Social Engineering and Revolutionary Consciousness: Domestic Transformations in Colonial South Africa

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Change life! Change Society! These ideas lose completely their meaning without producing an appropriate space. New social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa.

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974: 59)

Early colonial administrators relied primarily on indirect rule and "customary law" to govern Africans in segregated reserves by appropriating chiefs and propping up patriarchal power in rural families. But, by the early twentieth century, colonists' demands for African labour had led to the growth of an urban African population living in "slums" near European cities, outside the controls of indirect rule. Administrators believed that "detribalization" and the deterioration of the patriarchal family had rendered this population dangerously liminal, neither properly "traditional" nor yet entirely "modern". Fearing that social anomie would give rise to political unrest, the state embarked on a mammoth project to forcibly relocate slum residents into planned townships, where they could be "civilized" for the purposes of control. The planners assigned to this project sought to remake the African family in the modern, nuclear mould, believing that this new order would facilitate utopian docility. But, in the process of trying to create a fully proletarianized, egalitarian population, planners inadvertently helped generate the conditions for the national democratic revolution that developed in the townships in the 1980s, which eventually led to the demise of apartheid.

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Introduction

After decades of a difficult struggle, the African National Congress (ANC) and its allied organizations in South Africa finally brought the apartheid government to its knees in 1994. This revolutionary movement was based largely—indeed, almost exclusively—in the country's postwar urban townships. It was guided by a theory known as "national democratic revolution", which advanced a Marxist-inflected, liberal vision of society that held the autonomous individual as the bearer of rights within an egalitarian order (Chipkin 2004). Scholars have devoted a great deal of effort to historicizing the rise of this political consciousness among the country's black majority. In perhaps the best known contribution to this discussion, Walshe (1971) traces the ideological origins of the movement to the liberalizing pressure of missionaries and the influence of unionists, Marxists, Garveyists, and nationalists. In a similar vein, Cooper (1996) points to the strategic appropriation of Western discourses of universal human rights and the markers of European modernity. While these accounts deal incisively with the role of global ideological flows in the making of the South African revolution, they tend to ignore a series of prior questions. Ideas about liberal democracy, egalitarian rights, and class identity, we can hypothesize, will not take root just anywhere, as if human beings were universally predisposed to embracing them and recognizing their superiority over "traditional" ontologies; indeed, they are often vehemently resisted. What made it possible, then, for these particular ideological modes to gain mass traction in South Africa in the late twentieth century? And why did they take hold in urban townships, specifically?

In this paper I argue that liberal-Marxist political ideology managed to find traction in South African townships because of the specific forms of social organization that characterized township society. Focusing specifically on the province of Natal, I demonstrate that these forms were largely the product of violent colonial and apartheid-era exercises in social engineering through modernist urban planning deployed after the first decades of the twentieth century. As a tactic of control, this marked a decisive shift from earlier strategies used by British administrators, who initially sought to preclude urbanization in favour of governing Africans by proxy through patriarchal power in rural homesteads. When urbanization proceeded nonetheless in response to industrial demand for labour, colonial administrators worried that "detribalization" and the breakdown of the "traditional" African family would engender social indiscipline and political agitation. For them, the figure of the urban African upset categorical distinctions between "traditional" and "modern", and embodied the sort of dangerous anomaly that Douglas (1966) has called "matter out of place". Administrators sought to reassert control over the urban African population by relocating it to planned, modernist townships, and by remaking the African family according to European expectations of domesticity. This was an extremely violent project, not unlike the villagization schemes of Maoist China or Julius Nyerere's Ujamaa campaign in Tanzania. I trace this shift in colonial policy from indirect rule through rural homesteads in the nineteenth century to social engineering through urban townships in the twentieth century, highlighting the significant transformations of domestic

social form that this entailed. I show that while township planners intended their communities to function as citadels of domestic docility (in the mould of America's Levittown), they ended up becoming hotbeds for political activism—precisely the outcome that the project was designed to forestall. The new social forms that characterized late twentieth century African urbanism engendered new types of subjectivity, fostered new kinds of political expectations, and facilitated the rise of the revolutionary movement led by the ANC. The logic of revolution, in short, was an ironic byproduct of the colonial state's most draconian technologies of control.

From Indirect Rule to Reluctant Colonialism

It is commonly believed that European colonialism in Africa was organized around a "civilizing mission" intended to make "traditional" Africans more like "modern" Europeans. But this does not hold in the case of South Africa. For most of the colonial period, missionaries were the only ones consistently engaged in a civilizing mission; they sought specifically to remake the rural African home and family in the mould of the bourgeois European model as an integral part of the process of salvation (Comaroff & Comaroff 1997; Hansen 1992). The colonial administration, by contrast, regarded this civilizing mission with suspicion, fearing that "detribalization" would lead to social anomie, mass unrest, and the rise of a politically conscious class that would eventually undermine minority colonial rule altogether. The Native Affairs Department sought to foreclose this possibility by propping up "tradition" through indirect rule in rural areas. The idea was to prevent urbanization by keeping Africans confined to "native reserves", and to govern them according to a codified form of "customary law" through existing patriarchs and chiefs. Then, using an intricate network of influx controls, Africans were brought temporarily to the cities for work on fixed-term contracts, at the end of which they were expelled back to the reserves. The system was purposefully designed to prevent full proletarianization and forestall the rise of radical consciousness (Wolpe 1972).

From 1891, rural areas in colonial Natal were governed under the Natal Code of Native Law—the lynchpin of indirect rule. The Code was designed to control Africans by ossifying previously flexible systems of social hierarchy and underwriting the authority of patriarchs over minors and women (Walshe 1971). At the very centre of this system was the rural homestead (*umuzi*). With the rigidly hierarchical organization given it by the Natal Code, the homestead operated as the basic unit of what Mamdani (1996) has so aptly termed "decentralized despotism". The Code meticulously organized hierarchy within the homestead, determining the rules for the rank and status of wives and inscribing patterns of inheritance and succession according to a strict system of primogeniture through males. Importantly, for the purposes of this paper, this particular form of social organization was associated with a specific layout of domestic space. Like the "house societies" famously theorized by scholars like Bourdieu (1977) and Levi-Strauss (1987), Zulu homesteads embodied a definite correlation between kinship structure and domestic architecture. As anthropologist Adam Kuper has observed, the homestead mapped "the nodes of contemporary

social networks", modelled "ritual values and ideas about the organization of the world", and reflected principles of gender, hierarchy, and authority (Kuper 1993: 472–473). The Natal Code inscribed an orthodox model of the homestead that many Zulu-speaking Africans continue to recognize today. While homesteads vary quite dramatically in form, they all share a basic spatial logic organized concentrically around a cattle byre in what Huffman (2001) has famously termed the "Central Cattle Pattern".

According to the orthodox model, the ancestral hut (*indlunkulu*) sits at the physical apex of the homestead while the other huts—those of the patriarch's wives and children—are arranged down the sides around a central cattle byre. The huts of wives and their children are organized according to a pattern of precedence and hierarchy expressed through a set of binary oppositions between right/left and back/front: the right side is senior to the left side, and the huts at the top of each side are senior to those below them. The status of each hut—and that of the family that inhabits it— is indexed by its location within the homestead landscape (Figure 1). Likewise, the inside of each hut is divided according to similar oppositions: the right side (coded male) is senior to the left side (coded female), while the space at the back (sacred) is reserved for elders and the space at the front (public) is open to juniors. This spatial regime is shot through with taboos that police and maintain hierarchical social distinctions (cf. Raum 1973). Importantly, hierarchy in this context is conceived as a system of *encompassment* wherein the senior element represents the whole to its constitutive parts (cf. Dumont 1980). In the polygynous homestead, for example,
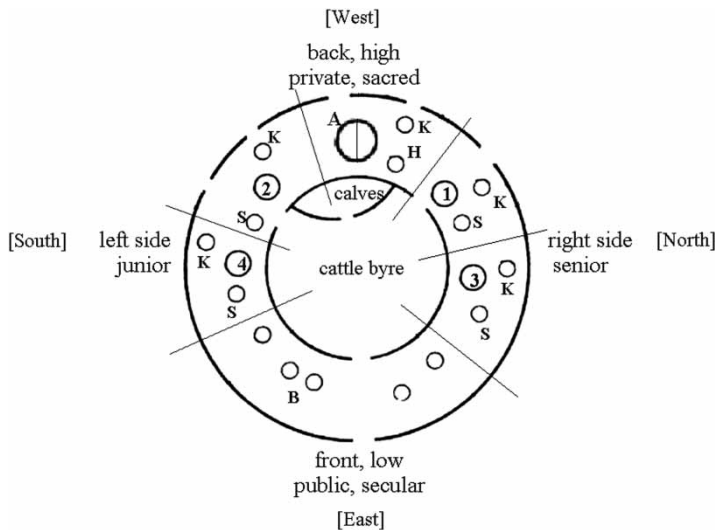
Figure 1. Schematic layout of a Zulu homestead with ideal cardinal orientation, follow- ing Raum (1973), Kuper (1993) and Huffman (2001). A: Ancestral hut; H: Homestead head's hut; 1–4: Wives in order of seniority; K: Kitchen hut; S: Senior son of each wife; B: Junior sons and other attached subordinates.

the first wife encompasses the third, the second wife encompasses the fourth, and the senior son of each wife encompasses his siblings. Far from being autonomous individuals, persons in rural Zululand are constituted as the composites of their relationships (cf. Piot 1999).

The colonial system of indirect rule that sought to keep Africans confined to rural areas was not watertight, however, and could not prevent the eventual emergence of an African population living in informal settlements on the outskirts of "white" cities in the early twentieth century, drawn by colonists' insatiable appetite for cheap labour. It was in response to this unauthorized urbanization that colonial administrators first began to adopt a moralizing approach to African domesticity similar in many ways to that of their missionary counterparts, although the object of their concern was the urban slum rather than the rural homestead. One reason for this is that African shacks and shanties presented the state with a serious problem of "legibility" (Scott 1998) that made them difficult to manage and control. In addition, however, and perhaps even more significantly, African slums appeared to Europeans as something of a social–evolutionary misfire. In South Africa, as across the colonial world, African urbanization was viewed as disorderly and dangerous, as much by colonizers as by the social scientists of the time. "Detribalized" Africans were considered "matter out of place"; as Ferguson (2007) has put it, "urban natives... confused and confounded the orderly divisions between traditional and modern, native and Western, and rural and urban".

Reflecting on his visit to the region, Karl Polanyi represented "detribalized" South Africans in the most pathological terms:

> The Kaffir of South Africa, a noble savage, than whom none felt socially more secure in his native kraal, has been transformed into a human variety of half-domesticated animal dressed in the 'unrelated, the filthy, the unsightly rags that not the most degenerated white man would wear,' a nondescript being, without self-respect or standards, veritable human refuse. (cited in Ferguson 2007)

Similarly, after visiting South Africa in the 1930s, Bronislaw Malinowski decried the "detribalized" natives of the "urban location" as "sociologically unsound" monstrosities who had lost the regulated order of "tribal" society but—given their lack of access to the necessary material resources—had failed to approximate the structure of "European" society (Malinowski 1945: 159, cited in Ferguson 2007). In these accounts, the very existence of urban black South Africans seems to threaten the basic categories that underpinned both colonialism and social scientific theory, which drew structuralist distinctions between rural/tribal/African and urban/modern/European that mapped onto the Durkheimian bifurcation between mechanical and organic solidarity. These concerns hinged on ideas about the family. The "tribal family" was construed as a domain of extended kinship, clan solidarity, polygyny, and hierarchy, while the "modern family" was construed as a domain of nuclear kinship, autonomous individuals, monogamy, and egalitarianism—precisely the evolutionary schema posited by early social scientists such as Maine (1861), Morgan (1985), and Engels (1884) along the trajectory from savagery to civilization.

Given their out-of-category status, urban Africans were considered to be dangerous and threateningly powerful (cf. Douglas 1966). The colonial administration deployed professional urban planners to defuse this danger by ritually reordering the African social milieu through forced relocations into modernist townships laid out along recti-linear grids. They tended to approach the project from a welfare point of view, intent on creating hygienic communities that would facilitate peace, health, and happiness among urban Africans who would internalize the values of European domesticity. Drawing on evolutionary social-scientific theories popular at the time, planners determined that the simple nuclear family located in a detached single-family home would best facilitate the development of Africans into happy, docile, subjects. Towards this end, houses were allocated according to strict codes that dictated—and monitored—what types of people and what forms of families would be allowed to inhabit the new townships.

The Informal Settlement: The Birth of the African Counterpublic

The migration of Africans into the Durban area began in the middle of the nineteenth century, and intensified following the destruction of the Zulu Kingdom in 1879—a military feat that was intended to draw rural Zulus away from their subsistence life-styles and into the rapidly expanding labour market (Greaves 2005; Guy 1994). Many Africans who had immigrated to the city for work lived in "interstitial" spaces such as workplace storerooms or in their employers' backyards, while others constructed "makeshift" housing in small shack settlements. By 1900 as many as 20,000 Africans lived in the broader Durban area, where their presence had become such a concern to white residents that the municipality began to monitor African access to the city for the first time (La Hausse 1997). Three years later, the city began to construct the first of a series of single-sex municipal barracks to house African workers near their places of employment (Maasdorp & Humphreys 1975:11).

But these attempts at housing workers were small-scale and piecemeal, the majority of migrants to the city continued to live scattered about in various informal settle-ments on the periphery, undocumented and illegible to the state. The influx of Afri-cans increased after the crushing of the Bambatha Rebellion in 1906 and the further imposition of taxes on Natal Africans, so that by 1921 the African population in the Durban area reached as high as 46,000 (Burrows 1959: 24–25). Those unable to secure formal housing ended up overflowing into informal shack settlements, the largest and most famous of which became Cato Manor—known by its residents as Umkhumbane—which sprawled across the Berea hillside immediately west of Durban's commercial centre. At its apex in the 1950s, over 100,000 Africans lived in Umkhumbane, and it had become one of the continent's most famous urban African settlements.

Communities like Umkhumbane that grew on the outskirts of Durban throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century constituted an indigenous African urban-ism. Architectural records show that the state did not interfere in spatial organization or community structure—rather, spatial patterns and corresponding forms of sociality

developed according to a vernacular geography, through everyday accretions that ignored modernist conventions of domaining residential, commercial, and civic zones in separate areas and allowed people to work, trade, and recreate through and among their homes.[1] Outside the purview of state power during their formative years, these communities provided a haven for thousands of men and women not legally entitled—according to the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923—to live in Durban proper. Dozens of self-employed artisans, mechanics, brewers, builders, and painters congregated in these precincts, where they could freely pursue independent livelihoods that the state precluded them from practicing elsewhere.[2]

These dense urban African communities differed quite dramatically from Natal's rural societies. In the informal settlements, outside the purview of the chiefs and the Natal Code, hierarchies were not so rigorously policed. For one, the population was comprised largely of "stray" individuals—including widows, runaways, or otherwise independent females—who could not legally live in town but no longer had rural homesteads to which they could return. Many of these people (and a majority, after the 1930s) considered themselves entirely dissociated from their rural backgrounds and regarded the city as their permanent home (Hellmann 1935). Given this fragmentation of kinship and owing to restrictions on space, households in urban areas departed radically from the normative structure of rural homesteads. Architectural records indicate that residents of the informal settlements developed a new, more democratic organization of domestic space that—while often gesturing toward concentricity— entirely subverted the gendered and generational oppositions that underwrote hierarchy and encompassment in the homestead.[3] Furthermore, as Africans were prevented from owning land by the Natives' Land Act of 1913, informal settlements like Umkhumbane were characterized by a contract-based system in which Africans rented plots from Indian landowners whose authority they deeply resented—quite unlike in rural homesteads, where residents were ontologically encompassed by patriarchal authorities who allocated land in trust. In the informal settlements, people who occupied multi-room shacks were often renters unrelated to the head of the household. Household structure hinged less on agnatic kinship than on contractual relationships, creating the conditions for people to imagine themselves as individuals—as the ontological equals of their superiors.

The egalitarian transformations that developed in Umkhumbane were reflected in its robust market economy, the most distinctive characteristic of which was the liquor trade. While the state held a monopoly over the production and sale of African sorghum beer (*utshwala*) in the city, the informal settlements sustained a flourishing trade geared towards workers who would frequent the "shebeens" (informal beer halls) during weekends. In contrast to the rural areas, where it was consumed as a gift during ritual rites and only according to strict codes of gender and hierarchical segregation, beer in the informal settlements became a true commodity, consumed in exchange for cash. Severed from its ritual moorings and the authority of agnatic elders and chiefs, the beer-drink gradually became an inclusive, egalitarian public event. Umkhumbane in particular became known for its shebeens, which functioned as places of public sociality somewhat analogous to the coffee houses and salons of

eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe. Paralleling the developments that Habermas (1998) noted in the latter context, the departure from homestead forms of hierarchy led to a tradition of critical egalitarian discussion akin to what Fraser (1990) identifies as the "subaltern counterpublic". As new discursive arenas where political matters could be freely exchanged and debated, shebeens fostered a robust oppositional culture by democratizing the "domain of common concern" (La Hausse 1997, 1988). This emergent public sphere replaced a system in which patriarchal authorities represented their subjects by encompassment with one where authority (the contractual authority of the state, landlords, and employers) was publicly monitored through critical discourse by the people. This new tradition of African democratic egalitarianism—first developed in the crucible of the informal settlements—became a central plank in the platform of the early ANC (Walshe 1971).

The cultural transformations that marked the growth of Umkhumbane had significant implications for women, whose being was no longer strictly constituted within systems of hierarchical encompassment—as in the homestead—and who thus exercised increasing degrees of social independence. The market in alcohol was structured by the persistence of a particular Zulu cultural rule, namely, that only women could brew sorghum beer. This meant that women controlled the beer trade and through it garnered incomes they could use at their own discretion. Owing to this new commercial autonomy—and given that women typically operated shebeens out of their homes—the ubiquity of the so-called "shebeen queen" indicated the emergence of a public sphere that for the first time included women. Drawing on these new egalitarian possibilities, women were at the forefront of resistance against the Durban municipality when the 1928 Liquor Act extended the beer monopoly to cover peri-urban settlements. The popular mobilization that they galvanized, which reflected elements of feminist discourse (Bradford 1987), furnished the momentum behind political organizations such as the Industrial and Commercial Union and the Communist Party, provided the bedrock for the early ANC, and spawned a rich tradition of urban political activism that registered the peri-urban slums as hotbeds of terrorism in the minds of colonial authorities (see Walker 1991; Wells 1993).

The Planned Township: Utopian Modernism and Social Control

As informal settlements grew during the first decades of the twentieth century, colonial administrators worried that urbanization was producing Africans who were unhinged from the control of rural chiefs and patriarchs and existed outside the strictures of indirect rule, no longer bound to their "tribal" values. For example, Mathewson (1957), one of South Africa's most influential social engineers, believed that the deterioration of the patriarchal family and the decline of marriage rates demonstrated that urban Africans were falling away from "traditional" social forms. Mathewson's writings demonstrate that European representations of detribalization carried a peculiar moral coding: they saw it as a process of decay, as the decomposition of tribal social order into a chaotic tangle of random persons. This discourse about liminality and chaos was further reflected in representations of the slums themselves, which

were regarded as makeshift and transient, in-between the traditional African home-stead and the modern European house.

As structuralist analysis would predict, these concerns about social disorder regis-tered as anxieties about "danger" and "pollution" (cf. Douglas 1966) in the minds of Europeans. For instance, Robert Watson, the patron behind the well-known reloca-tion scheme in Tongaat just north of Durban, wrote at great length about his percep-tions of the people living in Natal's slums, who he regarded as "incurably filthy, diseased, and corrupt, a permanent menace to health and chronic disrupters of the peace" (Watson 1960: 14). Policy-makers perceived a basic correlation between dom-estic conditions and moral dispositions. As one contemporary commentator put it: "disreputable homes have a direct and traceable effect in creating disreputable people. . . slum yards are breweries, selling foul liquor. They are dens of immorality, filled with loose women" (Phillips 1930: 11). Administrators believed that "broken families" and kinship disorder would inevitably lead to anarchy, immorality, sexual deviance, communicative disease, and—their greatest fear—violent political agitation, for violence was considered to be a product of irrational disorder (cf. Weber 1946).

An epidemic outbreak of Spanish Flu in informal settlements along the outskirts of Durban in 1918 provided the justification that authorities needed to take action. Administrators passed the Public Health Act that very year, which allowed for inter-vention in urban African communities on the basis of public health concerns. This was followed by a spate of legislation intended to control the rural–urban migration of Africans. The Housing Act of 1920 and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 pro-vided for the establishment of African townships and required that Africans entering urban areas report immediately to registration officers to be assigned accommodation in either established hostels or a series of planned "native villages". Giving teeth to this project, the Slums Act that was passed in 1934 provided legal backing for the destruc-tion of slums and the forced relocation of their African inhabitants.

Recognizing that urban Africans—who were needed as labour—could not be "retri-balized", and fearing that social anomie would give rise to political unrest, the state undertook to forcibly relocate slum residents into segregated planned townships, where they could be "civilized" for the purposes of control. This was a reluctant colo-nialism—an unwilling embrace of the civilizing mission—and a considerably more expensive back-up plan devised to deal with the leakages of indirect rule. It was the state's perception of urban Africans as "in-between" and "polluted" that propelled this new modernizing project. Like the missionaries before them, the architects of public housing invoked the moral constructs of hearth and home in their attempts to reorder the African social milieu, using forced relocations to restructure African families. Drawing on evolutionary social-scientific theories common at the time, plan-ners believed that placing nuclear families in detached single-family homes would render Africans safe, docile, and productive. The idea, in short, was to domesticate urban Africans by shaping them in the mould of mid-century European domesticity.

The first planned townships were successfully constructed the same year that the Slums Act was passed, and housed many of the residents who had been forcibly displaced under this legislation. Baumannville, built in 1934, was followed by a much

larger Lamontville, and both were superseded in scale by the later development of Chesterville in 1945. Still, these efforts could never keep up with the rush of urbanization. During the Second World War, industrial employment boomed and Durban's African population leaped from 71,000 in 1936 to an astonishing 162,000 in 1951 (Maasdorp & Humphreys 1975: 9). But existing municipal housing could only accommodate a mere 11,000 of these, leaving a massive housing backlog that caused significant anxiety among white South Africans.

The National Party rose to power in 1948 with these concerns in mind, on a platform that promised to reassert control over urban Africans by focusing specifically on "native housing". Hendrik Verwoerd—then Minister of Native Affairs—dedicated himself to ramping up slum clearances and developing new African housing projects. The basic assumption behind this programme was that the rational ordering of persons in rationally ordered domestic spaces would eliminate violence and engender docility. Not surprisingly, Umkhumbane became the target of the Natal government's first exercise in large-scale relocation and social engineering through black housing. In the 1950s, purportedly responding to increasing political upheaval and infectious epidemics in the slum, the state built the massive, planned township of KwaMashu and began relocating the residents of Umkhumbane. The project was completed in 1965, at which point a total of 82,826 people had been forcibly removed from the area (Soni 1992: 40).

Township planners sought to reconcile two competing concerns: a fear that the "detribalization" of urban Africans would engender immense social dislocation and upheaval, and a belief that "civilizing" Africans into an established set of European social norms would facilitate docility. The driving theoretical framework held that residential environments had a direct influence on the mental and social disposition of their inhabitants. Prefiguring Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice, planners believed in a definite correlation between structured space, social organization, and cultural disposition. Indeed, most of the planners supported what at the time was the relatively progressive view that differences between racial groups were less "natural" than they were merely the historical product of environmental conditions. As urban planner P. H. Connell put it in his 1939 policy treatise: "We are dealing with a primitive and backwards people [whose] mental makeup is relatively easily changed, for better or worse, simply by altering their environment" (1939: 50). In other words, planners believed that civilizing the built environment was the most effective way to civilize its inhabitants.

Connell's writings provide interesting insight into the philosophy of social engineering that was operative at the time. Assembling input from a team of psychologists and social scientists, Connell sought to solve the detribalization–civilization tension by housing Africans in blocks of flats, with a single nuclear family per unit. On the one hand, they sought to maintain the "communal" ethos of the rural areas:

> Because of his natural communal tendencies it would be advisable to house the native in such a way as to enable him to live in close cooperation with his fellows... It is in the thrusting of the Native into the turmoil of self-sufficiency and independence (which is the keynote of city life) that we find one of the greatest psychological menaces. The

[block flats] scheme must stimulate a revival of that community spirit existing in the kraal [i.e., traditional homestead], but destroyed or lost in the city. (Connell *et al.* 1939: 82, 97)

On the other hand, however, the team exulted in the fact that the block flat system would break up the traditional patriarchal family and facilitate its replacement with something more "modern, individualistic, liberal, and democratic". If the flat system *emerged* from a society bearing this structure, Connell reasoned, certainly imposing the system on a different society could *engender* the same. In the flat system of the modern family, "the individual has his own friends and activities, and is given a chance to develop his own individuality. There is not so much parental control and there is a greater amount of mutual regard and respect based on real merits" (1939: 79–80). Connell's overriding goal was to protect urban Africans from abrupt "detribalization" while gradually encouraging them to internalize modern liberal values. His team was, however, concerned that individualism and the close quarters of flat life might lend itself to immorality and an increase in children born out of wedlock.

Addressing similar concerns, in 1951 A. J. Cutten published a model of an ideal township comprising free-standing nuclear-family houses, which were considered more effective at engendering social stability than the block flats. While drawing on the spatial logic used by planners in nineteenth century Britain, he also sought to reproduce aspects of "native society" for the purposes of enhancing social control. He arranged the sections of the township around a central point of interest—which included schools, recreational facilities, and administrative buildings—to provide "an admirable basis not only for planning but also for guiding and controlling the lives of the individuals in the township". The idea was to replicate the concentric structure of "African kraals", or homesteads. Each block would be centred around communal and social buildings:

radiating their influence around them, they become pivots on which the lives of the surrounding residents may be hinged, and by this means is reborn in the African the sense of social union that previously existed only in his native kraal. (Cutten 1951: 87)

Drawing on a Romantic conception of the Noble Savage, Cutten assumed that the values of tribal life were intrinsically stable and peaceful, and should be integrated with European mechanisms of panoptic administration as a bastion against urban unrest and immorality.

Adding to the work of urban planners such as Connell and Cutten, in 1955, D.M. Calderwood argued that the creation of stable township families was important for maintaining worker productivity and a steady labour supply. "Among Natives", he argued, "the lowest incidence of absenteeism is found in men who live with their wives and families in town, whereas the highest occurs in married men living away from their rural homes in migrant laborers' hostels" (Calderwood 1955: 11). But even more importantly, to Calderwood, proper township housing was critical for the creation of "moral" persons and "responsible" citizens:

Overcrowded slum areas cannot produce responsible persons; it is through good family living that responsible persons will grow, [otherwise] the children will, as they grow older,

run away to become vagrants, prostitutes, criminals or shebeen kings or queens... The road to crime is being built upon a foundation of bad housing and broken family life... If the children are given the chance of a full life now, then tomorrow they will accept their responsibilities and become contented and well-behaved inhabitants of the urban areas. (1955: 12)

As with many of the other social scientists and urban planners who were contracted by the government to draw up plans for the townships, Connell, Cutten, and Calderwood were not nearly as draconian as the apartheid ideologues who drafted their services. Indeed, they considered themselves benevolent liberals who sought to foster welfare through decent public housing and wanted to bring Africans up to speed, as they saw it, with European modernity. Pitting themselves against the hyperrationalism of apartheid bureaucracy and the alienating austerity of existing centralized planning efforts, they drew up models patterned after the "garden city" (Figure 2) promoted by Ebenezer Howard in Britain and Le Corbusier in France (Evans 1997: 127).

Sighart Bourquin—the Director of the Department of Bantu Administration and the official in charge of the development and administration of KwaMashu—drew heavily on this liberal discourse even as a full-time functionary of the apartheid state. In line with his missionary background, he conceived of his project as an act of salvation, replacing the disease, disorder, and lawlessness of Umkhumbane with the beauty, cleanliness, rationality, and civic pride of KwaMashu. In his widely distributed promotional slideshow, he described the "sprawling shacklands of Cato Manor", where

filth not only endangered the health of the people but blunted their senses and caused them to adopt an indifferent attitude. Open drains spread sickness and disease [and] under these conditions children were born and reared, their only playground the sick soil between the shacks. Many died and those who survived had little to look forward to and were doomed to become loafers and tsotsis [thugs] and drunken wrecks.

Figure 2.   Artist's impression of KwaThema neighbourhood (Calderwood 1955: 94).

He contrasts this scene of moral depravity with a utopian vision of KwaMashu:

> [The] city is well planned and gives new hope and joy to thousands. The Bantu becomes intensely house-proud and shows a keen sense for beauty... He may have his house plastered and oil painted, he will fit picture rails and venetian blinds. With pick and shovel and assisted by his wife, he sets to work to clear the grass to pave his pathway, and to prepare a little garden so that he can hold his own with his neighbors. Here he can live as a decent self-respecting man. Here he can offer his wife a secure home and bring up his children to become happy and useful members of the community.[4]

In this narrative of violent chaos to peaceful order, from depravity to salvation, Bourquin reveals that the KwaMashu project was not just about eliminating public health hazards and providing services to urban Africans, but about remaking urban African subjectivities and instilling a new, bourgeois morality centred on the values attached to the European nuclear-family home. However, while some Umkhumbane residents may indeed have been pleased with the prospect of getting new houses, Bourquin's narrative elides the massive and violent social reorganization that this process entailed. Not only were tens of thousands of people forcibly relocated to KwaMashu; they were also coercively rearranged into new family structures. People who could not fit into this mould were externalized to the reserves, so that KwaMashu would become a place occupied solely by families and persons conforming to a particular ideal.

"Fit and Proper Persons": Apartheid Architectonics and the Ideal Urban African

Umkhumbane, like other informal settlements in South Africa, was marked by a spontaneous integration of domestic and commercial spaces and lacked rigid contrasts between public and private zones. As the sites of a bustling trade in sorghum beer, residential houses were not geographically distinguished from routes of circulation, but operated as crucial public nodes along those routes. In other words, the relationship between closed building and open space did not correspond to a rigid private–public code, but was imminently reversible, its terms in constant flux. It was this semiotic ambivalence between public and private—along with its consequences for social life—that registered the settlement not only as "chaotic" "diseased", and "immoral" in the minds of the Durban municipal authorities, but as an incubator for political agitation.

The planned township was designed to redress this politically dangerous ambivalence and imprecise distribution of people by organizing a new kind of analytical space. As Foucault (1995: 143) has put it, modernist planning is a disciplinary project that seeks to "break up collective dispositions", order "transient pluralities", and prevent "diffuse circulation" by dividing space in such a way as to locate, measure, and supervise each individual. In South Africa, the detached, single nuclear-family house was at the very centre of this project. The goal was to obliterate public solidarities by relocating each individual within the confines of a domesticated nuclear family, binding them to a predictable set of interests, commitments, and responsibilities. In addition, as Holston (1999) points out, the structured

differentiation of public from private spaces forms an important component of modernism's doctrine of salvation. Townships like KwaMashu were designed to neatly separate public from private life on three nesting scales: within the broader cadastral vision of the racially segregated city, within the township itself, and within the family house. This scheme was intended to have an interiorizing effect that would demolish the public sphere as a forum for social discontent by severing domestic dwellings from public activity.

The Durban area was restructured in accordance with the mandates for segregation dictated by the Group Areas Act after 1950. The new townships were erected a significant distance away from the city's central business district in an attempt to create a rigid opposition between the (European) commercial sector and the (Native) residential sector, which were connected by highway and rail. This arrangement was designed to exorcize any residue of the public street by transforming roads from spaces for "chaotic" pedestrian gatherings and marketplace exchange into purely functional conduits for the conveyance of workers between residential and industrial domains. The effect was to dismantle the urban marketplace that marked informal settlements by reordering relations of commerce and residence, pedestrians and transport, and strictly separating capitalist production from domestic reproduction.

Architectural planning within the township itself eliminated the domestic−commercial reversals of the informal settlement in favour of an uncompromising clarity of function written into a spatial order designed for easy policing (Figure 3). The scheme remade the family home as a distinctively domestic domain, precluding it from functioning as a locus of public interaction. Legislation prohibited industrial production and commercial trade outside of specially designated areas, severing the residential street from the place of exchange. Streets within the township were designed not to connect houses to each other, but to connect houses to labour transport facilities and enable police surveillance against politically questionable social

Figure 3.   Meadowlands; typical of African townships developed after 1948.

gatherings. Public life was confined to the church, the social centre and, later, the indoor shopping complex, which could be controlled and policed on the state's terms. Within the township, then, the modernist intervention attempted to eliminate the possibility of robust counterpublics—such as that which thrived in Umkhumbane—by creating an isolated domestic life separate from a public life that could be thoroughly surveilled.

Similar transformations operated at the level of the house. Two architectural models ended up dominating township developments across South Africa: NE 51/6 and 51/9 (Figure 4). The NE 51 (short for Non-European 1951) houses consisted of four rooms: a master bedroom, a children's bedroom, a kitchen, and a living room—all designed around the needs of the nuclear family. Ostensibly, the NE 51 model was selected by the National Housing and Planning Commission because it fit the criteria of "low cost". But this selection flouted all the available data, which showed detached single-family houses to be dramatically more expensive in terms of land use and construction materials than row houses or duplexes. In other words, the NE 51 model was selected not on the "objective" basis of cost and efficiency, but because it fit the soteriology of
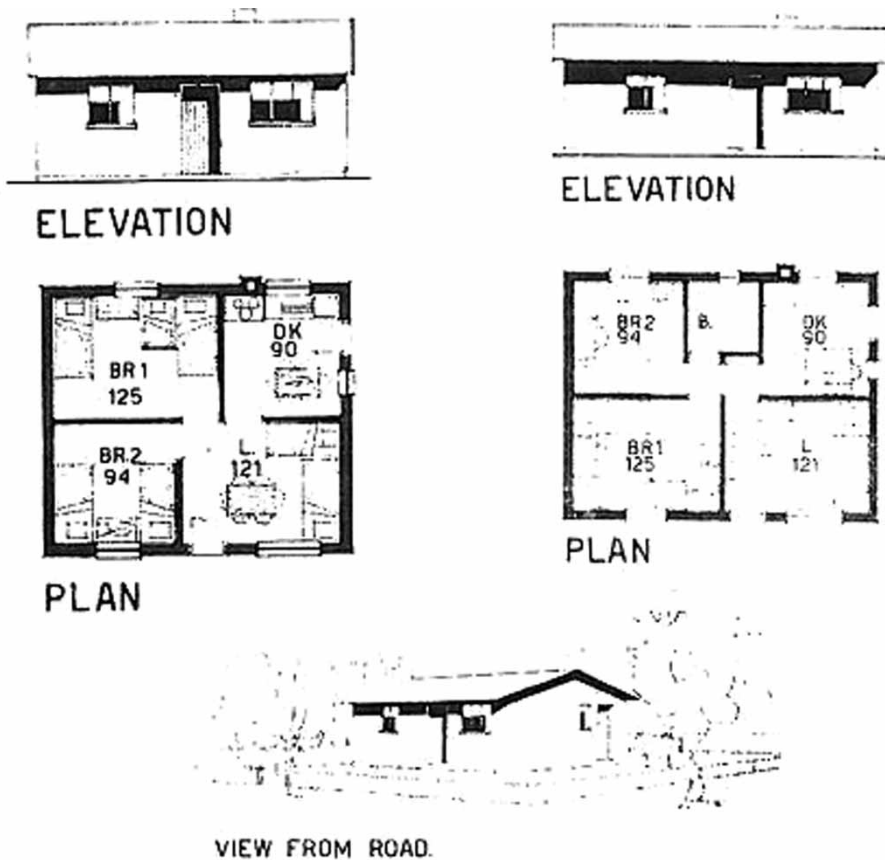
Figure 4.   House types NE 51/6 and 51/9 (Calderwood 1955: 29, 31).

European modernism as a sacred, divinely ordained domestic form thought to instill the values of good citizenship (see Perin 1980: 45).

In 1978, architect M.V. Pennington justified the design of the detached township house more explicitly. He thought that each house should have four distinct zones: a service zone, a public zone, a family zone, and a private zone. The service zone would be "used by women for washing, cooking, and storage" and should be adjacent to the public zone—the verandah—in either the front or the back of the house". The family zone, by contrast, "functions as the heart of family life born physically, as the centre of family activity, and emotionally, as the source of security and love". Kitchens also formed part of Pennington's family zone, and were to be contiguous with the family room "so that the woman working in the kitchen is in touch with the rest of the family... [and so that] small children and the front door can be supervised". The private zone includes the bedrooms and bathroom, where privacy should be strictly policed: "doors should be used to enforce privacy instead of curtains... And children of different sexes should never sleep in the same room except as babies". The master bedroom "should be located where it can have visual control over the children's coming and going... and an acceptable level of acoustic privacy. It should also have separate dressing spaces for the man and wife" (Pennington 1978). While these recommendations masqueraded as neutral assessments of housing needs, I suggest that they are better understood as projections of Eurocentric assumptions about gender and family structure.

The first houses in the KwaMashu development were handed over to residents in 1958 through a rigorous application process. Displaced residents of Umkhumbane were given first priority, but they had to meet a series of stringent criteria before they could claim their units. In correspondence with R.G. Willson, the Township Manager, Bourquin had the final word when it came to the allocation and termination of residential permits—near total power over social engineering. He made his decisions according to the dictates of Provincial Notice No. 383 of 1960, "Regulations for the Management and Control of Native Locations, Native Villages and Hostels". This notorious and widely resented legislation decreed that individuals could only receive family housing if they qualified to live in urban areas according to Section 10 of the Natives Laws Amendment Act of 1945 and if they were the head of the family with whom they would occupy the site. In addition, the regulations declared that accommodation would only be allocated to people who Willson proclaimed to be "fit and proper persons", which meant one who, "from the point of view of character, behavior, disposition, health or habits", is "suitable" for residence in the township, and who "produces proof that he is married either by Christian rites or civil law or that a customary union subsists between himself and the woman he describes as his wife". Ironically, within the ostensibly "private" modern home the state decided how the African family would be constituted.

These residence regulations produced a new kind of family tailored to planners' vision of the ideal modern community. By dictating that a household head (a male, by default) could own no more than a single dwelling and in that dwelling could support no more than a single wife, Notice 383 effectively outlawed polygyny in

urban areas. Furthermore, the proof-of-marriage condition rendered ineligible those couples united according to customary law, as acceptable proof of such unions was nearly impossible to procure. The ideal-typical township resident was therefore an employed, monogamous male head of a nuclear family in possession of a four-room, detached, single-family dwelling. Such individuals were permitted to have their dependents living with them, but only as many as could fit within the pre-fabricated confines of the dwelling without violating the personal space code of the Slums Act of 1934 (forty square feet per person), and only so long as they were unmarried and—in the case of males—under the age of eighteen. Notice 383 prohibited household heads from allowing anyone who did not qualify as "family" —according to the decree of the Township Manager—to live with them unless registered as temporary "lodgers" who qualified as "fit and proper persons" themselves. Only a single nuclear family was permitted to occupy any one residence, and homeowners were prohibited from erecting additional structures on their property for use as housing. Frequent police raids enforced compliance with these regulations, and violators were imprisoned or ejected from the urban areas outright.

According to Notice 383, alterations to housing units that compromised "the privacy of family life" in any way were expressly disallowed. Residents were required to keep their units "clean", "hygienic", and "free of vermin" at all times, and to be prepared for random inspection by the Township Manager for the purpose of preventing "contagion" presumed to spread so virulently among non-Europeans. Along these lines, residents were not allowed to take part in any activities which would "create a disturbance" or be "indecent or subversive to good morals", were precluded from keeping any livestock or poultry, and were prohibited from slaughtering animals except at specially designated places approved by the City Council. The Regulations also enforced a new and very rigid division of spatial utility. It was illegal for residents to use their houses for anything other than "domestic" purposes; hawking within the township was prohibited and persons could ply their trades only in designated commercial precincts. The head of the household was required to be employed in the urban area. Individuals who found themselves unemployed without due permission, employed outside the urban area, or absent from their residential premises for over one month were liable to be stripped of their permits.

Despite the best efforts of the planners, the type of social organization that emerged in the townships never perfectly matched the ideal of the male-headed nuclear family. First, inadequate wages drove women to seek employment outside the home to supplement family income, a trend that intensified after 1986 when influx controls were abolished. Second, the restriction of housing allocation to married couples meant that many people sought quick unions simply for the purpose of acquiring a house and the right to live and work in urban areas, but most of these "house marriages" proved to be brittle and transient, and frequently dissolved (Posel 2006). Third, a minor provision in Notice 383 allowed women to retain ownership of township houses after the death, desertion, or divorce of a household head in the absence of a viable male heir, which happened quite frequently and resulted in a significant number of female-headed households. Finally, generalized poverty made it difficult

for aspiring husbands to pay bride wealth (*lobolo*) to the families of their lovers—an exchange necessary to secure paternity according to a Zulu cultural rule—and thus left many illegitimate children to affiliate to families of their maternal grandfathers and live in the natal homes of their mothers.

The result was a notably rapid rise in female-headed families and households whose kinship narratives included moments of matrifocality and matrilineality. In townships today, descent and inheritance are frequently traced through women, households are frequently owned and headed by unmarried women, and sisters often make major household decisions even when legitimate male heirs are present. This trend is particularly evident in older sections of the townships, which initially conformed to the planners' nuclear-family ideals, but began to exhibit matrifocal tendencies after two or three generations (Marwick 1978; Pauw 1973). According to one long-time KwaMashu resident: "This type of matrifocal family is very common. More common than the traditional form. It is now the norm. Things have completely changed from those earlier years".[5] Demographic data illustrate this quite well. Simkins (1986) shows a sharp rise between 1970 and 1980 in urban Africans' incidence of divorce, cohabitation, and premarital reproduction, while the marriage rate declined, precipitously in the case of females.

In sum, the state's attempts at producing docile African nuclear families fell prey to a fundamental inconsistency that sprang from the gap between the racist ideologues of apartheid and the liberal urban planners that they contracted. The planners envisioned utopian "garden cities" centred on the Fordist model of the industrial male breadwinner, but the racist state hobbled this vision by funding only the most perfunctory construction and keeping black wages artificially low—making it impossible for working men to support legitimate social reproduction. In other words, while the state wanted to produce docile, modern nuclear families, it refused to pick up the bill. The matrifocal family within a growing culture of gender egalitarianism was an unintended consequence of incomplete social engineering, and is perhaps one of the reasons that women came to play such a central role in anticolonial resistance. In addition, this gap between the promises of modernity and the reality of racial exclusions generated a deep sense of betrayal, which resonated most intensely among frustrated young men who could not fulfil the expectations of masculinity that modernist planners laid out (cf. Hunter 2010). This generalized feeling of "abjection"—to use James Ferguson's (1999) term—fuelled the wave of workers' strikes in the 1970s and the anti-apartheid protests of the 1980s, culminating in a movement of mass discontent in the townships unlike anything that the planners could have foreseen.

Conclusion: The Revolutionary Byproducts of Social Engineering

As the above narrative demonstrates, the development of informal settlements such as Umkhumbane and the later forced removal of residents into planned townships such as KwaMashu radically transformed the structure of kinship and gender in the African family. The NE 51 houses obliterated the spatial referents of hierarchy that defined rural Zulu homesteads, and inscribed an entirely new organizational logic based on

the individual and the nuclear family. The taboo system fell apart as a result of this new spatial regime, for the layout of township houses made it impossible for people to observe the rigid prohibitions on space and interpersonal interaction that structure social life in rural homesteads along lines of gender and hierarchy. Furthermore, by dismantling the coordinates of encompassment, this process of domestic transformation effectively individualized township residents; women and youth, for example, were no longer constituted as encompassed (spatially and ontologically) by male elders to the same extent. These changes recall Marshall Sahlins' (1985) theory of "structural transformation", which he uses to describe how the destruction of the Hawaiian taboo system altered relations between men, women, chiefs, and commoners in a sort of cascading domino effect; changing one element of the system altered all of the others as well.

The structural transformations generated by the state's social engineering programme opened the door for new forms of consciousness, rendering the urban African population amenable to ideas about individual rights, gender egalitarianism, and resistance to class exploitation in a way that their rural counterparts never were (cf. Mamdani 1996). In other words, the political consciousness of township dwellers developed along the lines of the socio-spatial structure of the township, which reflected the basic logic of modern individualism and encouraged working-class identity by reifying abstract labour in industrial areas as separate from the domain of domestic life (cf. Lefebvre 1974). The township youth of the early 1980s were the first generation to have been born and raised in this new cultural context, which helps explain how they ended up at the forefront of a revolutionary movement that had a distinctly liberal, egalitarian, and class-oriented character (Chipkin 2004). As Jacob Dlamini put it in his recent memoire, "The township was the metaphorical home in whose living room the post-apartheid imaginary was largely conceived by a revolutionary movement that never really moved out of its urban base" (Dlamini 2009:160).

Ultimately, then, the apartheid state became the victim of its own strategy for social control, which found its initial impetus in confronting the intolerably "in-between" status of slum-dwelling Africans. The state's attempts to reorder this "polluted", "chaotic", and "dangerous" population through modernist social engineering was almost ritualistic; it recalls Douglas' (1966) discussion of how ritual reintegrates and reorders chaotic elements in order to neutralize the danger they pose. In a similar manner, social engineers sought to regain control over urban Africans by reordering their domestic milieu. Their basic assumption was that properly ordered, egalitarian, nuclear families situated in a rationally planned environment would be intrinsically stable and docile. In their blind devotion to this cultural model, however, planners planted the seeds of the demise of the colonial project itself. Planners failed to foresee the ironic political consequences of their scheme; they completely missed the fact that the fully proletarianized, egalitarian society they intended to produce would have new—and incredibly powerful—tools of resistance at its disposal. Instead of rendering Africans more easily controllable, the mass relocations produced new categories of personhood, entitlement and desire, and furnished the logic for new forms of resistance. This observation recalls Mahmood Mamdani's argument that, in

colonial and apartheid South Africa, "the form of rule shaped the form of revolt against it" (1996: 24), that resistance is always an effect of power. As I have shown, the apartheid state's most draconian technologies of control—namely, the manipulation of African domesticity—ended up creating the conditions for the ANC's national democratic revolution.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1]   KCF94, PNAB Microfiche, Killie Campbell Africana Archives, Durban. I draw heavily on data from this series, which includes rare information on domestic organization and kinship structure in Umkhumbane, including architectural sketches of dwelling layouts.
[2]   Cato Manor Heritage Center, Durban.
[3]   KCF94, PNAB Microfiche, Killie Campbell Africana Archives, Durban.
[4]   KCM 55166-55232, Killie Cambell African Archives, Durban. These are the unpublished notes that accompanied Bourquin's slideshow.
[5]   Interview 6.8.

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