

Geography of Fear: Crime and the Transformation of Public Space  
in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Contemporary public space is being eroded dramatically. This undermining of the public realm is given perhaps its most graphic representation in Mike Davis's diagram of the "ecology of fear," in which urban space is broken down into an ethnically segregated series of concentric rings (365). According to Davis, cities like Los Angeles are coming to resemble the manichean racial cantonments of colonial and apartheid urban spaces. The gravity of this situation in the United States, with its gated racial enclaves and private security forces, is certainly worth underlining and challenging. However, this decay of the public realm is not an issue in global cities of the developed world alone. According to the United Nations' "State of the Cities Report 2001," cities in the developed world are fast disappearing from the list of the world's largest urban sites. By 2010 for example, Lagos is projected to become the third largest city in the world, after Tokyo and Mumbai, while Milan, Essen, and London will disappear from the 30 largest cities list and New York, Osaka, and Paris will slip further down the list. These predictions suggest the inadequacy of recent attempts to theorize globalization by focusing on cities in the developed world alone. Analysts such as Saskia Sassen have successfully illuminated the increasingly pivotal role of global cities of the North in the transformation of current political, economic, and social structures. Cities are, now more than ever before, nexuses of exchange, gathering goods, information, and population from their vast hinterlands and exchanging them with other such cosmopolitan entrepôts. Yet the powerful global cities of the developed world are only one part, and an increasingly anomalous one at that, of the story of the urban realm and public space.

Today, in fact, we're faced not simply with the decline of public space but with an unfolding global ecological crisis of unprecedented and potentially catastrophic scale. Cities, the cradles of human civilization, lie at the core of this crisis. For the first time in human history, the

majority of humanity lives in cities. By 2025, this urbanized segment is expected to comprise at least 60% of the human race. Contemporary cities are the primary sites for humanity's consumption of natural resources and pollution of the environment. The cities of the developed world are currently responsible for the lion's share of such consumption and pollution. However, the model of the consumerist city - which finds its paradigmatic expression in the zoned, gated, and sprawling cities of North America - is currently being exported to the growing mega-cities of the global South. The implications of the proliferation of this unsustainable urban model are dire.

Discussions of public space take on a totally different tenor when situated in cities of the South such as Mumbai, where 5 million people currently live in peripheral shanty towns with little access to even the most basic necessities of life. The increasing spatial apartheid and social polarization of urban zones in the developed world pale in comparison with the forms of exclusion and deprivation that structure global cities of the south like Lagos, Manila, and Mexico City. The vast majority of humanity's urbanization during this century will take place in such sites. These cities are, by definition, those least able to cope with spiraling pressures on resources; they are, consequently, also the sites of the greatest environmental and social degradation. These problems will only worsen in the future, as such mega-cities attract increasing numbers of political, economic, and environmental refugees from their hinterlands. The mega-cities of the South demonstrate that we can no longer afford to ignore the inextricable connection between environmental sustainability, economic development, and political stability.

The cities of South Africa on which this article focuses are particularly apposite instances to discuss in order to refocus attention on urban conditions in the global South. These cities are the most developed ones on the planet's most underdeveloped continent. Since South Africa is

the economic dynamo of the sub-Saharan region, the fate of its urban areas will have a disproportionately strong impact on the other nations of Africa. In addition, South Africa is a particularly useful case study since it has historically offered so many parallels to a developed society such as that of the United States. Both nations were established as white settler societies. Like the United States, South Africa has a long history of controlling the movement of its racialized populations in order to facilitate effective labor exploitation and political control. Despite the purported exceptionalism of the U.S., its urban realm has been shaped by strategies of racial containment and exclusion that mirror those deployed in South Africa to a significant extent (Massey 2). Finally, just as in the American case, South Africa is faced with a situation in which formal ideologies of apartheid have been abolished, to be replaced by the informal practices of apartheid meted out by a grossly unbalanced class system. In both countries, the discourse of criminality is one of the primary means through which contemporary urban space and society are apprehended and structured. Unlike the United States, however, the numerical minority of whites in South Africa has ensured the extremity of social conditions. To a certain extent, Americans can look at South Africa and see the underlying currents of their own society in a particularly stark light.

With the end of apartheid, however, the hope has been that South Africa can transcend this role as dystopian twin of the United States. The new nation has a far more progressive constitution than that of the U.S., and it remains imbued with a strong element of hope generated by its political transition. However, as South Africa grapples with the difficult residues of apartheid as well as the political limitations imposed by free market fundamentalism's global hegemony, it runs the risk of following the U.S.'s lead by establishing a carceral economy to control the economically and socially marginalized segments of its population. While the spatial

legacy of apartheid has fostered strong forces leading in this direction, there are also resilient social groups working to establish alternative possibilities for the nation. Nowhere is this more evident than in discourses concerning crime and youth identities. In the following article, I will survey the spatial logic of apartheid and discuss the geography of fear that this legacy has helped to instill in contemporary South Africans before turning to an analysis of discourses concerning criminality in the post-apartheid nation.

### The Spatial Legacy of Apartheid

“Influx control” was a cornerstone of South African social policy long before the official implementation of apartheid in 1948. Indeed, control of the non-white population’s spatial mobility was predicated on an ideological edifice that dates from the colonial era. To understand this is to see South Africa’s history as continuous with the broader social forms engineered by colonial power. This is a crucial step if we are to connect urban conditions in post-apartheid South Africa to those that pertain in postcolonial nations throughout sub-Saharan Africa. While the specificity of South African history needs to be respected, analysis of continuities with colonial and postcolonial experiences elsewhere has become increasingly important following the demise of apartheid. The contradictions faced during the post-apartheid era are embedded in the spatial form created by apartheid-era policies of social engineering. Like the colonial legacy faced by other post-colonial nations, these problems must be addressed if South Africa is to establish a stable and just social order.

Throughout colonial Africa, an absolute, racially based dichotomy was established that relegated Africans to the realm of tradition, while preserving the spaces of modernity for the white settler population (Bester 219). As Mahmood Mamdani has underlined, this dichotomy of

modernity and tradition was used to define the perquisites of citizenship (18). A bifurcated state form developed throughout Africa in which the “native” population was ruled through indirect means, their day to day affairs consigned to the autocratic power of “customary” tribal chieftains. Although Africans were constitutionally excluded from urban civil society within this bifurcated state form, an elaborate institutional apparatus had to be developed in order to maintain this isolation. As Gwendolyn Wright puts it, in such conditions of racialized modernity, “maps of exclusion substituted for real urbanism” (226).

In South Africa, for example, blacks were seen, in opposition to the white population, as an essentially pre-urban group. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, white social critics and bureaucrats worried about the deleterious impact of African urbanization. Migration to the city was viewed as tantamount to the loss of tribal “tradition,” contributing to the alleged heightened vulnerability of Africans to corruption and delinquency. These concerns are reflected even in liberal texts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Alan Paton’s celebrated novel *Cry the Beloved Country*. The colonial-era policy of creating “native reserves” where the pristine, pre-contact “tribal” identity of the nation’s African population would be preserved was a cornerstone of this ideology, one that was subsequently developed by the apartheid regime through its establishment of the scattered and desolate ethnic “homelands.”

Yet the policy of enforcing the rural character of the nation’s black population rested on a central contradiction: this population was an essential source of labor for an increasingly industrialized and urban economy. As Mahmood Mamdani argues, “the problem with territorial segregation was that it rendered racial domination unstable: the more the economy developed, the more it came to depend on urbanized natives. As that happened, the beneficiaries of rule appeared as an alien minority” (6). This contradiction manifested itself well before the formal

implementation of apartheid. South Africa's 1913 Land Act, for example, may be seen as an attempt on the part of the government to dispossess the independent African peasantry and to capture their labor for the booming mining industry (Mabin, "Dispossession" 16). This primitive accumulation meant that rural households had less autonomy from the capitalist system of waged labor, and were under increasing pressure to export significant amounts of labor to other markets in urban areas (Mabin, "Dispossession" 16). Such increasing urbanization put the lie to the dogma of Africans' purportedly pre-modern identities. The government responded to this impasse by adopting a pass system, implemented with the Natives Urban Areas Act in the mid-1930s. The pass system was designed to control migratory flows of African laborers captured by the capitalist economy. As would be true during the late apartheid era, this policy of "influx control" did not succeed in controlling workers' migration to urban areas. As a result, massive overcrowding resulted in urban areas such as Sophiatown and Alexandra, often leading to land invasions by squatters.

The National Party's answer to these growing contradictions after its successful bid for power in 1948 was to reinforce the state's repressive apparatus while also constructing massive urban townships such as Soweto to house the burgeoning urban black population. In addition, the party established a series of ethnic "homelands" which supported the time worn ideology of Africans' tribal identities while also displacing the costs of social reproduction to these barren rural hinterlands. Johannesburg, the quintessential South African city, is a perfect example of the rationally planned, modernist city produced by the apartheid regime's policy of social and spatial engineering. Forced removals of blacks from the city's business core after 1948 resulted in the virtually perfect realization of the manichean spatial form that Frantz Fanon describes as characteristic of the colonial city (38-40). This compartmentalized space required the full

panoply of the modern state for its administration and maintenance. The classic tools of modernist social engineering, including urban planning, public administration, and criminal justice, were all deployed in South Africa in order to ensure the maintenance of differential structures of citizenship through rigidly segregated spatial form (Robinson, "Power" 294). By the early 1970s, over a million people had been removed by force from South Africa's cities (Bester 219). Just as was true in the "homelands," the townships were planned in a manner intended to reinforce perceived ethnic differences among Africans, with order being maintained through putatively autonomous tribal authorities (Robinson, "Power" 297).

This bifurcated social structure could not be maintained in the long run. As the rural economies of the homelands stagnated during the economic slow-down of the early 1970s, permanent migration to cities intensified and conditions in the townships worsened. The wave of strikes that rekindled overt resistance to apartheid during this period was directly related to the state's refusal to house those it saw as "illegal" urban residents (Mabin, "Dispossession" 18). Faced with the mobilization of the urban-based Mass Democratic Movement during the 1980s, the regime issued a landmark "White Paper on Urbanization" in 1986 which rescinded the decades-old policy of attempting to stem black urbanization using the dehumanizing pass system (Mabin, "Reconstruction"). In its place, the government proposed the creation of autonomous satellite towns spread around major cities. This, it was hoped, would facilitate black urbanization while preserving white segregation and security. Although this move to foster "orderly urbanization" had an impact on South Africa's cities, it was also an incontrovertible acknowledgement of the regime's inability to control the forces of popular resistance in metropolitan areas. By the late 1980s, the core sections of many cities had become "grey areas," zones of ethnically mixed settlement from which white capital and residents were fleeing en

masse. Similarly, government attempts to uproot massive squatter camps had, in significant instances such as Cape Town's Crossroads community, proven unsuccessful. Finally, the mobilization of powerful township civic organizations around issues such as rent and transport led to the demand for "one city" rather than the fragmented, isolated, and economically autonomous urban enclosures created by apartheid (Robinson, Power 209). The spiraling contradictions of apartheid urban policy were, then, pivotal to the regime's eventual abdication of power in 1990. If the urban crisis was at the center of apartheid's collapse, the resolution of this crisis is central to the viability of the post-apartheid social order (Robinson, Power 205).

#### A Dream Deferred: Post-Apartheid Reconstruction and Urban Form

Johannesburg is the most economically developed city in sub-Saharan Africa. Like many post-colonial cities in sub-Saharan Africa, this city of nearly 5 million inhabitants has inherited the polarized zoning patterns of the colonial/apartheid era. Johannesburg is bifurcated neatly in two. To the north of the central business district lie sprawling, lush white residential suburbs like Sandton. Houses in Sandton and other affluent suburbs to the north of the city center are generally one story and are sited on large plots. Like North American suburbs of the post-1945 era, the geographical sprawl that this planning model encourages is both economically and ecologically unsustainable, although the affluence of the area's residents tends to conceal the long-term impact of their hyper-consumptionist lifestyles (Duany 4). By the late 1980s, big business began fleeing for the Central Business District, relocating in "edge city" campuses in and around Sandton. This trend has increased the social and spatial fragmentation of an already polarized city.

To the south of the city center, over-crowded, sterile dormitory suburbs such as Soweto house the majority of the city's residents. Soweto, whose abbreviated name literally designates its location in relation to the city center, was built during the 1960s as the apartheid regime cleared black residents out of mixed-race urban neighborhoods such as Sophiatown and relocated them to outlying areas. Soweto suffers from severe overcrowding. Millions of people are jammed into the single-sex hostels, squatter encampments, backyard lean-tos, and cramped government built single-story houses that clutter the rectilinear landscape of what is essentially a government planned ghetto. The environmental and economic degradation produced apartheid planning policies is dramatically evident in areas such as Soweto.

In the critical perspective of a recent World Bank report, the pattern of sprawling suburbanization produced by apartheid social engineering is highly inefficient in economic terms. It is also extremely costly environmentally, since such decentralized urban form militates against the provision of affordable and effective systems of public transportation (Beatley 4). In addition, such polarized urban space is also unsustainable in social terms. Despite the official end of apartheid, these two racialized segments of the city exist in increasing isolation, suspicion, and hostility. As Lindsay Bremner argues, the chances that residents of such a divided city will develop a sense of mutual obligation and the public spaces that can sustain such civic engagement are increasingly bleak.

By contrast with the outlying municipal zones, Johannesburg's central business district is currently a kind of no-man's land. Property remains for the most part in the hands of the old white monopolies such as mining houses and banks, who have built themselves fortified towers with easy access to the arterial freeways that lead out to affluent suburbs. The streets and other public spaces of the city, however, are the domain of an increasingly multinational African

population. After over a century in which non-whites were excluded systematically from urban space, the significance of this transformation cannot be over exaggerated. A dynamic informal sector runs riot in these polyglot spaces, mocking the severe modernist planning of the apartheid urban realm. It is in these illicit spaces that a genuinely novel urban order is emerging in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet, as Lindsay Bremner puts it, this “city of necessity” is “traversed by the city of crime and speculation.” The breakdown in mechanisms of formal governance has, in other words, also created severe problems for the inhabitants of the so-called “grey areas.” As is true of other African cities, this breakdown is making life increasingly unsafe for many residents. In addition, the internationalization of the inner city precipitated by migrants from throughout southern Africa as well as from the Francophone countries to the north has resulted in dramatically escalating incidences of xenophobia (Simone). Foreign Africans are increasingly being blamed for problems such as the overcrowded informal sector, the growth of the drug trade, and the physical decline of the inner city. Such hostilities are likely to increase if the state cannot preserve civil order. The legacy of uneven development that characterized the apartheid order is thus likely to impact urban spaces adversely for generations to come.

It is extremely expensive to be poor in South Africa today. The sprawling form of the nation’s cities ensures that residents of distant townships have to make long and costly commutes to reach their workplaces. While certain areas of cities such as Johannesburg rival the most opulent and hyper-consumptionist cities of the developed world, the areas where the poor majority lives continue on the whole to lack even the most basic forms of infrastructure. During the late apartheid years and the early years of the transition to democracy, a strong movement arose to challenge these conditions. Marrying the popular base of the civic movement with the intellectual capital of radical segments of the academic community, this movement called for the

restructuring of South Africa's cities (Mabin, "Reconstruction"). Groups like SANCO, a coalition representing the national civic movement, backed this new paradigm. Metropolitan areas were to be reintegrated and growth was to be concentrated, making cities more economically efficient and more accessible to the poor (Watson 1). This model is in line with the "dense city" paradigm proposed by progressive urbanists such as Richard Rogers, who calls for the creation of ecologically and socially sustainable cities for the burgeoning urban segment of humanity (33). This new blueprint for urban development was perhaps best expressed in the ANC's Development Facilitation Act of 1995 (DFA) and, more broadly speaking, in the party's Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP). The RDP, however, was articulated in the context of a negotiated political transition in which the ANC had to contend with representatives of the old regime while also keeping its left wing content. As critics such as Patrick Bond have argued, the upshot was that the populist movement became a neo-liberal government, and consequently failed to transform the economic fundamentals established by the apartheid regime (195).

Similarly, ambitious plans to foster dense city cores ran afoul of economic and technological trends that exacerbated the drift towards multi-nucleated metropolitan physical structures (Bloch 65). In conjunction with the spatial legacy of apartheid and the growing NIMBY-ism of the wealthy, preponderantly white residents of the new South Africa, these conditions effectively de-legitimized efforts at city-wide planning among both affluent and poor constituents (Dewar, "Settlements"). Similarly, the demands of groups like SANCO for a more equitable provision of basic services to all citizens of municipal areas also fell by the wayside. Indeed, the office of the RDP was quietly abolished shortly after the ANC assumed power following the first democratic elections in 1994. In its place, the government announced a policy with the suspicious acronym of GEAR, a strategy for economic empowerment that mouthed the

rhetoric of community involvement while ignoring the structural barriers that militated against economic bootstrapping (Mabin, "Reconstruction).

Conditions in South Africa have demonstrated that neo-liberalism may succeed in delivering services more efficiently to the affluent, but that it seriously exacerbates problems associated with poverty, crime, and the environment (Swilling). Since 1994, the modernist framework for sweeping, utopian change has been largely bypassed and consequently discredited in contemporary South Africa, leaving little alternative to models of "participatory governance" articulated in the preceding period of transition. Such calls hinge on models of small-scale, self-generated transformation facilitated by local and central government intervention (Dewar, "Manifesto" 247). In the best of instances, this sort of model may initiate a far more responsive and engaging form of democracy. In addition, as Mark Swilling suggests, South Africa possesses a strong tradition of independent urban social movements that have attempted to initiate such forms of participatory governance during the transition period. However, such community-driven development strategies may ultimately exacerbate polarizing social conditions. Like the land invasions that brought down formal apartheid while helping cement the spatial logic of segregation, this model may simply contain rather than answer the demands of the economically disenfranchised majority for substantial social transformation. Poor communities are often far too fragmented and disorganized to participate effectively in the individualistic, choice-driven mode of communication central to the ethos of participatory government. In the absence of a viable and well-funded model for community-driven urban planning and reconstruction, social conditions in South Africa's cities have become increasingly violent.

### Geography of Fear: Law and Order in the New South Africa

Commentators on crime in South Africa are often quick to point out that the extremely high levels of crime that have been making headlines since the late 1990s have been a fact of life for the majority of the nation for the last several decades. Criminality was, however, essentially hidden from affluent whites by a police force whose two prime functions for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the enforcement of influx control laws and the quashing of political opposition. After formal apartheid was dismantled in the early 1990s, however, white South Africans no longer were protected by the rigid segregation and political oppression that had previously shielded them. By the mid-1990s, the recorded murder rate in South Africa was over four times that of the United States, a highly violent society by international standards (Marsh 181). However, as Lindsay Bremner has pointed out, the geography of crime in contemporary South Africa reflects two overwhelming social factors of the new nation: poverty and vulnerability. While statistics are often difficult to trust given the fact that the majority of violent crime takes place within domestic settings between people who know one another, black South Africans are twenty times more at risk from homicide than whites (Louw 12). Yet it is crimes against affluent whites which have attracted the most attention because of the disproportionate influence of those they effect.

With an annual growth rate of approximately 20% since the early 1980s, security has been one of South Africa's leading new industries (Bremner). The continuity in these statistics across the late- and post-apartheid eras suggests the extent to which South African society is saturated not simply with violence, but with the pervasive fear of violence. In fact, with the demise of formal apartheid and its official racist lexicon, the discourses of crime and security have become the primary conceptual frame through which the economically hegemonic white

minority apprehends national culture. As is true in other countries like the United States, such representations of criminality often serve as a coded form of racial discourse. The culture of excess that the apartheid economy allowed white South Africans to consolidate has now become an Achilles heel. The massive houses, sweeping lawns, and azure swimming pools of affluent suburbs are a plum ripe for the picking in post-apartheid South Africa. Faced with the erosion of their high standard of living, white South Africans have increasingly come to see the proliferation of crime as an index of the ANC government's corruption. If, the reasoning goes, the new government is unable to maintain law and order in the suburbs, then it cannot be fit to run the country in general. Without law and order, the nation's economy will necessarily stagnate. While there may be some truth to such assertions, the upshot of such discourse has been a dramatic escalation of the forms of spatial fragmentation and dislocation endemic to apartheid society. White South Africa, in other words, is just as gripped by a bunker mentality today as it was during the worst days of apartheid.

The privatization of public space is one of the primary modes in which this fragmenting effect has taken place. Private security forces now outnumber the public forces of law and order in South Africa by a margin of two to one (Bremner). With names like "Stallion" and "Terminator", these private security forces advertise the massive force they deploy in their reactive policing strategies. "Armed Response" is a common warning motto one sees hung next to the "Beware the Dog" signs in the affluent suburbs of South African cities. There are practical reasons for such signs: unless they subscribe to private security forces, homeowners in wealthy neighborhoods often cannot get insurance coverage (Emmet 30). Such market forces end up intensifying the spatial legacy of apartheid discussed above. As Lindsay Bremner notes, many of the new private security forces are run and staffed by disaffected former members of the

apartheid-era “defense” forces and, ironically, by demobilized cadres of the ANC liberation army. The reaction of these private security firms to the growth of crime during the post-apartheid era has been to adopt explicitly militarized strategies of control. The armored vehicles and military assault weapons deployed by these security companies underline their unmistakably paramilitary character. Since there are few effective democratic constraints on the force exercised by such companies, affluent white suburbs are increasingly becoming a free-fire zone in which anyone who appears suspicious may be the target of homicidal violence. Criminals are answering this escalation of force in kind. In a country awash with military hardware left over from the thirty years of liberation struggles in the region, weapons are all too easy to procure. The result is a vicious circle of violence, a distorted version of the bloody stalemate between liberation forces and the apartheid regime that occurred during the late 1980s (Emmet 30).

Linked to the growing use of private paramilitary forces is the increasing privatization of public space in suburbs. Streets are being blocked off and entire neighborhoods are seceding from the urban grid to form gated communities. Unlike the gated communities in the United States, South Africa’s upscale protected neighborhoods are guarded by booms designed to resist attack by military assault vehicles. The image of the laager, the defensive circle of wagons created by the Afrikaner pioneers or Voortrekkers as they pushed into the African interior centuries ago, is an apt symbol for such gated communities. Entrance to these closed communities is heavily policed, with identity documents required for all those who wish to gain admission. In effect, a privatized version of the pass system is once again being established in South Africa. While that system sought to operate on a national level, however, controlling the movements of blacks alone, the new pass control regime segments space for all citizens. Urban space is broken up into a series of discrete enclaves, with harrowing corridors of transit lying

between. This is neither economically nor politically viable in the long term. The vital characteristics of successful urban cultures throughout the ages, including cosmopolitanism, interaction, and equality, are all eradicated by the new privatized laager system.

Unlike their affluent co-nationals, South Africa's poor majority cannot afford the reactive paramilitary police forces that maintain the illusion of security in the suburbs. Consequently, at the same time as white neighborhoods are hiving themselves off from the public realm, black neighborhoods are forced to rely on the overburdened and under-resourced public forces of law and order. Despite the evident political will within the government to grapple with the problem of the culture of violence inherited from the anti-apartheid struggle, there has been very limited success in mitigating the forms of criminality and vulnerability to which the majority of the population is susceptible. There are a number of reasons for this. First of all, after years of functioning simply as the repressive arm of the state, police forces are struggling with limited success to retool themselves into a viable peace keeping force. As Jonny Steinberg has argued, the main national threat that the ANC anticipated after coming to power in 1994 was a white backlash against democracy rather than the rise of criminality. As a result, South Africa retains a transitional police force that is caught between the old order and the new ("Intro" 9). In addition, most poor communities lack the kind of stability and cohesion required to deploy the neighborhood watches and security programs that typify affluent suburbs (Louw 17). Finally, most of the violent crimes that occur in such neighborhoods take place between family members or people who know one another. South African police remain ill equipped to deal with such culturally embedded crimes.

This latter problem suggests a strong gendered factor that seldom appears in dominant accounts of criminality in contemporary South Africa. Indeed, over 80% of the murders in the

country are connected to a pervasive culture of domestic violence (Louw 13). The spatial dynamics of such violence are obviously far harder to track since they generally occur in the traditionally sequestered realm of the home. Moreover, South Africa also has the highest recorded rate of rape in world. This high incidence of violence against women has been related to the historical and contemporary displacement of black men in South Africa, as compensation to the many humiliations of being black is sought in the domestic arena, where women and children are still largely seen as men's property (Louw 13). The under-acknowledged character of such domestic violence is an indictment of the underlying tenets of the criminal justice system, which still largely seeks to punish violence against property rather than against human beings.

A corollary aspect of criminality in contemporary South Africa that is inadequately addressed emerges when the inter-generational character of criminality is considered. In a startling account, Antony Albeker describes the split reactions to the recent funeral of a young gangster in a township. The gangster's parents and their generation are struck dumb as they solemnly mourn the loss of this favored son. In contrast, their son's debauched cohort arrives at the funeral in flashy BMWs and fires automatic weapons into the air in hedonistic celebration of their dead colleague's violent path to the good life (90). Albeker's description of this gangster's funeral suggests that post-apartheid South Africa is now reaping the bloody rewards of its policy of social fragmentation. Similar images can be found in highly popular television serials such as *Yizo Yizo*, in which a group of adolescents find their school disrupted by gangsters. Apartheid consciously engineered the fragmentation of black communities by systematically splitting apart families through the policies of ethnic homelands and influx control. The resulting destabilization of community life is an important factor in contemporary crime. In such a

context, Graeme Simpson's account of the continuities in South African history is highly important. According to Simpson, "amidst all the formal change which has taken place in South Africa, the experiences of marginalization, impoverishment, and relative deprivation, which lay at the heart of the youth-based violent political resistance to apartheid during the 1980s, have not only been sustained, but continue to underpin much of the criminal violence which dominates the social and political landscape of the post-apartheid era" (115). Rejecting the terms of debate concerning youth gang activity as either anti-social banditry or socially functional resistance, Simpson argues that, depending on the social context, the resiliency of youth cultures can take the form of either political resistance or criminal activity (118). The line between the two is far harder to draw than is suggested by recent accounts of the shift from political activity to criminality among South Africa's youths. If young people turn to criminality as a means of gaining status and material affluence in a social context that systematically continues to deny them both, criminality cannot be apprehended or addressed simply through the forms of draconian protection being pioneered by the affluent citizens of South Africa. The roots of the problem lie far deeper.

### Policing the Transition

In May 1996, the recently elected ANC government announced its National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS). This document was a product of a series of momentous shifts within the party that began before it gained power in the nation's first democratic election. During the late 1980s, the forces of the ANC and the apartheid regime were locked in a bloody spiral of violence that threatened to destroy the country. Miraculously, both sides were able to see the folly of this situation, and in 1990 overt negotiations towards a political transition began.

Attempts to eradicate the political violence that had plagued South African society figured prominently in the liberation movement's evolving plans during this period (Emmet 40). While, for its part, the state unbanned organizations such as the ANC, the liberation movement abjured armed struggle as part of the negotiated settlement. By 1994, the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Plan included provisions that unequivocally defined violence as a mental health problem. Victims of apartheid-era political violence were seen as needing comprehensive care predicated on individual reconstitution and empowerment. Since the publication of this document, there has been an increasing appreciation in South Africa of the need to engage with violence and crime using a public health perspective (Butchart and Emmet 3). Within such a perspective, violence is seen as an under-acknowledged epidemic that is predicted to incapacitate just as many people worldwide as all communicable diseases by 2020 (Butchart and Emmet 8).

Central to the public health perspective on crime is the acknowledgement that health services rather than the criminal justice system are the most significant contact point between victims of violence and the authorities. This perception is no doubt related to the disrepute in which apartheid-era police forces were held because of their belligerence towards the liberation movement. The public health model is also, however, motivated by a focus on the predominantly domestic setting within which most violence in a society like South Africa occurs. Consequently, instead of simply attempting to accost the perpetrators of violence, the new public health model focuses on the victims of violence, attempting to develop preventative strategies to forestall future episodes of victimization. According to Butchart and Emmet, typical strategies for preventing the recurrence of violence include gun control, alcohol regulation, environmental modification, the provision of safe houses, the development of alternatives to gang membership for youths, and violence post-vention facilities (19). In addition, departing from the traditional

focus of the criminal justice system on the criminal alone, the public health model views crime holistically, analyzing the broad social factors that either contribute to or erode community cohesion. The government's emphasis on this model of prevention must be seen within the broader attempt by the liberation movement to reconstruct South African society in order to foster a culture of human rights and solidarity using forums such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As we have seen, however, neo-liberal fiscal policies have militated against the ambitious plans to reconstruct spatial barriers to equality in post-apartheid society. This raises the danger that the imaginative public health model for dealing with crime will be no more than a band aid approach that fails to address the deeper structural causes of crime.

Insights derived from the public health model concerning the preventative strategies needed to cope with social violence were embedded in the ANC's National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS). The NCPS contains four fundamental pillars: reform and streamlining of the criminal justice process; strengthening of community values through education; crime reduction through environmental design; and fresh efforts to cope with the increasing profile of transnational crime (Marsh 5). Efforts at prevention are designed to include not simply governmental workers but also transnational and local NGOs and members of affected communities. One prominent example of such multi-pronged initiatives is the *Soul City* program (Rocha-Silva 93). Perhaps best known through its televised dramatic serial format, *Soul City* is a media-focused program initiated by the Institute of Urban Primary Health Care, based in the township of Alexandra's Health Centre. The television serial uses an "edutainment" format that mixes soap opera-style drama with messages designed to facilitate prevention of crime- and violence-related injury, as well as other public health crises such as HIV/AIDS. In addition to its televised format, *Soul City* also uses other media, including newspapers, radio, and novellas to

disseminate its messages. Individual episodes are designed through an extensive community-based research program designed to develop appropriate measures for coping with health care crises and to monitor the impact of the serial among target groups. Initiatives such as *Soul City* and the related serial *Yizo Yizo* dramatize the sensitivity and potential impact of the public health care model in dealing with violence and crime.

Unfortunately, the last three pillars of the NCPS have received relatively little funding as the state has attempted to revamp a criminal justice system mired in apartheid-era bureaucracy. Like the ANC's plans for urban revitalization following the end of apartheid, much progressive rhetoric concerning violence prevention has remained just that. In addition, strategies such as community policing that have proved effective in other contexts such as the cities of North America have had limited success in the highly disorganized conditions of South Africa's poor township communities (Bremner). The failure to fund and implement measures designed to prevent social violence is likely to have wide-reaching impact in South Africa since the criminal justice system simply cannot cope with the increasing levels of crime. While affluent white suburbs have turned increasingly towards militarized laagerization, poor communities have in some instances resorted to vigilantism that has dramatically intensified the cycles of violence in such communities. Perhaps the most famous instance of such violence is that occasioned by the formation of People Against Guns and Drugs (PAGAD), an Islamicist organization that engaged in running gun battles and episodes of bombings with the infamous gangs of the Cape Flats (Marsh 185).

The ANC's neo-liberal fiscal policies have helped make it difficult to provide credible alternatives to such vigilante groups. Such policies are, of course, designed to stimulate economic growth, the premise being that crime is rooted in fundamental problems like

unemployment and poverty. While this logic is hard to refute in general terms, it elides the public health model's sophisticated appreciation of the social grounding of crime. After all, increasing levels of employment cannot be the sole answer for crime since gangsters can always make far more money and do so with far more macho style than can industrial workers. Solutions to the growth of criminality have to be grounded in a far broader enterprise of rebuilding social connections. As Graeme Simpson has emphasized, the government needs not simply to provide employment and economic development for the poor, but also to mend the social fabric in poor communities in order to offer a stake in society for the marginalized. This will certainly involve channeling the energies of self-defense units such as PAGAD in constructive directions. It will also, however, require the provision of a whole series of alternative outlets for youth. Prominent steps in this direction include the shoring up of families, the creation of a culture of learning in schools, the cultivation of alternative positive sexual identities for young men, and the empowerment of women (Simpson 128). Underlying such steps must, of course, be the development of viable alternatives to the privatization of space that is currently sweeping South Africa.

### Conclusion

In a recent article on what he calls "mass incarceration", Loïc Wacquant argues that the United States has created a penal state that copes with the lack of marketable cultural capital among African-Americans in the post-Fordist economy by placing an increasing proportion of them in prison (44). There is, he argues, a genealogical link between slavery, Jim Crow-era segregation, the ghetto system of Fordist-era industrial capitalism, and the post-Fordist carceral economy of today (41). This carceral economy has effectively revived the disenfranchisement

that condemned African-Americans to “social death” prior to the Civil Rights movement. Prison inmates in many states in the U.S. are routinely stripped not just of cultural capital, but also of social redistribution in the form of public aid and the right to political participation (57). Could South Africa, which, as I note above, has long mirrored conditions in North America, follow the U.S.’s lead towards the creation of a post-liberation model of social disenfranchisement using the discourse of crime? Aren’t there significant continuities between apartheid and post-apartheid era controls over the black majority population’s access to public space? The increasing fragmentation of space and correlated rise of criminality suggests that underlying social structures are pushing South Africa in precisely the direction described by Wacquant in his analysis of the United States.

One substantial distinction between the United States and South Africa offers hope that this trend is not, however, an inevitable one. Unlike the United States, South Africa’s marginalized black population is not an ethnic minority. The recently enfranchised black majority in South Africa continues to view crime not in the bourgeois sense of individual malfeasance, but in terms of the lack of broad forms of social equity (Bremner). Despite the fact that it is precisely this community that is most frequently victimized by social violence and crime, the social analysis of crime based on enduring forms of class- and race-based inequality embraced by the majority of South Africa’s poor holds out hope for corresponding socially based preventative measures. The alternative to such measures is truly bleak. South African organizations have articulated many far-sighted policies during the period of transition, including the progressive principles of urban redevelopment and violence prevention embodied in the RDP and legislated in the Development Facilitation Act and the National Crime Prevention Strategy. Unless such policies are effectively implemented, the spiral of violence and counter-violence that

is embedded in the last century's legacy of spatial apartheid will only deepen. South Africa cannot afford such an intensification of the geography of fear.

These problems – which typify conditions in many mega-cities round the world - will not simply disappear with economic development. Too often such development favors the few who already benefit from access to social and economic resources. Yet, as Michael Sorkin noted recently, the contemporary architectural avant-garde in the developed world has adopted an attitude of total indifference towards the vexing problems of ecological and social sustainability posed by urban growth (viii). It is far more difficult to evade such problems in contemporary mega-cities such as Cairo, Shanghai, Sao Paulo, and Johannesburg, where pressures on resources and infrastructure have reached unprecedented levels. As the preceding discussion of South Africa's urban history has made clear, cities in the underdeveloped world typically are heirs of colonial planning policies that purposely set out to fragment urban space. The apartheid city is perhaps the paradigmatic realization of such policies of racial segregation. This legacy has meant that the vast majority of those living in postcolonial cities tend to occupy the blank zones created by colonial urban planning practices. The denizens of such cities either live in vast squatter camps on the urban periphery or, in even more extreme cases, occupy interstitial spaces in the city center such as abandoned lots and sidewalks. Arjun Appadurai has linked this economy of scarcity in urban housing to the increasing instability of citizenship and the rise of ethnic chauvinist movements in places such as Mumbai (644).

In South African cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town, apartheid urban planning practices that targeted the non-white majority created a rigid modernist grid of bungalows deprived of both private and public amenities such as sanitation and open space. South Africa's recent attempts to cope with accelerating crime rates have focused attention on the role played by

such barren spaces in perpetuating forms of communal fragmentation and isolation. As the RDP acknowledges, a key element in coping with the negative impact of apartheid-era spatial practices will be to provide resources to strengthen indigenous community-building practices. This must include the provision of funding for affordable infrastructure to service such areas. Richard Rogers notes that the self-organization capacity of even the poorest communities has helped transform illegal squatter settlements around the world into socially cohesive and ecologically sustainable neighborhoods when technical aid and basic infrastructure has been provided (58). Of course, such provision in many instances will also require major changes in the local state. Without substantial democratization, many poor neighborhoods will remain peripheral in both a physical and a social sense, dangerously accelerating the spiral of alienation and violence bequeathed by colonial and postcolonial social hierarchies.

In addition to such local transformation, the degradation of public space must also be addressed on a broader scale. As Michael Sorkin argues, the only way to stem the massive growth of the underdeveloped world's mega-cities is to "redirect investment to divert the metastasis of opportunity that accelerates the desire to come" to such cities in the first place (53). This will involve sustained policies of decentralization on a national scale, including the creation of peripheral cities that offer amenities and opportunities sufficient to counteract the lure of the mega-city. Land redistribution of course offers a key strategy for addressing the pull of the city, but unfortunately it remains stalled in post-apartheid South Africa. The South African case makes it clear that the resources to implement such policies are increasingly scarce in the current conditions of neo-liberal hegemony among both global and national governmental institutions. The urgent social and ecological problems apparent in the global cities of the South are therefore also ineluctably tied to issues of social justice on a global scale. Stemming the decline and

degradation of public space must be a vital component in any movement for global social justice. It is hard to see how the social and environmental crises brewing in the South's mega-cities will be headed off unless the deep inequalities that divide humanity today are transformed.

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