Where are the people?
The Relationship between Government and Civil Society in South Africa

by\

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Introduction

In 2006, South Africa entered its 12th year of Democratic governance. Deemed by many as a political miracle, South Africa today boasts functioning democratic institutions (such as free and fair elections, a climate of free expression, organization and assembly) that become more consolidated each day. However, at the same time social and economic issues like unemployment, crime, and a devastating AIDS crisis undermine citizens' confidence in this new democracy. This is mysterious, since local communities have access to all the institutional tools of a consolidated democracy and a deep history of coordinated and successful action. But now that conditions are even more promising for effective organizing, they disengage from active organizing instead. While marginalized communities are as politically charged as ever, local populations appear more and more fragmented and seem to have lost a valuable voice in the government. This contradiction raises a puzzling question: Why is societal organizing so much less intense, despite more channels for its expression and unmet demands?

1994 was a watershed year for South Africa as it made its transition to democracy. New channels for mobilization and association opened for political participation. A vibrant civil society was a powerful force in politics, and different social groups who had been in conflict for years seemed to be cooperating as the old apartheid era National Party seemed unhesitant to give up power. A broad range of both conservative and liberal scholars, from Samuel Huntington (1968) to Larry Diamond (1999) to James Scott (1990) suggest that political mobilization among the previously marginalized would be either as intense, if not more as new channels for participation became available. Based on my observations and research in South Africa, this is not the case. Experts would agree. Simply put, South Africans are not mobilizing politically in the numbers that would have been expected.

Where are the people? They did not just go away. They are there—in the cities, in the shantytowns, and in rural areas—and they care. In fact, political debate is as charged as ever, in the press, in the streets, and at work. Furthermore, people voted in 1994 in huge numbers, and more than 60% of people still vote today[1]. While civil society has been forced to redefine itself, it has not gone away. On the other hand, the state is also as strong as ever. While many expected the South African government to weaken with the toppling of apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC)—South Africa's governing party—and the centralized government is as solid as can be.

A very unusual phenomenon is taking place in South Africa. While political institutions are being strengthened each day, becoming less corrupt, less racialized, and more efficient, political mobilization has not increased at the same pace. This occurs

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[1] The Human Sciences Research Council. "Identity documents and registration to vote: prepared for the Independent Electoral Commission." Pretoria, 2004.

alongside increasing social ills, including rising unemployment, crime, and AIDS. This has included many, including one South African from the Eastern Cape to say, "I'm sick of hearing about politics. It has done nothing for us[2]." Scholar Ashwin Desai agrees, "[There is a feeling] among some of the poor that, so far, the democratic order has failed them[3]." These suggestions provide two very important points. First, there is a severe gap between the political system and society. In other words, the political institutions do not represent society, despite being democratic. Second, and very much related, these people who are left out politically are the poor. This has even caused President Thabo Mbeki to admit, "The interaction between the government and the people has not been as effective as it should be[4]."

While scholars such as Huntington (1968), Robert Dahl (1971), Fareed Zakaria (2003) and Diamond (1999) suggest that getting the institutions right is the key to a democratic society, the case of South Africa suggests that there is more to it than just that. My research proposes that strong institutions have strengthened the ANC's power while at the same time distancing itself from the population. This research moves beyond the debate of political institutions and freedom of political expression in the discussion of democratic transitions. Instead, the relationship between government and local populations, and the power structure that ensues, is what really matters. I propose that strong democratic institutions have actually allowed the governing ANC to wipe out opposition and co-opt civil society, having a damaging effect on the poor. In other words, the ANC has taken what I call a *top-down approach to everything*, causing one to ask, "Where are the people?"

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[2] Coffee Bay Resident. Interview by Jeffrey Paller, 1 August 2005. Coffee Bay, South Africa.
[3] "South Africa: Rising Pressure on Government to Deliver Quicker." *IRINnews.org*. 27 May 2005.
[4] "South Africa: Rising Pressure on Government to Deliver Quicker." *IRINnews.org*. 27 May 2005.

It is no longer useful to look at the state and civil society as two distinct actors[5].

Instead, in today's South Africa—and in many developing societies in the world today—

state and civil society are much more closely related than previously thought or studied,

and the relationship between the two is what has caused such an unusual situation. Its

top-down approach to everything has put the ANC's hand in decentralization, non-

governmental organizations or community based organizations, globalization and free

trade policies. Oddly enough, the ANC is even its own opposition. This top-down

approach to everything has made it virtually impossible for significant political

mobilization to take place outside of the ANC, despite solid democratic institutions and a

climate of free expression.

Why South Africa?

At the end of his bestselling travel book *Dark Star Safari*, Paul Theroux finally

arrives in South Africa. After all of the complications he has gone through since traveling

from Cairo, he writes, "For me, South Africa was a place where almost everything

worked, even the political system.[6]" He concludes that it was hardly Africa. Similarly,

before I left to South Africa, friends and family told me, "Well, be careful. South Africa

isn't like the rest of Africa, is it? It's more developed right?" Conceptualizing South

Africa in this way is misleading: South Africa is part of Africa and is a developing

country. Unemployment, crime, and AIDS ravage the country. According to *Statistics

South Africa*, the overall unemployment rate rose from 25.4% in 2000 to 26.5% in 2005[7].

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[5] Habermas, Jürgen. *Structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.
[6] Theroux, Paul. 2002. *Dark Star Safari: Overland from Cairo to Cape Town*. London, New York: Hamish Hamilton, 459.
[7] *Statistics South Africa*. "Labour Force Survey: September 2000 to March 2005. Historical series of revised estimates." 26 September 2005. Available: www.statssa.gov.za/keyindicators/lfs.asp.

Other sources believe the figure could be as high as 43%[8]. Crime has increased

dramatically, making it unsafe for citizens to walk down the street alone in most cities

and for houses to be heavily securitized[9]. Perhaps most devastatingly, South Africa has

recently topped India as the country with the most people affected with HIV. *Avert.org*

reports that 29.5% of the South African adult population is infected with HIV or AIDS,

totaling over 6 million people[10].

   But South Africa is exceptional. Unlike the majority of African countries, South

Africa *has* built a solid multiracial democratic system of government. For the last 10

years, *Freedomhouse.org* has classified the country as completely "free," while ranking

its political rights with the best possible 1, and giving it a 2 for civil liberties[11]. South

Africa has finished its third round of free and fair elections over a decade. In 2005, The

Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted research that showed that voter

participation in the 2004 election was 76.73%, a very high mark. Furthermore, 82% of

the population is registered, and the HSRC did not find any wrongdoing or unfairness

while registering potential voters[12]. Additionally, South Africa has one of the most

progressive constitutions in the world, which has been enforced in the highest courts in

the country[13].

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[8] There is a continuing debate about how to assess unemployment. The South African government (*Statistics South Africa*) counts only those actively seeking work. The estimates that hover around 40% make a more comprehensive estimate and count those who are either actively seeking work or have given up their current job search but remain unemployed.

[9] For the latest crime statistics, see the Institute for Security Studies at: www.iss.co.za/CJM/stats0905/rsa_total.pdf. As shown, rape and drug related crimes are both increasing.

[10] *Statistics South Africa* reports that 10% of the South African population has HIV/AIDS, including 17% of the adult population. The international AIDS charity Avert.org estimates a slightly higher number. This information is available at: www.avert.org/safricastats.htm.

[11] *Freedomhouse.org*. 2005.

[12] The Human Sciences Research Council. "Identity documents and registration to vote: prepared for the Independent Electoral Commission." Pretoria, 2004.

[13] In fact, South Africa is the only country in the world to guarantee potable water to every member of its population. Furthermore, South Africa has outlawed the death penalty, and as of November 30, 2005, gay

South Africa is important because it is both ordinary and extraordinary. It is both Africa and the developed world. This strangeness makes it difficult and weird; it also is the reason why it matters. South Africa has become a model for the rest of Africa and also the rest of the developing world for the ways in which it has been able to institutionalize "people power." For example, Evo Morales, the new president of Bolivia traveled to South Africa because he sees obvious parallels to the situation in Bolivia. Morales said, "The struggle [against apartheid] of our South African brothers is the same as the struggle of our people. I consider the process of change [in South Africa] the big brother of change in Bolivia as we share a common history of discrimination[14]." South Africa is symbol of hope for Africa. For many years, scholars, journalists and the world public has had an apocalyptic vision of the continent[15]. But the end of apartheid and the subsequent political stability has shown that there can be success in Africa. Zenzile Khumalo's quote in *The New African* explains this sentiment, "Within a space of 11 years, South Africa has succeeded in building a solid multiracial democratic system of government. It has been nothing short of a miracle. It has worked to the extent where one might think South Africa has always been a democracy[16]."

The recent democratic elections in Liberia add to this African success story, and shows that democracy is possible in Africa. However, if Liberia fails, nobody will be too surprised. But if democracy fails in South Africa, not only would the world be devastated, it would also be disillusioned. One would begin asking: can democracy work

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marriage was upheld by the Supreme Court. To view a copy of the South African Constitution, go to: www.polity.org.za/govdocs/constitution/saconst.html.

[14] "Bolivia's Morales visits S Africa." *BBCnews.com* 10 January 2006. Similarly, Plaestinian leaders traveled to South Africa for similar reasons. See: Biles, Peter. "S Africa 'can play Mid-East role.' *BBCnews.com* 1 April 2006.

[15] Most notably, see: Kaplan, Robert. "The Coming Anarchy." *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994).

[16] Khumalo, Zenzile. "Politics of Inclusion." *New African* (August/September 2005): 48-49.

in any developing country? South Africa matters, not only for its own people, but for the future of all developing countries and the fate of democracy worldwide. Simply, South Africa cannot fail because its continuance as a democracy is important for legitimating transitions in many other countries where conditions for consolidating democracy are thought to be difficult or lacking in similar respects.

A New Approach to South Africa

      South Africa is difficult to study because it does not clearly fit into traditional categories of politics. As I have mentioned, South Africa is both a developing and developed country. There is no clear opposition or civil society that acts completely free of the ANC because of the historical struggle against apartheid that lasted so long. The switch to democracy in 1994 was not a typical revolution as Theda Skocpol has defined it—a complete transformation of the state and society[17]. In fact, South Africa faced great economic and political factors—the importance of becoming part of the international economy coupled with free trade policies and necessary compromises with the former ruling National Party, respectively—that greatly limited the extent of what the ANC could do[18]. For Skocpol, in order for true revolution to take place, political and social freedom would need to resonate to all members of society, completely restructuring the social and economic makeup of the country. This has not taken place in South Africa. But separately, South Africa has had a political revolution in which the country became a

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[17] Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions: A comparative analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
[18] Marais, Hein. *South Africa Limits to Change: the political economy of transformation*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998.

democracy, with free and fair elections, a climate of free association and expression, and a solid institution of law and justice. Socially, the toppling of apartheid has "revolutionized" the whole society, giving civil and political rights to the non-whites who had previously lacked them. For these reasons, South Africa cannot be studied in the typical sense of separating politics from society from culture. Instead, all of these factors are interrelated, being held together in a continued "liberation struggle" dominated by the powerful ANC.

This is not to say previous literature is worthless. South Africa has been intensely studied, and the academic debate surrounding the country is extremely useful. While studying the structural effects of apartheid can be an important history lesson, the social ills that ravage the country today must be studied in contemporary terms. Many argue that undoing the effects of apartheid will take years, and that we must simply be patient. They are not wrong. However, the AIDS crisis and the rising unemployment and crime are problems that keep getting worse, suggesting that these are problems with which the present administration has not adequately solved. Furthermore, the social problems that hinder South Africa today are distinctly a post-apartheid phenomenon, with the ANC and institutionalized democracy being the major factors, not pure racism.

The most useful developments in literature of the past ten years deal with the issues of opposition and the effects of post-apartheid policies on the poor. These two concepts are highly related because the poor are being left out of both the ANC's policies but also a viable opposition. During apartheid, people were obviously discriminated on the basis of race. Furthermore, the social movements of the past were strictly based on

race[19]. But today, there is a growing black elite due to the black empowerment campaign of the ANC. Instead, people are discriminated on class[20]. Ashwin Desai argues that the situation in South Africa is no longer an ideological struggle, but a new social struggle for survival. Thabo Mbeki's comments suggest that race is still a central theme to ANC's policies, "We will continue to pursue the goal of increasing the wealth and income in the hands of the black people of our country, as an inherent part of the continuing struggle to eradicate the legacy of colonialism and apartheid[21]." However, Gerhard Mare argues that while democratic ideals are universal goals that the government should strive to achieve, the government must go beyond thinking about these issues in racial terms[22].

The government must now address inequalities of society, not inequalities of race. Socially and economically, not much has changed since 1994[23]. In fact, political empowerment has not empowered people socially or individually because of the lack of class-based politics. All of these critiques describe a fundamental ideological flaw in the government of the ANC: ignoring social inequalities. This is not to say that the ANC has completely abandoned a social policy component. It has not. Rather, they have abandoned widespread redistribution of land, money, and other resources that was previously promised. Their top-down approach to everything has allowed the ANC to ignore social inequalities but still gain the votes of most of the poor.

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[19] Maylam, Paul. "Politics of adaptation and equivocation : race, class and opposition in twentieth-century South Africa." in Southall, Roger, ed. *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*. London: Frank Cass, 2001.

[20] Desai, Ashwin. *We are the Poors: Community Struggles in post-apartheid South Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002.

[21] Blair, David. "Mbeki lashes out as Tutu attacks ANC 'favouritsm.' *Telegraph News* 27 November 2004.

[22] Mare, Gerhard. "Race, Democracy and Opposition in South African Politics: As Other a Way as Possible." *Democratization* 8, no. 7 (Spring 2001): 85-102.

[23] Gibson, Nigel. "The limits of black political empowerment: Fanon, Marx, 'the Poors' and the 'new reality of the nation' in South Africa." *Theoria* 107 (August 2005): 89 (30).

These issues of class are highly important in the context of opposition as well. Most of the criticism of the present political system deals with the fact that there is no viable opposition to the ANC in South Africa. This could have enormous impacts on the state of democracy, so much that Barrington Moore argues, "No opposition, no democracy[24]." However, the ANC admits that it does not support opposition. ANC minister Firoz Cachalia explains, "The ANC's dominance strengthens the prospects of democratic consolidation and is good for both economic growth and in the long term for greater social equality[25]." But this dominance has created a situation in which political mobilization is less intense, and social inequality is only getting worse. Furthermore, this raises important questions about what is most essential in regime changes and democratic transitions: stability or widespread social organizing?

Opposition in South Africa, edited by Roger Southall, is the most useful collection of essays that addresses this issue[26]. Southall argues that although there is opposition in South Africa, it is highly confused and fragmented. While opposition is institutionalized, there is a problem between theory and practice. Perhaps it is a problem with opposition parties themselves; many lack financial and administrative resources to become a viable opposition[27]. Or maybe the problem is that opposition is based purely on ethnic lines, suggesting that the ANC will always be in power as long as there is a black ethnic majority. Opposition thus needs to be de-racialized[28]. Some scholars also call for a bi-

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[24] Quoted in Southall, Roger. "Opposition in South Africa: issues and problems." in Southall, Roger, ed. *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*. London: Frank Cass, 2001.
[25] Cachalia, Firoz. "ANC dominance strengthens SA." *Business Day* (31 May 1999).
[26] Southall, Roger, ed. *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*. London: Frank Cass, 2001.
[27] Pottie, David. "The Electoral System and Opposition Parties in South Africa."
[28] Mare, Gerhard. "Race, Democracy and Opposition in South African Politics: As Other a Way as Possible."

party political system—one like the United States—where opposition would keep

democracy balanced and dynamic[29].

Within this political system, there is no uncertainty. Adam Habib describes this

simply, "You know what you're gonna get[30]." There is no uncertainty of condition in

South Africa; there is no prospect that the ANC could lose[31]. Perhaps this is because a

fifth dimension of democracy is missing: a high level of public participation in the

political process through a wide variety of institutional channels[32]. Others suggest that

civil society itself is dying; many of the leaders of NGOs are now members of the

government[33]. Nonetheless, all of these theories suggest that there is a problem with

institutionalized opposition. In other words, while there are channels for opposition to

organize institutionally, they have not done so. These scholars propose theories that

would strengthen the institutions themselves: political parties, the electoral system, and

civil society itself. However, they fail to explore the power dimensions that overlie these

institutional realities. They do not take into account the way in which the ANC has used

these institutional means to bolster their own power. Simply put, it is necessary to move

beyond institutional understandings of democracy and also explore the power sources in

which this democracy inhabits. Looking at institutions tells us where the people are or are

not, but they do not tell us how they got there. For this, we must look at the power

dynamics of the ANC.

What One Would Expect to Happen

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[29] Schrire, Robert. "The Realities of Opposition."

[30] Habib, Adam. Interview by Jeffrey Paller, 8 August 2005. Pretoria, South Africa.

[31] Giliomee, Myburgh, and Schlemmer. "Dominant Party Rule and Opposition Parties."

[32] Houston, Gregory. "Public Participation in Democratic Governance in South Africa." The Human Sciences Research Council.

[33] James, Wilmot G. and Daria Caliguire. "The New South Africa." In Diamond, Larry and Marc Plattner. *Democratization in Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

During the Cold War, scholars such as Samuel Huntington worried that rapid social change and mobilization would lead to political chaos. In *Political Order for Changing Societies*, Huntington argues that political participation in conditions of reform tends to grow much faster than the capacity of political institutions to contain them[34]. He explains, "The most fundamental aspect of political modernization, consequently, is the participation of politics beyond the village or town level by social groups throughout the society and the development of new political institutions, such as political parties, to organize that participation[35]."

It is important to note two developments here: firstly, considering the intensive change in politics and society in 1994, Huntington would expect a flood of participation and rapid mobilization. According to him, the consolidation of democracy would not be able to keep up with the intense organization of the population. This has not happened in South Africa. Secondly, politics has moved beyond the local level and has been institutionalized, but this has not sparked true participation as well. Although people vote, a huge part of the population is still underrepresented. The situation in South Africa cannot be explained by looking at social organization in this way.

Since the Cold War, consolidating democracy has been understood as the most effective way to mobilize public participation in politics. Liberal Democrats such as Larry Diamond have suggested that institutionalized political competition is both a means and ends to processes of democratization. In other words, the establishment of free and fair elections and a climate of free and fair expression will establish individual rights and

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[34] Huntington, 5.
[35] Huntington, 36.

a solid rule of law. This is the only form of political legitimacy[36]. Stated differently,

solidly institutionalized democracy will pave the way for a democratic culture. Thus a

solid institutionalized democracy should lead to political mobilization. With a system in

place, a democracy ensures that the will of the people is being served.

Consider Bolivia. While their democracy is not quite as advanced or consolidated

as theorists like Diamond would hope, it does have free and fair elections. In fact, this

system was tested in the 2005 elections, and the indigenous majority flooded the polls to

vote for Evo Morales[37]. Popular participation continued to be organized by an

institutionalized process. Many would argue that the problem facing South Africa today

deals with economic liberalization policies, similar to those faced in Bolivia. According

to Diamond's theory, one would expect the poor majority to flood the polls and vote for a

leader who fights on behalf of the poor, like what happened in Bolivia where voters

complained that market reforms hurt their interests. However, the ANC only gets

stronger, and the inequality only gets worse.

Democratic Theorist Fareed Zakaria argues that there must be a distinction

between constitutional liberalism and liberal democracy. For Zakaria, in order to have

popular participation there must be a solid rule of law, a separation of powers, and the

protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property. These

constitutional constraints will then pave the way for free and fair elections. South Africa

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[36] Ottemoeller, Dan. "Three Schools of Democracy in Africa." *African Studies Review* 42, no. 3 (Dec. 1999): 63-66.

[37] For more information on Bolivia, see Portals to the World. "Government, Politics, Law: Bolivia. *Selected Internet Resources*. Available: www.loc.gov/rr/international/hispanic/bolivia/resources/bolivia-government.html.

has these constitutional powers, and an atmosphere of free and fair organization and expression. Yet societal organizing still is not as intense as Zakaria would expect[38].

Something beyond institutionalization is taking place in South Africa. To better understand this phenomenon it is important to place institutionalized democracy within a framework of power. A useful theoretical framework addressing power relations comes from the works of James Scott. All three of Scott's books, *Seeing Like a State (1998)*, *Weapons of the Weak (1985)*, and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance (1990)* explain the need for a more thorough analysis of what is happening on the ground and at the community level. While he writes from an anthropological perspective, the shortcomings of politics in South Africa have to do with the fact that these anthropological concerns are not being taken into account in politics. For example, while institutions are in place, there is a huge inability of civil society to tackle problems such AIDS, unemployment, and crime. This in turn hinders development, and people can see this in their everyday lives, even if they do not mobilize politically to reverse this state of affairs.

Scott suggests that power affects what people do, but that there are always forms of resistance. Scott writes, "The rich have the social power generally to impose their vision of seemly behavior on the poor, while the poor are rarely in a position to impose their vision on the rich[39]." This suggests two things: first, power often follows class lines. In this regard, money matters. Secondly, those in power are able to impose "visions." A vision is beyond simple actions. Thus, power often overlies institutions, actions, and forms of resistance. In our age, the State is the source of all this power. Scott argues, "Whereas the state used to be a bystander, because of the technological revolution state is

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[38] Zakaria, Fareed. "The rise of illiberal democracy." *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997): 22-43.
[39] Scott (1985), 24.

now the direct participant, decision maker, allocator and antagonist in all of the decisions[40]." Nowhere is this truer than in South Africa, where the State has become the dominant force of power. Furthermore, the State has become synonymous with the ANC due to its domination of post apartheid politics.

However, Scott argues that there are always forms of resistance, and this leads to unity among the poor. While he looks at peasants in Malaysia, the same could be predicted for the poor of South Africa. In fact, peasants are always performing actions such as foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, and sabotage that are mobilizing forces amongst peasants[41]. These actions just happen to be out of the public view—or public transcript as he calls it—and usually do not become any larger social movement. Therefore it is important to explore these relationships between the powerful actors and the local population itself. Nonetheless, he argues that these "weapons of the weak" destabilize powerful actors and make them less powerful. While societal mobilization takes place in the hidden transcript, it can undermine the present power structure. Eventually, these actions in the hidden transcript become a useful tool for collective action. Scott explains, "It is only when this hidden transcript is openly declared that subordinates can fully recognize the full extent to which their claims, their dreams, their anger is shared by other subordinates with whom they have not been in direct touch[42]."

Thus, in South Africa, Scott would expect the powerful State—and the ANC—to be susceptible to "hidden forms of resistance." This I do not deny. In fact, these hidden forms of resistance occur in everyday conversation, music, and even at community

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[40] Ibid, 56. Scott also makes this point in *Seeing Like a State*.
[41] Ibid, 29.
[42] Scott (1990), 223.

meetings. Yet they do not appear to be thwarting the ANC's hegemony. The ANC gets

stronger and stronger, despite anger at all class levels, but especially amongst the poor.

Using Scott as a theoretical framework is extremely useful in locating the power relations

are in South Africa. Furthermore, Scott's *Seeing Like a State* provides a good conceptual

framework and method to study the limited vision that a top-down approach can have,

even if he is erroneous about the outcomes of this project, at least in South Africa's case.

In other words, a top-down approach to everything—as I suggest—is often completely at

odds with what happens at the grassroots level. But since in South Africa Scott's

prediction that power will be broken down by everyday forms of resistance has not

occurred, we must further explore the way in which the ANC has been able to mold

institutions and social forces using the power that it has.

My Research

You cannot separate politics from everyday life in South Africa. My research thus

builds upon my participant-observations of political life in South Africa, and from my

interviews and discussions with people there. My experience attending the National

Women's Day Event in Pretoria highlights this well. This celebration is a national

holiday in South Africa; people have the day off from work, national institutions are

closed, and one is expected to celebrate the event with their family and friends. Each city

has a massive celebration with professional musicians, dancing, and food vendors

everywhere. People relax and have a good time. In Pretoria, this celebration occurred in

the park in front of the Union Buildings, the government buildings that houses the

electoral branch, including President Mbeki. Thousands of people showed up with large

picnic baskets, soccer balls, and blankets to sit on. But what was most interesting about

the event, was that most of the people were adorned with ANC shawls. Vendors were selling ponchos with Mbeki and Mandela on them; The ANC green and yellow blanketed the crowd. ANC members were registering people to vote, and campaigning for their candidates[43].

This event highlighted two things: first, the ANC is very good at mass organizing[44]. Second, the ANC infiltrates almost every part of South Africans lives[45]. Politics is not only voting and arguing about candidates. In South Africa, politics is history and culture. Politics is struggle and liberation. Politics is the everyday ambition to survive. The ANC understands this, and tries to use its connections to these ideas through the ideology of its leading role in the liberation struggle (leaving aside the critical contributions of other groups while the ANC was in exile) to consolidate the party's control over the country's political life.

By weaving together anecdotes of everyday events, studies of government initiatives, cultural artifacts, and theoretical literature I show how these are part of a larger political phenomenon taking place. This research is not located in one place; it explores issues in both Zululand and Xhosa country, rural and urban areas, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. By exploring politics as a greater phenomenon than simply institutionalized democracy, one can better understand the ways in which power forces act in accordance and against one another to infiltrate people's lives.

The Rural Water Sector and its Struggle for Decentralization

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[43] For more information on National Women's Day in South Africa, go to: About.com. "African History: South Africa's National Holidays." Available: africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/blsaholidays.htm. For the ANC's involvement in this holiday, go to the ANC's website: www.anc.org.za.

[44] The Congress Party Model: South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) and India's Indian National Congress (INC) as Dominant Parties. *African and Asian Studies* 4, no. 3 (2005): 271-300.

[45] The "liberation movement" is still being equated with the ANC. For example, the ANC still refers to itself as "South Africa's National Liberation Movement." This suggests that the ANC transcends politics and infiltrates people's everyday lives.

Consider the case of donor funding in South Africa's rural water sector[46]. Laid out in the country's constitution, the ANC has agreed to allocate much more responsibility to local government structures and community based organizations for service delivery initiatives. In fact, Article 152.1.e directly states that "The objects of local government are to encourage the involvement of communities and community involvement in the matters of local government[47]." Furthermore, The White Paper on Local Government acts as a "mini-constitution" for how local government should act, and describes that local government plays a "developmental" role in societal affairs. It does this by coordinating various actors, such as "national and provincial departments, para-statals, trade unions, community groups and private sector institutions[48]." The Municipal Structures Act created district and local municipalities to cover the entire country, thus ensuring that local government structures operate everywhere[49]. This cooperative mechanism organizes a tri-sector alliance between government, private donors, and community organizations for water service delivery projects across the country. It mobilizes institutions to coordinate civic groups, private water suppliers, donors, and government structures.

Galvin and Habib conclude that these institutions do not distinguish between state-centric or community-oriented decentralization. This is what really matters for participation at the local level. They explain:

> State-centric decentralization may devolve power, but it does so to a lower level of government that acts alone. Community-oriented decentralization fosters partnerships between civil society and local government, creating a far more

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[46] Galvin, Mary and Adam Habib. "The Politics of Decentralisation and Donor Funding in South Africa's Rural Water Sector." *Centre for Civil Society* Research Report 2 (University of Natal, Durban). 2000.
[47] The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
[48] White Paper on Local Government: www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/white_papers/localgov/wp2.html.
[49] Republic of South Africa, *Municipal Structures Act*, no. 117 (Pretoria, 1998).

participative process that ultimately enhances the democratic quality of government[50].

This is obvious in the outset: for the most part, the community is only involved once the project has been decided upon by private actors and the government—whether it is introduced by the local or the centralized government. Only then does donor funding focus on decentralization. It then focuses on four areas: "building local government capacity, developing institutions for water provision, supporting community-oriented decentralization through budgetary support, and providing technical assistance for the implementation of decentralization plans[51]." The advisor for one donor, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) acknowledged that they "have influenced the process of integrated development planning by institutionalizing participation, and by simply getting things moving[52]." This demonstrates a top-down approach to decentralization, where donors try to build community involvement, rather than being a grassroots initiative from the outset.

Another rural water case was developing water institutions in Bushbuckridge (BBR). This involved USAID as its major donor. South African Minister of Water Affairs Kadar Asmal requested assistance from USAID to help with project funding. USAID provided institutional support to local government to enhance its capacity to take over the water project. Most importantly, the only civil society organization represented was the Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD). However, this organization was only invited to join the project to complete the preliminary plan.

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[50] Galvin and Habib, 4.
[51] Ibid, 8.
[52] Interview with Rauch quoted in Galvin and Habib, 9.

AWARD was only used to raise awareness in the community about what would be taking place[53].

There is no denying that this was a coordinated effort between civil society organizations, government structures, and private donors. However, when taking a closer look, donors themselves acknowledge that they have "simply supported the South African government in its efforts to achieve its aims[54]." Furthermore, the involvement of NGOs was used as a similar tactic to raise awareness and gain positive public opinion from community populations for what the government was doing. In the words of Galvin and Habib, these were simply state-centric forms of decentralization.

By focusing strictly on political institutions—including social forces and political economy—there is a tendency to miss the most important factor: a discussion of power[55]. As Greenstein points out, this aspect of politics is essential:

> A process involving contestation within and between collective actors over the mode of organizing and exercising power, and a process of repositioning social and political relations within wider discourses, which endow them with meaning (such as the discourses of nationalism, race, development, and alternative paths to modernity)[56].

This is clear in the aforementioned example, where in which the debate over the water project was decided upon before the matter was discussed with civil society. This method of state-centered decentralization is another example of the way in which the ANC is able to organize and reposition institutional capabilities in a way that strengthens its power. Moreover, it does this in a way that is seemingly democratic.

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[53] Galvin and Habib, 11.
[54] Ibid, 18.
[55] Greenstein, Ran. "State, Civil Society and the reconfiguration of Power in Post-apartheid South Africa." *Centre for Civil Society* Research Report Number 8 (University of Natal, Durban). October 2003.
[56] Greenstein, 17.

Greenstein argues that state powers—such as the ANC—create and organize institutional structures in a way that will consolidate their own power. Because the ANC has historically been so well respected and understood as a party of the people, NGOs have often been used to carry out service delivery projects of the State. This calls into question the independence of CSOs and who is providing their agenda. Furthermore, Greenstein explains how the ANC has manipulated this space of power to be part of a larger nationalist struggle, thus equating itself with more than just a political party, but a complete social agenda. These institutions are only part of a larger engulfing of power. As Jeremy Cronin, a leading member of the South African Communist Party, explains, "The left is also in parliament, in government, in the security forces, in the Constitutional Court, in the educational and public broadcast institutions, and many more sites of institutional power. Each of these is a site of struggle, to be sure[57]."

As the case of the water service delivery shows, institutions are formed in a way to give voice to those that they affect. However, due to the top-down approach, these institutions are really orchestrated to give the central State complete power in the plan. As Greenstein further suggests, even a water service delivery plan is still understood as part of a larger nationalist struggle—a struggle that the ANC continues to be propagating.

Inanda's Struggle for Water

The struggle to bring potable water to every human being in Inanda has been a long and arduous task[58]. Located 30 km outside of Durban, Inanda is home to more than 300,000 people, mostly blacks; 50% of whom live below the poverty line. In 1998, eThekwini Water Services (eTWS) teamed up with Vivendi Water (a French

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[57] Quoted in Greenstein, 33.

[58] Lumsden, Fiona and Alex Loftus. "Inanda's Struggle for Water Through Pipes and Tunnels: Exploring state-civil society relations in a post-apartheid informal settlement." *Centre for Civil Society*.

multinational company) and Mvula Trust (a service delivery NGO) to establish a Tri-

Sector partnership to bring water to Inanda. Tri-sector partnerships are the latest idea in

development projects to bring together efficient business practices to positive state-civil

society relations. Theoretically, they are considered democratic, institutionally sound, and

the most cooperative mechanism for "people centered development[59]."

        However, like the prior example, civil society is presented with a slightly different

story: an equal forum to discuss how they can benefit from links with businesses and the

State[60]. When explored more closely, it is unclear how much Mvula Trust can truly be

considered an independent civil organization when it usually works as a sub-contractor to

local government on water projects. Rob Dyer who represents the Mvula Head Office

openly admits that "where we accept government policy as a given and our job is then to

work within this framework[61]." This is essentially a governmental organized NGO. More

importantly, Mvula Trust had little input in planning. Most of the planning was complete

and they were supposed to raise awareness to help create a workable environment so that

the multinational could go forward. In other words, community participation was not its

general concern, but rather reducing the chances of local resistance to these plans[62]. This

is not to say that the government does not try to get people involved. One official from

eTWS explained, "We would like to work with community structures but the problem is

there just aren't any[63]."

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[59] The World Bank and other leading development agencies advocate tri-sector partnerships.Tri-sector partnerships are laid out in the Constitution of South Africa in order to advocate "people-centered development."
[60] Lumsden and Loftus, 6.
[61] Quoted in Lumsden and Loftus, 7.
[62] Ibid, 11.
[63] Ibid, 8.

What was Mvula Trust's role in acting as community liaison? First, most of the members on the committee were relatively well off, whereas the project would be affecting mostly the poor. Second, the steering committee which made the real decisions had no community members. Additionally, women were highly underrepresented; this is a huge concern considering women would be collecting most of the water. Finally, the education and awareness team was "cherry picked" from local civic structures, and many had ties to the ANC. In conclusion, the Mvula Trust hardly represented the surrounding community. Although the institutional structures were there gain community input, this top-down approach of the government clearly bypassed the local population itself.

But Inanda does not just represent a problem with this specific service delivery project. It highlights a greater problem with the top-down approach of the State. Once again, nowhere is this clearer than in the decision-making process of implementing the project. By allowing private enterprises into the decision-making process, attention immediately becomes focused on profits, rather than on who truly needs water the most. For example, metropolitan cities are an instant center of attention because they are considered to have enough "urban poor" to generate a profit from fees. This highlights that the projects are about payment and cost recovery, rather than addressing community needs. Finally, nothing in the project looked at what would happen if communities were unable to pay for the water. This has become an obvious problem in contemporary South Africa. Lumsden and Loftus sum this problem as a problem with privatization itself, "community participation becomes a euphemism for market-oriented policies that try to

shape the public as paying consumers of a public service. Any genuine attempt at dialogue and participation is lost[64]."

In this case, the South African state did not take into account the local factors that would be key to the success of the project. As Scott describes, this top-down approach "implies a degree of certainty about the future" that in reality could never be known[65]. Furthermore, the State overlooked *mētis* or local practical knowledge such as "practical skills, variously called know-how, common sense, experience, a knack[66]" that could have helped the projects chance of success. Here, the obvious example is ignoring input from women—the *mētis* that clearly describes how this local population normally gathers water. Ironically, this top-down approach has abandoned the local population that it sought to help in the first place. Still, there are numerous channels in which individuals can participate and mobilize. So where exactly are the people?

Top-Down Decentralization

Institutionally speaking, South Africa has done a solid job in decentralizing its political system. During the Apartheid era, there were only 4 different municipalities; now there are 9. Each province was given greater political and fiscal power, and established free and fair elections for provincial legislatures[67]. Furthermore, the ANC has stamped out corruption, increased gender equality, and raised more awareness at the local level. For instance, nationally, 40 percent of all ward councilors are women. In the ANC, 46.08 percent are women[68]. President Mbeki pledged to stamp out corruption by not re-

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[64] Ibid, 13.
[65] Scott (1998), 95.
[66] Ibid, 311.
[67] Dickovick, J. Tyler. "The measure and mismeasure of decentralization: subnational autonomy in Senegal and South Africa." *Journal of Modern American Studies* 43, no. 2 (2005):189.
[68] "Mbeki: ANC Boosted Gender Equality in Election." *Mail & Guardian*. 11 March 2006.

nominating councilors known to be corrupt. The party also made all its members sign

oaths against corruption[69]. Nonetheless, even these positive steps of decentralization

suggest a common theme: all of these actions have come from a central ANC body. In

other words, they are all part of a larger top-down approach to decentralization.

The national government has delegated responsibility for many of its key services

to local government, trying to adequately decentralize its tasks for service delivery.

However, due to economic liberalization policies and the ANC's desire to have control of

the political system, they have not significantly increased budgets for local government

structures[70]. In fact, taxation, budgeting and expenditure decisions, and even the

appointment of some sub-national government officials have remained in the hands of the

central government[71]. For example, over 95% of provincial budgets come from the

central government, giving local governments very little of their own revenue. Second,

and more important, the ANC has moved to ensure compliance with its objectives in the

center, enacting standards for public service inputs and performance, and dismissing

those who do not follow their recommendations[72]. Finally, the central government

monitors expenditures tightly; making sure the ANC has complete control over

spending[73]. Clearly, the ANC has instituted a top-down approach to decentralization,

ensuring that it has its hand in on everything, including local politics.

Local Politician Freddie Maistry

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[69] "Decisive ANC Win in S Africa Poll." *BBCnews.com* 4 March 2006.
[70] Ballard, Richard et al. "Globalization, Marginalization and Contemporary Social Movements in South Africa." *African Affairs*104, no. 417 (September 2005): 625.
[71] Dickovick, 187.
[72] Ibid, 196.
[73] Ibid, 197.

Consider the case of Freddie Maistry. Maistry is a leader on the eThekwini Community Council, an organization that represents Durban and its surrounding townships. He heads the Isipingo Ward Working Committee (IWWC) that fights for rights and services for the township of Isipingo and surrounding settlements. On the surface, the IWWC and Maistry have delivered essential services to poor populations. He has helped bring potable water to the Dakota informal settlement. The IWWC has created a school playpen and renovated several flats in the area. Now he is fighting to get them real houses and property rights. Furthermore, he has helped Dakota residents by finding and producing jobs that supply local labor and also advocates training for individuals so that they can open their own businesses. Now he is running to be an ANC ward councilor.

After visiting a local rally on a Sunday at the Dakota settlement, it was quite clear that local residents thought greatly of Maistry, whom they all call Freddie. A few people came straight to Freddie if they had a problem. For instance, one resident was having trouble getting property rights to his shanty and wanted Freddie to take care of it for him. He told them not to worry about it: consider it done. As Freddie described this to me later—like a true politician—he said, "Every time I come, I come with good news[74]."

The rally was inspiring. There was a large tent set up, and most of the 589 residents showed up, including men, women and children. All the men sat on one side, on chairs, while the women sat on the ground. Some of the younger children played outside of the tent, and a group of girls danced to open up the rally. It quickly turned into a political rally. The residents clearly cared about politics, and wanted to better their lives.

[74] Maistry, Freddie. Interview by Jeffrey Paller, 16 August 2005. Isipingo, South Africa.

Then Freddie started his speech: "It doesn't take money to be happy. We are people, we still have intelligence. We are all one. We must live as one. If Mama India has a house, we must also have a house." After huge applause, Freddie continued, "We have won the fight against the people who were trying to mislead you…You must follow me. Nobody is going to come to Dakota and confuse you more." Later I learned that before the last local elections, several campaigning politicians promised the delivery of basic services, only to not uphold their promises after the election. Freddie vowed to be different. He concluded, "This is not about elections, it's about infiltrating and bettering your lives." After his speech, residents began cheering, "Viva Freddie Maistry! Viva the ANC!"

Electoral politics has come to South Africa, and it has come fast and hard. It entered this mostly black informal settlement, and the residents were quickly learning the tricks of the game. This appeared to be any normal political rally, as excitement over a candidate and party was obvious. However, after talking with Maistry it became clear the power that the ANC had in orchestrating this rally. In fact, the ANC was everything.

One of the first things Freddie told me was, "At the end of the day you can fight, but you can't fight government." Instead, Freddie stressed the importance of working with government, especially with the ANC to get things done. Interestingly, Freddie was not always supportive of the ANC. However, he explained that he quickly learned the power it had, "If you didn't follow the majority party, you're not going to get anywhere...Don't join people you cannot learn from[75]" About three years ago he joined the ANC, and was immediately given training and pamphlets on how to be a better

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[75] This quote is almost the same as the one that Razak makes in the *Weapons of the Weak* describing his method of survival, "I used my head. I want to be on the side of the majority" (11).

leader. As an ANC insider, he is now able to better advocate for the delivery of basic services such as potable water pumps and running toilets.

Undoubtedly, Freddie and the ANC have brought essential basic services to the residents of the Dakota settlement. Conversely, this dependence on Freddie—and more importantly the ANC—is problematic for the fate of democracy in South Africa. For example, I asked Freddie what would happen if he died tomorrow and he told me that they have learned from him and have been empowered from him, "They would be self sufficient." However, I asked the same question to one of the residents, named Mandla, and he responded, "We would fall right back into where we were before Freddie. We need Freddie." This is troubling and only highlights the growing dependency that South African individuals and communities are having on the ANC as a whole. Freddie left me with this, "Who knows, maybe I'll be a martyr one day. Or a Saint…" What does this make the ANC?

Coffee Bay: Left behind?

The following example shows what occurs if one is on the side of the ANC: Good things can happen. But what will take place if your community is not supportive of the ANC? Consider Rini Village—surrounding Coffee Bay—which is United Democratic Movement (UDM) territory. This is also Xhosa territory, where families live amidst the rural rolling hills in their circular houses, without electricity, and harvest their own food and livestock. However, most are poor, many live with AIDS, and several of the men of the family have tried to find work in the city. A chief controls 18 of the local villages, and a headman voted by the locals is in charge of their specific village. Surrounding this

peaceful village is the flourishing tourist development called Coffee Bay, which has become the party capital of the Transkei for those with money.

Currently, there are few development projects taking place. There is a water and invasive tree project that the government is conducting with the University of Transkei, but for the most part this does not affect the local population. But this is not because the people are lazy; in fact, especially after seeing firsthand the tourist industry flourish villagers want to get involved, learn, and work. Nonetheless, most of these tourist ventures do not get the local community involved for a variety of reasons, including lack of education, insufficient English skills, and inability to understand the ways in which businesses are run. Many of these hostels and hotels employed foreigners who simply wanted a fun place to live for a few months. A villager, named Silas told me quite honestly, "There are an abundance of locals, as you can see from all the beggars. But nobody has an idea on how to get things done[76]." There is electricity running through these people's backyards, but they cannot afford to pay for it themselves. Finally, everything is so far away that it takes a long time if they ever have to go anywhere.

While this may seem like the difference between a rural and urban setting, the discussion with Silas got interesting when politics was brought up. He told me angrily, "I'm sick of hearing about politics. It has done nothing for us." This is because, for Silas, politics is equated equally with the ANC. Although he considers himself supportive of UDM, he explains the way in which ANC tried to come in and register voters. They went from house to house, and when they could not register any more voters they simply left and were never seen again. For Silas, this seemed like another political ploy to get more

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[76]Coffee Bay Resident. Interview by Jeffrey Paller, 1 August 2005. Coffee Bay, South Africa.

votes. While the amount of euphemism is unclear, it is obvious that Rini Village is in desperate conditions, and the government seems to be unaware of its needs. It also seems like the ANC does not care.

This example also raises another concern that is evident in rural areas: the fate of the chieftaincy. The South African government has tried very hard to adequately represent the chieftaincy in the centralized government. There is a Traditional Council that is part of the political system, and the chieftaincy still holds enormous political sway in local affairs[77]. However, as Silas was quick to point out, issues of development are usually at odds with the institution of the chieftaincy. This contradiction makes the situation in rural areas even more difficult, and leads to the question: who is in charge, the government or the chieftaincy?

The chieftaincy as a political institution has responded and adapted well to the introduction of democracy[78]. Both South African democracy and the chieftaincy have transformed in a way that has affected the other. Functionally speaking, "chiefs rely more upon informal powers that reflect the ideas, rules, and institutions rooted in pre-existing community norms and practices, or so-called 'traditions[79].'" On the other hand, democracy is a more modern concept that attempts to bring all members of a population into dialogue with one another, focusing on the equality of its members rather than a traditional authority. Nonetheless, in efforts of democratic consolidation, these two polarized viewpoints have come into contact with one another.

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[77] For more information, see: Draft White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Local Government. October 2002. Available: http://www.info.gov.za/gazette/whitepaper/2002/traditional.pdf.
[78] Williams, J. Michael. "Leading from behind: democratic consolidation and the chieftaincy in South Africa." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42.1 (2004): 113-136.
[79] Ibid, 117.

Democracy and the chieftaincy are not mutually exclusive. On the local level the chiefs integrate into the electoral process by encouraging more participation and choice of candidates. In other words, while the chief is still spokesperson of the community, he is not ultimate authority in electoral issues. Some democratic ideas and institutions have been incorporated into the chieftaincy, like voting and participation[80].

Nonetheless, this raises some very important questions that have yet to be completely answered. Is the chieftaincy part of government or civil society? In many ways, it is both, once again blurring the lines between government and civil society. Furthermore, while institutionally the chieftaincy has been incorporated into government—or consolidated democratically—the power structure is still left unresolved. In other words, it is still unclear what the relationship the State has with local chiefs, and vice versa. All in all, is the chieftaincy a voice of the people or of the government?

A Brief History of Civil Society in South Africa

The defeat of apartheid in South Africa could not have taken place without a vibrant civil society. During the apartheid regime local populations continually mobilized in a way that was confrontational to the state. What made civil society so effective was its comprehensive approach on the grassroots level. Worker's Unions (most notably COSATU), the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), the ANC, the South African Communist Party, and local and international NGOs constantly put pressure on the state[81]. This pressure even forced international governments to place economic sanctions on the South African government. Furthermore, while each organization or group had their own primary functions and goals, all were unified in the

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[80] Ibid, 131.
[81] Hein Marais adds, "The sweep encompassed labour, women's, civic, student, youth, human rights, church, legal, health, education, media, community advice, legal, housing, land and other groups" (199).

liberation struggle[82]. In the end, this lively civil society forced apartheid out and became

a symbol for people power liberation movements across the world.

However, the transition to democracy has not been easy for civil society[83].

Consider the example of civic organizations. Jeremy Seekings argues that

democratization has affected civic organizations in two key ways[84]. Firstly, many saw the

civics major function as the fight for democracy. Now that democracy was in place, the

civics had achieved their goals. Secondly, grievances could now be raised through

institutional means via government structures. This has forced civic organizations to

change their strategy; some act as "watchdogs" of the state while others act cooperatively

with the state. Many organizations have experienced funding problems due to lack of

international funding and declining membership base[85]. Most importantly, civic

organizations have experienced the loss of important leadership, many of whom have

been elected to local government. Almost all have joined as ANC councilors[86].

Furthermore, Elke Zuern argues that civics are dependent on the ANC for funding

and privilege purposes, but also because it is easier to get things done. In her interviews

with SANCO leaders, their ambiguity in how to deal with the ANC is obvious. One

SANCO leader explained:

> If we don't disagree [with the ANC], it is unhealthy. We must disagree. But the
> moment where we disagree to the point where we actually fight publicly, it
> doesn't help our cause…Whenever we disagree such that there is lack of

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[82] In everyday conversation in South Africans, individuals still refer to apartheid as "the Struggle."

[83] Lanegran, Kimberly. "South Africa's Civic Association Movement: ANC's ally or society's "watchdog"? Shifting social movement-political party relations." *African Studies Review* 38 (September 1995): 101-126.

[84] Seekings, Jeremy. "After Apartheid: Civic Organisations in the 'New' South Africa." in Adler, Glenn. *From Comrades to Citizens: The South African Civics Movement & the Transition to Democracy*. New York: Palgrave Publishers, 2000.

[85] Civics have largely relied on foreign donors, membership dues and corporate sponsorship. After the fall of apartheid, many of these supporters saw the problem as over.

[86] Seekings, 211.

movement, it works in the hands of conservatives…There will come points where as Sanco we don't necessarily completely agree with this policy, but we will go on with you, but we will continue the debate with you[87].

As this comment shows, the ANC clearly has the upper hand in its relationship with civic organizations. Furthermore, the ANC has been able to use civic organizations for its own needs, while these organizations are sometimes forced to take a backseat to state policies.

Important resources are now in the hands of the state, and the ANC has taken full advantage of the ability to control them. In fact, the ANC still tries to have its hand in grassroots activism, but clearly through the framework of its institutionalized and centralized model. Desai provides the example of Ishmael Peterson of the Anti-eviction Campaign in Tafelsig, a community activist who fought against globalization in his town. After successful organizing to thwart the evictions, Desai writes, "But activism still has its price in South Africa. They have warded off attempts on their lives and, in Peterson's case, his conscience after the local ANC parliamentary office offered him a well-paying full-time job in exchange for his leaving community politics[88]."

In *Seeing Like a State*, Scott argues that one of the key elements of High Modernism is "a weakened or prostrate civil society that lacks capacity to resist these [social experimental] plans[89]." Interestingly, in South Africa's more democratic and postmodern society, civil society is not so much incapable of resisting State practices, but rather unsure of whether it should resist these policies or not. It simply does not know what it should do. In the end, whether being incapable or simply not acting has the same effects: the line between civil society and the state only gets more and more blurred each day.

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[87] Donovan Williams, interview, 10 May 1997 quoted in Zuern, 85.
[88] Desai, 98.
[89] Scott (1998), 89.

Civil Society Organizations and Social Grants

The Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) provides one of the most thorough analyses of the way in which Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) view their relationship with the State, and vice versa[90]. The section on "Social Grants" highlights the uniqueness of this relationship. In most cases, CSOs and the State have the same goals of poverty reduction, thus confusing what exactly their respective roles should be. On the one hand, this analysis suggests that civil society remained strong because of its independence from government and its close connection to local communities[91]. However, problems arose when CSOs tried to interact with government structures. One respondent explained, "The government doesn't have a framework for conversation with civil society[92]." Another member saw this as a problem within the government, "There is a whole bureaucratic process involved that prevents things from moving forward[93]." Finally, one respondent stated simply, "They don't take us seriously as civil society[94]." This analysis suggests that the institutions themselves are in place for a vibrant civil society, and CSOs themselves are trying to act in the best interests of local communities. However, the problem arises when the CSOs and government structures interact.

Many CSO members expressed concern that they were not only supplementing the State's efforts, but that they were also doing the work of the State. As one respondent stated, "It is very important to understand that we are not governmental and that we have

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[90] Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). *Civil Society in South Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in the Transition Process*. Analysed for USAID and Crea SA (Civil Society Strengthening Program). June 2004. This study used interviews with members of CSOs and government bodies to explore how each viewed the other and to investigate the relations between civil society and government.
[91] Ibid, 66.
[92] Ibid, 67.
[93] Ibid, 68.
[94] Ibid, 68.

an oversight role. So we have to keep our distance[95]." Another member added, "We aren't there to do the government's job. What we are there for is to ensure that government is doing its job."[96] While these members have specific objectives, they are often confused and contradictory when put in contact with the State. What they say is their role and what they actually do could be two completely different things. Furthermore, the State and CSO often do not understand each others' roles. One respondent explains, "I think there is a huge gap in terms of what the NGOs perceived as needed to happen from government's side and what government perceives is going to happen from the NGO's side[97]." Much of this relationship is confused because so many former CSO members now work for the State. A respondent said, "If you go and visit the Department of Social Services here in Gauteng, there are people who used to be our staff there[98]." This suggests the further blurring between State and civil society due to personnel and ideological factors.

However, the biggest problems arise when the State and CSOs were clearly dependent on the other to function. For example, many CSOs are dependent on the State for funding, thus adding incentives for the CSOs to pursue positive relations with the State. In fact, some CSOs in Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal expressed that they were in verge of closing down due to lack of funding. One respondent reported, "Even at best when government is responsive and might even call us to a meeting or something, we become cautious that we didn't eat dinner with power today and find that tomorrow we

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[95] Ibid, 69.
[96] Ibid, 69.
[97] Ibid, 71.
[98] Ibid, 73.

have to speak to power but we are so full we can't[99]." This suggests that CSOs are more directly linked to the State than previously imagined, lacking the true independence that these organizations have in their mission. In conclusion, civil society respondents found that the relationship with the State was confused and contradictory. One CSO member explains this general sentiment, "The State's response is a very strange mixture: on the one hand they invited us to participate and they seem to welcome our participation. They use a lot of our time and a lot of our resources in those processes. And then they tend to ignore huge amounts of what we were saying[100]."

All of this analysis suggests that the State has huge impacts on CSOs as a whole, and this relationship often dominates what the CSOs end up doing and how they function. While in theory CSOs act independently of the State, one cannot negate the enormous impacts that the State has on the organizations. While individually these institutions are set up democratically, it is the relationship between the State and CSOs that really define the power relations. In South Africa, this power clearly resides in the State.

Is there Community Development in South Africa?

Eshowe is a pleasant town in northern Kwazulu-Natal province, more casually called Zululand. Residents of this town take pride in what it has been able to accomplish in the last ten years since apartheid: blacks and whites walk next to one another down the street, the roads are impressively clean, a new mini-taxi rank offers benches and shelter for those waiting for a ride (this is definitely an anomaly in South Africa), and chain restaurants—even KFC—mix with locally-owned stores in so-called strip malls. Finally,

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[99] Ibid, 75.
[100] Ibid, 76.

signs supporting local development initiatives abound; there is even a store that sells pottery and other art made by Zulus, described as a community development project.

Eshowe is considered a success story[101]. But after taking a closer look at some of the community development projects, it became clear that there were specific power dynamics taking shape. Consider the house built for orphans, funded by *Rotary International*. For many years, a single African woman took care of several orphans in her hut. This is a very common practice in South Africa, and has only gotten more widespread with the AIDS epidemic and the higher amounts of AIDS orphans. *Rotary International* decided it would be worthwhile to build a facility that would better serve the orphans. Thus, they built a new, modern, relatively high tech facility amidst run down shanties. It looks incredibly out of place. Furthermore, it only houses 8-16 kids, whereas the caretaker has been taking care of up to 40 or more children. It is unclear where the rest of the kids live. Also, the financial and spiritual support is widely linked to Christian values; so much that the brochure that was handed to me was covered with Christian gospel and evangelizing doctrine. For example, the brochure of the facility read, "Pray that through this outreach many will come to know Christ as their Savior."

After talking with one of the residents, this was clearly top-down community development. A man named Graham said to me, "If you're looking for what villages and communities start for themselves, you're not going to find it here [in South Africa]. It doesn't work that way. Instead, somebody comes in with a lot of money, and tells them what to do. But things are getting better, you can't deny that[102]."

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[101] For a brief overview see: www.eshowe.com.

[102] Eshowe Resident. Interview by Jeffrey Paller, 25 August 2005. Eshowe, South Africa.

While this is only one example, it is certainly not the anomaly in South Africa[103]. In fact, whether it is Inanda, Coffee Bay, Mamelodi or anywhere else in the country, money clearly dictates what type of community development will take shape. And in such a hierarchical society, money comes from the top sectors of society.

So why does this matter? Robert Putnam argues that democracy is more than just voting through the political institutions, but includes grassroots civic engagement as well[104]. This is because a democracy requires more than just physical capital, but also social capital. Putnam defines social capital as, "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them[105]." Furthermore, social capital is produced by activity in voluntary organizations; he traces the history of bowling leagues in the United States. Nonetheless, the same could be true for any grassroots association in which people willingly come together. Putnam further argues that there is a correlation between high social capital and effective government performance, thus strengthening democracy. He writes:

> Strong traditions of civic engagement—voter turnout, newspaper readership, membership in choral societies and literary circles, Lions Clubs, and soccer clubs—were the hallmarks of a [democratically] successful region...These "civic communities value solidarity, civic participation, and integrity. And here democracy works[106].

In South Africa, the disengagement from civic organizations and the lack of true grassroots mobilization could hinder its democracy. As Putnam shows, true democracy is

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[103] Etienne Nel offers a very good assessment of community development in South Africa. Nel has researched some very successful projects and lays out plans to what can make community development more successful. But grassroots community development is still rare across the country, and has a long way to go. See: Nel, Etienne. "Local economic development: a review and assessment of its current status in South Africa." *Urban Studies* 38, no. 7 (June 2001): 1003-1024.

[104] Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

[105] Putnam, 19.

[106] Putnam, 345.

more than just functioning, institutionalized channels for participation, but includes

voluntary associations as well. Thus, top-down community development is not enough.

Top-Down Globalization

While this is not an economics paper, it is impossible to understand South

Africa's current political and social situation without considering the economy. More

importantly, discussing economic policy demonstrates the way in which the ANC has

changed its course to stress global free trade, privatization of industry, and foreign

investment[107]. In other words, the ANC has taken a top-down approach to the economy

by bypassing local opinion. Interestingly, they have implemented the exact opposite

economic policies from the state-centered approach—nationalization of industry, etc.—

that the movement was founded on. This has had a profound impact on the South African

population: inequality is rising, unemployment remains a huge problem, and the poorest

members of society continue to live in disparate conditions.

For those South Africans living in poverty, things are not getting much better.

While poverty itself may not be growing, those households living in poverty have sunk

deeper into poverty while the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen[108].

Still, by 2001, 57% of South Africans were living below the poverty line[109]. Furthermore,

South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. Its national Gini

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[107] McKinley, Dale T. *The ANC and the liberation struggle: a critical political biography.* London: Pluto Press, 1997.

[108] Human Sciences Research Council. "Fact Sheet: Poverty South Africa." 26 July 2004. Available: www.hsrc.ac.za.

[109] Ibid. Nonetheless, there are different ways to understand poverty Servaas van der Berg and Megan Louw estimate that 46% of South Africans live in poverty, equating to 20.5 million people in 2000 (2003). They use the "minimum living level (MLL)" as their benchmark. See: Van der Berg, S. & Louw, M. *Changing patterns of SA income distribution: Towards time series estimates of distribution and poverty.* Paper delivered to the Conference of the Economic Society of SA. Stellenbosch (17-19 September 2003).

Coefficient figure hovers around .6, and even rose to .77 in 2001[110]. Interestingly,

amongst black households this figure has risen substantially, suggesting that the

economic situation is no longer strictly a race problem[111]. Finally, the South African

government reports that 26.7% of the population remains unemployed[112]. However, this

is considered a very low estimate because it only includes those "actively seeking work."

It is generally believed that about 40% of the population is unemployed[113]. Clearly, a

huge percentage of the South African population is not being adequately represented by

government policy.

So what exactly is government policy? In 1996, the ANC declared the Growth,

Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan to tackle its macroeconomic problems[114].

The ANC argued that in order to stop inflation and stop the devaluation of currency, this

new focus on foreign investment and privatization was necessary. But GEAR appeared

contradictory to the people-centered economic model of the past. For example, in 1990

ANC leader Nelson Mandela said, "The nationalization of the mines, banks and

monopoly industry is the policy of the ANC and a change or modification of our views in

this regard is inconceivable[115]." Furthermore, in 1994 the ANC instituted the

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), a comprehensive social and

economic strategy that took a more people-centered approach to development and

economics[116]. The plan stressed civil society partnerships, social, cultural, and political

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[110] Landman, JP. "Breaking the Grip of Poverty and Inequality in South Africa: 2004-2014." December 2003. The .77 figure is from Human Sciences Research Council. "Fact Sheet: Poverty South Africa."
[111] Ibid.
[112] Statistics South Africa. 2005. Available: http://www.statssa.gov.za/keyindicators/lfs.asp.
[113] Landman.
[114] The policy can be viewed at http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/policy/growth.html.
[115] *Sowetan*, 5 March 2000 quoted in: Marais, Hein. *South Africa Limits to Change: The Political Economy of Transformation*. Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press: 1998.
[116] The plan can be viewed at http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/rdp/rdp.html.

rights, and strong community participation. All in all, the RDP emphasized a "growth through redistribution" strategy[117]. However, the ANC clearly changed its mind, gave into global market forces, and instituted neo-liberal policies. While the RDP is still intact, it has taken a backseat to GEAR and is no longer the comprehensive economic model of the ANC.

What is most telling of this apparent "bait and switch," is the way in which the ANC went about this significant change in policy. In fact, the ANC unveiled this strategy behind closed doors, and had very little input from its social partners[118]. This is especially significant because the ANC has had a tripartite alliance with both the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the South African National Civics Organization (SANCO). Clearly, the ANC did not consider other options[119]. This hard hand approach was evident in the words of then Deputy President Mbeki, now South Africa's President, "Anyone who is rational can't come to any conclusion other than our [economic] policies[120]."

This is not to say that redistribution did not occur. Some did. However, redistribution occurred along racial lines, especially via the program of the Black Empowerment Campaign that put more investment power into the hands of black-owned businesses. This was what Mbeki had in mind when he called for the emergence of a black bourgeoisie. All in all, while several blacks did in fact benefit, capital simply

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[117] Marais.

[118] Ibid, 160-161.

[119] Zwelinzima Vavi, the General Secretary of COSATU argues, "Government has been very reluctant to open debates on macro-economic policy, since it knows its own constituencies oppose its positions." See: Vavi, Zwelinzima. *Globalisation and Labour.* Speech delivered to Cornell University (22 September 2004).

[120] "The Rational Heir." Financial Mail 3 October 1997. Quoted in Marais, 161.

transferred from the hands of white elites to black elites[121]. Inequality was only getting worse and unemployment was still a huge problem.

It must be emphasized that the ANC was not simply held hostage by global market forces. In fact, as Padraig Carmody argues, "South African globalization has been largely internally generated[122]." The ANC consciously adopted GEAR in order to strengthen the currency and reassure foreign investors of its economic orthodoxy[123]. Furthermore, as Marais highlights, there were limits to what the ANC could do due to the "political economy of transformation," one that involved negotiations with the previously ruling National Party, the global economic climate, and the bureaucracy of the ANC itself. These factors forced the ANC to act decisively and take a top-down approach to the economy and globalization in general.

This suggests that there was something else at stake in the ANC's top-down approach to the economy: the desire to keeps its stranglehold on power. Had the ANC supported a people-power redistribution plan, the ANC would have run the risk of backlash by powerful actors at home and abroad, including big business, foreign governments and especially higher-ups in the ANC itself. In other words, this could have unleashed a more vocal political movement that was critical of its privileges. Instead, the ANC could enhance stability by turning its back on the less privileged of society. It could then rely on its top-down approach to quell social mobilization. This allowed the ANC to keep their stranglehold on power in place. Interestingly, this did not threaten institutionalized democracy. Rather, the ANC used it for its own political gains.

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[121] Bond, Patrick. *Elite Transition: from Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000.
[122] Carmody, Padraig. "Between Globalization and (Post) Apartheid: The Political Economy of Restructuring in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28.2 (June 2002): 256.
[123] Carmody, 258.

A Situation of Perpetual Waiting

The ANC's top down approach to everything has caused a situation of perpetual waiting. South Africans—especially blacks who have identified with the anti-apartheid struggle for so long—expect the ANC to come through on their promises of potable water, houses, and electricity for everyone. This has created a situation in which South Africans are completely dependent on the ANC for service delivery, or at least think they are[124]. One South African complains, "The government promised us that water is a basic right, but now they are telling us our rights are for sale[125]." As Bekkersdal resident Simphiwe Alfred explains, "We need houses and we need jobs," and he looks to the ANC to provide these resources[126].

Nowhere is this clearer than in Mamelodi, a township outside of Pretoria. I visited Mamelodi with my friend Cliff, a man in his twenties who had a respectable job in the tourist industry[127]. He lived with his older brother who was in the insurance business, and his younger brother who was attending high school. Like many South Africans of his age, the three of them moved away from their village that was two hours away (where they grew up with their parents) to have better opportunities in the city. I was surprised to learn that they had no electricity and no running water inside their house. Each house in their settlement—which was a formal settlement—had newly constructed "outhouses" that had toilets and a sink with running water. Each outhouse looked the same. The house had a tin roof, and water marks were evident on the side of the walls due to leaks. In my

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[124] South Africans are equally dependent on private actors due to economic liberalization policies that the ANC has instated, but there is still this belief that the ANC owes these individuals something.

[125] Quoted in Bond, Patrick. "The battle over water in South Africa." *Africa Files* 3 January 2006. This is slightly different from situations such as Bolivia where protests have been largely against multinational corporations. In South Africa, the local populations still look to the government for these services.

[126] Biles, Peter. "Waiting for Water in SA Townships." *BBCnews.com* 17 January 2006.

[127] Mamelodi Resident. Interview by Jeffrey Paller, 24 July 2005. Mamelodi, South Africa.

mind, Cliff is a middle class South African. He was manager of a decent business, he had a college education, and he had saved money. I asked Cliff if he planned to stay here for a while or if this house was just temporary. He responded, "I hope to build a bigger house for my family someday. I am just waiting for the ANC to connect electricity to the house. We will then build a much bigger and better place for my family." I asked him how long he thought it would be. He answered, "Maybe six or twelve months, who knows?"

Cliff did not seem to be in any hurry. But he also did not seem to be making any progress on his house, despite having money. For him, there was no point to move forward before electricity and before the government's plans had been put into place. Clearly, development takes time. But this time has kept South African citizens even more dependent on the government, giving the ANC that much more power. In other words, by taking a top-down approach to the development of Mamelodi, the ANC has caused a situation of perpetual waiting, creating more dependency on the centralized government. Although this sounds like socialism, the State has actually privatized the service industry, causing much of the problems to lie within the liberal economic models of privatization. However, by keeping its hands in the way in which this will work itself out on a societal level, the ANC has been able to keep civil society dependent on the central government.

Harboring Disillusionment

Most of the discontent with the ANC involves the way in which liberal economic policies have negatively affected the poor. Simply put, a large number of the poor are pissed off. This is extremely evident in black youth, ranging from university students to young twenty-something aspiring musicians. For example, I met two female university

students and one of their boyfriends, a young man who was becoming a Catholic priest[128]. When I asked them about President Mbeki, each of them started telling me what they thought of him, at the same time. One of the girls started screaming about how he was abroad all the time and was turning his back on his population at home. "Thousands of people are dying of AIDS and have no jobs and he is off at the Hague sipping coffee with your president." The couple was quick to respond, "Look what he has done with this 'African Renaissance.' And he has lowered our debt incredibly. You cannot overlook that." They passionately argued for thirty minutes, at times screaming and laughing at one another. By the end, I asked all three of them if they would vote for the ANC in the next upcoming election. They looked at me with dumbfounded faces as if I asked a stupid question. The anti-Mbeki girl responded, "Of course, we still believe in the struggle." As Lumsden and Loftus argue, for these students, "The ANC is not simply a party; it became a way of life and a symbol of liberation." Similarly, Michael Herzfeld argues that these narrow visions cause an eternal history. He writes, that they "showcase and maintain a specifically national heritage[129]." The ANC has become both central and indistinguishable from this national heritage. There is no alternative to the ANC.

These same sentiments appear in South African urban rap music. However, there is another dimension that the music highlights: disillusionment. In other words, many youth feel that the ANC has freed them from apartheid, but has failed to provide them with a better life. For example, the *Soldiers with a Divine Purpose* rap in one of their songs, "The government's functions are useless/not out on the street understanding the needs of taxpayers/of squatter camps/ surviving under minimum wages/ unable to

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[128] Pretoria Resident. Interview by Jeffrey Paller, 26 July 2005. Pretoria, South Africa.
[129] Herzfeld, Michael. "Political Optics and the Occlusion of Intimate Knowledge." *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3: 369-376.

adequately support their teenagers from gangsterism and being raped[130]." Another song

highlights the way the government has left the people behind, "Political leaders lead by

light just to please us/ the truth be told before it gets cold and defeats us/ people

physically need us while politicians verbally feed us/ our heads are full but our stomachs

are empty/ hunger thrusts the poor man's society[131]."

      While political and social mobilization is theoretically an option, local

populations feel as though this is not a viable alternative. Instead, they are left waiting,

disillusioned, and dependent on the ANC. In reality, these people on the ground are far

more capable than the opportunities they are given suggest. Scott argues that when

governments "see like a State" they display "how little confidence they repose in the

skills, intelligence, and experience of ordinary people[132]." The ANC's top-down

approach to everything similarly negates the confidence they have on local populations

across the country, severely limiting their voice in government policies.

New Social Movements in South Africa

      Although many South Africans are left disillusioned, there is a new phenomenon

taking place that has begun to turn this disappointment into action. Academics have

labeled these the New Social Movements. These movements are specific to post-

apartheid South Africa, and are in direct response to globalization and the neo-liberal

policies that the ANC have instituted. For example, more than 800 service delivery

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[130] Soldiers with a Divine Purpose. "Survivor's best element." *Umsabalas*. Track 4.
[131] Soldiers with a Divine Purpose. "Survivor's best element." *Umsabalas*. Track 18.
[132] Scott (1998), 346.

protests, anti-eviction campaigns, and anti-globalization campaigns have swept through

South Africa since 2000 and are starting to become a serious issue in the country[133].

However, the extent of these movements and their ability to thwart the ANC's hegemony

is still unknown. Despite these obvious protestations to state power and policies, the

ANC has only proven to get stronger both at the local and state levels[134]. Furthermore, it

is still unclear whether this phenomenon is indeed a unified movement that can have

political implications and punish the ANC in some way or simply a bunch of

marginalized populations ranting against *The System* with no useful dent in the state's

hegemony.

Ashwin Desai traces the history of these movements in his groundbreaking work

*We are the Poor*s[135]. According to him, these new social movements were in direct

response to the policies of the ANC. Desai writes, "The ANC had voluntarily imposed its

own structural adjustment program on South Africa[136]." Desai clearly emphasizes two

things: firstly, this is an anti-globalization struggle. Secondly, it is in direct opposition to

ANC policies—policies made voluntarily without adequately representing much of the

South African population. In fact, rather than being a racial issue—as was the problem

during apartheid—it was now a class crisis with the poorest members of society being

underrepresented. For Desai, the ANC had turned its back on a vital part of the

population, "The Poors." He writes, "Unemployed, single mother, community defender,

neighbor, factory worker, popular criminal, rap artist and genuine ou (good human

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[133] Allan, Kevin and Karen Heese. "Now that the dust has settled…" *Mail & Guardian* 10 March 2006.
[134] The Human Sciences Research Council. "Identity documents and registration to vote: prepared for the Independent Electoral Commission." 2004.
[135] Desai, Ashwin. *We are the Poors: Community struggles in post-apartheid South Africa.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002. Desai's book is influential in raising awareness of this issue both locally and globally but also bringing it into the academic realm.
[136] Desai, 10.

being). Those constructs have all come to make up the collective identities of "the poors[137]."

Desai locates the beginning of these movements with the emergence of the Concerned Citizens Forum (CCF) in Chatsworth (a township outside of Durban). As is the case with many social movements, protests and campaigns spread to Isipingo, Mpumalanga, Soweto, Tafelsig, and across the entire country. Thus, he characterizes these events as part of a single, unified movement against privatization, globalization, and the ANC in general. For Desai, it was at the community level where opposition was most clear, and this movement was the true voice of the people, not the institutionalized democracy in which governed the country.

Desai's book establishes a unified concept of these emergent protests and anti-globalization campaigns and claimed that they were in fact a social movement. The problems that Desai describes are in parallel agreement with the analysis that this paper seeks to highlight, namely the importance of a class based approach to politics, looking beyond institutionalized democracy for political representation, locating sources of power, and pointing to the hegemonic activities of the ANC as a potential threat to democracy in South Africa. Desai clearly sees this emergent movement amongst "the poors" as a potential and viable opposition to the ANC. By bringing voice to this so-called movement, Desai also introduced this issue to the realm of academia, sparking serious studies about what to make of these New Social Movements in South Africa[138].

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[137] Desai, 7.

[138] The Centre for Civil Society at the University of Kwazulu Natal has commissioned a comprehensive study looking at these New Social Movements.

For example, Peter Dwyer takes a closer look at the Concerned Citizens Forum (CCF) and their local response to globalization[139]. He argues that this movement evolved on the simple struggle to survive. Furthermore, he stresses the grassroots way in which people got involved. He writes, "This involves contacts between neighbours, friends, family, school friends and workmates who learn about issues and impending protests, and talk debate, gossip and argue about this, and encourage each other to participate or not[140]." Dwyer also notes the flexibility in the organizational capabilities of the CCF; its agenda and active base is continuously changing and reconstructed to what issues are most important at any particular time[141]. Similarly, Franco Barchiesi argues that this type of politics, which he calls "politics of the multitude" shifts power relations by adding new dimensions and areas of contestation that were previously not possible[142]. In this way, Dwyer and Barchiesi clearly emphasize the local dimension that groups such as the CCF bring to the political framework of South Africa. Finally, the flexibility and grassroots focus that these community movements stress provide a valuable opportunity for local political representation in South Africa. As Barchiesi claims:

> The new generation of community movements in South Africa seems to have succeeded in opening political spaces where discourses of "the nation," "transformation" and social change, previously almost the exclusive ideological preserve of the ANCs nationalist repertoire, are now radically put into question, debunked or outright subverted with the rise of new meanings and desires[143].

Theoretically speaking, these community movements provide a valuable lesson to the future of democracy in South Africa. They act as a viable framework to how politics

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[139] Dwyer, Peter. "The Contentious Politics of the Concerned Citizens Forum (CCF)." *Alternative Information Development Centre* (2004). A case study for "Globalisation, Marginalisation & New Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa" at the University of Natal, Durban.
[140] Dwyer, 13.
[141] Dwyer, 29.
[142] Barchiesi, Franco. "Classes, Multitudes and the Politics of Community Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa." *Centre for Civil Society* Research Report No. 20 (August 2004).
[143] Barchiesi, 4.

truly plays out on the local level, bypassing state institutions as the most useful outlets for political representation. However, it is still too early to tell the effects that these movements have on the future of democracy in South Africa.

There are a few reasons to believe that these community movements are not the answer to South Africa's political problems. Firstly, the ANC is incredibly savvy and is so good at stamping out opposition and activism. For example, as mentioned earlier, some of these activists involved end up working in local government as ANC councilors[144]. The ANC has located these community movements as a potential problem (as is obvious through quotes by Mbeki and other leaders) and are currently devising strategies to mitigate them. Instead of engaging these movements into the political process, the ANC is actively quelling them. This is a problem.

Secondly, the "looseness"— lack of membership and records—that these movements cite as their strengths are also potentially their greatest weakness. These movements have the potential of being too fragmented and diverse to truly gain any lasting change. In other words, by bypassing the institutional structures of government, these movements run the risk of becoming so marginal and illegitimate that they serve no long term purpose whatsoever. While authors like Desai claim that there is one unified movement, it still appears that these protests have not distinguished themselves as a viable opposition to the ANC. In fact, the ANC only appears to be getting stronger.

Conclusion

South Africa has become a situation of politics as usual. Tribal conflict has not broken out, widespread corruption has not doomed the country, and the population is actively engaged in the democratic process. People still care about politics and take pride

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[144] As I mentioned earlier in this paper, this is what happened with Ishmael Peterson (Desai, 98).

in what they have accomplished. In fact, this stability is exactly what the country, the world, and the ANC had wanted. Unfortunately, politics as usual now includes rising social inequalities, unemployment, crime, and AIDS. And the ANC's dominance is holding this political and social system together.

The case of South Africa shows that Scott's notion of *Seeing Like a State* is not strictly limited to authoritarian high modernist experiments. In fact, the narrow vision that the ANC has taken in its top-down approach to everything has the same effects as the Utopian projects that Scott describes in his book. Scott argues that these experiments narrow vision by using schematic knowledge, control and manipulation[145]. They stamp out *mētis*, or local practical knowledge[146]. In other words, *Seeing Like a State* is no longer limited to coercive mechanisms, but can occur in post-modern, functioning liberal democracies[147]. Instead, the problem resides in the way in which the State is able to organize and co-opt local actors (such as NGOs, local government structures, community organizations) for their own use. In fact, the ability of the State itself to penetrate Scott's so-called hidden transcript has allowed the ANC to become more and more powerful across the country[148]. Instead of hegemonic structures residing in a high modernist atmosphere, the ANC has been able to use the array of local forces to strengthen its own power. Thus, rather than limiting our view to simply the hidden transcript or public

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[145] Scott (1998), 11.
[146] Scott (1998), 311. Scott defines *mētis* as "practical skills, variously called know-how, common sense, experience, a knack."
[147] Li, Tania Murray. "Beyond "the State" and Failed Schemes." *American Anthropologist* 107 (2005), no. 3: 383.
[148] Greenhouse, Carol. "Hegemony and Hidden Transcripts: The Discursive Arts of Neoliberal Legitimation." *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 356-368. Carol Greenhouse extends Scott's notion of hidden transcripts to the realm of powerful groups. Whereas Scott explores the way in which subordinate groups display everyday forms of resistance on the hidden transcript, Greenhouse argues that the dominant group also penetrates the hidden transcript to strengthen its hegemony.

transcript respectively, it is more useful to explore the associations between the two. In this case, the relationship between government and civil society is what is most telling.

The ANC's top-down approach to everything has serious consequences for the state of democracy in South Africa. It is important to note that this is not an argument against institutionalized democracy. Instead, institutionalized democracy is part of a larger phenomenon in which the South African State is involved. As I have shown, a functioning institutionalized democracy is susceptible to one-party dominance. More importantly, it is vulnerable to elite or class supremacy. Inequality of society is the gravest threat, and this ends up affecting social issues for the entire population. In other words, institutionalized democracy happens to be part of the top-down approach to everything that has bolstered its own power.

So where are the people? In this case, the ANC's top down approach to everything has trumped societal organizing, especially class-based mobilization[149]. As I have tried to show, the people are there, they care, and they want to make their country better. They *are* modern-day democrats. This is not an example of Gramsci's notion of hegemony, one that suggests false consciousness[150]. In fact the people on the ground in South Africa know what is happening, and in many cases disagree with the ruling party. But the ANC is everywhere. They have kept the country engrossed in the "liberation struggle" while leaving the poorest South Africans behind. And this is not being addressed.

All is not lost. To the contrary. The problem in South Africa is not an illusion. Academics are writing about it. People are starting to take to the streets. And the

[149] Sivaramakrishnan, K. "Some Intellectual Genealogies for the Concept of Everyday Resistance." *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 346-355. Sivaramakrishnan warns of this in his essay.
[150] Gramsci, Antonio. *Letters from Prison*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

institutionalized structures are only getting better. However, these so-called New Social Movements have started to be seen as a threat to democracy. This is wrong. The real threat to democracy is ignoring these campaigns and protests. Instead, it is necessary to actively engage these movements into the political process. They must be taken seriously in order to be a legitimate political force. The ANC must recognize this.

Obviously, a drastic change from the apartheid regime to democracy is not easy. The case of South Africa affirms this. But it also presents us with a telling situation that highlights the shortcomings of institutionalized democracy. Latin America is currently undergoing a rapid shift to popular, left-leaning governments. The Middle East is experiencing its own shift of "democratization." This paper shows that democracy itself cannot *fix* developing countries without taking into account the ensuing power relations. Furthermore, it suggests that the very transition itself can harbor a situation in which the group in control "sees like a state." Exploring the relationship between state and civil society is the best place to start.

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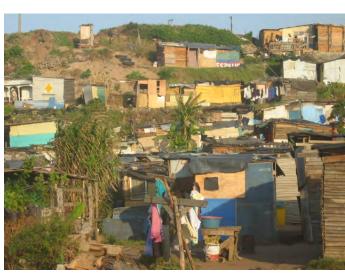Zakaria, Fareed. "The rise of illiberal democracy." *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997): 22-43.

Photos

Rini Village, Coffee Bay.

Local political rally.

The Dakota Township.

Local Politician Freddie Maistry.

The Dakota Township

House in Kyalitsha.