OVERCOMING FRAGMENTATION?
Labour-Community Alliances and The Complexity of
Movement Building in Cape Town

By

Adrian Thomas Murray

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Program in Global Development Studies
in conformity with the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
August 2013

Copyright © Adrian Thomas Murray 2013
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores processes of social movement organizing in response to the neoliberal restructuring of public services in South Africa. Through a case study of an alliance of municipal workers and community activists collaborating to contest public service commercialization in Cape Town, this thesis examines the limits and possibilities of contemporary efforts to build labour community alliances.

In many parts of the world, particularly Latin America, broad coalitions including community organizations and labour unions have formed to defend public services and propose alternatives to market delivery. Despite widespread discontent, rising levels of poverty, increasing inequality and the success of anti-privatization coalitions elsewhere in the world, a sustained and successful movement has not emerged in South Africa.

Situated in the debates within social geography on South African neoliberalism and those in the labour and social movement literature on labour-community alliances, this thesis argues that several factors serve to frustrate coalition formation in the present. These include the organizational and institutional complexities and heterogeneity of partner organizations, the fragmenting effect of a diverse and problematic socio-cultural context, and the disabling political economy of South Africa at the fore of which is the enduring hegemonic project of the ANC.

Highly interrelated, these factors ultimately continue to thwart attempts to build a social movement to effectively challenge and move beyond the neoliberal restructuring of public services in Cape Town. However, this thesis argues that openings and spaces for the emergence of labour-community alliances and deep coalitions do exist, and concludes that the outlook for the emergence of transformative movements in Cape Town is not so bleak as the complexity and fragmentation of the present may suggest.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must begin by expressing my most sincere and gracious thanks to my supervisor, Professor David McDonald who has been an enormous source of guidance and inspiration throughout my time at Queen’s University. Thank you also to my thesis committee, Professors Marc Epprecht, Allison Goebel and Marcus Taylor for their support and direction, and to Greg Ruiters, my ‘South African Supervisor’, for his guidance and insight while in Cape Town.

I would like to thank the wise and inspiring activists at the Ilrig, especially Michael Blake, whose ‘Assistant’ I was for much of the Samwu-Ilig Project, Koni Benson and Judy Kennedy. I must also extend my most sincere thanks to the Housing Assembly and Samwu members who welcomed me with critical yet open arms. Thanks also to those who inspired me, challenged me to be critical, and those who simply gave me a hand throughout my time in Cape Town including Lenny Gentle, Mtho Xali, Ronald Wesso, Roger Ronnie, John Pape, Sophie Oldfield, Mary Lawhon, Matt Esof, Chris Doolan and Family, Sankara, Awra and Terna Gyuse.

I am also grateful to the Department of Global Development Studies for their teaching, guidance and support during my time at Queen’s University. A very special thanks to Sarah Pugh for being a guiding light through the hazy and at times treacherous world of administration and academic regulations! Thanks to my inspiring classmates and especially those I travelled with to Cape Town. Financial support from the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Students for Development (SFD) program enabled me to carry out the research for this thesis.

I would finally like to thank my family, my partner and my friends for their encouragement and tremendous support and finally, my father, my inspiring memory of him and his eternal and insatiable desire to learn.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

Chapter 1: Introduction

Methodology

Overview

Chapter 2: The Political Economy of South Africa: Neoliberalizing Cape Town

Uneven Development and A Marxist Theory of Crisis

The Overaccumulation Crisis in South Africa

Interpretation of the Crisis

The Transition

Neoliberalization

South African Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism and the Local State

Neoliberal Cape Town

The Shift to Developmental Local Government

Neoliberal South Africa or the Return of the Developmental State?

Chapter 3: Labour Community Alliances

Social Movement Unionism in Theory

New Social Movements in the global South in Theory

SMU, NSMs and Labour-Community Alliances

SMU and Community Organizing in South Africa

Alliances, Coalitions and the International Experience in Theory and Practice

Accumulation by Dispossession and the New Working Class

Hegemony, Sociospatial Regulation, Scale and Contestation

Chapter 4: Building Unity? Complexities and Fragmentation in Cape Town

Organizational and Institutional Complexity

Sociocultural Fragmentation

A Disabling Political Economy and the ANC’s Hegemonic Project

Chapter 5: Conclusion – What’s Left of the Left in Cape Town and South Africa

References
Appendix A Interview Guide 124
Appendix B Letter of Information and Consent Form 126
Appendix C Ethics Approval 128
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYMS</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APF</td>
<td>Anti Privatization Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AsgiSA</td>
<td>Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosatu</td>
<td>The Council of South African Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>City of Cape Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CID</td>
<td>City Improvement District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Democratic Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLG</td>
<td>Developmental Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPWP</td>
<td>Expanded Public Works Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosatu</td>
<td>The Federation of South African Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilrig</td>
<td>International Labour Research and Information Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gear</td>
<td>The plan for Growth, Employment and Redistribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRA</td>
<td>The Labour Relations Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSP</td>
<td>Municipal Services Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDM</td>
<td>Mass Democratic Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>The Reconstruction and Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samwu</td>
<td>South African Municipal Workers Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanco</td>
<td>The South African National Civic Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCAEC</td>
<td>Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

The transition from apartheid brought with it incredible hope for what a democratic, non-racial and more equitable and prosperous South Africa could mean for its citizens. The overwhelming support the African National Congress (ANC) has enjoyed was built upon just such hope, exemplified in the promise of their 1994 election campaign slogan, “a better life for all’. But the fight for a democratic South Africa and an end to apartheid was not a war with an absolute victor. Rather, it was fought to a draw after which the terms of the settlement continued to be battled over and negotiated by the opposing sides (Mbeki in Marais 2012). The particularity of this stalemate emerged from the evolution of racial capitalism and the organization of production from the late 19th century onwards. The prevailing inequality, unemployment and lack of service provision and the development of South Africa neoliberalism, find their roots in this evolution, the crisis of capitalism that emerged in the early 1970s and the compromise of the transition.

By 1996, the voices already crying foul in opposition to what seemed to be an indiscriminate adoption of neoliberalism by the ANC, were more than audible. As it became evident that the neoliberal turn was to be presented as a fait accompli, voices of opposition began to organize. Those that formed organizations to oppose the new policy trajectory of the ANC were given the moniker ‘new social movements’ (NSMs) despite the uncomfortable or imperfect fit of the term exported as it was from the North. At times unions, uncomfortably aligned with the ANC, joined them, though these alliances would be fleeting, as was support from mainstream civil society. The ability of the ruling party to keep these allied organizations in line and command the hopes and dreams of South Africans remains an enduring force. Despite being able to mobilize thousands across the country for several years beginning in the late 1990s, the most organized opposition movements have gradually receded, succumbing to external pressure and
internal strife. In their place widespread protest over service delivery and the deteriorating living conditions of the majority have continued. But the opposition has not ceased their efforts to organize. Despite the decline of strong social movements, organizations at the street, community, and township levels remain. They exist, among other reasons, to organize, to educate, and to make demands on and challenge a state that has fallen short of delivering a ‘better life for all’.

Elsewhere in the world popular organizations have emerged in similar, though also unique, policy and socioeconomic environments to challenge neoliberal restructuring and demand alternatives to market led service delivery. The most successful of these have built alliances between unions and so-called NSMs, uniting the broad working class around daily struggles for the basic necessities of life (Olivera and Lewis 2003). Reviewing the literature on alternatives to privatization and the South African experience of popular politics, replete with histories of strong labour and community organizations important as they were in the struggle against apartheid, several questions came to mind. Why, despite similarities, have sustained alliances and coalitions to defend public services and advance alternatives not emerged in South Africa? What aspects of the South African political economy impact this? What about the history of labour and community organizing in South Africa hinders this development? What are the factors that serve to fragment and disable contemporary struggles to form alliances? Are there possibilities for transformative collaboration in the experiences of alliance building today?

With these questions in mind the research for this project was conducted over five months in Cape Town during the South African winter and spring of 2012 as part of an organizing effort by the International Labour and Research International Group (Ilrig) and the Cape Town branch of the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) to facilitate the development of labour-community alliances.
**Methodology**

Popular politics in South Africa is complex, multifaceted and dynamic. No doubt falling short in efforts to be inclusive, the methods employed in this thesis are similarly varied in an attempt to capture this diversity. These include the use of secondary literature, analysis of state, party and organizational documents, popular media, and participant observation and semi-structured interviews with labour and community activists. Below I will give a brief summary of the project through which I conducted my research to provide some context. Following this, rather than embarking on a conceptual discussion of the methodologies here employed and the problematic and complex dynamics at play within processes of participatory research, though I will touch on this briefly, I will attempt to situate this research within present debates in South Africa that interrogate the role of academics, researchers and intellectuals in the struggles of social movements. In the process, my intellectual pursuits and ambitions, positionality and the dynamics affecting my research will likewise be interrogated and revealed.

The project that provided the means to conduct the research presented in this thesis emerged in response to the upturn in popular expressions of discontent in South Africa. It also manifested from the desire among public sector workers, community organizations, activists and scholars to develop shared understandings of the impacts of neoliberal restructuring and a coherent voice through which to organize working class communities and engage and contest the state around service delivery in Cape Town. The ‘Project’, as it will be referred to henceforth, brought together 30 activists drawn from South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) shop stewards and community leaders from the Housing Assembly, an emerging umbrella organization in Cape Town, to engage in workshops, organizing and mobilization. Ilrig, a South African NGO that specializes in research and training for worker leaders and community
activists, occupies a central training role. The Municipal Services Project (MSP) “a research project that explores alternatives to the privatization and commercialization of service provision… composed of academics, labour unions, non-governmental organizations, social movements and activists from around the globe” (MSP 2013), provides financial support. The objective of the Project is to build capacity amongst municipal worker leaders and community activists in order to critique and jointly engage the City of Cape Town’s Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and its participatory processes as they pertain to public service provision. A series of workshops were held in April, June, July, October and November 2012 out of which numerous structures, campaigns and documents have been developed pertaining to service delivery policy, municipal governance, employment and the further development of the Housing Assembly as a forum in which numerous organizations can converge to critique and develop alternatives.

I arrived in Cape Town at the end of April 2012 and was allowed to use a shared space at Ilrig’s offices at Community House, a building that has been a centre of activism and organizing in Cape Town since the late 1980s. As a result I was immediately immersed in the activities of the Project and other organizing efforts and activism that Ilrig and the numerous other organizations based at Community House were engaged in. My role in the Project as a researcher and workshop developer and facilitator aided my quick negotiation of the insider-outsider relationship inherent in development research and to develop relationships of mutual trust and confidence with the Project participants, often found to be difficult (Mullings 1999). Due to these relationships and the use of Community House as a space for Housing Assembly proceedings and the considerable time I spent in the building, I was also invited to virtually all of the Housing Assembly’s meetings, at a variety of levels, for the duration of my research. I was similarly invited on many occasions to go to meetings with other organizations and communities,
affiliates, direct actions, legal proceedings and consultations and other organizing and campaign activities. This allowed me to observe in a finely detailed manner the proceedings of the Housing Assembly and the dynamics of working class organizing and alliance building in a variety of spaces in Cape Town. This experience was a critical element that informed my understanding of struggle in the city and the interview process that is a central element of this thesis.

My interviews consisted of conversations with twenty Project participants. I utilized purposive sampling to select interviewees so that they would be as representative as possible of participants in the Project in terms of geography, organization, gender, and race and ethnicity. As a result the interviewees were comprised of five Samwu shop stewards, one former shop steward turned activist, and 14 community activist leaders. Eight of the interviewees identified as African and 12 as Coloured\(^1\). Ten women and ten men were interviewed respectively.

The semi-structured interviews addressed personal histories, experiences of housing and service delivery restructuring, experiences of organizing amongst the poor and working class, their interactions with local government, their political, economic and social understandings of problems in their communities, Cape Town and South Africa, and the conceptualization of broad social change (see Appendix A for a copy of the interview questions asked). The interviewees are identified by area and position in what follows to protect their identities. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Community House, which provided a private and familiar environment for discussions. Some of the interviews, particularly those with Samwu workers, were conducted at places of work, in homes, or in private community settings, though only at the request of the interviewee and in the most private and comfortable manner possible.

---

\(^1\) The racial classifications of “African”, “Coloured”, “Asian” and “white”, a legacy of apartheid that remains in use by the state, are widespread in political analysis. These appear here when necessary for clarity. The term “black” will be used whenever possible to refer to all those oppressed under apartheid and in recognition of their struggle.
Data collected from interviews, informal discussions and public addresses were manually coded and categorized. They were then organized according to analytical concepts and themes developed from reviews of secondary literature and participant observation. Subthemes were established within these conceptual and thematic groupings where necessary. Themes and subthemes were overlapping however, displaying numerous interconnections and were rarely mutually exclusive (Runciman 2012). Analysis and evaluation of the data followed and was a constant process of re-visititation.

The process of re-evaluation was spurred on by my own immersion in dynamic and charged processes of popular education (Friere 2000). In this, the Housing Assembly was the school, and the struggle, meetings, court cases, direct actions, research and writing was the learning process itself. The plethora of organizational proceedings and actions to which I was drawn into as a ‘comrade’ were enormous, and while informing and inspiring my analysis, also impacted my research role and positionality as a participant observer. If we imagine a continuum from researcher to participant, positions can range from ‘total participant’, to the partially engaged ‘researcher-participant’ to the detached ‘total researcher’ argues Gans (in Runciman 2012). These roles are however, not mutually exclusive and are dynamic and fluid.

Processes of popular education will be a recurring theme in this thesis as a key element in developing working class consciousness and organization. This experience, practice (or praxis) is the third and often separately considered element in the relationship between ‘data’ and ‘theory’ and requires constant self-reflexivity and auto-correction on the part of the researcher.

Mathers and Novelli (2007) have argued that the recent re-engagement of radical researchers and academics with struggles against neoliberalism is essential given their falling off since the post-1968 period and displacement by the populist right. They are critical, however, of
some engagements that they conceive of as interventions by academics in the world of activism, especially in efforts of the former to maintain analytical objectivity in the context of political engagement, which they do not see as competing or constructive. Rather, they suggest an engaged ethnography, “ethically and politically committed” to research “embedded within concrete instances of organized resistance to neoliberalism” which seeks to “forge a relationship of mutual benefit between social science and social movement based on solidarity and reciprocity” (Mathers and Novelli 2007, 245). This is akin to the call by Bevington and Dixon (2005) for scholarship that prioritizes movement-relevant research rather than often practically irrelevant, academic debates. Spronk and Terhorst (2012, 151) have likewise sought to develop “an account of the distinct characteristics, roles, and impacts of social movements that seek alternatives to ‘accumulation by dispossession’… and which avoids the schism between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements, which has little relevance in analysing struggles for basic services in the global South.”

In relation to South Africa, Dawson and Sinwell (2012b) critique accounts of post-apartheid social movements that resemble interventions from the academy in which definitions and trajectories of transformation were often imposed from the outside. The evolution of this scholarship over the years, they argue, is as much due to the shifting understandings of academics as it is that of changing movements. Celebratory accounts, or academic vanguardism, were useful for the development of organizations in the late 1990s as activists and scholars searched for a way to counter the right turn of the ANC, and indeed some such celebratory accounts remain today and command considerable support amongst certain sections of the academy. These accounts, however, are limited in the pursuit of alternatives, precisely because they do not engage critically with the movements they represent (Pointer 2004). Many of these
authors have since reflected on the usefulness and limitations of earlier work, their auto
corrections welcomed by many (Bond 2008, Desai 2006, 2008).

On the other hand, works that are critical of romanticized, sanguine accounts of social
movements have also been lambasted from within the academy, some perhaps more because of
style and tone than content, and from within some of the more prominent social movements
connected to these scholars (Bohmke 2010, 2012, Bryant 2008, Desai 2006, Pointer 2004,
Sinwell 2010, Walsh 2008). In response to this somewhat destructive debate around this binary,
Dawson and Sinwell (2012b, 11 original emphasis) propose a ‘critical and sympathetic’
approach that seeks “to avoid the romantic register of earlier writings, but not fall into the trap of
vanguardism or, even worse, delegitimising and destroying movements.” I attempt this approach
here in the hope of offering some semblance of the ‘movement relevant scholarship’ Spronk and
Terhorst advocate above.

This thesis presents a representation of an emergent social movement, what Pointer
(2004, 1) refers to as a “contested space of power.” In this I must acknowledge my position as a
white, male researcher from the global North, utilizing a form of materialist critique informed by
a Marxist politics which likewise informs to a certain degree the approach of many of the other
individuals and organizations involved. My role in the Housing Assembly, initially through the
Project, as a researcher but also as periodic source of assistance, fellow activist, and sympathetic
critic is one which I have made every effort to maintain an analytical position and distance rather
than supporting or condemning unequivocally the position of the organization, in order to gather
and learn as much as possible (Lichterman in Dawson and Sinwell 2012b), and to remain critical
despite my sympathies. I argue, with Dawson and Sinwell (2012b, 12), that when involved in a
movement this orientation enables “one to come to grips with its internal contradictions or the
structural limitations that it is faced with,” precisely the goal of the research presented here.

Overview

This thesis begins by developing a broad political economy of South Africa in Chapter Two, which grounds this analysis in the historical and geographical context that has informed the city’s trajectory post 1994. Particular emphasis is placed on the uneven development and misshapen structure of the South African economy, the manifestation of the ongoing global capitalist crisis in the 1970s in South Africa, the particular way in which the apartheid regime attempted to address this crisis and the ideologically motivated interpretations of its causes. I argue that these elements of the South African and global political economy in the early 1990s had an enormous impact on the dynamics of the transition to democracy and the outcome of the political, economic and social reforms in the ‘new’ South Africa. Indeed, the South African neoliberalism of today is anchored in the development of racial capitalism from the colonial era through the transition from apartheid. A Marxist theory of capitalist accumulation and crisis underpins this analysis along with critical conceptualizations of space and scale drawn from social geography. This provides a critical, materialist basis from which to understand racial capitalism and apartheid, not as an irrational hangover of a racist colonialism, but as a rational tool of capitalism as a system of accumulation (Saul and Gelb 1981), the legacy of which looms large in South African neoliberalism. The chapter concludes with the tracing of neoliberal restructuring at the level of the local state in Cape Town and its particular manifestations and impact on Capetonians materially and politically. This illustration of the structural tensions at the scale of the local state lays the context in which the struggle for what Hart (2002) terms the contrasting requirements of redistribution and accumulation is played out. These possibilities and
limitations are also revealing of “the terrain of the conjunctural” - namely “the incessant and persistent efforts” by political forces to defend and preserve the status quo, which in turn defines the terrain upon which the forces of opposition organize” (Gramsci in Hart 2002, 237).

This sets the stage for the discussion of the literature examining labour-community alliances as a form of opposition to neoliberal restructuring advanced per the needs of accumulation and the development of alternatives per the needs of the working class poor for redistribution. Chapter 3 examines labour-community alliances, from their most early beginnings in nineteenth century Europe, to the instances of cooperation first observed in the 1970s that gave rise to the term social movement unionism and relevant scholarship in social movement literature. I note the centrality of these debates to the changing position of the working class in the era of neoliberal globalization and the strategies of renewal its organizations utilize.

Furthermore, I draw attention to the binary conception of ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements as disparate organizational forms and the imposition of theoretical constructs on the South that often have little traction. Instead, I argue for a conception of both ‘old’ and ‘new’ movements as social movement organizations (Fairbrother 2008) with both movement and institutional dimensions (von Holdt 2002) that are in tension, with the movement dimension appearing stronger when political, economic, and sociocultural conditions facilitate its emergence. With this in mind, I review the history of labour and community organizing in South Africa, which also informs the dynamics and understandings of the conditions for organizing in South Africa today. This is followed by an exploration of theoretical conceptions of alliance and coalition formation and the conditions in which they form. A presentation of recent experiences of coalition building elsewhere in the Global South is presented to provide evidence. I then present an alternative conception of labour-community alliances emerging from the experiences of the
global South that sees them as movements against what Harvey (2003) calls ‘accumulation by dispossession.’ Spronk and Terhorst (2012) draw on Harvey to argue that though these struggles have to some degree usurped those of ‘old’ social organizations such as unions, the new movements draw heavily on the repertoires and forms of the old and in practice the links between these organizations are many. Class formation and solidarity in the context of a diminishing base of collective consumption and the link between accumulation by dispossession and expanded reproduction is a key element in the development of struggles against neoliberal restructuring and for transformative alternatives. Indeed, in this way I argue that the spaces of governance and the production of the physical space of service delivery in ways that serve to exclude the working class poor are both elements of hegemonic rule that represent objects of struggle. Once placed within this Gramscian framework of neoliberal hegemony, economic and material practices of the dominant class(es) are shown to be just as important as those political and cultural elements of hegemonic rule.

The development of this basis of inquiry equips the thesis with the necessary tools to begin examining the case of the Housing Assembly in Cape Town and the alliance building and organizing carried out by CBOs and Samwu. Chapter 4 builds this case study and examines sources of complexity and fragmentation that represent obstacles and limitations for strong alliances to emerge in the present. I argue that a host of organizational, sociocultural and politico-economic complexities act as disabling forces on organizing efforts. This chapter is primarily based upon the empirical research conducted for this thesis and is supplemented by a body of existing literature on labour community alliances, public sector unions and social movements in Cape Town and South Africa.
Despite the sombre tone of the above there are positive arguments to be made in consideration of the case study. Chapter 5 presents the possibilities and openings for overcoming fragmentation present in the Housing Assembly. I explain that despite the impacts of neoliberal restructuring, the legacies of apartheid and organizational difference that serve to fragment working class alliances, possibilities can emerge from learning processes that utilize popular education and working class ideology to develop unity, new organizational forms and alternatives for service delivery and redistribution in general. The chapter concludes by connecting these possibilities and the research and analysis of the previous chapters to discussions of the development of strong left organizations in Cape Town and South Africa, drawing a series of concluding remarks and proposing areas for further research.

Overcoming Fragmentation is an attempt to delve into the experience of labour and community activists and determine the obstacles to and possibilities for transformative collaboration in present day Cape Town inspired by and expressed through our collective words.
Chapter 2: The Political Economy of South Africa:

Neoliberalizing Cape Town

The origins, development and structural composition of the South African economy are enormously important to the contemporary political economy of service delivery. The racial capitalist systems of the colonial period and apartheid were, at their core, based upon the exploitation and availability of cheap black labour. At the outset of mineral discovery in the 1860s economic activity consisted of scattered pockets of English and Afrikaner commercial and agricultural capitalist and widespread pre-capitalist production. With the discovery of diamonds in 1867, and gold in 1886, the Minerals Energy Complex (MEC) began to take shape. Alongside an intensification of settler colonialism, the MEC would define the trajectory of growth over the next century, both in the considerable proportion of output it represented and the contingent effect of the extractive industries on the economy as a whole (Fine and Rustomjee, 1996). At their core, the ability of these dominant sectors to accumulate capital was predicated on the availability of cheap African labour, which privileged semi-skilled and skilled European workers. Using “traditional techniques to strip land from indigenous peoples – 'hut taxes', debt peonage systems and fees for cattle-dipping and grazing, as well as other more direct forms of compulsion – the settlers drew African men from the fields, into the mines and emerging factories” (Bond 2003, 35). The Land Act of 1913 prohibited the purchase of land by Africans outside of homelands or Bantustans, which represented just 7.3%, later 13%, of land in South Africa. Wages paid to mostly male migrant laborers, housed in hostels nearby to production sites, were subsidized by the household and subsistence labour of women in the Bantustans. A close alliance between the state and capital was also established to ensure that the abundant and cheap energy necessary for intensive mineral extraction was available. Contrary to the arguments
set forth by a number of liberal scholars over the years, describing this racist labour regime as an ‘irrational anomaly’ of a particular historical experience of colonialism, Saul and Gelb (1981, 64) argue that this particular form of ‘racial capitalism’ was a very rational and deliberate system of ensuring a supply of cheap labour to drive production: “Afrikaner nationalism… has been no more irrational a factor, but instead has encapsulated the demands of a fluctuating alliance of classes and class fractions produced in the terrain of South African capitalist development itself.”

By the mid-20s the emerging threat of a multi-racial urban proletariat had created a shift in domestic policy that would consolidate white privilege and crackdown on efforts to unionize African workers. The Afrikaner nationalist project, an important part of the state strategy to diffuse labour unrest and maintain stability, began to consolidate in the interwar years. This strategy included state investment in industry, the politically motivated inception of a program of Afrikaner cultural revival and efforts by the newly formed Pact government to extend benefits to white workers (Marais, 2012). This succeeded in absorbing a class of poor whites, formed as agricultural was increasingly mechanized and urban populations grew, and paralleled the rise of Afrikaner capital in the private sector (Saul and Gelb, 1981).

Secondary manufacturing, developed with state subsidies and protection in the early 20th century, contributed to the growth of the African working class and intensification of labour unrest alongside rapid GDP growth during World War II (Bond 2003). Workers increasingly moved to the cities as demand for labour rose. Black wages also rose by 50% relative to white wages in this period (Bond 2003). In the 1940s the United Party (UP) government established several commissions to examine the state of the African working class and the labour question as supply and control of labour was essential to continued accumulation. The reinforcement of racial job reservation, the ‘color bar’, alongside an increasingly large and ever-exploited urban
population gave rise to renewed efforts on the part of African workers to organize.

By the end of the war and the reintegration of South Africa into the global economy the colonial segregation mode of production was unsustainable. The Bantustans could no longer socially reproduce their inhabitants. Saul and Gelb (1981) argue that this was a crisis of racial capitalism and an important conjuncture for two reasons. First, the racial labour regime set in place in the first half of the century had served economic ends and maintained political stability and control of labour. Second, as manufacturing and industrialization intensified the number of permanent and semi-permanent urban African workers increased as did labour militancy. The challenge for the state was to meet the demand for cheap labour from mining, manufacturing and agricultural capital in rural and urban areas and the desire for racial labour preference by whites essential to the maintenance of stability. The UP proved unable to provide an acceptable solution and the National Party (NP) narrowly won the 1948 election. The apartheid system concretely overcame this crisis by institutionalizing racial segregation and maintaining a proletarianized African population in the Bantustans and increasingly in urban and para-urban areas (Arrighi, Aschoff and Scully 2010, Hart 2002). Similar to earlier policies that facilitated the realization of extraordinary profits, the formalized and intensified policies of apartheid made possible “a favorable allocation of labour – beyond the immediate pressures of the market” (Saul and Gelb 1981, 69). This made possible a renewed period of above average growth and accumulation.

At the outset, the apartheid solution primarily served the interests of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and capitalist class and the white working class, whose interests became the priority of the state as its constituents. State investment was beneficial for capital in general however, which included English capital (Saul and Gelb 1981). Fine and Rustomjee (1996) argue that this disjuncture between the nodes of economic and political power at the outset of apartheid, though
they would be smoothed over some two decades later, had enormous implications for the economy as a whole. Although the NP was able to facilitate the interpenetration of English and Afrikaner capital by the 1970s, through the 1950s and 1960s the state lacked a comprehensive industrial strategy. The reason being that the state could not launch an industrial program that out of necessity would support English capital until such time that doing so would not alienate its middle class Afrikaner political base. Therefore, not only was the South African market constrained by the limited demand whites represented for manufactured goods, but primarily production was so biased towards the MEC that industrial growth would be stunted and distorted (Fine and Rustomjee 1996). When a partial strategy finally came in the early 1970s the apartheid economy was increasingly unstable and unevenly developed, the composition of South African capital greatly evolved, and the circumstances in the world economy remarkably different with the fall of the Bretton Woods system, and the general crisis of accumulation that had set in.

**Uneven development and a Marxist theory of crisis**

Uneven development refers to the constant and differentiated reproduction of sector, space and scale inherent in capitalist production (Bond 1999). On a global level, evidence of the inequities of globalization or “uneven geographical development” as Harvey (2000, 68) prefers to define it, is enormous. Sectoral unevenness and the valorization of certain sectors of the economy (particularly finance) over others, spatial unevenness and the rise and fall of different geographical spaces and places, and the reprioritization of scales are everywhere apparent in the pursuit of capital accumulation (Bond 2000b, Smith 1984). Nationally and sub-nationally, processes of uneven development also play central roles as is evident in the brief introduction to South African political economy above and which will become more apparent in what follows.
A Marxist theory of crises is similarly helpful in understanding the crisis of accumulation that emerged in the early 1970s and its manifestation in South Africa. Central to what Marx called the ‘absolute general laws of capital accumulation’ is the profit motive and the tendency of the ‘rate of profit to fall’. In an effort to realize profit and survive in a competitive market, capitalists can invest in technology in order to decrease labour costs and increase productivity however; competing firms are compelled to do likewise (McDonald 2008). In doing so the “capacity to produce surplus value… is diminished over time by the very technological revolutions that individual capitalist institute in their pursuit of surplus value” (Harvey 1982, 180). While downward pressure on wages or an increase in the productivity of labour by a variety of other means can be pursued, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall remains. The excessive use of counter strategies results at some point in too large a volume of goods being produced such that, in the context of increasing unemployment as production is less and less labour intensive, they cannot be brought to market profitably (McDonald 2008, Bond 2000a).

Such a crisis, due to the over accumulation of capital in the form of commodities, money capital, and machinery, is termed one of ‘overaccumulation’.

The only response that will succeed in (partially and temporarily) reestablishing conditions favorable to renewed accumulation is devaluation. This can involve “the scrapping of the economic dead word, which takes forms as diverse as depression, banking crashes, inflation, plant shutdowns and, as Schumpeter called it, the sometimes ‘creative destruction’ of physical and human capital (though sometimes the uncreative solution of war)” (Bond 2000a, 10). To overcome these general crises of accumulation capital can embark on a number of ‘fixes’ to temporarily displace the crisis through time and space. Spatio-temporal fix “refers to many different forms of spatial reorganization and geographical expansion that serve to manage, at
least for a time, crisis-tendencies inherent in accumulation” (Jessop 2006, 146). These include: “(a) temporal displacement through investment in long-term capital projects or social expenditures (such as education and research) that defer the re-entry of current excess capital values into circulation well into the future, (b) spatial displacements through opening up new markets, new production capacities and new resource, social and labour possibilities elsewhere, or (c) some combination of (a) and (b)” (Harvey 2003, 64). Type (a) investments in the built environment, including plant and equipment, infrastructure, urban environments, housing, and science and technology, and in social expenditure such as healthcare and education, represent the secondary and tertiary circuits of capital respectively. This clarifies the double meaning of the term ‘fix’ as these investments become both partially embedded in the built infrastructure, as well as providing a temporary solution to the crisis of capital. These fixes can be both internal and external; at times seeking those transformations necessitated by capital within a given geographical area and at others the export of capital beyond its place of origin in order to escape devaluation (Jessop 2006). A Marxist theory of crisis and uneven development coupled with the centrality of the MEC yields an alternative to the orthodox narrative of crisis in South Africa.

**The Overaccumulation Crisis in South Africa**

Despite the development of what appeared to be a considerably large and diverse manufacturing sector, South Africa’s MEC bias caused it to remain primarily an exporter of raw materials through the 1960s. Secondary industry growth that did occur in the post war period was extremely capital intensive partly due to state policy and because of the distorting presence of the core MEC. The World Bank itself observed “that, from the 1960s, ‘unusually’ high levels of machinery compared to workers… led to chronic overproduction, relative to the size of the local
market” (Bond 2000a, 21). Despite some diversification in industrial development, these tendencies left the South African economy dependent upon the core MEC and extremely vulnerable to the crisis in 1970s. By the middle of the decade, capital inflows that had previously financed expansion disappeared as “long-term foreign investment shrank from R1.6 billion in 1975/76 to R452 million in 1976/77, while short-term capital gushed out” (Marais 2012, 29), down a total of 13% in two years (Saul and Gelb 1981). Average annual GDP growth fell from 6% in the 1960s to 1.7% in the period between 1973 and 1990 (Marais 2001, 30) as rates of profit declined from 40% in the 1950s to less than 15% in the 1980s (Bond 2000a, 21).

Even when some semblance of a coherent state industrial strategy did emerge in the 1970s, the dominance of MEC and finance capital, and their integration with the state, led these strategies to be opportunistic and narrow in scope. Rather than building linkages with and developing other sectors to facilitate the maturation of the economy as a whole, particularly in manufacturing and higher value added production outside of the core MEC, an exclusionary industrial strategy remained that focused on subsidies and support for the MEC and capital investment (Fine and Rustomjee 1996). Fine and Rustomjee argue that because such a great deal of manufacturing was directly implicated in the MEC, it should be folded in with measurements of extractive sector productivity rather than be classified separately as orthodox analysis has misleadingly tended. Manufacturing, underdeveloped as it was, meant machinery had to be imported, compounding the balance of payments deficit. Under narrow conglomerate control, capital also focused “increasingly on speculative domestic investment activity and illegal capital flight at the expense of productive investment” as a ‘fix’ to the crisis of profitability (Fine and Rustomjee 1996, 174). The falling rate of return on productive investment contributed to the rise in speculation, and of
finance capital and financial markets. When limited market liberalization began in the early 1980s, legal capital flight and international investment exacerbated the situation (Bond 2000a).

Despite increasingly capital-intensive production, apartheid accumulation still relied on cheap black labour. The wages of black workers declined significantly as a share of the wage bill in the post war period and unemployment increased. The limited number of skilled white workers and racist labour preference meant a shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labour came with industrial growth and diversification and represented another factor facilitating capital-intensive production (Saul and Gelb, 1981). High levels of unemployment, which increased from 582 000 in 1962 to 1 000 000 by 1970 (O’Meara in Marais 2012), concentrated in urban and peri-urban populations, represented a real political and economic threat as workers began to organize industrially beginning in 1971 (Saul and Gelb, 1981).

High growth rates in South Africa in the early 1980s were mostly predicated on a rise in gold prices that provided a minor reprieve from the worsening downturn. The temporary upswing was unable to stave off the stagnation caused by both the global crisis and the structural contradictions of racial capitalism were presented anew. The trends of the 1970s continued, the tendency towards overaccumulation remained and investment slowed, dropping 2% each year in the 1980s (Bond 2000a). A severe balance of payments deficit, a symptom of the heavy reliance on imported technology, led the state to seek support from the IMF several times in the decade. Inflation control, austerity and economic contraction followed (Bond 2000a) decreasing the value of real wages and the consumptive power of blacks alongside a saturated white market. The brunt of the austerity, retrenchments and cuts to collective consumption that came in the wake of liberalization were borne disproportionately by the black working class (Marais 2012).
Interpretation of the crisis

Attempts by academics and policy makers to analyse and ascertain the causes and pathways of the crisis have been numerous (see Fine and Rustomjee 1996, Chapter 9). Among the most dominant and questionable in content, and unfortunate in its timing argue Fine and Rustomjee (1996) was that advanced by Gelb (1991) in which he gave capitalism in South Africa the moniker ‘racial Fordism.’ Gelb argued that the trajectory of South African economic development was the result of, drawing on regulation theory, the limited consumptive power of the white market and a failed plan of ISI. Fine and Rustomjee (1996) argue, while acknowledging the limited consumptive power of the white market and marked under consumption by black South Africans were salient, that this was not the root of the failure. On the contrary, the cause lay in the absence of a coherent plan of industrialisation beyond one that continued to support the MEC due to its deforming weight and tight connections with the state. Though industrial output did diversify, linkages between sectors, aside from those tied into the MEC, were weak at best, causing support for manufacturing outside of this core and some luxury goods to be haphazard with intermediate and capital goods production likewise suffering. Therefore, state facilitation of Fordist industrialization was neglected and never realized as manufacturing diversification was stunted and tightly integrated with the core MEC. This directly undermines the broad basis for Gelb’s argument. On the contrary, if one applies the theoretical tenets of ISI to South Africa, the trajectory ran in the opposite direction of the theoretical model, from extractive sector forward and not consumption goods backward, and these linkages were tenuous. Rather the culprit was the MEC as (Fine and Rustomjee 1998, 695) argue, “the history of industrial policy in South Africa is not, as traditionally perceived, one of protection to promote ISI (although protection does support domestic production of consumption
and other goods) but the creation and support of the MEC core industries, with limited impact on forward diversification.” Although the influence of the global economic climate also figured heavily, the dominant interpretation encouraged the adoption of a set of macro-economic prescriptions post-1994 promoted by IFIs and domestic economists during the transition; a neoliberal economics of liberalization and market reform that would have enormous implications for post-apartheid South Africa. The overwhelming weight of the MEC meant the possibility of a South African economy after 1994, newly positioned towards export oriented manufacturing and generally conforming to neoliberal orthodoxy, achieving both stability and redistribution was a long shot at best (Hart 2002, Marais 2012). Exacerbating this, argue Arrighi, Aschoff and Scully (2010), was the relatively high cost of South African labour in relation to other emerging economies due to the virtually complete proletarianization of the black working class who were without means to ensure social reproduction outside of wage labour and state grants. Post-apartheid, the MEC and conglomerate finance capital would continue to reign supreme.

The interplay between this dominant interpretation and the politics of the Tripartite Alliance (henceforth Alliance) and the theoretical conceptualization of national liberation are also consequential. As the ANC began to successfully construct a hegemonic project within the liberation struggle in the 1980s, nationalist anti-apartheid sentiment, i.e. the racial contradiction, rather than class contradiction became the dominant point of identification (Pillay 2008). This is evident for example in the SACP’s two-stage theory of revolution: first democratic then socialist (Marais 2001). This perspective saw the apartheid state as the culprit for the apartheid system in general and the immediate worsening economic situation. The solution to which was the removal and replacement of the state. On the other hand, apartheid capitalism, or simply capitalism, which the above analysis indicates would be more appropriate given the nature of the crisis of
accumulation that emerged in South Africa, is relegated to stage two. The parallel identification of the apartheid state as both the target of struggle and the cause of crisis helped to emphasize the race contradiction during the transition rather than both the race and class contradictions that apartheid capitalism represented and left open the door for the adoption of a particular set of policies in the transition and general continuity in the economic realm.

**The Transition**

In response to increased mobilization by the opposition in the 1980s, the worsening economic climate and increasing pressures from IFIs for austerity, the apartheid state attempted to utilize consent alongside the norm of state repression in order to refashion the apartheid political and social system in a more ‘modern’ way and restructure the accumulation strategy (Marais 2012). Following the recommendations of the Riekert and Wiehahn Commissions, the state relaxed elements of racial segregation and reordered a number of institutions of the state and the economy. This included relaxed restrictions on the movement of black workers to divide and subdue the black working class opposition, including those insiders vital to accumulation, the urban working classes, and excluding those surplus to it, largely in rural areas. The state also decentralized and privatized a number of township services in an effort to decrease its fiscal burden (Barchiesi 2007). Rate hikes and reinvigoration of protest followed. The costs of these reforms and the security apparatus associated with them were enormous. By 1986 the situation seemed untenable and a state of emergency was called. Reform continued but in the form of ‘oil spot development’ to curb resistance in the most volatile areas under the eye of the National Security Management System (Marais 2012).
The impasse at the end of the 1980s was such that neither side could dictate terms. The negotiations that ensued were lengthy and complex. A resolution to the crisis involved the realization of two imperatives: a political solution to the crisis had to be negotiated and a new development trajectory had to be established that could provide a way out of the economic and social crises that plagued the country (Marais, 2012). Marais employs a Gramscian analysis to pose this as a problem of the establishment of hegemony by the ruling bloc along novel and inclusive terms. However, “this implied a major risk: that the main political force in the democratic movement (the ANC) could be saddled with the task of salvaging South African capitalism, by accepting and then managing a historic class compromise” (Marais 2001, 84-85).

Hegemony is achieved when a set of forces is able to reconcile multiple class interests and absorb, to a certain degree, oppositional groups by providing leadership in both political society, read state, and civil society. Central to this argument is that the establishment and maintenance of hegemony rests upon the free consent of the majority of the population in relation to the direction of social life by the dominant class and, made legitimate by the above, that stability is also maintained by the judicially instituted, “apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively” (Gramsci 1971, 145). In this sense, as Hart (2002, 26 original emphasis) argues, hegemony must be constantly renewed, leadership in the political and civil society spheres maintained and rejuvenated. Hegemony is “a contested political process.” This was precisely the position the parties in the negotiations found themselves as a heterogeneous group of parties sitting down to fashion a novel consensus in a highly complex context (Hart 2002). In the process of forming an historic bloc leading up to the 1994 elections there were essentially two paths the country could take under the ANC. Marais (2012, 78-79) argues that one would
prioritize redistribution in the direction of those excluded under apartheid and provide for a “durable hegemony.” The other, while ensuring political inclusivity, “would engineer a small, increasingly multiracial enclave of privilege (buffered by a steadily expanding layer of black middle classes) and seek to gradually reduce the numbers of South Africans trapped in precariousness.” In other words, political transition on the one hand but general economic and social continuity on the other. In hindsight the economic and social continuity in the transition to neoliberalism seem clear but the process was fraught and the trajectories complex.

Neoliberalization

Building on a body of literature that conceives of the spread of neoliberalism as a process, or neoliberalization (Peck and Tickell 2002) and as historically contingent and locally specific, I seek to understand how neoliberalism influences contentious politics and state-civil society relations in South Africa and Cape Town. I argue that actually existing neoliberalisms are imbued with the spatial legacies of previous modes of organization and maintain stability through a complex set of highly contested and contingent mechanisms of sociospatial discipline and control. These mechanisms are essential to the maintenance of conditions favourable to capital accumulation. Despite their success neoliberal projects do show signs of wavering. The experience of contentious politics at the scale of the local state, while linked to other scales, is central to understanding these shifts as they pertain to the daily experience activists. As a market rationale increasingly comes to define and dominate the spaces, both physical and political, occupied by those excluded from an increasingly commodified existence, these surplus populations likewise increasingly define their struggles and engage in contentious action in and in terms of these spaces and places. In response new relationships and alliances emerge to
challenge neoliberal restructuring and the power of capital in the context of contested hegemonic projects and possibilities for transformation in the spaces that are the product of this contention.

Neoliberalism as an ideology, set of policy prescriptions and project to submit social relations to the mediation of the market logic, is a salient presence to varying degrees the world over. Harvey (2005, 2) defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills.” The neoliberal project has achieved, though in a crisis prone and unstable fashion, the conditions for renewed accumulation of capital since the mid-1970s. Critical theorists point out, contrary to mainstream liberal analysis, that neoliberalism in practice is not a static ideal or end point, but a highly varied phenomenon; one that “must be construed as a historically specific, ongoing, and internally contradictory process of market-driven sociospatial transformation, rather than as a fully actualized policy regime, ideological form, or regulatory framework” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 353). As McDonald (2008, 72) makes clear, “neoliberal projects are also embedded in particular social, economic and political milieus… [and] are therefore ‘path dependent’.”

Particularly significant for the case of South Africa is the historical and geographical context of neoliberalism. As Brenner and Theodore (2002, 351) insist, neoliberal projects are “produced within national, regional and local contexts and defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices and political struggles.” Indeed, within neoliberal doctrine there have been and continue to be profound shifts. Peck and Tickell (2002) distinguish between two distinct phases of neoliberalism: ‘roll back’ and ‘roll out’. The former refers to the first phase of policy prescriptions in the 1970s and 1980s that entailed the destruction and dismantling of the Keynesian welfare states of the global North through fiscal
austerity, union busting, privatization and liberalization. The latter refers to the second phase of reforms which, upon witnessing the disruptive consequences of the first, sought to stabilize and regulate a system that would ensure growth in markets while avoiding the more destructive and chaotic nature of unfettered markets; “revisionist neoliberalism” (Mohan and Stokke 2000, 255). Following this second wave, and the role of regulation, it is important to note that state intervention in the economy to maintain its viability in instances of crisis, action by the US and other states following the global recession in 2008 for example, are not paradoxical for neoliberal doctrine in the sense that they counter the received wisdom that the state get out of the market. On the contrary, it has always been the case that neoliberalism has “concerned state intervention to promote private capital” (Fine and Hall 2012, 53).

Neoliberal restructuring and dispossession has intensified contentious politics around the local state, and urban services and space in particular, in varied ways. Analyses of these processes frequently focus, whether from critics or proponents, on the forces of globalization and the inevitable advance and power of global capital, what some have dubbed ‘the impact model’ of globalization (Hart 2002). This characterization of globalisation as an unstoppable force goes hand in hand with the dominant Cartesian conception of space as a passive container, unproblematic, upon which and in which political, social and economic forces, act (Curry 1996). Beginning in the 1970s, many scholars brought a critical Marxist approach to the study of space that has challenged these static and absolute notions allowing for more nuanced and dynamic understandings of space and sociospatial change. This critical reconceptualization of space also contributes to efforts to move beyond reductionist and economistic understandings of globalization (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 1982, Smith 1984, Massey 1994).
In his ground-breaking work, *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre argued that the production of space was key to the capitalist dynamic, increasingly important as capitalism expands in a seemingly ever more unsustainable way. For Lefebvre each mode of production produces a space that is its own, and capitalism, more than any other mode of social organization, has conquered, expropriated and transformed space in complex and myriad ways in an effort to resolve, displace and internalize the inherent contradictions within it in an attempt to survive (Merrifield, 2006). The spatiality of capitalism as a system was, he argued, at the heart of the ability of capital to overcome crisis. But space does not only matter for capital, it is fundamental in every aspect and at every level of capitalism as a form of social relations. Indeed, “Lefebvre insisted on a relational understanding of space as actively produced through everyday practices that are simultaneously material and metaphorical, and on the inseparability of space and time” (Hart 2002, 34). Lefebvre (1991, 90) warns that if we lack this understanding of space as actively produced, “we fall into the trap of treating space ‘in itself,’ as space as such.” We come to think in terms of spatiality, and so fetishize space in a way reminiscent of the fetishism of commodities, where the trap lay in exchange, and the error was to consider ‘things’ in isolation, as ‘things in themselves’. Just as, for Marx, commodities mask the character of the social relations of production inherent in them, for Lefebvre, conceptions of space as absolute, passive and given, similarly conceal the social relations at the root of the production of space. Particularly significant for the present discussion is Lefebvre’s insistence that space is relationally, actively and socially produced. By focusing “on the production of space and the social relationships inherent to it – relationships which introduce specific contradictions into production, so echoing the contradiction between private ownership and the means of production
and the social character of productive forces,” Lefebvre (1991, 90), draws attention to the radical possibilities and openings that emerge for the realization of sociospatial change.

A number of geographers have taken up this alternative conception of space put forth by Lefebvre. Among them, Harvey (1982) and Smith (1984) have made important contributions to understanding of the role of capital in the production of space. Harvey’s (1982) theorization of the spatial nature of capitalist production, crisis formation and the earlier discussed ‘spatial fix’, established the importance of space and the built environment under capitalism. The notion of the spatial fix underscores Lefebvre’s argument that capitalism has only been able to survive, much to the contrary of a number of predictions, “by occupying space, by producing a space” (Lefebvre 1976, 21). Indeed, Harvey ((1982, 426) argues that, “capital builds a physical landscape appropriate to its own condition at a particular moment in time, only to have to destroy it [through disinvestment], usually in the course of a crisis, at a subsequent point in time.” This highlights tension between the fixity and mobility of capital. Both Harvey (1982) and Smith (1984) have addressed this, whereby capital must put down roots and produce a built environment or space in order to extract surplus value through production but on the other hand remain able to move to avoid the threat of devaluation or to seek out new opportunities for accumulation elsewhere. In addressing this tension, these theorizations of space under capitalism draw attention to the limits of capital’s mobility and ability to freely produce space (Smith 1984, Harvey 1996, 2000). Harvey, in fact, notes Lefebvre’s refusal to address the closure inherent in the materialization of space (2000, 183) that he argues is a realization essential both for theorizing the role of capital but also in the formation of alternatives. Smith (1984) and Massey (1984) in turn both emphasize the path dependent, contingent nature of the uneven development of geographies of capitalism based upon closure in the form of previously embedded forms of
spatial organization manifest in the built environment, confirming Harvey’s argument as to the
closure of space and speaking to the contextually specific and varied forms neoliberalism takes.

The concept of scale has also been reconceptualised along with the turn in understandings
of space within social geography. As Brenner (2001, 592) summarizes, “traditional… notions of
geographical scale as a fixed, bounded, self-enclosed and pre-given container are currently being
superseded – at least within the parameters of critical geographical theory and research – by a
highly productive emphasis on process, evolution, dynamism and sociopolitical contestation.”
Harvey (2000, 75) also speaks to the inadequacy of former conceptions of geographical scale
“because it makes it appear as if the scales are immutable or even wholly natural, rather than
systemic products of changing technologies, modes of human organization and political
struggle.” Scales is, like space, constantly in the process of being produced, contested and
reproduced and, while scale defines the field of struggle and impacts the processes therein, scale
itself is then impacted by this struggle and the effects at different scales will be varied
(Swyngedouw 1997). For Swyngedouw ontologically prioritizing the sociospatial process of the
constitution of scales redirects focus from the scale itself towards the social struggle formative of
scale. These discussions of space and scale are particularly illuminating in attempting to
understand the process of neoliberalization and contestation in South Africa.

South African Neoliberalism

Many scholars have argued that economic and social policy in post-apartheid South Africa is not
neoliberal but rather, Keynesian in its orientation. This is evidenced by the high level of public
investment since 1994, in housing and service infrastructure as a part of the RDP and in the form
of South Africa’s social grant system which is one of the most extensive in the world reaching
almost 30% of the population (Hagen-Zanker, Morgan and Meth 2011, Marais 2012). However, I argue that a misrepresentation of the process of neoliberalization lies at the root of these characterizations. Contrary to the arguments put forth by Freund (2002) citing an increasingly strong state presence, and Pieterse (2002) that the embrace of state intervention, regulation and the celebration of a vibrant civil society among other factors, McDonald (2008, 75) argues that “it is exactly this ‘embracing of the importance of the state’ – coupled with far-reaching marketization reforms in a wide range of social and economic spheres – that characterise post-apartheid reforms as neoliberal… and these objectives are being strengthened by roll out forms of neoliberalism, not lessened.” For example the extension of public expenditure has been accompanied by a powerful, underlying market logic of discipline and cost recovery, typical of roll out neoliberalism (2008). Many of the apartheid social expenditures in housing and services, once extended have also been either rolled back or slowly eroded in real terms. In the realm of production, the enormous subsidies given to corporations in the apartheid era, especially to the MEC and which for some sectors was the only way of maintaining profitability by the end of the 1980s, have given way to liberalized, export oriented production (Fine and Rustomjee 1996). However, while parastatals have been corporatized, placed under private management or dependent on contractors or consultants to function, subsidization of the core industries vital to accumulation continues, consistent with the role of the state in ‘revisionist’ neoliberalism. In the absence of a need for a roll back phase in many areas of public policy due to the racially skewed nature of Keynesian, apartheid state social expenditure, it is understandable how such reforms could be construed as something other than neoliberal (McDonald 2008).

Critics level that the materialist critique glosses over procedural improvements to standards of living and the important local processes of contestation (Meyers 2011). The more
sophisticated material analyses presented here however, give ample attention to these processes and openings for change. This draws attention to the importance and necessity of nuanced materialist critique in properly situating processes and contestation in a variety of spaces and at a variety of scales in the context of ongoing crisis in South Africa and globally in which processes of uneven development are intensified (Bond 2000a). The risk in only giving lip service to materialist critique is to elide the role processes, for example Pieterse’s (2008, 162) “systemic drivers of urban development” (how technology is used, infrastructure, built and local agency utilized), play in carrying the disciplinary and coercive power of the market and hegemonic state directly bear upon communities, households and individuals. This serves to demobilize and remobilize spaces of participation that serve to dominate and govern the working class, while providing sporadic and inconsistent procedural change and benefits (Ruiters 2005).

During the transition, the room to manoeuvre in terms of which path would be taken into the democratic era was constrained by national and global economic conditions among other factors. As South Africa entered its democratic phase it reintegrated into a global economy that had just undergone a dramatic shift. Set in motion by the crisis of accumulation first witnessed in the first half of the 1970s, the general adoption of neoliberal restructuring, otherwise known as the Washington Consensus, assured that the economic landscape onto which South African emerged in the early 1990s was decidedly neoliberal. This coincided with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and a vacuum of guidance in terms of alternatives to the capitalist mode of production as a model for social organization. By the 1980s South Africa had already adopted neoliberalism as a basis for its economic policy in some spheres, exacerbating the productive decline while further valorising finance capital. This domestic shift was also representative of the result of the struggle in the NP between far right hard liners in support of apartheid and the more
liberal clients of big capital that, since the 1970s, via the Urban Foundation for instance, had been advocating for political and economic liberalization as a way of rescuing the apartheid accumulation strategy, the latter eventually being victorious (Bond 2000a). When this dominant bloc reached out, the liberation movement, argues Hart (2002), was quite unprepared for the proposal put forward by the apartheid state for political liberalization and the ANC lacked a coherent economic policy and a plan for how the movement would deal with capitalism as it was while addressing extreme poverty and inequality once in power. The history of the ANC did not posit it in direct opposition to such a class compromise and general continuity in the economic realm (Saul and Gelb 1981). The argument that the liberation movement was on a course towards the realization of a transition to socialism in the run up to the negotiations lacks compelling evidence as is evident in the divisions within the movement itself.

Though Cosatu was able to fill somewhat the void in alliance economic policy with the 1993 Macro-Economic Research Group (MERG) report but it was largely ignored in the development of post-apartheid policy (Michie and Padayachee 1997). The Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) base document, released shortly before the elections and propelled by Cosatu, suspicious that substantive reform was being pushed aside by a narrow political transition, celebrated economic, social and political rights to address the inequities of apartheid but was also watered down. The RDP White Paper, adopted by the ANC later in the year, significantly altered the base document, replacing Keynesian redistribution with neoliberal restructuring and a discourse of trickle down poverty alleviation (Hart 2002, RSA 1994b). By 1996 this right turn seemed cemented with adoption of the plan for Growth Employment and Redistribution (Gear). Gear was the product of a technocratic exercise and was presented as a fait accompli that outraged many Alliance partners and members (Hart 2002). By the end of the year
the commitment to a neoliberal growth path and the general subservient position the state had taken to capital in Gear (Michie and Padayachee 1997) was evident, as national level policy reforms make clear. These included export oriented growth; trade liberalization; deregulation of finance; fiscal conservatism; lowering of corporate and increasing of personal taxes, including the Value Added Tax that disproportionately affected the poor; cost-recovery for public services; monetarism; privatization and commercialization of state entities; property rights enshrined in the constitution and the dropping of nationalization (McDonald 2008).

In the aftermath of the transition and the disappointing results of Gear, several theories emerged as to how such a regressive downturn, and turn to neoliberalism, could possibly have taken place; it certainly was not inevitable. Among them are that the ANC eventually saw that there was no alternative to capitalism, or similarly that the inexorable forces of globalization were too powerful. Another, the elite transition hypothesis, accuses the ANC and the emerging black bourgeoisie of selling out. Finally there are those who argue that, although ‘globally integrated capitalisms’ are limiting, along with the nature of South African capital and the transition, the policy trajectory of the newly elected government was determined by a complex and contested political process, in which popular political forces, parties, unions and capital struggled over the field and terms of the new dispensation (Hart 2002). Hart continues, citing the multitude and complex forces which included the persistent ‘education’ of the ANC by IFIs; the support of new elements of the state which saw this outward orientation as a way of bypassing apartheid era bureaucrats; the conversion of former, especially white, intellectual socialists, (see also Buhlungu 1997); and the use of neoliberal discourses to illustrate the success or failure of international examples and contrast the old and the new South Africa along stark lines which allied democracy with the market and the state with the economic failure and general atrocities.
of apartheid which interpretations of the crisis played into. Empirical evidence of what Hart (2002) calls the 30 percent solution emerged as early as 1996 and was indicative of the new trajectory: though the black share of income had risen to 29.9 from 35.7 percent in 1991, only the top 10 percent of black households benefited from this while bottom 40 percent experienced a 21 percent drop in income. Already these increasing inequities were being felt across the country but especially in the townships where cost recovery, rising inflation, worsening unemployment and falling real wages made swift, deep impacts.

Neoliberalism and the Local State

With the increasing adoption of neoliberal policy by governments around the world and increasing global flows of capital vying for productive investment, the local state has risen to centre stage as a central focus of state power and policy (Hart, 2002), particularly in urban areas. The World Bank (2000) has been a key facilitator of these transformations, championing the local state over the national, the latter tasked with maintaining stability and facilitating markets generally while, through processes of urbanization, decentralization and urban restructuring, the former is to compete to attract global capital. However, the failures of neoliberal economics to achieve equitable growth and neoliberal governance to provide acceptable democratic control of decentralized governance regimes are manifold. The World Bank Cities in Transition Report (2000) identifies the Bank’s central goal as identifying and resolving key instances of market and government failure to ensure sustainable economic growth in both the ‘real’ and ‘financial’ sectors of the economy that will be accompanied by improvements in social welfare and poverty reduction. Cities “have become increasingly important geographical targets and institutional laboratories for a variety of neoliberal policy experiments… [and] the overarching goal of such
neoliberal urban policy experiments is to mobilize city space as an arena both for market oriented economic growth and for elite consumption practices’’ (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 368). Cities have become more important for capital accumulation as finance capital and investment far outstrip that of production in generating growth. Decentralized local government institutions and spatial landscapes are easily managed and modified for the reoriented priorities of capital accumulation and are more easily made to conform to the needs of capital in an environment where cities compete globally for investment (McDonald 2008).

The impact of reprioritizing state expenditure to attract capital through the promotion of investment in Central Business Districts (CBDs) or City Improvement Districts (CIDs) more generally, luxury housing and leisure facilities, especially in urban areas where investments in public infrastructure are vital to the well-being of the mass of the population, are enormous. The privatization of public services has led to a deterioration of the social determinants of health. When these shortcomings have been recognized efforts to reverse negative trends have been slow to respond (Marais 2012). When services and infrastructure are extended, as in South Africa, gains are frequently moderated by the commodification of delivery, poor quality and the marginalization and stigmatization of those able to access subsidies (Ruiters 2005, 2011).

While the state remains central, it is but one player in governance mechanisms give great import to private sector and civil society organizations that are to cooperate to secure economic and social prosperity. By selectively extending the institutions and regulatory mechanisms of the state and implementing participatory processes to include civil society in governance, it is argued that sustainable growth and poverty alleviation can be achieved (Stiglitz 1998). These ‘good governance’ mechanisms limit civil society members to consultative roles however, with little or no substantive decision-making power. As a result ‘invited spaces of participation’ - spaces
condoned and established by the state and business - serve as inclusive yet simultaneously disabling mechanisms (Miraftab 2004). Public spaces have also become more exclusive with the rise of CIDs to regulate, police and improve the market appeal of city centres. Miraftab (2007) argues that CIDs serve the competitive needs of capital while excluding other urban residents and promoting uneven sociospatial development. The elimination of market distortions and so-called irresponsible public expenditure has included the transfer of items formerly of public consumption, basic services and other social expenditure for example, to the market with the state no longer acting as a provider but as a guarantor of services (McDonald and Smith 2004, Desai 2003). As this trend becomes more pervasive, marginalized populations, often unable to afford fees and tariffs, become increasingly vulnerable, especially as the jobs promised and necessary for market based poverty alleviation, fail to materialize and the new spaces provided for participation in city governance seem more and more unable to address their needs.

Neoliberal Cape Town

Experiences of neoliberal restructuring in Cape Town have been similar to other cities in South Africa and the world. There are however, some important instances of divergence, some of which find their roots in the transition and local government restructuring.

Generally speaking post-apartheid local government restructuring amalgamated apartheid-era Black Local Authorities (BLAs) and White Local Authorities (WLAs) into larger administrative entities. This included the devolution of service provision and redistributive functions among others, from the national to the local level. Democratically elected, local councillors were seen as the members of government most well placed to be responsive to the demands and needs of the most vulnerable South Africans. In many respects, these reforms were
badly needed. The numerous administrative authorities in Cape Town were plagued with inefficiencies, redundancy and a lack of communication. The RDP identified savings accrued from eliminating these problems as a source of partial financing for the extension of infrastructure and services (ANC 1994, 142). In their final rendering however, these proposals were generally in line with neoliberal reform at the time (World Bank in McDonald 2008). In practice restructuring processes have been fraught with structural and institutional difficulties, racial and economic ‘fault lines’ and the contradicting priorities of facilitating redistribution and renewed capital accumulation (Hart 2002). The national state enshrined elements of control in the constitution including preventing local governments from passing deficit budgets, and retained the right to set standards and requirements for service delivery, and to create laws impinging on local government. This ensured that unwanted debt financing of infrastructure and rate hikes could be blocked at the national level should they arise locally. Already responsible for almost 90% of budgets, local government had to maintain its expanded portfolio through locally raised revenue while intergovernmental transfers failed to keep up (McDonald and Smith 2004).

Beyond these structural limitations, the politics of local government restructuring also served to undermine attempts at redistribution. In Cape Town, like elsewhere in country, the pre-interim phase of restructuring leading up to the first local government elections in 1996 was complicated by political posturing and dominated by well-resourced suburban ratepayers associations. Established interests within and without the state were able to wrestle concessions both in terms of numerical representation on the councils and forums created to oversee these early developments and in the negotiations themselves. These institutions, while providing a basis for redistribution, were severely constrained by their composition which limited the extent to which taxation of wealthy areas could be used for cross subsidization of infrastructure and
services. Several wealthy towns on the outskirts of the city also avoided being included in the planned metropolitan area, limiting the resource base the city could draw upon for vital public investments. Racial divisions amongst the disenfranchised were also deep. Representatives from Coloured areas sat with the statutory representatives in the negotiations, as they had been incorporated into the WLAs during apartheid, while African representatives sat on the non-statutory side (McDonald 2008). This underlying basis of deep-seated, structural racism remains in Cape Town today, despite statements to the contrary, which we will revisit. Collectively, manoeuvring such as this ensured that possibilities for significant redistribution were limited.

In the following, interim phase of restructuring from 1996 to 2000, “local government negotiations resulted in deracialized institutions that were clearly more democratic and more transparent than before but that were largely incapable of effecting major redistributional change” (McDonald 2008, 123). On the basis of comparative analysis of data pertaining to investment and expenditure in service delivery staff and equipment between townships and wealthy suburbs, McDonald demonstrates the continuation of inefficient and grossly unequal expenditure characteristic of apartheid. The final phase of local government restructuring was to address precisely these trends of inequity.

The Unicity of Cape Town, one of five established in the country in 2000 to oversee the amalgamation of the largest urban areas into metropolitan municipalities, eradicated many of the institutional biases associated with the pre and interim periods and centralized power in the metro council. Despite this, a number of legislative and policy directives limited the possibility for change in the final phase of restructuring. McDonald and Smith (2004) identify three of these that were particularly significant. The first is the Gear plan. It began by characterizing public spending, especially that concerned with collective consumption, as excessive (Bond, 2000a). A
steady decrease in national transfers followed, which in light of devolution and increased demand for service delivery and infrastructure spending, resulted in enormous budget shortfalls (McDonald and Smith 2004). Attendant to this was the formal legislation of the tax ceilings by the national level and the local state was encouraged to look elsewhere to finance service and infrastructure provision; mainly towards commercialization of delivery. Created in 1997, the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit (MIIU) serves just this purpose, providing finance and expertise to facilitate private sector investment in municipal services. The MIIU has been active in promoting the corporatization and privatization of service delivery and management across the country, while no such complementary institution to promote effective and efficient public delivery has been realized (McDonald and Smith 2004). Finally, the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 eliminated the former emphasis on public service provision as the preferred option and legislated that private options receive equal consideration. Added to this are the pressures of IFIs, other international organizations and agreements, which promote privatization and limit the ability of the state to intervene to prevent these processes or institute redistributive measures.

Though significant, public investment in housing and services since 1994 has been insufficient to address the needs of the majority of citizens in Cape Town. The bulk of investment in the built environment has conformed to neoliberal orthodoxy, prioritizing secondary circuits of capital, transport, telecommunications and service infrastructure, to make Cape Town attractive to international capital and facilitate growth (McDonald 2008). Indeed, the argument made nationally and in Cape Town is that “investments and upgrades in the townships must not undermine international competiveness in the suburbs and business nodes of the city” (McDonald 2008, 137). Capital investment, McDonald continues, remains constrained by limited government transfers that despite reorganization have failed to provide the necessary funds. Even
if the CCT was able to secure funds for the capital investment necessary the restrictions on its operating budget and constraints on revenue raising and deficit budgeting would preclude the offering of any more than basic, lifeline services. The enormous debt financed investments made in preparations for hosting the 2010 World Cup, which cost the city hundreds of millions of Rands a year in finance charges (Desai, Bond, Maharaj 2011, CCT 2012b), a typical competitive investment, are indicative of this bias. The result after post-apartheid restructuring is a local state in Cape Town that is weak in its capacity engender significant redistribution and yet strong in its ability to implement neoliberal austerity, cost recovery and facilitate capital accumulation through the provision of infrastructure and services to business and the elite (McDonald 2008).

The Shift to Developmental Local Government

By the mid-2000s South African economic growth reached its peak pushed by a boom in international commodity prices, the real estate market and an overzealous extension of credit. Consumption far outstripped production, the manufacturing sector lagged along with investment and the balance of payments struggles were on going (Marais 2012). As the financial sector prospered, jobless growth (Bond 2000a) continued. The popular response was both organized and spontaneous opposition in the early 2000s to the self-imposed structural adjustment of the late 1990s. Desai (2003, 4) argues that “the rise of these movements based in particular communities and evincing particular, mainly defensive demands, was not merely a natural result of poverty or marginality but a direct response to state policy.” For example from 1999 to 2000 some 75 000 water disconnections were carried out in Cape Town affecting, conservatively, some 377 000 residents (McDonald and Smith 2004) or one eighth of the city’s population. After the displays of mass mobilization during the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in
2001 and World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) a year later, and ongoing, localized actions, there were signs that the state was beginning to listen.

Leading up to the national elections in 2004, the ANC appeared to be departing from the narrowly macro-economic, Washington Consensus policy trajectory prescribed by Gear. New policies aspired to “a model of economic growth and social redistribution in which the state acts, with varying degrees of autonomy, as a major variable promoting that growth, determining its pattern and ensuring its social development” (Marais 2012, 339), embodying ‘the developmental state’. This shift did not depart significantly however, from the general neoliberal policy consensus of the ANC. On the contrary Hart (2007) argues this shift addressed the moral crisis of legitimacy that party faced having been unable to achieve its goals of poverty reduction and equitable growth and, some argue, popular pressure (Ballard et al. 2006c). Alongside this, the antiquated discourse of the first and second economies was used to depoliticize the lack of progress in the latter, and pose these problems as technical issues to be solved by state intervention, placing enormous responsibility on the shoulders of those in the second economy to “empower themselves to exit the poverty trap” (Hart 2007c, 5). These interventions came in forms that smacked of paternalism and disciplinary mechanisms of control. Hart argues, for example, that the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP), workfare in effect, was preferred over the Basic Income Grant (BIG) because the latter, “is a universal grant – and therefore lacks points of leverage for instilling in its recipients the ‘correct’ [market] attitudes and aspirations” (2007b, 26). Whether or not the developmental state has been or will be successful is contested however. Swilling et al. (in Fine 2007) argue that the South African state has more or less been developmental since the middle of the 1990s. Fine (2007) contends that this over simplifies neoliberalism and has little, if any basis. Fine notes, traces of the MERG report in the
developmental state mantra that may offer possibilities of addressing poverty and inequality if it can be rescued from the vagaries of revisionist neoliberalism.

At the level of the local state the developmental turn was represented by Developmental Local Government (DLG) established in The White Paper on Local Government as “exercising municipal powers and functions in a manner which maximizes their impact on social development and economic growth; playing an integrating and coordinating role to ensure alignment between public (including all spheres of government) and private investment within the municipal area; democratizing development; and building social capital through providing community leadership and vision, and seeking to empower marginalized and excluded groups within the community” (RSA 1998, 8). The defining tension amongst these priorities has been the maintenance of a balance between what could be termed a limited welfarism and the facilitation of capital accumulation (Ruiters 2011). In addition to the EPWP, DLG has included investments in infrastructure for business and residents and the provision of free basic services (FBS) to those that qualify. While FBS contribute to the basic needs of households they also have unintended affects, are integrated within cost recovery mechanisms and serve to discipline and stigmatize recipients, while providing amounts far below what is necessary (Ruiters 2005).

**Neoliberal South Africa or the Return of the Developmental State?**

By the end of the decade the South African economy appeared in many ways much the same as it had at the end of apartheid, and does today, though with some variation. Stagnant industry and manufacturing, including capital and intermediate goods sectors, exist alongside a usually steady MEC that provides the bulk of export earnings, all of which require significant imports to remain productive. Tight monetary policy attempts to keep inflation in check and attract capital. The
economy has become more financialized in line with global trends and liberalization has ensured that it is more exposed to international capital flows. The adoption of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) has increased public spending but fails to represent a turn away from neoliberalism, and closely follows the shifting orthodoxy of the World Bank and the post-Washington consensus (Marais 2012). When the recession hit in 2009 policy makers were surprised, having maintained that South Africa was relatively well shielded. Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel had told parliament’s finance committee in late 2008 that “we are not looking at a recession in South Africa” (Mail and Guardian 2008). The social costs were deep when it did come, however, and policy responses have failed to organize a new industrial strategy to guide the country forward, leaving it just as distorted towards the MEC and finance as before the recession hit, and equally as vulnerable. Renewed promises of poverty reduction and growth remain largely unfulfilled as the ‘developmental state’ fails to materialize or deliver (Marais 2012). In the immediate past, protest of worsening socioeconomic conditions has increased (Alexander 2012). The next chapter will consider the experience of organizations challenging what remains the ANC’s neoliberal trajectory for growth and poverty reduction.
Chapter 3: Contesting Neoliberalism: Labour-Community Alliances

The scholarship on social movement unionism (SMU) and a selection of social movement literature, analyses the experience of unions, community based organizations (CBOs) and social movements in responding and adapting to the shifting nature of ‘neoliberal globalization.’ Struggles in the realm of production have been partially supplanted by struggles in the realm of reproduction, especially in the global South, and the role of unions has changed. Those associated with struggles in the latter category have been given a variety of labels: new social movements (NSMs), newest social movements (Day 2005), New Alternative Social Movements (NASMs) (Waterman 1995), or movements beyond movements (Hart 2007a). Despite the emergence of these so-called new movements and their often problematic classification, unions still remain the strongest, most well-resourced and resilient form of working class organization in civil society (Munck 2002). For our purposes the working class will be broadly defined as the ‘new working class’ or all those who do not live off the labour of others in their struggle to survive (Olivera and Lewis 2004, Spronk 2007). These so-called ‘new’ and ‘old’ (union) social movements also share many commonalities and links despite having evolved over time (Munck 2002). Consequently it is important to not elide the internally diverse, heterogeneous and contradictory nature of these organizations and the alliances they form.

Social Movement Unionism in Theory

Labour scholarship has explored two directions in responding and adapting to the change wrought by neoliberal globalization: new labour internationalism and new forms of organizing, including SMU. Globalization, the space-time compression and reorganization of global production networks and supply chains has brought into question the traditional strategy of
organizing unions at the national scale to challenge capital at each stage of production (Mittelman 1995, 2000). Traditional, industrially structured, male dominated unions are increasingly less applicable as the informalization, casualization and feminization of work intensifies. In response, international trade federations and secretariats have attempted to form a ‘new internationalism’. Though positive steps continue to be taken, efforts have generally been unable to challenge capital despite internationalism being widely perceived as essential to the survival of organized labour (Lambert and Webster 2001, Munck 2002). While this remains an important focus in the labour movement, some in the field of labour geography have challenged the notion that internationalism is so essential. Herod (2001, 2003, Herod et al. 2007) argues that because of the hyper competitive, just-in-time nature of global capitalist production and the tension between the fixity and mobility of capital, place still matters, and that coordinated local actions can be effective in disrupting highly sensitive production networks that give labour the power vis-a-vis capital to effect favourable changes.

This leads us to the second current that addresses new forms of organizing as work becomes less structured around the Fordist model and is increasingly casual, flexible and informal. The term SMU first arose in the 1980s as labour scholars attempted to understand a form of unionism emerging in a number of newly industrializing countries in the global South, particularly Brazil, South Africa, South Korea and the Philippines. The concerns of these unions went far beyond those of production to also encompass struggles of social reproduction (Webster 1988, Waterman 1984, Lambert 1988, Waterman and Lambert 1988, Munck 1988). Von Holdt (2002, 285), informed by the historical South African case, “describes SMU as a highly mobilized form of unionism which emerges in opposition to authoritarian regimes and repressive workplaces in newly industrializing countries of the developing world, and which is based in a
significant expansion of skilled manufacturing work… [and] is embedded in a network of community and political alliances, and demonstrates a commitment to internal democratic practices as well as to the broader democratic and socialist transformation of authoritarian societies.” Though there has been some debate as to its structural characteristics (Scipes 1992), whether it has a structure at all and the political context in which it emerges (von Holdt 2002), SMU generally refers to four characteristics embodied by progressive unions. That they are: independent from business and political parties; rely on democratic shop floor structures; acknowledge that shop floor struggles are integrated into the struggles of the wider working class, extending to the realm of reproduction; and allies itself when possible and/or desirable, with other social movement organizations (Scipes 1992).

A number of scholars have attempted to transfer SMU to contexts other than those in which it arose, and to scale it up in an effort to provide the international labour movement with a strategy to address global capitalism (Moody 1997, Waterman 2001). In this process, Von Holt (2002) argues that the term has developed a considerable degree of ambiguity and that particular political, sociocultural and economic considerations may be equally as important as political and workplace conditions. In doing so Von Holdt questions the basis of SMU as a transferrable union strategy. Barchiesi (2011) also challenges linear and teleological conceptions of SMU read off broad political and economic conditions, such as those identified by Seidman (1994) in reference to Brazil and South Africa. Barchiesi argues SMU is instead contingent on local sociopolitical factors and processes, responding to the precarity of workers’ everyday survival. Herod (2001) also focuses on the micro level and emphasizes the agency of workers and local organisational dynamics. Both Barchiesi and Von Holdt argue that examining these dimensions of SMU are potentially more fruitful areas of inquiry than attempts to apply SMU as a single model.
These arguments are also pertinent to a theoretical debate about the changing role and form of unions in wider transformation of society. Many scholars argue that a break is evident between SMU and ‘old’ unionism, both economic and political (Lambert 1988, Scipes 1992, Waterman 1984). While the differences from economic unionism are clear, Scipes (1992) argues that within Marxist theory SMU represents a significant departure from the instrumentalist view of unions, per Lenin, as agents and recruiters of the party and as economic organizations incapable of radical political and social change. Waterman (in Scipes 1992, 83) contends, “we are talking not simply of a different union model but a different understanding of the role of the working class and its typical organization in the transformation of society.” Studies of labour-community alliances in late 19th and early 20th century Europe, however, caution against interpretations of SMU as indicative of a sharp break with earlier conceptions and practices of unionism. The defense of public services, especially in the case of public health emergencies that arose because of privatization, propelled by alliances is exemplar (Leopold and McDonald 2012). Labour and socialist organizations at the turn of the century responded to many of the pressures that SMU has responded to, and displayed similar organizational characteristics in which culture, identity and community participation were central (Seidman 2011). Some argue that these characteristics are always present within labour organizations, coming to the surface when historical conditions deem their emergence necessary (Clawson 2003, Fairbrother 2008).

**New Social Movements in the Global South in Theory**

The literature on NSMs began to emerge in the late 1960s to analyze movements whose campaigns identified with and focused on issues outside of production and the capital-labour relation. This literature can be roughly divided into two traditions; the American political process
approach and NSM theories from Europe that explicitly sought to move beyond Marxist theories of social struggle (Della Porta and Diani 2006). The former includes analysis of political opportunity structure, resource mobilization and network analysis while the latter examines why movements emerge, focusing on the formation and propagation of collective identities. Recently, a number of scholars have worked towards integration, as each tends to focus on different aspects, levels or scales of movement organization, and a more coherent theory which speaks to political opportunities, networks, the mobilization of resources and the construction of collective identities (Ballard et al. 2006b, Della Porta and Diani 2006, McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001).

The applicability and relevance of theory that attempts to understand NSMs is, however, questionable when applied to movements in the global South, particularly those fighting for public services. Spronk and Terhorst (2012) argue that the aforementioned body of scholarship was developed to examine movements in post-industrial societies and that the experience of western, liberal democracies differs greatly from that of the global South. Struggles for services also make material demands and represent the interests of the wider working class. Experiences of alliances have shown the organizational binary between ‘old’ and ‘new’ movements to be largely void. Finally, rather than seeking autonomy from the state, per NSM theory, ‘new’ movements often make demands on the state, whether counter-hegemonic or rights based.

**SMU, NSMs and Labour-Community Alliances**

While characterizations of recent expressions of discontent in South Africa differ somewhat from theoretical conceptions of NSMs, this theoretical work remains helpful in analyzing these movements. Similarly, these tensions and the case of Samwu feed into the argument made by
some scholars that, rather than the changes that have come with SMU representing a break with
earlier conceptions of unionism, unions in general are better conceptualized as both a movement
and a bargaining institution (Fairbrother 2008). In this instance von Holdt (2002) makes a vital
contribution, utilizing social movement theory to explain the tension and balance between the
movement and institutional dimensions of trade unions. Drawing on Tarrow (1998), Von Holdt
(2002, 4-5) argues that the realization of the movement dimension is analogous to contentious
challenge, which is “based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction
with elites, opponents and authorities” and tends to go through cycles. The intersection of
shifting social, political and economic circumstances at multiple scales then has great impact on
both these ‘cycles of contention’ (Tarrow 1998), and the ability of the movement dimension to
assert dominance over the institutional dimension that holds a union within a given system of
industrial relations. “Social movement unionism is not one particular form of trade unionism, a
more authentic or class-based or focused unionism. Rather the argument or question is how and
under what circumstances trade unions can challenge and question the labor capital relation”
(Fairbrother 2008, 217)? If we conceive of unions as highly organized social movement
organizations (SMOs), formalized, relatively bureaucratic, organizing structures representative
of the mass base that comprises social movements, many commonalities, as well as differences,
can be established between unions and other social movements. Indeed, institutional aspects of
SMOs exist to a greater or lesser degree in all movements. More importantly, when the impetus
for this movement dimension to swell is uncovered, the radical potential for unions to display
characteristics of SMU can be connected to class formation under neoliberalism and the
development and maintenance of solidarities within the wider ‘new working class’.
SMU and Community Organizing in South Africa

The 1940s saw the re-emergence of African nationalist organizations, perhaps in response to or because of the defeat of the relatively weak, pre-apartheid working class movement in the latter half of that decade (Marais 2012). Founded in 1912, the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), the precursor to the ANC, initially functioned to represent the interests of relatively wealthy middle class Africans, to the detriment of so-called ‘uncivilized’ Africans. SANNC faded during the interwar years, reemerging as the ANC in the early 1940s, energized by a militant, urban Youth League. The ascendance and ability of African nationalism to absorb class contradictions in this period, are telling of the quick compromises made by the ANC at the end of apartheid- what Marais (2012, 14) calls “the abbreviated nature of social progress after 1994.”

The ANC gained momentum in the 1950’s with the Defiance Campaign and the drafting of the Freedom Charter at the Congress Alliance in 1955 that was to become the defining document of the resistance and symbolic of the fight against apartheid. The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was also founded at the Congress Alliance. Following the 1960 Sharpeville and Langa massacres, where protesters were killed contesting pass laws, a new and largely unsuccessful era of underground, militant resistance by uMkhonto weSiswe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC, began. Marais (2012) argues this period left a lasting impression on the movement as armed struggle, and the actions of an elite, vanguardist element, were prioritized over the mass struggle of the people. A stark binary was also established around ideas of revolutionary opposition and reformist collaboration with the apartheid state in which the ANC leadership made central the overthrow and capture of state.

A new phase of struggle emerged in the 1970s with the resurgence of labour and the rise of class politics. The structural instability of the apartheid economy, evident by the late 1960s,
left it vulnerable to the crisis that would hit internationally in the early 1970s. Rising
unemployment and inflation would hit the African working classes hard and spark a militancy
not seen in decades. The success of independence struggles in neighboring nations and the rise of
the Black Consciousness movement would also bolster popular struggle. The final factor was the
“growing tendency within the broad opposition to attribute all forms of deprivation, oppression
and discrimination to the apartheid system, thereby enabling a heightened and more widespread
 politicization of the oppressed” (Marais 2012, 41).

Strike actions in Durban and Cape Town in October of 1972, were followed by a wave
that spread across the country for the next several years. Saul and Gelb (1981) argue that this
represented a spontaneous and yet un-chaotic expression of working class consciousness and
power that would ultimately lead to the revival of the trade union movement. The influence of
material hardship, particularly falling wages and the increasing cost of basic necessities was a
primary trigger for the strikes, although demands would soon become far greater (Marais 2012).
The strikes paralleled the rise of the student and Black Consciousness movements. The Soweto
student uprising began on June 16th 1976 in protest against the teaching of certain school subjects
in Afrikaans, and continued into 1977. Soweto came to represent a much wider set of student,
community and workplace concerns across the country in which, even if subtle, links between
 popular nationalist ideology and workers movements began to emerge (Saul and Gelb 1981). The
banning of the Black Consciousness movement and repressive action against its leadership and
the murder of Steve Biko at the end of 1977, ushered in a short period of relative quiet until a
wave of mobilization began in 1979 with labour mobilizations and the emergence of thousands
of street committees and community organizations or ‘civics’ in the townships (Swilling 1993).
The strikes of 1979 kicked off with a strike in Cape Town at the Fatti’s and Moni’s pasta factory, which, though only 88 workers struck, had an enormous impact via the accompanying national consumer boycott of the company’s products. Student and community protests and boycotts played an important role. In April, the Federation of South African Trade Union (Fosatu) was founded. Despite the overlap between workplace and popular struggle, it preferred to concentrate on workplace structures as the “expression of a truly independent working-class consciousness” (Lodge and Nasson 1991, 28). Other unions preferred a more political orientation and this ‘workerist’/‘populist’ debate would continue even after the founding of Cosatu in 1985.

The so-called workerists in Fosatu were accused of neglecting the struggle against apartheid by concentrating their efforts on the politics of production, however, there was far more differentiation amongst workerists than this critique implies. These ranged from narrowly focused business unionists to radical unionists open to working with communities as long as democratic workplace structures and struggles informed alliances (Pillay 2008). Those on the fence, and those who preferred creating an independent working class political party, lay somewhere in the middle. The more progressive of these groups “warned that unless labour’s political organizations were fully independent from the liberation movement, they would merely abolish the legal structure of apartheid while subordinating workers to the new majority-based nationalist regime” (Barchiesi 2011, 53). Despite registering with the state after the release of the Wiehahn report and their aversion to the ANC and the ‘workerist’ label, Fosatu would increasingly develop connections and participate in protest outside the realm of production, much to the chagrin of the apartheid regime that had conceived of acknowledging black workers as an avenue to curbing unrest (Barchiesi 2011). Indeed, this was a source of tension within Fosatu between the nominally white, intellectual leadership and the demands of black workers in
whose minds reproductive struggles were increasingly at the fore. Though the populists were also a heterogeneous group, they utilized the power of nationalist consciousness that was far more apparent than class-consciousness even amongst workers, viewing apartheid-era exploitation through a racial lens. Indeed, many in the Alliance saw capitalism as inextricably linked with apartheid and so, by combatting the latter, one fought the former. In the end, Pillay (2008, 10 original emphasis) argues that “capitalism, from a Marxist perspective, may have been the primary contradiction, but racism was the dominant contradiction.” Those populists that acknowledged the existence of a separation argued that if the alliance could be organized into a popular democratic front rather than a populist one, able to articulate a nationalist with a socialist discourse, working class leadership had the potential to emerge (Pillay 2008, Saul and Gelb 1981). Central to the demands of these community unions was the exploited position of workers and blacks in general, which they argued went beyond the workplace. Many of these unions joined the United Democratic Front (UDF), adopted the Freedom Charter and aligned themselves with the ANC’s multiclass struggle for national liberation (Barchiesi 2011).

The UDF was founded in 1983 in Cape Town with the purpose of attempting to unite the multitude of civic organizations under a national banner. The extent to which it was able is debated however, as its presence in many areas of the country was lacking and relied more on populist oratory than sound organizational structures (Lodge and Nasson 1991). Its development quickly drifted in line with the ANC’s strategy of ungovernability launched in 1985, from which point onwards it was fiercely repressed. Banned in 1988, it remerged the following year as the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) in what some characterize as a triumphant return (Seekings 2000). However, the MDM was heavily reliant on unions and progressive church groups to operate. Likewise, though independent, UDF support of the ANC’s largely unsuccessful strategy
of insurrection before it had built strong organizational structures meant its eventual condemnation of violence and attempts at movement building were unsuccessful (Marais 2012).

From the campaigns in the late 1970s, both workerist and populist unions engaged with the UDF and community struggles. In the mid-1980s, during a period of intense mobilization in the industrially dense East Rand, Fosatu joined popular organizations in actions spurred on, Barchiesi (2007) argues, by the political oppression of its members rather than a turn to the ANC. It was this period of mobilization that led scholars to associate unionism in South Africa with SMU. As the 1980s moved forward, state policies of fiscal restraint and an effort to establish a somewhat liberalized labour regime, per the Riekart and Wiehahn Commissions, increased the precarious position of black workers and facilitated community ties. The formation of Cosatu from Fosatu and ANC allied unions in 1985 was a compromise between the two camps such that Cosatu, although it lead the struggle of late apartheid in the context of the repression of more popular structures within the country, was eventually sidelined by the strength of the ANC’s ability to achieve hegemony as the party of national liberation. Barchiesi (2011) argues that this represented a victory for the proponents of SMU within both camps that saw it as a tool with which to unite workerists and populists, vital to the liberation and labour movements.

From the late 1980s onwards labour was highly mobilized. It responded to efforts by the NP to make changes to the industrial relations system and taxation with mass action that resulted in the inclusion of many formerly excluded groups and the establishment of important institutions that would remain post-1994 (Barchiesi 2011). Labour became the leading force in the liberation movement during the 1980s, partly as a result of the relaxation of labour relations. Institutionalized in the Labour Relations Act of 1979, black membership grew exponentially, by some 700 000 members from 1981-1988 (Buhlungu 2004). Labour would also play an important
role in eventual negotiations, as discontent and violence raged across the country. Despite this success the role of Cosatu shifted dramatically as the transition moved forward.

The transition was also problematic for the civics. The ANC's struggle strategy shunned collaborationism and the administrative and program capacities of civics were not nearly as developed as those directed to mass action. The context of the transition meant that the goal of overthrowing the state was void. As a result civics had no entry point for participation and little capacity to contribute. The strategy of ‘ungovernability’ was declared out of control and no longer constructive by voices in the negotiations, including the leadership of the ANC. As a result, enormous pressure was put on the ANC to build a new national consensus and the terms for a lasting settlement to ensure stability. This weakened what was interpreted as being the initial redistributive position of the ANC and the ruling bloc was able to extract significant concessions as a result. This represented a retreat as “the political-ideological project of nation-building became paramount and overshadowed the socioeconomic dimensions of the crisis” (Marais 2012, 74). The UDF was dismantled and the civics reorganized under the umbrella of the ANC aligned South African National Civic Organization (Sanco) after 1992. Though originally the civics seemed well placed to voice the concerns of communities in the transition, they would be relegated to a marginal role in the changing institutional context of the transition.

An important part of the project of nation building symbolized by ‘Masakhane’ (or ‘let us build together’ - the post-apartheid slogan of the ANC) was the relationship between wage labour and citizenship. Barchiesi (2011) argues that wage labour, by this point detached from its exploitative and agency lacking role under apartheid, had been redeemed in the eyes of South Africans but was subsequently relieved of the contentious political role Cosatu and the struggles of apartheid had associated it with and was brought into a relationship with a process of
reconstruction. This rearticulated wage labour as a path to citizenship rights, socioeconomic emancipation, and redistribution. In this way, while the importance of the role of wage labour increased in the nation-building project of the ANC, its importance politically, via Cosatu, declined as the transition moved forward. The connections with economic growth as a path to redistribution rather than the inverse are clear in this. Barchiesi (2011, 74) sums this up by intimating that now that South Africans were political citizens they were also to be “‘citizens in practice,’ capable of actually exercising their rights free from poverty and need, however, they were required to shed ‘dependency’ habits, moderate their claims, defer social expectations, suppress resentment over class inequalities, and place work at the centre of responsible conduct.” This re-articulation of citizenship placed market forces and individualism at the fore, telling of the ANC’s emerging neoliberalism. The relative success of this important component of the ANC’s hegemonic project would profoundly change the political role of Cosatu after 1994, undermining its ability to fight for its members and the wider working class.

This marked the second major shift that occurred within labour in the transition era, as labour became less representative of a collective, struggle mentality and democratic shop floor structures, more corporatist in its orientation and structurally more bureaucratic, led by an increasingly individualist elite (Buhlungu 2004). As the negotiations continued the space for operation of the civics was also severely curtailed and any attempts to contest or influence the ANC trajectory, service delivery policy for example, were quickly brought in line (Zuern 2001). As the transition moved forward Sanco would be further absorbed into the Alliance and, despite efforts to assert its independence, increasingly hierarchical and responsive to party rather than constituent needs (Zuern 2001, 2004). The experience of Cosatu and Sanco mirrored that of many civil society groups in the transition that saw many struggle with the transition to
democracy as their organizational structures, capacities, repertoires of contention, and goals came into conflict with the ruling alliance and the ANC's project of nation building.

This is also indicative of a shift in the dynamic within the Alliance and the role of Cosatu and the civics. While the ANC, SACP and Cosatu were to act in cooperation in the Alliance while retaining their organizational independence, the central position of the ANC in the negotiations and the coming elections, was indicative of the leadership role the party occupied. Similarly, Cosatu and the civics were no longer to be a politicized, disruptive, mass mobilizing force but rather, orderly and disciplined partners in reconstruction. This would also have a profound impact on the relationship between Cosatu and its rank and file, and the civics. As mobilization in the townships continued, including boycotts, blockades and marches (the effects of the recession on working class South Africans should not be underestimated in relation to these ongoing actions) both sides in the negotiations condemned the violence and ongoing ‘ungovernability’, asking for de-escalation and calm in order to not destabilize negotiations and a peaceful transition. This in turn alienated the Cosatu and former UDF leadership in some ways from its membership and the grassroots. The conclusion drawn by the majority of the literature after 1994 is that the labour-community alliances of the 1970s and 1980s are a thing of the past (Buhlungu 2004, Webster and Buhlungu 2006, von Holdt 2002, 2003, Barchiesi 2001, 2007, 2008) and unions have become more alienated from members and communities post-1994.

The ANC's new economic orientation exposed the South African economy to an array of pressures from the global economy that had disastrous effects on workers and unions. These included greater capital mobility resulting in the relocation of production and retrenchment; the replacement of permanent jobs with increasingly flexible, casual and informal work; pressures for a more flexible labour market from transnational and domestic capital, IFIs and other external
players; and monetarism and fiscal discipline. This has constrained the ability of unions to recruit and retain members and defend their conditions of work and pay, hollowing out some industries like textiles in Cape Town (Lemanksi 2007), and has increased the cost of basic necessities. The positions of individual unions and Cosatu have, however, been both externally and internally inconsistent. This is evident in union policy and political positions, elite conduct and union investment firm participation in tenders and corporatization initiatives (Buhlungu 2004), and serves to further undermine unions in the eyes of the rank and file and grassroots.

The introduction of the new LRA in 1995 and the inclusion of unions in structures such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) and Industrial Bargaining Councils (IBCs), opened up greater institutional avenues of engagement but simultaneously curtailed the ability of unions as a political force. The ANC’s shift to neoliberalism by 1996, though an array of democratic spaces had opened, undermined its position within these institutions, some argue, in which it is still expected to be cooperative partner (Buhlungu 2004). The leadership of unions and popular organizations and intellectual allies have taken an increasingly individualist and career-oriented track (Buhlungu 1997). Prominent union members have also been recruited as political candidates along with the leadership of struggle-era organizations like the UDF (Seekings 2000), whose activities have also been curtailed.

The Non Profit Act encouraged civics to register with the state to be eligible for support upon application and the submission of audited financial statements (Habib 2004). McKinley (2006, 416) argues this was part of the process whereby the Alliance “swallowed” popular organizations to limit the ability for external political challenge and to ensure stability through the transition. Although demobilization is typical in post-national liberation environments and this may be less sinister than the above indicates (Marais 2012), the energy expended by the
ANC to ensure that partners and popular organizations fell in line, and the zeal with which it pursued dissent, offers some support to the former argument (McKinley 2006, Zuern 2001). This need for coercion and discipline was dwarfed, however, in relation to the consent that the ANC enjoyed as the hegemonic party of national liberation. This absorption marked the enormous depoliticization of the post-apartheid project of reconstruction that sidelined many of the community movements as the ANC government preferred NGOs, international organizations and consultancies that could offer technical assistance and delivery capacity to what were now simply issues of ‘development’ (Ballard et al. 2006b). McKinley argues that this shift, accomplished especially during the first two years of the democratic era, mirrored the shift from the RDP to Gear as the basis for building a new South Africa. “Just as Gear had now rubbished any latent applicability of the RDP, so too was the oft stated ‘leading’ role of the ANC’s historic mass base – the millions of workers and unemployed – rubbished as the vehicle for transformation of post-apartheid South Africa” (McKinley 2006, 416). The relative demobilization of popular organizations in the aftermath of the 1994 elections, argues Ballard et al. (2006b), was to come to an end as the 1990s moved forward and a reinvigorated civil society increasingly challenged the pro-growth model for redistribution led by GEAR.

The extent of this demobilization is, however, debatable. Dawson (2010b) argues that a nuanced analysis that considers the political opportunity structure, or general characteristics of the political field that facilitate or dissuade people from direct action (Tarrow 1994), can help situate the experience from which the basis for the so called NSMs emerged later in the decade. Dawson, points to the immediate criticism both from within and without the Alliance, of the RDP White Paper and of Gear, with some of the strongest voices being those outside who would soon be associated with the new movements. Dawson also disagrees with Ballard et al. (2006b)
that these movements, when they did emerge, generally accepted the legitimacy of the
democratically elected ANC despite the majority working in opposition to it. Indeed, Dawson
argues that many vehemently opposed the democratic legitimacy of the government in practice
despite organizations grouped in with NSMs often utilizing institutional channels to sue for
policy change. While it may have been select voices within these movements articulating highly
oppositional positions, as it has been argued was the case in later movements (Pointer 2004,
Walsh 2008), this period was one in which democratic spaces, both given by the state and those
created in the wake of its failures, facilitated the (re)formation of oppositional organizations.

Ballard et al. (2006b) are correct however, in pointing out the variety of movements that
have emerged and the number of organizational and tactical differences from those previous.
These include the presence of movements at differing or multiple scales – local, national,
regional and international. Many are independent and loosely organized, while others are part of
international federations or affiliated with international NGOs. Tactically, movements operate
inside and outside institutional channels and make rights based, class, and counter hegemonic
claims, often in uneasy combination. When it comes to the issues they organize around however,
Marais (2012) and Dawson (2010b) contend that these so-called NSMs are not so diverse despite
appearances to the contrary. Indeed, Marais cites contradictory work by Ballard et al. (2005)
much to the opposite, identifying three commonalities that most, if not all these movements,
seem to hold. First, they address failures of the democratic state, while, second, organizing as
political entities and third, they rely heavily on middle class intellectual support to access
resources and networks of support and solidarity. Indeed their establishment is explicitly aimed
at mobilizing the poor to contest the implementation of neoliberal restructuring and social policy
(Marais 2012, Habib 2004). This highlights continuities “in the recent rise of a new generation of
social movement politics in South Africa in its organizational and ideological/discursive relationships with long standing experiences of working class organizing” (Barchiesi 2006, 36).

The experience of Samwu, one of the more radical unions in Cosatu, is indicative of these connections. Municipal workers in South Africa fought a lengthy battle to unionize, forming Samwu in 1987 from a number of affiliates. The most important of these, argues Barchiesi (2007), was the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association (CTMWA), a formerly conservative white union, reformed along radically democratic, shop floor lines that had opposed apartheid for decades. The CTMWA joined a wide variety of community struggles in the 1980s that sought to realize the rights of workers as citizens beyond the workplace. This democratic structure and community focus was inherited by Samwu, which launched its first anti-privatization campaign in 1988 in opposition to market reforms introduced in the townships. However, public sector workers in South Africa would have to wait until 1995 to be integrated into the industrial relations system through the LRA. While Samwu was able to push for reform through Cosatu and in partnership with Sanco, it was largely ignored (Barchiesi 2007). The union, along with a number of partners in the Alliance expressed its discontent at the adoption of neoliberal policies by the ANC, but was to be left relatively alone in this role as Cosatu fell in line with the ANC. In 1996 Samwu’s executive adopted a resolution to renew its anti-privatization campaign (Samwu 1997). The most successful case of cooperation Samwu would undertake would be the initiative it took to co-found the Anti-Privatization Forum (APF), primarily, in opposition to the plan for municipal reconstruction in Johannesburg - iGoli 2012.

As many as ten million South Africans had some form of service cut off and up to 2 million experienced evictions from their homes for non-payment between 1994 and 2002 (McDonald 2002). This would spark several years of struggle beginning in the late 1990s as
social movements contested policies of cost recovery, tariff restructuring and other market-based fees for service. Marches at the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban in 2001 and, especially impressive, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg a year later, served as examples to South Africans and the world of the potential power of these organizations and the failure of the ANC to provide ‘a better life for all’. These include the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC), the APF, the Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC), The Landless Peoples Movement (LPM) and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC).

In 1999, citing a fiscal crisis due to service backlogs and non-payment, the ANC-led Greater Johannesburg Municipal Council (GJMC), initiated a centralized municipal restructuring process managed by an unelected, appointed council. As Barchiesi (2007) describes it, the plan for restructuring that emerged, iGoli 2002, was decidedly neoliberal and prescribed the corporatization and privatization of services with an emphasis on the collection of user fees, the elimination of cross subsidization and contracting out. Despite opposition by Samwu, and the largely oppositional public consultation period that followed its release, iGoli was adopted in September 1999. Outraged, Samwu, emerging community movements protesting poor service delivery, and dissident SACP and ANC members, such as Trevor Ngwane, came together to form what later became the APF in May of 2000. In November of 2000 an indefinite strike commenced which only came to a close as pressures mounted on and within Samwu and the Alliance in the run up to local government elections in December 2000. Barchiesi (2007) attributes Samwu’s failure to push forward to its problematic position in the Alliance, the changing character of the municipal workforce towards more casualization, and the contradiction in the union’s policies and repertoire around contesting broad social issues or members concerns; the Gauteng provincial office of Samwu pragmatically siding with the latter. This eventually led
to the breakdown of Samwu’s role in the APF. By the middle of the decade, due to the unsuccessful campaigns, a lack of resources, activist fatigue, internal divisions, and state coercion, most of these organizations had dissolved or receded into relative obscurity.

This decline however, has not precipitated a decrease in the frequency or size of protests, especially those for service delivery. Alexander (2012), has used data from police statistics to determine that the number of state sanctioned and unsanctioned protest actions, after falling to near 7 000 in 2008/09 from an earlier peak of almost 11 000 in 2005/06, rose once again to over 11 000 in 2011/12. Hart (2007, 682) refers to these protest actions as ‘movements beyond movements’ and attributes their emergence to a number of factors, including the failure of ANC local government service delivery and in the practice of democracy, and the inability of NSMs to “tap into huge reservoirs of popular anger and discontent.” Hart argues that these protests also indicate that direct action has become an acceptable and necessary component of political action in the minds of citizens while they still continue to vote for the ANC in local government elections. Finally, Hart argues that these outbursts represented popular support for Jacob Zuma, his particular brand of ethnic nationalism, and the hope of change within the ANC and the Alliance. In this, Hart refers to the way Zuma was able to draw on the frustration of citizens disillusioned with the ANC, its broken promises and of the perceived failure of Thabo Mbeki to bring about prosperity for all South Africans. His ability to tap into popular discontent and to present himself as an ally of the poor and of labour, as a “common man” argues Marais (2012), was an enormous and enormously effective piece of political theatre. Hart warned at the time that the direction of these protests was unpredictable and that it could lead to movements seeking “to re-embed neoliberalism in society, to make it more acceptable socially and politically” (Jessop 2002, 467). In hindsight, the rise of Zuma and a continuing neoliberal trajectory confirm that
some popular support has been thrown behind this position. Today, the so-called ‘working class bias’ of the ANC continues to recede, the pro-capital stance has become more deep-seated under Zuma than Mbeki and opponents of the Alliance remain fiercely marginalized (Marais 2012) while movements appear less coherent, continuing to focus on ‘bread and butter’ issues.

Alliances, Coalitions and the International Experience in Theory and Practice

Far from the inchoate masses that Hart and others have observed in some instances in South Africa, the international experience of the ‘new working class’ has seen numerous successes in efforts to maintain and improve public services. These have been led by coalitions of a diverse array of social movements, unions, CBOs, NGOs, faith-based organizations (FBOs) and often, international networks and research organizations.

In a contribution to labour scholarship Tattersall (2005) has grouped coalitions into three general forms: ad hoc, support, and mutual support. The first two are relatively short term and, even in the case of the latter, restrict positive organizational development to the elite level and remain in the control of the stronger, usually initiating organization. Mutual support coalitions on the other hand involve deeper, more cooperative relationships that revolve around common interests and objectives and strengthen the overall resilience of the coalition as each partner has a mutual interest in its survival. This type can be transformed into ‘deep coalitions’ and display characteristics of SMU. Deep coalitions emerge out of broad mutual support initiatives that are deepened by the mobilization of rank and file members and the democratization of structures. Organizing, mobilizing and direct action are enabled at numerous scales resulting in the formation of more robust solidarities, capacities and the achievement of greater success.

Tattersall (2008) also draws on resource mobilization, political opportunity structure and
framing from social movement theory to propose a number of criteria indicating when successful coalitions will emerge. Foremost, political and economic context impacts coalition-building opportunities as crisis or threat to either party will facilitate links. This is enhanced when the fixity of the production of a good or service by industry or the state, especially salient in the case of services, can be targeted to provide opportunity for coalition formation on the basis that labour and communities can affect change. Shifts in this environment, attendant regulatory and institutional frameworks, more open labour relations systems or fractured links with political parties for example, can also facilitate these connections.

This also speaks to the labour geography literature that seeks to establish the agency of labour in often one-sided, impact model conversations around neoliberal globalization, and to prioritize the study of the role of labour under capitalism. Bringing together critical Marxist human geography with scholarship examining the struggles of workers, this field has sought to explore a more spatially informed understanding of working class life. Herod (2001) argues that both critical Marxist and liberal literature have in different ways tended to theorize the geography of capitalism in a way that prioritizes capital, leaving labour as a passive factor impacted by capital. Herod (2001, 33) calls for a “labour geography” approach to studying “working-class life that recognizes that the production of space in particular ways is not only important for capital’s ability to survive by enabling accumulation and the reproduction of capital itself, but it is also crucial for workers abilities to survive and reproduce themselves.” Thus, similar to the way capital seeks to produce space and the built environment in a way that ensures on-going accumulation labour also seeks a spatial fix to ensure, as far as possible, present and future social reproduction. However, just as the mobility of capital is constrained by particular spatial characteristics established to facilitate earlier phases of accumulation, the set of
mechanisms put in place to ensure the prosperity, or at very least the social reproduction of labour at some past moment, may be found to be insufficient at another. At this time labour, Herod (2001) argues, with agency of its own, though at times often in cooperation with capital, seeks to struggle to secure favourable conditions once more. With this vulnerability in mind, labour, by itself or in cooperation with others, can strategically disrupt production processes to extract procedural or substantive concessions. Ultimately however, capital has considerable impact on the conditions in which this agency operates.

Coalition formation however, cannot be read solely off of broad economic trends and political opportunity structures. Despite the existence of these “pre-existing opportunities” as Tattersall (2008) refers to them, it remains that unions and social movements must choose to enter into relationships with other progressive civil society groups. Union characteristics, the presence of participatory democracy, organizational diversity and shared interests with other groups (more common in the public sector argues Johnston (in Tattersall 2008)) are also important elements. Historical identities and previous progressive ideological positioning and coalition building are also relevant. Tattersall goes on to intimate that the prioritization of particular issues, a common cause between partners, the ‘deepness’ of the coalition and its inclusivity throughout organizational scales, and the role of union actors and leadership, all affect the direction that a union or other social movement will take.

The politics, consciousness or identity that informs choices to enter into relationships with other civil society groups, and the strength of these bonds, is particularly important. Informed by an examination of successful coalition building in Colombia, Novelli (2004) reasons that coalitions are the “educational outcome” of “strategic learning” processes. Drawing on Gramsci (1971) and Freire (2000), Novelli and Ferus-Comelo (2010, 54) argue that “beyond
instrumental understandings of education and learning as providing ‘new skills’ and ‘strategies’, education and learning can also play a key role in raising political consciousness and commitment… to develop an alternative movement and incorporate new allies into the political project.” Popular education, formal, informal, and incidental learning in traditional settings and through social action, is a key factor in raising consciousness through the development of solidarity through collective action and the acknowledgement of multiple identities that intersect with class. These processes are vital to the development of counter-hegemonic movements and counter-knowledges in opposition to hegemonic neoliberal globalization (Wainwright 2012).

More than any part of the globe, Latin America furnishes the greatest number of successful examples of coalition building, as Wainwright (2012) details. In Brazil, the urban workers union (FNU) and the trade union federation (CUT) were vital in the development of the Frente Nacional pelo Saneamento (FNSA) in 1997 along with other CBOs, NGOs and FBOs to defend public water, eventually partnering with several local utilities and public managers to do so quite successfully (Wainwright 2012). In Uruguay in 2002, in response to the attempts by the government and IMF to privatize the national water company Obras Sanitarias del Estado (OSE), an alliance for the Defence of Water as the Source of Life (CNDAV) was formed. The driving force behind these efforts was the Federation of State Employees of OSE (FFOSE), which formed the ‘spinal vertebrae’ of CNDAV with popular membership and organization capacity across the country that again allied with CBOs and faith based organizations among others (Spronk and Terhorst 2012). In a similar though more leading role, SINTRAEMCALI, a public service union in Cali, Colombia, contested a series of attempts to privatise public services in the city. Through strong alliance with community organisations and international groups and ongoing organizing, education and direct action, they were able to successfully oppose the
privatization plans and articulate and develop an alternative modernization of the local utilities (Novelli 2004).

Despite these successes, traditional unionism has often resulted in antagonistic relationships with communities. The changing composition of the working class has often led to unionized workers being referred to as “a privileged ‘labour aristocracy’” (Spronk and Terhorst 2012, 143). Frequently, this emerges from cases of unions colluding with rather than combatting privatization or frustrating pro-public restructuring of public utilities. For example, accounts of the successful opposition to water privatization in Cochabamba, Bolivia often neglect to mention that the water workers union, while supportive of the fight against privatization, did not take a leadership role, even obstructing efforts at public restructuring. It was the manufacturing workers that stepped in and took a leading role. While inroads are now being made against this opposition in the Bolivian case, it is indicative of the conservative action unions may take, but also of the value of union experience which, when absent, can make the pro-public restructuring of utilities extremely difficult (Spronk and Terhorst 2012, Wainwright 2012).

Impediments to cooperation are also present within CBOs and NSMs. Frequently emerging at the grassroots, local level in democratic processes, these organizations often have weak organizational and accountability structures and are exposed to local networks of power. The result is frequent elite co-optation and capture of benefits. A lack of resources and ability to establish and maintain coherent structures in the face of neoliberal pressure on multiple scales also limits the extent to which organizations can extend demands and opposition beyond local, immediate needs. Despite this, these movements frequently have broad constituencies and are capable of mobilizing in response to privatization and towards alternatives (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012). It is vital that CBOs and NSMs are able to dispel and move beyond the characterization
that they are merely “reformist attempts to deal with specific (rather than systemic) issues, and therefore as neither revolutionary nor authentically class movements” (Harvey 2012, xiv).

Encouragingly, many examples of this transcendent character exist. Beginning in 2003 in Huancayo, Peru, CBOs provided vital strength to a coalition that stopped privatization of the water utility and, through a series of public seminars, articulated an alternative vision for its modernization. The defence of OSE in Uruguay led by FFOSE was also spread across the country by a broad coalition of organizations that made the movement successful in its constitutional challenge to privatization (Spronk and Terhorst 2012). While these are positive contributions it remains that long-term mobilization is still a point of weakness for these movements. The establishment of a utility board after the initial victory against the attempted water privatization in Cochabamba, Bolivia, on which two of the five seats were held by the coalition, was insufficient to achieve the desired changes and the coalition began to unravel. This is representative of movements’ greater ability to “generate procedural outcomes than… substantive change” (Spronk and Terhorst 2012, 149). Spronk (2007), however, observed a new form of organization in the alliance that emerged to combat privatization in La Paz, Bolivia. These organizations were territorially rather than class based in a traditional sense, creating a more inclusive working class organization based on place and community rather than ‘old’ class lines. Rather than excluding those outside formal work the “only criterion for membership has been active participation in the daily struggles” (Spronk 2007, 9).

**Accumulation by Dispossession and the New Working Class**

I suggest, following Spronk and Terhorst (2012), that in light of the shortcomings of both social movement and labour scholarship, Harvey’s (2003) notion of accumulation by dispossession
offers a helpful conceptual framework through which to view labour-community alliances that seek to defend public services. Spronk (2007, 2009, Spronk and Webber 2007) has brought together social geography, social movement theory and labour scholarship to develop a frame for understanding new forms of organizing and strategy which display not only characteristics of SMU, a phenomenon she warns can be a progressive façade, but truly embody its radical democratic and transformative spirit. While in many cases public sector workers are coopted in processes of privatization, despite being well placed to form alliances with communities as both workers delivering services and as citizens and users of the same services (Barchiesi 2007), there have been recent efforts to democratize public sector unions in meaningful ways (Spronk 2007). Unions in other sectors have also often joined coalitions opposed to service restructuring.

Spronk has observed that these coalitions often organize in a place-based manner, articulating demands that simultaneously address workplace issues and social reproduction and community concerns. Increasingly citizens engage on terms that are class defined while working primarily in the highly fragmented informal sector, characteristic of what has been termed the ‘new working class’. Olivera (in Spronk 2007, 14), the leader of the Coordinadora, the alliance defending water in Cochabamba, Bolivia, argues that “organizing multiclass alliances involving all groups negatively affected by neoliberalism around ‘the basic necessities of life’ is a potential way to overcome the fragmentation of the working class.” While alliances often operate at the local government scale, strong national campaigns and strategic international links have been valuable (Novelli 2004). Through analyses of these struggles against the privatization of basic needs and the commons, Spronk (2007) draws attention to the complex ‘new working class’ forms of organizing characteristic of SMU that have emerged in struggles against neoliberal restructuring in terms of place; at the scale of the local state, the community, the street.
Spronk and Terhorst contend that Harvey’s (2003, 166) argument that “insurgent struggles against accumulation by dispossession” in the realm of reproduction have to a large degree supplanted struggles in the realm of production, sustains. These new struggles, while strong in their ability to mobilize mass action and their embeddedness in daily struggles, are less focused and risk a politics of nostalgia rather than addressing the material needs of their constituents. Key to these struggles against neoliberal restructuring is the connection between accumulation by dispossession and its necessity for expanded reproduction. This link, while conceptually clear is not always easily made in practice, but is nevertheless extremely powerful in bringing constituencies together (Harvey 2003, Spronk and Webber 2007). In the view of Spronk and Terhorst, among others, many of the movements in opposition to neoliberal restructuring can be characterized as movements against accumulation by dispossession (Bond 2005, McDonald and Ruiters 2005, Spronk and Webber 2007). At their core has been a wide array of organizations that include alliances of labour, CBOs, NGOs and faith based organizations (FBOs). Spronk and Terhorst (2012, 136-137) argue that, “as Harvey’s work highlights, contemporary struggles for basic services are one strong indication of the changes to class formation under neoliberalism. The historic role of trade unions as leaders of the working-class struggle has been usurped by coalitions of social movement organizations dominated by informal workers.” However, they are careful to emphasize the variety and depth of connections with earlier forms of working class organizing these new movements display.

As work becomes increasingly informal, casual and precarious, and real wages and the social wage continue to fall, the impetus for unionized and un-unionized workers alike to organize around the movement dimension of unions (von Holdt 2002) and to push against the institutional dimension grows, as they increasingly identify with fellow community members as
end users of services and victims of accumulation by dispossession. While it is important to note that the heterogeneity of these broad coalitions is pronounced and the formation of the new working class is often unstable, conditional and temporary, class formation under neoliberalism is increasingly exhibiting the characteristics which Spronk and Terhorst outline above.

**Hegemony, sociospatial regulation, scale and contestation**

While Spronk and others emphasize the political economy, social movement strategy and place-based nature of struggles around neoliberal restructuring, Ruiters (2005, 4) argues that the commodification of public services is also representative of the sociospatial construction of “hegemonic places as produced state spaces and sites of difference.” Services are, for Ruiters, both features of the built environment that serve to connect and separate communities and powerful mechanisms of social engineering and discipline that mediate a variety of political and sociospatial relations of uneven geographical development. Different levels of services and methods of delivery entrench, stigmatize and contain poor communities, while forms of service payment and regulation – water flow restrictors, putative rates, disconnections – serve to discipline and condition citizens in the ways of living in a market society at the level of the household and keep people in their place sociospatially (Ruiters 2005). Optimizing local, household and community strengths is central to countering these ‘hegemonic state spaces’.

“How to break out of the local, communicate across scales, communities and different situated loyalties” is a key component of building counter hegemonies (Ruiters 2000, 289).

By adopting a Gramscian framework to examine ongoing contestation of neoliberal restructuring, these forms and instances of working class contention can be located within wider processes to form counter hegemonic movements to challenge projects of neoliberal hegemony.
These projects involve the attempted imposition of a set of contradictory and contested social practices, by a dominant group or alliance of classes, and norms in particular spaces and across and at particular scales (Swyngedouw 1997). It is important to insist that these social practices, while cultural and political, are also economic and material, “based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity” (Gramsci in Munck 2002, 179). The state is central in the “process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria […] between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups – in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly economic interests” (Gramsci in Marais 2012, 392). As the local state becomes increasingly prioritized in projects of neoliberal hegemony, contestation of efforts to achieve the consent and adoption of “series of hegemonic regular social practices” (Swyngedouw 1997, 147) at this scale become a terrain of struggle of particular importance. This suggests the need for strong organizations to contest restructuring in the spaces and at the scales it manifests most intensely, which are increasingly the sub-, especially local state, and supra-national scales.

By focusing on the fragmented nature of the working class and the need to communicate across and between communities and scales, both Spronk (2007) and Ruiters (2000, 2005) draw attention to the multiple, relational identities of the ‘new working class’ and the tensions within it. Both a respect for heterogeneous subject positions and identities, informed by race, gender and ethnicity, and an acknowledgment of commonalities are essential for connecting across and between different perspectives of spatio-temporality and scale. What are those factors and obstacles fragmenting efforts to develop deep coalitions in Cape Town, to defend and revitalize public services as a process of developing counter hegemonic movements to contest the local state and seek both procedural and substantive change? Chapter Four turns to this question.
Chapter 4: Contemporary Alliances In Cape Town:

Complexities And Fragmentation

Past attempts to contest and move beyond national and local government development policy in Cape Town have had some success but only in procedural terms. The most promising alliance that has emerged to date was in the early 2000s between Samwu and the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (WCAEC) under the umbrella of the Cape Town Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), and paralleled to some degree the opposition to iGoli 2002 in Johannesburg. Initially founded as the Local Government Transformation Forum by Samwu, the APF acted as a forum for communities and unions in Cape Town to come together to challenge local government restructuring and the top down, exclusionary attitude and processes of the Unicity Commission, which had been created to develop proposals for the future amalgamation of the city. Samwu’s participation can be seen as both a continuation of its anti-privatization campaign that began in the late 1980s to protect members as workers and users of services, with roots well beyond the oft-cited campaign of the late 1990s (Barchiesi 2007), and a strategic move to protect members in the face of restructuring. The union initiated the APF and provided resources, including office space, training and political education to support activities vital to struggles opposing what they saw as creeping privatization in plans for municipal restructuring (Xali 2005).

The WCAEC emerged to coordinate the actions of CBOs challenging evictions and service cut offs stemming from payment defaults and brought together constituencies from across Cape Town (Lier and Stokke 2006, Xali 2005). Although support for the alliance was present throughout the structures of Samwu and WCAEC, requisite for ‘deep coalitions’ per Tattersall, a number of obstacles emerged to frustrate its success. Xali (2005) and Lier and Stokke (2006) identify differences in institutional structures and campaigning methods, political
positions and allegiance and the composition of membership as broad categories in which the gulf between the organizations proved too great to bridge. Both argue that the great diversity of positions and commitment to the alliance within the organizations, though perhaps more so on the part of the WCAEC, contributed to its downfall. While some members held disparate political views, others had different levels of commitment, and still others abused resources, undermining individual and organizational integrity (Oldfield and Stokke 2006, Xali 2005).

Samwu leaders began to withdraw support as the APF became more imbued with a socialist ideology and critical of the ANC in general. On occasion, protest actions were poorly coordinated and even harmful to other partners. Projectiles thrown by protesters struck council workers (and members of Samwu) in one case. These episodes exacerbated tensions between the campaign-oriented CBOs and the negotiation-oriented union. While they desired each other’s support, divergent interests and needs also often led partners in opposing directions (Xali 2005). Such was the case when unemployed residents took casual council jobs street cleaning or removing refuse that were seen as undermining Samwu’s efforts to fight back against casualization but which residents with little or no source of income felt they had to take despite the low pay (Pape 2001). Eventually, due to political allegiance, organizational difference, and internal divisions, the alliance broke down and Samwu closed the space for the APF in its Athlone office in 2002. While the roots causes of its demise are still debated, this represents the most concrete example of a labour-community alliance in Cape Town to date.

Since the middle of the decade and the decline in organized opposition to restructuring, South Africa has experienced an intensification of neoliberal reform under the misleading title of ‘the developmental state’. This has continued to affect service delivery, employment, poverty and inequality (Alexander 2012). Far from the geographical core of the MEC, investment in
Cape Town is increasingly focused on the CBD, finance capital, real estate and tourism; the enormous investments in the 2010 World Cup are indicative. Spatial inequality has become more marked, and poverty, unemployment, and a lack of basic services amongst the city’s growing township and informal population (StatsSA 2012) have become more intense and widespread. Public sector strikes in 2007 and 2010 saw little cooperation between unions and CBOs (Ceruti 2012) that many argue are becoming more fluid as protest manifests in less coherent expressions of popular anger and discontent (Hart 2007). The Cape Town APF is no longer active and the WCAEC is now defunct for example, suffering from repression and internal problems (Oldfield and Stokke 2006, Pointer 2004). The increase in service delivery protests across the country and their composition is indicative of this discontent and lack of organization. As protests skyrocket, some have given South Africa the title ‘protest capital of the world’ (Alexander 2012).

Analysing the possibilities for coalition building in Cape Town through the lens of the Project allows for the identification of a number of complexities that serve to fragment efforts to build strong organizations and coalitions between sections of the working class in the present.

**Organizational and Institutional Complexity**

The composition of the Housing Assembly is similar to that of the APF and many of the same organizations are members. These include: the Gugulethu Backyard Dwellers, Tafelsig Residents Unite, Delft Integrated Network, Overcome Heights Integrated Development Settlement, AbM Western Cape (Khayelitsha, Langa), Blikkiesdorp Concerned Residents, Makhaza Community Forum, Newfield’s Village AEC, Siqalo Informal Settlement, Zille-Raine Heights, Informal Settlements In Struggle, Tafelsig Community Forum, Women For Development, Tafelsig Active Youth, Makhaza Youth Forum, and the Phillipi Socialist Youth Movement. The Housing
Assembly continues to develop links with other organizations struggling against neoliberal restructuring. These include those contesting school closures in Cape Town in the spring of 2012, workers and strike committees connected to the mining strikes of the Winter 2012 sparked by the Marikana strike\(^2\), and those active in the ongoing Western Cape farmworker strikes.

Housing Assembly CBO affiliates utilize differing forms of democratic leadership and administrative structures. While they appear relatively horizontal, hierarchies are often arranged in executive, steering and coordinating committees, supplemented by issue or campaign committees as the Housing Assembly is itself structured. The frequency and size of organizational and community meetings is also varied in keeping with observations made by Xali (2005). Membership, like struggles against restructuring and dispossession elsewhere, is solely dependent upon participation in daily struggles (Spronk 2007).

Samwu on the other hand, is the largest municipal union in South Africa, a member of Cosatu and a partner in the Alliance. Membership is only open to workers employed directly or indirectly by the city council (Samwu 2010). Organizational structures and procedures in Samwu are hierarchical and local, regional and provincial branches are limited in terms of their freedom to develop campaigns (Xali 2005). Given the loose organizational form of CBO affiliates, it is difficult to ascertain the size and active nature of their membership. This caused tension between the highly structured union and the Housing Assembly, with the former questioning the mandate of CBOs and their, and their members, abilities, intentions and commitment to the struggle.

The structures of the Housing Assembly and Samwu are indicative of their goals. The Housing Assembly (2012, 1) states in their provisional constitution that, “as communities of the Western Cape we want to create equality amongst the people based on transformative

\(^2\) Marikana refers to a wildcat strike by workers at a Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana, Gauteng that was catapulted into the national and international eye when 44 miners were killed on August 16\(^{th}\), 2012. A strike wave then spread across the country in mining and other sectors.
participatory democracy, non-racialism and non-sexism. We shall always condemn oppression and exploitation of the working class and the poor. We want to achieve an egalitarian society in South Africa and the world.” The goals of Samwu (2010, 5-6) are similar, Section 2 of their constitution stating that they function on a democratic basis to defend and advance the rights of workers, and that they “work for the achievement of a society based on economic, social and political justice and equality… to oppose privatization and to fight for the direct provision of all the basic necessities of life by the state at all its levels… and the equal distribution of wealth.” Despite this, Samwu members prioritize the responsibility of the union to its members first and foremost, establishing a clear the insider-outsider relationship in relation to community activists.

Both organizations, in keeping with their constitutional principles, displayed a respect for fellow members and democratic processes in debate and critical decision-making. However, a small number of the Housing Assembly leadership displayed a lack of willingness to make decisions, fully provided for in the organization’s provisional constitution and backed by the support of the coordinating committee, for fear that these decisions would appear undemocratic. While these may be isolated incidents that can be attributed to the individuals themselves, it speaks to the history of community organizing in Cape Town that is fraught with charges of autocracy, corruption, the misuse of funds and ‘selling out’ that plagued several organizations, including the AEC, during the middle of the last decade (Oldfield and Stokke 2006, Pointer 2004). A Housing Assembly leader from Gugulethu indicated that this stems from past experiences and the perception that “if people are becoming Chair they are not doing those things so they can help organizations to achieve goals, no it is opportunism” (Interview 7-18-12). This overly cautious attitude towards decision-making has hampered the Housing Assembly’s ability to build organizational strength and a strong relationship with Samwu, whose members
expressed frustration at the unwillingness of community members to ‘get things done’.

Another key to ‘getting things done’ is the presence of adequate resources to carry out organizing efforts and campaigns. Housing Assembly members were unanimous that a lack of resources for organizing campaigns, direct actions, workshops and general organizational function is one of the greatest obstacles they face. The failure to mobilize resources and develop organizations, argues McKinley (2012), will undoubtedly undermine efforts to mobilize a mass base, key to organizational impact. A Housing Assembly leader from ‘Grassy Park’ remarked,

resources is our main obstacle. Because we are not registered we don’t receive funding. For the first few years [the chairpersons], we were unemployed. I think we only have two persons on the… committee that’s employed, so it’s hard for us to go around and do things without money. But now since we’ve been working with the Housing Assembly we get our travelling allowance back so that makes it a bit easier, but the main obstacle is resources (Interview 7-17-2012).

Material considerations like this are central to mobilizing activists and a mass base and are important components of organizing. Housing Assembly members generally agree that there are a variety of funding sources and Samwu is often identified as one that does not come with many of the problematic aspects of NGO funding, although the union brings its own issues. While they agree and want to contribute, Samwu members have reservations and are quick to point out that

because of the stretching of resources shop stewards are going to work first and foremost with the workers and it’s going to take an extra commitment from shop stewards and from the union if they are going to work in other areas… Part of that problem is the nature of unions trying to build their own membership so does it leave much room for extraneous issues which advantage a wider section of the working class? That feeling does exist but it’s the constraints of what resources the unions have to build those linkages. That is more where the problems are, resources and the motivation, which pushes those kinds of linkages (Interview Samwu Shop steward 12-6-2012).

This confirms the previous findings of Xali (2005) and Lier and Stokke (2006) in Cape Town and Barchiesi (2007) in Johannesburg. International literature similarly places labour as an important source of resources but also as a broad and highly organized structure than can act as a ‘spinal vertebrae’, playing an essential and supportive role connecting movements and coalitions across diverse geographical areas (Wainwright 2012). Samwu members echoed this, one
commenting that “the relationship between Samwu as a union and the issues of the communities like housing and others can become a big building block, [with Samwu] definitely in partnership with community organizations and also playing a leadership role in that partnership role” (Interview Samwu Shop steward 12-6-2012).

Steady access to funds and resources, however, is not without complication. Tension arose in the Johannesburg APF around the influence and benefits various affiliates were able to access when the organization acquired regular funding (Lier 2007). While some organizations have relied on NGO funding in the past, NGOs occupy a dubious position in the eyes of many. While this has to do with the very real influence a source of funds can bring to the direction, goals and ideological content of an organization, and the risk of corruption, some activists feel that this aversion has more to do with leadership politics in the activist community and the threatening presence or appearance of NGOs and intellectuals with funding. As a Housing Assembly leader from Gugulethu (Interview 7-18-12) commented, “we are coming from poor backgrounds, we get this tendency of corruption coming into our organizations as well, where we will find people coming to be the leaders and once they become leaders they don’t lead the organization well but in a direction so that they can get access to the funds”.

This is very relevant in the case of those organizations or personalities that have fluid relationships of opposition and engagement with the local authorities (Millstein and Lier 2012). For instance the now defunct WCAEC, though presently attempting to reconstitute itself, paradoxically with the support of NGO funding, previously stated that it would not “accept money from anybody for a simple reason: we don’t want them to direct us. We are on the ground: we will direct our struggle. So we don’t want NGOs to rule us or to act on our behalf, because they don’t have our interests at heart. They have their own interest at heart”
Concerns were voiced in the APF in Cape Town in the same period, of which the WCAEC was a part, noting the way NGO funding seemed to affect politics and goals, but eventually the organization decided that NGOs did have a role to play but only a supporting one (Lier and Stokke 2006).

On several occasions I witnessed Housing Assembly meetings be explosively disrupted by a small group of activists, unanimously placed in the self-interested leadership category by members, contending with support from NGOs. These were not trivial and were backed by threats bordering on physical violence which, at times left members visibly shaken. The majority of members however seemed to hold the view that they would work with NGO funders on the condition that they contribute in a supporting role. The Housing Assembly came together several times in remarkable demonstrations of cohesion and strength to calmly and democratically oust such disruptive individuals and groupings from their otherwise constructive proceedings.

With the breakdown of many organizations, and their relationships with NGOs and unions, resources remain vital but in short supply. Rising unemployment, especially among youth which now comprise an important new layer of activists, and cost of living in general means that individuals have less and less to finance activism. As a result, individuals are increasingly open to opportunities that will allow them to secure funds for their own reproduction and that of their families, and less willing to participate in struggle that does not also assist them in some way with their immediate needs. Commenting on organizing efforts, a Housing Assembly member from Tafelsig commented that

you have struggles because of poverty in our areas because for you to come in and explain these things, or talk about politics to these people it’s not putting bread on their table immediately. So along the way now what I have tried is to link immediate things in the community with the political things that are happening and then people will catch on. But as you move on you lose them along the way because they lose interest because [they say] ‘it’s still not putting bread on my table… my child still don’t have shoes so where’s this going?!’ (Interview 7-18-2012).
Further complicating this is the role of community development organization some CBOs have increasingly taken on. Xali (2005) connects this to different experiences of privatization and the willingness of communities to partake in the EPWP and self-help initiatives that are often perceived as positive development or livelihood opportunities. Samwu on the other hand sees these as instances of self-exploitation that serve to undermine the overall efforts of the working class to fight for quality, decent jobs (Samwu 2012, Xali 2005). Recently in Cape Town, Millstein and Lier (2012) have explored what they call ‘casualization from below’ or the process whereby CBOs vie for position to act as distributors of community development resource, effectively acting, sometimes formally, as labour brokers. They argue that this facilitates processes of casualization in the municipal labour force. Immediate benefit to the community is prioritized in these cases and dubious arguments to distinguish casualization from privatization are made by CBOs to reconcile the various conflicting political positions of the organization.

Combined, these processes contribute to complex insider-outsider dynamics informed by race, class and sociopolitical dynamics where, in this case, local residents that participate in community development projects are insiders, and unionized municipal workers, whether from the local community or not, and casual workers from elsewhere are outsiders. On the eve of the anti-EPWP march, however, one Housing Assembly member remarked, “I know what these casual jobs, these EPWP jobs is doing. I know what they represent. If I take a job I am only making it worse. I would rather not have those funds” (Personal comment Tafelsig activist 7-5-2012). The need for resources to build organizations and campaigns on the one hand and the risks that come with funding and vulnerable livelihoods on the other make resource sharing between sections of the working class complex but necessary to overcome fragmentation.

---

3 When participants and interviewees made particularly insightful personal comments to me, which they often did in our conversations, I recorded these comments in my notes and secured the permission to cite them. They appear throughout as “Personal comments.”
When it comes to repertoires of contention, CBOs tend to be campaign based, responding quickly to evictions, disconnections and other community issues through direct action. These include street blockades and protests, marches to City Hall, the courts and councillor’s homes, reinstatement of evicted persons to their homes and utility reconnections (Xali 2005). Tactics are heterogeneous and vary from group to group informed by particular social and material contexts (Oldfield and Stokke 2004). However, organizations also frequently utilize juridical and institutional means, drawing on discourses of human rights and the constitution. Struggles in one informal settlement in Tafelsig have seen Housing Assembly members protest, confront police and the anti-land invasion unit, be evicted and reoccupy over the past two years, as well as use drawn out legal battles to fight eviction based on the constitution and the 1998 Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act 19 or PIE Act. The informal settlement of Siqalo in Mitchell’s Plain has also seen enormous growth over the past two years, from a few dwellings to more than 2000 people as the informal settlements in the Western Cape have grown by two percent in the last decade (StatsSA 2012). Siqalo residents have used tactics similar to the above and have also blocked roads, burned tires, *toy-toyied*\(^4\), marched in the CBD and protested in front of the courthouse (Majiet 2012).

Samwu on the other hand proceeds primarily through institutional channels, using direct action only when necessary. Aggressive direct action used by CBOs has led the union to label all such movements radical and predisposed to violence (Xali 2005). Despite their differences, Samwu and the Housing Assembly carried out a joint march in July 2012 to protest EPWP jobs and to demand investment in public services and housing (Samwu 2012). However, the last minute invitation from the union led the Housing Assembly to question the motives of Samwu

---

\(^4\) Toyi toyi refers to an ever present feature of protest marches is South Africa. It is a rhythmic dance that accompanies chants on a march and remains, as it was during apartheid, an effective tool for attracting the attention of and, some argue, intimidating the state and authorities.
and to feel as if they were a ‘rent a crowd’ and that workers struggles were more important. This echoes observations elsewhere that unionized workers are perceived as a ‘labour aristocracy’ (Spronk and Terhorst 2012). The Housing Assembly expressed this concern and the desire to be consulted as a more equal partner in future joint action. Although the research for this thesis observed no instance of shop stewards chastising the repertoires and tactics of CBOs there remain points of tension in the role and importance of partners in alliances and the strategies and tactics that inform campaigns that reflect organizational and institutional characteristics.

As previous analyses of alliances in Cape Town have concluded, these organizational differences have impacted the ability of alliances to cohere (Lier and Stokke 2006, Xali 2005). A number of shop stewards and the provincial and metro leaders of Samwu expressed and demonstrated a strong commitment to working with communities and have taken a leading role. Nevertheless, the lukewarm commitment of the rank and file, and the ad hoc attitude of Samwu as a union at the national level, remains. While the SMU literature often prescribes loose, horizontal linkages between unions and communities (Waterman 1995) that could describe the current state of affairs, a number of recent cases of successful coalitions have seen labour democratically occupying a leading role or acting as a vital organizational network and source of resources (Spronk and Terhorst 2012, Wainwright 2012). In partial explanation of the timid commitment on the part of Samwu, previous studies from Cape Town have emphasized the way in which workers defer to due process, union structure and hierarchy in times of strike action and in policy and campaign development despite being sympathetic to the demands of CBOs (Lier and Stokke 2006, Xali 2005). Scholarship examining the 2007 and 2010 public sector strikes highlights an encouraging shift in attitudes from the earlier to later strikes. Ceruti (2012, 212) argues that while in 2007 cautious and ambiguous attitudes toward the strike were prevalent
amongst rank and file members, by 2010 it was the rank and file who forced the national leadership into a strike position and were unanimous and “adamant that ‘there was nothing wrong’ with people taking to the streets for their rights”. This is indicative of the tension that Von Holdt (2003) notes between the movement and institutional dimensions of unions and the growing strength of the former over the latter in Ceruti’s account. It also confirms McKinley and Veravia’s (2005) observation, perhaps overly optimistic at the time that protesters were beginning to lose faith in the electoral system and increasingly investing in direct action.

Attitudes are likely more ambivalent than this estimation suggests, and closer to Hart’s (2007) observation that direct protest action was being added to the political repertoire of individuals alongside voting in elections. Strategies of engagement with formal and informal, and state centred and oppositional politics are similarly varied and contradictory. Still, the positions of many Samwu shop stewards in the run up to the strike season in 2012 and in the aftermath of Marikana, suggests that a broad constituency of public sector workers in Cape Town increasingly hold the position Ceruti (2012) refers to. One shop steward commented that

> it’s only now for the last two years that Samwu has realized that it must work hand in hand with communities… So when we have a protest, when we have an action, then we’ll ask the community to support us and when the community has an action they can come to Samwu and say, look here you can support us in our struggle. Like for example the Project, it is a very good thing because we need the Housing Assembly so that community organizations can use Samwu’s knowledge of engaging the City. Samwu’s got the structure, Samwu’s got the resources to say look here lets move with this. You’ve got an objective; you’ve got an aim to engage. With Samwu you’ve got the union and the city that engage on some issues and this is how this can be used as a platform to engage because Samwu is a stakeholder in the city and can open doors for communities to engage… it is a very vital partnership that will be able to bring the city and force the city to engage communities and that’s very important. If we want the city to make a turn, a 180, we need those three partners to engage vigorously with the IDP, engage the city, engage the councillors. We talked about cross-subsidization that is a thing that needs to be forced on the city by the communities (Interview 12-6-2012)!

Likewise, they are concerned and frustrated that national leadership opposes what they see as the valid position of striking workers like those at Marikana and the farmworker strikes. They consider this as contrary to the interests of the working class. “There wasn’t any discussion or
debate [at the Samwu congress regarding Marikana], we were told not to discuss it” (Personal Comment Samwu shop steward 11-13-2012). Accordingly, faith in the union to affect Alliance structures such that an institutional outcome preferential to the working class can be reached without the use of direct action and an elite accountable to the membership, not the other way around, seems to have been brought into question in the minds of members. This is also reflected in the joint submission of a memorandum to the City Council critiquing the IDP, and the creation of Housing Assembly area committees across the Metro, led by members of Housing Assembly and Samwu to develop stronger organizations and campaigns for housing and services.

The extent to which these sentiments are present throughout Samwu structures in the Cape Metro is however, questionable. As is the extent to which members at a variety of scales within the union participate in these initiatives, a factor which has been established as a crucial element for the formation of deep coalitions (Tattersall 2005). Provincial and Cape Metro Samwu leaders, Andre Adams and Mario Jacobs, have publicly expressed their support for casual and EPWP workers’ right to organize and for better wages (Public Address, Cape Town City Hall 7-5-2012), participated in a march and joint submission with the Housing Assembly to the CCT critiquing the 2012 IDP and its failure to address the needs of the working class. However, these actions can still be regarded as beneficial on a solely strategic basis, as they contribute to protecting the jobs of unionized workers and bolster the power of the union in the metro on what was the run up to ‘strike season’ in the winter of 2012. It also remains to be seen what level of support exists for Housing Assembly area-committees amongst the rank and file and shop stewards in general, a shortcoming Xali (2005) previously noted. One Samwu shop steward warned that

although the union has gained members in the last two or three years, if you look at the shop stewards in the last election virtually 70% of shop stewards elected were brand new shop stewards… They don’t have the kind of commitment to working class issues that I think the shop
stewards as a group or Samwu as a union had 10 years ago or 20 years ago… [and] once they come inside the union it is not as if their priority is the interests of the workers. My impression is that shop stewards in the last period have tended to not carry out the general duties of what shop stewards are there for, that is put forward the interest of the workers that elected them, and tended to be there for various other reasons, either party political reasons or ‘what can I get out of it for myself.’ So that is a problem and hopefully the union can combat that. (Interview 12-6-2012).

Instances of constructive organizing in the Project must be praised but approached cautiously so as to not generalize these, for the moment, isolated successes to the entirety of Samwu and CBO activity in Cape Town. While these observations may be indicative of a self-conscious shift in the understanding of the “nature and purpose of labour” in Samwu, and a moving beyond the narrow concerns of production (Wainwright 2012, 79-80 original emphasis), it is equally possible that they represent relatively isolated incidents in what remains a complex and ambivalent position to community concerns on the part of the union.

Although it has not been addressed in past literature pertaining to alliances in Cape Town, clearly indicated in observations and interviews, is a concern for the absence of knowledge and understanding of the issues that affect the working class and efforts to educate its members. Two thirds of those interviewed in the research conducted for this thesis volunteered a lack of knowledge and education as a primary obstacle to developing strong organizations. A Housing Assembly member from Tafelsig commented that, “in our communities the most pressing thing is that people have no idea of anything. People don’t have any information. Like the IDP, they have no idea what it is. For us it’s a stumbling block because we need to get people to understand what is happening, politically, raising consciousness” (7-18-2012). A Housing Assembly leader from Grassy Park noted that, “we need political education to make people understand that this is more long term” (Interview 7-17-2012). Another commented that,

it’s throughout the struggle that people see what is incorrect about what is happening now and people understand the alternatives and stand for the alternative that they wish. We still need to educate people. We need popular education, not only going to schools. People cannot read but they are not irrational. They can think. If we engage in our community telling people about the system and coming up with alternatives, we should. I mean we are moving slow but we are
moving in the correct direction (Interview Housing Assembly Leader Gugulethu 7-18-2012).

Similar sentiments came from Samwu shop stewards, one commenting that,

we need to start building experience and educating a new layer of shopstewards, of politicizing many of them in a sense towards the development of the needs of the working class because for a lot of these new shop stewards they come there with organizations they are a part of and in the interests of certain sections of ANC party politics and not in the interest of the working class in the final analysis (Interview 12-6-2012).

As Novelli (2004) and Novelli and Ferus-Comelo (2010) argue, drawing on the experience of labour community alliances internationally, Housing Assembly and Samwu members understand the development of counter knowledge, solidarities and class-consciousness and counter hegemonic movements to be the outcome of learning processes. Likewise they see a lack of knowledge, education and mutual understanding as a root cause of fragmentation of struggles.

**Sociocultural Fragmentation**

The Western Cape occupies a rather unique position in South Africa, home to two thirds of the 4.6 million (or 8.9% of the total population of the country) who identify as Coloured (Stats SA 2012). The Coloured Labour Preference Policy of 1954, the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the particularities of South Africa’s development, restricted the movement of Africans into the Cape and gave labour preference to Coloured workers, access to limited benefits via the state and increased their concentration in the Western Cape, especially around Cape Town. Though a number of organizations emerged before and during apartheid to defend and advance the position of Coloureds both engaging with and opposing the state, and independent and allied with the ANC, protest was quashed in the 1960s and did not re-emerge until after the Soweto uprising in 1976. Despite instances of cooperation, racial fault lines in anti-apartheid organizations were never fully overcome and increased as the transition moved forward (Fourchard 2012).

Coloured identity has been subject to a great deal of ideological and political contestation
over the years. It has become more than acceptable in political circles post-apartheid to once again embrace being Coloured. Adhikari (2005) suggests this is because of efforts to overcome negative racial stereotypes; to take advantage of ethnicity in a more open democratic political environment; and out of the fear that Coloured people would once again be marginalized under African majority rule. Indeed, racial divisions were exacerbated during the local government transition (McDonald 2008). Fears of Coloured marginalization and ‘Swart gevaar’ (‘black threat’) have become common currency in political battles in the Western Cape between the DA (which currently holds both the province and the CCT) and the ANC, and is the only region in the country to undergo several reversals in electoral politics post-apartheid. Fourchard (2012) argues that the DA and ANC have developed networks of patronage with NGOs, CBOs and activists and have made inroads in communities to gain electoral support. This exacerbates racial divisions that exist in communities, sometimes by street or by neighbourhood in less homogenous townships, fragmenting efforts to build strong working class organizations. This is indicative of the inroads such politicking has made even in the core of radical activism in Cape Town and is problematic for relations with Samwu, whose members - regardless of their racial identification - are considered ANC supporters on account of the union’s membership in the Alliance. One Housing Assembly leader from Khayelitsha commented that “they are using the policy of divide and rule; they are dividing us and ruling us. So if we can come to our senses… let us unite and leave these parties alone and create unity. If we create that unity we will really achieve what we are wanting” (Interview 7-27-2012).

At the root of these racially charged political manoeuvrings is the underlying, daily reproduction of racism in Cape Town. McDonald (2008) argues that racism is an ongoing problem in the city despite the celebrated liberal position that racism has always been less
prevalent in the Cape than elsewhere in the country. Particularly important are the “practices and ideologies, carried out by structures, institutions and individuals that reproduce racial inequality and systematically undermine the well-being of racially subordinated populations” (McDonald 2008, 286). The connection between racism and material wellbeing is evident as racism contributes to the maintenance of particular sections of society in subordinate socioeconomic and spatial positions and places, internally dividing the working class. This dynamic is, of course, exacerbated by the spatial legacies of apartheid, uneven development and neoliberalism.

Racism is not restricted to relations between South Africans however, and xenophobia is widespread in the country. The inability for the state to deliver on promises to raise living standards and the increasing competition to survive has created a ripe environment for ethno-nationalism. This has contributed to xenophobic attacks, such as those that erupted in May 2008. Studies have long demonstrated that xenophobia is a serious and systemic problem in the country (SAMP 2003, 2013). Neoliberal nostrums of ‘doing more with less’, limited resources and self-reliance combined with the rhetoric of population influx as an excuse for limited expenditure at the local government level only serve to exacerbate these tensions. More recent reviews in the aftermath of the 2008 attacks maintain that xenophobic sentiments continue to be held by a large segment of the population and have a presence in the ongoing service delivery protests (Dodson 2010). While not a direct object of study in the research conducted for this thesis, tensions were observed in the Project when discussions broached unemployment, race and migration and the impact of xenophobia in service delivery protests especially in light of the rise of ethno-nationalist and ethno-populist rhetoric of the Zuma-era ANC. Some activists hold a version of these views despite, or integrated with, critical views of political economy. One Housing Assembly leader from Khayelitsha argued that at the root of the employment problem was capitalism in South Africa and the government allowing the people that are coming from foreign
countries to come and make things worse here. It is worse here in Cape Town. There are a lot of foreign people coming from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Nigeria, all over, and they are all here. Even now you can go to the garage [where they are waiting for someone to come by and offer work] and ask them where they are coming from Congo, Lesotho, so that is why we have this problem of unemployment in the Western Cape because there a lot of people coming from outside and they are cheap labour (Interview 7-27-2012).

Much to the contrary, employment statistics and meta-analysis indicate the presence of migrants in South Africa has a positive effect on job numbers and that even in the absence of migrants there would still be an enormous job shortage (McDonald 2008). With this in mind, discussion that acknowledges these facts are important to overcoming misleading, disabling and harmful information that exists amongst the working class, obscuring the true source of problems.

With the caveat that gender analysis was not included in the research design of this thesis, observations and interviews conducted in the process make it imperative to address gender concerns. Likewise, research data have yielded important indications of the state of gender in movements in Cape Town, as well as offering conceptual direction when examining state-civil society relations, a discussion we will return to in the final chapter, and suggests areas for further study that I hope to pursue in future research. Previous analysis of coalitions in Cape Town noted that gender analysis or a gender perspective had not been incorporated to any considerable degree within affiliates or alliances (Lier and Stokke 2006), nor however did these attend to an examination of gender in a meaningful fashion (Lier and Stokke 2006, Xali 2005). This is unfortunate given that women are disproportionately affected by service delivery restructuring and that the gendered division of labour within and beyond the household in South Africa “mean struggles for services and livelihoods are gendered struggles” (Goebel 2011, 388).

Miraftab (2006) argues that linear, liberal notions of citizenship like those celebrated in democratic South Africa that see substantive economic and social rights following from formal political rights, mask over and maintain gender inequalities. Invited spaces of participation,
while more inclusive of women in formal and informal politics have been coupled with neoliberal restructuring that disproportionately affect women via service cut offs and evictions, thereby simultaneously excluding them. The result is the inclusion of women in spaces where their agency is severely constrained institutionally and an undermining of the material basis of their survival outside of these new, invited spaces of formal and informal political participation. In each instance these spaces are rife with gender inequalities, and is particularly the case in the household (Goebel et al. 2010).

Despite this there are spaces that continue to open for radical change to challenge the patriarchal gender order. As Miraftab (2006, 210-211) notes, “women’s grassroots strategies that neoliberalism relies on to stabilize processes of capital accumulation by providing free community care or ‘affective labor’ also destabilize the gender orders on which neoliberalism relies… and women’s community activism, which is often fueled by their gendered responsibilities as care givers, often also finds the transformative power to seek gender justice.” She concludes that the oppositional, invented spaces of action that women increasingly create and thrive in, are vital and effective spaces in which to challenge state centred, liberal notions of citizenship, state-civil society relations and inclusive yet demobilizing and depoliticizing, invited spaces of participation. These invented spaces challenge the market logic and discipline, delivered into communities and households through the mechanisms of service delivery, that seek to establish hegemonic state spaces (Ruiters 2005), and in which contestation must occur.

Observations of the proceedings of the Housing Assembly are similar to those above, though with a number of differences. Most remarkably, in the case of the Housing Assembly leadership, women greatly outnumber men. However, their voice and ability to steer organizational function does not appear to match this numerical superiority confirming earlier
observations of affiliates (Pointer 2004). In the case of Samwu, slightly more than half of the shop stewards active in the Project were male, and despite deliberate efforts to achieve gender parity male members also dominated discussions. In other fora, workshops, meetings and so on, there was an unwillingness among many male activists, especially and unfortunately amongst youth, to acknowledge conceptually and practically the burden placed upon women especially in processes of neoliberal restructuring. This leads to a number of questions. Why are women represented so heavily in the leadership of the Housing Assembly and, it appears, deferred to, while the majority of men refuse to accept the greater burden placed on women, or when they do declare it to be ‘natural’? The way broad social networks, that liberal discourse celebrates as an example of the survival strategies of women and upon which capital accumulation rests, work to undermine these very structures was also observed (Miraftab 2006). Specifically, in the way racial and sub-class divisions, that is between the unemployed activists and shop stewards, were bridged more often by women that by men. Although they must be approached with caution, these observations are indicative of the centrality and necessity for further gender analysis of organizations and alliances, in order to better understand the function and process of gender dynamics and the spaces for change these unstable processes continually open. The dominance of men in union structures and the powerful connection of work in the ANCs hegemonic discourse of national building remains a considerable obstacle (Barchiesi 2011).

A Disabling Political Economy and the ANC’s Hegemonic Project

Engagements with the local state on the part of Samwu and the Housing Assembly occur within a culture of neoliberal urban governance and policies of fiscal thrift, narrow financial efficiency, performance-based management and cost recovery. Limits imposed by the national state on
municipalities’ autonomy have also impacted local government restructuring. In particular, national grants were reduced by 55% between 1997 and 2000 (McDonald 2002), leading, despite recent increases, to ‘unfunded mandates’ that exacerbated further the underinvestment problems of apartheid. Participatory rhetoric has become mainstream over the past couple of decades in governance and development, especially at the level of the local state, to improve transparency, accountability, and sustainability. In South Africa, IDPs and their participatory processes are to fulfil this role and are part of an extensive opening of democratic spaces of participation post-1994. However, what is clear in Cape Town and around the world is that these participatory mechanisms are limited, give little decision making power to citizens and increasingly place the power to shape the urban sociospatial landscape in the hands of capital (McDonald 2008, Miraftab 2005, 2007, Williams 2006).

As the above discussion of gender makes clear, processes of inclusion through invited spaces of participation have been coupled with processes of neoliberal restructuring and cost recovery that have simultaneously excluded on a material basis those who cannot afford services. Theoretically tools for progressive change, invited spaces have in practice been little more than instances of “spectator politics, where ordinary people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes, are often the objects of administrative manipulation and a miracle of reconciliation in the international arena of consensus politics whilst state functionaries of both the pre- and post-apartheid eras ensconce themselves as bureaucratic experts summoned to ‘ensure a better life for all’” (Williams 2006). On consideration of the report on participatory engagement in the 2012-2017 CCT IDP, in which the mayor claims that one million people were reached in the process of its formulation, Williams’ observations seem to hold true. The IDP’s quantitative review of the process accounts for 2780 public meeting attendees and the receipt of
6500 ‘Have Your Say Forms’ (not necessarily submitted by different persons). It provides no indication of how the other 990 720 engagements were carried out except to say that the process involved “the use of information inserts in a range of media, including newspapers, and the innovative use of social media” to reach residents (CCT 2012a, 28). Housing Assembly activists found these claims laughable and problematic. A Samwu shop steward commented that

the IDP for instance. I’ve got a huge problem with that document. Such a hugely important document that the people of Cape Town have to live with for the next five years and they [CCT] come with this consultation but it’s not enough and most of those things are not in the interests of the people in Khayelitsha, in Site B, in Gugulethu. It’s only catering to the people who already have money and who are able to suck up more money from the city and really I don’t think there is anyone in their right mind from poor areas who would have gone ahead with that because it doesn’t even cater to them (Interview 11-30-2012).

As McDonald (2008) points out, public engagement, often outsourced to private consultancies, is conducted in ways and scheduled at times that exclude many from participating. Furthermore, permanent institutional structures such as Ward Committees, implemented city wide after 2004, are dominated by elites and are highly controlled, functioning as little more than rhetorical devices and vectors of patronage. Housing assembly members confirm that Sanco is likewise little more than a recruiter for the ANC as one youth member from Khayelitsha remarked,

I was told that this organization is helping communities with services so I… introduced the Housing Assembly and asked… how they can work with the Housing Assembly in order for the community to have better services. So I had a dialogue with the leader… and he said to me ‘are you in a political party’ and I said ‘no I am not in any political party’ and he said ‘why?’ I told him the truth because… political parties the ones that are dividing people because if you are for organizations fighting for the same thing why don’t you guys join together to be strong and build capacity for that thing that you want. So this guy told me ‘no, I must make you an ANC member and you must join us in Sanco and we have a seat for you if you work for us.’ So that guy gave me a deal, ‘if you work for us you can forget about the Housing Assembly.’ So in order to be in Sanco, it doesn’t matter who you are, anyone can join, but the way they make you understand it is that you have to be a member of the ANC so in that way it was showing how the ANC betrays people and the broken promises so I thought to myself that this is useless (Interview 12-4-2012).

Even large, official bodies such as Samwu, affiliated with the Alliance and the ANC, have been excluded from local government governance processes, notably the Unicity Commission, on the basis that the city is not accountable to unelected unions. This indicates the contradictions of neoliberal governance, as private sector representatives and consultants were heavily represented
in the commission, as they are in governance mechanisms today that seek to make Cape Town a more competitive city. Williams (2006), based on observations as a CCT planner for over ten years, advocates for communities to strategically engage with the city to make invited spaces of participation work better and for a return to apartheid-era strategies of open opposition and confrontation to transform the underlying structures and power relations of the status quo.

Those organizations that do or are perceived to challenge the underlying basis of the mainstream plan for neoliberal development are labelled ‘far left’ or ‘extremists’ and are prevented or discouraged from participating in invited spaces of participation (Miraftab 2004). This creates further fragmentation as potential partners, even so-called radical unions such as Samwu, within the Alliance and in the mainstream are deterred from developing relationships with so-called radicals (Lier and Stokke 2006). When ostracism or marginalization is insufficient, the state utilizes coercion and force. The metro police, the anti-land invasion unit and private security are regularly deployed across the country and in Cape Town in the case of evictions, service delivery and other protests (McDonald 2008, Xali 2005, Oldfield and Stokke 2006), regularly affecting Housing Assembly members (Majiet 2012, Solomons 2011).

Part of the willingness of Samwu leadership to take part in direct action in opposition in Cape Town presently appears to be the fact that the DA currently controls the CCT. This allows Samwu to address the CCT with more oppositional rhetoric than if the council was led by the ANC, despite the similar policy positions of the two parties. Cameron (2012) finds little evidence that Cape Town is treated any differently than other cities by the national government despite a lack of vertical integration politically. Aside from the ‘political football’ of housing, service delivery is still the purview of the local state and therefore, even though infrastructure is largely dependent on the national equitable share grant, the DA appears responsible for service delivery.
in the city. This opens considerable room for Samwu to oppose the DA, which elides the fact that service delivery policy would differ little under the ANC. Interviews and observations from meetings confirm that this enables the oppositional stance of both union members and activists towards the CCT. The language used by Andre Adams, Samwu Provincial Secretary in the Western Cape, as he addressed a Housing Assembly-Samwu march at City Hall is telling:

Comrades, we are here today to send de Lille [CCT Mayor] a message. We are here to address the dishonesty of the DA. That the DA is being dishonest with the people of Cape Town and that this is the most dishonest mayor of the City of Cape Town. The mayor has no respect for the poor…. What you are doing is showing the whole city the lies that are being peddled by the DA. They are saying that as Cosatu, unions are only fighting for their own members. Now we need to say that is a big lie because our members out there that work in the municipalities live in the very communities that there is unemployment (Public Address 7-5-2012).

ANC councillors themselves have gone as far as to assist informal settlement occupiers, albeit in very ad hoc ways that lack any real meaning for Housing Assembly members. Similar cases of national governments attempting to undermine local government have been witnessed elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa in cases of vertical decentralization (Lambright 2012, Resnick 2011), but have been more coordinated and have also affected funding allocations, which has not been the case in Cape Town (Cameron 2012). This element of the political opportunity structure also widens the repertoire that Samwu and the CBOs can utilize in relation to service protest. Where direct action against an ANC led council may not be acceptable a march on a DA led City Hall is well within reason. Indeed, Oldfield and Stokke (2004) indicate the delicate way in which CBOs and activists had to campaign utilizing forms of opposition and engagement in efforts to challenge the local state in the early 2000s when the ANC led the CCT. If groups were not careful and explicitly opposed the ANC council they risked physical harm and marginalization. Similarly, Samwu opposition to iGoli 2002 in Johannesburg was significantly impacted by loyalty to the ANC in the union and the reformist pragmatism coming from Samwu’s Gauteng provincial office, curtailing their ability to use direct action to protest restructuring and anti-ANC
rhetoric, ultimately leading to the breakdown of the alliance in the APF (Barchiesi 2007).

Barchiesi notes that the national leadership of Samwu did not hold the same views as the provincial office in the case of iGoli 2002. The recent relocation of Samwu’s head office from Cape Town to Johannesburg may make it more difficult in the future for the national leadership to maintain oppositional given their now close proximity to the Samwu provincial office and the core of ANC power and government in Gauteng. This is a contributing factor to the contradictory views held by activists and shop stewards and the enduring influence of the ANC.

As Lier and Stokke (2006) observed of the Cape Town APF in the early 2000s, national political context is an important consideration for organizations at the local scale. In the broadest of terms the wavering hegemonic project of the ANC, imbued with and highly reliant on the legacy of national liberation, looms large in the working class. Presently, the ANC continues to marshal an enormous level of consent in South Africa, evident in election results and experiences of organizing in the working class. Samwu members regularly interrupted workshops and discussions in the Project if the ANC was chastised too strongly and remain, as Xali (2005) argues, more likely to view the state as developmental and pro-poor. This consent is, however, complex and contradictory. The shifting postures of Housing Assembly and Samwu members are exemplary of the multiple subject positions South Africans occupy (Ceruti 2012). Unionists frequently articulate sophisticated understandings of ANC-led neoliberal economic restructuring, very clearly linking this to a decline in unionized municipal employment, real wages and service deliver and rising living costs and a failure to deliver on promises, and yet continue to pledge support for the ANC. Likewise, Housing Assembly members who hold critical understandings, participate in grassroots organizations with contradictory subject positions as they associate themselves with one of multiple subject identities given a particular context. When asked about
obstacles to organizing, one shop steward from Khayelitsha said, “people are tired of broken promises for a better life, promises that were made before. Since then, they have seen nothing so they have lost hope in the leadership, from government, from communities. They needed the help of people to get there and once they reach there they forget so the problem is with the leadership, the government, at all levels” (Interview 12-6-2012). He continued, echoing other shop stewards and Housing Assembly members, identifying “the government, the state… not acting in our interests… because of capitalism,” as the target of the present struggle. At the same time, however, he expressed his belief in the state, and that “we can get these leaders in government to come together with communities and go down there and hear the cries, and listen to them, and respond to them and their demands, and whatever action they want, and proper consultation, not that ‘participation’ we talk about. I think our government can do that.” These contradictory statements represent support for the ANC in defence of what Matlala and Benit-Gbaffou (2012, 207) call “the ‘real’ ANC of the past” of the apartheid-era. But this is often easily swept away when critiqued. On the other hand, there are those, argues Sinwell (2011, 72), drawing on Hickey and Mohan (2004), who do not challenge the leadership of the ANC nor its plan for immanent development – “that is, the underlying process of social change known as neoliberalism” and believe that the ANC still has the potential to deliver on promises of ‘a better life for all’. Both serve to marshal support for the ANC in the context of few electoral options and the extension of thinly veiled neoliberal, developmental state programs.

The tension between the various sections of the working class is especially evident in engagements with processes of immanent development to get “a piece of the… pie” (Sinwell 2011, 71). The complicity of municipal workers in privatizations and business unionism generally, and participation with EPWP workers and the unemployed in marches protesting
casualization and threats to decent jobs, can still be seen conservatively as attempts to hold on to ‘a piece of the pie’. The valorisation of permanent employment and the diminution of casual jobs by unions, in the context of an economy that is unlikely to be able to provide mass employment, serves to alienate casual and unemployed workers, “leaving them torn between material insecurity and reverence for an unfulfilled ideal of full-time, decent work” (Barchiesi 2011, 246). The acceptance of casual and EPWP jobs by communities, what Millstein and Lier (2012) call ‘casualization from below’, also widens the gap between sections of the working class. Reflected in this is the enduring salience of the ANC’s discourse of liberal citizenship that prioritizes individual entrepreneurialism, work, and sacrifice while eliding class, race and gender.

Entrepreneurialism and employment has become the path to “real citizenship”, moderating claims to collective social provision and disciplining and stigmatizing “subaltern demands for decommodification, or dignified lives independent from employment status and market relations” (Barchiesi 2011, 251). Engagements of this sort are easily absorbed by the ANC project and hinder efforts to engage with immanent development and neoliberalism in a transformative manner that challenges ANC hegemony. They are, rather, extremely disabling and fragmenting, functioning to undermine working class unity.

These tensions and contradictions in the direction of the new South Africa continue to be papered over by the keystone of the ANC’s hegemonic project: a dynamic and shifting South African nationalism. Discussions of gender, race and xenophobia above, indicate some of the terms upon which inclusion and belonging continue to be articulated. The failure of the Rainbow Nation era, and Mbeki’s African Renaissance, to unite South Africans and deliver on the promises of national liberation have given way to a trajectory that leans toward possibilities of nationalism “inflected with racial and ethnic chauvinism… or with narrow exacting
interpretations of culture and tradition, or with antipathy toward the ‘alien luxuries’ of liberal constitutionalism” (Marais 2012, 419). These are dangerous, Marais argues, insofar as they prioritize a conservative, ethno-populist nationalism as the source of authority as opposed to the possible progressiveness contained in the ‘foreign’, liberal constitution, the other pillar of the new South Africa. As Hart (2007, 692 original emphasis) warns, “the capacity of the ruling bloc to tap into deep veins of popular understandings of “the national question” has been simultaneously the lynchpin of its hegemonic power and a key source of vulnerability.”

The complex and shifting attitudes of the ANC’s base, contested notions of work, citizenship and survival in the context of an economy that is structurally unable to provide work for the majority (Marais 2012), and the fluid and potentially regressive notions of nationalism which serve to elide difference and marshal consent, speak to the wider crisis of the left in South Africa and its inability to build strong organizations to challenge the hegemonic project of the ANC.
Chapter 5: Conclusion – What’s Left of the Left in Cape Town and South Africa

While the preceding chapter has focused on sources of complexity and fragmentation obstructing the formation of alliances, this chapter will present some of the possibilities emerging from analysis of the Housing Assembly. It is my hope this analysis will contribute to the body of critical-sympathetic research relevant to South African movements. It will conclude by tying these struggles into the development of organizations on the left in Cape Town and South Africa.

In consideration of the ANC’s powerful hegemonic project, the importance of unity amongst the fragmented working class and beyond is vital. In the face of multiple forms of neoliberal dispossession, alternatives to market led service delivery and their ideological basis are important tools in this class formation. Dawson (2010b) argues that the APF used ideology to bring coherence to the movement and its campaigns to oppose cost recovery and the private management of utilities. While these ranged from, for example, claims to water as a human right based on the constitution, to claims to water as a part of the commons, which have their own internal tensions, these alternatives were communicated as part of an anti-capitalist discourse of decommodification. Dawson observes that much of the organizational repertoire of the APF displayed continuity with that of the struggle against apartheid but differed in espousing an explicitly socialist program that attempted to reclaim the Marxist rhetoric used by the Alliance “often in defence of policies that postpone, even undermine, social justice” (Marais 2012). While Dawson (2010b) points out that the ANC never officially held socialist objectives, the APF made demands on the state and those in the Alliance who formerly did advance socialism during apartheid, to fulfil promises made. Similar to the way the so-called post-apartheid NSMs did not emerge distinct from apartheid-era struggles, Dawson argues the socialist ideology of the APF
has not formed in a vacuum and draws important and effective links with the struggle against apartheid. While the capitalist ANC has failed to provide a ‘better life for all’, socialism as an ideology and basis of an oppositional politics can be a powerful tool in the creation of meaningful, collective, and democratic alternatives and organizations (McKinley 2012). The Housing Assembly also advances a socialist vision that does “not have the faith you [the CCT] have in the capacity of the capitalist economy to improve the quality of the lives of all the citizen of South Africa” (Housing Assembly and Samwu 2012, 2). It is “a vehicle for collective struggles and mobilizations for the implementation of working class and poor centred development… [that seeks] to achieve an egalitarian society in South Africa and the world” (Housing Assembly 2012, 1).

A Housing Assembly leader from Gugulethu declares that, “under capitalism we will never see the government offering a solution to these things” (Interview 7-18-2012) and advances a move to socialism. Two-thirds of Housing Assembly members interviewed in this research also hold socialist political views. These political positions, however, are often held in tension with other political and ideological beliefs, and evidence that the Housing Assembly articulates a coherent, counter-hegemonic socialist vision throughout its leading membership is lacking. Rather, the struggle is more often understood as based on making demands on the state for service delivery. That aside, the Housing Assembly’s use of ideology, much like the APF, acts as a unifying force that conceptualizes the struggle as going beyond these particular claims on the state for service delivery to “change the whole system and to change the system you need to build strong organizations that will be responsive to the people and will not be responsive to the needs of capitalism because that is what makes us to be in this crisis” (Interview, Housing Assembly leader Gugulethu 7-18-2012).
Popular education is essential to the articulation of coherent alternatives as a strategy of building unity amongst and within working class organizations. Labour and community activists in the project reflected that their arrival at particular conceptions of class unity, alliances and an anti-capitalist organizational politics that seeks the public provision of services, was the outcome of a learning process, much like Novelli (2004) observed in Colombia when workers and communities came together to defend public services in the city of Cali. Indeed, two-thirds of activists interviewed attributed their understandings of the need for strong organizations to oppose neoliberal restructuring and their ability to overcome divisions based upon race, ethnicity, class, gender and employment status, to education processes in the Housing Assembly, the Samwu-Irrig project and related left fora. These include formal workshops, informal discussions and popular education in protest and community politics. One activist commented that, "the class thing, I only understood when I started going to meetings and workshops and it started to make sense to me and as time goes by I can actually link what is being said to what is happening. It’s not just a theory. If you look at the budget and at the IDP there is proof” (Interview Housing Assembly Leader Tafelsig 7-18-2012). Another said that,

these workshops have changed me so much, the way I view unions, the way I listen to politicians, the way I listen to certain bills that they want to pass. I have become so vigilant about what is happening to us. Even my views now politically have change because now I understand where certain things are coming from and I’m able to put things in perspective. I’m able to interrogate certain things that have been said and its often a question of if you are going to pass that bill what does it mean to me (Interview Samwu shop steward 11-30-2012)?

These comments represent the outcome of what Novelli (2004, 184) argues is a “process of strategic learning... as a pedagogical response to the complex conditions under which processes of neoliberal globalization manifested themselves.” These efforts and engagements, in both traditional and popular paces of educational constitute “embedded processes of learning and production of counter knowledge” (Wainwright 2012, 86). These counter knowledges are created
in and through relationally produced political spaces of participation and challenge, and in
genewalism and uneven geographical development, as
organizations challenge and propose alternatives to the construction and maintenance of
hegemonic state spaces in the form of service infrastructure and delivery (Ruiters 2005).

Learning processes and the production of counter knowledges are also essential to
challenging hegemonic framing and discourse that propagates pejorative and disabling narratives
of counter-hegemonic movements and the material and disciplinary impacts of neoliberal service
delivery (Kowalchuk 2011, Della Porta and Diani 2006). These are also pivotal in breaking down
the “privilege gradient” within the working class that sees unionized workers as a labour
aristocracy and in building working class unity (Kowalchuk 2011, 155, also Novelli 2004,
Novelli and Ferus-Comelo 2010, Spronk and Terhorst 2012). In the case of public sector
alliances in South Africa, Barchiesi (2007, 65) argues this is “crucially enable by the position of
municipal workers as employees and citizens, and as producers and users of services.”

Despite the presence and partial success of strategic learning processes in class formation
and organization building in Cape Town, there remains a general ‘crisis of the left in South
Africa’. McKinley (2012) argues that the left has failed to mobilize the South African population
generally and remains unable to articulate a coherent alternative to capitalism and unite
progressive forces. Despite worsening poverty, inequality and an increasing acceptance of
market individualism, the left remains “numerically small and politically weak, characterized by
organizational sectoralism, disjointed resistance struggles and a lack of ideological confidence”
(2012, 24). While they have succeeded in critiquing the ANC’s neoliberal policy and have placed
mass struggles for material well-being back into the consciousness of South Africans,
progressive post-apartheid movements have been limited to achieving procedural change.
As a strategy of renewal, McKinley calls for the organizational and ideological linking of struggles amongst sections of the working class. In this, a more inclusive notion of worker must dominate, which includes the labour of women in and beyond their social reproductive roles that represent an enormous force. This must be accompanied by a re-politicization of workers to break out of the endless cycles of meaningless official union rhetoric and develop “a clear socialist strategy and the practical unity in action of broad working class forces” (McKinley 2012, 37). McKinley concludes that the left, while not abandoning procedural reforms that ease the pains of everyday life, must prioritize the struggles of the broadly defined urban and rural working class and develop forms of organization and contentious challenge that step outside of hegemonic state spaces and unify struggles to contest class power.

The experience of the Housing Assembly and alliances with Samwu fit well within these proposals, yet indicate many tensions and obstacles. The enduring power of the ANC, the Alliance, the fragmented working class, and the internal divisions that plague organizations are among the most prominent. What remains as a sliver of hope is the presence of learning processes that seek to constructively interrogate neoliberalism and organizations on the left to “conscientise” people (Freire 2000, 35) and transform “common” sense into “good” sense (Fals-Borda and Rahman in Dawson and Sinwell 2012b, 184). However complex the way forward, in this lies the potential for the basis of counter knowledges and the development of strong counter-hegemonic organizations.

Questions remain at the end of this inquiry, however. Specifically, what are the structures of organization, politics and understanding of the membership of the Housing Assembly affiliates? How does this apply to Samwu rank and file? What are the possibilities for transformation amongst the left in the Alliance, Cosatu and individual unions? What will be the
role of women as the majority of the membership of community-based organizations and with a
greater awareness of the impacts of neoliberal restructuring and accumulation by dispossession
and ability to make connections with processes of expanded reproduction? How and in what
ways does the relational production of gender, race, ethnic and class difference continue to
fragment struggles? What are the continuing and long-term outcomes of the learning process
described above in terms of organizational development and individual understanding? Indeed
are the two mutual as we conceive of them here?

Finally, and perhaps somewhat self-indulgently, what can an aspiring critical-sympathetic
researcher offer to these efforts, as they are equally important to me for my own existence and
my own struggles, despite occupying a space so distant from the struggle in Cape Town?
References


121


Appendix A

Interview Guide

General

What is your name?

In what area in Cape Town do you live?

How old are you?

Relationship? Family? Children?

Where did you go to school? What level did you achieve?

Are you employed or unemployed? Previously?

Housing and Service Delivery

Please tell me about your home in Cape Town. In what type of housing do you live?

Have you lived elsewhere? What type of housing?

Why did you move?

What has been your experience with housing and service delivery? Cut offs and evictions?

Activism

To what organization(s) do you belong? What is your role(s)?

How and why did you become involved?

What are the most pressing issues in your community?

What changes are needed?

What needs to be done to achieve these goals? How will these goals be achieved?

What are the obstacles to achieving these goals?

What is the root cause(s) of these problems?
When, how and why did you become involved with the Housing Assembly?

Is the cooperation between Samwu and CBOs in the Project positive/good?

What should the role of each be in the Project and in other cases of cooperation?

Are there any obstacles to Samwu/CBOs working with CBOs/Samwu? Internally and externally?

Have you always had this perspective/understanding around the issues in your community and the ‘struggle’?

When, how and why did your perspective/understanding change?

Additional Questions for Samwu shop stewards:

What sector of Samwu do you work in?

When and why did you become a shop steward?

Do you belong to any other organizations?

What are the most pressing issues in Samwu as a union?
Appendix B

Letter of Information and Consent Form

**Project title:** ‘Building Union and Community Capacity to Improve municipal service provision’

**Researcher:** Adrian Murray, Graduate Student, Queen’s University, in collaboration with the Municipal Services Project, International Labour Research and Information Group and the South African Municipal Worker’s Union.

**Sponsorship:** Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

**Purpose:**
This MSP/ILRIG/SAMWU project aims to build capacity amongst municipal worker leaders and community activists in order to critique and jointly engage the City of Cape Town’s Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and its related participatory processes. A combined package of research tools and training materials will be developed with and utilized by participants with a view to strengthening both the collaboration between SAMWU and community organizations, and the respective organizations themselves. The researcher will observe these interactions and individuals may be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews to record personal reflections on these processes. A paper will be produced that provides a literature review of urban civic engagement and a narrative account of this particular interaction of community activists and union members with the IDP process, and each other, and the lessons learned from it.

There are no known risks to participation in the study.

Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time before the paper is written and submitted. Your signature below indicates that you understand that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality will be protected. Reports of this study will not contain any identifying information unless the participant requests its inclusion. Notes will be stored on a password-protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to this data. Your signature below indicates that you understand these provisions around confidentiality and anonymity.

Research results will contribute to a thesis and be published in an open access MSP publication relevant to the South African labour and activist community.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s University policies.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to the researcher (9atm@queensu.ca or 073 879 8056) or his supervisor Greg Ruiters (gruiters@uwc.ac.za or 021 959 3869).
Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University in Canada, Dr. Joan Stevenson (chair.GREB@queensu.ca or +1-613-533-6081).

Again, thank you. Your interest in participating in this research study is greatly appreciated.

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.

Name: ___________________________
Date: ___________________________
Signature: ________________________
Appendix C

May 25, 2012

Mr. Adrian Murray
Master's Student
Department of Global Development Studies
Queen's University
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GDEVS-022-12; Romeo # 6006987
Title: "GDEVS-022-12 Building union and community capacity to improve municipal service provision."

Dear Mr. Murray:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GDEVS-022-12 Building union and community capacity to improve municipal service provision." for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementations of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. David McDonald, Faculty Supervisor  
Dr. Susan Soederberg / Dr. Magda Lewis, Co-Chairs, Unit REB  