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**Violence and Community in the
Everyday of Post-Apartheid**

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Violence and Community in the Everyday of Post-Apartheid

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This paper considers the relationship between violence in South Africa and its impact on citizenship and governance. Violence considered outside of the normative terrain of Law, and as structural, physical and psychological, has wide ranging implications for the forms of community emerging in post-apartheid South Africa. There have been calls for increased levels of social cohesion as a remedial action to counter the propensity toward violence as a phenomena which breaks down the social fabric. This paper critically considers the implications of relying on ‘community’ as way to reduce violence. It also discusses the practices of cohesion and community which violence brings into existence. These actual forms of community in the post-apartheid era may be at odds with unifying nation-building efforts of the government, and would result in balkanized zones of governmental practices mapped onto spatially distinct networks of living regulated by racialized calculations of risk and mortality.

Violent crime is taken to be an important indicator of a range of socio-political factors which have long term implications for the realization of what are taken to be “developmental questions”, like “social cohesion”, democratic practices and economic development in South Africa. This paper takes both ‘crime’ and ‘violence’ as categories better understood not simply as legal categories, but as political-historical constructions. By that I mean that the activities we cast as ‘criminal’ are defined as such because they fall into, or outside of domains and norms of behaviour which are governed by the Law. The intentional taking of a life for example, is considered ‘murder’ when it falls outside of the lawful prescriptions on the taking of a life. In countries that have the death penalty, for example, the taking of a life by the state is not considered murder, if it

punishment accorded to a individual which follows a judicial process deemed 'fair' and 'just'.

Violence in and of itself may not be criminal, but its relationship to the existing legal framework will decide whether its particular form is criminal or not. This is quite apart from normative views which might inform an individual or a self-identification of a group's ethical, moral and religious views on violence¹.

Outside of the legal categorization of violence as 'crime', such as murder, or assault, we can think of violence in two categories or forms.

The first is to think of violence as involving physical assault, the infliction of pain, or death. This notion of violence is consistent with the definition of violence developed by the World Health Organisation:

"the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation."

The World Health Organisation's definition is widely cited by those who work in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and public health interventions. It does seek to extend an understanding of violence by including psychological trauma and forms of deprivation which we might not immediately consider to have damaging physical somatic effects on the body. It does however require that the actions which have violent effects, whether material or psychological, are done so 'intentionally', with the premeditated aim of creating a violent effect.

¹ Walter Benjamin suggested the important distinction between law-making and law-preserving violence as an analytical distinction. Cf Benjamin, W [1926] (1986) 'Critique of Violence', in *Illuminations: reflections, aphorisms, autobiographical writings*, New York: Schocken

Another consideration of violence emphasizes its social, cultural and political dimensions as a *process* which is often less visible. The violence involved in murder, and assault is more likely to get attention, to become the subject of newspaper reporting, rumour, gossip and social hysteria¹. As the anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes notes, ‘focusing exclusively on the physical aspects [of violence]...misses the point and transforms the project into a clinical, literary, or artistic exercise, which runs the risk of degenerating into a theatre or pornography of violence’.¹

Scheper-Hughes invokes the concept of ‘everyday violence’ to describe those forms of violence which become part of the routine lived existence of citizens, and therefore attract less attention: ‘the everyday violence of infant mortality, slow starvation, disease, despair, and humiliation that destroys a socially marginalized human with even greater frequency are usually invisible’¹.

Similarly, John Galtung has drawn attention to what he calls ‘structural violence’. Galtung argues that violence is not simply a physical act, but should also be understood as a ‘process that can be embedded into wider social structures’, and that can therefore be ‘built into the structure of society, showing up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances’.¹

Everyday, routinized, or normalized violence does not often appear within the ambit of research on violence because it does not fall within categories of law that we consider ‘illegal’. ‘Violent crime’ connotes specific categories of violent behaviour, practices and intentions. It is worth bearing in mind however that it does not describe all forms of

¹ On the relationship between rumour, hysteria and criminality see James Siegel (1998) *A new criminal type in Jakarta*, Durham: Duke University Press

¹ Scheper-Hughes, N and Bourgois, P.eds (2004) *Violence in War and Peace*, UK: Blackwell, p1

¹ *ibid*, and also Scheper-Hughes (1992) *Death Without Weeping: The violence of everyday life in Brazil*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, chpt 20

¹ Galtung, J (1969) ‘Violence, peace and peace research’, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 6, no. 3, p171

violent relations in South African society. For the purposes of this discussion I am confining myself generally to the more limited conception of violence in relation to the question of legality although I do invoke the more general conception of violence later on.

Violence, Crime and Governance

Discussing the implications of violence for South Africa's future requires taking into account trends in both forms of violence that permeate relations within the society. In order to do so, it would be useful to locate an analysis of the effects of violence and crime within various practices of 'governance'. I am using governance in its broadest sense to describe multiple practices which co-exist and overlap, and which describes practices and relations at both an individual level as well as at a group level.

Governance therefore refers firstly to the ways in which the self is managed, and more particularly the abstracted autonomous self within the secularized liberal eschatology of modernist political discourse¹. This has normative implications for the multiple ways in which we manage personal conduct, in relation to morality, ethical conduct and the configuration of choice, of what Michel Foucault called 'the conduct of conduct'. These are of choices configured within group sensibilities and are part of the values, norms and practices shaped by socializing agents and institutions.

Secondly, governance refers to the ways in which we manage the construction, maintenance and transformations of identity. Identities often prescribe, or establish way of being in the world which entail normative modes of conduct and behaviour. The construction of gendered identities, for example, creates normative expectations of femininity and masculinity which become taken for granted¹. When these are challenged or threatened by encounters with difference this produces multiple effects, some of which

¹ Foucault, M (1990) *The History of Sexuality: the care of the Self*, vol.3, UK: Penguin

¹ Butler, J (1997) *Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

result in forms of violence. Threats to male honour for example, might occasion violent behaviour to re-assert a masculine sensibility¹. The ways in which we respond to threats are themselves socially conditioned, but are often inscribed into the body so as to become a reflex reaction, the ‘ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies’.¹

More broadly, we may also refer governance in the more conventional political sense. This refers to the institutional mechanisms through which we regulate the public aspects of social and community life. The distribution of political power occurs within the structures of governance we establish. In a democratic constitutional dispensation, such as South Africa, the governance of social life is therefore mapped by the division of spheres of authority and competencies horizontally and vertically, eg. Local, provincial and national government. The Constitution governs the relations between citizens and citizens, and between citizens and the state- relations established by the Rights which underpin it. This establishes the legal frameworks of legitimate and illegitimate practices. The government of political life further refers to responsibilities for taking care of different aspects of collective and individual well being- economic well being, education, public and private health, and safety and security for example.

Governance, fourthly, here also entails the regulatory networks of interdependence that characterize social and collective life which are said fall outside the direct responsibility of the state and within what we refer to, within a secular state like South Africa, as the private domain. This involves practices within the family, the church, mosque, temple or synagogue, the ‘community’, or the ‘nation’ in its cultural form.

Taken together, the character, depths, mediation and articulation between these different spheres of governance, along a continuum from the personal to the political, describes what is referred to as ‘social cohesion’. Disarticulations between these spheres of

¹ Polk, K (1994) *Why Men kill, Scenarios of Masculine Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

¹ Mauss, M (1973) ‘Techniques of the Body’, *Economy and Society*, no.2, p70

governance- indicated by violence for example, indicate low levels of trust and therefore poor levels of social cohesion. Whilst social cohesion is a normative aspiration in a fractured society like South Africa, its presence or absence, I suggest, is the *effect* rather than the cause of practices established by the ways in which governance is practiced in the multiple forms described above. In other words, the presence or absence of something like ‘social cohesion’ is a symptomatic marker, and cannot be created by simply insisting on it as a normative disposition towards others- within a family, community or nation. To approach it in this way does not take into account the historicity of the existing lived forms of governance which exist in these spheres of social life.

Crime and Citizenship

The ways in which we conceptualize the relationship between rights and obligations, social capital, and social trust, have to take into account the historical influences which shape the actual practices of these ideas. In a South African context, the African experience of citizenship, shaped by colonialism and apartheid is crucial. The Nigerian political scientist, Peter Ekeh¹, argued in a seminal article, that the conventional division between the private and the public sphere, between the state and civil society, cannot simply be transferred analytically from its Western genealogy to an African context. The African colonial experience, in particular, the experience of indirect rule, Ekeh argued, creates multiple spaces of rights and obligations- and two publics rather than one. Ekeh distinguished between a public realm, a private realm and a realm of ‘societal morality’ (1973, p91). Whilst the same individuals may overlap as members of these realms, each of these realms makes a different claim on ethics and morality, and rights and obligations. In particular, Ekeh distinguishes between a primordial public, a civic public and a private realm. One feels an obligation to the primordial public, but in exchange one gets solidarity and identity- not economic benefit. The civic realm on the other hand, which is the colonial public sphere, is a amoral space where economic benefit

¹ Ekeh, P (1973) Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 17, no. 1

is derived: ‘duties...are de-emphasized, while rights are squeezed out of the civic public with the amorality of an artful dodger’ (p107).

Ekeh was intent on historicizing the idea of ‘corruption’ and ‘tribalism’ in Africa, by showing the impact colonialism had in creating different sensibilities about right and obligations. Corruption, as ‘criminal’, Ekeh argued, had to therefore be understood as a practice which could be justified because the law of the postcolonial state lacked legitimacy since it had historically been used to exclude and dominate Africans. In the South African context, the sensibility of *‘ukupanda’*, of always trying ones luck, resonates with the ‘artful dodger’ that Ekeh describes. As the literary theorist Sam Raditlhalo observes , “young blacks in the ghetto use the notion of hustling, ‘ukupanda’, or to ‘make life’ as their armour. For them this obsession with making it good involves, as for youth anywhere, a desire for recognition, legitimacy, status, wealth, and, ultimately, being allowed membership of mainstream society, and Johannesburg is as good a place as any for the hustlers... Beyond the platitudes of the ruling party, youth out there are going to make it by hook or crook, and yes, some of this makes for the higher crime rates that we experience. Having grown up in a tough neighbourhood that included the likes of "Fingers" Rabotapi , I know not the number of funerals of hustlers I have attended over the years.”¹ Above all what the practice of *ukuphanda* points to is the divergence between an ethical conduct condoned by a domain of sociality which is not commensurate with the legal conduct authorized by judicial norms. To this extent, legal conduct that regulates the domain of ‘civil society’ applies effectively to a limited section of the society, as Marx noted in his usage of ‘civil society’ as a bourgeois realm. Criminal violence, I would argue, must be ‘thought’ in this liminal space, as neither within the domain of the state, nor the domain of ‘civil society’¹ . In the Indian context, the political theorist Partha Chatterjee has called this domain “political society”.

¹ Raditlhalo S (2007) ‘Notes from a Lazy Scholar’, !! HYPERLINK "http://www.litnet.co.za" ¶ www.litnet.co.za¹ . See also Bhekizizwe Peterson, "Kwaito, ‘dawks’ and the animonies of hustling". *African Identities*, 1:2, 2003

¹ See also Partha Chatterjee (2006) *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, New York: Columbia University Press

State Responses to violent crime

The postapartheid security services, and the South African Police Service in particular, has been acutely aware that in order to provide effective policing the perception by the public had to be changed.¹ From serving the interests of an authoritarian and racist regime which protected the welfare of a racial minority, the police had to become an institution which now served the majority of South Africans. It had to become the custodian of security rather than an agent of insecurity. The South African Police Service heralded the re-naming of the force, as well as heralding the inauguration of a new ethic of policing that upheld human rights practices, was based on detection and accumulation of evidence and a state objective to serve ‘the community’.¹

The most comprehensive framework for transforming the role of the police to date was the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS). The NCPS advocated a multi pronged approach which emphasized a range of interventions, which included community partnerships, public education and reshaping social values, and changes in environmental design. As Clifford Shearing and Mark Shaw noted, ‘What was remarkable about the document was that it challenged the conventional wisdom about policing being fundamentally police business. While it did not recognise the risk-focused nature of apartheid policing’, it emphasized that ‘security within post-apartheid South Africa will require the creation of a new set of apparatuses for governing security that re-established the police as one node in a network of resources....At the nub of the NCPS is the argument that the governance of security is effective when it involves more than simply police resources. It argues that post-apartheid policing strategy should be developed to

¹ Marks, M & Fleming, J (2004) ‘As unremarkable as the air they breathe? Reforming Police Management in South Africa’, *Current Sociology*, vol. 52, no.5

¹ Shaw, M (2002) *Crime and Policing in Post-apartheid South Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Brogden, M (1993) *Policing for a New South Africa*, UK: Routledge; Rauch, J et al. (1994) *Creating a New South African Police Service: challenges for the post-election period*, Braamfontein: Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

create new systems for mobilising resources to reduce the risk of crime across the society.’¹

As Shearing and Shaw note, however, all elements of this plan were not implemented equally. In effect, the plan carried forward the policing aspects, which focused on the more conventional understanding of crime as something to be reduced by a more effective administration of detection, arrest and incarceration. Besides the conventional account for this shift as correlating with changes in the political administration, we have to ask a more fundamental question about whether the NCPS was probable in the first place. I say this from the vantage point of a political-philosophic doubt that the modern police as an institution is already always scripted to produce a violence immanent to the law.

The actual response to crime has been then to provide legal empowerment to the administration of justice, and to create mechanisms which improve the efficiency and scope of the criminal justice system through the employment of more police personnel and prosecutors. In effect therefore, ‘the net result of all of this has been that, despite the intention of the NCPS to shift policing reform away from the police, it has become little more than a strategy for police structural reform’¹

The shift away from the comprehensive approach to policing has been driven by a number of other factors, which are likely to continue to exert considerable influence on the shaping of policing policy. A key factor has been the need to respond to public outcry around crime levels, animated by both the actual statistical levels of crime, and growing perception of increased insecurity. This public outcry is mediated through newspapers and television, and initially was substantially driven by those who had a historical sense

¹ <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/7No3/ShawAndShearing.html>

¹ <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/7No3/ShawAndShearing.html>

of entitlement to feeling safe¹, felt empowered to articulate their views in newspapers in English, and who understood the legal and constitutional obligations of the state towards citizens. In effect therefore, it has been white citizens who most vocally articulated views around ‘crime’ as a pressing socio-political concern. In addition, an important articulator of the public discourse around crime has been the business community, who have emphasized the need for a safe environment in order to be effective producers and retailers of goods, and to create an enabling environment for investment in long term investment. To that end, business has been proactive in establishing policing partnerships, private security, surveillance cameras and so on, in urban areas and central business districts¹.

The” return to community”?

The observation by the Ministry of Safety and Security that more than 80% of violent contact crime occurs between people who know each other, has once again brought to the fore an element of the NCPS- that the police cannot solely prevent violent crime since they cannot be everywhere all the time, more so in social spaces considered the private domain of citizens. This realization has led to the current emphasis on the need to inculcate and transform the social norms, values and practices of citizens if were are to reduce violent and property related crime. The emphasis is therefore on creating a ‘socially cohesive’ community where levels of trust engender more socially harmonious relations, and where rights and obligations are practiced which are consistent with the laws which govern the country. The importance of social cohesion was highlighted through the development of specific programmes to be undertaken and monitored by the Cabinet of the South African government, which noted in its cabinet *lekgotla* in July

¹ It is worth bearing in mind that in 1996 more than 74% of police stations were located in formerly white areas.

¹ An example of this is the Business Against Crime initiative (www.bac.co.za)

2007 that such ‘programmes would be informed by the need to improve the quality of social relations by promoting positive values, including social solidarity and trust.’⁷¹

The mechanisms through which these could be achieved at the level of policing are through community policing forums, and sector policing for example. Key institutional agents of socialization, like the family and the public education system could also be important sites of intervention through which to transform relations amongst citizens in order to create a socially cohesive community.

The successful implementation of policies and programmes, based on this realization would be an important goal in the years ahead. If South Africa is to address violent crime, and increased property crime, then security will have to be understood in broader terms than punishment, deterrence and incarceration. The question of which section of the population’s security needs will most effectively also be met is of vital importance.

Making the communities in which the majority of South Africans find themselves, safer, and building ‘social cohesion’ through state-civil society partnerships, will have to confront a number of challenges however. Firstly, it is important to note that significant forms of social organization which expressed grass roots political demands were demobilized with the inauguration of a democratic government in 1994⁷². The expectation was and continues to be that the new state will deliver, and that communities would be the recipients of development rather than proactive agents. This view was held by ruling African National Congress and it set about its tasks as a government with this approach in mind⁷³.

⁷¹ <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2007/07073009371001.htm>

⁷² Mkhuseleli Jack and Janet Cherry (2003) ‘Participatory Democracy: The Legacy of the UDF in the Eastern Cape’, *Umrabulo*, www.anc.org.za

⁷³ For a critical reflection on this by a senior member of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, cf Helena Sheehan (2002) *Jeremy Cronin interviews*, May, <http://www.comms.dcu.ie/sheehan/za/cronin02.htm>

Secondly, the existence of the apartheid state, and the mobilization against it, created socially cohesive communities. These were communities mobilized not only against the infliction of harm through repression, detentions and torture, but also mobilized against the everyday violence of apartheid- the violence of racialized citizenship, restrictions on movement, poor education and health services. In other words, the socio-economic violence of apartheid as the bureaucratic administration of racist policies which systematically undervalued black life- what Hannah Arendt called the ‘banality of evil’. Bringing into focus the apartheid state as the source of suffering and insecurity provided an animating energy around which ‘community’ was brought into existence and maintained by ‘traditions’ of activism and ‘struggle’.

Thirdly, the effects on these communities of the postapartheid government’s economic policies needs to be critically considered. Whilst there have been considerable improvements in political stability, provision of social welfare grants, access to water and electricity, these have been uneven and their means of delivery have had mixed, sometimes unintended consequences. South Africa is ranked by the UNDP as a ‘middle-income’ country. The macro-economic indicators suggest consistently modest growth of the economy, with a drop in inflation levels, increases in profits, trade and investment¹. For nearly a decade these aggregate macro-economic indicators also contained a less optimistic story of ‘jobless growth’. However, ‘between September 2004 and September 2005, more than 650,000 jobs were created, according to the official statistical agency’s count.’²³ Whilst there is a translation of growth into jobs there is still some concern about the sustainability of these jobs, created in sectors which rely on a flexible labour market, and whether they provide sufficient rewards to lift people out of poverty. The unemployment crisis presents a serious challenge: wide definitions hovers at around 40%

¹ Manuel, T (2005) Budget Speech, February, www.finance.gov.za

²³ !! HYPERLINK

"<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0210/P0210September2005.pdf>" Labor Force Survey¹ (LFS)¹ .

whilst 'strict' definitions place it in the low 30%¹. The economy's most dramatic cleavage, the racialized gap between rich and poor, which since the end of apartheid is widening, is only marginally deracializing. The gini-coefficient, which measures income inequality, puts South Africa in competition with Brazil as the two countries with the highest level of income inequality. Some forty five percent of the population lives below the poverty line. "In spite of the pro-poor policies, South Africa still remains one of the highest in the world in terms of income inequality²⁵."

Building social cohesion often relies on the assumption that communities possess a level of material and symbolic resources, called 'social capital'. This new 'ethic', argues Ash Amin, 'is epitomized by talk of revitalizing social capital, community cohesion, civic responsibility, and public spaces'¹. However, as Amin notes, 'why should we expect some much from community in such places? ...The down and out- if this is not to caricature the social pathology of deprived areas- are least equipped and least motivated to play at such lofty community expectations, stripped as they are of the material, institutional, experiential and possibly also civic and public life. It simply does not make sense to based regeneration on community in these contexts'¹. Amin's point, which is worth taking up, is not that local areas do not have any capacity or agency. Rather it is, firstly that it might be misplaced to give a normative moral character to the kinds of cohesion projected onto these communities as a 'lack', which needs to be revived in social relations. And secondly, he reminds us that the fate of a 'community' is not simply determined by communities themselves, but is also determined by the networks of spatial links, economically and politically, that communities are tapped into, or delinked from.

¹ The 'strict' definition does not include people who are unemployed and are no longer seeking a job.

²⁵ World Bank Report, 2006

¹ Cf. Altman, M (2006) 'The State of Employment', in Daniel, J. et al. *The State of the Nation, 2004-2005*, Pretoria: HSRC Press. Also, Trieghaardt, J (2006) Reflections on Poverty and Inequality in South Africa, Paper presented at the annual Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) conference organised by University of Venda Department of Social Work. 18-20 September 2006.

¹ Amin, A (2005) 'Local Community on Trial', *Economy and Society*, Vol. 34, no. 4

¹ *ibid*

Fragmented Cohesions: ‘community’ after apartheid

Areas most affected by violent crime are also the areas most affected by everyday or structural violence. They are black communities in mega-townships, mostly working class, with high levels of unemployment and poverty. They are the communities least articulating crime as the major concern affecting them, but they are increasingly mobilizing around the expectations of improvements to their basic conditions of living-housing, land, and ‘service delivery’. By May 2007 already, according to a study by the Freedom of Expression Institute, ‘6000 protests were officially recorded during the 2004/05 financial year of which almost 1000 were banned...15 protests are being held *per day* somewhere in South Africa – besides the number of unrecorded protests’¹. The study went on to note, significantly for our consideration here, that ‘A disturbing pattern emerges from the research: activists that oppose the government’s macro-economic strategy and their communities’ slide into deeper poverty and misery are finding themselves isolated and targeted by local municipalities and its law enforcement machinery. In the process they are denied their constitutional rights to freedom of expression and assembly. Police officers are often ignorant of the Gatherings Act or, more worryingly, abuse the Act to prevent people from protesting and marching in public.’

Fragmented Cohesions: ‘criminality’ and ‘community’

Ekeh’s argument outlined above suggests that the social status of the Law in postcolonial societies cannot be assumed to be normatively prescriptive of the social morality within which it is embedded. In fact, there is a disjuncture between the social morality of legitimate practice and the legal prescriptions which govern the ‘civic sphere’. The conceptualization of a policing strategy in post-apartheid South Africa took this into

¹ Delaney, S (2007) *Amandla! Protest in the New South Africa*, <http://www.fx.org.za/content/view/83/51/>

account, and the formulation of the NCPS set out to establish the legitimacy of policing by extending the conception of it to include community partnerships, taking a broad view of 'safety and security' as not only the task of a police force. This however was not fully implemented.

'Community', could also become an identity which coheres around a notion of marginalization and social exclusion, as victims of a lack of delivery, and poor local government representation and service. This cohesion, whilst seeming geographically sporadic, and often times spontaneous, is being established against a particular object of derision. If municipalities and local government agencies respond, as indicated above, with disproportionate force and disregard legal restrictions, then the police are less likely to establish legitimacy within communities in the future. The Law will therefore be experienced as repressive if experienced as the sharp end of a stick, and likely be seen to be working against poorer communities rather than for them.

More than 50% of black South Africans are victims of violent crime in their residential areas, while more than 80% of white South Africans are victims of similar crimes away from their residential areas¹. The growing call for action against criminals has seen an increase in police arrests. However the increased arrest rate has not seen a commensurate increase in conviction rates. Rather, there has been a decline in conviction rates. The result is a decline in the perception of the efficacy of the South African Police as the ultimate provider of safety and security. These has lead to the growth of various community initiatives, which have taken multiple forms depending on the resources which communities can mobilize.

There has been the emergence of vigilante groups across the country¹, such as the People Against Gangsterism and Drugs in the Western Cape. Similarly in Natal organizations

¹ Bilkis, O (2006) 'Can our public order police still deliver?', *SA Crime Quarterly*, no. 15

¹ Buur, L 'The Sovereign Outsourced: Local Justice and Violence in Port Elizabeth' in T. B. Hansen & F. Stepputat (eds.), *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the*

were formed which started out as community neighbourhood watches, some of which have taken on violent and racialized forms. In his ethnographic study of community policing a mostly Indian neighbourhood in Chatsworth, Thomas Blom Hansen notes that ‘the patrols became involved in a range of intractable and unpredictable activities...arrests at times turned into shootings and savage beatings of young Africans’¹. ‘Community’ in the case of Pagad and the neighbourhood watches in Chatsworth speak to the recovery of a religious and racially hegemonic social morality fraying at the seams as a result of substance abuse, gangsterism and poverty.

In less organized forms, there have also been sporadic violent outbursts of community action against criminals or those suspected of being have committed crimes across the country. Most recently in March of 2012, in Khayelistsha in Cape Town three young men were killed, two of them ‘necklaced’ and one stoned to death. This brought to eight the number of people killed in that area alone in two weeks by the procedures of justice deemed more effective by the residents, marking the regularized return of the ‘kangaroo court’³³.

Black South African townships, suffering the structural violence of poverty and unemployment have also cohered around that which comes from outside and threatens, or perceives to threaten or impede the life chances of local citizens. Within this category of external threats are those who are seen to be taking prospective jobs, and income generating opportunities, or undercutting local business people by selling staple goods at a cheaper price within townships and informal settlements. The target around which ‘community’ coheres in this particular instance becomes foreign Africans, designated colloquially as *Amakwerere*, who have become victims of xenophobic violence. A stark case in point has been the Masiphumele informal settlement in Cape Town, where more than thirty Somali traders and their families have been killed and their businesses

Postcolonial World, pp.192-217, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹ Hansen, T.B (2006) ‘Performers of sovereignty: on the privatization of security in urban South Africa’, *Critique of Anthropology*, vol 26, p289

³³ http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/why-khayelitsha-is-turning-to-mob-justice-1.1263776?TB_iframe=true&height=600&keepThis=true&width=900

destroyed. Similar attacks occurred on Somalis in Johannesburg, Northern Limpopo and the Free State provinces as well. One victim, Hadith Haji Adam lamented that ‘Some people in the community like us, but others don't want the competition. I think some local shopowners are behind the violence against us - they organised the attacks on our businesses and now we have nothing’¹. These attacks are not confined to Somali’s, and the number of migrants to South Africa from the North, including the DRC, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe, continues to surge.

The insecurity of life, in its biological, economic and social reproduction also further entrenches the widespread belief in occult practices of witchcraft. Where trust is eroded, threats and jealousy circulate invisibly. The use of sangomas to protect health, and reduce susceptibility to the bad intentions of others is a widespread and often unacknowledged practice which disrupts modernist bio-medical and legal conceptions of care and social order. In a survey conducted in the Slovo Park informal settlement outside of Pretoria it was found that almost seventy percent of residents resorted to the use of muti in order to safeguard them from risk. This included herbal products such as *Ubulawu*, which assists in communication with ancestors and keeps attackers away from a house; *Vimbela*, which is said to make attackers burn alive; *Isithunzi*, which provides a shadow against evil; *Ntelezi*, which is sprinkled around the home and the body to protect against misfortune, and *Iwasho*, which is a mixture of soap and holy water used to ward off evil¹. In his study of the relationship between witchcraft and democracy in Soweto after apartheid, Adam Ashforth observed that : ‘Life in a world with witches must be lived in the light of a presumption of malice: one must assume that anyone with the motive to harm has access to the means and that people *will* cause harm because they can.... It is dangerous to assume that an instance of suffering might be accidental or a product of purely impersonal forces devoid of connection with human or spiritual agency.... Thus it is wise, when living in a world of witches, to seek protection against suffering being so caused. And it is also wise, when

¹ ‘Attacks on Somali’s expose xenophobia’, *IRIN*, 31 October, 2006

¹ Emmett, T and Buchart, A (2000) *Behind the Mask, Getting to Grips with Crime and Violence*, Pretoria: HSRC Press, p169

misfortune does occur, to other reason than to afford protection against further mishap'¹ (p. 69). Those who are seen to succeed, or are upwardly mobile can sometimes be marked as doing at the expense of others in the community, or through the use of occult powers. Those perceived to be witches are also vulnerable to attack, as has been the case in the North West province in particular, but in other parts of the country as well. In a recent case at a Kwazulu-Natal school, pupils at Mahlenga High School burnt to death two women whom they accused of being 'umthakathi's (witches), who were putting a curse on the school. An investigation has so far brought to light that one of the women accused of being a witch has a granddaughter who is a grade twelve pupil at the school. According to the report, she was the only one passing, and the girls at the school began to blame her grandmother for their failures, as she was an *umthakathi* placing a curse on them. They marched over to the grandmother's house, where another lady was visiting : 'The two women in their 60s - Mangubane Msaba Zungu and Qibile Thabitha Thusi - were dragged from a home and taken to a sports field where they were doused with petrol and set alight. Zungu died at the scene and Thusi later died in hospital.'¹

Safety and the production of 'communities' of Exclusion

With the perception of state inadequacy to provide security, and the perception of rising levels of insecurity, David Garland argues that there is the unraveling of 'one of the foundational myths of modern societies: namely that the sovereign state is capable of providing security, law and order, and crime control.'¹

¹ Ashforth, A (2005) *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p69. On occult belief and neo-liberalism, see Jean and John Comaroff (1999) 'Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 26, no 2

¹ http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2179345,00.html

¹ Garland, D (1996) 'The Limits of the sovereign state', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 36, no. 4

Noting that for most white South Africans, victims surveys suggest that most violent crime occurs away from the place of residence, it is the residential area that has become the zone which has to be fortified. Middle class residents are able to mobilize resources, information, technologies, and organization. A website of one such organization, the Community Safety and Information Network, which aims to ‘fight crime through intelligence’, notes that in its own study that the state cannot be relied on to ensure effective criminal justice, given the low levels of convictions:

‘statistically, out of an estimated 2,115,946 serious & violent crimes committed in South Africa in 2004/5 there were only 62,717 convictions - a conviction rate of 2.96%. Only 1,100,292 (52%) were reported to and/or recorded by the South African Police Services (S.A.P.S.) This means that at least 2,053,230 criminals, equivalent to the population of a city like Cape Town or Durban, who perpetrated serious and violent crimes in 2005 alone are walking free on our streets, posing a massive threat of crime to the citizens of South Africa as well as all international visitors - **even the President of Taiwan, Chen Sui Bien, was held up at gunpoint in South Africa** when he visited our country while he was still a legislator!’¹

As the blurb intimates by its example, if the President of a foreign country is not immune from criminality in South Africa, how could ‘ordinary’ citizens expect to have their safety guaranteed by the state? The ability of wealthy communities to mobilize resources for their safety has given rise to a number of industries geared towards this. A company by the name of Cingulum Security for example, offers subscribers the preventive measure of becoming part of their network of surveillance cameras that monitor nine-hundred households in four suburbs of Johannesburg. The cameras are linked to a central control room which can deploy a rapid reaction security force. Working on a strategy of ‘Tactical Intervention’, company director Geoff Schapiro extolled the virtues of his approach: “To move past response to early detection and prevention of crime, you need field intelligence, and that is what the cameras give us. Video surveillance has great advantages. Technology does not fall asleep on duty or take lunch and tea breaks. It’s in

¹ www.csin.c.za

action 24/7.”¹

The socio-spatial experience of violent crime suggest that violent crime accompanies property related crime in middle class and formerly white areas to a greater degree than in black urban areas. Two trends are important here. Firstly, the proliferation of ‘gated communities’. Typically these have involved setting up access control around older neighbourhoods, blocking off a street or blocks of streets, organized by residents within an area. Private security guards are employed to regulate the inward and outward movement of people and vehicles within a neighbourhood. There are more than three hundred road closures in the Gauteng metropolitan area, most of which have not been approved by the local municipality¹. A second model, the ‘security village’, is the format taken by newer property developments, based on town house and cluster home models, are often built as a form of gated community, with controlled access points, surrounded by high walls, and electrified razor wire. The safety offered by these developments adds to the retail value of the property, indicating their desirability in the middle to upper class housing market, particularly in Gauteng and Durban and Cape Town.

Secondly, the lack of confidence in state agencies providing adequate levels of safety has lead to the massive growth of the private security industry in South Africa.

The increased investment in residential fortification, and private security, in order to both ensure safety, and feel safer, may paradoxically, in the long run, create further social fragmentation and insecurity. In her study of spatial separation in Cape Town, Charlotte Lemansky observes that, based on the Latin American experience, ‘walls and gates have reinforced a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion by concentrating the poorest social groups in spaces with minimal economic and political leverage...Furthermore, enclaves

¹ www.axis.com

¹ Landman, K (2002) *Gated Communities in South Africa: building bridges or barriers?* paper presented to conference on Private Urban Governance, http://www.gatedcomsa.co.za/docs/bridges_barriers.pdf

do not just respond to difference and fear, but actually deepen segregation and reinforce fear by excluding difference and limiting social mixing, thus increasing paranoia and mistrust between groups'.¹

Fear has also generated a sense of community within former white areas. With considerably more resources and capacity, active community policing forums have been set up in many former white areas, where short staffed police stations can be personelled with volunteer staff, body corporates are organized, and there is a collective mobilization against crime. In a survey of how residents are responding to crime in two residential areas, one predominantly white and middle class, and the other predominantly black and working class, it was found that the middle class community could much more effectively mobilize around ensuring services which would secure their neighbourhood than the working class one¹.

However, these positive formations of community are often mobilized against an 'other' that increasingly fosters separation. In the study mentioned above, it became clear that in the middle class white area the view was that 'crime originated from outside the community'¹. The community could therefore establish a level of 'trust' and social relations which bound them together in relation to an external threat which they could collectively keep a look out for, and draw on and develop practices and technologies in order to do this. Similarly, in her study of gated communities in Sao Paulo, Caldiera noted that the 'withdrawal of the upper classes from public space into enclaves leads to the emergence of a discourse associating criminality and poverty, and generates stereotypical images of the poor as inherently 'dangerous''¹.

¹ Lemanski, C (2004) 'A new apartheid? The spatial implications of fear and crime in Cape Town, South Africa', *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 16, no. 2, p107

¹ Emmett, T and Buchart, A (2000) *Behind the Mask, Getting to Grips with Crime and Violence*, Pretoria: HSRC Press, p173

¹ *ibid*, p 173

¹ Caldiera, T.P.R (2000) 'Building up the walls: the new pattern of spatial segregation in Sao Paulo', *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 147, p 55

These imaginaries of the poor, as those to be placed outside the spatial zones of safety, means relinquishing the shared social space of citizenship and narrowing conceptions of rights and obligations. In her work on Brazil, Scheper-Hughes noted the mutually determining relationship between the fate of the urban poor and the fears of the middle-classes: ‘Meanwhile, the affluent and the powerful, tucked away in gated communities and in homes protected by armed guards and mechanical surveillance reminiscent of medieval fortresses safely imagine themselves as endangered rather than as endangering populations’.¹ Under siege, the middle classes do not see the proportion of wealth at their disposal as directly of consequence to the level of fear they live with in a society with stark material inequalities.

Their residential spaces of safety are accompanied by fortified enclaves where work takes place, as well as consumption and leisure. These zones are connected by road and transport systems that favour the wealthy, creating an interlinked ‘fortified network’, which could eventually ‘disembed’ the city. The trend towards malls, high ways, and transport systems like the *Gautrain* project, which favours the middle classes, may be indications of this trend in South Africa.

Conclusion

Violence impacts on South African society at physical, psychological and structural levels. Rather than suggest a breakdown, I am arguing that we need to look at the kinds of cohesion this violence brings into existence. The forms of social cohesion it creates shows signs of being at odds with the forms of social cohesion envisioned by the national government. Whilst there are positive community formations to manage risk, poor communities are also showing signs of cohering around marginalization, social exclusion, xenophobia, and susceptibility to gender and sexual violence. Violence, as experienced by middle class communities increasingly pessimistic about the state’s capacity to provide safety, shows signs of creating enclave communities with privatized

¹ Scheper-Hughes, N (2004) *Dangerous and Endangered Youth*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 13, 46, p14

security, which could lead increasingly to cohesion around fear of ‘the poor’.

If social cohesion continues in these fragmented and mutually exclusive spatial zones, social polarization would continue to create racially separate ‘publics’, with different benefits, rights and obligations, and fragmented experiences of citizenship. Each dependent on the other, yet rendering a conception of the Other which threatens the identity of the self, where the self is considered racially, as an economic agent, and simultaneously ‘national’, and gendered. The terrain of the encounter between self and Other remains therefore a terrain saturated with everyday violence, reproducing the rationality sublimated by the Weberian state but foundational to its existence: that the security of the Self requires acts of privatized violence to secure itself.