Europe, witnessed an international revival of concern for civil society’s prospects, particularly in cities where both human rights advocacy and social activism were integral to broader political and economic liberalisation.

The main subjects of the analysis that follows, urban social movements, are, as Schuurman puts it, ‘social organisations with a territorially-based identity, striving for emancipation via collective action.’³¹ But it is important to distinguish immediately between urban ‘organisations’ -- particularly those that emerge in the implementation of formal social policies (such as welfare agencies or implementation-oriented NGOs) or in the reproduction of daily life (mutual aid groupings) -- and *movements*. The latter are both protest-oriented and utopian, in the sense of attempting to construct the community of a future society in the decay of the old, in the manner posited in the classic studies by Castells and by Frank and Fuentes.³² (Subsequent research by William Martin and his Binghamton University colleagues update and deepen the historical work in this tradition, known as ‘anti-systemic movements’, by Amin, Arrighi, Frank and Wallerstein.)³³

As globalisation amplified local uneven development during the era of neoliberalism, rising inter-urban competition between many of the world’s megacities reduced municipal management to the enhancement of competitive advantage, via the heightened efficiency of the city as an export platform. The bottom line was the *productivity* of urban capital, as it flowed through urban land markets (now enhanced by titles and registration), housing finance systems (featuring mainly private sector delivery and a dramatic reduction in state subsidies), the much-celebrated (but often extremely exploitative) informal economy, and (often newly-privatised) urban services

³⁰ Some of these are reviewed in more detail in Bond, P. and M. Mayekiso (1996), ‘Developing Resistance, Resisting ‘Development’: Reflections from the South African Struggle’, in L. Panitch (Ed), *Are There Alternatives? Socialist Register 1996*, London, Merlin Press and New York, Monthly Review Press.

³¹ Schuurman, F. (1989), ‘Urban Social Movements: Between Regressive Utopia and Socialist Panacea,’ in F. Schuurman and T. van Naerssen (Eds), *Urban Social Movements in the Third World*, London: Routledge, p.9.

³² Castells, M. (1983), *The City and the Grassroots*, Berkeley, University of California Press; Frank, A.G. and M. Fuentes (1990), ‘Civil Democracy: Social Movements in Recent World History,’ in S. Amin, G. Arrighi, A.G. Frank and I. Wallerstein, *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World-System*, New York, Monthly Review.

³³ Martin, W. (2003), ‘Three Hundred Years of World Movements: Towards the End of the Capitalist World-Economy?’, presented at the *Sociology Seminar, Rand Afrikaans University*, Johannesburg, 13 June.

such as transport, sewage, water, electricity and even primary health care services (via intensified cost-recovery).

Such processes were vigorously contested by popular movements, agitating both around conjunctural social policy decisions associated with structural adjustment, especially cutbacks in subsidies for food, transport or other services. As a result of looking to more structural determinants of the problems instead of just short-term causes of crisis, the movements began to transcend the traditional dichotomy of urban organisations: between an inward-looking territorial identity, and the rhetoric of a broader emancipation. They began exploring a broader set of urban political practices, which in the Latin American case -- according to Petras and Morley -- entail new alliances that traverse traditional spheres of workplace and community:

The power of these new social movements comes from the fact that they draw on the vast heterogeneous labour force that populates the main thoroughfares and the alleyways; the marketplaces and street corners; the interstices of the economy and the nerve centres of production; the exchange and finance centres; the university plazas, railway stations and the wharves -- all are brought together in complex localised structures which feed into tumultuous homogenising national movements.³⁴

The same structural factors prevail in contemporary South Africa.³⁵ The unity of the urban poor and the formal working-class, Petras and Morley continue, is also based upon broader economic crisis: 'The great flows of capital disintegrate the immobile isolated household units, driving millions into the vortex of production and circulation of commodities; this moment of wrenching dislocation and relocation is silently, individually experienced by the mass of people, who struggle to find their place, disciplined by the struggle for basic needs and by the absolute reign of ascending capital.' Under such conditions, so evident in Johannesburg's townships, the social base for urban movements is continually regenerated.

As for their political orientation, South Africa's civic movement, along with the mass movements of many other countries,

emerged to break the bonds of authoritarian politics and the constraints of police state regimes, to overcome the passivity and paralysis of the traditional opposition, and to forge a new political reality. What makes these social movements different from those in the past is that they are independent of traditional party-electoral political machines. They are led and directed by grassroots leaders. Policy is constantly debated in democratic popular assemblies. The strong ties to local communities and the intense but profoundly democratic political life has enabled these new social movements to mobilize previously unorganised strata: the unemployed, young women, squatters, indigenous

³⁴ Petras, J. and M.Morley (1990), *US Hegemony Under Siege: Class, Politics and Development in Latin America*, London, Verso, p.53; the citations below are from the same section.

³⁵ I provide evidence for this assertion in Bond, P. (2000), *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal: Essays on South Africa's New Urban Crisis*, Africa World Press; Bond, P. (2002), *Unsustainable South Africa: Environment, Development and Social Protest*, London, Merlin Press and Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press; and Bond, P. (2003), *Against Global Apartheid: South Africa meets the World Bank, IMF and International Finance*, London, Zed Press and Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press; Bond P., (2004)[2000], *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*, London, Pluto Press and Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press; and Bond, P. (2004), *Talk Left, Walk Right: South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms*, Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

peoples. The new social movements combine with and transcend the action of organised labour movements; street action surges beyond the wage issues toward enlarging the areas of freedom for people to act and realise their human dignity.

Of course, it is not always feasible to specify the construction of social movement identity in urban settings, where conjunctural features are legion but where overt market processes have torn asunder land relations, rural ties, indigenous culture, and many forms of pre-existing authority and social control. The identity of social movements can be traced, at least to some extent, through their implicit or explicit strategic orientations in contesting uneven capitalist development. From experiences with urban movements in Santiago, Tironi conceptualised two fields of strategic polarization: between a sense of exploitation or exclusion, and between the goals of participation within or breaking from the wider political, economic and cultural system. Four categories -- and prototypical modes of political organisation -- result across this matrix of characteristics (Table 1).³⁶

Table 1
Identities of Social Movement Constituents

status, objectives	excluded	exploited
participation	1	2
revolution	4	3

First, those who feel excluded and are anxious to participate more are often supporters of traditional populism (*pobladores*). Second, those who felt both exploited and anxious to participate more in the system included traditional trade unionists. Third, those who feel exploited by the system and who are interested in its formal rupture include traditional revolutionaries. Fourth, there are those alienated social forces which are excluded from the system and which also desire its rupture -- and which are also, in many cases, engaged in collective subsistence activities that aim towards the construction of an alternative life-style based, at least to some extent, on the economy of solidarity. *It is in this latter category that Johannesburg's civil society has had success in early 1990s and early 2000s mass anti-apartheid mobilising and sustained challenges to neoliberal policies, respectively.*

Yet if urban revolutionary resistance to exclusion -- i.e., to apartheid in the early 1990s and neoliberalism in the early 2000s in Johannesburg, and to neoliberalism elsewhere in the world since the early 1980s -- has had a set of defining characteristics, these must be the *defensive, ephemeral, even destructive* manner in which people have often taken to the streets. Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina each witnessed a dozen major anti-austerity urban protests during the 1980s; repeated uprisings were experienced in the cities of Chile, Ecuador, the Philippines, Zaire, Jamaica, Morocco, Sudan, and the Dominican Republic; in Venezuela in 1989, security

³⁶ Reported in Franz Schuurman, F. (1990), 'Modernity, Post-Modernity and the New Social Movements,' in F.Schuurman (Ed), *Beyond the Impasse*, London, Zed Books, pp.200-201. See also, in Spanish, E. Tironi, 'Pobladores e Integracion Social,' *Proposiciones* 14, 1987.

forces killed more than 600 people involved in a single IMF riot; and there were isolated incidents in dozens of other countries. In the 1990s, these countries were joined by India, Albania, Nepal, Iran, Ivory Coast, Niger and Zimbabwe, where large-scale IMF riots broke out.

The leading scholars of the IMF riot, John Walton and David Seddon, have contemplated the transition from the chaos intrinsic in most urban uprisings to the more durable mobilisations required for movement-scale democratic transformation. Given that the most decisive factor in the reproduction of everyday life in many Third World urban settings is the shrinkage of the state under conditions of structural adjustment, 'the broader trend is toward the decline of clientism and, conversely, the growing autonomy of urban low-income groups.'³⁷ As states lose their patronage capacity to channel social surpluses to supporters, social movements can cast off the worst influences of corporatism and corruption associated with urban civil society under populist regimes. As this becomes a more generalised political process, the urban poor consequently have the capacity to transcend spontaneous and unsustainable reactions to economic crisis such as the classic IMF riot. They even regularly serve as the material basis behind sustained protests that result in regime changes, as Walton and Seddon point out.

Is this process now underway in Johannesburg? To answer requires retracing steps to the period in which the major urban social movements began their revival. A series of published studies helps point the way.

South African civics, then and now

There are numerous reviews of civic resistance to late apartheid.³⁸ Many subsequent publications on Johannesburg civil society dealt explicitly with the mid-1990s governance debates.³⁹

³⁷ Walton, J. and D.Seddon (1995), *Free Markets and Food Riots*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p.336.

³⁸ The local participant-based writings from the early 1990s are most interesting; many are reviewed in Mayekiso, *Township Politics*, Chapters 5 and 12; Murray, M. (1995), *The Revolution Deferred*, London, Verso; Marais, H. (2000), *South Africa: Political Economy of Change*, London, Zed Press and Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press; and Adler, G. and J.Steinberg (Eds) (2000), *The South African Civics Movement and the Transition to Democracy*, London, Macmillan. The following are amongst the main statements from the civil society debates during the period: Bernstein, A. and J. McCarthy (1994), 'High Time for Some Soul Searching by Civic Organisations,' *Business Day*, 4 November; Boaden, B. and R. Taylor (1992), 'Informal Settlement: Theory versus Practice in KwaZulu/Natal,' in D. Smith (ed), *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa*, London, Routledge; Botha, T. (1992), 'Civic Associations as Autonomous Organs of Grassroots' Participation,' *Theoria* #79, May; Cross, S. (1992), 'From Anomie to Civil Society in South Africa: Reflections on Development Planning,' African Studies Seminar paper, St. Antony's College, Oxford; Friedman, S. (1991), 'An Unlikely Utopia: State and Civil Society in South Africa,' *Politikon*, December; Friedman, S. (1992), 'Bonaparte at the Barricades: The Colonisation of Civil Society,' *Theoria* #79, May; Friedman, S. (1994), 'Having SANCO at the Table will be Bad for Digestion,' *Business Day*, 14 November; Jacobs, B. (1992), 'Heading for Disaster?,' *Work in Progress* #86, December; Schlemmer, L. (1992), 'Organising Communities: The International Experience,' in Urban Foundation, *Strategic Planning for Civics*, Report on Workshop of Civic Associations of Johannesburg and the Urban Foundation Development Strategy and Policy Unit, Johannesburg, August; Seekings, J. (1992), 'South Africa's Townships 1980-1991: An Annotated Bibliography,' Department of Sociology Occasional Paper #16, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch Research Unit for Sociology of Development; Seekings, J. (1992), 'Civic Organisation in South African Townships,' in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds), *South African Review* 6, Johannesburg, Ravan Press; Shubane, K. (1992), 'Civil Society in Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa,' *Theoria* #79, May; Shubane, K. (1992), 'The Changing Urban Environment,' in Urban Foundation (Ed), *Strategic Planning for Civics*, Report on Workshop of Civic Associations of Johannesburg and the Urban Foundation Development Strategy and Policy Unit, Johannesburg, August; Shubane, K. and P. Madiba (1992), 'The Struggle Continues? Civic Associations in the Transition,' *CPS Transition Series*, Research Report #25, Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand Centre for Policy Studies, October; Swilling, M. (1991), 'Socialism, Democracy and Civil Society: The Case for Associational Socialism,' *Work in Progress*, July/August; Swilling, M. (1992), 'Quixote at the Windmills: Another Conspiracy Thesis from

However, the more detailed studies reflected upon the systemic demobilisation of⁴⁰ -- and in one case, the desire to demobilise⁴¹ -- the community groups that had played such an important early 1990s role. As a relatively less politicised environment prevailed after apartheid was defeated, one quantitative survey specified civil society with such a large lens as to lose the distinction between *status quo* and social-change organisations.⁴² While other reviews of civil society's influence after apartheid ended were more respectful, they retained enormous scepticism that the intense counterhegemonic role achieved earlier in the decade could (or indeed even should) be restored under conditions of state legitimacy, democracy and 'development'.⁴³

However, by the late 1990s, Pretoria's neoliberal policies had severely deleterious effects on urban South Africa, and resistance began rematerialising (as documented below). Researchers identified an upturn -- if not a full-fledged revival -- of some Johannesburg-area SA National Civic Organisation branches, for example.⁴⁴ However, because of a simultaneous political break from the African National Congress, the most substantial community groups that formed the Anti-Privatisation Forum were mainly unconnected to the organisational forms of the prior decade, even if many of their leaders had been forged in the earlier round of urban struggles.

The composition of Johannesburg's working class was, likewise, changing. As new social subjectivities emerged, they merited study in and of themselves, often as sites of 'autonomist' politics.⁴⁵ According to a proponent of this analysis, the new movements are based on 'community self-management, construction of grassroots discourse, direct action in ways that are so rich, plural and diversified to be totally at odds with the hierarchical organisational practices of the traditional Left.'⁴⁶ Such an alleged rupture with left traditions, however, is hotly contested, with local leaders insisting that the Johannesburg left has simply reconstituted itself via

Steven Friedman, 'Theoria #79, May; Tsenoli, L. and S. Mgidlana (1994), 'SANCO has a Key Role in Economic Policy Making,' *Business Day*, 17 November.

³⁹ Everatt, D., G.Rapholo, H.Marais, and S.Davies (1997), 'Civil Society and Local Governance in the Johannesburg Megacity,' Community Agency for Society Enquiry, Johannesburg, for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Geneva.

⁴⁰ Meer, S. (1999), 'The Demobilisation of Civil Society: Struggling with New Questions,' *Development Update*, 3, 1; Pieterse, E. (1997), 'Urban Social Movements in South Africa in a "Globalising:" Era,' *Urban Forum*, 8, 1; Seekings, J. (1996), 'The Decline of South Africa's Civic Organizations, 1990-1996,' *Critical Sociology* 22, 3; White, C. (1995), 'Democratic Societies? Voluntary Association and Democratic Culture in a South African Township,' Centre for Policy Studies, Research Report 40; Lanegran, K. (1996), 'South Africa's Civic Association Movement: ANC's Ally or Society's "Watchdog"?' Shifting Social Movement-Political Party Relations,' *Critical Sociology*, 22, 3; Zuern, E. (2000), 'Democracy from the Grassroots? Civic Participation and the Decline of Participatory Democracy in South Africa's Transformation Process, 1979-1999,' Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Columbia University, New York.

⁴¹ Makura, D. (1999), 'The MDM, Civil Society and Social Transformation,' *Umrabulo*, 7.

⁴² University of the Witwatersrand Graduate School of Public and Development Management (2002), *The Size and Scope of the Non-Profit Sector in South Africa*, Johannesburg.

⁴³ Friedman, S. (2002), 'Golden Dawn or White Flag? The State, Civil Society and Social Policy,' Johannesburg, Centre for Policy Studies. Greenstein, R. (2003), 'State, Civil Society and the Reconfiguration of Power in Post-apartheid South Africa', University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society research report, <http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs>; and Greenstein, R., V.Heinrich and K.Naidoo (1998), *Civil Society and the State in South Africa: Past Legacies, Present Realities and Future Prospects*, Johannesburg, Community Agency for Social Enquiry and Sangoco.

⁴⁴ Heller, P. and L.Ntlokankulu (2001), 'Civil Society Project: the South African National Civic Organisation,' Johannesburg, Centre for Policy Studies, revised and reprinted in Beauregard, R. L.Bremner, X.Mangu and R.Tomlinson (Eds)(2003), *Emerging Johannesburg*, New York, Routledge.

⁴⁵ Desai, A. (2002), *We are the Poors*, New York, Monthly Review. See also the persuasive work by Desai and Richard Pithouse at <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs>, including formal research reports and popular articles.

⁴⁶ Barchiesi, F. (2002), 'After the March on the Left,' *Khanya Journal*, December 2002.

community activism, while the traditional goals of socialism via state power remain intact, a point we return to in the conclusion.⁴⁷

Finally, in terms of thinking globally and acting globally, more recent studies describe the resurgence of Johannesburg-based civil society's global vision, in part through the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in September 2002,⁴⁸ and in the construction of the African Social Forum and World Social Forum.⁴⁹ By the early 2000s, indeed, the key characteristic of Johannesburg's most active civil society movements was profound scepticism about both the world-class city agenda adopted by the municipality and the national government's neoliberal response to economic globalisation.

4. Civil society struggles for a non-racial city, early 1990s

To give these studies historical context, and to establish the need for a tighter relationship between contemporary urban movements and Johannesburg's drive to become a world city, requires further review of civil and political society dating at least to the high points of activism in the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

Background to the civic resurgence

Civil society organising in South African cities has a long tradition, but the historical memory of activists to the intense apartheid urban repression during the 1960s-70s might be the most important precursor of contemporary civil society. An essential element of political ideology across South Africa, but particularly in Johannesburg's vast proletarian townships, was the African National Congress (ANC) call for 'ungovernability,' made from exile in early 1985. There quickly emerged a vision of building 'organs of people's power' in the townships.⁵⁰

The stage of ungovernability was a new political epoch. 'Make South Africa Ungovernable!' was a popular slogan, accurately reflecting the mood and the activities already underway in the townships. The ANC's surrogate was the United Democratic Front (UDF), a broad multi-class, non-racial coalition that coordinated the national protest campaigns against apartheid. Swilling explains the relationship between community struggles and the UDF during the mid-1980s:

⁴⁷ Ngwane, T. (2003), 'Sparks in Soweto', Interview, *New Left Review*, July-August.

⁴⁸ Munnik, V. and J. Wilson (2003), *The World Comes to One Country*, Berlin and Johannesburg, Heinrich Boell Stiftung; Ngwane, T. (2003), 'A Tale of Two WSSD Demos', in R. Neumann and A. Hsiao (Eds), *Anti-Capitalism: A Field Guide to the Global Justice Movement*, New York, New Press.

⁴⁹ Cock, J. (2002), 'Local Social Movements and Global Civil Society: Some Cases from the Back Alleys of South Africa', Paper presented to the Sociology of Work Programme, University of the Witwatersrand Department of Sociology, Johannesburg, 27 September; Cock, J. (2003), 'A Better or Worse World? Report on the Third World Social Forum, Porto Alegre 2003,' University of the Witwatersrand Department of Sociology, paper prepared for the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (<http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs>), Durban, February.

⁵⁰ For critiques of this strategic turn, see Morris, M. and V. Padayachee (1988), 'State Reform Policy in South Africa,' *Transformation* #9; Carter, C. (1991), 'Community and Conflict: The Alexandra Rebellion of 1986,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 1; Carter, C. (1991), 'Comrades and Community: Politics and the Construction of Hegemony in Alexandra Township, South Africa, 1984-1987,' DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford; and Kane-Berman, J. (1993), *Political Violence in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Institute of Race Relations. For a rebuttal, see Mayekiso, M. (1993), 'The Legacy of Ungovernability,' *Southern African Review of Books*, November/December.

The driving force of black resistance that immobilised the coercive and reformist actions of the state emanated from below as communities responded to their abysmal local living conditions. The result was the development of and expansion of local struggles and organisations throughout the country. As these local struggles and organisations coalesced, the UDF played a critical role in articulating common national demands for the dismantling of the apartheid state. In so doing, the black communities were drawn into a movement predicated on the notion that the transfer of political power to the representatives of the majority was a precondition for the realisation of basic economic demands such as decent shelter, cheap transport, proper health care, adequate education, the right to occupy land and the right to a decent and steady income.⁵¹

The mid-1980s revolts against urban apartheid were repressed by repeated states of emergency. But financial sanctions and other economic constraints forced white business to negotiate with the ANC in exile, and in turn brought Pretoria to its senses. On 2 February 1990, the apartheid government began its political liberalisation, culminating in the transfer of power to a democratic government in May 1994 following the first one-person, one-vote election in South African history. But of greatest importance for understanding Johannesburg civil society during the 1990s through the present, is the rise and fall and then subsequent rise of township ‘civic associations’ (or simply ‘civics’) and affiliated popular movements.

The civics’ choices of strategies and tactics rested upon several crucial universal norms, values and practices: non-racialism, mass participatory democracy, a commitment to fight apartheid (including its fake reforms) until one-person one-vote in a unitary state was obtained, and the translation of struggles over material grievances into a broader programme of socio-economic justice. However, beginning in 1990, the civics struggled with several new factors: the threat -- in many cases, reality -- of barbaric state-terrorist activities, especially associated with the Zulu migrant workers’ organisation Inkatha; the increasing misery created by intransigent local white councils and other official bodies; and uncertain relations with the recently unbanned ANC. We can consider each in turn.

By 1990, approximately eighty civics were active in the region stretching from the coal mines of the Vaal Triangle, to Johannesburg and the Rand, up to Pretoria. While political liberalisation in 1990 allowed the civics to operate above ground again, it was a more classically repressive process -- a semi-fascistic paramilitary attack on civics -- that brought the groups into alignment in the struggle for democracy. For example, horrific hostel-based attacks occurred against township residents in mid-1990 in which a thousand people were killed. Fed by police and an alleged ‘Third Force,’ the unprecedented aggression of Inkatha migrant workers forced street mobilisation on a scale not seen since the 1985-87 state of emergency. Inkatha’s well-documented massacres, initiated in Sebokeng in late July 1990, pushed communities to reevaluate what kind of civil society they were defending.

In more than a few cases, the traditional community fabric, characterised by organised, highly politicised response, tore badly. Facing desperate conditions, ANC-aligned township youth resorted to in-kind violence, sometimes with tribal overtones. The material conditions behind the violence -- particularly the inhumane housing of migrant labourers -- were to some degree

⁵¹ Swilling, M. (1992), *Roots of Transition*, Unpublished manuscript.

addressed by the more visionary civics, such as in Alexandra. Civics made migrant hostel conversions (into family units) a top priority, and the National Union of Metalworkers and National Union of Mineworkers unions established longer-term proposals to provide migrants with access to family housing or at least to better living conditions. The community fabric came under even more stress when negotiations with local white town councils began in late 1990. More than 150 such negotiations were attempted across the country at that point, but they produced very uneven results which mitigated against short-term conflict resolution. Johannesburg's 'Metro Chamber' was an exception, but not without internal contradictions associated with excessive ANC control that led to its premature mid-1990s demise.

White officials wanted the civics to call off widespread rent boycotts, which in Soweto were joined by 80% of formal rent-paying households for four years.⁵² Civics wanted a range of immediate and medium-range concessions, ranging from highly-subsidised services, to a single metropolitan tax base, to the development of formulas for democratic local government, to transfer of rented houses from the state to the people. All these objectives were achieved for South Africa's largest township, Soweto, in theory, in September 1990. The signing of the Greater Soweto Accord between the Soweto People's Delegation, the Transvaal Provincial Administration and three black councils could have been the model for civic victories elsewhere in Johannesburg and across South Africa, but two problems emerged.

One was the desire of many civics to use negotiations as a final tool for discrediting the black councils (which were viewed, quite appropriately, as local agents for apartheid), and so the inclusion of the three Soweto mayors raised activist hackles. Although civics were rarely formally implicated in dozens of fatal attacks against black councillors during the mid-1980s, their message to the councils was always simple: 'resign.' It was evident to the civics that only with the removal of the racially-demarcated, financially-unviable system of local government, to be replaced by 'one-city, one-municipality' governance, would this form of violence cease.

The other barrier to applying the Soweto Accord elsewhere was the surprising intransigence of most white local councils, including Johannesburg. Many white authorities were stung by then-president FW De Klerk's efforts to open municipal amenities such as libraries and swimming pools to all races, and they were also cognisant of the deteriorating position of the ANC in national negotiations, until the April 1993 breakthrough that followed the assassination of popular leader Chris Hani. In combination, such factors signalled to white councils that they had the capacity to resist democratisation.

Add to this the confusing strategies of provincial and parastatal authorities -- which sent contradictory signals to negotiators -- and it quickly became apparent to leading civics like the Alexandra Civic Organisation and Johannesburg's Actstop that joint regional actions would have to replace case-by-case negotiating. Hence was born the Civic Associations of the Southern Transvaal (CAST), a group determined to unite a variety of urban organisations and to approach the authorities with a standard set of demands. But the authorities continued to be intransigent. Deadlines for rent payment came and went, and by late 1990, the result was a wave of electricity and service cut-offs. Raw sewage ran in the streets, and the darkness invited a new wave of

⁵² Swilling, M. and L.Boya (1997), 'Local Governance in Transition,' in P.Fitzgerald, A.McLennan and B.Munslow (Eds), *Managing Sustainable Development in South Africa*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, p.187.

township violence. Only after dozens more died at the hands of Inkatha in Thokoza just days before Christmas, for example, did authorities consent to restore services. CAST responded with further calls to 'mass action.' The impunity with which police and Inkatha carried out their oppression suggests a concurrence at the highest levels of the state. This realisation, in turn, led many civic activists to question their own relations with the ANC, which was regularly accused of making excessive concessions especially to the neoliberal wing of capital (as represented, in many concrete and policy struggles, by Johannesburg's Urban Foundation).

Civics, the ANC and the corporatist threat

Indeed in Johannesburg and elsewhere, the ANC appeared to be sidelined during most, if not all, of the local negotiations, aside from local government coordinator Thozamile Botha's efforts to maintain consistency with the ANC's national constitutional goals. Local ANC branches were still relatively weak, and the organisation's membership remained below 200,000 in 1990. The prospect of a standard African nationalist power transfer made the willingness of key township activists to remain in autonomous civics (instead of converting them to ANC chapters) all the more remarkable and commendable. From 1990, even though they were allied in spirit and history to the ANC, civic leaders began a delinking process from formal political parties, and permitted (even encouraged) membership from sympathisers of other parties, such as the PanAfricanist Congress and Azanian People's Organisation. In 1992, the key activists founded the SA National Civic Organisation (SANCO) as their umbrella body.

The political maturity in civil society required to transcend internecine party politics came in large part from the material basis of the movement, especially the bottling up of the black intelligentsia in townships. These 'organic intellectuals' might, under a different system, have moved into the high-paying white collar jobs in finance, administration and services that began proliferating during the 1970s and 1980s. Instead, they were forced by apartheid to live and organise in townships, and this accounted in part for the enormous moral strength of urban resistance and the clearly-stated (and fought for) ideologies. Those ideologies -- whether based upon the ANC's Freedom Charter or 'black consciousness' and socialism -- by-and-large remained 'anti-capitalist,' in spite of the generosity the ANC bestowed on big business as a potential anti-apartheid ally from the early 1990s.

In the urban sphere, capital began to earn a status as an ally of deracialisation. The most important voice of business was the Johannesburg-based Urban Foundation, which from 1991 attempted to win civics to their position. The civics' critical thinkers argued that the benefits of a new-found corporate social conscience would be overwhelmed by firms which still placed self-interest first. For example, the rush to make available housing bonds for the wealthiest 10% of black households -- which translated into 200,000 mortgages granted from 1986-90 -- slowed to a crawl in late 1990, when, partly because of violence and crime at construction sites, and partly because of the onset of the long 1989-93 recession (which left 500,000 freshly unemployed workers and their families less able to pay for housing), many developers loudly announced their intention to pull out of black housing. The developers also blamed building societies and banks for declining building activity, but financiers replied that civics had invented a formidable new weapon against lenders -- the 'bond boycott' (a collective refusal to repay housing bonds until

certain conditions were met), which moved from the Eastern Cape to the Johannesburg area in 1990. The tactic was the consequence of two factors: shoddy housing construction (for which the homebuyers had no other means of recourse than boycotting the housing bond) and the rise in interest rates from 12.5% in 1988 to 21% in late 1989, which in most cases doubled monthly bond repayments. In November 1990, ANC official Thabo Mbeki met with the main apartheid municipal administrator (Hernus Kriel) and announced bond boycotts were definitely not ANC strategy, a point reiterated by Nelson Mandela in July 1992, when SANCO called for a country-wide boycott in support of the ANC's decision to break off negotiations with the apartheid regime due to government intransigence and ongoing state-supported violence.

It was already evident, at that stage, that the ANC would have more durable alliances with capital than with the civics. Leading Urban Foundation strategist Jeff McCarthy argued that winning civics over to a 'market-oriented' urban policy would 'hasten the prospect of alliances on broader political questions of "vision"'.⁵³ In other words, a consensus on urban issues would then form the basis for a new post-apartheid political order. The option of joining this political-economic project was perhaps the most important choice that civics faced in the short- and medium-term. Until 1994, the civics were resolutely anti-capitalist but after demobilisation began in earnest in the wake of the country's May 1994 liberation, SANCO turned to a corporatist relationship with the ruling party, leading in the late 1990s to a revival of the civics under a new guise, more commonly referred to as the 'new social movements'.

Nevertheless, the early 1990s period was a crucial moment for Johannesburg civil society to establish an ideology opposed to neoliberalism. An exemplary (but not atypical) vision was contained in a hallmark Alexandra Civic Organisation (ACO) document: 'Affordable housing for all in Alexandra -- Proposals for the development of the Far East Bank.' In late 1990, the ACO demanded that the Transvaal Provincial Administration turn over 260 hectares of vacant land (the Far East Bank) to a community trust; that the land not be allocated directly to private developers; that sales of housing be conducted through the community trust; that a community loan fund mediate in the financing of housing; and that a community development corporation be established to hire local labour and use local cooperatives for housing construction. The ACO also began planning for a repatriation centre on the land that would provide temporary housing for hundreds of exiles. Such a community-controlled centre, suitable for later conversion into a multi-use facility, was one of the most advanced approaches to reducing tensions between returnees and community residents, tensions which had undermined efforts to provide housing and jobs for exiled South Africans, as a result of the extreme shortages that existing residents suffered.

Civic demobilisation

No matter the strength and creativity of the civic movement at its peak, a period of demobilisation resulted from the ascendance of the ANC to state power in 1994. Civil society was meant to be nurtured, according to official documents such as the 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Programme*: 'Social Movements and Community-Based Organisations are a major asset in the effort to democratise and develop our society. Attention must be given to enhancing

⁵³ Swilling, M. (1990), 'Deracialised Urbanization: A Critique of the New Urban Strategies and Some Policy Alternatives from a Democratic Perspective,' *Urban Forum*, 1, 2. See the discussion in Bond, *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal*, Chapter 10.

the capacity of such formations to adapt to partially changed roles. Attention must also be given to extending social-movement and CBO structures into areas and sectors where they are weak or non-existent.⁵⁴ This did not happen, as an enormous funding boost meant for civics and other CBOs in late 1994 was diverted into advertising the state's new 'Operation Masakhane' (pay your bills) campaign.⁵⁵ Perhaps the most charitable interpretation of the relationship desired by the ANC can be found in an important discussion paper circulated widely within the party. Author Joel Netshitenzhe insisted that, due to 'counter-action by those opposed to change,' civil society should serve the ruling party's agenda:

Mass involvement is therefore both a spear of rapid advance and a shield against resistance. Such involvement should be planned to serve the strategic purpose, proceeding from the premise that revolutionaries deployed in various areas of activity at least try to pull in the same direction. When 'pressure from below' is exerted, it should aim at complementing the work of those who are exerting 'pressure' against the old order 'from above.'⁵⁶

In reality, as we will see, most of the pressure from below in South Africa's largest city soon came to be directed explicitly *against* the ruling party. Reasons can be cited in depth, but it may be simplest to recall the warning that Frantz Fanon provided more than three decades earlier, concerning the ascendance of African nationalism to state power:

Very often simple souls, who moreover belong to the newly born bourgeoisie, never stop repeating that in an underdeveloped country the direction of affairs by a strong authority, in other words a dictatorship, is a necessity. With this in view the party is given the task of supervising the masses. The party plays understudy to the administration and the police, and controls the masses, not in order to make sure that they really participate in the business of governing the nation, but in order to remind them constantly that the government expects from them obedience and discipline.⁵⁷

5. Civil society struggles for a 'decommodified' city, early 2000s

The return of protest

By the late 1990s, Johannesburg was witnessing regular community rejections of obedience and discipline, perhaps beginning with the Soweto Residents' Association's 1996 demonstrations against water price increases (due to Lesotho Highlands Water Project costs). South Africa's own version of the 'IMF Riot' began breaking out in townships such as Soweto, Tembisa, Eldorado Park and KwaThema.⁵⁸ In mid-1997, as the SA government insisted on using harsh

⁵⁴ African National Congress (1994), *Reconstruction and Development Programme*, Johannesburg, Chapter Five. For more on how this would ideally have been implemented, see South African National Civic Organization (1994), *Making People-Driven Development Work*, Johannesburg.

⁵⁵ The story is told in Bond, *Elite Transition*, Chapter Three.

⁵⁶ African National Congress (1998), 'The State, Property Relations and Social Transformation,' Discussion document, Johannesburg, p.12.

⁵⁷ Fanon, F. (1963)[1961], *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, pp.181-182.

⁵⁸ Barchiesi, F. (1998), 'Delivery from Below, Resistance from Above: Electricity and the Politics of Struggle over Basic Needs in Tembisa,' *debate*, 4; Phadu, T. (1998), 'An Inside View of the Tembisa Struggles,' *debate*, 4.

tactics to enforce a cost-recovery approach to infrastructure and services, township protests intensified. Grassroots demands included lower service charges and an end to both pre-paid (more expensive) electricity meters and disconnections of basic services. The protests turned violent in some areas, and included clashes with the police and municipal councilors. By mid-1998, the conflicts had reached even deeper into East Rand townships and smaller rural towns. In the townships of Witbank and Tsakane, east of Johannesburg, municipal offices and a post office were burned after evictions and summonses stripped residents of their personal property. In Amersfoort, community residents kidnapped a leading councillor in anger over mass cut-offs of water which led directly to the death of an infant. Tembisa saw more strife over evictions from houses where commercial banks declared foreclosure. On the East Rand, ANC councilors' houses were even burned down in rage, and in one tragic incident, a mayor was killed allegedly for disconnecting residents' services. A 1998 legal/regulatory campaign by Soweto and Alexandra residents against the Lesotho Highlands Water Project included a tough critique of its designer, the World Bank, which declared the community's arguments against water pricing exploitation (due to the dam costs) to be invalid. In 1999, as Johannesburg's Igoli 2002 commercialisation strategy was adopted, the SA Municipal Workers Union was engaged in sustained public confrontations (including a protest by 20,000 workers). In 2000, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee was formed to reconnect electricity to those disconnected, and the Anti-Privatisation Forum gathered urban residents from several Johannesburg townships and the inner-city, as well as students and workers opposed to the University of Witwatersrand's outsourcing.⁵⁹

Objections to Johannesburg policies were also made by human-rights advocates such as the Legal Resources Centre and even high-profile liberal-rights campaigner Helen Suzman, as well as much of the media, especially newspapers. When Alexandra township experienced forced removals in February 2001 once the national cholera epidemic spread there, the country's leading elite (and generally pro-government) paper, the *Sunday Independent* -- protested 'bureaucratic know-it-allism and disregard for individuals and indeed communities. Sadly the events in Alex have all the elements of the worst of apartheid-style thinking and action.'⁶⁰

Johannesburg electricity and water wars

From 2001, the electricity sector was the subject of particularly intense civil society contestation once Eskom began disconnecting the supplies of 20,000 Sowetans each month. In November, the front page of the *Washington Post* carried a lengthy analysis that began with the story of Agnes Mohapi, an ordinary elderly resident surviving on not much more than R600 per month:

When she could no longer bear the darkness or the cold that settles into her arthritic knees or the thought of sacrificing another piece of furniture for firewood, Agnes Mohapi cursed the powers that had cut off her electricity. Then she summoned a neighborhood service to illegally reconnect it.

Soon, bootleg technicians from the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee arrived in pairs at the intersection of Maseka and Moema streets. Asking for nothing in return,

⁵⁹ Details are provided in Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, Chapters 3-6 and Bond, *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal*, Chapter 14.

⁶⁰ *Sunday Independent*, 18 February 2001.

they used pliers, a penknife and a snip here and a splice there to return light to the dusty, treeless corner.

‘We shouldn’t have to resort to this’, Mohapi, 58, said as she stood cross-armed and remorseless in front of her home as the repairmen hot-wired her electricity. Nothing, she said, could compare to life under apartheid, the system of racial separation that herded blacks into poor townships such as Soweto. But for all its wretchedness, apartheid never did this: It did not lay her off from her job, jack up her utility bill, then disconnect her service when she inevitably could not pay.

‘Privatisation did that’, she said, her cadence quickening in disgust. ‘And all of this globalisation garbage our new black government has forced upon us has done nothing but make things worse ... But we will unite and we will fight this government with the same fury that we fought the whites in their day’.

This is South Africa’s new revolution.⁶¹

A month later, minister of public enterprises Jeff Radebe criticised the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) for the ‘Operation Khanyisa!’ -- Reconnect the Power! -- campaign. Radebe and an allied community network, SANCO, ventured to Orlando Hall, in the heart of SECC territory, to persuade residents that they should put their Eskom payment boycott behind them, repay half their arrears and start making regular full payments.⁶² Despite his own recognition that accounts were inaccurate and that corrupt contractors were cutting electricity off and forcing people to pay high reconnection fees, Radebe offered residents only a one-month ‘amnesty’ to apply for reconnection to Eskom, threatening that any resident who had not done so after one month would be prosecuted. He also announced that 100% of pensioners’ arrears and 50% of arrears of other residents would be set aside in a suspense account. Regardless of the accuracy or not of the arrears, residents would have to repay 50% of arrears in their name.⁶³ Radebe, SANCO, the Human Rights Commission, Eskom, the Johannesburg Metro and Johannesburg’s corporatised City Power soon launched ‘Operation Lungise’ -- Light Up -- to persuade Sowetans that, as full-page advertisements put it, ‘All you need to do is pay your current account. Every month. On time. And with those payments, we’re able to keep improving service delivery’. Although many Sowetans initially signed up for the partial-forgiveness deal, within a few months payments levels were back to pre-deal levels.⁶⁴ Finally in early 2003, Radebe announced that R1.4 billion worth of Sowetans’ electricity arrears would simply be canceled, yet still the payment rates remained low.

Much the same story occurred in subsequent months in the field of water, as the *New York Times* reported on its front page in May 2003:

Among the newest efforts by Johannesburg Water has been the installation of prepaid water meters in townships around the country’s business capital. The first prepaid meters were installed last year in Orange Farm, and led to the formation of the Orange Farm Crisis Water Committee, the group headed by Mr. Bricks Makolo...

⁶¹ Jeter, J. (2001), ‘For South Africa’s Poor, a New Power Struggle’, *Washington Post*, 6 November.

⁶² For a written account, see Department of Public Enterprises (2001), ‘Speech by Minister Radebe at Workshop on the Service Delivery Framework’, Megawatt Park Conference Room, 30 November 2001.

⁶³ The ‘suspense account’ also suggests that the full arrears will re-emerge at a later stage. Activists argued that Radebe would criminalise opposition to cutoffs and when the opposition was destroyed, bring the arrears back.

⁶⁴ *Business Day*, 12 April 2002.

On the dirt streets of Orange Farm, where state-of-the-art water meters have been installed in front of lopsided tin shacks, people foresee a human disaster. Because of its location, it is known as the ‘deep south.’ However, it seems a fitting nickname in other ways.

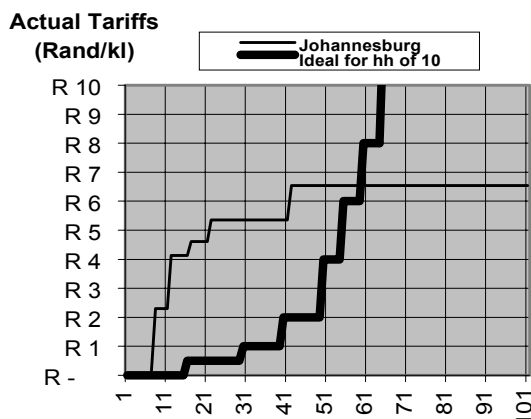
The township has become a microcosm of the nation’s most pressing social problems, including high rates of unemployment, violent crime and H.I.V.-infections. Officials at Johannesburg Water acknowledged that in communities like these, billing people for water has been like squeezing water from a stone...

Mr. Makolo, a veteran of the anti-apartheid movement, urges people not to pay. His motto, he said, is ‘destroy the meters and enjoy the water.’

‘The government promised us that water is a basic right,’ he said. ‘But now they are telling us our rights are for sale.’⁶⁵

In part because the activists chose national and even international targets -- e.g., the World Bank and Suez, spelled out above -- these sorts of social struggles occasionally linked global, national and local movements, as well as Johannesburg to rural areas. The SA Municipal Workers Union, Rural Development Services Network, Johannesburg Anti-Privatisation Forum and Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee simultaneously demanded a specific minimal daily amount of water (50 liters) to be supplied to each person *free*. As discussed above, the free services should be financed not only by subsidies from central government, but also by a ‘rising block tariff’ in which the water and electricity bills for high-volume consumers and corporations rise at a more rapid rate when their usage soars to hedonistic levels, so as to blend social justice ‘red’ politics with conservation-oriented ‘green’ environmentalism. As shown in Figure 2, however, the reality of water pricing did not conform to this ideal.

Figure 2: Divergent water pricing strategies
Johannesburg (2001) v. ideal tariff for large household



’ New York Times, 29 May.

Source: Johannesburg Water (thin) and own projection (thick)

The water tariff system chosen by Johannesburg in the wake of the ANC's 2000 municipal election 'free services' pledge shows a remarkable distortion of the social movements' demand for just, ecologically-sensitive water pricing. In July 2001, the new 'free water' tariff included an extremely high price increase for the second block of consumption, which led once again to a spate of water disconnections. Two years later, the price of that second block was raised 32% (in the context of less than a 10% overall increase), putting an enormous additional burden on poor households which used more than 6,000 litres each month. The rich got off with relatively small increases and a flat tariff after 40 kilolitres/household/month, which did nothing to encourage water conservation.

Campaigning against commodification

Notwithstanding important caveats about the water sector, similar strategies for decommodification emerged from Johannesburg-based NGOs, unions, churches and social movements in other sectors, cutting across a variety of scales:

- the living *body* of the HIV positive individual -- for example, one of millions of South African rape victims -- facing a fatal disease, but through intense struggle against even Mbeki and his health ministry, winning access to antiretroviral medicines to hold AIDS at bay;
- the *household*, where women in particular celebrate victory (albeit preliminary and partial) in the campaign for free lifeline electricity and water;
- the *neighbourhood* that successfully resists municipal service cuts through anti-disconnection activism;
- policy debates that typically occur at the *nation-state* scale, which progressives occasionally win concessions through mass mobilisation, direct action and humiliation of the government;
- *regional* African cross-border grassroots alliances, such as those prefigured by the critiques of the New Partnership for Africa's Development emanating from Johannesburg trade unions, social movements such as Jubilee and the Social Movements Indaba, the African Social Forum and Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa; and
- *global-scale* protests against an international system that, faced with eco-social crises such as water scarcity and global warming, attempts to subvert genuine solutions by making profits out of resource trading (as witnessed at the WSSD).

To illustrate the increasingly universal nature of the decommodification strategy, not only is the demand for 'lifeline' supplies of water and electricity being made from the urban ghettos like Soweto to the many rural areas which have still not received piped water. The need for free access to antiretroviral medicines, for five million HIV+ South Africans, is also acute. A campaign for a Basic Income Grant has also been taken up by churches and trade unions. The Landless People's Movement objects to the failure of a commodified land reform policy designed by the World Bank, and insists upon access to land as a human right. Such demands, based upon the political principle of 'decommodification', are central to campaigns ranging from basic survival through access to health services, to resistance to municipal services privatisation. These campaigns are, nearly without exception, directed from Johannesburg.

The verb decommodify has become popular amongst progressive strategists in part through studies of social policy conducted by Gosta Esping-Andersen, a Swedish academic. In his book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Esping-Andersen points out that during the first half of the 20th century, the Scandinavian welfare state grew because of urban-rural, worker-farmer, 'red-green' alliances which made universalist demands on the ruling elites.⁶⁶ Those demands typically aimed to give the working class and small farmers social protection from the vagaries of employment, especially during periodic recessions. They therefore allowed people to escape the prison of wage labour, by weaving a thick, state-supplied safety net as a fall-back position. To decommodify their constituents' labour in this manner required, in short, that the alliance defend a level of social protection adequate to meet basic needs. Over a period of decades, this took the form of generous pensions, healthcare, education, and other free state services which, like childcare and eldercare, disproportionately support and liberate women. The electoral weight and grassroots political power of the red-green alliance was sufficient to win these demands, which were paid for through taxing wealthy households and large corporations at high rates.

The ANC government's argument against such expansive national and municipal policies, however, was that international competitiveness and job creation relied upon South Africa's and Johannesburg's successful integration into the world economy. If 'globalisation made me do it!' was the favoured justification for neoliberal policies, then civil society would have to use Johannesburg as a base for contesting corporate-dominated globalisation. An unprecedented chance to do so emerged in August 2002, when Johannesburg hosted the United Nations-sponsored WSSD.

Civil society marches on Sandton

For ninety years, since Alexandra Township was settled by black people in 1912, Johannesburg residents have wondered about the combined geographical and political implications of locating an urban bantustan in a small block of land in northeast Johannesburg. Finally, on a sunny, hot spring day -- 31 August 2002 -- at least 20,000 supporters of the 'Social Movements Indaba' (SMI) and the Landless People's Movement marched along a 12 km route to the site of the WSSD. Class/community struggle had finally physically crossed the highway separating the country's richest suburb, Sandton, from one of the poorest. Even at the mid-1980s height of

⁶⁶ Esping-Andersen, G. (1990), *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

revolutionary anti-apartheid fervor, the idea that tens of thousands of people could walk westward from Alexandra over the 8-lane motorway and into the wealthiest suburb in the Third World was considered unthinkable.

From 9am, crowds gathered for the march of what was known, for just one day, as 'United Social Movements.' The Landless People's Movement had been hampered by internal conflicts -- including a pro-ANC faction -- and a desire not to be taken for granted, so they waited until the last moment, and until interventions were made by their Latin American 'Via Campesino' comrades, before signing up with SMI as cosponsors of the big march. Red and green, urban and rural, local and global, autonomist and socialist mixed comfortably. Looming on the horizon across a valley was the glistening Sandton skyline, mainly constructed during the 1990s flight of white capital from the Central Business District. The Convention Centre where 6,000 WSSD delegates were working sits next to Citibank's Africa headquarters, in the shadow of the Michaelangelo Hotel and the opulent Sandton City skyscraper and shopping mall.

What relationship do Alexandrans have with their wealthy neighbours? Sandton's financial firms, hotels and exclusive retail outlets draw in workers for long, low-paid shifts in the security, cleaning and clerical trades. Once they clock out, Alexandra workers are quickly repelled from consumption due to high prices, blatant class hostility and intensive surveillance. They return to shacks and broken sewage systems. For many tens of thousands, a single yard watertap sometimes serves forty families surviving amidst overcrowding and filth. Materially, very little had changed since democracy arrived in 1994, aside from new but tiny houses on the township's eastern hill, and a slum-clearance programme which began in earnest in 2001, along the filthy Jukskei River, a stream coursing through Alexandra, which during the summer rainy season often suffers fatal floods.

Global and local came together here quite obviously. The Igoli 2002 strategy had been designed, in part, by the World Bank. So too was the main water supply to Johannesburg a result of an unnecessary World Bank dam in Lesotho, riven with corruption and eco-social displacement, whose overpriced water was too expensive for low-income communities.⁶⁷ Alexandra residents who tried to complain to the Bank's Inspection Panel watchdog were simply rebuffed.⁶⁸

Just as important as the symbolic route of the march were the battles of numbers and of passion: the independent left surprised itself by outdrawing the mass-based organisations allied to the ANC. What was termed 'the Global Civil Society Forum' -- supported by the Congress of SA Trade Unions, the SA Communist Party, the South African Council of Churches and the ANC itself -- attracted only roughly 5,000 to the Alexandra soccer stadium to hear president Mbeki, in spite of the fact that the ANC advertised the possible participation of Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat (neither of whom made it to the WSSD in the end). At stake in this contest were both prestige in South African politics and the ability of government officials to disguise deep dissent from world leaders. The SA NGO Coalition had pulled out of the Forum march the day before, claiming the ANC was manipulating the gathering. Thus fewer than 1,000 Civil Society Forum

⁶⁷ For updates on corruption and resettlement/compensation problems, see <http://www.im.org>, especially Mopheme/The Survivor (Maseru), 9 April 2003.

⁶⁸ The story is told in Bond, *Against Global Apartheid*, Chapter Three; and more broadly in Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, Chapters Three-Five.

marchers left the stadium for the long trek to Sandton, and many of these (especially Palestinians) had been locked in earlier when they tried to exit, as the larger march passed nearby.

In a township which had been relatively unorganised, due to myriad splits in community politics over the past decade, the attraction of Alexandrans to the United Social Movements instead of the pro-government group was revealing. The Social Movements Indaba core group had claimed the week before, 'We will take Sandton!' -- but the prior question was, who would win the hearts and minds of Alexandra? This question was striking on the eve of the big march, when Mbeki argued the following in a weekly column in the e-zine *ANC Today*:

So great is the divide that even as many are battling in the WSSD negotiations for a meaningful outcome that will benefit the billions of poor people in our country, Africa and the rest of the world, there are others, who claim to represent the same masses, who say they have taken it upon themselves to act in a manner that will ensure the collapse of the Summit. These do not want any discussion and negotiations.

For this reason, they have decided to oppose and defeat the UN, all the governments of the world, the inter-governmental organisations, the major organisations of civil society participating in the Summit and the world of business, all of which are engaged in processes not different from those that take place regularly in our statutory four-chamber Nedlac, which includes government, business, labour and non-governmental organisations. Those who hold these views, which they regularly express freely in our country, without any hindrance, also have their own economic views. As with all other ideas and views about the central question of the future of human society, we have to consider and respond to them rationally, whatever is happening in the streets of Johannesburg, for the benefit of the global mass media.⁶⁹

But hundreds had been jailed for non-violent protest in preceding weeks: the Anti-Privatisation Forum's 'Kensington 87' shot at and arrested outside the mayor's house; 100 from a landless group in the Mpumalanga town of Ermelo; 77 from the Landless People's Movement demonstrating outside the Gauteng premier's office; and nearly 100 from the Soldiers' Forum (an Anti-Privatisation Forum affiliate of ex-ANC armed forces treated badly in the post-apartheid army). They would easily dispute the claim that they could express themselves freely, 'without any hindrance.' (Tellingly, all were later released *without being convicted*, indicating that Pretoria's fear for the security of leaders was unfounded.)

On August 31, police and army overkill was evident. 'One would have thought that South Africa had gone to war during the Summit,' commented Human Rights Foundation director Yasmin Sooka. 'Many senior police officers from the apartheid force were recalled and put in charge of security operations... It was almost unbelievable to watch the heavily armed police and soldiers lining every inch of the route with guns pointed at the marchers.'⁷⁰ Defending the police action,

⁶⁹ <http://www.anc.org.za>, 30 August 2002.

⁷⁰ Sooka, Y. (2003), 'Defining the Constitutional Right to Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Demonstration,' in S.Kimani (Ed), *The Right to Dissent: Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Demonstration in the New South Africa*, Johannesburg, Freedom of Expression Institute, p.58.

former township activist Chris Ngcobo -- subsequently head of Johannesburg policing -- made this leap:

A massive international event of this kind had the potential to attract acts of terror and incidents of violent protests. In this sense, it would have been grossly irresponsible on the part of police and security agencies in the country to think that the summit was free of such dangers. One only needed to be reminded about the violent events that occurred in Seattle in 1999 and Genoa in 2001 to understand the sort of situation that confronted the country's security organs. Nevertheless, the Johannesburg Metro Police Department is very proud...⁷¹

Yet authorities in Seattle and Genoa charged their security forces with excessive force during those police riots. In the event, with more than twenty times as many people on the anti-WSSD march, and with a mostly empty stadium as his audience, Mbeki was not convincing in this critique of the new movements. Ironically, the 'benefit of the global mass media' was indeed a factor, but in favour of Mbeki's opponents -- as Mbeki's ANC colleagues later complained about vociferously. Indeed, international attention was partly responsible for the massive public pressure required to even gain police permission for the protest march.

The social movements march gathered together the Landless People's Movement and the SMI: the Anti-Privatisation Forum, Jubilee SA, the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, the Rural Development Services Network, Friends of the Earth, First People, the World Bank Bonds Boycott, Indymedia and the Palestinian Solidarity Committee, as well as thousands of international allies and local unaffiliated activists. Its highest-profile leader, Trevor Ngwane, called this 'the coming of age of the new anti-capitalist movements in South Africa,' linking to 'the international mobilisations such as those that took place in Seattle and Genoa. Some have honored the event by calling it the A31 mobilisation. The day was a great success... The red march revealed Mbeki's Achilles Heel: his lack of support at home. Can he speak for Africa when social movements in his own country march against him?'⁷²

6. Conclusion: Decommodification, deglobalisation of capital and globalisation of people

The struggle for Johannesburg's future is revealing for local, national, continental and even global politics.⁷³ The stakes are extremely high, as witnessed by the criminalisation of dissent

⁷¹ Ngcobo, C. (2003), 'Local Authorities and the Regulation of Assemblies and Demonstrations,' in S.Kimani (Ed), *The Right to Dissent: Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Demonstration in the New South Africa*, Johannesburg, Freedom of Expression Institute, p.58.

⁷² Ngwane, 'A Tale of Two WSSD Demos'.

⁷³ One of the reflections of this is the Soweto activists profile in two recent books about the international anti-capitalist movement: Kingsnorth, P. (2003), *One No, Many Yeses: A Journey to the Heart of the Global Resistance Movement*, London, The Free Press, Chapter Three; and Klein, N. (2002), *Fences and Windows*, London, Flamingo Press.

that followed the WSSD protest. Over subsequent months, there were repeated failed prosecution attempts at trials of the Kensington 87, until charges were dropped in March 2003. Johannesburg followed with attempts to impose apartheid-era banning injunctions against Orange Farm and Soweto water activists in September 2003. In March 2004, the apartheid-era Regulation of Gatherings Act was invoked by municipal officials in order to ban a Human Rights Day protest at the opening of the new Constitutional Court building, and when 52 Anti-Privatisation Forum demonstrators gathered at the Hillbrow site of Mbeki's opening ceremony, mass arrests followed. Within a month, however, the prosecution had to withdraw the case. Yet in June 2004, a Johannesburg magistrate imposed R10,000 fines against two Phiri (Soweto) activists to penalise them for destruction of pre-paid meters. Shamefully, in virtually none of these recent blatant instances were traditional 'liberal' proponents of democracy visible (with the exception of one *Sunday Independent* columnist, Rob D'Amato).

Beyond the vital task of defending basic civil and political 'first generation' rights against municipal and national government retrogression, a new generation of independent left writers has located neoliberalism as the fundamental basis for social conflict and political-economic contradiction in South Africa.⁷⁴ As a result, the ruling bloc of 'political society' has viewed Johannesburg's civil society upsurge as a profound threat, not only during early 1990s anti-apartheid struggles but also during the epoch of late 1990s and early 2000s neoliberalism, as Mbeki's quote above indicates. Illustrating the contemporary importance attributed to its critics by the ANC, these urban movements are alleged to be a) 'ultra-left' and b) excessively globalised. According to the African National Congress Political Education Committee, the ultraleft

is represented by important factions in the SA Communist Party and Cosatu, as well as the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the local chapter of Jubilee 2000, and other groups and individuals. All of these maintain links with their like-minded counterparts internationally and work to mobilise these to act in solidarity with them in support of the anti-neoliberal campaign in our country. Together with their international allies, they

74 See websites such as <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs>, <http://www.red.org.za>, <http://www.aids.org.za>, <http://southafrica.indymedia.org>, <http://www.khanyacollege.org.za> and <http://www.queensu.ca/msp/journals>; journals such as *Khanya Journal* and *debate*; and various recent books: Saul, J. (forthcoming), *The Next Liberation Struggle*, London, Merlin Press, New York, Monthly Review Press and Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press; Barchiesi, F. and T. Bramble (Eds) (2003), *Rethinking the Labour Movement in the 'New South Africa'*, Aldershot, Ashgate; Kimani, *The Right to Dissent*, Alexander, N. (2002), *An Ordinary Country*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press; Hart, G. (2002), *Disabling Globalisation*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press and Berkeley, University of California Press; Desai, *We are the Poors*; McDonald, D. (Ed) (2002), *Environmental Justice in South Africa*, Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press; McDonald D. and J. Pape (Eds) (2002), *Cost Recovery and the Crisis of Service Delivery in South Africa*, London, Zed Books; Marais, *South Africa Limits to Change*; and some of my own books. These works were prefigured by 1990s studies of nascent neoliberalism in South Africa, including Bond, P. and M. Khosa (Eds) (1999), *An RDP Policy Audit*, Pretoria, HSRC Publications; Desai, A. (1999), *South Africa Still Revolting*, Durban, Natal Newspapers; McKinley, D. (1997), *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle*, London, Pluto Press; Levin, R. and D. Weiner (Eds) (1997), *'No More Tears'*, Trenton, Africa World Press; Bernstein, H. (Ed) (1996), *The Agrarian Question in South Africa*, London, Frank Cass; Fine, B. and Z. Rustonjee (1996), *The Political Economy of South Africa*, London, Christopher Hurst and Johannesburg, Wits University Press; Mayekiso, *Township Politics*; O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*; Murray, *Revolution Deferred*; Mokonyane, D. (1994), *The Big Sell Out*, London, Nakong ya Rena; Saul, J. (1993), *Recolonization and Resistance in Southern Africa*, Trenton, Africa World Press; Alexander, N. (1993), *Some are More Equal than Others*, Cape Town, Buchu; Callinicos, A. (1992), *South Africa Between Apartheid and Capitalism*, London, Bookmarks; Fine, R. and D. Davies (1991), *Beyond Apartheid*, London, Pluto Press; and Bond, P. (1991), *Commanding Heights and Community Control*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press.

have determined that the ANC and our government represent the subjective factor in the contemporary expression of the capitalist mode of production in our country.⁷⁵

The main point of divergence evident at the WSSD and in similar protests is the global justice movements' argument for 'deglobalisation' of capital.⁷⁶ As ANC policy director Michael Sachs put it, 'We don't oppose the WTO. We'd never join a call to abolish it, or to abolish the World Bank or the IMF... Should we be out there condemning imperialism? If you do those things, how long will you last? There is no organisational alternative, no real policy alternative to what we're doing.'⁷⁷

Yet deglobalisation of capital has a certain prestige amongst even moderate economic nationalists, who turn readily to John Maynard Keynes' 1933 dictum: 'I sympathise with those who would minimise, rather than with those who would maximise, economic entanglement among nations. Ideas, knowledge, science, hospitality, travel -- these are the things which should of their nature be international. But let goods be homespun whenever it is reasonably and conveniently possible and, above all, let finance be primarily national.'⁷⁸ The deglobalisation of capital and the globalisation of people – especially international political solidarity – is essentially what the global justice movements are pursuing. Some of the movements' strategic texts may suggest 'globalisation from below' or even global-scale reforms, but the balance of evidence about the leading struggles for social justice in most Third World locales – Zapatista liberated municipalities, occupied factories in Argentina, Brazilian land invasions, Ghanaian water campaigns, South African townships, Zimbabwean civil society struggles, Indian popular movements, Thai poverty organising, Filipino anti-privatisation movements, Korean worker organising and many others -- supports the idea that decommodification (ordinarily achieved at municipal and national scales) and the deglobalisation of capital are consistent with the globalisation of people – a point worth concluding on below.⁷⁹

The ANC's demonisation of the deglobalisation position will not be successful, in my view. Nevertheless, under the prevailing circumstances, the SACP was anxious to distance itself from

⁷⁵ African National Congress Political Education Unit (2002), 'Contribution to the NEC/NWC Response to the "Cronin Interviews" on the Issue of Neoliberalism,' Johannesburg, September.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Bello, W. (2002), *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy*, London, Zed Books; Bond, Talk Left, Walk Right, Chapter Twelve.

⁷⁷ Kingsnorth, One No, Many Yeses, pp.119-120. Margaret Thatcher coined the acronym 'TINA': There Is No Alternative.

⁷⁸ Keynes, J.M. (1933), 'National Self-Sufficiency,' *Yale Review*, 22, 4, p.769.

⁷⁹ See, amongst many new books about anti-capitalist strategy: Alvarez, S., E.Dagnino and A.Escobar (Eds) (1998), *Cultures of Politics; Politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*, Boulder, Westview; Amin, S. and F.Houtart (Eds) (2003), *The Globalisation of Resistance: The State of the Struggles*, London, Zed; Anand, A., A.Escobar, J.Sen and P.Waterman (Eds)(2003), *Are Other Worlds Possible? The Past, Present, and Futures of the World Social Forum*, New Delhi, Viveka; also Bircham, E. and J.Charlton (Eds) (2002), *Anti-Capitalism: A Guide to the Movement*, London, Bookmarks; Callinicos, A. (2003), *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*, Cambridge, Polity; Fisher, W. and T.Ponniah (Eds)(2003), *Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalisation at the World Social Forum*, London, Zed; Kingsnorth, One No, Many Yesses; Mertes, T. (Ed)(2003), *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?*, London, Verso; Smith, J. and H.Johnston (Eds)(2002), *Globalisation and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield; Starr, A. (2000), *Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalisation*, London, Zed; Waterman, P. (2001), *Globalisation, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms*, London, Continuum.

charges of consorting with the ultraleft. Hence its general secretary, Blade Nzimande, offered a counter-analysis of the independent left: 'The baton of global popular mobilisation and of anti-systemic politics has swung powerfully (and one-sidedly) towards social movement and NGO politics -- what is sometimes called the "new left" (but which properly belongs to an old tradition -- anarcho-syndicalism, cooperative socialism, etc etc), as opposed to the so-called "old left" (communism, social democracy, trade unions, and third world national liberation movements).'⁸⁰

Indeed, the debate over whether the new movements are most logically anarchist and autonomist or instead 'socialist' will continue. As Ngwane puts it,

My concern is also that the [autonomist] ideology of no leadership means, by default, the principle of 'self-selection' and thus encourages a lack of accountability. There is also the danger of [autonomism] drowning in its own militancy, because of its refusal to develop long-term political projects in favour of immediate and short-term and militant actions. The Marxist method of distinguishing between immediate, democratic and transitional demands can be used as an antidote to the disease of 'pure' militancy, and can win militants by its usefulness. Marx teaches us that our aim, in taking up immediate problems of the class, is to show the power of collective working-class action and the need to ultimately overthrow the capitalist system. Without such a perspective there is a danger of co-option, once the enemy accedes to our demands, as they did with the SECC stopping disconnections, or once demoralisation and tiredness set in when the enemy stands firm and people don't see a solution despite their efforts.

Of the SECC cadres, Ngwane concludes, 'these are ordinary people, like millions of other ordinary working people in SA. They have rescued a word which was disappearing into history, or being lost in books and discussions of a few people from the middle class: socialism.'⁸¹

No matter how this debate is resolved, it is apparent that the past few years have brought together at least four factors that will continue to affect local state-civil society relations: Johannesburg's increasingly unsatisfactory municipal services for poor people (due in part to globalisation pressures); the failure of neoliberal macroeconomic policies to deliver jobs and rising incomes; national and municipal political dynamics that fail to incorporate—and instead exclude—the urban masses; and an internationalist ideology on the part of the new protest movements. Will these conditions lead to the kinds of dramatic breakthroughs that were last witnessed a decade earlier, when urban social movements were instrumental in dislodging municipal-scale and indeed national-scale apartheid?

Today, in both resistance and the potentially liberatory demands for decommodification, Johannesburg's new social movements hope to dislodge their national and local government's

⁸⁰ Nzimande, B. (2003), 'New Possibilities for a Progressive Global Politics,' *Umsebenzi*, www.sacp.org.za, March.

⁸¹ Ngwane, T. (2004), 'The New Social Movements and Working Class Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa,' *Historical Materialism*.

⁸² Mbeki, T. (2002), 'Statement of the President of the African National Congress, Thabo Mbeki, at the ANC Policy Conference,' Kempton Park, 27 September.

⁸³ *Sunday Times*, 8 October 2002.

⁸⁴ Appoljis, J. (2002), 'The Political Significance of August 31,' *Khanya Journal*².

commitment to neoliberalism and increasingly repressive governance. This they view as *continuity* from the earlier civil society upsurge to the present resurgence of struggle against class apartheid and residual gender superexploitation. Perhaps the key similarities – which are worth drawing upon both for analytical purposes and by way of normative pro-civil society advocacy – can be summarised, simply, as the rescaling of class struggle, according to the newly reconceptualised but traditional formula which we can term the globalisation of people versus the globalisation of capital.

What does this mean in practice? By arguing for the deglobalisation of apartheid during 1960s-90s campaigns, both internal civil society movements and the ANC showed an awareness of power relations that helped dislodge the alliance between white capital (foreign and domestic) and the racist Pretoria regime. The international demand for disinvestment of financial, commercial and industrial capital was a central pillar of the movement to end apartheid.

The global justice movements' demands today which are fundamental to the struggle against global apartheid are based in large part upon the deglobalisation of capital. Consider some examples of these struggles: anti-war activism focusing in part upon links between the petro-military complex and imperialism; Third World debt repudiation (and reparations for apartheid-era financing and profits); a Tobin Tax and exchange controls against financial speculation; rejection of Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPs) agreements protecting monopoly patents on anti-retroviral brand-name medicines; campaigns against biopiracy and genetically-modified agriculture; an end to export-led trade policies (i.e., those that focus on exploitative maquiladores, destructive cash crops, extractive minerals and fossil fuels); revival of infant industries whose deindustrialisation was caused by excessive trade liberalisation; globally-coordinated anti-privatisation campaigns, especially in the water sector; the cross-subsidisation of electricity and water by big corporations so as to achieve universal access to basic state services; the 'shrink or sink' campaign against the World Trade Organisation; and the new 'Adios IFIs' movement to close the World Bank and IMF. There are many such campaigns, and many interpretations of how these relate to organic movements occurring at the grassroots, shopfloor and household settings that are so crucial to their organic reproduction and growth.

To accomplish the global justice movements' objectives, some of which are moving rapidly to fruition in various pockets of the world, including South Africa, obviously requires the globalisation of people. By this I mean a continuation of the resurgence of civil society worldwide, and perhaps also – notwithstanding (sometimes valid) postmodernist concerns about totalising discourses -- a common language of rights that will increasingly gel, in coming years, into full-fledged coordinations of analysis, strategies, tactics, and even, perhaps, local/national/regional/global programmes of reconstruction and development. It is here, I am convinced, that the continuities of resurgent civil society from the days of racial apartheid to the

85 Bello, W. (2002), *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy*, London, Zed Books; Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, Chapter Twelve. See also, amongst many new books about anti-capitalist strategy: Alvarez, S., E.Dagnino and A.Escobar (Eds) (1998), *Cultures of Politics; Politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*, Boulder, Westview; Amin, S. and F.Houtart (Eds)(2003), *The Globalisation of Resistance: The State of the Struggles*, London, Zed; Anand, A., A.Escobar, J.Sen and P.Waterman (Eds)(2003), *Are Other Worlds Possible? The Past, Present, and Futures of the World Social Forum*, New Delhi, Viveka; also Bircham, E. and J.Charlton (Eds) (2002), *Anti-Capitalism: A Guide to the Movement*, London, Bookmarks; Callinicos, A. (2003), *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*, Cambridge, Polity; Fisher, W. and T.Ponniah (Eds)(2003), *Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalisation at the World Social Forum*, London, Zed; Kingsnorth, *One No, Many Yesses*; Mertes, T. (Ed)(2003), *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?*, London, Verso; Smith, J. and H.Johnston (Eds)(2002), *Globalisation and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield; Starr, A. (2000), *Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalisation*, London, Zed; Waterman, P. (2001), *Globalisation, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms*, London, Continuum.

current epoch of global apartheid are most important, and it is here that South Africans can continue providing inspiration to their comrades across the world.