

REWORKING HEGEMONY IN THE URBAN WATERSCAPE

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'For the philosophy of praxis cannot be disjoined from thinking, man from nature, activity from material, subject from object; if one makes this detachment one falls into one of the many forms of religion or nonsensical abstraction'.

(Gramsci 1971)

'Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched...

The answer must be no'.

(Lefebvre 1991: 11)

'Common sense is the site on which the dominant ideology is constructed, but it is also the site of resistance and challenge to this ideology'.

(Simon 1980: 64)

Introduction

One of the central questions confronting people interested in progressive and democratic change concerns how dominant ideas come to be established in particular places at particular times. In this paper, we explore this question in the post-apartheid informal settlement of Inanda. Above all, we seek to show that the environment of the settlement has become a crucial terrain over which dominant ideas are fought. We focus, in particular, on the aspect of the environment that might be referred to as the waterscape (Swyngeoduw 1999, 2004). Over the last fifty years, access to water in Inanda has been transformed. Originally residents relied on streams or the benevolence of landlords to provide a borehole in the area. In the early 1980s, the apartheid state, working in alliance with the Urban Foundation, implemented the first water scheme in the area. After the fall of apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC) has sought to extend access to water to all in the settlement. Throughout this period, the activity of collecting water has changed profoundly, both in terms of the physical act and in terms of the different relationships established through that physical act. The waterscape has thereby come to mean different things at different times, and the common sense ideas working through it have also changed. Part of this shift in meaning has been an attempt by different groups to enrol water in a particular view of the world that is supportive of a particular position. Often, as we show, this attempt to manipulate the waterscape for the purposes of moral and cultural legitimation has resulted in failure. Towards the end of the paper, we begin to explore the ways in which the struggle over ideas in the waterscape might open up new democratic possibilities.

For Gramsci, the stabilisation of a particular worldview, and the acceptance of this view by different groups (often against the interests of the individuals involved) are achieved through the operation of hegemony. The terrain over which hegemony operates, he refers to as civil society or 'the so-called private organisations like the Church, the trade unions, the schools etc' (1971: fn56). These

institutions thereby serve as the ostensibly 'neutral' organs through which class power comes to be consolidated in the realm of ideas. As Kipfer (2002) has pointed out, for geographers, one of the central attractions of the work of Henri Lefebvre lies in his view of the urbanisation of hegemony. Dominant ideas are thereby consolidated through the built environment of the city. Conversely, as the French protests of 1968 appeared to show, the city can become a terrain over which dominant ideas are challenged, and the survival of capitalism put under threat. Whilst Kipfer's work implicitly addresses the socio-*natural* relations of urban environments, our aim is to make these more explicit. We do so through arguing that the urbanisation of nature always implies the extension of a terrain over which worldviews might be contested.

The paper is necessarily historical and our approach to the urbanisation of nature in Inanda is roughly chronological. Thus, we seek to show how, during the apartheid years, the expanding water network was enrolled in the National Party's 'total strategy', as it sought acquiescence to apartheid through improvements in living conditions. Later, we suggest that it became a terrain over which civic movements sought to contest the racist ideology of apartheid. In more recent years, we show how the waterscape became a part of the African National Congress' attempt to cultivate a popular nationalism in the wake of apartheid's defeat, before attempting to use the water network as a means of generating support for its post-1996 rightwards shift. As a result, we argue that the waterscape has become one of the key terrains over which the cultural and moral legitimacy of the ANC's neoliberal turn has been consolidate and contested.

We do not argue that people are merely passive recipients of these reshaped worldviews, nor do we argue that there is a simple one-way relationship between hegemony and the lived environment. Both environmental determinism and 'scientific Marxism' fell prey to such an illusion. Both theories have been shamed by the ability of individuals to think independently, and to be able to make their own histories and geographies. Rather, following both Gramsci and Marx, we seek to show how hegemony is established through concrete human activity in the production of nature (Gramsci 1971: Marx 1976: Smith 1984, Swyngedouw 1999). Elites try to manipulate hegemony, not by simply changing the physical environment of a settlement, but by reshaping the way in which people relate to that environment through their concrete, everyday, activities (Kipfer 2002). Such a relational ontology has been crucial not only to Gramsci and Marx but also to recent developments within left geography (Harvey 1973, 1996, Smith 1984, Kirsch and Mitchell 2003). Overall, we seek a rapprochement between a Gramscian understanding of hegemony and recent work in urban political ecology (Heynen, Kaika and Swyngedouw 2006). Following the example of Gramsci, we argue that such a study should remain rooted in an understanding of contingent historical practices. Thus, we turn first to Inanda's complex history.

Inanda

Over the last half century, the area referred to as Inanda has become increasingly integrated into the lived environment of the city (Hughes 1996). Over this period, it has transformed from a quiet rural community of dispersed farmsteads to a dense and bustling informal settlement providing a home for almost 200,000 people. As a liminal zone, Inanda saw some of the most violent turf wars between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the United Democratic Front in the last years of apartheid. These struggles became generational ones, as the youths of the area struggled for a democratic vision of a world beyond the conservatism of village headmen and chiefs. The area thereby encapsulated many of the most important changes of the dying days of apartheid.

In one of the few scholarly papers written on the settlement, David Hemson refers to the community's ability to capture the political zeitgeist:

French political life served for Marx, and in a sense for all historians and social scientists, as a barometer of all modern politics in its usage, language and innovations. Taken in proportion, and obviously to a lesser degree, Inanda shows more explicitly the latent potentialities and contradictions in political practice on a national scale by exhibiting the extremes in their development. (1996: 78)

The story of water provision in Inanda is one way into making better sense of this political practice. As we argued at the outset, the history of water provision also sheds light upon a terrain over which dominant ideas were both challenged and consolidated. For most of the last century, Inanda lacked any formal water network: its burgeoning population relied on individual landlords or shop-owners to drill boreholes (Hughes 1985). As the settlement increasingly came under the influence of the urban region, debates over who was responsible for the provision of water were ignited; a drought between 1978 and 1980 increased the urgency of these debates.

Inanda's released status

Importantly, Inanda's administrative incoherence (it lay outside the formal authority of either the apartheid state or the KwaZulu legislative assembly) provided ample opportunities for the apartheid government to both delay in providing water, claiming not to be responsible for water provision in the area, and also to exploit some of the tensions between different groups that had been exacerbated by the drought. Landlords represented the key figures of authority for much of the last century. These class dynamics, however, were deeply entwined with, and inscribed by, 'race'; Inanda being one of the few areas in apartheid South Africa in which both Africans and Indians were able to acquire freehold land. The preponderance of Indian landlords seeking to make a living out of 'shack-farming' provided a lever

from which the apartheid state was able to exploit racial tensions (Meer 1985, Hughes 1987).

Inanda's confusing patchwork of administrative responsibilities was partly a result of the 1936 Land Act. This earmarked several of the local farms as Released Areas 33 and 34 for eventual acquisition by the state (SPPR 1983) in preparation for sole African occupation of the area at some undisclosed future date. In the interim, the area lay in an administrative limbo, permitting both Africans and Indians to acquire freehold land. Lying in the mist belt, nearly all of Inanda is just too high to form part of the lucrative sugar lands situated to the East. As a result the lower value land and the high number of landowners amongst whom it is distributed served to ensure that throughout the apartheid years it retained its ambiguous, 'released' status, the Verulam Magistrates Court being thus established as a temporary authority (Hughes 1996).

Lacking a formal authority, it might seem odd to consider Inanda within a Gramscian framework. As Showstack Sassoon argues, an understanding of the role of the state is crucial to Gramsci's work. Indeed, Gramsci seems to understand hegemony and civil society as integral to, or, at least, as defined in relation to the state (1971: 262-3). Inanda, of course, lacked formal links with the local and national state up until the 1990s when the redrawing of municipal boundaries brought it formally within eThekweni Municipality. However, prior to this, whilst only acting as a formal authority in South African Development Trust -owned land (a relatively small portion of the area understood as Inanda), the apartheid state still cast a long shadow over the settlement. Indeed, the relational, decentralised understanding of the operation of state power developed by Gramsci provides a useful framework for understanding this relationship and for understanding how the state can cultivate power within such apparently liminal spaces. Our attention needs to shift, however to the more subversive ways in which power operates through the environment. Thus, Inanda becomes a far more interesting area for study than those communities with a direct link to the national state.

Whilst the coercive arm of the state intervened at several times in the area, Inanda became a site for the experimentation with various means for trying to develop consent within the populace. As Femia notes (1981: 29), it is this distinction (between consent and coercion) that is of the most relevance for Gramsci rather than a distinction between civil and political society.¹ Thus, attempts were first made to cultivate consent through an Urban Foundation intervention to improve the living standards of those in the area and establish access to potable water for some of the residents of Inanda. Later, different groups attempted to enrol the waterscape in the

¹ Partly for this reason, and partly because of the somewhat circuitous nature of the debates, we do not review the post-apartheid literature on South African civil society (for a selection, see Friedman 1991, 1992, Mayekiso. 1996, Swilling 1992. For the most useful summaries, see Glaser 1997 and Marais 1998)

process of establishing new moral and cultural norms. The unfolding of these processes, in turn, depended on the gradual urbanisation of nature (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2000), or the cohering socio-natural structure of the urban region (see Harvey 1989 on the structured coherence of the urban region). It is to this, rather than the area's ambiguous position within the formal structures of governance, that we must now turn.

The urbanisation of nature in Inanda

Urbanisation in Inanda was, of course, intimately bound up with the unfolding of apartheid in the rest of the country and, above all, with the forced removals that moved so many people from relatively stable communities in the centre of cities to the outskirts of urban areas. Thus, with the destruction of Cato Manor in 1959 and the forced removal of all of its African and Indian residents, new townships were constructed on the outskirts of Durban to accommodate the displaced population (Maylam 1996). The construction of these separate townships for those of different 'race' was the cornerstone of the National Party's policy of 'separate development'. Inanda's neighbour, KwaMashu, was soon to become the second largest of these townships in the Durban region, located roughly 20km to the North West of the city centre. Its creation had a profound catalysing effect on the growth of Inanda. With the extension of bus routes to the township, it became possible for residents of the informal settlement to commute to work in the city using the bus connections from the formal township, although pass restrictions effectively barred many of its residents from applying for such work (Hughes 1996). Whilst a basic understanding of the influence of the 'structured coherence of the urban region' might refer to this ability of an urban centre to draw upon a surrounding labour supply (Harvey 1985), we would suggest that the extension of the water network to Inanda represented a still more profound subsumption of the informal settlement into the urban region. With this change, the city became a part of the home life and the bodily functions of those living in the informal settlement. An urban nature came to flow through the shacks and bodies of Inanda's residents (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2000, Kaika 2003). A clearer socio-natural relationship with the metropole was thereby defined. First, however, for the urbanisation of nature to unfold, water planners had to contend with the patchwork of land titles making up the area and the lack of a clear administrative authority. At the time, Inanda was divided up between several hundred private landowners, mission lands, state lands and land administered by the KwaZulu government. It represented a planner's nightmare. This situation was worsened by the apartheid government's plans to turn Inanda into a site for solely African occupation. This would require the appropriation of vast swathes of land from numerous different landowners (Meer 1985).

Such a patchwork of land titles, as well as the racist priorities of the apartheid government, was reflected in the lack of provision of basic services in the

area up until the early 1980s. If these were provided at all, landlords tended to be responsible. Benevolent landlords, and those with an eye for a commercial opportunity thereby supplied water through boreholes,² otherwise residents collected water from the polluted streams that flowed through the area (Hindson 1996, Community Workshop, Bhambayi 2003). When these sources of water ran dry in 1979, the inadequacies of service provision were clearly emphasised. Although silent killers such as dysentery had affected residents for decades, a dramatic increase in typhoid cases in January and February 1980 began to draw attention to Inanda's service deficit. Fears of a contaminated labour supply began to grow, as did fears that labourers might bring typhoid with them to the centre of Durban. Senecque (1981) quotes an article from *The Sunday Tribune*

Durban is sitting on a typhoid bomb. Thousands of workers could be unwitting carriers of the killer disease – and there are fears that the epidemic could spread to the city. The bomb is Inanda and the solution is water piped within easy reach of every home. But Inanda – one of Durban's major labour sources – is a squatter's haven. (quoted in Senecque 1981: 9)

If the solution was a simple one (urbanising nature through bringing potable water to the informal settlement), who should be responsible for implementing such a programme remained less simple. For the national government, the legitimacy of moves towards 'separate development' appeared to be put under test. Whichever department was made responsible for a water scheme, and whether it was a part of a government in Pretoria or a legislative assembly in Ulundi became crucially important.

One of the key players in the drive to bring a water scheme to Inanda was the Urban Foundation. Established by large capital in the early 1980s, the Urban Foundation served as a think tank, aimed at focussing energies on South Africa's urban problems. Although there was a wide diversity of opinion within the organisation, ranging from the progressive to the outright racist (Senecque 1981), it was persistently open to the criticism that it sought to make 'apartheid liveable'. At a time when the national government in South Africa was attempting to ameliorate some of the worst living conditions in the country, as an overt strategy of attempting to quell rebellion (part of the 'total strategy' in countering the 'total onslaught'), the Urban Foundation appeared to be a willing handmaiden. People's relationships to their lived environments were to be manipulated in order to provide an atmosphere in which opposition would be minimised and some form of segregation might be politically sustainable. Although not all within the Urban Foundation would have

² Interestingly, however, Rogers Ngcobo, a prominent African landowner is quoted in Meer (1985) as saying that no landlord ever charged for water in Inanda.

been motivated by the same desires, what we see in the drive to bring water to Inanda can be interpreted as an attempt to pacify a working population through transforming the relationship between residents and their environments. Hegemony was to be worked through a reconfiguration of the socio-natural relations comprising the waterscape in Inanda. The aim was to provide a new form of moral leadership, one based around the apparent benevolence of large capital, which might begin to transform this hotbed of discontent into a container of loyal labourers.

Such a transformation was effectively blocked whilst landowners remained the most important power bloc, thereby seriously restricting the possibilities for a reconfigured waterscape that would encompass the entire area and severely restricting the possibilities for a reconfigured worldview. The apartheid state was confronted with several possibilities. First, it could seek to appropriate the land. At the time, however, with the economy in recession, the state's lack of financial resources limited the chances of it being able to do this legally. Secondly, it could attempt to undermine the power of the landlords and seek to drive them out of the area through extra-legal means. As will be shown in the next section, this strategy was evident in the manner in which tensions between Indian landlords and their African tenants were exploited by the state, in the run up to violence that engulfed the area in August 1985 (Meer 1985). Thirdly, the apartheid government could relocate people from areas in which landlords were the dominant force, to areas in which the state already had a strong presence. Essentially, this was the strategy pursued: the drought in the early 1980s thereby provided a justification for the movement of large numbers of people from freehold land to state-owned land. The latter had been purchased from individual landowners for the purpose of integrating Released Area 33 into the KwaZulu Bantustan at some as yet unknown future date. One of South Africa's earliest 'site and service' schemes was thereby established: residents were provided with a plot of land at a reasonable rent (with the possibility in the future of being able to purchase this land), a standpipe, and the possibility of borrowing a tent until they had been able to construct their own house on the land. During the first phase of resettlement, 3000 families, or roughly 15,000 people, moved to what would become known as Inanda Newtown. Since the establishment of Inanda Newtown, three new divisions have since been established (creatively titled Newtown A, B and C).

Moving residents from land in which they rented plots from landlords to land owned by the state served several functions. First, through state-planned, speeded-up urbanisation, it permitted the rapid implementation of a water scheme, avoiding potential planning delays. Secondly, whilst not involving forced removals, a major driving force was the apartheid vision of separate development for those of different 'races'. This relied on sole African occupancy of certain parcels of land. Thirdly, it broke the power bloc of local landowners. Senecque (1981) refers to the

changing position of the prominent Inanda landowner, Rogers Ngcobo, whose cautious support for the water project changed to opposition as he saw the loss of power that would result from resettlement. Finally, and of great interest for the purposes of this paper, the supply of water to a resettled population in parts of Released Area 33 allowed the state to rework the socio-natural relations of hegemony in the area. Prior to this, as Hindson (1996) notes, landlords had been responsible for providing very basic services and also 'a worldview' for the local populace. In effect they could provide the moral and cultural leadership that hegemony represents, through their control of people's access to land and to the waterscape. This 'worldview' would come into conflict with the apartheid state's vision of separate development and it became imperative for the state to establish itself as the principal authority in the area. It could thereby attempt to shape and manipulate such a worldview through the concrete act of people being able to access water from a standpipe. The act of collecting water, although improving the life-chances of those moving to the new area of Ematendeni enormously, now established a direct link between the residents of Inanda and the apartheid state. Over the next two and a half decades, the way in which hegemony operates over this terrain has changed still more profoundly.

Political ecologies of violence

In spite of the development of the Inanda scheme, the apartheid state's ambitions for the area continued to be frustrated by the patchwork of land titles in those areas of Inanda not owned by the state. In particular, the presence of both Indian and African residents and landowners seemed to provide a direct challenge to the violent segregation that constituted apartheid. One of the expressions of this coexistence had been local peace camps – organised by Rick Turner, a Durban philosopher-activist (assassinated in 1978) and Mewa Ramgobin, a prominent Natal Indian Congress and later UDF activist. Ramgobin is married to the granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and the camps, designed to promote non-racial harmony, were held at Gandhi's former home in Inanda, known as Phoenix. For some, these meetings are still remembered as key platforms for building a progressive politics in Natal (Personal Communication: Hemson). However, at the same time as pockets of hope showed the possibilities for a society beyond apartheid, the central state was making a concerted effort to open up new faultlines. Heather Hughes (1996) charts these fractures in trying to get to grips with the violence that took hold of Inanda in August 1985.

One can accept the point that it is wrong to view shanty towns as 'problems', characterised by crime and vice, social despair and political instability. Yet it is also true that in the case of such speeded-up urbanisation, pressure on lines of social tension has often resulted in fracture: ethnically, between Mpondo and Zulu people;

racially, between Indians and Africans; between those with 'proper' housing and those possessing only shacks, after two blocks of Inanda were set aside by the state for formal township development in 1982; between the youth and their elders; and between tenants and landlords, as each struggled for a more beneficial arrangement. If these forms of tension are 'situational', then looming large in the creation of the 'situation', first by its non-action and then its method of intervention, was the South African state under the apartheid regime. (ibid: 306)

Hughes' writings capture the important interplay between the apartheid state, and the socio-natural relations making Inanda the distinct place it is. Through doing this, she seeks an explanation of the ugly violence that took hold of Inanda. The spark for this was provided by uprisings in other parts of the city, provoked by the murder of UDF activist Victoria Mxenge. In Inanda, these uprisings took the form of intense clashes between an emerging, but by no means coherent, United Democratic Front and armed Inkatha militias. Many of the attacks were targeted at Indian landowners and, within a few days, the vast majority of the Indian population of Inanda was driven out of the area, fleeing to nearby Phoenix or Redlands.

As the Hughes' quotation attests, the roots of the violence were complex. For Sitas (1986), the bloodshed needs situating in the political-economic context of the moment. Much was an attack on what were perceived as symbols of wealth: this followed the acute crises of drought and resettlement. Also, Inkatha was able to capitalise on such violence, attempting to consolidate its power through the ensuing clashes, whilst portraying its supporters as the peacemakers and upholders of law and order. Above all, Sitas suggests, the violence showed the limitations, at that time, of all organisations in the Durban area, whether this be the UDF, Inkatha or the growing trade union movement.

Elsewhere, Fatima Meer (1985) interprets the 1985 violence as a state sponsored effort to rid the 'Released Area' of Indian landowners. With the state lacking the money to pay a reasonable price for this land, it was convenient to see Indian landlords driven out through violent insurrection. Through firsthand reports and signed affidavits, she shows the manner in which the apartheid state operated as a hidden hand seeking to clear the area of its Indian populace. In contrast, Hughes (1987) argues against conspiracy theories, and instead alludes to the political *ecological* context (whilst not naming this directly). Here, again, we begin to see how the socio-natural relations of the urban waterscape are enrolled in and productive of particular political configurations. Crucial here is the drought of 1979-82 and the state's response to this. After the drought, Indian landlords were targeted by the state authorities for not having provided water supplies to their tenants, whilst their African counterparts were not questioned. The state attempted to manipulate the worldview of local residents through blaming Indian landlords for the degraded living conditions of the area.

As the state sought to fuel this image of Indian landlords as exploitative and uncaring, further lines of tension emerged with the construction of Inanda Newtown in 1982. Xhosa speaking residents of Inanda were effectively barred from residency in Inanda Newtown, as the apartheid state considered the development to be part of a move towards an 'ethnically' distinct KwaZulu Bantustan. Thus, with potable water being supplied to Inanda Newtown, clashes occurred at standpipes in the site and service scheme between Zulu- and Xhosa-speaking residents of Piesang River (Hughes 1987). By the time Inanda ignited with violence in August 1985, the state had already, in Hughes' words, 'discovered and forcibly widened every faultline in the social makeup of Inanda' (1987: 347). At the same time, with neither landlords, nor the civics, neither the Inkatha Freedom Party, nor the apartheid state able to exercise true hegemony through the political ecology of the area, the result, in Gramsci's words was 'a variety of morbid symptoms'. These symptoms were shown in the depressing 'racial' violence.

A tool becomes a weapon: The urbanisation of opposition

If the violence in Inanda was indeed provoked by the state with the intention of simplifying the patchwork of land titles across the area and driving Indian landlords away, this clearly failed. Similarly, if the relocation of residents to Inanda Newtown is considered to have been an attempt to develop greater passivity to the apartheid regime, this also failed. Instead, opposition seemed to be stoked. Part of this can be read through the fact that urbanisation often seemed to bring about a denser network of opposition to apartheid; support for the United Democratic Front always being greatest in urban areas³. However, of further interest is the manner in which, through attempting to reconfigure residents' relationships with the urban environment in a manner aimed at garnering consent, the apartheid government actually provided new tools with which the regime might be challenged. With centralised provision of water in the area, a new weapon was provided with which residents could target central political institutions. A payment boycott could thereby be organised, the intention of which was to challenge the apartheid state's stronghold. Crucial to the transformation of the new water network from a tool for the consolidation of apartheid into a weapon for the challenging of apartheid, was the urbanisation of opposition that was expressed in the emergence of new civic movements.

Whilst powerful civic groups were emerging all over South Africa at the same moment, it was the 'comrades phenomenon' that made opposition in Natal distinctive. Sitas (1992) refers to the comrades as 'a large scale social movement with its peculiar Natal overtones', juxtaposing this with the common-place assumption

³ One might find echoes of Engel's view of the double-movement captured in the centralisation of the proletariat in the 'great cities'.

that the youths involved represented a suicidal expression of a loss of hope in the potential for change. In Inanda, the comrades seemed to focus the energies of a new generation of progressive youths. Whilst many of their aims were short-term, the movement also seemed to contain the seeds for a potentially lasting transformation of the socio-political landscape (Hemson 1996). Not only did the comrades become a crucial counter-hegemonic force within Inanda – thereby cultivating a new set of moral and cultural norms – but with the gradual collapse of authority in the area, they served as crucial agents in reworking relationships with the lived environment. They became crucial architects in the new political ecology of Inanda through the various democratic planning forums established and the distribution of land to needy parties that they initiated. Temporarily, the comrades replaced both traditional authorities and apartheid structures of governance, providing a grassroots, democratic channel for reshaping the environment of the settlement.

In the Amaoti area of Inanda, one of the sites worst affected by the 1979-1982 drought and one having experienced a major loss of power by both landlords and the apartheid state, the comrades played a crucial role in distributing land and housing to those most needy. Whilst there was clearly the potential to abuse this position in order to cultivate patronage networks and feed one's own personal gain, Kaarsholm (2005) quotes interviews showing that many comrades were so restrained as to actually leave themselves with no home at all. This disciplined altruism was reflected in the formation of the Inanda Marshals, a grassroots movement of youths committed to the ending of apartheid, the establishment of peace and described by Hemson (1996) as combining spontaneous self-organisation and a militia formation.

The character of the Inanda Marshals was quite profoundly misunderstood by the returning exiles from the ANC who appeared to subscribe to the dominant stereotype that the comrades were nihilists. Hemson (*ibid.*) refers to Nelson Mandela's speech in Durban in 1990 as a defining moment in which the Marshals began to realise their distance from the Congress leadership. This distance was then reasserted when, in March 1990, a meeting was convened in Inanda with the proposition to dissolve the Marshals and replace them with the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), a more easily contained 'civic movement' (Hemson 1996). Thulani Ncwane describes the meeting:

If a democratic resolution was passed to dissolve the committees and join the ANC Youth League then we would do this. But instead, this guy came along with a shirt tie and gold watch and brief case. In the past we had only seen Dubes⁴ dressed like

⁴ A reference to the family of prominent Inanda landowner and one of the founders of the ANC, John Langabilalele Dube.

this. And then he said, I am from the ANC Youth League convening committee and we have come to organise your local branch. (Interview Ncwane: 4th March 2003)

The imposition of the ANCYL was a clear attempt by the Congress movement to formalise disparate civil society movements across the country within one hierarchically organised structure. The autonomy of the Inanda Marshals, as architects of a reconfigured political ecology within Inanda, posed a potentially unwanted source of opposition. For the Marshals, this conflict was both unnecessary and debilitating. Thulani, for example, saw no division between the work he was carrying out *within* the ANC and the work he was carrying out with the Marshals (Interview November). In spite of this, in 1992, he and another Marshal were suspended from the ANC for allegedly Trotskyist tendencies. This was a clear attempt to target dissenters in an effort to better facilitate the dissemination of a nationalist hegemony. By mid-1992, the structures of the Marshals were in disarray (Hemson 1996).

Following this, civic organising within Inanda appeared to switch to more formal movements, groups that were more readily recognised by the returning ANC leadership but still with a relative autonomy at the time. The Inanda Civic Association (ICA) flourished and, in 1994, the Inanda Development Forum (IDF) was launched. Unique in its structures and aims at the time, the IDF attempted to bring together disparate groups across Inanda that had formerly been in conflict. In particular, the Inanda Landowners Association and Inanda Civic Association, two organisations normally opposed to one another, were brought into conversation. As a result of this new dialogue, various innovative structure plans for Inanda could be devised. Youths from both within and outside of the comrades movement were trained as community development workers. One community development worker from each of the 32 communities comprising Inanda was appointed, and it finally seemed like the energies of previous generations could be directed at reconfiguring the lived environment of the area. With no formal government in Inanda, different local and national administrations respected the IDF as a semi-autonomous (albeit loyal to the ANC) local authority.

By 1996, with the development of wall-to-wall local government in South Africa, this situation was clearly no longer acceptable: the Inanda Development Forum appeared to provide another potentially autonomous power base within the region. With the appointment of the aforementioned Thulani Ncwane as Chairperson, the likelihood of dissenting views was once again brought to the fore. The ability to maintain an African Nationalist hegemony through the IDF seemed far less feasible and, again, the ANC turned to establishing more effective channels to be able to consolidate its own moral and cultural leadership. In particular ward committees were established, working in close collaboration with local councillors and ostensibly providing a forum for open debate about the needs of the local area.

Funding was cut to the IDF and by 1997 this organisation was also in crisis. In the first local government elections of 2000, several of the community workers who had been trained and nurtured within the IDF became African National Congress local councillors.

The rediscovery of political ecology as a terrain for the contestation of hegemony

As this brief review of the formation and rebirth of civic moments within Inanda has shown, repeatedly, the community has seen the appearance of vibrant autonomous movements; repeatedly, these seem to have been either disbanded, or attempts have been made to quash their autonomy. The result, in the contemporary moment, seems to be a considerable level of political disillusionment and mistrust for those in authority. Whilst the ANC would appear to have consolidated power within the formal institutions of Inanda (Mshayazafe remains the only 'Inkatha area' in Inanda) this has been at the expense of channels through which dissent might be expressed. The Inanda Civic Association is now a hollow shell, the Inanda Development Forum has become an organisation only in name, and the various ward committees established for devolving democracy to the grassroots appear to serve merely as forums for cultivating the next generation of councillors.

It is not only for dissenters that this situation poses problems. Indeed if channels of civil society have been lost, the potential for cultivating consent is also reduced. Kaarsholm (2005) suggests that conflict is now centred on various 'moral panics', as people are unable to find outlets for their anger in a political arena almost entirely monopolised by one party. Although seemingly omnipotent the ANC has lost many of the networks of tunnels and earthworks that Gramsci saw as so crucial for defending particular socio-political regimes (1971: 238). It has virtually lost its Youth League in the area, it no longer has a link with the hollow shell of the civic association, and, with growing disillusionment at the pace of reform within post-apartheid South Africa, the likelihood increases that the moral and cultural leadership of the ANC in Inanda will come under serious threat.

It is at this juncture that new partnerships, bringing together the state, a very broadly defined 'civil society', and the private sector have rediscovered the ability to consolidate hegemony through people's relations with their lived environments. Once again, as in the apartheid years, hegemony is to be cultivated through the everyday acts with which people work the urban waterscape. As the water network has expanded, this waterscape is now much more encompassing of the whole of Inanda. Whilst the drought of 1979-82 began to initiate the urbanisation of nature in Inanda, the relations comprising this urban waterscape have now transformed. Thus, the recent commercialisation of bulk-water supplies to the municipality means that the infrastructure through which that water flows has come to acquire a life of its own as it embodies the apparently alien dominance of capital over people (2006, forthcoming). With these reshaped relationships, it has become both easier and more

important to ensure a modicum of consent to the apparent dictatorship of the water meter. One vehicle for grooming such consent has been the Business Partners for Development 'learning partnership', piloted in Inanda as part of an effort to provide better services to the area and, importantly, to tackle the high incidence of non-payment for water services. It is to this that we now turn.

Hegemonising partnerships

Unequal partners for business?

As if to make clear the importance of the Gramscian insistence on the realm of culture as a key battleground in late capitalism, the post-apartheid government has seen one of its primary challenges as being to transform an alleged 'culture of non-payment' for basic services within poor communities. Whilst such discussions nearly always overlook the question of people's inability to be able to pay for these services, it has reopened the waterscape to the contestation of ideas already discussed in this paper. The Business Partners for Development (BPD) (or 'Building Partnerships for Development' as it has since been renamed) initiative must be seen as one aspect in this struggle over neoliberal ideas. BPD claims to be 'a worldwide network of partners involving government, donors, business and civil society' (BPD 2004). Created by the World Bank in 1998, it has helped to coordinate tri-sector partnerships between governments, 'civil society' and the private sector throughout the world. The water and sanitation cluster of the group has pioneered 12 local-level projects, one of which was based in KwaZulu-Natal – Inanda being one of the two focus areas in the province. Thus, Inanda became an important testing ground for an international drive towards such tri-sector partnerships. Here, a project evolved between eThekweni Water Services, Mvula Trust (an NGO specialising in the provision of water to rural communities) and Vivendi Water (one of the two largest multinational water companies). The aims and results of the partnership remain somewhat ambiguous: much of the time the project appeared more like a period of courtship between the main partners, prior to what many hoped would be a private concession contract (see Hemson 2003). Tangible results are minimal – amounting to little more than a slight change to the municipality's ground tank system and steps being made towards the piloting of a new sewerage system for informal settlements. The self-acknowledged principal outcome, however, seems to be the establishment of a 'learning partnership' (Hemson 2003). In many ways the effects of the learning partnership have been more subversive than the presumed effects of an outright divestiture; it is here that we see what might be understood as the attempt to diffuse a renewed moral and cultural leadership through both the conventional organs of civil society and through a more broadly defined 'produced environment'.

For eThekweni Water Services, one of the principal lessons they claim to have learnt from Vivendi Water is how to deal with 'customers' (Interview Bailey: 14th February 2003; Interview Macleod 26th March 2003). The language used in both

interviews and in the BPD documentation is quite explicit about residents of the municipality being customers, and a large part of the BPD seems to have been an attempt to re-script citizens as atomised, fee-paying and passive consumers of services. Prior to this, eThekweni Water Services has clearly felt compromised in its dealings with 'customers'. Interviewees from both Umgeni Water and eThekweni Water Services commented on the political astuteness of the South African consumer (Interview Pillay: 11th December 2002; Interview Bailey: 14th February 2003) and this seems to have served as both a powerful source of opposition to water privatisation and a source of discontent over attempts to introduce cost-recovery initiatives (see McDonald and Pape 2002). Locally, the agitation of the Concerned Citizens Forum (see Desai 2000, 2002; Interview Macleod: 26th March 2003), the higher than average profile given to the Christina Manquele court case that challenged eThekweni Municipality's reading of the right to water (Community Law Centre 2001), and the apparent willingness of the council to side with the 'poor black majority' (Interview Macleod: 26th March 2003; Interview Khuzwayo: 11th April 2003) – all point to major failings in eTWS' approach to concerns over high bills and serious problems around its ability to impose water meters and disconnect supplies. The killing of two disconnection bailiffs is one of the more overt signs of the limits to the municipality's more conflictual approach to imposing charges on poor residents. Now, the head of eThekweni Water Services seems to argue for a slightly more conciliatory approach to ensuring bills are paid. A two-pronged strategy is, he argues, necessary. One prong is to combat the agitation of the social movements organising around water issues and win back the support of the council. The key to this is to work on the attitude of the Exco, the cabinet committee of the municipality:

The Exco is a fairly amorphous group. They're beginning to understand the issues and are beginning to understand that some people are not paying for water when they could pay. I spoke with a leading representative in the Exco recently and he now admitted that there were possibly hundreds or even thousands of households who are not paying and should be paying. They're coming over to our side but then we have these 'Concerned whatever they are'⁵ – telling people that all water should be free. I've got some of their information somewhere. But we'll deal with this source of opposition soon too. (Interview Macleod: 26th March 2003)

The second prong is to overturn the 'culture of non-payment' that he assumes to be the haunting spectre at the heart of all problems experienced by eTWS. As well as the tighter quantification of supplies referred to previously, the strategy to be developed to counter this, lies in the more 'decentralised' approach 'learnt' from Vivendi:

⁵ A reference to the Concerned Citizens Forum (see Desai 2002).

We've learnt a lot from Vivendi...Vivendi have a particularly refreshing approach to customer management. At the moment the Metro is communicating a lot with its customers but this communication is not working. It's important to establish a person in an area responsible for community liaison. This will lead to more empowerment. We're now thinking of employing somebody working in a [ship] container. My hope would be for more private sector involvement of this kind in future. (Interview Macleod: 26th March 2003)

Perhaps not surprisingly, a representative from Vivendi feels the same, arguing that the company's most important gift lay in fostering this decentralised approach to customer management:

In terms of customer management we favour a more decentralised approach. We have been arranging for a decentralised office in the community with a trained person from the community working in this. They will handle technical problems, explaining bills, general queries and household visits. (Interview LeMaux: 15th April 2003)

On the surface, this seems relatively unproblematic. An office in the community providing people with a space in which to seek information, lodge complaints or query bills, is surely vital for the provision of a quality service. However, beneath the surface, it becomes clearer that the prime motivation for this decentralised approach to customer management is less to answer technical queries and much more about ensuring the regular payment of bills:

It is too easy not to pay for bills though...A form of 'punishment', if you might call it that, needs to be quicker. And education needs to take place around this issue. (Interview Le Maux: 15th April 2003)

Interestingly, LeMaux emphasises both the coercive and the consensual. Whereas previously the municipality had been heavy on the coercive approach to ensuring regular payment of bills, provoking both protest and anger (Desai 2002), lessons from the private sector on the need to foster consent became available through the 'learning partnership'. This has intriguing echoes of the partnership with capital represented in the Inanda scheme in the early 1980s. With the channels through which the ANC had previously attempted to manipulate consent no longer being available (the civics and the ANCYL, were, as we have suggested in an enfeebled situation) the local state has worked with the private sector in pioneering new ways of reconfiguring residents' relations with the lived environment. *Inanda's waterscape has thereby become the key terrain over which the moral and cultural legitimacy of the ANC's neoliberal turn is both consolidated and contested.*

Apart from the attempt to shift to a more decentralised approach, the BPD project has initiated a flurry of research into the reasons for the persistence of a culture of non-payment and initiated various educational programmes prior to the installation of new water connections, urging residents to keep up regular payments and arguing the case for the necessity of charging. The BPD website states that:

Within the townships there is a strong culture of non-payment and entitlement, stemming from the apartheid-era resistance movement. This low willingness-to-pay is proving difficult for the pilot to overcome and impairs cost recovery. (BPD 2004)

In most cases, non-payment is not a matter of choice but a matter of necessity.⁶ In spite of this, educational visits were aimed at conveying to people 'the advantages of paying' and the 'disadvantages of an illegal connection'. Mvula Trust was the partner in the BPD project responsible for coordinating educational visits and their strategy was one of selecting civic activists to bring this message to the communities. In doing this, they gained privileged access to the community. As one of the participants, a key civic organiser in the Amatikwe area of Inanda, commented:

As we knew the advantages and what people would say and think, we were told to send the message that this [illegal connections] was not helping plumbers who would be employed in the new system, and that there were problems with burst pipes and pressure dropping. (Interview T. Ndlovu: 30th January 2003)

The old civic structures were thus partially rejuvenated in an effort to rework hegemony through the political ecology of Inanda. Both recognisable civil society institutions and the lived environment of the settlement were brought together in the hope of guaranteeing the community's acceptance of the ANC's rightward shift.

Sisondela Kuwe: Getting closer

In 2003, a second phase of the trisector partnership was launched. This time, it was no longer under the umbrella of BPD, involved liaising directly with 'civil society groups' and was given the isiZulu name *Sisondela Kuwe*, meaning 'getting closer' (Interview Le Maux: 15th April 2003). Any vestiges of the partnership being about improved service delivery were abandoned at this stage, as the sole focus of the new partnership was customer management and overturning the 'culture of non-payment' through the recruitment of local activists and a vigorous education programme at the micro-level (Desne 2003).

⁶ This was confirmed throughout this research (Community Workshop Bhambayi: 6th March 2003; Community Workshop Amaoti: 16th January 2003; Community Workshop KwaMashu C: 10th March 2003; Household Interviews Amatikwe: 11th February 2003; Household Interviews KwaMashu C: 18th March 2003)

The attempt to consolidate a culture of the responsible, bill-paying consumer of services cannot, of course, be seen in isolation from other shifts taking place within South Africa. Principal amongst these must be the aforementioned *Masakhane* campaign. This stretches back as far as 1995, first appearing in the local election manifesto of the ANC before being reiterated in its manifesto for 2000. *Masakhane* means 'build together': its aim is 'to inculcate the culture of payment' (ANC 2000) and to reverse what is presumed to be a continuing economic boycott of payment for services. As with *Sisondele Kuwe*, *Masakhane* is given an isiZulu name to ensure its entry into communities is given a level of indigenisation. The intended meaning is clear - 'Zulu culture means payment for services'. Local *Masakhane* projects vary from area to area, with local committees drawing up ideas for street theatre, cartoons and billboard or radio adverts. It is difficult to assess the overall significance of the projects. Certainly, t-shirts, folders and leaflets bearing the slogan have a high profile within communities. And certainly there is a strong desire on the part of people to be able to pay bills (Community Workshop KwaMashu C) but this seems to stretch much further back than the implementation of the campaign, with few even acknowledging a conscious effort under apartheid to boycott payments.

Against all the claims on the surface, neither *Masakhane* nor *Sisondele Kuwe* can therefore be understood as challenges to a genuine culture of non-payment. Rather they seem efforts to cultivate a moral obligation to pay for what is actually unaffordable. In this regard, their aim is to develop broader consent to neoliberalism. Ensuring that people pay their water bills is of far less importance to the new ANC than cultivating a neoliberal hegemony. Rather like Gramsci's interest in the Taylorist techniques of Fordism creating a new economic being, the pilot trisector partnerships in Inanda would seem to be micromanaging service delivery in an effort to bring into being a new neoliberal consumer. For Gramsci, writing over seventy years earlier, and in a classically dialectical move, rather than finding the situation of the Fordist human to be hopeless, he detects new possibilities. The routinisation of tasks does not mummify the worker but frees her up to develop new ways of thinking about progressive change. Similarly, as we begin to draw this paper to a conclusion, we suggest that immanent possibilities lie within the common sense view being established in Durban's waterscape.

'Common sense' and immanence

When hegemony is at its most effective, people consent to a set of moral and cultural norms, not because of a fear of reprisals, nor because they are unthinking, but rather because of a genuine attachment to that particular set of ideas, based on an agreement with certain core elements of the society (Femia 1981: 38). Part of the effectiveness of Stuart Hall's neo-Gramscian writings on Thatcherism lay in his ability to demonstrate the true popular appeal of the 'authoritarian populism' of Margaret Thatcher (Hall 1979, 1988. See also Barnett 2005). In Hall's opinion, many

of the most disadvantaged people in Britain were deeply embittered by the failings of a Keynesian Welfare State. Even though the alternative proposed by Thatcher was quite contrary to the vast majority of people's material interests, support could be relied upon through Thatcher's ability to mobilise popular resentment and exercise moral leadership. In the preceding sections, we hope to have shown that the same has been made possible through the operation of hegemony in the urban waterscape. For this reason, hegemony is more than simply false consciousness. The moral obligation cultivated in both *Masakhane* and *Sisondele Kuhle* does not simply impose a new worldview on unthinking individuals. Rather, both projects draw on a deep attachment to the sense that the post-apartheid settlement requires an effort on the part of everyone to contribute all they can to reconstruction. This was made clear repeatedly in community workshops for this research, as people stressed the importance of supporting the provision of basic services by paying for these.

Another way in which the post-apartheid government has been guaranteed this support (as was also the hope of the apartheid government) is because of certain material improvements in the delivery of services. This has gone hand in hand with a promise of the right to basic services for all. Thus, the 1996 constitution enshrines the right to water for all (Republic of South Africa 1996, 1996, s27.1.a). A 1998 Water Act takes this further in making it law (Department for Water Affairs and Forestry 1998). A clampdown on payment arrears has been accompanied by concessions in another area. The citizen-consumer nexus has become fraught with myriad tensions as a result. Contradictions abound. Thus, the state will provide some water to its citizens for free, on condition that they act as obedient consumers. Importantly, as statements from the head of eThekweni Water Services and the Vivendi representative make clear, this is not reliant on a citizen-based rights and obligations trade-off. Rather it is a complicated negotiation of the citizen consumer nexus. The resultant moral leadership is as multiform and contradictory as Gramsci suggests. Material outcomes are similarly contradictory. Thus, in the course of this research, we encountered schools that had been disconnected for not having paid their water bills. We encountered willing citizens approaching the local state in order to request that their water supplies be restricted to a bare minimum in order to ensure their obligations as consumers are met.

What this appears to open up is a starting point for the contestation of hegemonic projects somewhat different from that highlighted by most conventional Gramscian readings. In countering the spontaneism found in the writings of Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci saw a crucial role for education in counter-hegemonic projects. Whilst he was keen to assert that all people are intellectuals, he placed emphasis on an elite of intellectuals from within the Communist Party who might be able to work within the subaltern classes and cultivate an alternative hegemony that transforms the radical nucleus within common sense into 'good sense'. We would suggest that this transformation of common sense is already taking place within Inanda. In a

previous paper, we cited a protest taking place in the Amaoti area of Inanda, in which residents descended on the offices of the local councillor demanding their constitutional right to water (under review). Similarly, whilst participants in the research would repeatedly assert the importance of payment for basic services, a recurring theme was also 'where is this free water that we have been promised?' There appears to be a double-movement taking place within common sense that opens up new opportunities for a radically democratic politics. As David Harvey writes, 'on questions of rights, the bourgeoisie has created such a maelstrom of contradictions on the world stage that it has unwittingly opened up several progressive paths towards a progressive and universalising politics at a global scale' (2000: 94). It becomes possible, therefore, to root counter-hegemony firmly within the activities of day-to-day people.

Even though, in Femia's terms, 'Gramsci believed that socialist truth must be brought from 'outside'; it does not spontaneously emanate from the conditions of production or from the class struggle' (1981: 135-136), there is a strong immanentist tradition within Gramsci's work that suggests that the 'ought to be' of socialism might be found in the present. We would suggest that, by extending the terrain of struggle over hegemony to the everyday environments of which people are a part, that 'ought to be' is more likely to be realised in a democratic fashion by everyday people. Thus, in searching for radical possibilities, we would seek to reassert the tradition of immanent critique within Gramsci's work, through bringing it together with new left geographical thinking on urban political ecologies.

Conclusion

Through developing aspects of a Gramscian reading of hegemony, we hope to have shed some light on the politics of one particular informal settlement in post-apartheid South Africa. We have shown how Inanda became increasingly integrated within the urbanised nature of metropolitan Durban and, through this process, how it became possible to attempt to establish moral and cultural leadership through the lived environment of the settlement. At first, the worldview within Inanda was heavily influenced by the power bloc of landlords in the area who remained responsible for the provision of basic services. Later, the apartheid state sought to reconfigure this relationship as part of its 'total strategy' to seek acquiescence to apartheid within the simmering peripheral areas of Durban. Here, a new water scheme was implemented within Inanda and, as part of this scheme, residents were moved from freehold to state-owned land. Such a move would later permit the apartheid state to move one step closer to its vision of separate states for those of different 'races'. In a double movement, with the urbanisation of Inanda, new sources of opposition developed in the form of the comrades movement and so new tools for attacking the apartheid state were developed as payment boycotts were organised around the new water services. Through similar mobilisations across

South Africa, and in alliance with a broader international movement, apartheid was brought to its knees. However, as the African National Congress began to establish control of national institutions, it increasingly viewed the autonomous power bases in Inanda as a threat. Again, attempts were made to manipulate the political ecology of the area around a populist nationalism. *Masakhane* became a rallying cry, and payment for water became one way in which people could show their patriotic commitment to the new regime. As the ANC has increasingly sought to re-shape basic services along what might be considered to be neoliberal lines, so it has attempted to legitimate neoliberalism morally and culturally through people's relationship with the waterscape. Whilst major concessions have been made in the form of a free basic water policy, the result for many has been the loss of a supply of potable water and a major increase in indebtedness. New tri-sector partnerships have developed between the state, 'civil society' and the private sector. One of the pilot areas for such schemes has been Inanda.

We concluded this paper by suggesting that, if successful, such neoliberal hegemonic formations will only be temporary. Indeed we saw hope developing in the situated knowledges of the waterscape – the praxis of working the waterscape – and in the contradictions within the liberal post-apartheid settlement. If urban political ecologies have become a terrain over which hegemony is consolidated, they also represent a terrain over which that hegemony might be contested.

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