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A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF MAJOR ASPECTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN POLICY

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Dominant issues of contemporary South African urban policy are the urbanization of the Black population, the spatial pattern of settlements, and the spatial structure of cities. This paper can only deal in a summary way with the first issue. It is hoped, though, that at some future date the approach employed here can be applied to the remaining issues as well. For example, an evaluation of the effects on settlement pattern of attempts to create new focal points, of resettlement policy and homeland policy, and the implications on urban structure of Group Areas legislation and other measures, would be included.

There are many interpretations of the term "urbanisation". For the purposes of this paper it is regarded as the concentration of population and economic activities and to the physical growth of towns (Friedmann, 1973, p. 65). On the subject of terminology the term Black will be used in place of Native, Bantu, and African and will not refer to other South African defined population groups of Colored and Asiatic.

The intention of this paper is to undertake a preliminary evaluation of South African urban policy concerning Blacks. Specifically questions will be raised concerning the soundness of major assumptions underlying policy. These assumptions are, firstly, that the urban Black in white South African cities has an impermanent status, secondly, that the migration of Blacks from rural areas to urban centers or concentrations can be controlled, and, thirdly, that local governance of Black cities can be devolved gradually.

A useful conceptual framework for evaluating these major assumptions is adapted from Friedmann (1973, pp.135ff.). This is that policy prescriptions for urbanisation vary with a number of contextual variables including the distribution of power in society, the country's level of development, information about urban growth, and the political commitment of particular value propositions. However, to adequately evaluate urban policy it is necessary, in addition, to view policy in historical perspective. Since the variable "power in a society" has such an impact on the other three variables, significant changes in power will be taken as a criterion for establishing a time framework for the evaluation.

Significant Changes in Political Power

A review of significant changes in political power reveals, for the purposes here, four major periods in the development of South Africa. The demarcation of these periods is related to changes that have an effect on urban policy. For this reason the focus is on the political power, first, of European nations and subsequently Whites to prescribe and regulate policy. This is by no means meant to ignore the distribution of power among the Black Kingdoms.

The first period, then, covers the years 1652-1795 and concerns only the Cape. The Cape was simultaneously a remote branch of the Netherlands East India Company (V.O.C.) and a Dutch colony containing the largest population

of White settlers in the Dutch Eastern Empire (Katzen, 1969). For all practical purposes the second period can be taken to be 1795-1910. During this period the British governed the Cape Colony and annexed Natal as a colony in 1843; for a short while the Afrikaaner Voortrekkers established the Orange Free State Republik (1850) and the South African Republic (Transvaal) (1854) (Thompson, 1969). The third period, 1910-1948, is that of Union and South Africa as a self-governing Dominion in the British Commonwealth. Although the country became a Republic in 1961 the significant change with major implications for urban policy occurred when the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. The fourth period is thus 1948 to the present.

Period One: 1652-1795

In this period society was essentially an agrarian one. The Cape, apart from Cape Town, was in a pre-urban phase of development. Most settlements were within 50 miles of Cape Town and were essentially hamlets.

Period Two: 1795-1910

Level of development and urban growth. In period two the turning point in development was the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886. These discoveries ushered in large scale mining which initiated industrialisation in South Africa. This in turn was the first major impetus to urbanisation that was fed by an unprecedented inflow of immigrants beginning in 1870.

During this period only the British Cape Colony can be regarded as having been partly urban in character. Settlements in Natal and the Afrikaaner Republics were mostly villages and hamlets. Urban in this context meant the close settlement of the Eastern Cape by 1870 and in South Africa as a whole hardly twenty towns with a population of 1000 or more (Welsh, 1971, p.172). In the last two or three decades of the 19th Century, however, the economic forces generated by the mining industry began the inexorable pull of people from the rural areas to the towns growing around the mines and ports. It is at this time that the migrant labor system originated in which the rural areas were to be regarded as pools of migrant labor for the industrial machine in the urban areas.

Political responses. The British and Afrikaaners responded in different ways toward emerging urbanisation. Even before the increased migration stimulated by mining the Volksraad of the South African Republic in 1844 decreed that no Blacks were to be permitted to settle near towns without official permission (Welsh, 1971, p.186). In their constitution of 1860 they specifically stated that Blacks were not allowed to settle in White areas but were to remain in scattered locations.

The British, as an urban civilisation, "imported" the idea of concentrating population in settlements. At first they encouraged Blacks to move from their scattered homesteads to villages centered on mission churches and schools. In the Cape the British had in mind the "general civilisation of the natives" or "civilisation by mingling" (Wilson, 1969, p.260). In addition they attempted to control the Xhosa by establishing "locations" or "reserves".

With the onset of industrialisation in the late 19th Century the government attempted to pry Blacks from rural areas to provide labor for the expanding mining and industrial machine through measures such as the Glen Grey Act of 1894 (Welsh, 1971). In 1903-5 the Black Affairs Commission recommended the formation of "labor locations" near employment centers to overcome the problem of intermittent workers.

In period two, then, during the emergence of urbanisation there were two diverse policies towards towns. The Afrikaaner Republics' policy was to control in-migration of Blacks into White settlements. The British Cape Colony, on the other hand, actually encouraged the concentration of Blacks in villages and towns, but at the same time endeavoured to control the bulk of the Xhosas by confining them in special areas.

Assumptions. Although the assumption of control was explicit in urban policy and its implementation, the assumption of the impermanent status of Blacks was only implicit during period two. Whites assumed that Black stay in towns was temporary, that they were "mere visitors" and not considered as permanent members of urban communities. In reality, as Welsh points out (1971, p.174), this stereotype of the "temporary sojourner" applied to a large majority of Blacks, with no restrictions on the remainder to acquire freehold land in the towns. During the period some towns in the Cape Colony were ostensibly multi-racial communities but the predominant "northern tradition" was an emphasis on White domination. Whites perceived Black "locations" as reservoirs of labor which could be drawn upon to drive the emerging industrial machine. When their labor was not required Blacks were expected to return to their "reserves".

Thus major assumptions of contemporary urban policy regarding permanency and control have their roots in the late 19th Century. This was the time when industrialisation and urbanisation emerged in South Africa. Due to the paucity of direct data it is not possible in this paper to evaluate these assumptions beyond noting their origins.

Period Three: 1910-1948.

Level of development and urban growth. This is a period of increasing industrialisation and the expansion of the secondary sector of the economy, particularly manufacturing (Table 1). In period three there was a rapid surge in urbanisation after the end of World War I: the increase of urban Blacks was 90.4% between 1921-1936 and 51.9% between 1936-1946 (Table 2). The escalation in migration to the cities was caused by the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s and the persistent droughts. The massive in-migration that occurred during the years 1939-1948 was at a time when there was a shortage in housing. The new arrivals became, mostly, unregistered sub-tenants in existing housing or they constructed shanties which eventually grew into large urban squatter settlements.

TABLE 1

SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

YEAR	GDP (Millions of Rand)	PER CENT OF TOTAL		
		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1911	299.2	48.8	5.4	45.8
1936	759.6	32.8	15.6	51.6
1960	4,965.0	25.9	26.1	48.0
1975	24,285.0	21.0	31.1	47.9

Source: Department of Statistics, South Africa. Various publications.

TABLE 2

URBAN POPULATION (IN THOUSANDS)

YEAR	URBAN & RURAL POPULATION			URBAN POPULATION					
	Total	Blacks	Whites	Blacks			Whites		
	# +	# +	# +	#	%	+	#	%	+
1904	5,175	3,490	1,117	363	10.4		599	53.6	
	2.1%	2.0%	1.9%			159(43.8%)			77(12.9%)
1911	5,973	4,019	1,276	522	13.0		676	53.0	
	1.5%	1.6%	1.8%			136(44.4%)			232(34.3%)
1921	6,927	4,697	1,521	658	14.0		908	59.7	
	2.2%	2.3%	1.9%			595(90.4%)			458(50.4%)
1936	9,508	6,596	2,003	1,253	19.0		1,366	68.2	
	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%			650(51.9%)			427(31.3%)
1946	11,416	7,830	2,373	1,903	24.3		1,793	75.6	
	2.1%	1.8%	2.2%			485(25.5%)			297(16.6%)
1951	12,671	8,560	2,642	2,388	27.9		2,090	79.1	
	2.5%	2.7%	1.7%			1,087(45.5%)			485(23.2%)
1960	15,994	10,928	3,080	3,475	31.8		2,575	83.6	
	3.3%	3.6%	2.1%			1,587(45.7%)			700(27.2%)
1970	21,794	15,340	3,773	5,062	33.0		3,275	86.8	
1975	25,471	18,136	4,240						

- - - - Division between period three and period four.

Source: Adapted from Tables 1 and 12, South African Bureau of National and International Communication

Political responses. Urban policy in period three revolved around the principle of the impermanent status of Blacks in urban areas. This was entrenched by the Stallard Commission in 1922, the subsequent Black (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and later amendments to this Act. Throughout this period there was a continuation of the previous policy that Blacks were to be permitted into White urban areas for employment purposes only.

Machinery was also set up to control the "influx" of Blacks into and remove "surplus" Blacks from urban areas. The policy of controlling this in-migration, however, was not carried out with much rigor. With the onset of World War II there was an official relaxation of influx control.

The policy towards portions of urban areas occupied by Blacks for the purposes of local government and administration was that they were merely regarded as adjuncts to the White urban settlements (South African Bureau of National and International Communication, 1978, p. 176). In several towns advisory boards were set up whereby municipalities could consult Black opinion, Blacks having no local government responsibility.

Assumptions. The assumptions that Blacks were "temporary sojourners" and that the influx of Blacks to urban areas actually could be controlled were challenged in some quarters. The Social and Economic Planning Council in 1946 emphasised the need for the development of a permanent urban labor force and the rejection of the migrant labor system. This was reinforced by the Minister of Black Affairs, Major P. van der Byl in 1947 and by the 1946-48 Black Laws (Fagan) Commission (Welsh, 1971, p. 189).

The Minister and the Commission also saw attempts to stem the tide of increasing Black influx into towns as unrealistic against the background of economic necessity. The Commission envisioned guiding and regulating, and perhaps also limiting, the movement from country to town but could not see how it could be stopped or turned in the opposite direction. The Prime Minister, General J. C. Smuts (1942, p.10) said: "It (urbanization) has, however, not stopped in the least. The process has been accelerated. You might as well try to sweep the ocean back with a broom."

As urban Blacks were not enfranchised it was assumed that a satisfactory substitute would be advisory boards. The boards were supposed to give Blacks some involvement in local decision-making but advisory boards were never a success (Welsh, 1971, p.229).

In evaluating urban policy in period three, it is clear that there was some questionning of the assumptions: the validity of controlling Black in-migration and maintaining the impermanent status of urban Blacks. In addition urban Blacks were dissatisfied with advisory boards as the first step in gradual evolving local government responsibility. They never regarded the boards as adequate substitutes for direct representation, for which they repeatedly asked.

Period Four: 1948 - Present

Level of Development and urban growth. In this period industrialisation continues (Table 1). In the distribution of wealth, however, a clear dichotomy arises between a highly urbanised rich White group and a less urbanised comparatively poor Black group, between economically developed metropolitan cores and less developed rural peripheries (Fair and Browett, 1979). Urban growth continues but with a slow down in the rate of Black urbanisation itself. In absolute figures, however, the numbers of Blacks in cities increases at almost twice the rate of Whites (Table 2).

Political responses. A major component of the Nationalist Party's 1948 election platform was the promise to enforce influx control. The new government repudiated the findings of the Fagan Commission and reaffirmed the view that permanent residence in the towns was the exclusive right of Whites (Welsh, 1971, p.191). Blacks in urban areas were to be regarded as guest workers or temporary sojourners. Their permanent place of residence was to be in Homelands which were to be developed.

In the subsequent three decades many Acts and regulations implementing these aspects of South African urban policy were promulgated. Space does not permit full or even cursory consideration of all political responses. All that is possible is to highlight some landmarks in the implementation of major issues of urban policy regarding Blacks.

The policy on the impermanent status of Blacks in urban areas was not carried to an extreme. The 1952 Black (Urban Areas) Act and subsequent amendments permitted some degree of permanence in towns and cities to those Blacks with comparatively long residence and employment records. In 1955 the Tomlinson Commission recommended a change in urban policy to prevent an increase in the proportion of Blacks in urban areas. The change was to disperse economic activities from the largest urban centers to border areas. As a result a program of industrial decentralisation was launched in 1960. A further development was brought about by the

Environment Planning Act of 1967. Restrictions in the employment of Blacks in certain areas was established through a quota system. The system reinforced the temporary status of Blacks in urban areas and attempted to increase the pace of development of the Homelands.

Further changes occured in the late 1970s when proposals for leasehold schemes for Blacks of 30 years, an "indefinite period", and 99 years, in urban areas were made (Morris, 1980, p.132). This is an indication of the acceptance of the permanent status of some Blacks in White urban areas but with conditions. The Black Laws Amendment Act of 1978, however, will have the effect that fewer and fewer Blacks will be entitled to permanent urban rights.

Influx control has been tightened up continuously, primarily through the Black (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act of 1952 which introduced "reference books" and the Black Laws Amendment Act of 1963. The Black Affairs Administration Act of 1971 increased control of urban Blacks by centralising administration and reinforcing the temporary status of urban Blacks. In 1977 the Reikert Commission recommended retention of influx control.

Local government responsibility for Black urban areas was initially in the hands of White municipalities. The 1961 Urban Black Councils Act provided for municipalities to establish Urban Black Councils, the majority of whom must be elected. The Councils were to have the the same functions as Advisory Boards but with certain executive powers. The situation changed in 1973 when responsibility for the administration of Black urban areas was taken over by White Administration Boards. The urban Black Councils were to serve in an advisory capacity only. Another change was in 1977 when the Community Councils Act permitted the election of members of Urban Black Councils with the promise of development into municipal authorities in the future.

Assumptions. The basic assumption of urban policy in period four is that at some unknown time in the future Blacks will not be permanent members with Whites in urban settlements. In evaluating this assumption it is questioned whether the policy-makers truly understand the economic forces at work. In the last decade or two the numbers of Blacks in White urban areas has apparently decreased due to influx control according to official figures. But this decrease has been achieved through the device of creating Homelands on the outskirts of large urban areas, such as Pretoria, Durban-Pinetown and East London, and presenting separate data for those Blacks in Homeland areas and those in White urban areas. In reality,

Blacks commute from their residential dormitories in the Homelands to employment opportunities in White ares or border industries (South Africa Bureau of National and International Communication, 1978, pp. 250-252). From an economic point of view Blacks and Whites are tied inexorably together through the workplace, and to some extent commerce. As defined by economic criteria, which are paramount to others in urban processes, South African cities have contained, and will continue to do so, Blacks as permanent members despite the strategem of spatially segregating Black and White residential areas.

The assumption that the tide of Blacks to urban centers can be stemmed signigicantly is questionable in the light of economic reality. In 1970, 86.8% of the Black labor force was to be found mainly in White South Africa, with 40% actually concentrated in the three major metropolitan areas (Fair and Browett, 1979, p.278). Furthermore of the Black population living in towns 93% were in White areas and adjacent Homelands.

The assumption of the gradual evolution of local government responsibility is caught in the contradictory trends of increasing centralisation of Black affairs in the hands of White political power and attempts to evolve local responsibility. The sequence envisaged for Blacks is advisory councils, urban councils, community councils and eventually fully-fledged municipal councils. The Reikert Commission in 1977 supported the view that the government had bound itself to grant full local government responsibility gradually to Blacks. In February 1980 the Prime Minister, P.J. Botha, indicated that urban Blacks would be granted a status beyond that of ordinary permanent status, that is a "developing" status - possibly an entity independent of the Homelands in future (quoted in Morris, 1980, p.66).

In evaluating the assumption of gradual devolution of local governance indications are that it has been and is too gradual. A major problem is the credibility of elected representatives (Morris, 1980, p.250) and the chronically low percentage polls (Welsh, 1971, p.229).

Conclusion

South African Urban policy concerning Blacks has been founded as shown on the three major assumptions of impermanence, controllability, and graduality. The preliminary evaluation carried out in this paper has indicated that they are questionable assumptions as a basis for urban policy. Blacks and Whites will of necessity be tied together in the cities by economic forces. Despite spatial segregation of residential areas and the creation of separate Black and White political jurisdictions Blacks will remain permanent members of economically integrated cities. As it is unrealistic to assume the establishment of parallel and equal Black and White economic systems existing side by side, Blacks will have a permanent status in urban areas. Political and residential segregation cannot obscure the facts of economic unity.

Influx control may reduce the number of Blacks in White areas but will not radically affect the urbanisation of Blacks around the White controlled economic cores. Welsh (1971, p.196) goes so far as to say that "the urbanisation of Africans occurred despite official policy." Fair and Browett (1979, p.280) similarly conclude that the "flow of African labour to White areas...seems destined to continue... " Besides the questionable soundness of the assumptions evaluated here there is also the social costs in a modernising economy of impermanency, influx control and other policies related to the urban Blacks are many. These include a subordinate position, lack of geographical, economic and social mobility, restricted opportunities and social deprivation (Fair, 1976).

The assumption of a gradual or evolutionary transfer of local government responsibility ignores, to use Fair and Browett's (1979, p.261) terms "conflict between white ruling elites and a black subordinate peripheral population." The author (Patricios, 1978) has discussed elsewhere three possible scenarios for South African cities. The evolutionary road, following the urban policy discussed in this paper, is pursued even though there is a conflict between those with political and economic power and those without. It was concluded that a reformative scenario, with the alternative assumptions of achieving a multi-racial, egalitarian society, and redistribution of wealth in a mixed economy, would have better trade-offs and be a humane approach to urban policy in guiding and directing change in South Africa.

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