

POST-APARTHEID GEOGRAPHIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: WHY ARE URBAN DIVIDES SO PERSISTENT?

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The apartheid city was always the ultimate paradigm for urban division and exclusion. This was even more so in the 1990s when it became clearer that urban forms and patterns in many parts of the world were going the way of intensifying segregation, fragmentation and splintering, resulting in deepening intra-urban inequalities (Graham and Marvin 2001). Thus, when South Africa embarked on its ambitious democratic transition in 1994, there was great anticipation that under the behest of a radical-democratic majority government, ways would be found to undo the paradigm of urban division—the apartheid city. This desire was both justified and misplaced. Justified in that the redistributive ambitions of the newly elected government invariably had to involve some form of urban justice and rebalancing because this was where the heart of economic apartheid resided; Misplaced because the negotiated terms of the transition precluded radical interventions in either private property or the accumulated wealth of the white minority. Part of the deal, from the outset, was that the South African economy, anchored in that wonderfully elastic phantasm—market sentiment—would not be endangered by extending the franchise to the black majority and addressing their developmental needs for access to basic services such as water, energy, shelter, education and health care (Marais 2001).

If we turn to recent empirical studies about the space-economy of South Africa and its major metropolitan regions the evidence is unambiguous: South African cities have remained profoundly divided, segregated and unequal despite sixteen years of concerted government efforts to extend development opportunities to the urban poor (Charlton and Kihato 2006). The over-riding feature of South African cities is unsurprisingly economic. Like most countries caught up as intimately as South Africa is in the global economic system, economic inequalities have grown dramatically over the past two decades. It is essential to understand the urban remaking of South Africa in this context. For instance, barely two years after the moment of political liberation, South Africa embraced wholehearted integration into the neoliberal global economic system by pre-empting trade reforms and lowering barriers and tariffs even before this was strictly necessary. The consequences have been devastating for the working classes and this has contributed to the rise of economic inequality and the spatial divisions that go along with that.

Ironically, these exogenous forces were compounded by home-grown redistributive social policies. One of the most important redistributive programmes of the government is the public

housing policy whereby all poor people are entitled to a free house, with legal title and internal services. This programme has had profoundly negative consequences: intensifying urban sprawl and increasing the daily reproductive costs for the poor, instead of providing them with an appreciating asset that can bolster their livelihoods (Charlton and Kihato 2006). However, the idea of providing free housing for the poor is too intoxicating a political discourse that the ruling party cannot see a way of amending this policy in order to address the unforeseen consequences and continue with a more effective set of strategies that can bend spatial patterns and ensure better access to urban opportunities. This reluctance stems from a deeper political crisis of the imagination pervasive in the ruling coalition—the inability to recognise and name the inherently heterogeneous, hybrid, impure and contested nature of the social as manifested in ubiquitous urban cultures of contemporary invention.

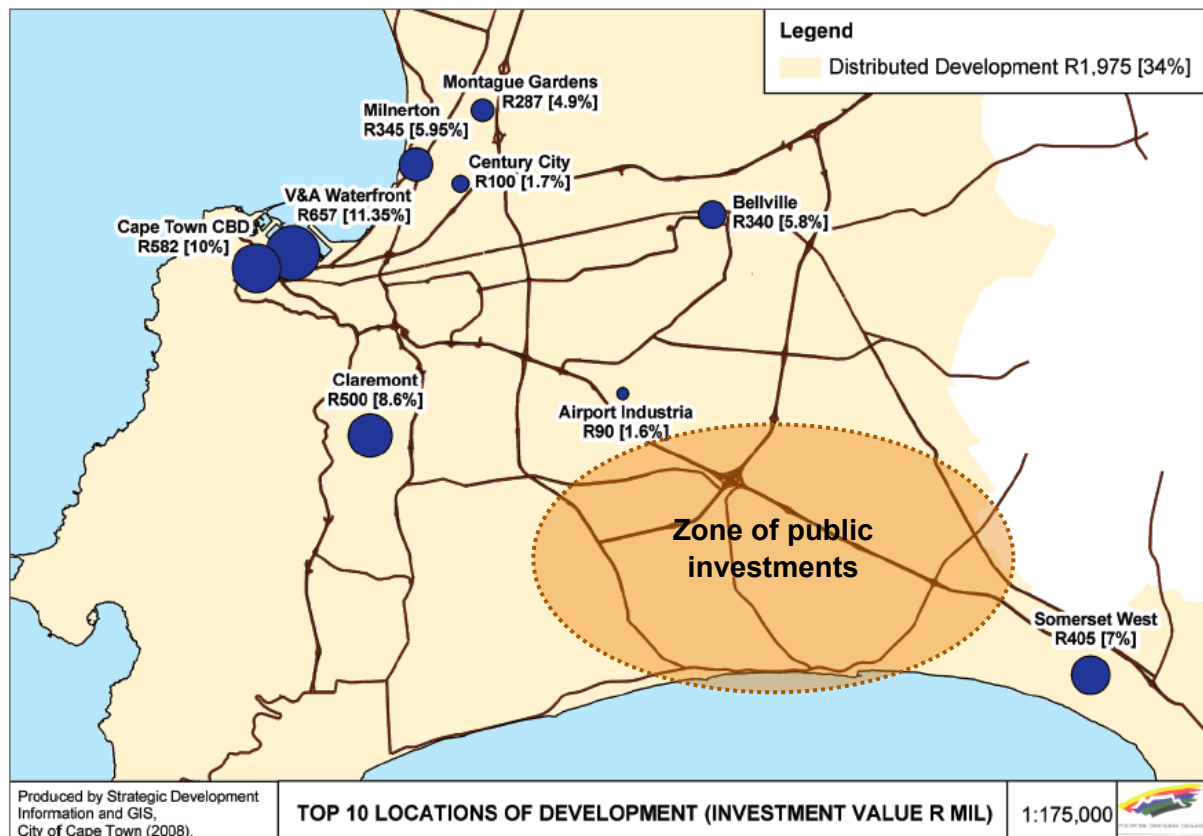
In most accounts of the stubborn persistence of the apartheid city, these two factors are usually cited as the main causal drivers of the contemporary condition. In this paper I want to suggest that it is too limiting a frame. Instead, I want to explore six clusters of issues that intersect in different ways in various cities and towns to reproduce the contemporary condition. These factors are: immunity of private investment to governmental spatial priorities; chronic governmental fragmentation across the three spheres and within them; the unintended spatial consequences of the redistributive programmes of the state as intimated above; parochialism on the part of civil society organisations manifesting in the absence of multi-scalar politics; a number of cross-cutting dynamics that serve to reinforce these trends; and what one could regard as insidious fantasies and desires of political elites who insist on a particular interpretation of African nationalist ideology that remain umbilically connected to rural land and identity. Unless we begin to sophisticate our accounts by working across these diverse drivers of urban form, which in turn must push research to become more empirically grounded—of course with both spatialised quantitative data and fine-grained (institutional) ethnographies—we are unlikely to capture the divisive dynamism of city-making in South Africa, now heading for two decades after liberation.

Immunity of private investment flows

It is relatively well established in the literature that the biggest failing in urban investment terms is that the private sector has not followed the governments' wishes in terms of where urban investments are targeted (Pillay 2008; Todes 2006; Turok 2001). (See Figure 1 below for a graphic illustration of the spatial mismatch between large-scale private investment versus the primary zone of infrastructure and service investments by the metropolitan government. Figure 2 provides a detailed mapping of class-based areas in Cape Town in the parlance of a marketing company that help business understand where rich and poor people live so that they can target their investment and advertising decisions. What is clear from this map is that the private investments correlate very closely with where the wealthy live and the public investments correlate with where the urban poor live.) This is generally written off as yet another example of the failure of planning, which of course it is; but the more important question as to what the reasons are for this is less clear. It strikes me that there are a number of inter-related dynamics at work. Firstly, the way in which private property has been sacrosanct in the Constitution is key. At a recent conference organised by the City of Cape

Town, a law professor intimated that this is the fundamental issue. The implication of the constitutional protection of private property is that it makes it very difficult for city governments to institute regulations that can be perceived as imposing negatively on property rights in the name of social rights or public goods. Most importantly, if there is a perception of the reduction in the value of property it could be interpreted as an infringement of the right. The middle classes in South Africa are highly organised and their interests are typically advanced through ratepayers associations and other specialist organisations. Typically these organisations have no shortage of access to legal expertise to threaten litigation if they deem it necessary to block government plans or interventions. In other words, Nimbyism is not some abstract sentiment but rather a powerful sentiment that is always backed-up with a litigious disposition. This threat is enough to neutralise ambitious planners. Moreover, the middle-classes have access to environmental and heritage legislation to mask their interests and recast the protection of their property values behind a veil of developmentalism (Swilling 2010).

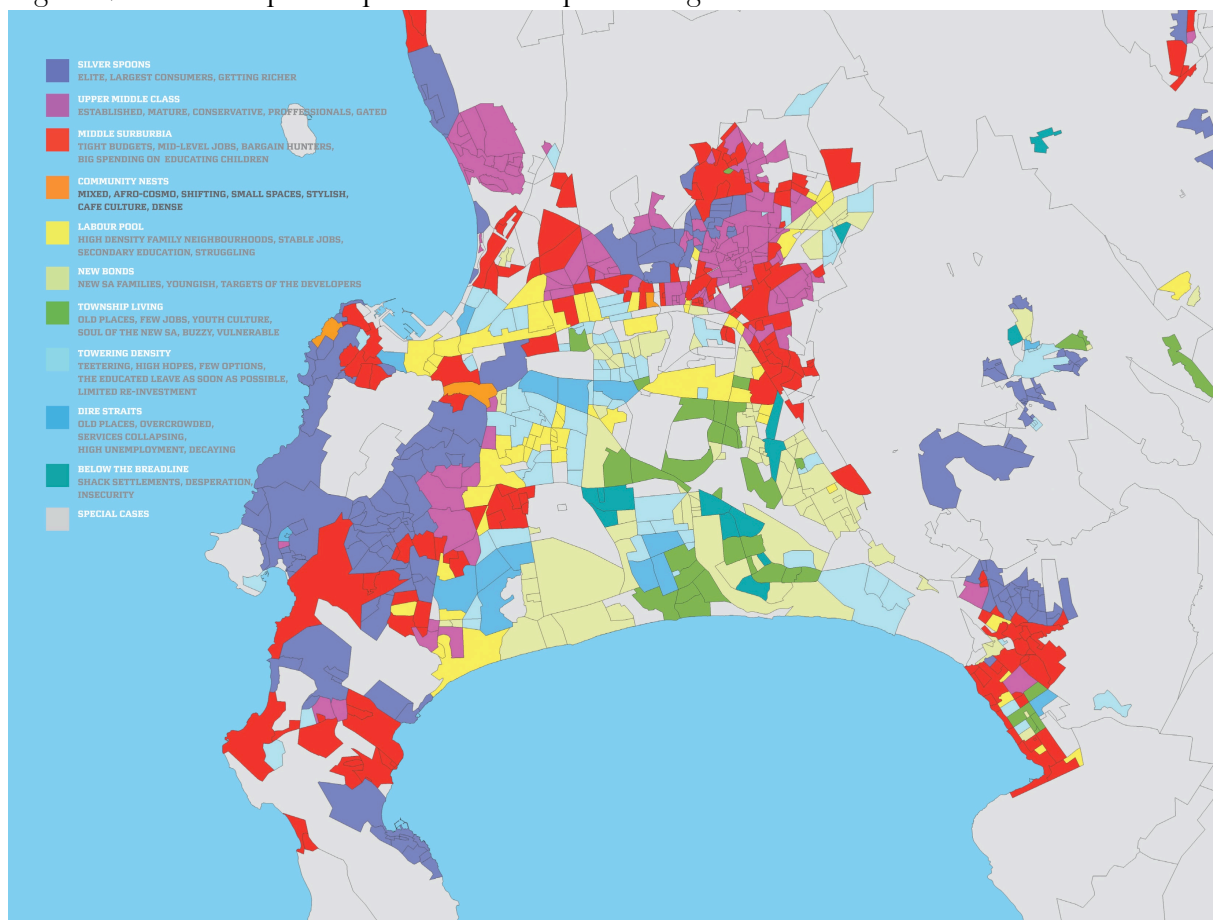
Figure 1: Disjuncture between public and private investments



Secondly, because of the decentralised fiscal system in South Africa, municipalities are dependent on the rates base for taxes and income. This reinforces a conservative mindset because any intervention that can be seen as a threat to property values can be recast as a threat to the tax base. In a context where the tax base is indeed used for a significant redistributive agenda in terms of basic needs, this argument advanced by powerful interests rooted in the finance and engineering functions of municipalities, carries a lot of weight. Thirdly, on the regulatory side it has been pointed out recently that very few municipalities

have or use disincentivising instruments to cut-off or penalise private investments in the “wrong places” or of the “wrong kind” (Todes 2009). Fourthly, it is also self-evident that as the political elite becomes more and more vested in the investment returns of property development companies, either in terms of tax revenues or through direct profiteering through equity shares, even if not for themselves but for their networks, it is unlikely that the political determination can be mustered to block, redirect or sanction undesirable private investments. There is very little research available on the intersection of these interests at the urban scale, but given what has become apparent about generalised involvement with private companies, as a proposition, it is not too far-fetched. However, as Todes (2009) recently documents, there are some interesting counter-tendencies emerging in Cape Town, Durban and especially Johannesburg that warrants closer scrutiny and analysis.

Figure 2: A class map of Cape Town metropolitan region



Source: Knowledge Factory

Governmental fragmentation

There can be little doubt that the South African government has worked hard to be developmental in the sense of ensuring a state-led redistributive thrust to development since 1994. It has excelled particularly in the social sectors. South Africa has amongst the highest per capita expenditures on education and provides free education up to the age of 16. Furthermore, health services are also available to the poor through a nation-wide network of

primary health care clinics. In addition, South African continues to grow in real terms its social security system, especially since 2001 when the economy recovered from its four-year crisis and state revenue was on a steady upward curve. In addition, there are numerous black economic empowerment programmes and subsidies as well as dedicated development finance for civil society organisations that seek to work directly with the poor (Pieterse 2008a). However, across all of these progressive policies there is a serious problem of quality and depth—the effectiveness of state institutions are routinely bemoaned and especially in the domain of education it is clear that there is little correlation between the per capita spent and the learning outcomes demonstrated by students, especially in their formative years (Bloch 2009).

In terms of urban services the situation is more or less the same. A number of progressive policies are in place to promote the provision of public housing, access to basic services, local economic development inputs and opportunities for popular participation, with hugely disappointing results. At the core of this problematic is chronic state fragmentation that stems in large part from the space-blind conceptualisation of how to allocate powers and functions across the three spheres of government. All of the key built-environments functions such as housing, transportation, land management, energy, environmental planning, economic development, and so on are awkwardly split across the three levels of government, which reproduces highly problematic outcomes (van Donk and Pieterse 2006; PDG 2005). Typically, national departments and ministries adopt a top-down imperial posture whereby they assume to know what is best for all sub-national territories and spaces, and so produce policy frameworks and guidelines that can greatly undermine local plans and initiatives. Provincial level actors are the only players in the system with hardly any autonomous revenue which sets them up to be the “muscle” to enforce national preferences, whilst feeling threatened by the resources and policy intelligence of, especially the six metropolitan governments (who generate 55% of the national GVA), triggering a competitive dynamic (Pieterse and van Donk 2008). Often the relevant political party in control is the only actor able to mediate these competitive pressures, but if this dispute resolution facility is not available because a different party control different levels of government, then relations degenerate into chronic dysfunctionality (Schmidt 2008; 2010). Local governments are typically deeply frustration by the attitudes and priorities of higher levels of government and in the metropolitan areas tend to “manage” these pressures and also pursue their own independent policy prioritisation and strategy development.

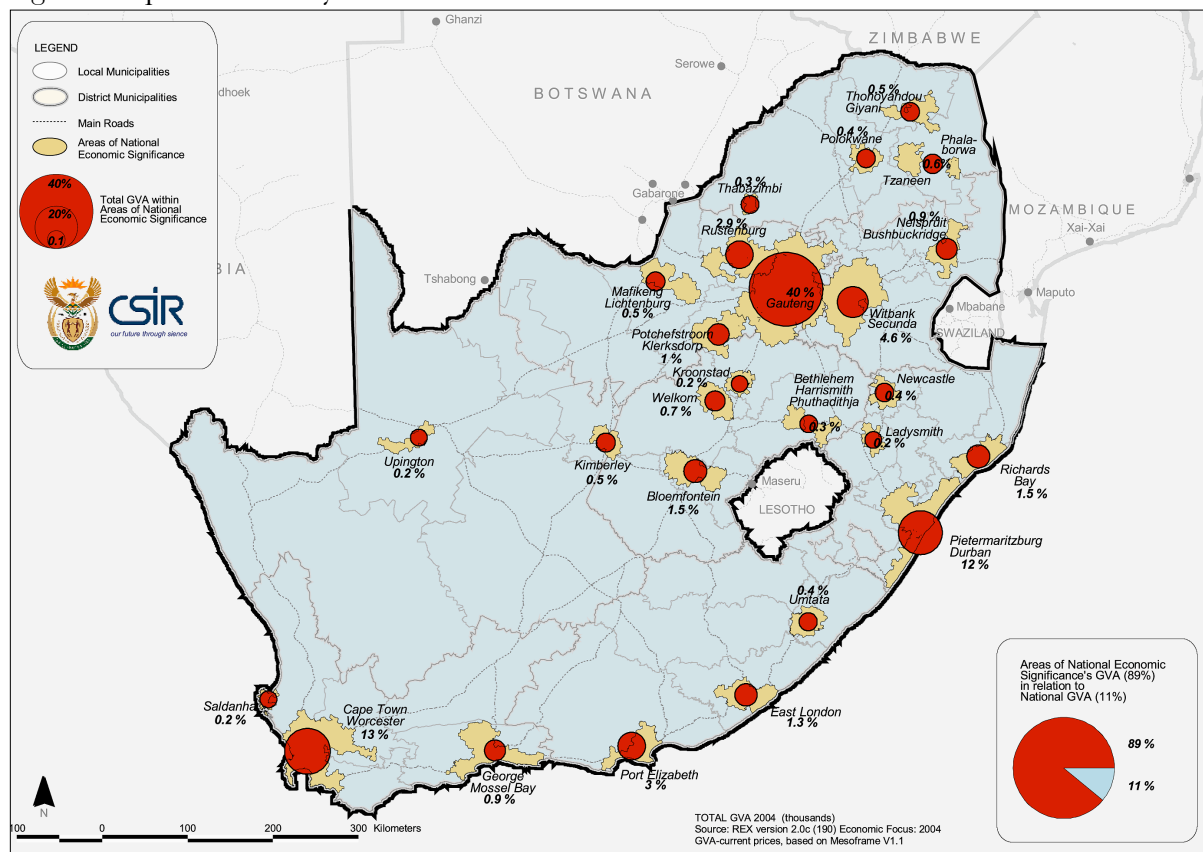
Since the publication of the *Ten Year Review* in 2003 by the Presidency there has been a clear recognition of these dynamics. This begs the question: What has been done to resolve the systemic problem of government fragmentation? In a phrase, precious little, despite a few attempts. The most significant attempt to date has been the production of the *National Spatial Development Perspective* (NSDP), also in 2003 and updated in 2006. The NSDP highlights the strongly concentrated nature of economic activity, people and poverty as captured in the last *State of South African Cities Report*:

The most recent update of the NSDP showed that 84.46% of the national population and 77.31% of people living below the Minimum Living Level are located within 60km of areas that generate at least R1 billion of GVA per annum. While constituting 31.24% of the land surface, these areas generate 95.59% of the total national GVA (SACN 2006: 2-8 to 2-11).

The NSDP came to the conclusion that the government was failing to achieve synergy between its various redistributive investments because it was failing to understand how to coordinate and inter-relate these investments in particular geographies. Building on this assumption, the NSDP developed a series of principles to guide governmental investment based on the distinction between people and places (The Presidency 2006). All people had a right to basic services such as education, health and social security and these need to be provided universally. However, scarce capital for economic investment, especially in connective infrastructures, had to be restricted to places with economic potential, i.e. urban settlements with growth potential. Given the highly uneven nature of the South African space economy (see Figure 3), the implications of this statement was radical, and definitely, controversial in terms of the universalistic and pro-rural mindset of the ruling party's ideology. One of the spin-offs of this policy agenda was the commissioning of a National Urban Development Framework (NUDF) (Turok and Parnell 2009). By the ascendancy of Jacob Zuma to the presidency in 2009, both of these policies were more or less dead in the water.

It is important to note the efforts by the national local government department to forge alignment between the integrated development plan, the spatial development framework, local economic development plans, sustainable human settlement strategies and medium-term income and expenditure frameworks as a precondition for shifting the dynamics of local geographies (Pieterse et al 2008; Pieterse and van Donk 2008). This degree of strategic clarity and alignment has proven virtually impossible to achieve because of the continued perversities that flow from the unviable divisions of powers and functions across the three spheres of government and the challenges produced by the intergovernmental fiscal system (Savage 2008; PDG 2005). It is well beyond the scope of this paper to explore any of these issues in adequate detail. It will therefore have to suffice to assert that the fragmentation and contradictions within and across governmental entities is systemic and is likely to persist for the foreseeable future. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that many urban municipalities are doing reasonably well in consistently extending infrastructures and services to the urban poor (Jaglyn 2008). Of course, success on this front may represent failure at the urban scale in terms of spatial equity.

Figure 3: Space Economy of South Africa



(Source: The Presidency 2006)

Unintended consequences of redistribution

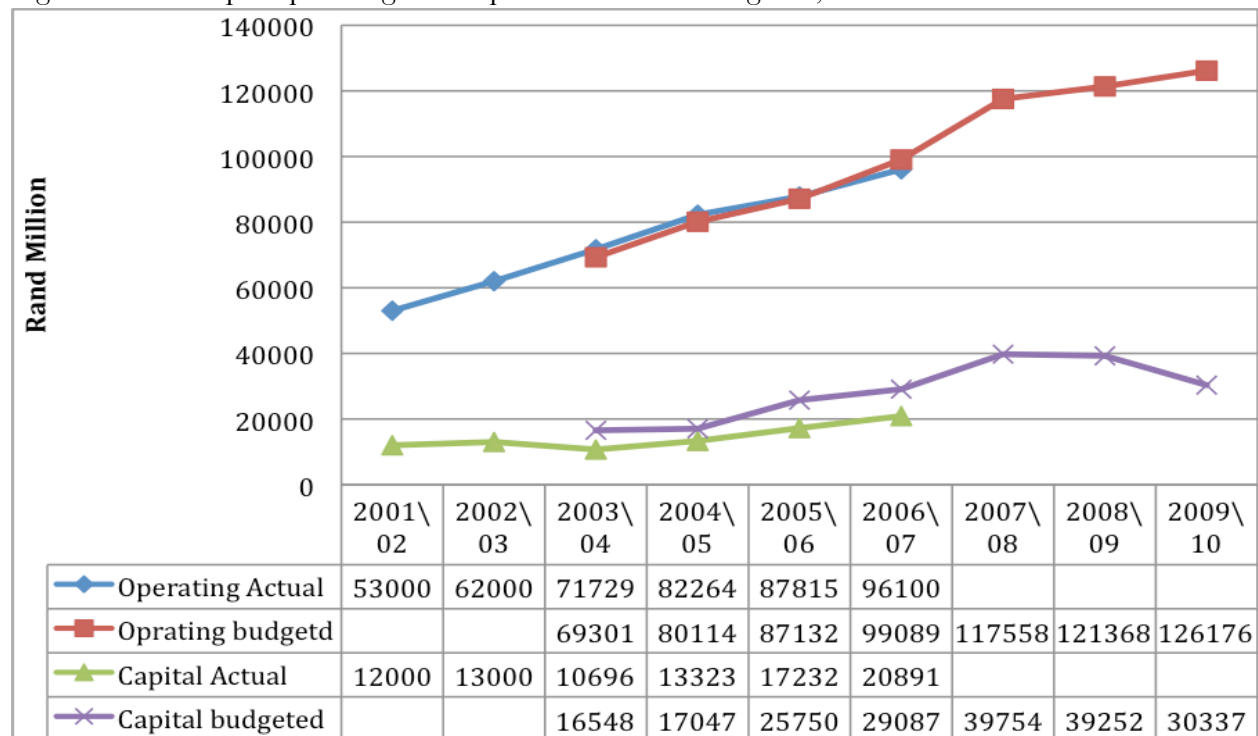
As intimated at the outset, the post-apartheid state has been determined to develop an expansive redistributive approach to address the basic needs of the poor. In the urban context this takes the form of the public housing programme, which in the first instance, seeks to provide a free asset for the poor if they can demonstrate incomes below a certain level. Other dimensions of the housing policy seeks to create institutions to promote rental housing and other quasi market interventions to facilitate greater private sector participation in lower levels of the housing hierarchy. The public housing programme has been ambitious and successful in expending close to 3 million subsidies since 1994. This programme is complemented by a series of infrastructure subsidies to support municipalities in extending basic services to the poor. It is expected that these programmes work together but this has not always been the case. On the social side, the state also provides a number of grants for various categories of poor and vulnerable people. This contribution comprises a significant share of poor people's incomes. It is essential to set these programmes against the scale of the unemployment and poverty challenges in South Africa. In the beginning of 2009, unemployment was pegged at over thirty percent (using the expanded definition) and recently it was reported that at least 1 million jobs have been lost during 2009 as a result of the impact of the global economic recession. Given the unprecedented rate of unemployment it is unsurprising that over half of

the population are below the minimum living level, especially when one considers that South Africa has one of the worst levels of income inequality in the world.

The point that is of relevance to this discussion is that the free public housing programme is in fact the de facto urban development strategy of South Africa with disastrous consequences for spatial patterns in the city. This intemperate assertion requires some qualification. Most municipalities have been playing a desperate game of keeping up with the pressure from national government to provide as many housing “opportunities” as possible within budgetary provisions. Given the scale of these programmes, and the input planning that is required to identify and service land, award contracts to private developers to build, negotiate a contested waiting list, and maintain these assets once they come on stream—when most of the inhabitants do not have the incomes to pay for the services or maintain the houses—it is inevitable that the imperatives of public housing dominate urban development practice. In the face of the political pressure to keep these programmes growing, it is equally predictable that there is little capacity or energy to understand and deal with the unintended consequences of sprawl, depreciating stock because of the inability of residents to maintain their dwellings, the widespread informal trading of these housing at a tenth of the cost to build them, and so on (Zack 2008). In effect as quickly as these housing settlements arise from the ground, they compound, at a larger scale, the unsustainability, inefficiency and fragmented nature of the city-region.

The financial implications of this programme on municipalities is probably the most important factor that makes it virtually impossible for public authorities to acknowledge and deal with the settlement catastrophes that are being created today. Two brief examples will suffice. The graph in Figure 4 demonstrates clearly that local authorities in South Africa are not able to afford these programmes. Basically, the new housing programmes are creating an operating expense that they do not have the tax base to service, nor sufficient transfers from national government. In fact, inter-governmental transfers are for capital costs with the assumption that municipalities will find ways of funding the ongoing operating expenses.

Figure 4: Municipal operating and capital actual and budgeted, 2001-2010.

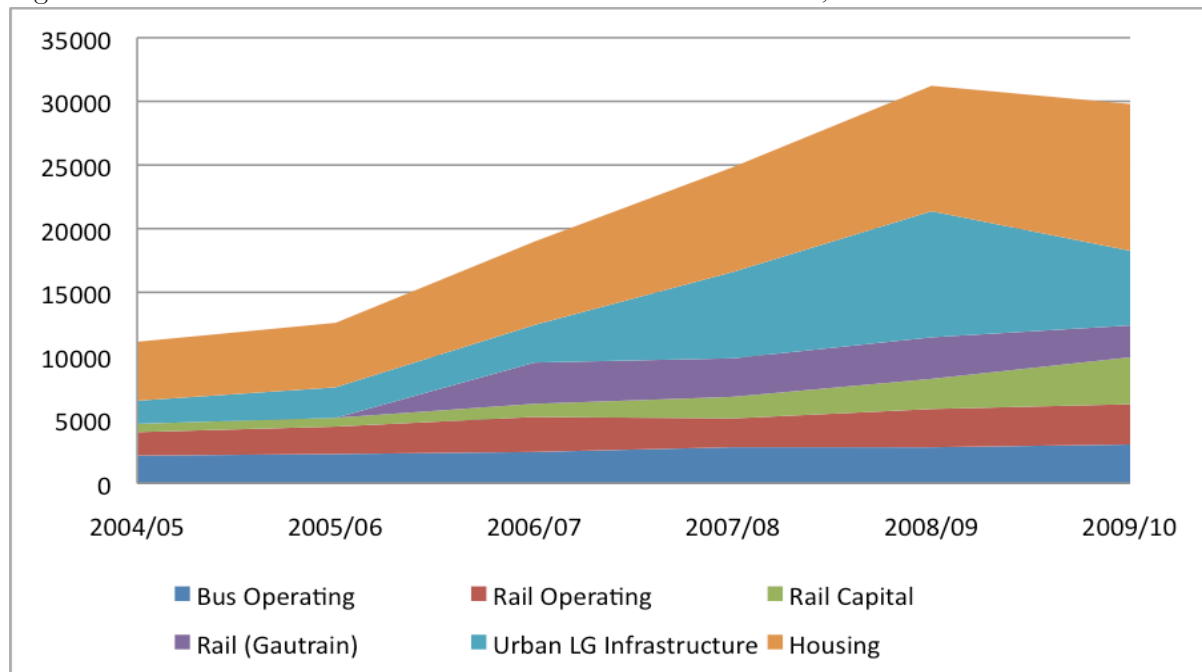


Source: Bigen Africa 2009

However, it is important to understand these dynamics against a larger backdrop of nationally driven urban investment. Municipal finance expert, David Savage points out that over the past five years or so, there has been significant growth in national transfers to municipalities for bus, road, rail, general infrastructure, and housing, and again with little consideration with what this means in terms of maintenance of these assets in the context of what local tax bases can withstand (see Figure 5). Within a larger political discourse of “avoiding the roll-over of public funds for the poor”, municipalities are pushed very hard to simply invest, build and expand with no clue about how they will cope with maintenance price tags associated with these processes.

All municipalities find themselves in a multi-pronged financial bind. On the one hand they have to continuously extend new infrastructures to areas where the urban poor agglomerate, with little certainty about how they will recoup and maintain those investments. Another pressure comes in the form of maintaining the existing infrastructural stock and level of service in established areas, i.e. former white neighbourhoods but these infrastructures are relatively old and now require substantial maintenance and potential replacement investments. Note, these middle-class areas are the golden goose of the local tax base and therefore demand responsiveness from municipalities. In addition, municipalities are continuously pushed to invest in essential economic infrastructure to facilitate better connectivity for the routine functioning of the regional economy but increasingly to also underpin special or mega projects, as with the Gautrain and the World Cup investments. Achieving an informed understanding of the dynamics and trade-offs between these diverse categories of infrastructural investment remains an ill defined challenged for most urban areas.

Figure 5: Trends in national subsidies for the built environment, 2004-2010



Source: David Savage, personal correspondence

Civil society parochialism

These issues have been compounded by a fourth problem—civil society parochialism and divisions. It is relatively well established in the literature that interventionist and transformative public policies depend on focussed and consistent civil society pressure (Fung and Wright 2001). Many commentators and scholars have observed the fact that there has been an upsurge in municipal protests in most parts of the country. The intensity, scope and focus of these protests vary greatly which makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions. What is clear is that dissatisfaction with municipal performance with regard to service delivery is often a trigger and focus. It also seems that once these protests ignite, all manner of social forces seek to maximise the energy for their agendas. For instance within the ruling party alliance, factions of local ANC branches and regions will attempt to redirect the protests against the political enemies that may or may not be local councillors or even “deployed” officials in a municipality. The various anti-neoliberal social movements to the left of the ruling alliance also try and use these protests to bolster their long-standing campaigns against the privatisation and corporatisation of municipal services and the partial introduction of user-pays policies in municipalities. What is noteworthy across these unfolding events is that these protests remain by and large sporadic, traceable to local political dynamics and not cohered across territories and scales.

One of the really curious puzzles in South African politics is the general absence of civil society formations or coalitions that operate at the larger urban scale. This is peculiar because the metropolitan system of governance paves the way for re-articulating public claims at a metropolitan scale because that is where decisions are considered and made. This is even

more acute given that fiscal redistributive decisions also get to be made at that scale and to an insignificant degree at a district or ward basis. Yet, despite this institutional construction of the urban democratic systems, civil society organisations across class and interest lines seem intent to restrict their activism to the neighbourhood level. As a result these formations seldom reflect the capacity or language to connect local problems to broader, city-wide issues of resource allocation and structural inequality. I am relatively certain that unless this shifts; unless radical civil society groups can reformulate their claims to connect the local and the regional, as well as the current moment and the future, it will be difficult to foster enough autonomous political pressure to influence or redefine the political calculus of local authorities (Pieterse 2008b). And as long as that remains unaltered, it is relatively certain that municipalities will remain trapped by the dynamics discussed before.

Cross-cutting institutional dynamics

The promise of the South African transition was of course that everything could be reimagined, redefined and remade. It is this heady optimism that spills throughout the much lauded South African Constitution of 1996; a beacon of progressive, inclusive and tolerant jurisprudence. In the wake of the Constitution and the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), South Africa was indeed an insane laboratory for redefining just about every aspect of contemporary rule, except possibly for the economy. But even in that domain there we have witnessed interesting experiments to pursue and consolidate black economic empowerment, informed by the Malaysian experiment of affirmative action (Pieterse 2008a). The upshot of this was between 1994 – 2002, a plethora of Green Papers, White Papers, laws and policy frameworks were published; all steeped in the discourses of holistic and integrated development, paying homage to the imperative of multi-dimensional approaches to development in all domains (see: Pieterse (2007) for ones pertaining to urban issues). Practically what this meant was that the policy frameworks and laws reflected a sophisticated synthesis of international thinking on a particular issue, reflecting left-of-centre, third-way (à la Giddens) perspectives on how to push the radical envelop in a predominantly neoliberal world. Almost of all of these policies worked on the assumption that development must be holistic, integrated, and devolved into the hands of lower levels of government. Also, all of these processes took participatory modes of policy development and service provision for granted—an unquestionable truth. The net effect of these simultaneous processes of reform during a period of economic crises (1996-1999), traumatic institutional amalgamations at the local level, was the production of a politically correct hurricane of policy reform; reforms that no-one really understood in terms of what it might mean in practice, generating immense institutional confusion, competition, uncertainty, to the point, often, of paralysis.[†] The South African urban and development landscape is currently buckling under the weight of policy overload. Most political leaders and public policy managers have no idea how to navigate their way through the morass of new, and ever changing, policy imperatives. With the tidalwave of reform that accompanies the new Zuma administration, this situation has just intensified during the past year. As a defence mechanism, a certain inertia sets into the government system that simply undermines any prospect of undertaking risky, complex and bold initiatives like reversing the apartheid geography in South African cities and towns.

This risk avoidance impulse has been reinforced by two pieces of legislation that aims to prevent corruption and ensure transparency in public finance accounting: the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA). Both of these pieces of legislation reinforce a narrow accounting mindset and restrict evaluation criteria to fiduciary accountability (Savage 2008). Practically, what it means is that the Head of a Department (in national or provincial government) and the City Manager (in a municipality) are personally liable for over-expenditure or any malfeasance. This automatically instigates risk aversion behaviour. Such behaviour precludes integrated or coordinated programmes or projects, because who will ultimately be accountable if there is a problem during execution? And so we find ourselves in an absurd dilemma: all urban development and sectoral policies demand and insist on holistic approaches but the public finance system comes very close to criminalising joint programmes. These financial management laws serve as an acute example but it underscores the broader problem that the urban development policy landscape is simply too complex, multi-dimensional, demanding for most municipalities to navigate. Unless this fundamental institutional dynamic is not better understood and unravelled, it is unlikely that we can envisage more effective policy outcomes in South African cities, apart from exceptional cases.

Insidious fantasies and desires

The final and most complicated, elusive and insidious sets of reasons for the lack of urban transformation revolve around a more existential dynamic. The political elite in South Africa, particularly in the shape of leadership of the ANC-led alliance, remains deeply ambivalent about the profoundly urbanised reality of South African society. Especially since the ascendancy of the Zuma coalition in December 2007, and more formally after the elections in 2009, there has been an forceful return of a rural nostalgia snugly ensconced in a narrow strain of African nationalism—the ideological prism that remain uncomfortable with the messiness of postcolonial urban modernities. The cumulative legacy of colonialism and its apartheid successor have left deep and often grotesque psychic scars on the social body of the country manifested in the disproportionate and arbitrary capacity for violence that marks almost all classes and races (Jamal 2009). It also manifests in nihilistic popular youth cultures that continuously rail against the neat and ordered nationalistic prescriptions of “ubuntu” and the “simunye nation” (where are one nation); and most palpably expressed in the “bling” cultures that not only surround the musical and television icons of popular life, but also everyday passions and energies in the townships; both dynamically amplified and circulated through the rabid tabloids. There are such profound dissonances in popular cultural expressions that both feed off the “right-to-be-rich” politics of the ANC youth league—a veritable force in the contemporary landscape—and also spit in its face as it eschews the lame theatricalities of contemporary symbolic politics. Simultaneously, the ruling party is continuously confronted with its own impotence in the face of alarming rates of unemployment that hover somewhere between 34-38% of the labour force (accepting the expanded definition); and which just got horribly worse as the South African economy shed 1 million jobs since January 2009. At best the government can spin out wildly inflated numbers of public works job opportunities that are both short-term and poorly paid and yet to be proved as a pathway to a steady job with reasonable wages.

It is against this backdrop of political incapacity that one must come to consider the extravagant proclamations of slum eradication; sentiments that remain wedded to the modernist ideal that all poor people will be saved by the benevolent state from the egregious indignities of living in shacks or slums or informal settlements, as polite policy discourses would have it. The ruling party is marked by a deep distrust of contemporary modernity in as far as it represents an irretrievable return to the rural ideal. This manifests in numerous ways. One, rural development gets alleviated to one of five key political priorities for this term of office even though only 30% of the population resides in these areas; it has no economic base to solve the problems since rural areas contribute only 6% to the national general value add (GVA); and the opportunity costs of infrastructural and economic investments in those areas are unjustifiable (CSIR 2008). Two, informal settlements are stigmatised as undignified ways of living for (black) African people when a developmental state is in office! Instead of engaging with the shelter solutions of the poor on its own terms, key government leaders, including the current President and the former Minister of Housing, continuously foreground their undesirability. In fact, Lindiwe Sisulu (former Housing Minister) thought it necessary to launch a campaign to criminalise informal trading of public RDP houses.

At the core of the growing and interlinked problems of unemployment, informal ways of living in shacks that are either in shanty towns or backyards of formal houses in the townships, is a reminder that the ideologically inflated state is simply not in a position to solve these problems. And this very notion, suggestion, whispered intimation is of course pure political heresy. I am convinced that until these ideological driven anti-urban biases are roundly critiqued and replaced, there is simply not the political basis to really come to terms with the complexities sketched in this paper. These anti-urban sentiments that reside in the tissue of the dominant political cultures of the ruling coalition are important to address first, if one is to expect efficacy in coming to terms with the five clusters of issues that ensure the reproduction of the neo-apartheid city elaborated before.

In conclusion

At a macro level, the post-apartheid geography of the South African city has simply morphed into a neo-apartheid spatiality since both urban sprawl and intra-class divisions have worsened since 1994. The macro economic and institutional reasons for this are complex and certainly go beyond the two key problems of limited state interventions in land markets and the unforeseen negative consequences of the public housing programme. At least four other dynamics play a role and across these issues, we have a paucity of systematic case study research to demonstrate how they unfold in daily routines, practices and dispositions of various urban actors. Clearly, there is much that remains to be done to fill this vacuum because in the absence of careful, nuanced and grounded research we are unlikely to animate the requisite political discourses that can engender a truly post-apartheid condition. However, what I have not covered in this paper, but which is as important as the macro dynamics discussed here, is to explore the rich practices of living, livelihood, becoming, imagining and invention that pulse through South African cities. The works of scholars like Kihato (2008), Mbembe and Nuttall (2004), Robinson (2006), Simone (2006), amongst many others come to

mind. If one were to look at the post-apartheid city through the keyhole of this genre of work, a very different kind of analysis would have come to the fore. I certainly agree with much of what is argued by these scholars, but would insist that we need to also begin to explore how these culturally inflected accounts can be articulated with the macro trends presented in this paper. It may even be possible that such an articulation could get us closer to a reasonable account of the elusive post-apartheid city.

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† I of course have no representative empirical data to base this assertion on but am drawing on my personal experience in working intensely with many senior policy managers in the fields of local government and urban development, intermittently from 1997 to 2007.