Post-apartheid Development, Landlessness 
and the Reproduction of Exclusion in South Africa

by
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Introduction

The Landless People’s Movement (LPM) is one of a number of independent grassroots movements to emerge in response to the negative impacts of the post-apartheid economic and developmental model. The expectations of a fairly rapid transfer of land back to the dispossessed after 1994 were dashed when the ANC adopted a ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ model of land reform. This consigned land redistribution to a small afterthought in the process of restructuring the capitalist economy and redirecting it onto another growth path. Constitutional imperatives to redistribute land, secure tenure for all and return land to those unjustly dispossessed by racial laws formed the central poles around which the landless have organised. However, the longer these imperatives are not met, the more grassroots organisations begin to break away from these and begin to seek – and create – alternative poles around which to organise.

The LPM is perhaps unique amongst the independent grassroots movements in that its active membership is found in both urban and rural parts of the country. The movement is challenging the compartmentalisation of urban and rural struggles by insisting that urban evictions and insecure tenure are issues fundamentally related to land access.

Since the LPM is still in its infancy it is early to generalise too much from its experiences and practices to date. However, its very existence raises a number of issues of wider significance to civil society in post-apartheid South Africa. In particular, how has the transition from apartheid created new possibilities and limits for organising a land-based movement in both urban and rural areas? And how have the dynamic processes of state reformation and civil society reconstitution impacted on the possibility for an independent grassroots movement of the landless? These questions raise issues of discourse, ideology and hegemony, not least with regard to exclusion and inclusion, the role of civil society organisations and their relationship to the state, and the location of the land struggle in post-apartheid transformation.

This report focuses on three inter-related aspects of the LPM’s attempts to forge a national land-based movement. The first is the way post-apartheid developmental discourse and
practice has reproduced exclusion in both urban and rural areas, recreating the structural conditions for urban-rural solidarity. The second considers the way local government has been reorganised, and at the ways this has changed the political terrain. The crisis of local government was a very influential aspect of the broader crisis of apartheid, and the restructuring of local governance is a key element of the re-establishment of hegemony in the post-apartheid era. This is the case both at the level of political representation and the ideological production of citizenship, and at the level of the physical reproduction of the population through the distribution of services and opportunities.

Finally, the report explores the ways the historical and current contradictions of development and the structure of power influence forms of grassroots organisation and resistance around land, in both urban and rural contexts. This takes into account the changing character of, and new contradictions emerging within, civil society. It also considers the link between civil society and hegemonic power exercised through the state.

**Post-apartheid developmentalism and the re-establishment of hegemony**

“We must continue to focus on the growth, development and modernisation of the First Economy, to generate the resources without which it will not be possible to confront the challenges of the Second Economy. This is going to require further and significant infrastructure investments, skills development, scientific and technological research, development and expansion of the knowledge economy, growth and modernisation of the manufacturing and service sectors, deeper penetration of the global markets by our products, increasing our savings levels, black economic empowerment and the further expansion of small and medium enterprises.”

- President Thabo Mbeki, State of the Nation address, Parliament, 6 Feb 2004

The ideology of development forms the core of the post-apartheid hegemonic discourse. In particular, the development and modernisation of the formal market economy is viewed to be the basis of social advance. Modernisation means dismantling outdated forms of organisation or economic structures, eliminating obstacles to renewed profitable accumulation, and reshaping the economy in ways that permit an intersection with international capital flows and technological advances. As Mbeki highlights in his address, this in particular means an emphasis on science and technology, and on the knowledge economy. The ANC’s trajectory is to concentrate resources in the formal economy in the hope that this will generate resources for the second economy i.e. that the benefits of formal economy growth will trickle down to the second economy. Related is the goal of connecting those in the second economy with opportunities in the formal economy. In other words, the ANC’s economic programme is to strengthen and extend the market economy.

The post-apartheid development model is premised on the centrality of markets (i.e. the formal economy) - as constituted under capitalist relations of production and consumption - as the primary mechanisms for the allocation of productive resources and the distribution of goods and services. Market-driven development implies that both the means and the goals of development are the integration of the excluded into market relations, and the production of commodities either purely through the market, or where that is not possible, through market-compatible means i.e. developmental goods must have an exchange value. Since only commodities have precisely determined exchange values at a particular point, developmental goods and services must be converted into commodities.

The fundamental weakness of this reliance on markets – even when assisted by the state – lies in the fact that markets only respond to ‘effective demand’, i.e. the ability to pay for
commodities at prevailing prices. That means that markets are skewed towards meeting the desires of those with resources, able to pay for commodities. The result is an ever-greater concentration of resources in the hands of a few. Even where the state assists, this is no guarantee that ‘effective demand’ will be stimulated beyond the point at which state assistance is no longer available. For example, the state may assist to buy land and even to provide initial start-up support for agricultural production. But in a context of intense competition with large-scale landowners and producers these resources are likely to be depleted for most beneficiaries of assistance long before they are independently regenerated through the market.

**Historical context of the developmental model**

The post-apartheid developmental model is situated in a context of a decades-long global restructuring of economic and political systems, driven by state managers, multilateral global institutions and profit-based economic elites. From an ideological point of view, the project of restructuring is committed to opening up commodity and financial markets to increased competition (liberalisation and deregulation); the ceding to profit making organisations of potentially profitable economic activities formerly carried out by the state (deregulation and privatisation); and the use of the state to facilitate these goals.

Given the integrated nature of the world economy, peripheral countries are compelled to follow the lead of core countries. Restructuring initiated by capital in the core capitalist economies in response to overaccumulation and recession found fertile ground in South Africa too, where the apartheid growth path was also reaching structural limits. The economy was skewed towards the production and consumption of luxury goods for a narrow white domestic market. It relied on artificially cheap wages for the majority, thus preventing Fordist mass consumption that drove the expansions of the capitalist core economies from the Second World War. The result was overaccumulation and ‘trapped capital’, with limited potential growth in domestic effective demand for commodities (see Gelb 1991).

This opened up a period of restructuring that ultimately resulted in a realignment of social forces and the realisation of formal political democracy. In the urban economy the state attempted to open up new markets and to move towards a less regulated economic system, including greater private sector involvement in urban management and planning. Similar shifts were evident in commercial agriculture, partly caused by structural weaknesses specific to the agricultural economy, and partly stimulated by the reduction of state support to agriculture (see Bayley 2000; De Klerk 1991). The changes were encouraged by sections of capital that required a broad expansion of markets to survive.

Despite its best efforts, the apartheid state was unable to de-link the processes of economic restructuring from liberalisation in the political and social spheres. The National Party proved incapable of transcending its reliance on a racially exclusive democracy (see Gelb 1991; Morris 1991). In the urban areas, the state partially implemented policies of privatisation and deregulation, but would not accede to demands for political democracy or the meaningful redistribution of resources towards improving the conditions of the black population. This led to intensifying contradictions so that by the late 1980s, the state was confronting a mass-based challenge to its rule in the urban areas.

In agriculture, some of the larger farming and industrial interests, increasingly critical of aspects of the control system, were exerting pressures on the state for change (Bayley 2000:
In order to meet the needs of the leading sectors of agriculture, however, the institutional link between the state and the grain farmers in particular – an agricultural nomenklatura, in the words of Bayley (2000:35) – had to be severed. The National Party was too reliant on these farmers as a support base to disconnect from them.

Confronted with the structural limits to the economy, and encouraged by global economic restructuring, the more export-oriented fractions of capital began seeking alternatives to the existing political leadership in the country. Given the growing confidence of the mass resistance that each piecemeal reform stimulated, it became apparent to the ‘progressive’ fractions of capital that nothing short of genuine political democratisation and an accommodation with the leadership of the liberation movement was required in order to secure the necessary stability to carry out economic restructuring.

South Africa faced economic stagnation, a crisis of local governance and an ethnically-based political leadership incapable of managing the crisis. At the same time, a strong mass movement (although mainly urban-based) was demanding political democracy. It was under these conditions that a compromise was reached between the economically dominant fractions of capital and the politically hegemonic leadership of the majority in the form of the African National Congress (ANC). The dominant fractions of capital were finally prepared to concede to majority rule if there was only limited economic redistribution, and if the political framework allowed for renewed accumulation (Wood 2000: 201).

Post-apartheid South Africa’s state managers have situated the country on the developmental arm of the globally dominant project. The state questions aspects of the pace and direction of the globally hegemonic project, in particular the ability of the market to meet certain redistributive goals and to provide certain goods and services if left to its own devices. The South African version of this project identifies the need for state assistance in supporting the market to produce developmental goods and services, especially where market failures are apparent. The state is also driving a project of black economic empowerment requiring state intervention. The state poses questions (albeit selectively) on issues of power in the global economy, especially where rules are made for all but are routinely ignored or broken by the most powerful.

However, post-apartheid state policy and practice is not in principle opposed to the dominant global project - that the capitalist market is at the core of the efficient production and distribution of goods and services. It accepts the need to create markets that are as competitive as possible, thus liberalisation and deregulation across many sectors of the economy since 1994. Where markets are not functioning effectively or where no markets exist, the role of the state is to improve their functioning or to create markets. State supports and interventions are market-compatible, mainly in the form of a system of subsidies and grants. These provide a basic level of resources to enable participation in markets for housing, services, land and so on for those otherwise excluded. Whether the level of support provided is sufficient, or whether markets are capable of absorbing new entrants for long beyond their initial investment in the context of a lack of regular resources, are both open to question.

The realignment of political forces that resulted should not be viewed as a victory for a counter-hegemonic power. Hegemony is a class-based concept (Burawoy 2003:225) and thus a counter-hegemonic challenge to the existing power is an overt class challenge. However, it is apparent that there has not been a transfer of power from one class to another in South
Africa. Rather, given the organic crisis of the 1980s, the ruling class has succeeded in adapting its alliances and making the necessary compromises to re-establish its hegemony. This involves the creation of a new balance of political forces (based on the strength of the contending forces), the reshaping of state institutions as well as the formation of new ideologies (Simon 1991:39). This was possible because of the inability of a counter-hegemonic bloc (based on an oppositional class) from shifting the balance of forces decisively in its own direction. Although the working class played a fundamental role in resistance to apartheid, it was not up to the task of forming a cross-class system of alliances under its own leadership.

The re-establishment of hegemony by the ruling class has resulted in a new historic bloc, comprising large-scale export-oriented capital together with African nationalist political leadership drawing small-scale capital and the organised working class behind them as subordinate partners. The interests of the hegemonic class are again presented as the universal interests of the citizenry as a whole. That is, “the development and expansion of the particular group is conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the ‘national’ energies” (Gramsci 1991:182). The success of capitalist expansion and accumulation through an export-led growth path is to be the generator of improvements in the lives of every citizen. Post-apartheid development conforms to a modernising capitalist project. The liberal critique of apartheid distortions (to the free functioning of unhindered markets, that is) was coupled with a desire to more efficiently and effectively utilise available resources. In both urban and rural areas, it is apparent that modernisation of capitalist relations of production underlies post-apartheid development - taking into account rapidly advancing processes of globalisation as much as local constraints (market structure, technology and skills levels, labour organisation) to further capitalist growth. The rest of the paper considers the way these ideologies have been translated into practice, the reshaping of the state system (focusing on the local government level) and the new balance of political forces (including subaltern responses) underpinning the re-establishment of hegemony. In each case, the practical implications of the realignments for urban-rural solidarity in the landless movement are spelled out.

**Economic modernisation in the post-apartheid era**

**Urban restructuring**

The need to restructure the urban economic and political environment, and the proposals from capital for doing so, influenced the broader developmental model. At the base of restructuring was the need to expand markets and rationalise spatial organisation. Between the World Bank and the Urban Foundation, proposals for restructuring focused on changing the role of the state, and modernising urban management and planning. In line with international trends, the urban planning discourse centred on spatial integration and the compact city and partnerships. Internationally, already by the 1980s the meaning of partnerships had changed ‘to reflect the emergent desire across both public and private sectors to transfer responsibility for urban regeneration to private developers and investors’ (Adams & Hastings quoted in Harrison 2003:18). The Igoli 2002 plan aimed to corporatise service delivery functions, most notably water and electricity provision and transport. Corporatisation ring-fenced each of these functions and structured them into entities that were to become financially self-sufficient, thus creating “commercial imperatives for improved performance and efficiency” (Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council 2001). Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) then opened the door to the private sector to participate in
these. This either took the form of private sector investment, management contracts (such as the contract between French multinational Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux’ and Joburg Metro for water services) or outsourcing to private companies of services such as technical support or credit control. Prices have risen beyond inflation because companies must add their own profit on top of inflation and operating costs.

The goal of the ‘compact city’ was to overcome apartheid inefficiencies. The concept has been used elsewhere to describe a vision of high density and mixed use environments. While these have been influential in the South African debate, local concerns regarding the history of urban apartheid, its impact on city form and the way it served to impoverish spatially marginalised black people were the basis of the case to compact the city (Todes 2003:109). Despite the noble intentions, the model is underpinned by a market-development approach, with economic growth (of a particular type) seen to lead to social development.

In the same way that municipalities were placed in direct competition with one another within South Africa, urban planning was situated in a discourse of competition between cities. The goal of post-apartheid urban development is for the city to compete with other cities around the world. The competition is to attract investment into the city, and this means modernising the city economy, focusing on cutting edge technologies and industries – in particular the information/knowledge industries. Thus the three pillars of Blue IQ, the Gauteng provincial government’s investment initiative, are high value-added manufacturing, tourism and smart industries (see www.blueiq.co.za). The results of this emphasis are shown below.

While housing is not the primary reason for people coming to cities, and therefore urbanisation policy cannot be reduced to housing policy (Dewar 1989), it is a crucial component of an urbanisation strategy. Post-apartheid housing policy was negotiated during the period of political transition between 1990 and 1994, on the basis of a trajectory set in motion with the 1985 White Paper on Privatisation. Bond (2000, chap 4) tracks housing policy through a series of World Bank studies from 1991 through the actions of banks in attempting to recoup their housing investments in the townships, to the role of the National Housing Forum in the period immediately preceding the first democratic elections in 1994. As in other areas of the developmental agenda, the outcome was a market-centred housing policy that was “little more than a developer-led, site-and-service policy” (Bond 2000:136). The Housing White Paper in 1994 and subsequent amendments based housing policy on “the fundamental pre-condition for attracting investment, which is that housing must be provided within a normalised market” and in 1996 the Ministerial Task Team confirmed that the state’s gradual withdrawal from housing provision was a fundamental principle (Bond 2000:145).

In line with the ‘state-assisted market’ model of development, a small subsidy was provided to enable those without resources to enter the market. The policy was based on individual tenure, with resources diverted to private sector developers to build the houses. This had the result of housing funds being skewed towards those with higher incomes because they had the capacity to gain access to credit (Bond 2000:149).
Rural restructuring

The growing dominance of large-scale agri-businesses that required economic expansion beyond the domestic market was part of the broader realignment of the relationships between capital and the state from the 1970s described above. That is, fractions of capital that drive the post-apartheid historic bloc cut across different sectors of the economy. In agriculture, the needs of those sectors most geared towards export production – fruit, wine and to a lesser extent other horticultural crops, sugar, forestry – superseded the needs of those sub-sectors more heavily reliant on state support for survival, such as maize, wheat and livestock. The latter were forced into becoming internationally competitive or going under. Organised agriculture, in restructured form, was able to retain significant influence on post-apartheid agricultural policy and practice. But this was based on an ideological reorientation away from an expectation that the state would continue subsidising commercial agriculture, and an acceptance of the value and importance of promoting international competitiveness and free markets in agricultural products.

Processes of deregulation and liberalisation of agriculture rooted in the 1970s and gathering pace in the 1980s thus were carried through to their logical conclusion by the ANC. Most significant was the wholesale dismantling of the control boards and their instruments of product and price controls (see Bayley 2000; Williams, et al. 1998). Also important was the corporatisation of the formerly membership-owned and -controlled agricultural co-operatives that had played such a dominant role under apartheid. Coupled with the reduction of tariff barriers at a rate even faster than negotiated by the apartheid government during the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and the total elimination of subsidies to farmers, the ANC was able to achieve a major restructuring of the sector in favour of exporters that would have been impossible under the National Party.

Rural restructuring included a land reform component. The programme was based on three pillars: restitution in land or financial compensation for those who had lost land as a result of racially based laws after 1913; redistribution through the market; and tenure security, including the upgrading of tenure to full title. The programme was a willing-seller, willing-buyer model meaning that landowners had to volunteer to sell their land and potential buyers would have to pay for land they wanted. The state provided some assistance to qualifying groups and individuals in the form of a small grant. Land reform was thus not incompatible with the market. The programme retained the integrity of the land market and even aimed to draw those previously excluded into the land market. There was certainly no attempt or intention to decommodify land.

Restructuring of the political economy in urban and rural areas alike, and in the forms of governance to regulate it, thus situated the market at the centre. The reorientation of the national economy towards international competitiveness through an open economy was mirrored at the local level through the creation of competition between local economies. In line with the ‘trickle down’ economic model of building the formal economy in order to generate employment and resources for the second economy, the state at national and local level emphasised private capital investment and set about creating conditions conducive to this. These included the strengthening of land markets in both urban and rural areas, the repackaging (corporatisation) of public services and their preparation for privatisation where profitable, and the associated entrenchment of commodified social and developmental goods including housing, transport, water and energy. In the name of leveraging privately owned
capital (i.e. privatised social capital), the state ceded greater areas of the economy to the private sector.

**From coercion to consent in local governance**

**Coercion as the basis of local governance under apartheid**

Systems of local governance are structurally linked to the political economy. Under apartheid, local government was imposed on the black population both in urban and rural areas. White local councils were given responsibility for the black population in their jurisdiction. It goes without saying that the levels of service thus provided were entirely insufficient. In the commercial farming areas, the provision of housing and services was left up to white landowners. Most took the opportunity to provide only the most rudimentary forms of shelter and access to water and food, and used the provision of these as a stick to discipline the workforce. Housing and water for farm workers was dependent on working for a white farmer and on maintaining ’good’ relations with the farmer – in most cases meaning the worker had to be prepared to endure permanent humiliation and play the role of child to the farmer as parent.

The role of *de facto* local government in both urban and rural areas was to police the system of apartheid, making sure that segregation remained intact. Cities were organised in a fragmented way, with residential areas spatially separated from employment, and vast buffers of open space between compartmentalised mono-use areas (Dewar 1988:159). Black residents of cities and towns were removed from the central areas to segregated dormitory townships, and the policy was managed through influx controls. In the rural areas, the population was either corralled into the reserves, or lived on white owned farms under a tight system of labour control that immobilised them and gave farmers almost total control over their movement and employment opportunities.

However, the changing political economy meant that control over movement and the freeze on the provision of housing was unable to stop the flow of people into the urban areas searching for work. The result was massive overcrowding in formal settlements and the spread of informal settlements despite all attempts by government to control it. Coupled with renewed resistance, with lack of political democracy and the lack of resource redistribution to black areas key issues, this forced the state to continually adapt its structure in an attempt to head off the opposition.

**Relations of power on commercial farms**

In the commercial farming areas, the popular challenge to local control was not as organised or intense. This is not least because of the naked oppression that characterised social relations in the countryside. Violence has always been an integral part of social control in commercial farming areas. This is especially true for the poorer areas where farms are individually owned and undercapitalised, resulting in greater reliance on cheap labour. South-eastern Mpumalanga is one such area, and is notorious for the extent of violence on farms (Segal 1990:4). Forms of violence include negligence resulting in accidents and injuries, direct assaults and forced evictions. These served to keep labour tenants and farm dwellers in a permanent state of insecurity. In the countryside, a social block comprising security forces (police and commandos), magistrates and farmers ensured limited or no access to justice for farm dwellers. Farmers enlisted the support of the police in their endeavours to evict workers.
and seldom, if ever, were charged for contravening the law (Segal 1990:24). Reports were rife of police torturing workers into pleading guilty, or of courts allowing evidence extracted under torture (Segal 1990:24-27). The paramilitary commando system, financed by and accountable to the state, operated to clamp down on any disturbance to the status quo. In Wakkerstroom, the commando was particularly active and abusive. As shown below, this situation has continued after 1994 and forms the context in which farm dwellers and tenants organise and resist.

The social block referred to above extended beyond issues of security, direct control and coercion. The way that power is exercised, as described here in Ceres in the Western Cape, is familiar in commercial farming areas around the country: “Local government and membership of the most important white political parties has clearly been central over the years, but a more subtle and in some ways more important role has been control of local agro-food institutions, the boards of local credit institutions and banks, and the ability to use informal networks and family connections effectively” (du Toit 2003:9-10). Farm dwellers found themselves trapped in a powerless position in this tightly knit network from which they were most decisively excluded.

This is not to say there were not other types of resistance to the social order. Fence cutting, stock theft and encroachment on private land (‘land occupations’) are part of the arsenal of the ‘weapons of the weak’ when overt resistance is liable to be crushed unsparingly. In Wakkerstroom, labour tenants had a proud history of resistance to dispossession. The ICU was active amongst labour tenants in the 1920s, although the reality of its weak infrastructure and organisational base meant it often had a marginal influence on resistance that was more rooted in local traditions of struggle and patterns of association (Bradford 1987:156). The very existence of labour tenancy, despite ongoing and determined efforts by landowners and the state to eradicate it throughout the twentieth century, is testimony to the resistance put up by tenants.

Although it may appear strange for tenants to want to defend their miserable conditions of living, there are clear reasons why tenants resisted encroachment of their rights so vigorously. First, in the first phase of modernisation (1920s-1960) labour tenancy differed from straight farm labour in that tenants had the right to seek work elsewhere when not working on the farm. In contrast, farm workers were immobilised on farms and were only permitted to seek work on other farms (Marcus 1989:69). Second, even though their access to land for grazing and cropping was constantly being eroded and limited, tenants had contractual relationships that secured this access. This at the least gave them a legal base to fight from. In contrast, where farm workers had any access to land this was only through the generosity of the farm owner and this access could be withdrawn at any time. Nevertheless, under extreme pressure from the 1930s onwards, many tenants chose to abandon the farms rather than submit to the trapped conditions of straight farm labour. They either went to the reserves in the hope of gaining some access to land, or moved illegally to the towns especially as the prospect grew that their access to the towns would be permanently sealed off (Marcus 1989:69).

In the 1980s, the Black Sash and then Farmworkers’ Research & Resource Project (FRRP) responded to calls for assistance by the labour tenants. The former raised the profile of farm worker abuse and lack of security, while the latter undertook to organise labour tenants and farm dwellers in south-eastern Mpumalanga. In 1992 a labour tenants’ committee was
formed. Post-apartheid struggles waged by labour tenants are rooted in this organisational and historical base.

Nevertheless, in the commercial farming areas, with the black population fragmented and completely subject to the whims of the landowner, social control was not at a point of crisis in the same way as it was in the urban areas. The impetus for change in forms of control had to come from outside. Coupled with resistance to forced incorporation into the bantustans, and growing opposition to undemocratic rule there, the crisis of governance in the urban areas dragged the commercial farming areas with their still-functioning repressive forms of control into reforming.

**Shifting to consensual forms of local governance**

Mamdani (1996) analyses the way the colonial state drove a wedge between urban citizens and rural subjects as a form of control. In addition, the rural was further divided between ethnic groups who were geographically separated and ruled. Apartheid was the perfection of these forms of divide and rule that were practiced across Africa under colonialism. If the forces occupying the post-colonial state were conservative, they would retain the hierarchy of the local state apparatus after independence. If they were radical, they generally attempted to restructure the form of rule, but still tended to tackle either one or the other of the divisions while leaving the other intact. Thus, radical post-colonial state reform sometimes undermined the urban-rural divide by establishing systems of patronage that flowed from the cities into the countryside. But this was at the cost of entrenching ethnic separation in the countryside, for it was ethnicity that formed the basis of patronage. Otherwise, the state tried to break down ethnic separation in the countryside by creating a uniform system of administration and law in place of the fragmented ethnically based systems entrenched under colonialism. However, this replaced decentralised despotism with a centralised despotism (Mamdani 1996:25). The partial reform of the system of governance is built around the requirements for control in the future and the structure of the particular society.

The legitimacy of local government is crucial to economic restructuring towards an export-oriented open economy since this is the interface at which the impacts on the population are most directly managed. Local government has an important role to play in the new developmental framework. Recall that the developmental model aims to strengthen and extend markets, and to draw those previously marginal to the formal economy into the market relations of that economy, partly through state-assisted development programmes. In order to achieve this model, spaces need to be attractive to investment that is driven by stability and profit-making opportunity. Therefore, the responsible administrative and regulative agency must stabilise conditions, and stimulate the development of markets. Amongst the tools at their disposal are government infrastructure and service programmes, with state resources being made available either to kick-start development or to ‘crowd-in’ private sector investment. This role has fallen to local government.

Local government was substantially overhauled following the demise of apartheid. As part of the constitutional system of co-operative governance, the local sphere was given formal power in the functioning of government at provincial and national levels. The most important tool in this regard was the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) that was a legal requirement for every municipality. Local IDPs were designed to be participatory and to lay the foundation for the integration of planning and service delivery at all levels of government.
Another important change was the establishment of a system of wall-to-wall municipal government. In the past, the Boards and Regional Services Councils (RSCs) operated as regional level structures. A smaller equivalent is the district council that acts as an intermediate tier between the municipality and the province. Related to wall-to-wall municipal government is the integration of urban and rural municipalities ideally along the lines of real economic and social linkages. Metros were set up after the second democratic local elections in 1999, and were also given greater formal responsibility for the hinterland. This served a dual role: first, to formally integrate urban and rural economies that were functionally but not administratively integrated in the past. Second, it aimed to work as a redistributive mechanism to ensure a fair spread of resources across urban and rural. After a few years, the Fiscal and Financial Commission came up with a formula determining how resources would be redistributed.

Local government and market-based development

The developmental model explicitly calls for competition between local governments to attract investment, not only from the private sector but also from the central state. Thus the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) says: “the municipal councils will seek to attract programmes of the line departments into their localities…Municipalities that are stronger and have more capable councils will be best placed to attract departmental programmes” (Office of the Deputy President 2000:28). In the urban areas, it accounts for the plethora of advertisements by metropolitan municipalities desperate to draw private investment into their areas of jurisdiction. Underpinning this model of development was a drive towards local level self-sufficiency, based on raising revenues from local population.

While land redistribution and administration are national and provincial competencies, local government is given a role in land use planning through the Land Development Objectives (LDOs). Efforts have been made to tie these in to the IDPs to integrate land use and development planning. In the context of a market-driven development model and inter-municipal competition, land development objectives tend to favour economic activities that generate income for local councils. The effects of this development framework are discussed later. But a couple of points should be made in this regard. First, development is driven by economic rationality and efficiency. Second, land is a commodity prone to speculation especially in areas of high economic potential. Third, the existence of tenants on the land reduces the economic value of land and hence offers an incentive to landowners and local councils alike to move tenants from the land.

The delivery of services – as one of the primary functions of local government – is also rooted in market relations. Under apartheid, white local councils generated surpluses on electricity in particular, and used this to cross-subsidise other municipal services. In the post-apartheid era, subsidising across services is seen as economically inefficient because the provision of each service should be able to pay for itself. The result is a ring fencing of services from one another, with each theoretically self-supporting. The way for them to become self-supporting is through the implementation of a full cost-recovery policy based on a user pays principle, and the substantial tightening of credit control measures to ensure payment with the threat of service cut-offs for those not complying. The ‘user pays’ principle and tariff uniformity mean that industrial and wealthier users no longer cross-subsidise residential and poorer users. In the context of inter-municipal competition, relentless squeezing of individual consumers is the most obvious way out for municipalities that must
balance between generating their own resources while creating investment-friendly conditions that includes subsidising big business.

Where services are potentially profitable, such as electricity generation or water provision in some places, official policy is to encourage the involvement of the private sector in the provision of services. In order to carry this policy out, the structures of service provision must be corporatised i.e. constructed along the lines of a private business. In the electricity sector, this means separating generation from distribution and eliminating subsidies across these ring-fenced components of the electricity supply chain. Whereas generation used to subsidise distribution, now distribution will have to be self-sufficient. Again, this means passing the costs onto the user. And since the unit cost of distributing electricity to far-flung areas or to individual residences is higher than the cost of distribution to a large industrial user, this reality will be reflected in higher charges for residential users, or those at some distance from intermediate sub-stations, compared to industrial users. This economic rationality undermines the possibilities for redistribution.

It is important to note that the notion of decentralised local government is limited by a centralised political system that tightly delineates the possible options open to local governments in meeting the developmental needs of their populations. The squeezing of the public sector and the imperative to form partnerships with the private sector means that the autonomy of local government is limited to filling in predetermined blanks on a page written by central government. At issue here is not whether a decentralised or a centralised government system is preferable, but the character of the project that central and local government are structured into.

**Economic restructuring and the reproduction of exclusion**

**Urban restructuring**

“The problem with the government is they want to move people, not upgrade. They want to keep people outside Johannesburg, we don’t know why, what the reason is”
- Daniel Botha, Thembelihle, 18 Aug 2003

The emphasis on capitalist investment and the growth of the formal economy as the driving force of social improvement has not played out according to the rhetoric. As the timeframe for change recedes ever further into the future (witness Joburg’s 2030 vision), the immediate fallout from the developmental and growth path adopted is experienced every day by millions in insecure locations across the city and beyond. The development model reproduces racial dynamics because those not equipped to contribute to the ‘knowledge economy’ and unable to acquire these skills are the same as those ejected from the late apartheid economy in both rural and urban areas, and who have found their way onto land on the outskirts of the city. Formal deracialisation is accompanied by continued exclusion based on economic ‘value’. The spatial character of this is undeniable. While most informal settlements and low-income housing projects are south of the city centre, almost all new jobs are being created north of the city centre along the M1 between Johannesburg and Tshwane (Tomlinson *et al.* 2003:14).

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2 Most the interviewees quoted in this article are referred to by name. I used my own discretion to exclude the names of some people who I thought made comments that could potentially bring them into danger in their settlements. No-one expressly asked me not to use their names, but that does not necessarily mean they would want me to.
In each of the components of urban growth – most relevantly in housing, employment and services – the short-term costs are borne by those who were supposed to be the primary beneficiaries of development and democracy. In housing, government policy and programmes have proven incapable of responding to the vast backlog or new demand. Practice has veered “towards the construction of mass, non-functional schemes undertaken on disconnected parcels of land and characterised by a low-density, undifferentiated blanket of freestanding housing shells” (Khan & Ambert 2003:xxv). Despite the rhetoric of integrated urban spaces, most housing subsidy projects “have been – and continue to be - located on cheap land in peripheral locations, thereby consolidating existing apartheid spatial patterns and creating new inequities” (Royston 2003:234). In the meantime, the restructuring of the spatial framework is proceeding at pace. The result is the threat or actuality of forced removals without an improvement in living conditions.

In southern Gauteng, technocratic ‘efficient’ land use planning means that informal settlements must be cleared to allow the more rational use of land. In many places, this process has begun and is being marketed as the beginning of the new-look city. In Newtown in the city centre, informal settlements have been totally destroyed and government-backed investment is turning the area into a gentrified ‘cultural precinct’. The result is skyrocketing property prices in the area, directly subsidised by the city (Otter, ThisDay, 22 Oct 2003:18). The culture of consumption of exotic food and highbrow art trumps the culture of everyday life in a squatter camp. The same processes are taking place in and around Soweto. In January 2002, 1750 families were evicted from Mandelaville informal settlement in Diepkloof because the land was zoned for business. In the process a 71-year old man was arrested for encouraging residents to resist relocation (Mokopanele, Business Day, 8 Jan 2002:3). Nearly two years later the City of Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) announced that the ‘prime property’ was available for development. The JPC said it wanted to uplift the area and bring “retail and business facilities closer to the community” (Wilson, Business Day, 19 Nov 2003:18). Apparently the evicted families were never considered part of the ‘community’ that stood to benefit from these facilities. In Kliptown, Blue IQ has committed R299m to upgrading the area, including the removal of residents living in informal settlements (Milazi, Financial Mail, 28 Nov 2003:35). Rumours of impending forced removals are rife in other places too.

The residents who are made to disappear from the scene of these development initiatives are not offered improved circumstances – the ‘legally secure tenure or comparable redress’ offered in the Constitution (clause 25(6)). Instead, this clause is narrowly interpreted as meaning that if you live in insecure circumstances and do not own the land you live on, you are legally entitled to be moved to a similar situation elsewhere (of the choosing of the council in the best national or regional or metropolitan interests), since you are not thereby receiving any less than you had. The Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council’s urban renewal strategy includes a commitment to “be rid of informal settlements, and intends for land invasions to have ceased” (Thale 2002). This will include relocating people who have moved onto undesignated land. According to Sizakele Nkosi, responsible for housing in the Joburg Metro, “we have established a rapid response unit led by the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD). This unit will crack down on land invaders without any hesitation” (quoted in Thale 2002). Improvement of conditions is separated from removals. Thus the situation where the council plans to remove 36 000 households from 26 settlements by 2004, yet only plans to eradicate the housing backlog by 2007. Even
supposing the council meets its housing delivery targets and these households are on the list of beneficiaries, where should these households stay in the meantime?

In the face of a coldly rational model of planning, the horror of forced removals has not been consigned to history along with apartheid, but remains alive in post-apartheid South Africa. The logic of market-driven development reproduces patterns of oppression and marginalisation. A feature of the compact city is a mixed-use environment, meaning that residential, commercial and urban agricultural land uses might exist side by side. However, this cannot be achieved through the market since those with resources draw productive activities towards themselves according to the principle of supply meeting (effective) demand. Residential areas that are not low income are unable to attract businesses purely through the market. The solutions available are either to subsidise businesses to go to those areas – the basis of the disastrous apartheid decentralisation policies, or to raise the incomes of the populations in those areas, or to move those people elsewhere. Presumably, the purpose of moving people elsewhere would be to give them access to infrastructure and services not available in their current place of residence. But in practice, residents of informal settlements are being dumped in conditions no better – and more often than not, worse – than from where they have been moved.

The implementation of housing policy “demonstrates a bias in favour of greenfields development, as opposed to upgrading” (Royston 2003:240). It is precisely here that the ghost of apartheid returns to haunt spatial planning, since existing land ownership by the state makes it much easier and cheaper to simply continue with the process of resettling people in areas that were already designated for resettlement under apartheid, where land is already owned by the local state. A classic example of this is the continued attempt by the Johannesburg metro to move people from informal settlements to Vlakfontein. This is a piece of land that was earmarked for a site-and-service settlement under apartheid. To date, the area has not been developed at all, and is further from transport, health facilities and schools than where people are currently living. “They tried to move people to Vlakfontein, from shack to shack. There were no houses on offer,” says Daniel Botha of Thembelihle. “Some people were moved to Vlakfontein, but they returned to Thembelihle. They are working in Lens, but from there they must go by foot to work, there is no transport” (interview 18 Aug 2003).

In Thembelihle, residents have been engaged in an ongoing battle with the local council over forced removals. The council bases its argument on a geologist’s report that says the shacks are built on dolomite and this is unsafe. Residents dispute the report, arguing that dolomite is only at the corners of the land where the settlement is located. The council’s arguments follow a long string of attempts to remove those who have settled in Thembelihle. In the late 1980s, the House of Delegates (the Indian Chamber in the apartheid Parliament) had made plans and budgeted for the building of sports facilities on the land (Grange, The Star, 22 Feb 1989). This became the first justification for removing the residents from Thembelihle. The growth of the settlement led to vigilante attacks soon after, with a group of men claiming to be security guards threatening to destroy dwellings, and even entering the settlement and destroying five homes in July 1990. Residents vowed to rebuild houses and prevent further attacks. After a hiatus in the early 1990s, residents again came under attack, this time from the democratically elected council. “The government made a court order to move people. They made it themselves, it was not legal,” says Daniel Botha of Thembelihle. “They tried to force people to move, but we refused to move because we’ve been staying here for a long time. The dolomite is a threat. Today you hear about dolomite, next week they are talking
about the next thing, we don’t know the real reasons why they want us to move” (interview 18 Aug 2003). Says Johannes Makaleng, an 86 year-old who has seen Thembelihle grow up around him from a dairy farm to a brick factory to a thriving informal settlement: “The dolomite is just a story. If there is dolomite, they must build around it and leave it like that” (interview 18 Aug 2003).

Upgrading itself may be problematic from a technocratic point of view, since it also can serve to entrench existing spatial divisions. However, forced removal from shack to shack is not only a sideways move, it is ten steps back because it rips individuals out of social and economic networks that were painstakingly constructed against all odds in the most trying circumstances. Although the location of informal settlements may not be economically rational if measured against the grand plans of the city council, for residents with limited options the location of their settlements make economic sense. Says Phyllis Mavimbela of Protea South: “We want government to build houses on land that is nearby here. There is land available, it is earmarked for firms, but for many years nothing has happened. Government wants to move people, but we don’t want to go. Sometimes we walk to Lens from here just to get something to eat, our children are at school here” (interview 14 Aug 2003).

As a result, the demand for upgrading rather than relocation is widespread. This is especially so where residents are not convinced of improvements that are promised along with relocation. “It’s okay to move from shack to house, but not shack to shack. But the councillor says there is no budget for houses, so why should we move? We have schools and shops in Thembelihle, but if we go to another place there are no schools, no shops, no work”, says Daniel Botha. “We have started to build our own things here. Another place is far away. It’s safest to live where you stay. If you’ve been there a long time, you know the place, it’s your place, even after five years” (interview 18 Aug 2003). Johannes Mokoleng from Thembelihle feels the same way: “I don’t want to stay anywhere else but here. I live here. If government wants to build me a house, they must build it here. I am used to this place” (interview, 18 Aug 2003). From Finetown North, Emily Moranye says: “I don’t want to move anywhere else. My children are at the school in Ennerdale, there is transport nearby and a clinic” (interview, 25 Aug 2003). At Lawley Station, Portia Ngidi explains the insecurity associated with being moved against your will: “If I can move from here to another place, maybe I can suffer, I don’t know where I can go if it’s a good place or not” (interview, 27 Aug 2003).

**Rural restructuring**

The impacts of the processes of liberalisation and deregulation in commercial agriculture have been experienced unevenly in the sector. Heavily indebted farmers and those relying on state subsidies to farm marginal lands were forced out of production, or converted from crop production to extensive livestock. Export-oriented agri-businesses, especially in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, saw international opportunities flourish. However, they have also experienced the full impact of the volatility of world markets in agricultural commodities and uneven playing fields caused by huge subsidies to agri-businesses in the core capitalist economies. The latter has resulted in the domestic market being flooded with artificially cheap agricultural products and in particular processed products. Exporters continue to confront barriers to access to core capitalist markets, again with an emphasis on processed goods. Global overproduction and relentless competition have meant mixed fortunes even for the most lucrative sectors in South Africa like deciduous fruit.
Grain and livestock farmers are experiencing much difficulty. Limited drought assistance from the state and volatility caused by currency fluctuations make it difficult to plan. The result is that the area planted to maize in the 2003-04 season possibly the lowest since 1940, according to the crop estimates committee (Business Day 2004:2). A futures exchange has been established to stabilise commodity prices and narrow the risk of planting maize. However, even large companies such as Tongaat-Hulett have been hit hard by the fluctuations in futures prices. The company reported a R211 million loss as a direct result of valuation adjustments on maize contracts in the six months to June 2003 (Jenvey 2004:10).

But it is the farm workers who have borne the major brunt of agricultural restructuring. The shift from labour-intensive to capital-intensive agriculture from the 1960s had led to a steep downward slope in the number of farm workers. The restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s saw a continuation of this decline. According to the Development Bank of Southern Africa, employment dropped 25% between 1985 and 1992 (cited in Marcus, Eales & Wildschut 1996:104). A similar decline of 25% - from 1.2 million permanent and seasonal/casual workers to 900 000 – between 1990 and 1996 has also been recorded officially (Stats SA/NDA 1999:32). Aliber (2001:36) estimated a permanent workforce of just 580 000 in 2000.

This decline in employment has been accompanied by changing forms of employment. In particular, there is a growing tendency towards the use of casual and subcontracted labour in place of permanent workers. There is also a move towards relocating workers off the farms and recruiting even permanent workers from informal settlements or townships around the farms.

**Land reform and agricultural modernisation**

Land reform has remained marginal during the transition to democracy in South Africa. Reform in the rural areas has mainly been limited to a restructuring of the commercial agricultural sector. Land reform has been side tracked, and there has been no significant attempt to reorganise the rural economy on the basis of a more egalitarian ownership structure. Land transfer and support to black farmers is occurring on the terms of sections of the white commercial farming sector. According to the Strategic Plan for South African Agriculture, ‘it is important to deal efficiently with land reform to ensure rural stability and market certainty’ (NDA 2001: 16). From a purely economic point of view, land reform is of limited importance for the path being followed. It is quite possible to reorganise the agricultural sector without any land reform at all. However, there remains a residue of political significance attached to land reform. Amongst the mass of the population, land reform is a legitimate and necessary process and is widely supported, mainly for reasons of justice and redress. This has partially been met by the focus on restitution – the return of land from which people were forcibly removed under apartheid and colonialism (after 1913). However, even white farmers are recognising the need to transfer some land to the black population and to see the establishment of a black commercial farming class. The current situation in Zimbabwe has woken many white farmers to the threat that the continued lack of redistribution may pose to their own livelihoods in the future. In the words of a white export farmer in the Eastern Cape: ‘Look, if we’re going to have a future in this country, we must

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3 This process has been best documented in the Western Cape. See Women on Farms Project 2003; du Toit 2003; du Toit & Ally 2001; Sunde & Kleinbooi 1999; Kritzinger & Vorster 1995
have black farmers. And if we have black farmers, they must be successful commercial black farmers’ (interview, July 2001).

Post-apartheid land reform has thus been reduced to a market-based process of deracialising land ownership without disturbing markets or destabilising the political and social climate. This is very much in line with the drive to modernise the agrarian structure. For labour tenants and farm workers, the result has been the formal extension of minimum labour standards and formal protection against arbitrary evictions. In 1995 national government passed the Labour Tenants (Land Reform) Act, ostensibly to establish and protect the rights of labour tenants. However, as with other land reform legislation, the law required a lengthy process of application in which tenants had to prove they were in fact labour tenants according to a complex definition provided in the Act. Even though the law aimed to convert existing land access into some type of legal right of ownership for tenants, at best it did little more than regulate evictions from the farms. At the start of 2003, thirty-four percent of labour tenant claims had been settled, involving the transfer of a mere 7 845 ha of land (Department of Finance 2003:713), or 0.007% of commercial agricultural land.

In many instances the laws are only formalities since actual relations of power on the ground determine practice. As shown in the section on local governance and control below, these relations include a powerful white social block that severely limits access to justice or security for farm dwellers, and a weak local state that is oriented upwards and is incapable of (or unwilling to) enforce legislation and government policy.

Impact of restructuring in Wakkerstroom

Wakkerstroom has historically been a marginal maize and extensive livestock area. The district is dominated by zuurveld (sour grassland), lacking in adequate nutrients for proper commercial pasture. The result is that farm sizes are large, at an average of 800-1200 ha. Many landowners have more than one farm, with farms distributed between winter and summer areas (Kotze 2002:184). Absentee landlords from the Free State and urban-based professionals also owned game farms in the area (Krumm 1993). The area has a rich diversity of fauna and flora and a 650 ha wetland. Wakkerstroom is particularly well known for its bird life.

The restructuring of agriculture has led to changes in land use in the area. At present it is used primarily for stock farming, with a growing eco-tourism component. Cropping is limited to patches of maize for subsistence planted by labour tenants, and larger patches of maize and monoculture grass planted by landowners for winter fodder (Kotze 2002:184). Attempts to reconstruct the local economy as a centre of eco-tourism mean pressure has been brought to bear on cattle owners who often turn to the wetland for grazing in the late winter. According to Joshua Mlambo, an evicted labour tenant: “The land here is now only for tourism. The birds will be frightened by the cattle” (interview, 18 Oct 2003). It is unsurprising that the general cry at a labour tenants’ meeting in Wakkerstroom held in October 2003 was ‘Phansi game reserves, phansi!’ Poverty has also forced residents of eSizameleni township to use the wetland to hunt waterfowl and collect eggs, fish and use reeds for construction (Kotze 2002:185-6).

Labour tenants have experienced local economic restructuring through rising evictions and a squeeze on their access to land for grazing and cropping. In 1994 the NLC was providing support to 500 labour tenants and their families facing eviction before the first democratic
elections (Mvoko 1994:25). Farmers also responded to the 1995 Labour Tenants Bill with a wave of pre-emptive evictions of labour tenants (Mashego 1996). Once forced off the land, it became incredibly difficult for tenants to return to the land or prove the validity of their occupancy in terms of the Act. The life stories of evicted tenants show how eviction destroys a lifetime of work. Joseph Mavimbela, a 78-year old man from Wakkerstroom, says:

“I was born on a farm just outside Wakkerstroom. I worked on the farms since I was 15 years old, counting cattle and as a tractor driver. I moved between farms, and had some space for my own cattle and horses on the farms. After 1994, the farmer said I must stop running my cattle and goats. I refused, and the farmer harassed me. He burnt my house down. I was forced off the farm. My livestock is now with other people, I don’t even know who they are with. Now I am living in the location at Dirkiesdorp” (interview, 18 Oct 2003)

Joshua Mlambo, an evicted tenant quoted earlier, explained how he was born on the farm Ongeluk but was chased away and ended up working on Bergenplaas. After 10 years of he and his children working there, he was again chased away by the farmers in 1995. He still has his cattle, but they are confined to the location. Another tenant, Fios Nsibande living on a farm near Driefontein said:

“I used to have rights to grazing for 25 cattle and 12 horses. In March 2003, the farmer told me to cut my livestock to 12 cattle and 2 horses. I had to sell some of the cattle, and others I had to hire to other people. The farmer is paying me R150 and 2 bags of maize. But now he is also charging R10 per cow rent and R20 per horse because the horses are eating day and night. That is deducted from what I am paid” (interview, 19 Oct 2003)

This process of eliminating labour tenancy as a labour form is as old as capitalist agriculture. From the 1920s onwards, the state and ‘modernising’ fractions of capital have both sought to squeeze tenants by reducing their access to land and binding them into onerous contracts of employment. Capitalist agriculture required the transition from the former to the latter, but this took place over a number of decades and total dependence on wage labour was not immediately established after the 1913 Land Act (Morris 1976; van Onselen 1996). Labour tenancy allowed for the formation of a wage labour force on white farms while reducing the costs of maintaining this workforce. Nevertheless, as Mather (1997:62) points out, “small and uncertain markets, periodic droughts and constant debt ensured that even large landowners were not averse to using the unpaid labour of African tenants”. This meant an ongoing contradictory relationship between tenants and farmers, with the latter seeking to limit the former’s access to land while simultaneously relying on the cheap labour that was partially supported by that very access to land.

The Labour Tenants Act should be viewed as yet another way on eliminating labour tenancy once and for all, and of modernising social relations on farms i.e. making labour freely available to the employer to be allocated to its most profitable use (Williams 1996:217). Williams makes the point that the picture of labour tenancy in the Act is outdated and does not understand tenancy as a complex and changing set of social relations. The reason why tenancy has not ceased to exist is because farmers benefit from access to a labour force when required, while not having to pay wages all year round. For tenants, this relationship offers some form of independence and access to land in conditions where few other possibilities for accessing land present themselves. The battle at present is more around the terms of the contract than the contract itself (Williams 1996:227). At the least, tenants fight against encroachments to their rights of access, while farmers seek to reduce these to a minimum. A deeper conflict is around the farmers’ desire to have unrestricted access over the
use of the land, while tenants would prefer to have unfettered access to arable and grazing land without any obligations to provide labour in return (Williams 1996:228).

Minimum wage legislation passed in 2002 has had little effect on the actual conditions of workers. Not only did farm workers on farms around Wakkerstroom say that the minimum wages were not paid in practice, but also that the wages of R650 a month are too low. Tenants and farm workers at a meeting said that the costs for their children and to cover funerals alone were more than the minimum wage, and farmers made big deductions before paying wages, for example for livestock grazing (LPM meeting, Wakkerstroom, 18 Oct 2004).

These processes of displacement are not purely driven by economics. The transition to democracy and the land reform programme in particular were perceived by the marginal farmers of the district as a direct threat to their power and property. While this section has focused on the economic aspects of restructuring, the section below looks at changing forms of social and political power at local level, and the various responses that also contributed to their shaping.

**Recreating the structural conditions for a national movement of the landless**

Tenure insecurity remains a key issue in both urban and rural areas. The post-apartheid developmental model fails to secure tenure despite the Constitutional imperative to do so. In both urban and rural, secure access to land is governed by laws that create a framework for evictions rather than an end to evictions, accompanied by a negotiated process of moving if the state feels this to be necessary. In the urban areas, the Prevention of Illegal Evictions and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act of 1998 (PIE) regulates the eviction process. Recent amendments tabled in Parliament aim to criminalise land invasions and even make it a criminal act to collect funds for legal costs to fight evictions (Radebe 2003:3). In the rural areas, the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) and the Labour Tenants Act both establish a procedure for evictions to take place. Evictions are allowed if tenants constitute an obstacle to economic activity.

In urban and rural areas alike, the development model favours those with resources and skills valued in a modernised capitalist economy. Post-apartheid developmentalism reproduces economic and social exclusion, and this transcends geography. In the urban areas the marginalised under apartheid were denied access to decent formal education or a secure place to stay, and were constantly forced to duck and dive to avoid detection by the state. Resources and skills that allowed them to fit into the formal economy have never existed. A thin top layer may be able to access training for semi-skilled or skilled labour. But in the context of structural high unemployment and job losses, previously skilled workers are the more likely beneficiaries of this training or newly created jobs. For the urban underclass, constantly on the move in an effort to survive, or those freshly arriving from the rural areas, access to training or employment is closed. In the commercial farming areas, workers who have experienced a lifetime of heavy manual labour in conditions that did not permit them to keep aside any of their income for the future, are thrown out as agriculture is modernised. Once again, a small layer of workers may benefit from skills training as capitalist enterprises retool, but for the majority the door is shut tight. This is especially true for labour tenants who were the backbone of the workforce when capitalist agriculture was struggling to its feet, who were locked into semi-feudal social relations with their employers for nigh on a
century now, and who are now pushed out of the way as the agricultural economy consolidates and restructures on a modernised platform.

**Post-apartheid local governance and the reproduction of political exclusion**

**Local elites and the institutionalisation of power**

Following Mamdani’s schema, it can be said that post-apartheid local government reform appears to be directed at breaking down the urban-rural divide by establishing integrated municipalities. However, the competitive model of municipal government entrenches inherited inequalities between those municipalities with resources and those without, and between those with capacity to market themselves and those without. Wealthier municipalities such as the metros are able to offer subsidies and other incentives to investors that smaller municipalities cannot. As with markets in general, initial access to resources results in the ability to draw further resources, and thus a tendency towards concentration of resources in pockets over time. The developmental model encourages this rather than undermining it. A growth path premised on strengthening the formal economy in order to draw the informal (second) economy behind it is necessarily geared towards the concentration of resources in the formal economy. Those without resources or capacity tend to be the small towns that have suddenly had to take responsibility for outlying rural areas with insufficient additional sources, or rural municipalities that have no history of local government.

But there are still further levels of inequality that are not challenged in the local government reforms, and these are found within municipalities. Where municipalities incorporate both urban and rural areas, the balance of power inside the municipality tends to be concentrated amongst those with greater resources, including experience. White landowners have long been involved in local government, and have built up social networks as described earlier and have detailed knowledge about the functioning of the administration, or how to construct budgets, divert resources, or present arguments in council meetings. In contrast, the rural black population has been denied access to these forums of decision-making until very recently. Interim local government arrangements in 1995 gave white councillors veto powers and entrenched seats on the councils, and this further stalled opportunities for black political representatives. ‘Sunset clauses’ also secured white jobs in local council administration until the second local government elections in 1999. An example of the power imbalances was evident in a visit to councillors in a smallholding area in southern Gauteng in the mid-1990s. Many of the white councillors were involved in the local municipality for three or four decades, were farm owners with their own private communications infrastructure and had their own transport to move amongst their constituencies. In contrast, one of the black councillors was a landless farm dweller without any access to communication infrastructure or transport, who was under threat of eviction at the time. In such circumstances, the ability to present arguments to the council, read through the necessary material and lobby for the way resources should be used was entirely skewed towards the white landowning councillors with their own vested interests. The situation is compounded when formerly urban councillors are sitting in the same council as new rural councillors.

Similarly, attempts to break down ethnic divisions by establishing a single system of government across all rural areas, including the creation of a uniform legal system based on the integration of customary law with the mainstream (western) law are only partial. An undefined role for traditional leadership in the Constitution has opened the door for
traditional authorities to reassert their power. The recently passed Communal Land Rights Bill offers traditional authorities greater control over land use and administration in the former homelands than they had even under apartheid. Since control over land is a key component of local power in these areas this can only be viewed as a continuation of tribal rule in the post-apartheid era. Since the issue of the powers of traditional authorities has consistently only flared up close to national or local government elections⁴, it must be concluded that it is being manipulated for political purposes. Centralised political and administrative control is entrenched, with lines of patronage from the centre to the peripheries of power in the rural areas.

More importantly for the purposes of this research, power relations in commercial farming areas have not undergone significant change. While local governance has been democratised – albeit on a slower time scale than in the urban areas – political power remains tied up with economic and administrative power. In the urban areas, local democracy is bound up with elite control and it is difficult for the marginalised sections of the population to challenge this institutionalisation of local politics.

The restructuring of local government and its extension into a ward system covering the entire country opened up the possibility for a shift in local power relations towards those who were previously marginalised. Despite the discursive framework of developmental local government, rooted as it is in the rhetoric of popular participation, accountability and transparency, this is not the way post-apartheid local government is experienced by the residents of informal settlements or farm dwellers on the commercial farms. Local elites have been able to capture institutional political power to serve their own interests. In the informal settlements this means local political elites, who existed even under apartheid but whose status was somewhat hidden because of the common struggle for political democracy, have formalised their political power. The leadership of the erstwhile civic movement, and leaders of branches of the ANC as the dominant political party, have been the primary beneficiaries of local government restructuring. It has given them access to resources and career paths that were previously unavailable to them. Dan Bovu, the councillor for the ward incorporating Thembelihle, is a case in point. In the days of forced removals under apartheid, Bovu was at the forefront of supporting resistance. However, today he is the councillor responsible for attempts to remove the very same people by force. According to one resident, “The councillor wants to renumber all the houses here. As the LPM we want to stop him, because the numbers are used for removal purposes. He is also making committees here that oppose the LPM. Then they come to the meeting in place of the councillor.” (interview, 18 Aug 2003). Referring to the community take-over of the municipal building and the eviction of the council from these premises in Thembelihle in 2002, this resident continues, “We fired him long ago, because he has never come to a LPM meeting”.

This is not to say the councillor no longer has power in this ward. But power does not reside in being accountable to the population in general in the ward. Rather, the councillor’s power derives from having a position in the council’s executive committee. Obviously, not all councillors are in the exco, and so it becomes a political battle to reach that level. At the same time, there is a widening gap between councillors who are paid salaries to occupy political positions, and the grassroots who only indirectly have access to formal political power through a committee handpicked by the councillor who is oriented to playing a

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⁴ For example in 1995, again in 1999 and 2000 when the Green Paper on Traditional Leadership and the first version of the Communal Land Bill were released, and once again in 2003-04 with the passage of the Communal Land Rights Bill and the White Paper on Traditional Leadership.
political game at higher levels than her or his constituency occupies. Maureen Mnisi, Gauteng provincial chair, describes how the LPM experienced problems in trying to organise in the informal settlements because the ward committees blocked them:

“We went to different informal settlements and it was not easy, because we find other people in the ward committees, in the council committees, they are not even taking what we are saying. We went to Majazane [near Finetown], and found it was a bad situation where the ward councillors and ward committees were there always trying to block. So we came to the conclusion of saying we need somebody who is not participating in the ward committee or steering committee or the political organisation. We need just an ordinary person. It seems as if the ward committee is the watchdog of the councillor. They are not going to allow you to do anything unless the councillor recommends that. We see that the issue of the use of land, obviously everything will be run by the councillor.” (interview, 21 Nov 2003)

A big part of the problem is the way that systems of accountability are built into local government. The proportional list system invariably makes elected councillors account to their party rather than their constituency. In many cases residents reported trying to have a meeting with their ward councillor without any success. Councillors either evade meetings, or make promises and do not report back after that. On the Eikenhof farms, one LPM member described his experience of interacting with the councillor to try to find out who owned the land they are living on:

“I no longer have trust in government. Since the owner died, no government official has come to tell us about our situation. We only have the boers harassing us. We did approach the local council many times to find out who has title to this land. But they keep giving us different title deeds. The original is nowhere to be seen. The ones they show us are interfered with, they are in the name of the neighbouring farmer. We have also seen deeds for this same piece of land under the name of Megajet Aviation, who claimed they bought the place” (interview, 17 Sept 2003).

In the commercial farming areas a similar situation exists, with the addition of District Councils on top of local councils. The DCs have been given statutory control over many of the functions that were to be performed by the municipal council, but which the latter lacked the capacity to do. Although an additional level may well be justified from an immediate operational point of view, it nevertheless serves to extend the distance between farm dwellers and political institutions. From voter to ward committee to ward councillor to local council to municipal exco to DC to district exco is a long distance indeed. And in the context of vast physical distances, no communications infrastructure and repressive social relations, farm dwellers are to all intents and purposes denied access to formal political power.

Most importantly in the rural areas, social power built under apartheid remains intact, based on force and networks that transcend (but often incorporate) the political power of the local state. According to an LPM organiser in Wakkerstroom,

“The boers have taken control over the police station again. There is a private security company that assaults farm workers, then takes them to the police station to be charged. I wrote a letter to the area commissioner, who sent the letter straight back to the security company. Next thing I received a phone call from the very same security company I was laying a charge against telling me not to make allegations against them” (interview, 18 Oct 2003)

A former farm dweller from Wakkerstroom district describes the real power relations in the farming areas:

“We will never, never speak to the farmers. People are scared of the boers. If you speak to them about land they will take you to a far away place and beat you, beat you until you sign that you
retire from today, that you will no longer demand about land. They will beat you, though they are not in charge” (interview, 12 Aug 2003)

In both urban and rural municipalities the lack of accountability to the constituency is visible, but also power in the local council is located not so much with councillors as with landowners and businesses in the area.

**The rhetoric of participation and the reality of political exclusion**

One of the frustrations highlighted more than once was the way the local and provincial governments present the image of consultation and participation without it being real. In the words of Sello Koithing of Eikenhof informal settlement: “We tried to speak to government, then they opened their doors. But when you go there, they have all the answers prepared.” (interview, 3 Sept 2003). Even at the provincial level, there is a belief that government does not really listen to issues but arrives at meetings with prepared statements:

“There’s something that I hear from the officials of the government... All these people at the MEC, they said those gates will be closed. We will only open if it is members of the ANC that are complaining about these things. So what is happening now to the LPM, because now you are complaining to these people, because you are LPM, you are not ANC members, so they are not going to listen to us because you are not ANC members. That thing is wrong. I believe they do this. Because if they considered everyone, we sat with them, and where’s the response up until now?” (interview, 21 Nov 2003)

It is apparent that individuals feel incapable of approaching local councils on their own and that organisation is essential to provide an entry point into government programmes. This is especially true for single women. Thabile Buthelezi (30) has been moving from building to building, every half a year or more often, in the inner city of Johannesburg since 1991. When we caught up with her she was living in an abandoned building right next to the Carlton Centre in central Johannesburg. All the residents of the building had joined the LPM, and were under an eviction notice from the City Council. She says she doesn’t know who the councillor is, and has never spoken to him. Another tenant in the same building, Nonhlalha Ntombela (30) says she hasn’t spoken to the government yet because she has lost her ID. Yet another tenant, Mary Khumalo (23) says she hasn’t spoken to government because she didn’t know who to approach (interviews, 21 Aug 2003). Says Nancy Peter (25) of Lawley Station informal settlement: “I’m not that person who can attend the meetings properly. People are taught there and I don’t hear those things, that’s why I don’t have a say for my rights”. Also at Lawley Station, Michelle Makganya (31) says: “There are some people who are forward, they speak to government, but I can’t. There were some people who spoke to the councillor, but I don’t know what happened from that” (interviews, 27 Aug 2003).

According to the dominant political discourse of the day, political democracy is a necessary pre-requisite for economic and social transformation. However, ten years since formal political democracy not everyone has access to formal political power even though they have the right to vote. Earlier we saw manifestations of the reproduction of social and economic exclusion resulting from the developmental model and the capitalist growth path adopted in post-apartheid South Africa. Accompanying this there is also the reproduction of political exclusion resulting from a political system that only partially and unevenly challenges inherited relations of power, and has a structure that is open to capture by local elites. But subaltern groups and the marginalised have not remained passive in the face of this reproduction of their exclusion.
Civil society and the changing terrain of struggle

We have seen how, in many places, local political leadership abandoned the cause of the marginalised in favour of an accommodation with the new hegemonic alliance. Some reasons for this are considered immediately below, followed by an indication of emerging grassroots responses to this state of affairs.

The taming of civil society: from resistance to reconstruction

The achievement of formal political democracy in 1994 altered the terrain of struggle. The apparent capture of the coercive apparatus of the state by the forces of democracy signalled a shift in the relationship between civil society organisations and the state. Where the relationship was previously one of opposition and conflict, it was transformed into one of partnership and co-operation. Many former activists in progressive civil society organisations (CSOs) were converted almost overnight into development workers in line with the general ideological current of the early 1990s, best captured in the slogan ‘from resistance to reconstruction’. Related to this was a strong statist element in the ideology of the movement that saw the capture and use of state power as the pinnacle of the political struggle. The result was the attrition of an independent civil society once the state was occupied. The disbanding of the UDF, the near collapse of the once vibrant civic movement and their self-subordination to the ANC as the political leadership are the starkest examples of this.

Gramsci distinguishes between the integral state and the state-as-government/political society. The integral state refers to ‘political society plus civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion’ (Gramsci 1991:263). State-as-government represents ‘the coercive and punitive force of juridical regulation of a country’ (Gramsci 1991:267). The reason for reconnecting state and civil society in the concept of the integral state is to reveal how the social relationships in civil society are relations of power as much as are the coercive relations of the state (Simon 1991:73). Power is not concentrated exclusively in the state but is distributed throughout civil society. The hegemonic class exercises its power both through civil society and the state. In South Africa, the re-establishment of hegemony by sections of the capitalist class required the abandonment by capital of key positions relating to political control. The transfer of power in political society permitted a renewed hegemony in civil society.

The new hegemony was reinforced by broader conceptual shifts in the meaning and role of civil society associated with the globally dominant project. A key feature of restructuring was the formation of “new configurations of state, markets and civil organisations unencumbered by outmoded or ideological notions of central planning or unhindered free markets” (Watts 1993:258). The way that ‘civil society’ came to be identified and supported by elite institutions entrenched the apparent autonomy of citizens, state structures and markets from one another (Schmitz 1994). Alongside the ‘lean’ state is the self-regulating market and the emergence of a ‘self-organising’ civil society to assume the majority of the responsibilities previously associated with the welfare state. Not only does an autonomous practice of solidarity get converted into a social obligation (Zehle 2002), but social organisation outside the state is drained of its political content. This trend is captured in a quote made by Welfare Minister Zola Skweyiya at the end of 2003: “[The NGOs] do not understand their role. They think it is to theorise about democracy, like before 1994. They should be helping in strengthening democracy and helping with service delivery to the poor” (quoted in Tabane 2003). Two things are interesting about this statement. First is the idea that to consider and
discuss the meaning of democracy is seen to be separate from the strengthening of democracy. In other words, the form of democracy as it is practiced is not open to debate, and civil society has the duty to make sure it is strengthened without question. Second, the role of civil society is reduced to assisting the state to deliver services, within the given framework of the developmental discourse, rather than to organise a class-based counter-hegemonic project, as one might expect a revolutionary party to argue.

The conceptual reconstruction of civil society was accompanied by the withdrawal and redirection of funding to NGOs and CBOs in the 1990s. Funds previously channelled directly to CSOs were redirected to the democratic government. Combined with the political and ideological climate, this disciplining force had two consequences. The first was that a number of NGOs were forced to close as funding dried up and they were unable to adapt to a more ‘market-related’ relationship between donors and recipients of funds. The number of NGOs declined dramatically in the early 1990s, with the smaller, rural community-based organisations such as advice offices hardest hit. The second consequence of the shift in funding channels was the rapid professionalisation of the NGOs as financial management, efficiency and tangible outputs became increasingly important. One result of this was that NGOs began to shift towards donor priority areas, and lost their responsiveness to the grassroots constituencies they were meant to be accountable to. In the first years after 1994, NGOs also lost a large number of experienced members to the government, and a politically and organisationally inexperienced secondary layer took leadership of the NGOs.

The renewal of ruling class hegemony in civil society meant an uncritical participation by civil society organisations in the formulation of policies and programmes. The general ideological outlook was welfarist and vaguely populist – evident in the central place occupied by undifferentiated concepts such as ‘community’ or ‘the people’. The adoption of these terms may partially have signified the subsumption of a range of cleavages within ‘communities’ in the struggle against apartheid, and the desire for unity against a common enemy. After political democratisation these terms reflected a continuation of these tendencies, and served the broader purpose of ‘nation building’ with the enemy now being an apolitical ‘poverty’. Although the need to build a rural social movement was placed on the agenda by CSOs fairly early on, this was ambiguously understood, and in large part was taken to mean the necessity of mobilising the rural population in support of government reformism. Even where there were criticisms of government policy, for example around the ‘willing seller willing buyer’ approach to land reform or GEAR, the questioning did not advance to a point of querying the structural conditions that resulted in these policies being adopted (Mngxitama 2002:2). Populist notions of social movements were therefore very susceptible to co-optation and lacking in unambiguous class alignment (Watts 1993:268).

The resuscitation of struggle

“To understand the nature of struggle and of agency, one needs to understand the nature of power”
- Mahmood Mamdani, Citizen and Subject (1996:23)

Although the ruling class has re-established its hegemony on the basis of a new alliance of political and social forces, this does not mean this goes unchallenged. Further, this contestation is beginning to take a more organised form than was the case in the period of transition to political democracy. Responses from the excluded have flooded out of the channels so neatly carved by the discourse and practice of the post-apartheid political class, even while they are shaped by this power. Capitalist hegemonic influence in civil society is
now based on a discourse of participation and democracy, and this opens up a new terrain of struggle.

There are the beginnings of renewed organisation both in the urban and rural areas. In the LPM, these focus on anti-evictions and resistance to forced removals in informal settlements, and anti-evictions and to press land demands amongst labour tenants on the commercial farms. In the informal settlements, access to local councils and participation in planning and implementation is also a growing issue, while human rights and opposition to abuse is a specific struggle amongst the Wakkerstroom tenants. The struggles are mainly defensive so far, although they are carried out using the post-apartheid discourse of democracy and rights. Additionally, these struggles are structured along the lines of government programmes and policies, indicating the way state power shapes resistance.

The Landless People’s Movement (LPM) emerged as a nationally co-ordinated movement in July 2001. It arose from a base of community-based organisations (CBOs) formed over the preceding decade to gain access to land. Closely tied to the National Land Committee (NLC) and its affiliates, these CBOs came to be structured along the lines of the post-apartheid government’s land reform programme. There were restitution committees, labour tenant and farm worker committees, and land reform committees. Since the NLC-affiliated NGOs mainly operated in the rural areas (mostly, although not exclusively, in commercial farming areas), initially the LPM was a rural movement. However, in late 2001 contradictions in post-apartheid urban development strategies saw the LPM extend its support and membership base into the informal settlements around Johannesburg.

The Wakkerstroom labour tenants have not let up in their struggle for access to land and tenure security. Together with the labour tenant committee, FRRP was deeply involved in pressing for a law to protect labour tenants, and participated in the formulation of the Labour Tenants Bill in 1994 and 1995. Despite the intervention, the Bill was altered substantially in favour of the interests of landowners before it was passed (Mashego 1996). In the lead-up to the national elections and then the passing of the law, farmers engaged in a spate of preemptive evictions, with heightened violence against workers. This led to a historic march of 7000 labour tenants and farm workers in the town of Piet Retief in August 1994, where a memorandum of demands was presented to the provincial premier (Husy 1994). The brutal murder of Piet Retief farm worker Bheki Mlangeni, supposedly for stealing a chicken, led to another march of over 5000 workers and labour tenants to present another memorandum to the regional Department of Justice (Land Update 1994:7).

When the Farmworkers’ Research & Resource Project collapsed at the end of 1997 the labour tenants sought other avenues of support, and found it to some extent with another NLC affiliate, the Rural Action Committee (TRAC). The Labour Tenant Committee remained active, but under conditions of severe repression. This included the torture and maiming of many of its leading members, a number who were forced into exile in Johannesburg for fear of their lives (see Human Rights Watch 2001:86-94). The NLC continued to provide support, and the tenant’s committee was an instrumental force in the formation of the Landless People’s Movement in 2001. In April 2002, around 200 members of the LPM Mpumalanga marched to the DLA offices in Ermelo to demand land and the transformation of the rural criminal justice system. Police arrested more than 100 demonstrators on charges of illegal marching and illegal gathering.
There are many reasons accounting for the decline in numbers from a 7 000 strong march in 1994 to a 200 person march in 2002. These include the systematic campaign of violence against organisers in south-eastern Mpumalanga throughout the 1990s, the associated withdrawal of local organisers, the collapse of a dedicated support organisation, the victory of the liberation movement in the political sphere that meant people have been prepared to wait for change, and the ongoing difficulties of organising farm dwellers with limited resources. As Helen Bradford (1987) says, there is a difference between agitating and building sustained organisation on the ground. Labour tenant organisers in Mpumalanga are finding it difficult to make the transition from the former to the latter. In the rural areas, the struggle is primarily against the power of private landowners, with democratically elected government seen as an inconsistent ally. Nevertheless, at the same time as organising has become more difficult and numbers are declining, there are renewed demands on the post-apartheid state through protests to highlight shortcomings of state responses to conditions in the commercial farming areas. This suggests a growing understanding of the connection between the state and capital in maintaining social relations in the rural areas.

New organisational forms build on, but transcend, the past

It is apparent that new forms of organising and resistance are rooted in historical forms. Although the political terrain of struggle has changed, the social and economic terrains remain very similar to the past. Forms of organisation are related to the tasks facing a movement. Political democratisation has opened up spaces for organisation, but has also institutionalised struggles.

The different histories of organising in urban and rural areas have contributed to the different ways LPM structures have responded to the new terrain. In the urban areas, the close association between political and civic structures and the Congress movement has meant that a sharper break has been necessary in order to formulate an independent line of march from the ANC alliance now in power. As the primary vehicles for grassroots organisation in the townships and informal settlements in the urban areas, the civics under Sanco have attached community organisation to the ruling party. To break from this dependence, new grassroots formations have had to adopt a somewhat more antagonistic attitude towards government. But also, unlike in the rural areas where the main obstacle to change is seen to be farmers and landowners, in the urban areas the government is the immediate target since it is government and not private landowners that is threatening security in the informal settlements. In contrast, the organisational support base of most rural formations has rested with the NGOs. As shown above, in the main these organisations have also aligned themselves with the ruling party but in a less apparent way. While the civics are now seen as vehicles of the ANC at local level, the same cannot be said for the NGOs.

The history of organisation in urban areas is based on a structured party with community organisations aligned to that party. In the post-apartheid period, traditional organisation has developed along party lines. In many settlements, the division between different parties is raised as one of the key problems in the community. In addition, people are becoming more cynical of merely replacing one organisation with another. “It is difficult to organise now, because people are in political parties and others are sick and tired of organisations” (Nobuhle Mhlongo, Protea South informal settlement interview, 14 Aug 2003).

The response has been to move away from party organisation and towards broad-based and non-affiliated organisation in social movement-type structures. “The LPM is not like the
ANC. The ANC is heaven [up there], but the LPM is down here. Its leadership is still in the informal settlements, fighting for the things they need too. This is not a political party, it’s a social movement. Now the ANC is scared because they think people will join us as a political party. But we know it’s a social movement. We need a shield, and the LPM was there to support us” (interview, Sello Koithing, Eikenhof informal settlement 3 Sept 2003).

Maureen Mnisi, Gauteng chair and member of the LPM national council describes her experience with starting to organise the LPM in Protea South: “Protea South is a place which is a very difficult situation, because we have so many structures. We have IFP, we have UDM, we have civic association, we have ANC, we have community organisations. When I find the LPM, I feel I have to go and introduce the LPM in Protea South. Jesus, it was very hard. It was not so easy. People are so concerned, ‘Where is the office?’ They are starting to get suspicious that this LPM is a political organisation, that I want to move people from the ANC or their parties to join the LPM. There were so many questions. You can see it was difficult for people to understand what is the LPM actually. But I tried to explain, ‘You see, LPM is only focusing on the land and is going to help us against the removals’” (interview, 21 Nov 2003).

There is also a growing class division between the traditional Congress aligned organisations and the new grassroots organisations. In Finetown, a settlement near Ennerdale, divisions between residents of the formal and informal parts of the settlement have become apparent. In the past, Sanco organised all residents. But now, as an LPM member from the informal settlement explains, “Sanco said they are not the umbrella for the informal settlement anymore. We thought the development would include Finetown East [the formal settlement] and Finetown North together, but the East said they don’t know the North and want the people to be moved. It is the ANC councillor who is behind that argument” (interview, 25 Aug 2003). Maureen Mnisi of Protea South indicates how she resigned as chair of the local ANC branch when the branch executive began making decisions that favoured those with formal houses over those in the informal settlement:

“Most of the people in the executive were staying in formal houses in Protea South. The new houses, which were the bond houses and the RDP, they came after people had been staying [in the informal settlement]. The time I was in the chairperson position in Protea South, actually they were insisting that the people have to be removed from the informal settlement because of the value of their houses, talking about crime, that the crime is very high, all those things. But actually there was nothing that we should take a decision about the people without consulting them about what we are planning… The worst thing they have done, they made a memorandum as the people staying in houses to submit to Eskom that they need electricity. I didn’t know there was a petition going behind me, meanwhile it was made by the people who are serving in the ANC office at local branch. As soon as I uncovered that this is something that is happening, then I even called the people from the informal settlement that they have to do that because they are human beings, they need electricity all the time, they’re even making illegal connections because they don’t get that chance to apply. So now I tell them that they have to make this memorandum because even the people staying in the proper houses are making a petition, already they have done that.” (interview, 21 Nov 2003)

**Critical engagement with the state**

The relationship between the landless movement and government reveals a lucid understanding by LPM members of the terrain of struggle. On the one hand, members are disillusioned and frustrated with their inability to influence government and with the slow or non-existent pace of material improvement. At a labour tenant meeting in Wakkerstroom for example, tenants described how farm workers continue to be abused, and are now being
evicted for no reason. But when this is reported to government, it goes nowhere (meeting, 18 Oct 2003). Forced removals, evictions and lack of secure access to land are constant issues that were highlighted by LPM members and supporters in our interviews.

On the other hand, scores of people interviewed were of the opinion that they still needed to approach government to assist them to get land. Amongst labour tenants, the view was widespread that the LPM’s first task was to speak to government, “even to the top of the DLA” (F Nsibande, labour tenant, Geelhoutboom, 19 Oct 2003). At a meeting in Wakerstroom (18 Oct 2003), another tenant argued: “We want to meet with government to discuss our grievances. If they don’t listen then we must protest. Government should rectify the situation”.

In the informal settlements of southern Gauteng similar sentiments were heard. Oupa Makhanya from Eikenhof farms argues: “We want to first inform owners and government about our intention to occupy the land. We must occupy at the same time as discussing. We mustn’t be seen as unwilling to talk, although it is not enough on its own”. In most of the settlements, members had been involved in marches and petitions to local councils. Almost as a matter of principle, members felt that the LPM had a duty to approach government with their demands before embarking on more radical forms of protest such as land occupations. This approach came through clearly on many occasions when talking with members. In Senouane, a suburb of Soweto, Zandi Luthuli said: “We held a meeting with the public to ask the council to make land available. We haven’t yet spoken to the council. We will first speak to councillor Nkomo, and if there is no response we will occupy the land” (interview, 12 Aug 2003).

The approach to government indicates a sophisticated understanding of the new spaces opened up by political democratisation, as well as the limits imposed by the compromises and the balance of forces. As Daniel Botha from Thembelihle says: “The government says ‘land for all’ and that it’s our right to get land, and that makes it easier to organise around the issue of land. But the problem is that the government is not giving us the land” (interview, 18 Aug 2003). For most LPM members who were interviewed, there is no contradiction between engaging with government to advance an agenda of land access and tenure security, while simultaneously organising mass protest against the pace or direction of government reform. This indicates that people are not merely waiting for the government to deliver, but also recognise the greater possibilities and opportunities for government delivery in the post-apartheid political system. While the range of activities at present is fairly narrow, strategies employed by the LPM cut across civil and political society.

While it may not be true of all the recent community movements, there is no doubt that the LPM is operating on the grounds laid by the post-apartheid political order. In particular, there remains a strong conviction that institutional space must be used to achieve the goals of the movement as far as possible. Threats to act outside the government-defined framework exist – for example the threat to occupy land. But even here there is an ambiguity. Amongst some members, there is almost an expectation that government should assist with occupations. “We have tried to occupy, but we were chased away by the police. There’s lots of land, but the problem is the government – they chase people off” (interview, 12 Aug 2003). Or in the words of a labour tenant: “We must take the land. But the police and farmers prevent people from occupying. If we want to occupy the land, we must go to the government and tell them to stop the police” (interview, 18 Oct 2003). Some even believe that occupations are not morally defensible, but that it is a tactic to get the government to respond:
“As we are always talking about the land must be redistributed equally, but the government is not yet responding, it will lead us to do something that is wrong in order that it pay attention to us. Because if maybe you want something and you’re talking in a cool manner, the government won’t hear you. So you have to do something wrong, so that it can just see it has to pay attention to that particular person” (interview, 21 Nov 2003)

At the same time, there are many other LPM members who are firmly of the belief that they have a legitimate right to occupy land, but even this tends to focus on unused land. These quotes are highlighted just to show how the rule of law and the processes of government have general legitimacy in the eyes of the grassroots, even while they feel that government is not responsive to their needs.

The contradictory role of NGOs as influential institutions may have something to do with this. The NGOs in the current era are classic organisations of civil society, on the one hand stimulating dissent and pressure on the state and on the other hand mediating between the state and the subaltern classes. Arguably, without NGO support the LPM would not survive for long, mainly because it lacks independent resources to build its organisation and carry out its activities. Members of the LPM are very much aware of the dominant influence of the NGOs, but realise the constraints to organising entirely independently. As Oupa Makhanya from Eikenhof farms puts it: “The LPM is an autonomous body. People should fight to occupy the land. But at the moment the LPM still needs the capacity to do this all on its own. We need to rely on the experience and expertise of the NLC and its affiliates, but also to transfer skills to be able to stand on our own” (interview, 17 Sept 2003). And in Mpumalanga, a member of the interim provincial executive says: “We are assisted by the NLC at national level, and by TRAC Mpumalanga at provincial level. There are tensions between TRAC and the provincial LPM around ANC and anti-ANC tendencies, but for now we still call on TRAC for support. We have a good relationship with the NGOs, and we must keep it good because it’s the only way we can get going. We need to have assistance from the NGOs” (interview, 18 Oct 2003).

**Migrancy as an organising channel**

The migrant labour system has played a role in organising across the urban and rural divide in the past, and continues to do so today. Under apartheid migrant workers from the same rural areas formed cultural associations that, although superficially ‘tribal’ in form, played a critical role in organising and mobilising workers on the mines and in factories (Delius 1996). The Durban strikes of the early 1970s that sparked the revival of mass resistance to apartheid were predominantly strikes by migrant workers (Mamdani 1996:220-221). In the other direction, migrant workers returning to rural areas brought their experiences of trade union and urban community forms of struggle. In essence, migrant workers functioned as conveyor belts between urban activism and rural discontent, in Mamdani’s words.

Generally, the migrant economy has been taken to refer to migration from rural to urban and then back again. The elimination of legal barriers to movement, coupled with shrinking economic opportunities, has created more complex types of movement. First, it is apparent that many urban/peripheral households have severed the link with their rural homesteads to all intents and purposes. Many of those interviewed indicated that while they had family still living in rural areas (mainly parents), there was little financial support in either direction and they only occasionally returned for any length of time. The primary reason for this was lack of income. Under apartheid, the migrant economy saw a constant flow of cash remittances
back to the rural areas. Indeed, this was one of the key ways that the state and capital were able to externalise the costs of maintaining the rural areas. It also permitted the ruling class to lower urban wages and eschew the provision of formal housing based on the existence of permanent homes in the rural areas. This was the basis of the structural link between the formal and informal economies.

However, as a growing number of functionally urban residents remain unemployed, migrancy no longer functions in the same way. Migrants no longer act as the conduit of resources between urban and rural as they once did. Freedom of movement - a very significant victory in the struggle against apartheid – has been reduced to perpetual movement, the necessity of movement. This is because the post-apartheid political economy does not provide the necessary stability to allow freedom of movement to be a choice. This is not to say there is not still oscillating migration between urban and rural, and that this does not still serve as a conduit for organisation. Derek Zondi, who lives in the inner city of Johannesburg, came from Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal 11 years ago to find work. He says: ‘We don’t have any land in Newcastle, just a yard. We want land for ploughing and cattle, but there is no LPM there. I could organise LPM there, because they need land but don’t have the knowledge on how to get it’ (interview, 21 Aug 2003). Zondi’s move to Johannesburg was motivated by economic necessity. But for some of the Mpumalanga labour tenants, migration to the city and back again is the result of the immediate threat of death. For Fana Mthethwa, Zeph Tshabalala and others, continuing violence, including torture, forced them out of the Wakkerstroom and into Johannesburg. Yet they return periodically to the area, clandestinely as if apartheid is still the law of the day, to organise and mobilise tenants for the LPM.

A more obvious but less investigated type of migrancy is intra-urban migrancy. Many residents we spoke to in the informal settlements have moved from one settlement to another in the past 10 years. The general process appears to be movement from a rural area or small town straight into Soweto with relatives, either in backyard shacks or sharing accommodation. But overcrowded conditions and high rentals often force people to look elsewhere for accommodation, and there is a move to the outskirts of the city into informal settlements where there are no or low rents. The story of Vuyokazi Damane from Lawley Station is typical: “My family is in Transkei. I found a place in Orlando East [in Soweto] through a friend and moved there in 1999. I moved to Johannesburg to look for a job. I am still unemployed. At the moment I am depending on my brother who is living in Orlando. I had no money for rent in Orlando, so I moved to Lawley in 2001. My cousin was staying in Lawley Station, then he called me here. He spoke to the committee to get me a space” (interview, 27 Aug 2003).

The table below indicates the movement of residents of informal settlements who were interviewed during the course of the research. Fully 62% of those interviewed have moved from another residential location to an informal settlement in the past 10 years (since 1993). Of these, slightly less than 1 in 5 have come directly from a rural area or a small town in another part of the country. Over 45% lived somewhere else in Gauteng and moved into their current location in the past ten years, and 31% came from outside Gauteng, stopped in Soweto for a while and moved on again into their current location all in the last ten years. Activists who are part of this mobile population are able to connect issues faced by residents across separate settlements so that local struggles become more easily generalised.
Table 1: Changing residential location in the past 10 years, residents of informal settlements in southern Gauteng

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the past ten years I moved from…</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Been in the same place for 10 yrs or more</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soweto/Johannesburg to informal settlement</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere in Gauteng/other informal settlement to informal settlement</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural or small town to informal settlement</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another city to informal settlement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere, then to Soweto then to informal settlement</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stories of inner city residents most starkly reveal the constant pressure to pick up and move elsewhere, as well as the desire to settle in one place and begin building a life. Nohlanhla Ntombela who lives in the inner city describes her recent experiences:

“I’ve been staying in this building for 2 weeks. I was staying in Jeppestown for 6 months before that, and in Mofolo South (Soweto) since 1996. I come from Nongoma [KZN]. I was looking for work, but only found temporary work for 3 months at a time. I was cleaning for Prestige, somewhere between 3 weeks and 3 months at a time, and I operated a public phone for a while. I moved to town from Soweto because transport was too expensive. I want to live in a flat in town. I do jobs around here, and I’m closer to work opportunities.” (interview, 21 Aug 2003).

The majority of the people who were interviewed are thus forced to keep changing their residential locations because of economic necessity and in the search for opportunities to make ends meet. The role of social networks and multiple households becomes very important in this context. Some people can be located in one of three or four households spread across southern Gauteng on any given day. Immediate or extended family, or even friends, provide temporary bases for a population that is constantly circling for a stable footing near the city. In this context, government’s relocation policy serves to further destabilise survival strategies, not least by closing down places that people have created to settle. In the absence of alternative residence with long-term stability, or of long-term employment and work opportunities, this is merely destructive.

This circling mass, forever seeking ways to make ends meet amidst the wealth of Africa’s richest city, is economically inefficient by the standards of the adopted development model. But where are they to go? As fast as the globally competitive agricultural economy is spewing people out and driving them towards the cities, the cities are ejecting them and pushing them to the margins. The formal economy relies on this vast surplus labour army, and draws on it as needed. Labour laws may offer some protection to permanent workers, but to the casualised, temporary worker, the laws are as foreign as ownership of fixed property. The outskirts of Johannesburg are a compact and gathering mass that is squeezed between the rural and the urban economies that are equally incapable of meeting their needs. The urban-rural interface is densely populated, with pressure building. The developmental agenda is unable to absorb this population, and new forms of government cannot control it. Continually shifting people from one place to another within this zone, in the hope that they will somehow disappear in the process, will not ease the pressure in any way.
Urban-rural solidarity in the LPM

The LPM has both rural and urban components, yet in practice the structured organisational links between them are thin. There are some connections between the local leadership and activist layers, but for most ordinary members of the movement urban-rural solidarity remains an ideal to strive for. Part of the problem is lack of resources to bring activists and members from one province to another to provide support for struggles that are being waged. Many of the people we spoke to said that before anything was planned, it would be necessary to bring urban and rural members together to understand the basis of the concrete struggles and to ask what assistance was needed. Some people had specific suggestions about what help could be provided: “The rural members could show us how to produce food to sell, and the urban members could help the rural members with skills, like computers”, says Mary Khumalo from the inner city (interview, 21 Aug 2003). An exiled resident of Wakkerstroom says: “Wakkerstroom LPM needs support from Gauteng. People must come in busses in large numbers, and provide support for some days to see what the situation there is” (interview, 12 Aug 2003). More than one person suggested raising money at branch level to provide support to branches in rural areas. From the rural side, labour tenants highlighted their need for information from the urban areas.

Even though the connections remain tenuous at present, and more at the level of ideas than reality, there is a desire for solidarity. “It is important to support the rural members”, says Percy Mabaso of Finetown North. “If you know that you did suffer, you must think of other people. We are the same” (interview, 25 Aug 2003). And from another LPM Mpumalanga member based in Gauteng; “People living in the urban areas come from the farms, they know what the boers did to the blacks. So if we say we are taking back the land, they will give us support” (interview, 12 Aug 2003). “I’ve never been to a rural place,” says Zandi Luthuli, a young activist from Senouane in Soweto, “but we must support them. We must know how their minds work, how their place is, what we must do” (interview, 12 Aug 2003).

Despite the weakness of practical organisational links between urban and rural areas, national campaigns such as the ‘No Land, No Vote’ campaign ahead of the 2004 national elections, or the ‘Take Back the Land’ campaign have struck a chord in urban and rural constituencies alike. In Wakkerstroom, a labour tenant argued: “I am not prepared to vote because I have already suffered the pain of the previous vote” (LPM meeting, Wakkerstroom, 18 Oct 2003). Another tenant says: “I was a member of the ANC, but no longer, because I can’t see them working for anything but votes” (interview, 18 Oct 2003). Similar feelings of frustration are experienced in the informal settlements of southern Gauteng. Phyllis Mavimbela, a resident of Protea South informal settlement says:

“I don’t hate the government. Except they don’t take care of poor people. Like me, I have no money so they can do what they want. Now the elections are coming, we will vote for the ANC. But after the elections they will leave us again, they will bring the Red Ants to take our shacks out. We don’t want to be moved like dogs” (interview, 14 August 2003)

According to Norman Gigi, an LPM member from Kanana settlement on the outskirts of Tembisa: “I was a full member of the ANC and the Youth League too. But now I’m sick and
tired of the ANC. The mouth is talking nice, but when it comes to the hands the politicians do nothing” (interview, 10 Sept 2003).

However, others are not as willing to abandon the national political level without a fight. Says J Dladla from Wakkerstroom: “People on the ground have the same feeling [as the national call to boycott the election]. But it is a strategy to speed up land reform, and maybe we must withdraw that position just before the elections, because not voting is killing the country. Voting shapes the future of the country” (interview, Wakkerstroom, 18 Oct 2003).

On a smallholding in Eikenhof, Oupa Makhanya says: “I was a member of the ANC, but nothing has come up. They only come here when they need the support of the people for voting. The people of Eikenhof never enjoyed the fruits of liberty. There are no grants. Only recently did we get a proper clinic. We have no transport.” But then immediately he says: “We need to vote ANC, because they are the only organisation here. The DA rules here, we need a change of power in this area. Even if the ANC won’t deliver, we will be able to go to them. We can force them to have a local office here at least” (interview, 17 Sept 2003).

The Take Back the Land campaign also receives support from the grassroots, although the way it is understood may not be identical in all places. In Mpumalanga, a member of the interim provincial council says: “Occupations are not a good idea because they lead to confrontation. Although we could try to occupy unused or unoccupied land. There is nothing wrong with that. People are ready to occupy. They have been calling on leadership, but the leaders have been delaying because they suspect the people won’t be strong enough to stand against the farmers and the police” (interview, 18 Oct 2003). Mostly illegal occupation is not driven by ideology but by practical necessity. “Maybe you have a family. Where are those people going to sleep at that very time when you need a place to stay? If you have to apply [to the government’s housing programme] and you don’t have the documents they require then you won’t get a place. So it can work to just set up your shack if you need to then” says Jonas Mpho Matume of Orange Farm (interview, 26 Aug 2003)

Ultimately, this captures the contradictions in a nutshell. Most people do not wish the government to fail, and want it to be able to create ways of returning the land, securing tenure and providing services and opportunities. But the developmental path being followed forces these same people to consider acts of illegality – acts that force them into confrontation with the very state that they have chosen - merely to survive. It’s not a question of being greedy or trying to jump ahead of a queue for housing or services. It’s a question of the immediate demands of having a place to live, productive activity to do, to be able to participate with others in creating the future.

Is there a nascent counter-hegemony?

Are the new struggles nascently counter-hegemonic? The new movements are constructed from a number of different social forces that do not necessarily have an explicit class base. This is important since a durable hegemonic (or counter-hegemonic) pole is necessarily organised around a particular class that is able to absorb popular democratic demands into its own project. For a class to become hegemonic, it must have the ability to direct popular energies and demands in a manner that allows it to consolidate its rule and ensures consent to its leadership amongst the populace. This requires an element of compromise on the part of the class seeking hegemony, because it has to adapt its own project to absorb popular demands.
As part of the new wave of mobilisation, the LPM remains a popular movement without a clearly defined class base, reflecting a growing demand for access to and ownership of land. The movement is a mix of different class and social forces, ranging from labour tenants and farm workers to chiefs and other local elites. The struggle over the direction of the LPM has already started to occur both internally and externally by an array of forces. At present, the working class does not appear to be prepared for a struggle for hegemony in the society as a whole. The key institutions of the class, the trade unions, are mainly locked in a defence of the interests of their members conceived of in narrow workplace terms. More broadly, one could say the working class is not presently a ‘class for itself’, there is only partial and fragmented class identity and solidarity. In such circumstances, a working class counter-hegemonic project cannot emerge.

To date, there is no clearly defined and open debate about the objectives and principles underpinning mobilisation in the landless movement. This is an indication of the nebulous character of the movement as it exists at present. Because a radical counter-hegemony at present has limited power in the society more broadly, an alternative political and social vision to the one presented by the dominant classes has so far failed to emerge with any clarity in civil society generally, but also within the landless movement. The LPM is at the phase of a nascent popular movement, and the issues it raises and the struggles it is taking up are crucial to placing land more firmly on the popular agenda than it has been in movements past. But the movement can be taken in many different directions, depending on the ways that classes organise themselves within the movement and the way external class forces absorb popular demands around land and integrate them into their own class projects.

**Conclusion**

Political democracy has opened up the freedom of movement for the black population that did not exist in the days of apartheid. This in itself has made it easier for organisers to move between urban and rural areas. In addition, the demand for land is more clearly articulated that it was previously and this is the product of a successful struggle against political oppression in at least two ways. The first is that the struggle for political freedom has resulted in the legal right to meet where you want and with whom you want, and to discuss almost anything you want without fear of arrest. That this does not always translate into reality does not reduce the importance of this right for organising. The second is that there was enough of an awareness in the liberation movement across classes around the issue of land dispossession to place it on the developmental agenda. This official recognition has made it easier for activists to mobilise around land as a demand. The importance of housing in the urban areas in particular, and its obvious connection to land and tenure security, has made a direct link possible between urban concerns with those of the rural landless.

Nevertheless, the reality of political society is that an elite stratum enjoys most access to formal political power. And the developmental model and economic growth path have served to reproduce exclusion of subaltern groups and the marginalised in the post-apartheid epoch. The logic of the developmental path – capitalist modernisation as the basis for redistribution - is through forcing people off the land they now occupy in both rural and urban areas, and is reliant on a technocratic model of service delivery that excludes millions of people living in ‘uneconomic’ locations. At the same time, the excluded have taken the development message to heart. They refuse to be moved without proper participation in decision-making processes, and they demand the services promised them more than 10 years ago. The demand is for
security of tenure, for water and electricity, for housing, schools, medical care, roads, transport, jobs, safety, in short the prerequisites for a decent life. Perhaps there are some for whom some of these promises have been met. But there are a great many for whom development has not arrived at all. And they are beginning to organise in response, despite the rhetoric of change and democracy.
Appendix: Methodological note

The research approach was based on the participatory action research (PAR) framework. The aim is to engage the subjects of the research as equals with ongoing and direct participation in determining the objectives and trajectory of the research. This requires that the researcher ‘deprofessionalise’ him- or herself and becomes a committed participant in the struggle for change. The research is also designed to make a direct contribution to movement building. This requires a two-way flow of information between the researcher as change agent, and the movement. In this piece of research, the LPM Gauteng provincial council and the Mpumalanga interim provincial council forwarded names of LPM activists to work with the researcher on the project. This team had a couple of initial workshops where basic research methodologies were discussed and selected, and where the group as a whole adopted the key questions and the approach to conducting fieldwork.

Field visits to conduct interviews were carried out in August and September 2003 in southern Gauteng and in October 2003 in south-eastern Mpumalanga. The LPM activists who were part of the research team organised meetings with individuals and/or groups of LPM members in each of the settlements visited. A team of six conducted 140 interviews in eleven branches of the LPM in Gauteng. The interviews were of varying quality, and the extraction of statistically sound quantitative data was not possible. Nevertheless the most important issues confronting members and supporters of the movement were clearly apparent after a number of branches had been visited. On occasion, interview sessions grew spontaneously into more general meetings where the LPM was able to communicate some of its ideas to residents who had gathered around.

In Mpumalanga the situation is less amenable to free activity, and LPM members from Mpumalanga who are exiled in Gauteng served as the conduit into Wakkerstroom and its surrounds. A research team of approximately 20 people spent two days in and around Wakkerstroom in October 2003. This followed a number of preliminary visits to the area and discussions in the research team. Meetings were held with labour tenants, farm workers and farm dwellers in Wakkerstroom and on a farm near Dirkiesdorp in Mpumalanga. Discussions in these meetings, coupled with in-depth interviews with a number of the participants after the general meetings formed the basis of the information for the research. The research team interviewed approximately 25 LPM members from the area in this time. Additional interviews and discussions were held with Gauteng-based members of the Mpumalanga group. The visit to Mpumalanga gave LPM members living in Gauteng first hand experience of the living and working conditions of fellow members in rural Mpumalanga.

Given time constraints, limited emphasis was placed on transferring skills in the research report-writing phase of the research. A two-day workshop to identify and discuss some of the findings proved useful to the research team, highlighting as it did key issues that were raised in the majority of interviews.

This research should be viewed as a step in the process of building research capacity in the LPM, as well as In the future, research work should consolidate and build on experiences with carrying out interviews. A process should be developed to draw the grassroots activist-researchers more deeply into analysis and writing up of research.

A weakness of the research was that it was conceptualised in a short space of time without direct input from members of the movement. There is always a tension between immediately
practical research that serves to inform the movement about day-to-day tactics, and broader research that can feed into more principled or strategic considerations in the movement. The value of the latter is not always immediately appreciated, especially when the movement is facing attack from the state and is severely under-resourced. It does seem important, regardless of the type of research that is ultimately carried out, that active members of the movement themselves should be involved in those decisions. Without that, there is no ownership of the research and it becomes a sterile exercise with wasted output. This is a lesson for future proposals as well as research processes in the movement.
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