UJ Sociology, Anthropology & Development Studies

W E D N E S D A Y

S E M I N A R

Hosted by the Department of Sociology and the

Department of Anthropology & Development Studies

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

Meeting no 09/2016

To be held at 15h30 on Wednesday, 13 April 2016,

in C-Ring 315, UJ Kingsway campus

Social policy after two decades of democracy in South Africa: A call for social re-engineering?

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Social policy after two decades of democracy in South Africa: A call for social re-engineering?

A paper presented by

Prof. Ndangwa Noyoo at the Sociology, Anthropology & Development Studies Seminar, University of Johannesburg, 13 April, 2016.

Abstract

For two decades the African National Congress (ANC)-led government has put in place a wide array of social policy measures primarily aimed at transforming South Africa and also raising the quality of life of the citizenry, especially and more importantly, sections of the country that had been excluded and marginalised in the previous colonial-apartheid socio-political and economic dispensation. Such initiatives, by the governing party, are indeed laudable. However, social policy during this period, even though it was focusing on transforming the country and aimed to empower vulnerable South Africans, has not been able to erase the vestiges of the colonial-apartheid order. The former are mostly structural in nature, because the society which was inherited in 1994, was unfortunately a product of an ingenious, pernicious and diabolical process of "social engineering" which spanned several centuries. After apartheid was institutionalised in 1948, and onwards, the majority African population was locked into the bottom rung of the colonial-apartheid hierarchy via a battery of policies and legislation. It is the contention of this paper that such a society could not be transformed, or will take time to transform, if the present social policy approach is going to be adhered to. A society that was "socially engineered" would equally require instruments that would be able to "socially re-engineer" it. It is further argued in the paper that social policy is the best state instrument that can humanely and democratically " socially re-engineer" the South African society, but it must be *transformative social policy* as opposed to the present social policy thrust that is still couched in a colonial-apartheid mould. Arguably, it is still quite *residual* as it heavily leans on social assistance forms of intervention, as exemplified in the high expenditure on social grants. The paper concludes that the present social policy instruments will face difficulties in transforming the South African society, later on, "re-engineering" it. On the other hand, *transformative social policy* has a better chance of "re-engineering" South Africa and in fact could put the country on the path to becoming the "good society".

Key words: Apartheid, Colonialism, Good Society, Residual Social Policy, Transformative Social Policy.

Introduction

The year 2014 marked 20 years of freedom and democracy in South African, for all citizens, irrespective of their race, gender, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. This was a significant milestone for the country given its tortuous and painful past. In the said period, South Africa had been ruled by an ANC-led government, which was, for decades, the main protagonist against colonialism and apartheid in the country. Although the ANC government made concerted efforts in the last two decades to erase the remaining traces of the colonialism and apartheid, as exemplified by, *inter alia*, high levels of inequality and poverty, unemployment, social and economic exclusion, violent crime and destitution, the living conditions of many South Africans continue to remain extremely dire. In 2013, the then Minister in the Presidency responsible for the National Planning Commission, Trevor Manuel, whilst deliberating on national issues, with reporters at a government leadership summit in Pretoria, was quoted as saying these words: "We (government) should no longer say it is apartheid's fault…in 1994, 1995, and 1996, government could perhaps have said we do not have the experience, but as the country approached two decades of democracy this was no longer an excuse."[1] These views were expressed in reference to the track record of the ANC government in terms of its overall performance. Manuel's comments were immediately challenged by the president, Jacob Zuma. One print media source quoted his assertions accordingly: "While wanting to see change happening fast in every corner of the country, we are under no illusion that South Africa will automatically and comprehensively change in only 20 years. That is impossible. The legacy of apartheid runs too deep and too far back for the democratic administration to reverse it in so short a period."[2]

The foregoing views of both Manuel and Zuma seem to resonate with a cross-section of South Africans and are taken in this paper as having merit and should not be simply discounted. On the one hand it can be argued that Manuel was to a certain extent right as some of the country's challenges could have been tackled effectively after 1994 and probably resulting in a drastic reduction of some of the country's social ills. This situation could have transpired if, for instance, the right policy instruments, strategies and approaches and human capital were employed and harnessed by the government. It is also important to note that Manuel had not overlooked the negative outcomes of both colonialism and apartheid in his observations, especially in the light of contemporary development efforts and challenges thereof, but he had suggested that politicians, public servants and citizens alike were also expected to take some responsibility for some of the country's social and economic policy failures. On the other hand, Zuma's points also hold water as they seem to acknowledge the fact that the effects of 350 years of colonialism and apartheid, could not be easily erased or even rectified in just 20 years. However, what is telling about these two held positions by the ANC's most powerful men at the time (for Manuel, this status changed when he resigned from the National Executive Committee of the ANC and government in 2014), seem to mirror the sharp divide in the country, in so far as public opinion on the pace of South Africa's transformation is concerned. Some quarters argue that after two decades of freedom, the time for blaming colonialism and apartheid had to come to an end – slightly echoing Manuel. On the other hand, other sections disagree and argue that the effects of hundreds of years of colonialism and apartheid could not be eradicated in just two decades.

This discussion takes a middle ground and attempts to provide a bridge between the above-mentioned divergent view-points by bringing forth alternative policy positions. In regard to the

foregoing positions of Manuel and Zuma, it is important to note that a lot of work has been undertaken by the government and organs of civil society, in the last two decades, which focused on raising the quality of life of ordinary South Africans. However, in spite of such concerted efforts by both the government and civil society, the majority of the people still wallow in abject poverty and the question to ask is: Could things have been done differently or any better? Admittedly, perhaps the manner in which state and non-state actors had approached the task of transforming the South African society may have stalled progress and also other factors such as lack of skills, misapplication of human capital, nepotism and corruption, may have contributed to the dismal performance of the state. Probably, if some of these nefarious activities had been kept in check, transformation could have unfolded at a much rapid pace – almost echoing Manuel's position. But just treating these contemporary failures and predatory trends in structures of the state as ends in themselves tends to obscure the potency of historical and structural barriers in the manner in which they can stifle social change in a society like South Africa. Assuming this position could lead to the closing off of social policy choices and innovative strategies and even making one adopt facile solutions for complex challenges. Also, merely highlighting historical and structural barriers perfunctorily may not allow for a deeper analysis in the light of prevailing socio-economic conditions or allow South Africans to appreciate the potency of such negative forces to blunt present-day government efforts and civil society interventions that attempt to raise the quality of life of the citizenry.

Context and background

On 7 May 2014, South Africans went to the polls and voted for the fifth time - after those first historic elections of 1994. Close to 11 million South Africans, constituting about 64% of the population, voted overwhelmingly for the ANC. This response from the electorate was symbolic as it demonstrated that even after 20 years of the ANC in power, millions of South Africans still believed in the governing party's political programme and its transformation agenda. Unlike in past elections though, the contestations were quite intense with new political parties coming to the fore to contest the elections. The aftermath of the elections saw the official opposition, the Democratic Alliance (DA), which was headed then by Helen Zille, gain significant ground across the country. The DA was joined in Parliament by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) which became the third largest party in the country, after only being in existence for several months. The EFF is led by the ANC's former youth leader, Julius Malema, who was expelled from the ANC after falling out of favour with the ANC leadership, especially, its president Jacob Zuma. The EFF swept aside Mosiu Lekota's Congress of the People (COPE) - a party that was formed by mainly ANC members who had left the party after the country's second democratically elected president Thabo Mbeki, was ousted from power in 2008, by an ANC faction which was allied to the current president Jacob Zuma. The EFF was not only riding on a populist wave but touted itself as a left-leaning and radical political formation. Its clarion call of nationalising the country's mines and other strategic industries seemed to resonate with the majority of poor South Africans who are also mainly unemployed and residing in the urban informal settlements and shanty towns. The EFF also called for the implementation of a radical land reform programme, which would expropriate land from white farmers without any compensation, because as the EFF argued, white South Africans had already benefitted from the past dispensation of colonialism and apartheid. Worryingly though, for the ruling party, both the DA and EFF managed to make in-roads into former ANC strong-holds and both parties had even garnered some votes in the predominantly rural and ANC-leaning provinces such as Limpopo. Worthy of note, these developments came on the back of the death of South Africa's first democratically elected president, the almost talismanic Nelson Mandela, who passed away on 5 December 2013. To a larger extent, a free and democratic

South Africa had benefitted in one way or another from Mandela's aura and his passing away, just before the twentieth anniversary of the country's freedom, signalled the end of a political era which had seen Mandela and his colleagues sacrifice almost everything for the freedom of their country.

Meanwhile, on the side-lines of the elections, there was a protracted strike by the platinum mine workers of a newly formed union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). The union had been locked in a wage dispute with the workers' employers for almost three months. This strike followed the now infamous massacre of more than 30 miners at Marikana in Rustenburg on 13 August 2012. The strike action had not only catapulted AMCU onto the national stage but had also signalled the arrival of a new order in the mining sector, which hitherto, had been dominated by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) for almost three decades. It is also important to note that NUM is an affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which is a staunch ally of the ANC and part of the tripartite alliance which also includes the South African Communist Party (SACP). The Marikana massacre was the first time that so many lives were lost through the actions of the police in a post-apartheid South Africa. The scenes of the killings sent shockwaves around the country and the world as they were reminiscent of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. During this period and just prior to the elections, there were also various "service delivery" protests across the country. The former were quite intense, especially in the Gauteng province's West Rand area. Citizens who were involved in such actions were also adamant that they would not vote in the mentioned elections and indeed some of them had boycotted the elections. But despite some of these challenges, the majority of South Africans still felt that the ANC was doing a good job of transforming the country and providing "a better life for all". Interestingly, some of those had who voted also expressed the view that even if there were numerous challenges in the ruling party and the country, there seemed to be no viable alternative to the ANC. Many ordinary people colloquially asserted that it is "better to vote for the 'devil' that you know."

In the light of the foregoing proffered backdrop, this paper's main contention is that the tools and avenues which were employed by the post-apartheid state, in driving the transformation process, were not in all cases transformative and emancipatory in content and outlook. They may have staved off abject poverty, for instance, through the country's elaborate social assistance programme, however, they have not managed to break many families, households and communities out of the cycle of intergenerational poverty and underdevelopment. This paper further contends that some of these measures were palliative and only helped to alleviate the deplorable living conditions of many poor and disarticulate communities of South Africa. The former did not have emancipatory capacities, which could have helped to transform the lives of millions of South Africans and probably also turned a significant number into skilled, educated, self-sufficient and wealth-creating citizens. Two important issues are considered in this discussion in regard to South Africa's transformation agenda. First, many, if not all, of the country's social policy interventions were not anchored in a process of "social re-engineering", but had merely endeavoured to offer relief to poor, marginalised and vulnerable South Africans. Second, the transformation agenda did not follow a thrust of creating another society, that is, the "good society" but had mostly been preoccupied with trying to erase the remaining traces of the colonial and apartheid order, whilst relying on the inherited institutions and political economy which were to the most not transformed. Such an approach had to a larger extent militated against the creation of a new society, namely, the "good society". Due to this thrust, after two decades of democracy, millions of South Africans cannot live or even aspire to live the "good life". For this discussion, social policy is taken as the most effective instrument that

can quickly change a society and yield positive dividends in the social and human development arenas.

Arguably, post-1994 strategies which were employed in the fight against human deprivation did not seek to address the root causes of the country's many social ills which are deeply rooted in South Africa's colonial and apartheid past. Such an approach was inadvertently promoted by the government, in what is referred to in government parlance as "quick wins". With this approach which was focusing on "quick wins" social policy became more of a technocratic, bureaucratic and "compliance" related type of intervention, rather than a long term approach that sought to create a new society altogether, namely, the "good society". In a way, it can be argued that social assistance grew quite exponentially after 1994 and continues to do so, because it was seen as a "quick win", although it is now regarded as a "poverty alleviation strategy". However, it is contended in this paper that social policy interventions must be able to spur "social re-engineering" in South Africa and not just lead to "quick wins". As earlier stated, what the ANC inherited in 1994, was actually a "socially engineered" society which was created by colonialism and apartheid. Crucially, the ultimate purpose of apartheid was to keep a certain part of South Africa in a position of extreme weakness and vulnerability. Its policies and legislation were all aimed at eroding a section of the South African society to a point whereby it would not be able to first, challenge its brutal and racist rule and second, such a section would subserviently continue to cater to its needs, especially through cheap labour.

South Africa's social and human development profile

South Africa continues to be a highly unequal society and the Gini coefficient, which is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates total equality and 1 indicates total inequality, is calculated to be approximately 0.65 based on expenditure data (per capita excluding taxes) and 0.69 based on income data (per capita including salaries, wages and social grants) in 2011. These high levels of inequality, amongst the highest in the world, are only slightly smaller than the Ginis recorded in 2006 (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Furthermore, the majority of the youth are dependent on either the state and its institutions, or families. Unemployment is one of the major challenges confronting South Africa's youth today. For instance, approximately 3.4 million (32.9%) of the 10.4 million of the youth aged 15-24 years were not in employment, education or training in the Second Quarter of 2013 (Statistics South Africa, 2013). This situation did not improve much the following year. It is also important to underline the fact that youth unemployment is nuanced by a racial dimension. According to Statistics South Africa (2014), the rate of unemployment among black African youth was 4.1 percentage points higher than that of the youth in the Coloured population group, and as much as 23.7 and 29.8 percentage points higher than that of the Indian/Asian and white groups respectively. In addition there is a large number of young people who simply drop out of the education system.

Also, the approximated overall HIV prevalence rate is around 10%, with the total number of people living with HIV estimated at 5.26 million (in 2013). For the ages 15-49 years, an estimated 15.9% of the population is HIV positive (Statistics South Africa, 2013). The phenomenon of child poverty, which is usually underreported or lumped together with adult poverty, by both politicians and policy-makers, is also another very serious societal challenge. In many respects, child poverty has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic as parents and care-givers have succumbed to the disease over the years.

Conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the paper

Transformative Social Policy

Generally, progressive traditions of social policy acknowledge the three roles that social policy is supposed to play in any society. First, it plays the *social* function which lies in reducing the impact of lifecycle risks through social insurance and alleviating poverty through social assistance. In this way social policy helps people to stabilise their lives and support their families. Second, it plays the *political* function which refers to its stabilising effect, whereby, social justice and greater equality become vital factors for building trust and social cohesion, and contribute to political stability (Economic & Social Commission for Western Asia, 2009). Third, the *economic* function of social policy hinges on widening the productive capacity of a society through the inclusion of marginalised areas and social groups in the growth process, and through investment in improved health and education. This definition of social policy also extends to health, education and labour market policies, and supporting social development which is based on the integration of social concerns into all aspects of public policy (Economic & Social Commission for Western Asia, 2009). In this regard, we see that public policies that affect the welfare of citizens are known as social policies (Midgley, Tracy & Livermore, 2000).

What is clear enough, especially in this millennium, is the fact that there is a need for comprehensive and transformative social policies which address a multiplicity of objectives that include equity, social inclusion, and human capital formation. In order to achieve the foregoing, a multidisciplinary approach, which incorporates social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects of development is crucial (Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific, 2008). Hence there is a need for a broad framework for formulating social policy, which focusses on namely: (a) reducing disparities and (b) managing risks and challenges. Furthermore, a country's social policy should be a natural product of its markets, communities and households, and should be formulated in the context of that country's traditions, institutions, culture and values, as well as the availability of financial resources. National efforts in this arena also need to be complemented by various forms of regional, cross-border co-operation that could serve as a stepping stone to a socially just globalisation (Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific, 2008). Following Mkandawire (2006, pp. 2-5), transformative social policy should be driven by 16 philosophical underpinnings. However for this paper's contention six will be closely examined:

    (i)   *The multiple tasks of social policy*: Value-driven arguments for social policy must work in tandem with instrumental ones. Social policy must deal with four major concerns: distribution, protection, production and reproduction.

    (ii)   *Ideologies:* Ideologies are important to social policy because they determine the underlying motives and norms for a number of policy measures: are they an aspect of social rights, or are they social privileges accorded by an authoritarian or paternalistic regime?

    (iii)   *The instrumental value of social policy*: Social policy is not only an expression of normative values, but can also serve as a major transformative instrument in the process of development. The great challenge is how to mobilise the instrumental value of social policies without undermining the intrinsic value of the goals being pursued.

    (iv)   *Labour Markets*: Labour market policies are an extremely important arena for addressing issues of poverty and development. Labour markets are not simply institutions for the static efficient allocation of existing labour resources, but they are also the site for the realisation of basic civil and social rights, what the International Labour Organisation calls "decent work". It is also in the labour

market that reconciling production and reproduction clearly emerges as a social concern of developing economies, in addressing the need to facilitate women's labour force participation (through the provision of public child-care services) which, apart from being a social right, can also produce positive macroeconomic effects (it uses the human capital investments made through female education, it has multiplier effects by creating a demand for various caring services, and so on).

(v) *Macroeconomics and social policy*: The ability to achieve rapid poverty reduction depends critically, *inter alia*, on the nature of the development, and social and macroeconomic policies adopted to promote rapid growth and equitable income distribution. While scholars and policy makers of different economic persuasions generally agree on the broad lines of suitable pro-poor development and social policies, the nature of macroeconomic policies consistent with poverty reduction remains controversial, and the discord has intensified with the liberalisation of international capital movements.

(vi) *State capacity*: Policy choices must be aligned with institutional capacity. The state is a key institution as an organiser, if not necessarily a provider, of social protection and provisioning. States that are well institutionalised are better able to translate political commitments into effective social policies and delivery systems. Social policies are demanding in terms of the quality of social institutions they require, as well as in terms of financial resources, efficiency, transparency and integrity. "Capacity" refers not only to the direct provision by the state of social services through public expenditure, but also to the state's ability to regulate and stimulate non-state actors in the fulfilment of requirements in social sectors (Mkandawire, 2006, pp. 2-5)

This slant of social policy resonates with the social policy that was pursued by post-colonial African states in the first decade of independence in the 1960s. Its hallmarks were free education, free health care and guaranteed employment. This was the surest way to eradicate the social deficits which were created by colonial rule. Social policy in post-colonial Africa was aligned to the nationalist discourse which linked economic growth with national unity. It was also premised on the "eradication of the unholy trinity of ignorance, poverty and disease (Mkandawire, 2005, p. 13, cited in Adesina, 2007). Countries such as Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah, Tanzania under Julius Nyerere and Zambia under Kenneth Kaunda, rapidly developed due to this social policy approach. It can be argued that this type of social policy would also readily respond to the national question and South Africa's race relations conundrum.

Notably, transformative social policy plays multiple roles of redistribution, protection, reproduction, social cohesion and nation-building. In this regard, it also recognises the symbiotic links between social policy and economic policy. Hence, economic development that is supported by this type of social policy would combine growth with structural transformation of the economy and social relations, whilst reinforcing the norms of *equality* and *social solidarity*. In this sense, social policy would not only be an expression of normative values, but will also serve as a major transformative instrument in the process of development. Transformative social policy is defined by universal membership and coverage in provisioning. Therefore, its instruments range from education to health-care, agrarian reform, child-care, old-age care and to fiscal instruments. Its development outcomes filter through to social and economic development (growth with structural transformation), and also political development. Transformative social policy has the potential to enhance both labour market efficiency and innovation (Adesina, 2010).

Residual Social Policy

It can be noted that the residual formulation is based on the premise that there are two "natural" channels through which an individual's needs are properly met, namely *the family* and *the market economy*. The two institutions are the preferred structures of supply, but sometimes they do not always function adequately. When this situation takes place, the idea is that a third mechanism of need fulfilment is instituted, namely, the social welfare structure. The notion behind the residual model is that, although society should help in emergencies, people in need are responsible for their own problems and should solve them with minimal state intervention. The residual perspective prescribes short-term, stop-gap welfare measures that last only until the family or market economy can resume their functions. A major criterion is whether people earn more than a set level of income and possess assets valued above a certain amount. Therefore, in order to access a certain service they will be obliged to undertake a means test that will establish whether they are eligible or not, based on their income levels. The means test aims to ensure that applicants do not get more help than they should (Wilensky & Lebeaux, 1958). The foregoing view of social policy is set within a wider model of society and state which seeks to explain the formation of social structures in all societies and is often referred to as a convergence theory. It is a functionalist approach which proposes that the most important factor influencing the development of social structures and social institutions is neither political consensus nor political conflict. Rather, it is the development of industrial technology which influences societies' institutional patterns (Sullivan, 1987, p. 79).

The residual character of the country's social policy is typically exemplified in the fragmented welfare system and responses which are reactive and again not tackling root causes of societal ills. The National Development Plan aptly observes:

> South Africa needs to confront the reality that social services are critical for improving social integration and human development. The current model of shifting the burden of care, treatment, and rehabilitation to the non-governmental sector and the poorest communities is not working. The scale of social fragmentation and loss of purpose requires more systematic engagement with both governmental and non-governmental social service providers. Statutory services for children, young offenders, the elderly, people with mental health problems and people living with disabilities need well-conceived state and community interventions (The Presidency, 2011, p. 338).

Social policy, it can also be seen, is still located in the "poverty reduction" and not "development" discourses. It is still being ascribed a marginal role in national development endeavours. Thus, the preference for targeting is often a reflection of the residual role assigned to social policy, which has come to be seen as merely an instrument for correcting some of the negative outcomes of macroeconomic policy. One implicit assumption is that social policy is only about poverty eradication, whereas in many cases it has other objectives, such as national or social cohesion, and equity (Mkandawire, 2006).

The good society

This paper also intimates that transformative social policy would be the best vehicle to "socially re-engineer" South Africa and also enable the country to come closer to being the "good society". In presenting a case for the good society, Lippmann (1937) points out that when we delve into debates of the good society, we (that is those who accept that the good society is indeed attainable) have to first and foremost accept that freedom is a cornerstone of the good society. What this means is that a prosperous and peaceful society must be free. If it is not free, it cannot be prosperous and peaceful. This then supposes that the good society should be led by a certain calibre of rulers. *If this is so, then the good society should demand from its rulers that they sacrifice their personal ends to the interests and general welfare of the people* (emphasis added). The central question Plato set himself in *The Republic* was this: What is a good individual and how is such an individual formed? It seemed obvious to him that an individual could be made only through membership in a good society (Zeitlin, 1997). For Plato and his colleagues, a society was well-ordered when the people who governed it knew what they were doing and this "knowing what they were doing" was linked directly to finding and serving the public good (Huard, 2007). It would also be helpful if such a society could be regarded as a community. However, the concept of a community is only viable especially if one treats it not as a given but as a variable. That is, some societies are much more of a community than others and their communal quality changes over time. In such a community we should therefore be concerned with greatly reducing *inequality, rather than having equality as the end state* (emphasis added) (Etzioni, 2002).

Hence, inequalities in allocation of resources among communities and not just among individuals must be taken into account. A good society would not only secure a "generous minimum" for all its members, but would also strive to cap inequality by slowing down increases in the slices of the total resources gained by the higher strata. Crucially, *in order to ensure broad and genuine adherence to values, a good society should rely on the moral voice* (emphasis added) - the informal controls members of communities exert on one another-rather than law (Etzioni, 2002). In this regard, any useful identification of the good society must therefore take into consideration the institutional structure and the human characteristics that are fixed and immutable. In this way, they make the difference between the utopian and the achievable, between the irrelevant and ultimately the possible (Galbraith, 1996, p. 3).[3] Hence, a good society must have a *good economy* (emphasis added). An evident purpose of a good economy is to produce goods and services effectively and to dispense the revenues therefrom in a socially acceptable manner. It must have substantial and reliable increase in production and employment from year to year. Finally, a good society must have a strong international dimension. The state must live in peaceful and mutually rewarding association with its trading partners on the planet (Galbraith, 1996).

Putting a spotlight on social re-engineering

In this section, the discussion advances the idea of "social re-engineering" which could have spearheaded the government's social policy. It goes one step further and calls for *social re-engineering* to propel social policy interventions two decades after the fall of apartheid. Two issues need to be brought sharply to the fore before proceeding with this line of thinking:

(a) First, many, if not all, of the country's social policy interventions were not anchored on a process of "social re-engineering", but had merely endeavoured to offer relief to poor South Africans. "Social re-engineering" differs markedly from social engineering as the latter tackles structural impediments, whilst the former changes and transforms the status quo to a certain degree.

(b) Second, the transformation agenda did not follow a thrust of creating another society, that is, the "good society" but had mostly been preoccupied with trying to erase the remaining traces of the colonial-apartheid order whilst relying on the inherited institutions as well as political economy. This approach had to a larger extent militated against the creation of a new society, namely, the good society. Due to this, two decades later, millions of South Africans cannot still live the "good life".

Therefore, it is contended in this paper that instead of instituting a bold and radical programme of "social re-engineering" whilst being guided by a transformative social policy, the post-apartheid government's social policy responses kept on dealing with the outcomes and not the causalities of the past order. It is further argued here that whatever was "engineered" by colonialism and apartheid, had to be "re-engineered" in the last 20 years through social policy. The idea of "re-engineering" South Africa has been sounded by some of South Africa's progressive sections for quite a while, but it has not been vigorously elevated to academic and policy discourse levels and remains on the peripheries. Authors such as Hlumelo Biko[4] have referred to this issue and in his book he calls it social and economic re-engineering. Hence, this discussion hopes to couch this perspective in a transformative social policy theoretical framework and give it the space that it has not been accorded by scholars and policy-makers in two decades.

Nonetheless, the term "social engineering" is not a new term. It comes from the field of social control. Social engineering can refer to the process of redefining a society – or more correctly, engineering society – to achieve some desired outcome. The term can also refer to the process of attempting to change people's behaviour in a predictable manner, usually in order to have them comply with some new system (Berti & Rogers, 2003, p. 147). The eminent social scientist, Karl Popper, recognised the fact that most social institutions are the product of gradual evolution or adaptation than any conscious design. From a functionalist or instrumental perspective, institutions may be designed or may be redesigned to more efficiently attain desired ends. Efforts to reform human institutions may be regarded as social engineering (Hayes, 2001). According to Popper, social engineering can take on two distinct forms, which he termed: *"holistic social engineering"* and *"piecemeal social engineering"*. "Holistic social engineering" aims at remodelling the whole society in accordance with a definite plan or blueprint, by taking control of key positions and extending the power of the state until it becomes commensurate with society. From these key positions, the state can arrest the course of historical forces or foresee their course and adjust society to them (Hayes, 2001). By contrast, although piecemeal social engineers may cherish certain ideals that apply to society as a whole – social justice, for example, or the general welfare - they will reject as impractical any attempt to remodel society as a whole. Whatever their ends, they try to achieve them by small adjustments which can be continually improved upon (Hayes, 2001, p. 36).

Since South Africa is a country that was heavily "socially engineered" for centuries, this paper calls for the "re-engineering" of the inherited vestiges of colonialism and apartheid which have defied the transformation processes of the government in the last two decades. This discussion endorses *"holistic social engineering"* for South Africa because:

Perhaps no other country has experienced as much and as detailed socio-political engineering as apartheid South Africa. The apartheid project impacted people's lives at every level, always with the goal of creating a set of parallel but grossly unequal spatial realities with almost no meaningful

contacts between the population groups. This apartheid era legacy is one of enormous inequalities reflected in landscapes of separate, ethnically determined social worlds filled with despair for non-White South Africans (Domingo, 2011).

Starting the re-engineering process

Centuries of colonial rule, which was typified by European conquest of Africans and the dispossession of their land, culminated in the passing of the Native Land Act of 19 June 1913. This piece of legislation would have far-reaching implications for South Africa's future and to date, its ramifications are still being felt across the country. After apartheid was formally adopted as a national ideology by the National Party in 1948, it was concretised through policies and legislation in the 1950s and afterwards. Some of apartheid's centre-pieces were:

- The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, No 55 of 1949
- The Immorality Amendment Act, No 21 of 1950
- The Population Registration Act, No 30 of 1950
- The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, No 52 of 1951
- The Group Areas Act, No 41 of 1950
- The Bantu Education Act, No 47 of 1953
- The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, No 49 of 1953
- The Natives Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act of 1952.

Due to the foregoing history and the post-1994 social policy interventions that have not managed to change the former, it is the contention of this paper that social policy must be guided by interventions that have built-in mechanisms of "social re-engineering". Furthermore, the foregoing should also be directly linked to the National Development Plan (NDP). Indeed, for this "social re-engineering" process to transpire - ***without having the same effects as those of colonialism and apartheid, in reverse order*** - the Constitution and the NDP must be its propellers. This section deals with the practicalities of "social re-engineering" via transformative social policy. For purposes of this paper, "social re-engineering" will be anchored on four pillars:

I.   **Instituting a progressive labour regime**:
South African labour practices are still reminiscent of the colonial-apartheid order. Labour relations are still underpinned by the archaic migrant labour system. This outmoded labour system still militates against the transformation of the South African society. Hence, a progressive labour regime, which intersects with transformative social policy, would abolish the migrant labour system forthwith. This labour practice is not only just a labour related problem, but one that has negative consequences for other sectors of the South African society, for example, the African family. While economists are busy talking about "flexible" labour laws, not many are mentioning this labour system and its deleterious effects on the country's social fabric. According to the Green Paper for the Family:

> The migrant labour system, based on the carving up of "African reserves" which, in turn, guaranteed a steady supply of cheap labour to the emerging industrial and capitalist enclave, was a direct product of industrialisation. This form of labour was regarded as temporary and connected to the reserves. The main assumption of both the political establishment and business at the time was that migrant labourers would be guaranteed social protection by their extended families and that they would return to their communities, once their labour was no longer required. However, this system led to the manifestation of various social problems in the country that had a direct bearing on family life. One such problem was the absence of able-bodied men in African villages, which greatly undermined the extended family in many ways (Department of Social Development, 2011, p. 6).

Another aspect of this sector that would require state intervention is the area of absorbing large pools of unemployed and lowly skilled South Africans into productive ventures. Usually, this role is not for the private sector. Thus large reserve armies would need to be channelled into for example, agriculture, manufacturing and the construction sectors. However, these sections of the economy need to be deliberately tailored to engage in labour-intensive economic activities until such a time that some of these individuals could be skilled and graduated to the next sector. Therefore, the labour regime that will be up to the task of "socially re-engineering" South Africa must be ***multi-tiered***. This model is not new or out of the ordinary. It has been tried in other parts of the world, for example, South Asia. Another important issue here is that employment avenues must be created and guaranteed by the state. Employment should not be left to markets only but should be directly linked to an education sector which would have been universalised.

II.   Rolling out Universal high quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) to the poorest segments of South Africa:

Universal and high quality ECD if well planned and manged has the capacity to create a new South African citizen 20 years down the line. The issue here will be to "catch them whilst they are still young". Competent and highly trained ECD facilitators should be recruited for this endeavour and deployed to mainly rural and depressed areas of South Africa. Such personnel would be able to engage with the children in such a way that they would be able to impart to them new values that could ultimately lead them to becoming empowered and productive citizens decades later. Inculcation of a progressive ethos into the young minds would also ensue. This is where issues of gender relations, respect and national service, would begin to be inculcated into the minds of young South Africans. The home situation is not always the best for nurturing young people in South Africa and the state can play a decisive role here.

III.   Rolling out Universal high quality education from ECD to tertiary levels:

This would be anchored on a resolute and expansive recruitment drive of competent, highly trained teachers and lecturers across the country, who would be working in rural areas. The first phase of this agenda would see the building of new primary and secondary schools of excellence, and agricultural colleges in mainly rural areas. Many of the highly qualified teachers would also be paid "risk allowances" and provided with more incentives such as housing, and car allowances. This is to make sure that market-based salaries and other benefits "lure" highly competent teachers to the deep rural and poorest areas of South Africa. In a way, this approach would also serve to stem the rural-urban migration tide. Such approaches had been attempted in post-colonial Africa, especially in the successful first decade after independence. One issue that needs to be stressed here is that universal education is self-sustaining and must be seen as an economic imperative and not a drain on the economy. Those who have gone through this system would need to pay high taxes in later years that would in turn buoy up universal education. An educated and highly skilled citizenry is less of a burden on the state.

IV.   Fostering high levels of social solidarity across all sectors of South Africa

Transformative social policy cannot be implemented in a fragmented and racially divided society such as this one where most of the country's wealth is still in white hands. After two decades of democracy, there still seems to be not one South African identity, but arguably, the

colonial-apartheid classifications define South Africa. The **national question** has not been answered in its entirety in this country. Many citizens still seem to prefer their laagers. The notion of "I am my brother's or sister's keeper" is still not embedded in the national psyche. Lessons can be learnt from the nationalist discourse, mentioned above, whereby refugees and freedom-fighters from Southern Africa, especially, South Africa, were looked after in countries such as Tanzania and Zambia, and benefitted from these countries' free and high quality education, among other benefits (Noyoo, 2010). This solidarity needs to be fostered from ECD levels all the way to tertiary education. Education curricula should also be tailored in such a way that they respond to the national question. The above-mentioned type of education would serve the country well in this regard. Furthermore, business, labour and government still have to come to a social compact, which seems not be there despite the existence of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). Labour and especially the unions must be conscientised over the fact that violent and protracted strikes are not good for business and conversely, big business or the private sector must be responsible enough to know that archaic labour practices such as the "dope system", slave wages and the migrant labour system etc., are also bad for business. Equally, the government needs to create an enabling environment that is conducive for all parties to benefit so that the tax base is expanded and that the collected revenues are able to shore up the aforementioned universalised education sector.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper, it can first be asserted that South Africa is the most advanced economy on the African continent and can do more to raise its human development profile through the mentioned agenda. Countries with lesser resources had done better than South Africa in past epochs, especially when it comes to high quality free education, for example, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, the aforementioned agenda can only be effected if there is a clear vision on the part of politicians and policy-makers, and more importantly, if the politicians and policy-makers are guided by a clear ideology. One issue of critical concern to South Africans is the sustainability of even the residual mechanisms of social grants. This paper contends that the sustainability question must not only be reduced to a monetary argument but a social capital and human development issue as well. After 20 years of shoring up social grants, especially, the Child Support Grant, then what? The present model is based on *outputs* and *outcomes* but seems to shy away from *impacts*. It would not make sense that all the children who were on the CSG end up dropping out school or become second or third generation beneficiaries of social grants. Deliberate efforts of graduating them to other tiers of society would require a monitored and co-ordinated approach where different government sectors "plot" and follow this population cohort for 20 years and thus making sure that social grants beneficiaries are provided avenues of upward social mobility. In addition, there is a need to rethink social policy expenditure not as a gratuitous favour done to citizens but as investments in development and nation building or social cohesion (Adesina, 2007).

Furthermore, many South Africans have asked the perennial question: "Where is the money going to come from?" This paper retorts in this manner: "First and foremost, cut the government's wasteful and fruitless expenditure and channel it into the cited endeavours. Also, the government structure is top heavy and questions must be asked whether the second provincial tier is really necessary or serving its ends. Would not competent and efficient bureaucracies at the national and local levels suffice to drive a development agenda in this country? Also, what about corporate tax? Is it being judiciously used as a development mechanism? Or how can it be geared towards the financing of universal high quality education? The private sector in South Africa is the largest on the continent. South Africa's private

enterprises comprise the largest investment portfolio of African countries. In 2012, South Africa invested in more new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects in Africa than any other country in the world, and the number of projects from the country has increased by almost 536%, according to a 2013 report by FDI Intelligence - a company which provides insights into, and advice on, cross-border investment. Ernst & Young's 2013 *Attractiveness Survey* found that South Africa has created almost 46,000 cumulative jobs through FDI in Africa since 2003. Only in 2012, the number of South African FDI projects increased by 23%, despite the grim global economic outlook of that year (Mail & Guardian, 2013). Surely, the dividends from such business forays can be set aside for universal education?

Endnotes

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[1] Mail & Guardian. (2013). *Manuel says government can't blame apartheid anymore*. Retrieved from http://mg.co.za/article/2013-04-03-manuel-says-government-cant-blame-apartheid-anymore.

[2] Business BDLive. (2013). *Zuma takes swipe at Manuel on apartheid*. Retrieved from http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/politics/2013/04/11/zuma-takes-swipe-at-manuel-on-apartheid.

[3] Edmund Burke was among the first scholars to launch an attack on ideological and utopian politics as such, on all attempts, starting from universal first principles, to draw up blueprints of what an ideal society would be like and make them into realities. According to Burke, such attempts were at odds with "reason" and order, and peace, and virtue, and "fruitful penitence" and led to madness, discord, vice, confusion and unavailing sorrow! Many since have followed his example, particularly in the period after the Russian Revolution (Arblaster, 1971, p. 2).

[4] Biko, H. (2013). *The Great African Society: A Plan for a Nation Gone Astray*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.

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