The Politics of Youth and Violence
in the Townships of Johannesburg

by

Frederik Johannus Kooijmans

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Department of African Studies and Anthropology

School of History and Cultures

College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

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Abstract

The townships of Johannesburg developed as racially exclusive and deprived urban areas and it was here where many young people were directly exposed to the physical and systemic brutality of white minority rule in South Africa. This thesis demonstrates how these conditions proved fertile ground for some township youth to engage in violent confrontations with the state and within their communities. Physical violence proved for some township youth to be a necessary reaction to provocation or a method to claim masculine status and gain self-determination within their immediate environment and on a national scale. The author does not aim to provide justifications for youth violence or give explanations of individual motives, however emphasis will be placed on exploring risk factors and complexities of criminal and political violence in the townships of Johannesburg. The analysis of youth involvement in violence as victims and perpetrators prior to and during apartheid sheds light on continuities and differences of the politics and repertoires of violence in the urban landscapes of democratic South Africa. The author draws modern occurrences of youth violence in township into a historical perspective and diffuses claims that current young generations of township dwellers are more aggressive and occupied with non-political struggles based on self-interest.

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List of Abbreviations

ANC   African National Congress

IFP   Inkatha Freedom Party

PAC   Pan-Africanist Congress

SACP   South African Communist Party

Introduction

South Africa's first genuinely democratic election in 1994 brought huge optimism to a country that was physically and emotionally wounded by decades of violence and racial segregation. The multi-racial election was the outcome of a long negotiation process between the National Party government and anti-apartheid movements, most importantly the African National Congress - ANC-. The latter gained a sweeping victory in the election and entered into a National Unity government with their former adversary. This was a remarkable achievement that ended the divisive system of apartheid and paved the way for an inclusive democracy supported by a progressive constitution. The first priority of the new government was to reconcile a highly polarised society because resentment was widespread amongst non-white people who had suffered from years of oppression at the hands of the state and intra-communal violence. Particularly during the late 1980s and early 1990s many individuals were maimed or killed and entire communities displaced in the ongoing violent struggles in the townships. The country had narrowly escaped a civil war through a negotiated settlement; however society faced vast socio-economic inequalities, embittered relations and distress due to violence that would take considerable time and effort to leave behind.

The systemic and physical violence that the non-white population endured during apartheid caused individual and collective traumas that implicate and reinforce social problems affecting young generations in modern-day South Africa (Pohlandt-McCormick 2000: 23-24; Van Eeden *et al*. 1998: 2). Resultantly, society has been unable to drastically change the image of struggling with violence in spite of a multi-racial political representation and the abolishment of discriminative legislation. Political violence and belligerent criminal manifestations are casting a dark shadow over democracy and according to some observers symbolise the inability of the state to adequately address poverty and destitution. Public protests against failed service delivery more frequently turn violent as they are handled by the police with greater brutality, whilst gun crime and sexual violence remain persistently high in the townships of Johannesburg and other urban centres in South Africa.

Hamber (1999: 118), for example, speaks of a "culture of violence" in which violence is a normative condition of everyday life in South Africa. This resonates in reports in the media and statistics which often stress a bleak picture of violence as a modern criminal problem perpetrated mostly by young men from deprived townships in South Africa. There is a strong case for associating violence to deprived urban environments, masculinity and youth which will be explored and discussed in more detail in this thesis. Nonetheless, the author questions tendencies in current public discourses of seeing violence as a distinctively modern problem of criminality that needs to be addressed through the justice system. The association between violence and township youth is instead discussed as a subject with important continuities from the past and subjective to contemporary struggles for recognition and improved living conditions. Emphasis is placed on identifying circumstances that increase the risk of violent behaviour or victimisation and the politics involved in this process with the aim to facilitate a better understanding of causative factors and methods of addressing the topic from a more comprehensive approach.

The politics of youth and violence are historically and currently subjects of dualism and contestation in the imagination and everyday life and culture in the townships of Johannesburg. Township life and culture allowed young men and women to escape poverty and parochial cultures of the rural hinterlands and offered them opportunities to attain an education and participate in the metropolitan subcultures that developed in Johannesburg. Even so, living conditions proved harsh and dangerous for young township dwellers because social relations were weaker than in rural communities and there were always looming threats of removals, violence and marginalisation. Townships epitomised the immediacy of racial differentiation and socio-economic disparities because many of these deprived and often overcrowded areas were located cheek-by-jowl with the wealthy white residential areas of Johannesburg (Hyslop 2008: 122; Van Kessel 1989: 537). The apartheid state established a sizeable bureaucratic apparatus and security force to uphold the system of racial segregation and white dominance in the townships of Johannesburg. These conditions arguably caused the townships to become stages for noteworthy radical ideologies, protests and political movements against apartheid whose influence often stretched far beyond the townships

and inspired movements and events on a national level (Hyslop 2008: 121). Township youth have often been at the forefront of these struggles and particularly youth activist groups that were linked to the anti-apartheid movements and facilitated the campaigns to make their townships ungovernable during 1980s are nowadays credited for their contribution to political freedom (Sapire 2013: 168). The energetic actions of activist youth unquestionably placed an enormous pressure on the apartheid state, however the tendency to legitimise the violent struggles of township youth as politically meaningful because it led to the downfall of the apartheid system is erroneous.

For many people violence is considered as reprehensible and meaningless, irrespective of the end it serves, because violence destroys life and property and therefore cannot produce an elevated moral order. Bearing this in mind the author of this thesis does not seek to rationalise violence as political or criminal, however neither is the aim to deprive the violence of any meaning because state-orchestrated physical and systemic violence had a tremendous impact on township youth desires for enacting change. Reactionary violence for some of them became a much more acceptable means to create an opportunity for a better life, albeit many perceived violence as a last resort against an oppressive state that only spoke with and would only listen to the language of violence. Primarily violence is a method for people to assert power over others; whether it is governments asserting their rule over populations or individuals that seek authority within their community (Arendt 1969: 36-37). Perpetrators may well consider violence as a means to establish and maintain a political hegemony, however victims will at all times dispute this and witness violence as an illicit onslaught on their political and personal freedoms. The fine line between whether an act of violence is political or criminal depends upon viewpoint, and as such the coercive measures of the state to maintain law and order may have equal political as well as criminal aspects as violent retaliation by people who defy this authority and seek an alternative order (Žižek 2009: 44). Resultantly, the author does not seek to make judgements on whether violent deeds of township youth are political, instead the foci is placed on the political processes underlining violence to become commonplace as well as the types of politics that develop in the aftermath of significant collective violence.

By means of an examination and contextualisation of historical and contemporary systemic and physical violence the author attempts to provide a multi-layered analysis that will reveal the complexity of continuities and differences between the politics and repertoires of violence in the townships of Johannesburg. Township youth are the focal point of this study because of the important role that successive generations have played in many violent and non-violent struggles against marginalisation and discrimination during and after apartheid. The environment of the township during apartheid proved to be a fertile ground for many young people to develop a tendency towards legitimising the use of violence as a reactionary and revolutionary force which produced some of the fiercest violent conflicts in South African history. Whilst the motives of each generation of township youth to engage in violence differed from regaining control over their lives, contest for power within their communities or instigate a revolution, it can be argued that "to some degree each successive wave of violence was informed by previously established patterns and practices" (Kynoch 2011: 463).

Based on an examination of motives of young people from Diepkloof to engage in political violence during the 1980s, Marks argues that collective violence should be seen as a form of "collective action" when all other channels and means for political participation have failed (Marks 1996: 137-138). Arendt (1969: 51) disputes the notion of violence being a creative force and argues that "violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues". Political violence allows consideration to be given to those who are alienated from the power structures; however the justification that it is rational when it serves political objectives is flawed because political violence poses the risk of reproduction through a violent backlash and further destruction (*ibid.*: 75, 79). The premise of this thesis is that violence neither produces meaningful reform nor should be considered as a social or political alternative. Violence merely brings to light situations of grievance and agendas for social and political change which makes it no less justifiable during apartheid than in modern-day democracy. With this in mind this thesis does try to examine what inspires successive generations of young

people from the township to perceive violence as an appropriate means to achieve social and political change.

With the advent of democracy, the political landscape has transformed drastically and in tandem levels of violence in the townships have steeply dropped from their peak levels during the final years of apartheid (Kynoch 2011: 463). Perhaps the most important change is that the state is nowadays much more representative of society as a whole and therefore no longer perceived as an oppressor of the non-white peoples. Nonetheless, the fierce repute of township youth holds sway and recent surges of public violence stir public imagination and debate in South Africa (Hyslop 2008: 122). This suggests that the abilities of people to participate in democratic processes and have their grievances addressed are inadequate and resultantly violence becomes a more broadly accepted alternative to influence political decision-making and draw attention to alternative agendas. The victimisation and active involvement of township youth in violence lends ambiguity to discussions and makes young people prone to stigmatisation as well as generalisation (Graham *et al.* 2010: 41, 43; Ward *et al.* 2012: 2). Responses to township youth involvement in violence are divided along lines of empathy amongst people who sympathise with the struggles of the youth and resentment amongst many others who accuse young people of being self-centred and responsible for their own troubled situation. The ANC government often downplays modern-day political violence to criminality perpetrated by mainly self-interested young men and in line with this approach the police often respond forcefully to demonstrations and protests. Politicians typify young men involved in political violence as threats to democracy and development rather than recognise them as equal citizens who desperately try to have their voices heard. This is contradictory to the treatment of the young men who violently challenged the apartheid state because they are nowadays heralded as freedom fighters and some of them have even taken seats in government. The glorification of township violence during apartheid is remarkable and ambiguous; because if there was a true belief that violence led to the downfall of apartheid than violence in modern-day democracy is rational and political in nature as well. The treatment of township youth as a 'lost generation', whilst only a minority engage in violent deeds, necessitates an understanding of the risk

factors for aggressive behaviour and the politics of youth and violence in the townships in Johannesburg.

Outline of the Thesis

To start with violence as a concept and youth as a specific population group will be discussed in further detail. Both violence and youth are broad concepts with different interpretations and the use of these concepts in this paper necessitates some clarification. The enactment of physical violent deeds, for example, is the most apparent form of violence and has a masculine disposition in terms of perpetration. In contrast, systemic and symbolic violence are less apparent and have an indiscriminate nature because they affect individuals as well as entire population groups. Youth is also a contested definition that shifts between time and space, and represents a heterogeneous group of people that requires caution regarding generalisation.

The second chapter starts with a discussion of urban planning and racial perspectives during the formative stages of Johannesburg which laid the foundations for the townships as racially segregated spaces. Deprived living conditions and discriminatory socio-economic policies contributed to growing numbers of youth seeking alternative and socially less-acceptable ways of meaning and survival. The result was that youth gangs and violent crime became more prominent in the streets of townships and were met with strong condemnations and reactionary violence from vigilante groups composed of other township residents.

This is followed in the third chapter with an exploration of repressive social engineering policies and measures that the apartheid government imposed on the non-white population of Johannesburg. From the beginning apartheid led to growing resistance from the township youth which was brutally suppressed by the state and security apparatus in Sharpeville in 1960. Lodge (2011) argues that this event marked the shift from passive to violent resistance to apartheid, although organised mass-resistance was quelled through the arrests of leaders of the anti-apartheid movements and tightening security measures. The examination of the intermediate period suggests that violent crime and intra-communal conflicts between non-white youth and adult urban dwellers

dominated township politics and divided communities. This changed to some extent from the mid-1970s onwards amidst deteriorating living standards and an educational crisis which would see students and other township youth act in a concerted way against apartheid during and after the Soweto uprising in 1976. This thesis will discuss how the brutal reactions of the state and violent campaigns against youth activist caused the latter to take the political foreground and stage numerous campaigns to make the townships ungovernable during the 1980s. In the uproar of these campaigns, criminality mixed with political struggles and the violent methods deployed in power struggles became more extreme which disenfranchised the youth further from their communities. In the closing part of the chapter the entanglement of criminal and political violence as well as antagonism between different political factions during the transition period are investigated. This arguably came at a great cost of township youth and casted a shadow over the hopes for a peaceful settlement and inclusive democracy.

The violent inclinations of youth occupied the public imagination during the transition years, however these became more prominent in the years after the elections when sustained fears and moral panics about violent crime became associated with a 'youth problem' and 'lost generation' (Seekings 1996), as discussed in the fourth chapter of this paper. This is illustrated in the examinations of sexual assault and xenophobic riots which are frequently used in public discourses to stress the violent inclinations of township youth in Johannesburg. The author argues that sexual and xenophobic violence emerges from a history of violence in tandem with modern political and socio-economic exclusion which affect particularly affect youth from poorer townships. Links are established with living conditions in townships and politics of youth and violence during apartheid; however the author also aims to highlight some of the changes in the attitudes of contemporary youth compared to previous generations who lived through the heyday of apartheid. The final chapter will draw together and conclude the main arguments discussed in this thesis.

Note on Race

Race in the context of South Africa is a socially constructed form of differentiation that is given weight by a history of racial segregation and oppression and should not be seen as an ethnical distinction (Foster 2012a: 24). The prominence on race as a category of social differentiation in scholarship on urban apartheid, for example, is attributed to the fact that experiences of reality differed so widely between racially segregated urban populations (Parnell and Mabin 1995: 41). Race was the most significant factor that defined the political and socio-economic abilities of the urban populations, whereas slighter social distinctions, such as class and educational status, were less important binding and differentiating features of social organisation throughout the twentieth century (Foster 2012a: 38). Racial identity discourses are still ubiquitous in modern-day society due to the legacy of apartheid and attempts to redress historical injustices (Jones and Dlamini 2013: 19). This explains the continued use of apartheid racial categories in contemporary scholarship, though race as a distinctive factor is gradually waning and becomes replaced with other social categories. This thesis follows this line and uses racial terms in discussions on topics where racial discourses had a distinctive role, however where possible other demographic categories are used to discuss particular population groups, such as township youth, though the majority of young people living in the townships of Johannesburg in the past and present are overwhelmingly defined as Africans. Particular racially defined population groups discussed in this thesis include 'white' to comprise people with European origin, 'coloured' as people of mixed European and African descent, 'Africans' to signify different African groups, and 'non-white' to define all people of non-European descent in South Africa.

Explaining Violence and Youth

Explaining Violence

There is a looming tendency in studying violence to focus on the manifestation of physical violence because of the immediacy and severity of consequences. Žižek (2009: 10) argues that the easily identifiable perpetrator and victim also explain why physical violence often has greater significance in studies on violence than systemic and symbolic violence. In order to understand the concept of violence holistically a broader view is needed that gives consideration to the rationales and risk factors leading to instantaneous occurrences of physical violence in South Africa (Du Toit 1993: 5-6). Physical violent manifestations emerge from a milieu of symbolic violence, signifying exclusionary language and beliefs, and systemic violence, involving the politics and social economy of society (Žižek 2009: 1). The different forms of violence often reinforce and reproduce each other in intricate ways, though one form of violence may not lead to another in an apparent way. This thesis therefore aims to explore the physical, symbolic and systemic conditions that influenced violent interactions involving township youth as perpetrators and victims.

Even though the topic of violence takes precedence in this study, it should be stressed that violence "is neither natural nor endemic to African cultures" (Bay 2006: 3). Donham (2006: 17) argues that exposure to systemic violence increases the risk of reactionary physical violence and *vice versa* but does not *per se* lead to a reproduction of violence. White minority rule and racial segregation deprived the non-white population of their human dignity and are widely considered the main forms of systemic violence in South Africa during the twentieth century. The effects of systemic violence, including high levels of overcrowding, unemployment, substance and sexual abuse, and exposure to crime, have harmed many township inhabitants and contributed to prolific milieus for violent interaction with the state and within communities. Whereas almost every township resident suffered to some degree from violence during apartheid, only a minor percentage of the youth actively engaged in violence, and when they did, it was often due to various reasons.

The justifications for engaging in violent acts, committed most frequently by young men, were on many occasions unambiguous and political. However, every so often rationales of violence, especially violent crime and abuse, appeared irrational and were both cause and effect of systemic violence in the townships of Johannesburg (Du Toit 1993: 6). The differentiation of political and criminal violence was difficult in reality because rationales frequently overlapped and violent outburst often emerged from tensions that built up over long periods.

Factors causing township youth to engage in violence included the excessive force performed upon them by the state which went far beyond legitimate and socially acceptable levels of coercion. The human rights of township people were regularly trampled through, *inter alia,* forced removals, detention without trial, torture and intimidation, raids on homes and schools and assassinations. The deliberately unclearly defined legislation allowed security forces great autonomy and because there were few control measures they regularly acted outside of the boundaries of the law as well (Frankel 1980b: 481, 484). Furthermore, there was a great deal of secrecy regarding the operations of the police force during apartheid, and because they were protected from public scrutiny they could engage in extreme brutalities and systemic violence with impunity (Cock 2005: 795). For those reasons many township people considered the police a coercive rather than protective force that kept them trapped in an intrinsically oppressive and violent system (Frankel 1980b: 490; Tshabalala *et al.* 1988: 98). In post-apartheid society the police have to some degree reclaimed some of their legitimacy; however abuses of power and excessive force by police officers, including corruption, extortion, beatings and killings have placed into question the role and capacity of the police to maintain law and order in the townships of South Africa (Cock 2005: 799).

In addition to violent conflicts with agents of the apartheid state, township youth were to an equal degree involved in criminal violence and intra-communal rivalries along dividing lines of ethnicity, political alliance, gender and generation (Kynoch 2000: 267). To a great extent intra-communal violence is attributable to the volatile political situation during apartheid, and particularly towards the end, due to campaigns to make the township ungovernable and attempts by the apartheid state to foster and exacerbate community divisions to undermine political opposition.

The levels of township violence have decreased after their peak levels in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and some townships, such as parts of Soweto, transformed to relatively prosperous urban areas. Even so, the current generation of township youth, particularly young men, are frequently held responsible for violent crimes and protests that make the townships dangerous and volatile places and undermine the foundations of modern-day democracy in South Africa (Goebel 2011: 382). The frequent public disposition of violence as a problem of youth and masculinity is not surprising because most perpetrators of criminal and political violence in the townships, then and now, are young men from these areas operating as individuals or in groups (Graham *et al.* 2010: 60; Von Holdt 2011: 11).

The participation of women in township violence is much smaller and, although there are cases where women have actively encouraged violence, on the whole their role is usually less aggressive and confrontational. The participation of women in political opposition movements and public protests was significant and through organisations, such as the ANC Women's League, they held considerable influence over the anti-apartheid struggle. When the pass laws were expanded to include women during the mid-1950s, for example, women would gather in their thousands to protests and participate in the civil disobedience campaigns against urban apartheid (Lodge 2011: 32). In the majority of cases women preferred peaceful actions whereas young township men in particular displayed aggressive behaviour and were more forthcoming to confront the police or participate in intra-communal clashes (Bozzoli 2004: 98-99). Physical violence was considered a male business and thus women were often discouraged or prevented from partaking in violence, even though they shared similar grievances with men and equally suffered from violent state repression (Ramphele 2001: 6). The same culture of gender differentiation characterises youth gangs as they often promote distinctively masculine and risky behaviour, such as alcohol and drug abuse, multiple sexual relationships and engaging in violence and criminal activities (Goebel 2011: 381; Schwartz *et al.* 2012: 36). The tendency of young men to join youth gangs and display aggressive behaviour is often explained as an alternative means of achieving masculinity and adulthood. Salo (2006: 150, 154) argues that displays of aggression and performances of violence

offer an alternative to the common rites of passage to adulthood, such as securing steady employment and fostering a household which are out of reach for the many young men from the townships. The inclination of male township youth towards violence is on the whole much greater and thus the discussion in this thesis is skewed towards this group.

Note on Youth

In terms of defining the youth as a population group a number of analytical difficulties emerge since demographic definitions are contested based on various demarcations other than, for example, age which is used to officially define childhood and adolescence as below the age of eighteen. The official definition of youth in South Africa is "all people between the age of fifteen and thirty-five" (Boyce 2010: 88). Scholars nonetheless often use varying age categories to define youth which depend on the weight given to different criteria such as economic, cultural and social markers, as well as the period and ethnic group under investigation (Morrow 2005 *et al.:* 17-18). From a Western outlook youth starts during adolescence and ends when an individual settles in employment or establishes a family which is often argued as not matching the context of Africa (Graham *et al.* 2010: 37). Even so, young people in modern-day South African society commonly identify the passage to adulthood as achieving economic independence and establishing households of their own (Panday *et al.* 2012: 106). From a historical perspective racially defined challenges to this differentiation between adulthood and youth emerge because the apartheid system significantly hampered non-white youth from achieving economic independence and establishing households of their own. Young white people, on the contrary, enjoyed better education and socio-economic opportunities which allowed them to reduce their dependency on parents and extended family much faster. The life stage of youth depends therefore on individual and environmental factors as much as on age, making it difficult to pinpoint a strictly defined analytical category of youth. Resultantly, as this thesis examines different time periods and is based on studies with varying markers of youth, the author decided to treat youth as a flexible population group defined by the

markers proposed by youth themselves as achieving adulthood through establishing and providing for a household.

The exposure of young people to physical and systemic violence from an early age had a large impact on their social and cultural perceptions often materialised in risky or aggressive behaviour (Graham *et al.* 2010: 37; Lockhat and Van Niekerk 2000: 295). This can be demonstrated by the early ages at which some township youth were involved in street gangs and criminal activities which was observed in several cases to be as young as eleven (Van der Merwe *et al.* 2012: 58). Poverty and destitution during apartheid drove many young people towards alternative means to provide for subsistence, make sense of their environment and claim a role within their communities. Even though the state is no longer attacking young people directly with oppressive policies and measures, the scenario of many young people being exposed to violence holds sway in the townships and is likely to induce them to use violence against others in the foreseeable future (Lockhat and Van Niekerk 2000: 300). Nonetheless, the number of youth that actually engage in violence and aggressive behaviour, in the past and at present, is relatively small considering the histories of violence and adverse conditions of the townships (Ward *et al.* 2012: 8).

Early Development of the
Townships of Johannesburg

Formation of the Urban Landscape

The discovery of the vast gold deposits at Witwatersrand initiated the transformation of a small Transvaal mining settlement in the late-nineteenth century within decades into the economic powerhouse and metropolitan Johannesburg. Fortune seekers and wealthy investors from other continents were drawn to the mineral riches of the reef and, as the mining industry developed from shallow ore digging to capital and labour intensive deep level mining, a large labour force was attracted from across southern Africa (Van Onselen 1982: 3). Physical violence was endemic in the mines as labour conditions were harsh and dangerous and wages low, whilst blunt racism was cause for a proliferation of symbolic and systemic oppression of African mineworkers. Thousands of young men who ventured into the mine shafts did not return to the surface alive, whilst many more suffered from respiratory diseases and other injuries incurred from mining work. Racial attitudes of that time certainly played a significant role in the violence underground as white supervisors could inflict physical punishments on black mineworkers with impunity. Dunbar Moodie (2005: 553) argues that the pressure put on mine management by investors to increase production due to the large investment costs and long development time required for deep level mining to become profitable exacerbated physical assault against African mineworkers. Furthermore, he argues that the culture of violence in the mining industry became more entrenched due to the introduction of the maximum average wage which eradicated competition for labour between mines (*ibid*.: 566). Because the skills and productivity of African mineworkers was no longer financially rewarded, physical violence was used to coerce and control the labour force at the mines. The culture of intense violence in the mineshafts underground continued for many decades and had a significant impact above ground on the city of Johannesburg which grew in tandem with the mining industry.

Van Onselen (1982: 2) vividly describes how the contradictions of enormous wealth and abject poverty that fashioned the fast-paced erection of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand mining industry led from the very beginning to political and industrial unrest. Johannesburg from its inception truly transcended local and national boundaries and attracted a youthful male migrant population seeking employment in the mines or accompanying industries. This cosmopolitanism allowed the city to cultivate a broad social multiplicity that brought forth unique urban cultural and physical expressions that made the city appealing to newcomers and the settled population (Hyslop 2008: 122). The industrial foundations and overwhelmingly male demography made early Johannesburg at the same time a very masculine and socially alienating place, where prostitution and alcohol consumption were common practice to cope with harsh living and working conditions (Van Onselen 1982: 6). While alcohol consumption began to take a large toll on the productivity of the African workforce and the obscenity of prostitution was clearly visible, the Kruger government was pressurised to pass legislation against these practices which pushed the selling of alcohol and sex into the hands of criminal organisations (*ibid.*: 15, 17).

The fast development of Johannesburg led to immediate structural social problems and tensions that the government and industries struggled to address. Unemployment was one of such unforeseen problems because many migrants who would or could not be accommodated as mineworkers also failed to make ends meet through the economic opportunities that had developed alongside the mining industry. Transportation, domestic services and building were a few important sectors that facilitated the growth of the city and mining industry, however as they became modernised they too failed to absorb continues flow of mainly unskilled Afrikaner and African newcomers from the rural hinterlands. Housing problems also emerged as a result of the large population growth which led to the establishment of large multi-racial slum yards that housed many unemployed people as well as low-paid workers from the manufacturing industries and domestic services sector (Bonner 1995: 123; Parnell 2003: 624, Stadler 1978: 21). The African population especially was facing the consequences of serious housing shortages and growing unemployment, and found no recourse for their problems from the government which instead imposed a stricter

enforcement of the pass laws as a means of influx control. The new administration after the South African war was hardly concerned with the faith of the African population and embarked on a path that led to even greater entrenchment of racial differentiation in the economy as well as landscape of Johannesburg (Marks and Trapido 1988: 3). Racial segregation through separate housing locations had been trialled in several urban centres, however these attempts were often crude and fell short in physically separating the white population from the non-white population (Maylam 1995: 22-23).

In contrast to early urban development of Johannesburg, the mining industry of the Witwatersrand immediately adopted a rigid racially segregated compound housing system likened to those at the diamond mines of Kimberley. The compound housing system enabled mining companies to maintain stricter control over their non-white workforce and more easily repatriate them once their contracts had finished (Maylam 1990: 59). This inspired urban planners to experiment with designating and building group areas during the early twentieth century which became known as the first townships of Johannesburg (Maylam 1995: 23). Klipspruit was the first housing locations commissioned by the municipality specifically for the African population, however due to the limited offer of family housing and poor transportation facilities, this was an unfavoured location amongst the urban African population (Parnell 2003: 620). Increasing landlessness and pressures on agricultural economies in the first decades of the twentieth century resulted in large numbers of rural Africans seeking employment in the manufacturing and mining industries or exploiting informal urban economic opportunities (Bonner 1988: 394). The trend of oscillating migration of African men between urban and rural areas to serve employment contracts in the mines was gradually replaced with permanent migration of African families to Johannesburg. This process of rapid urbanisation exacerbated already existing housing shortages and competition over scarce facilities and opportunities in the townships and informal settlements of Johannesburg (Marks and Trapido 1988: 5-6). Because of the dire circumstances of overcrowding and overt masculine behaviour involving significant levels of alcohol consumption and prostitution in the

early townships, it could arguably be foreseen that social tensions and economic struggle frequently erupted into opportunistic criminal endeavours and violent conflicts over power.

When this came to light, the wider public and politicians hardened their racist attitudes and called for the removal of non-white people to separate locations to divert the threat of crime and moral degeneration involving the white and the non-white poor (Parnell 2003: 633-634). This was made even worse by the moral panic that emerged amongst white urbanites about their own health and safety due to the outbreak of disease which was alleged to be caused by increasing squalor and lack of sanitation in the growing inner-city slums (*ibid.*: 631). These attitudes paved the way for the 1919 Public Health Act to make provisions for the authorities to forcefully remove non-white people to separate areas on the peripheries of the city which was the first step towards comprehensive racially segregationist urban planning in Johannesburg (Parnell and Mabin 1995: 53). The spatial restrictions and relocation of the non-white population were expanded with the introduction of the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act which enabled the national government to exercise greater control over urban planning of Johannesburg (Maylam 1990: 63-66). Even though the short-term impact of this legislation was nominal, the growing state intervention in urban planning laid the foundations for racially exclusive townships of Johannesburg (Dubow 1986: 230, 234; Maylam 1990: 66).

The freehold townships in the western parts of Johannesburg grew rapidly in population size due to relocations and new waves of migration during the 1930s (Hart and Pirie 1984: 39). The overtly male township population became more balanced as larger numbers of young women traded their rural homesteads for urban residence, some joining their husbands who had been working there, whilst others escaped the hardship and parochial culture of their rural communities (Delius and Glaser 2002: 40). The arrival of growing rural migrants amongst settled urbanites proved to be fertile for origination of distinctive urban cultures and social life that succeeded traditional cultures and offered people some stability and security in the rapidly changing and harsh surroundings of the townships (Bonner 1995: 123, 126). The freehold townships of Alexandra and Sophiatown exemplified the demographic growth and social diversity of that period as settled

working-class families in solid brick houses were joined by numerous squatters who built or rented makeshift homes (Bonner 1995: 121; Hart and Pirie 1984: 41-42). Orlando was somewhat different at the time from the freehold townships because it was built by the municipality during the early 1930s in an orderly fashion with neat rows of houses and better facilities on vacant land on the edge of Johannesburg (Foster 2012b: 51). Nonetheless, also in this township the arrival of many newcomers led to overcrowding and a multitude of unemployed with the result that illegal activities and violent struggles over power and resources came to be a common feature of many of the new and older townships of Johannesburg.

Youth and Criminal Violence

In spite of the frantic drive of the Witwatersrand mining conglomerates to attract a large workforce as well as the growth of new industries in and around Johannesburg, it was extremely difficult for township youth to find economic security and social stability and unemployment amongst this group was rampant throughout the twentieth century. Racial restrictions placed on skilled labour and educational attainment and low wages skewed aspirations and perspectives for the township youth to sustain a family and escape poverty (Bonner 1988: 400; Stadler 1979: 111-112). The township youth fortunate enough to be educated at better funded municipal or mission schools, discovered quickly after their studies that their aspirations for upward social mobility through skilled and white-collar employment could not be met within the confines of the discriminatory political and economic system (Goodhew 2000: 249). The limited admission rates at township schools denied many children a proper education and because the quality of teaching at these schools was low many students left education prematurely (Goodhew 1993: 451, 455). This led to a situation where only a small number of young people attended classes during daytime, whereas the majority roamed the streets in search of alternative outlets to channel their energies and sustain themselves (Bonner 1988: 403). This was a precarious existence because township youth were also obliged to demonstrate their legal presence in the city at all times under the auspices of Natives (Urban Areas) Act (Frankel 1980a: 202). This legislation stipulated that employment or studies were official preconditions for non-white people to obtain a pass that offered them conditional urban citizenship. Through frequent harassment and prosecution of people without a valid pass the authorities aimed to contain or prevent urbanisation of Africans in Johannesburg (Goodhew 1993: 448).

These conditions were motivation enough to press a growing number of disillusioned township youth, men in particular, to join criminal gangs and use violence as a means of survival (Bonner 1988: 401; Goodhew 2000: 250, 257). The culture of *Tsotsism* was arguably born out of the insecurity and systemic violence of the townships, however it equally exacerbated these features and

led to a growing unease about the youth during the 1940s (Bonner 1988: 406; Glaser 2005: 120). *Tsotsi* gangs fought for territorial control and were regularly associated with armed robberies, rape and assault in the township which resulted in a heightened sense of insecurity and bitterness amongst township residents (Goodhew 1993: 453). In the influential magazine *Drum*, for example, mixed portrayals of *tsotsism* as a social threat that caused a decline of traditional values and moral degeneration were interspersed with stories depicting *tsotsism* as an emblem of easy riches and temptations of urban life in Johannesburg (Fenwick 1996: 618-619). Particularly in the impoverished freehold townships of Alexandra and Sophiatown struggles for resources and control became more aggressive in contrast to the noticeably better facilitated townships that fell under authority of the municipal council, including Orlando. The social disengagement of the youth in the latter township was less problematic, however, over the course of time patterns of youth involvement in crime and violence would sadly come to characterise all townships of Johannesburg (Goodhew 1993: 450).

The police force, however, seemed unconcerned about the growing unease about the violent conduct of *tsotsi* gangs and occupied itself with administrative offences, such as the enforcement of pass controls (Kynoch 2005: 498). This aggravated the poor standing of the police force amongst many township residents who considered police officers rather as aggressors securing white domination than protectors of law and order (Kynoch 2000: 270; Goodhew 1993: 448). The lack of police action against youth gangs and public unease about soaring levels of violent crime eventually led older township residents to developed a fixation on restoring order themselves and control the youth through vigilante action and community policing (Goodhew 2000: 251). This was not an entirely new development as street committees and vigilante groups fulfilled the role of social control in the township landscapes for a much longer period and many were rooted in an innate mistrust of the discriminative legal systems of South Africa. They took inspiration from longstanding rural traditions of local justice systems where authority came with age and community leaders arbitrated their authority through penal measures. The community policing efforts were briefly embraced by the government during the Second World War when they could deploy fewer

police officers in the townships of Johannesburg (Glaser 2005: 128). The government granted township residents the opportunity to organise themselves into Civil Protection Service units, however after the end of the Second World War this mandate stopped and because no alternatives were offered township residents continued their efforts as unofficial vigilante movements (Glaser 2005: 128; Kynoch 2000: 270).

The frequency of physical punishment inflicted by vigilante movements on young men suspected of immoral or criminal behaviour caused the latter to aggressively retaliate against their treatment which over time led to polarisation along generational lines and an increasing complexity of violence within the townships of Johannesburg (Goodhew 2000: 261-262; Kynoch 2000: 285). Newclare Township, for example, transformed into a battlefield as a result of extremely violent encounters between the notorious *amaRashea* gang and local vigilante movements during 1952. The *amaRashea* gang, composed mainly of young Sotho migrant workers, took control of the southern part of Newclare and responded to the customary authorities in a similar fashion by introducing their own laws with makeshift civil courts measuring out extremely violent punishments (Kynoch 2000: 287). In other townships youth gangs also were also swelling in numbers and adopted similar strategies to consolidate their own hold over particular areas and their people through notoriously violent means (Bonner 1988: 404-405). In Alexandra, for example, a number of youth gangs with internationally inspired names divided the township in territories and dominated the streets, including the Spoilers, Young Americans, Berlins, Stone Breakers, Black Koreans and Mau-Maus (Bozzoli 2004: 28).

Physical violence was very much a manly business and especially young women were often preyed upon as male members of *tsotsi* gangs frequently strived to prove their masculinity through sexual coercion and asserting ownership over women (Delius and Glaser 2002: 44). Even though on the whole young women often held a subordinated position in relations, not all sexual encounters between young women and male gang members were violent and without mutual consent (*ibid.*: 45). Hunter (2002: 101, 105)., for example, gives a modern-day account of young women who have multiple transactional sexual relations to remain a degree of autonomy in the face

of poverty, and this seems to be rooted in the longer historical patterns of masculine discourses and survival strategies in the townships. During the 1940s the violent youth subcultures and frequent sexual assaults on young women captured the attention of the media and motivated older township residents to make various pleads to the authorities to act against *tsotsi* gangs and allow vigilante groups to be officially reinstated (Kynoch 2000: 272). This largely fell on deaf ears with the government and police force who both largely ignored the problem of youth gangs and criminal violence and were more concerned with growing political opposition in the townships aroused by increasing deprivation and growing white support for an exclusionary form of nationalism.

Youth and Township Violence
during Apartheid

The Formation of the Apartheid City

The programme of apartheid, introduced after national elections in 1948, embraced earlier racial segregation policies and turned these into a consolidated arrangement of legislature and measures that reserved socio-economic and political rights exclusively for the white population at the cost of depriving the freedoms of the non-white population (Marks and Trapido 1988: 7). Immediately after gaining power the National Party took drastic steps to bring urban planning for the non-white population under more centralised control and imprint racial segregation on the cities of South Africa (Parnell and Mabin 1995: 57). The first step of government towards implementing its ruthless social engineering policies was to racially categorise the population through the 1950 Population Registration Act and subsequently segregate of racial groups under the auspices of the Group Areas Act which was introduced during the same year. This latter legislation ensured that the responsibility for urban planning for the non-white population became progressively more centralised under the Department of Native Affairs (Maylam 1990: 69). The change in urban planning in combination with a series of urban apartheid laws had devastating consequences for the livelihoods of many non-white people in Johannesburg. Radicalisation of attitudes amongst the youth ensued as negotiation possibilities were stifled and the existing representative bodies were unable to change the deterioration of life-standards in the townships of Johannesburg.

This laid the foundations for mass-resistance campaigns and growing support for political opposition movements which strengthened the basis of the ANC within the townships in the early 1950s. Young members gained more prominence within the ANC and established the ANC Youth League to allow youth a stronger voice in the organisation. They broke with the previous approach of the ANC of seeking to appeal to and collaborate with the authorities, and instead took a more radical stance which led to the adoption of a Programme of Action in 1949 (Lodge 2011: 28). This

programme changed the ANC's course of action from negotiation to resistance campaigns and during the subsequent year the Congress collaborated with the Indian Congress and the Communist Party in organising a series of civil disobedience campaigns in Johannesburg and other urban and industrial centres in South Africa (*ibid*.: 30-31). These events were organised over a period of two years and although they were aimed at passive resistance, several had turned violent after the South African Police responded with a brutality and arrested of thousands of people (Lodge 2011: 31). These violent responses hardened the attitudes of the young activists to change the course of action that the older generation had followed and several of them even started to consider armed campaigns to challenge white-minority rule. Even though it took many more years for an armed organisation to actually take shape, political violence became a serious option and was no longer a last resort of resistance during the early 1950s (Landau 2012: 540-541).

Throughout the turmoil of the civil disobedience campaigns, the National Party government ratified a number of stringent laws to suppress and prosecute political opponents. These included the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953 and the Public Safety Act of 1953 (Foster *et al.* 2005: 30). The Suppression of Communism Act was in practice blanket legislation for prohibiting and prosecuting almost any form of political opposition. The other two laws were also repeatedly applied to criminalise defiance campaigns and detain people for long periods without trial (Foster *et al.* 2005: 30; Frankel 1980b: 484). With clear directives on curtailing political resistance and extensive legal powers at their disposal, the South African Police started exploiting youth gangs and intra-communal rivalries to break the influence of anti-apartheid movements in the townships of Johannesburg. This new tactic was employed in Newclare Township, for example, where youth gangs were given the means and directives by special branches of the South African Police to attack local anti-apartheid figures and organisations. Before long it became clear, however, that with the backing of the police the influence of youth gangs became too large and caused an escalation of violent clashes that created an uncontrollable situation of open conflict in Newclare.

The government supposed that the tide of growing influence of political opposition movements and youth gangs in the townships could best be stemmed through imposing tighter influx controls and removing unemployed township youth to the Bantu homelands (Glaser 2005: 121). The consideration behind this policy was that youth gangs and political movements were largely composed of unemployed young men and therefore removing them from the townships would reduce social and political problems in Johannesburg (*ibid.*: 122-123). These tactics were trialled during 1958 in Newclare where resettlement had been high on the agenda due to the township's proximity to affluent districts and growing need for housing of the growing white population of Johannesburg (Kynoch 2000: 283-284). The clearance of the freehold township of Sophiatown followed shortly for similar reasons because this centrally located and densely populated area made famous by a lively culture and informal economy alongside sprawling poverty was seen as a breeding ground for political opposition by the authorities (Hart and Pirie 1984: 39-41). The plan to forcefully relocate the population of Alexandra to the Diepkloof district in Soweto was only partially implemented because of continuous resistance which led to the eventual suspension of removals during the late 1970s (Bozzoli 2004: 31; Jochelson 1990: 3). In due course it became clear that the ruthless social engineering policies of the apartheid government made living conditions in the townships so systemically violent that it drastically changed the mindset of young people as they became more susceptible employ equal means of violence against the state which the latter could only contain with the presence of a formidable security force (Frankel 1980a: 201).

Growing Resistance to Apartheid

The apartheid programme was more than just spatial and economic differentiation and gradually evolved into an extensive set of policies that affected almost every aspect of the lives of the township populations. The introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1953, for example, made sure that even for children from the townships there was no escape from racial oppression. Bantu education, offered four years of basic education and literacy skills in English and Afrikaans to prepare young Africans for semi-skilled work in industries (Marks 2001: 26), was widely considered

as a method to indoctrinate ideas of racial inferiority in African children (Tshabalala *et al.* 1988: 90). This would in fact make township youth more aware that they had the least to lose in mobilising themselves to fight against the violent and discriminatory system in which they were trapped because without change they would face the same subordinated socio-economic and political position as their parents. The politically radical thoughts and drive for action of youth also received a following amongst older township dwellers who had witnessed their lives being debilitated due to large increases in rents and prices of transportation as well as stringent enforcement of pass laws during the latter half of the 1950s. Seen against this backdrop of frustration with apartheid it was not unexpected that political opposition movements gained many supporters amongst young people as well as adults in a series of protests and defiance campaigns (Bonner 1995: 128-129).

Regardless of political antagonism and defiance of township residents, the Nationalist Party was relentless in pursuing the expansion of the apartheid programme (Foster *et al.* 2005: 30). The government granted the police unrestricted abilities in order to stun any defiance or protest which became clearly evident when the local branch of the Pan-Africanist Congress -PAC- organised a civil disobedience campaign against the pass-laws in Sharpeville in 1960. The PAC was formed in 1958 by mainly young well-educated ANC members from Johannesburg who were cynical of collaborating with the Communists and adopted a more radical political ideology of African nationalism (Lodge 2011: 53-54). The PAC sought to challenge white-minority rule through nationwide non-violent action and civil disobedience campaigns likewise to the ANC. In Sharpeville several local PAC members rallied community members to stay-away from work and organised protests against the pass-laws, one the main nuisances of most non-white people who lived and worked in Johannesburg. The rally proceeded relatively peacefully according to witnesses but turned grim as more police officers with armoured vehicles were called in to end the protest at the gates of the Sharpeville police station. What happened next was for the protesters completely unexpected as police officers started firing their automatic rifles at the crowd. Even as people were fleeing in panic after the first targeted shots, the police continued to fire and killed or injured many in what unfolded into a full-fledged apartheid massacre (*ibid.*).

In the immediate aftermath of the events at Sharpeville protests and riots took place across the country to which the government responded by declaring a state of emergency and detaining thousands of people. The organisations that had organised or supported the protests, including the ANC and PAC, were declared illegal and their leaders arrested or forced into exile due to the threat of prosecution. Even though the extensive presence of security forces restored some peace and stability in the townships, the Sharpeville massacre and subsequent onslaught had raised the stakes of political resistance and strengthened the resolve of township youth to overthrow the National Party government. The effects of the apartheid administration enforced by an extensive police and military force, became so widespread and entrenched that it had tangible ramifications on the daily realities of township residents (Frankel 1980a: 202). Township youth and children especially were a frequent target for harassment or blatant torture for various types of administrative offences and mass raids on schools were becoming a common practice of the police to arrest suspected youth offenders (*ibid.*: 202). This systemically violent situation reinforced the feelings of township youth that the passive resistance campaigns of the older generations had not brought them any closer to the change they desired.

Violent confrontations had stamped out any consideration for dialogue with the authorities and thus campaigns to overthrow the apartheid system in its entirety seemed the only feasible way forward for many young township dwellers. Landau (2012: 552) argues that from that perspective *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the armed wing of the ANC established in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, was an attractive option for many angry township youth who were given the means and political ideologies for violent retaliation against the discriminatory state. *Umkhonto we Sizwe* occupied itself for two years with various sabotage campaigns until the leadership, including Nelson Mandela, was arrested at Rivonia and put on trial in 1963 (Ellis 1998: 264). The onslaught on political opposition in the form of a large police presence, extensive recruitment of 'informers' and frequent mass raids did seem to have an effect of a relative quiescence period of political opposition in many of the townships of Johannesburg during the 1960s (Glaser 1998: 302). This allowed the nationalist government to embark on an ambitious trajectory of mass-scale social engineering in the townships

and the rural Bantu homelands in order to reduce the level of urbanisation of Africans (Marks and Trapido 1988: 13).

The decline of investment in social welfare and employment in the townships as well as the uprooting of communities through forceful removals to the rural Bantu homelands pushed township youth to live on the fringes of their communities (Frankel 1979: 50; Legassick 1974: 19-20). Youth gangs that rejected traditional forms of authority and promoted violent behaviour became an outlet for young men severed from education and employment to develop alternative modes of status and control. The resort of disengaged young men to crime and violence was, on the one hand, argued to be a survival strategy to cope with the hardships of poverty and suffering brought on them by the apartheid state, whilst on the other hand, it was considered the effect of their declining attachment to the common ways of gaining respectability within their township communities. The members of youth gangs new imaginations of the township inspired by the many urban subcultures that emerged in Johannesburg. The overwhelming involvement of 'unruly youth' in township violence in combination with ineffective policing led to a generational conflict, causing the adult population to reinstate street committees and use civil courts and corporal punishments to discipline young people (Glaser 2005: 130). These street committees exasperated the authorities because they were not inclined to share their monopoly over law enforcement and were particularly weary of the violent punishments measured out by street committees and their such as in Soweto (*ibid.:* 130). The majority of appeals from township residents to reinstate civil guard units fell on deaf ears with the authorities, though a few known exceptions were made and a number community patrols acted against youth gangs that made township streets unsafe during the 1960s (*ibid.*: 132-133).

Soweto Student Uprising

In the mid-1970s, township youth experienced another symbol of oppression added to the already despised Bantu education which was the introduction of compulsory instruction in Afrikaans instead of English (Pohlandt-McCormick 2000: 25). The influential Black Consciousness

Movement was considered the most vocal critic of this change and condemned teaching in Afrikaans and Bantu education as a whole for instilling notions of inferiority in the minds of the Africans (Mafeje 1978: 22). Black Consciousness had a large following of Sowetan students and rallied them in their thousands to stage a protest march on the morning of 16 June 1976. Primary and secondary school students marched peacefully through the township and send out a clear message to the state as they sang songs and shouted slogans condemning Afrikaans and Bantu education as the symbols of oppression of African people. Police officers arrived to dissolve the crowd and began to shoot with live ammunition into the crowds of students, killing two young people and provoking violent confrontations in which many more were maimed and killed. This Soweto student uprising is recognised as a turning point for the anti-apartheid struggle because it inspired numerous youth from other townships to stage protest and riots in solidarity with the Sowetan students (Marks and Trapido 1988: 23). Running battles with the police and destruction of perceived apartheid institutions, such as municipal buildings and shops, started in Alexandra only a day after the uprising in Soweto (Bozzoli 2004: 36). In the townships of Cape Town coloured students united with their African peers on the streets to express their denunciation of the educational crisis and more broadly their inferior socio-economic and political position (Mafeje 1978: 21). Security forces intervened with the same hard-line approach as after the Sharpeville massacre and arrested thousands of township youth. Whilst many of the thousands of detained young people returned to the townships after having undergone severe beatings and mistreatment, numerous others were less fortunate and died in detention, including Steve Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness movement.

For many parents the youth uprising was a terrible ordeal as they felt that they had failed to protect their children from the physical violence of the state and witnessed them become more distanced and militant in the aftermath of the uprising (Pohlandt-McCormick 2000: 36). Families were broken as large numbers of township youth fled the country in fear of prosecution and joined the ranks of the armed wings of the ANC and PAC to risk their lives in fights against the apartheid state from abroad as well as within South Africa. The widespread protest and riots in tandem with

the brutal reactionary violence of the state had long-term impacts on moods and collective courses of action within the townships. Rising numbers of students and youth gang members founded activist movements whose actions, although sometimes violent and criminal, aspired to establish alternative forms of self-governance (Glaser 2005: 139). Especially amongst educated young people there was a strong awareness that collective political ideologies and actions needed to take precedence over individual aspirations because the apartheid system kept entire population groups trapped within the confines of deprived living conditions and low self-worth (Frankel 1981: 837, 840). They were determined to challenge the foundations of the apartheid state as a collective force and aligned with workers bodies and other organisations in the numerous protests and strikes that followed on for months after the initial student uprising in Soweto (Mafeje 1978: 20).

Youth Militancy in the 1980s

Rising unemployment and persistent low wages as a result of economic decline during the second half of the 1970s increased desperation amongst township youth and pressed them towards militant approaches and alternative ways to escape the hardship of poverty (Marks and Trapido 1988: 20-21). Dismal economic prospects in tandem with the impacts of the earlier uprising proved fertile ground for young men to subscribe to revolutionary and nationalist ideologies and connect with anti-apartheid movements. The increased presence of security forces as part of the government's 'total strategy' did help to prevent large-scale violent protests in the townships in the years following the Soweto uprising (Frankel 1981: 846). Ellis (1998: 271) and Herbst (1988: 674) argue that the 'total strategy' was a move of the National Party towards establishing an absolute police state as security forces were allowed to take prominent seats in local and regional Joint Management Committees and expand their hold over the administrative structures of the townships of Johannesburg. Though this strategy offered some temporary relief from large social unrest, the government was well aware that this was not a viable long term policy and that some placatory reform was necessary to address the detrimental living conditions in the townships which in some measure had motivated of youth to engage in violence (Bozzoli 2004: 60; Ellis 1998: 272).

In the early 1980s high apartheid was gradually supplanted for a more modest version of apartheid under the P. W. Botha administration which was more technocratic in nature than the preceding government and provided the coloured and Indian population a better political representation through the system of a Tricameral Parliament. The end of high apartheid offered opportunities for some township youth to receive better education and employment, however for the large masses of unemployed youth there was little relief from socio-economic hardship (Schenk and Seekings 2010: 4). Faced with the challenges to tackle growing antagonism and marginalisation amongst township youth, the Botha administration wanted to bring stability to townships by upgrading them into middle-class communities as proposed by the Riekert Commission (Marks and Trapido 1988: 34). Townships that had the greatest support base for the anti-apartheid movements were prioritised in order to stem the rising tide of social disturbances and political protests in Johannesburg. These urban development programmes had to be funded through significant rent increases as they did not receive financial support from the government (Jochelson 1990: 5). Bozzoli (2004: 63) argues that many youth were aggrieved by the intolerable conditions in the townships and became even more angered after learning of the proposed rent increases which threatened to make their deprivation worse and cause them to be evicted from their homes.

Local councillors who agreed to the rent increases became frequent targets of violent attacks (Herbst 1988: 668), whereas students forcefully imposed boycotts on municipal beer venues because they believed that these destroyed families and were institutions that crippled unity in the apartheid struggle and funded the apartheid state (Marks and Trapido 1988: 23-24). The negligence of the needs of township residents and an absence of desirable reform arguably caused a number of youth to use violence as a collective means to challenge the *status quo* and bring their grievances to the attention and with the hope that some of their demands would materialise. Because the state used violence as method to maintain a political hegemony, numerous youth considered using violence as political instrument to take precedence over what they considered was pure repression. Frankel (1981: 845) argued at that time that in spite of the greater support for violence against the state, many township youth did not consider violent action a desirable option because of the risks

of beatings, imprisonment and death. Marks (2001: 55) highlights in her study how several youth organisations in Diepkloof therefore aimed to rally their community in disruptive protests and boycott campaigns, despite the difficulty of convincing older residents who preferred mediation in order to protect their livelihoods. What this demonstrates is that the reactions of township youth to adversity were heterogeneous and not by definition had a violent and selfish disposition, because with the emergence of power struggles most often collective aspirations thrived over self-interest.

The protests and boycott campaigns involving youth became so numerous and aggressive that many townships of Johannesburg were ungovernable during 1984 (Schenk and Seekings 2010: 4). Rent increases and police brutality were immediate provocations of violent incidents, however the duration and scale of violent confrontations with the state and security forces implied that township youth sensed that there was the opportunity to defeat the apartheid system. Herbst (1988: 671) stresses that at the time of the township revolts during the mid-1980s revolutionary attitudes prevailed amongst anti-apartheid movements and some members of the ANC were openly proclaiming that the road of violent action was necessary for achieving political freedom. For many young people who had challenged the authority of the apartheid state with the risk of injury and death, there would be no way back from the struggle and violence was the only way forward (Marks 2001: 49). The government tried to tackle the revolts of the youth through declaring a state of emergency in 1985 and arrest the leaders of activist movements in order to restore calm and continue with the modernisation of townships (Jochelson 1990: 6; Sapire 2013: 170). The desired outcome to suppress militancy and proceed with urban reform through detaining youth leaders failed as without their leaders township youth became even less restrained in their means to achieve their objectives. Township youth took guidance from national bodies of anti-apartheid movements and it seemed that particularly the ANC leadership in exile had a considerable role in actions that made townships ungovernable, even if it was mostly from an ideological instead of organisational perspective.

Bozzoli (2004: 61) describes how this scenario was especially apparent in Alexandra Township where the Riekert Commission plans to redevelop the area into a 'model' township was

stirring tension in the township in the early 1980s. Alexandra was geographically a relatively small yet densely populated area with many families cramped into one or two-room dwellings with little sanitation facilities (Bozzoli 2004: 22-23; Straker *et al.* 1996: 47). Even though living conditions were dire, many people lived in Alexandra for long periods because of the central location, good public transport connections, relatively well-developed community life and bustling informal economy (Bozzoli 2004: 25). When the announcements of an impending redevelopment project reached several youth activists they were distressed by the acute threat this posed to their livelihoods and produced their own plans and devices to address the degrading effects of poverty. Jochelson (1990: 2) describes how youth laid claim over particular streets and areas of the township upon which they projected utopian ideals that they perceived were essential for a better future for themselves and others. Even though these campaigns were only sporadically violent, the campaigns awakened resentment with the authorities because they challenged their power base, causing the latter to respond with an overt presence of police officers in the township and brutally handling arrested youth activists. The breeding tensions led to an outburst of mass violence and riots on the day that police officers confronted thousands of attendees during the funeral procession of a young person in February 1986 (Jochelson 1990: 8). The provocation of the police force resulted in running battles with angry youth activists and even military officers were called in to put a halt to the violent events that lasted for nearly a week, becoming known as the 'Six-Day War' (Bozzoli 2006: 182).

Levels of violence did subside after negotiations took place and a large military consignment was deployed in the township, however the scene was set for a political struggle through violence as this method had to some extent broken down the foundations of established power structures (Bozzoli 2004: 87). Emerging after the revolt was a power struggle because local councillors that had collaborated with the authorities were disgraced which allowed various youth groups to claim control over particular areas of Alexandra. Several of these youth groups were aligned to anti-apartheid movements and started to put their political ideals into practice through establishing alternative structures of authority with makeshift institutions based on elevated principles and strict codes of conduct (Bozzoli 2006: 184). These youth defined themselves as

'comrades' and adhered to rules of discipline that rejected socially unacceptable behaviours, such as visiting *shebeens*, which made them excellent role-models and more controversially self-appointed custodians of morality (Marks 2001: 58-59). Responses of the wide township population were varied as some people saw opportunity in makeshift institutions to act against perceived wrongdoers, whilst sceptics witnessed in the behaviour and attitudes of youth a decay of respect for traditional values and authority (*ibid*.: 185). *Tsotsi* gangs that previously withheld themselves from politics also became entangled in the liberation struggle which added more complexities to multi-layered conflicts with the state and within communities (Jochelson 1990: 6). Known as *com-tsotsis* they infused criminal activities with political objectives and took advantage of the social unrest by expanding their hold over particular areas (Bozzoli 2006: 185).

Only some months after the initial violent riots in Alexandra a second state-of-emergency was declared by the government and security forces flooded the streets and detained numerous people in order to restore government control and allow a continuation of reform of the township (Jochelson 1990: 14). The police raids and the subsequent resurrection of local councils with new administrators brought back some temporary normality and government control in Alexandra (Bozzoli 2006: 188). Parallel efforts to re-establish government authority through the employment of brute force were made in other townships that had experienced comparable levels of social and political unrest, such as Diepkloof in Soweto (Marks 2001: 110). In spite of the efforts the determination of many township youth to continue to confront the apartheid state did not subside and they responded willingly to the call of the political and armed wings of anti-apartheid movements to make the township ungovernable (Jochelson 1990: 8-9). Escalating conflicts between security forces and youth groups created the context where entire township communities were drawn into conflict and suffered from violence and constant upheaval (Tshabalala *et al.* 1988: 96). The events that unfolded in the townships of Johannesburg spread rapidly as similar scenes were witnessed in the Eastern Cape, Orange Free State and Natal (Bozzoli 2004: 37; Sapire 2013: 171). The leadership of the ANC in exile promoted campaigns to make their townships ungovernable through non-violent actions, whilst at the same time they were stepping up their armed struggles in

an attempt to overthrow the National Party government (Marks 2001: 105; Sapire 2013: 172). Township youth mobilised behind the call for armed struggle and participated in non-violent resistance campaigns, however the need for youth to defend themselves against the security forces and intra-communal rivalry meant that the division between violent and non-violent action often was distorted (Marks 2001: 117).

The government and security forces came under intense pressure to restore control over the townships due to the resistance campaigns and announced once more a state of emergency in 1986 that lasted for five years and became one the deadliest periods of apartheid South Africa (Sapire 2013: 172). The police established special units composed of members from the police and army as well as *Askaris* who would use any means to repress political resistance which provoked an escalation of violence that was unprecedented and devastated several townships (Ellis 1998: 274). Particularly the township youth were regularly targeted by the security forces as the latter had developed a seeming paranoia to root out and inflict brutal punishment on any suspected member of an anti-apartheid movement. Tshabalala (1988: 90) stated in front of a commission that the actions of security forces in the townships were often a violent onslaught, as they raided schools and houses and used torture and intimidation against young people and children. Furthermore, he described that if suspected anti-apartheid fighters could not be found, often other young people or entire families would be detained and tortured which led to township inhabitants living in constant fear of the terror of the state security apparatus (*ibid.*: 93, 99). From the stories and images of township youth who were shot dead on the streets or died in detention at police stations it was indeed clear that there were no limitations to the dehumanising and violent methods employed by the state and security forces to uphold their power (Duncan and Rock 1997: 59).

Violence during the Transition Period

By the late 1980s frequent violent protests and intra-communal violence had spread so widely that many townships of Johannesburg were deemed uncontrollable. The government nonetheless tried to have township violence portrayed as incidents of senseless 'black-on-black' violence and obscure the political motives of many of those young people who participated in the violence (Marks 2001: 87; Van Kessel 1989: 538-539). Regardless of the government's efforts to censor and manipulate the media in order to retain some political authority, they could not prevent stories and images of township violence and human rights abuse reaching a broad audience within the country as well as abroad. Van Kessel (1989: 538) argued at the time that the condemnation of the injustices of apartheid in the international media significantly diminished political support for what she termed was increasingly seen as the "last bastion of white civilisation" on the African continent. Western political leaders were compelled to put pressure on the South African government and started to impose sanctions to politically and economically isolate South Africa. The South African government had to come to terms with risking civil war if they were not take seriously anti-apartheid movements and act against the violence which had intensified in the urban centres in spite of the continuous state of emergency since the second half of the 1980s (Jochelson 1990: 2). The failure of the hard-lined security approach to quell internal disturbances as well as the economic sanctions against the country gradually took their toll on the support base of the National Party. Even though the government still enjoyed the backing of many followers, it was clear that a loss of absolute power through reform outweighed the price they would have to pay for staying in power through mass-scale violence. By the early 1990s, the government under the leadership of F. W. de Klerk saw no other option than to negotiate with the opposition movements whilst there was still the possibility and space to secure a settlement for a political transition in South Africa. The first step towards opening the way for a negotiated settlement was made in early 1990 with the release of several prominent political prisoners and unbanning of prominent anti-apartheid movements, including the ANC, PAC, SACP, and several other political parties. This was hoped to cause a "turn from the politics of violence to the politics of negotiation" (Du Toit 1993: 7) and

relieve the enormous pressure on government to curb the mounting violence. The signing of the Peace Accord in September 1991 allowed hostile relations between political parties at the national level to make way for constructive dialogue and eased the overt violence of state security agencies against the non-white population. By that time political violence had overflowed in other dimensions of the public domain and took a more uncompromising direction as it became a more normative form of resolving disputes within township communities (Simpson 1993 cited in Rock 1997: 10). Rivalries between different political and ethnic factions took on particular sinister forms and became a serious threat to the future of township communities of Johannesburg during the late 1980s.

Entire townships became engulfed in factional violence between ANC and IFP supporters which had started off in KwaZulu-Natal during the mid-1980s and gradually spread to Johannesburg (Bremner 2001: 394). With the state largely having lost direct control over the townships a contest for power emerged as the IFP organised Zulu-speaking hostel dwellers in Self Protection Units to fight against the Self Defence Units of the ANC (*ibid.*: 394). Recurrent shootings of taxi and train commuters, frequent fights between township youth and hostel dwellers, and settling of personal feuds through life-and-death encounters came to characterise many of the townships of Johannesburg (Du Toit 1993: 10). The special branches of the police saw opportunity in these intra-communal conflicts to divide political opposition and started training and equipping young IFP combatants to carry out attacks on members of the ANC (Ellis 1998: 274-275). The notorious *Vlakplaas Unit* under the leadership of Eugene de Kock, for example, provided illegal arms to youth groups aligned to the IFP to destabilise the hold of ANC activists on the East Rand (*ibid.*: 284). This heightened the number of assassinations and massacres in the East Rand townships to such an extent that these areas were portrayed as being in a state of civil war during the early 1990s (Van Kessel 16 October 1993). Factional violence often served to settle much deeper running social and materialistic conflicts with public and individual often being intertwined, causing political and criminal violence to become inseparable and opening up opportunity for local political figures to assert themselves as feared warlords and *vice versa* (Du Toit 1993: 11; Kynoch

2005: 503-504). The ferocity with township youth fought the state and amongst themselves was considered, on the one hand, threatening the negotiations process, whilst, on the other hand, stressing the importance of a swift political settlement and transition to democracy (Seekings 1996: 103). The latter was especially true as more than 14,000 people had died and many thousands more were physically and emotionally wounded or displaced in the years preceding the first truly democratic elections in April 1994 (Ellis 1998: 263, 285).

Post-Apartheid Politics of Youth and Violence

The political transition to a multi-racial democracy instilled the hope in young and old township inhabitants that they would enjoy the same freedoms, rights and entitlements as the white population. Equal citizenship for all people, irrespective of race and gender, were the fundamental principles of the Freedom Charter and became guaranteed under the new constitution of South Africa. This was considered an important step for overcoming vast racial disparities and reversing the waves of violence that had brought human suffering and destruction to the townships. The youth were heralded as the centrepiece of the new democracy and, accordingly, numerous policies were introduced and institutions erected to harness their potential to steer the future of South Africa (Panday *et al.* 2012: 99). Education and economic participation were considered key markers for youth development and was hoped to reduce the involvement of youth activists and ex-combatants in violence in the townships (Boyce 2010: 97-98). Political leaders of the new government urged young people to attend education or find employment in the hope that this would benefit their participation in democratic South Africa (Seekings 1996: 106). In the first years after the transition there was indeed a steep drop in incidences of political violence and many youth leaders seized opportunities for political participation through government institutions or civic committees and forums (Cherry *et al.* 2000: 895, 902).

Years of social upheaval and conflict had left many township youth without educational qualifications or marketable skills and without suitable opportunities and assistance it was difficult for them to become students or employees (Bray *et al.* 2010: 23). Promised employment and educational opportunities only partially materialised as resources that were dedicated to youth development came under greater pressure from mismanagement and orthodox economic policies which augmented inequality and unemployment (Natrass and Seekings 2001: 483). Furthermore, relations in many townships remained tense as numerous young men who had fought the state and each other struggled with psychological problems and reluctantly held on to their arms (Swartz *et al.*

2012: 28-29). Several township youth were accustomed to violence and crime and because they found little prospects for studies or employment they were prone to resort to known strategies for survival (Kynoch 2005: 503). There was a large amount of freely circulating weapons from the political struggle which were used in armed robberies, violent intimidation, rapes and murders in the first years of democratic South Africa. Indeed, Cock (2005: 796-797) argues that the failure to disarm and reintegrate former anti-apartheid combatants contributed to a proliferation of criminal violence involving firearms after 1994. This explains why particularly the townships that suffered from severe violence during the transition years also afterwards experienced a continuation of violence, albeit this time it was publically considered criminal rather than political violence (Shaw and Gastrow 2001: 250-251).

The white population who had largely been sheltered from violence and crime under apartheid was suddenly confronted with the opening up of their previously secluded urban spaces to everyone, including criminals and youth gangs (Steinberg 2008b: 26). Stories of violent crime, including armed robberies and rape, became the foci of discourses amongst sections of the white population and the multi-racial middle-class about the future of South Africa (*ibid*.: 28). These anxieties resulted in a national debate on the 'youth problem' which stigmatised township youth as the driving force behind the supposed waves of violent crime in South Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004: 523; Morris 2006: 60). Even though it is unclear whether incidents of violent crime significantly increased after the end of apartheid, heightened fears in due course led to urgent calls on the government to restore law and order and control the township youth (Shaw and Gastrow 2001: 236, 239). The effect of this condemnation of township youth was that attention was diverted from prevention of crime and violence through investment in socio-economic programmes towards orthodox law-enforcement campaigns. These orthodox campaigns involved arresting and detaining large numbers of suspected criminals which aimed to demonstrate that government was taking serious action in order to reduce crime and establish law and order. In effect these campaigns did little to address the root causes of crime and violence and proved to be merely a highly visible display of the government exercising its authority with adverse consequences. It can

be argued that these campaigns were an onslaught on marginalised youth and replicated the resented tactics of the apartheid state to propagate divisions and criminalise the non-white urban population. Samara (2005: 222) argues that the criminalisation of township youth aggravated their exclusion from their communities and made violence a more accepted means for them to claim stakes in society. Seeing that non-white youth are significantly overrepresented amongst the prison population, the failures of post-apartheid law-enforcement campaigns to break with the tactics employed during apartheid is obvious.

Youth and Sexual Violence

Prior to the democratic transition gendered violence and sexual abuse in particular had seldom led to political debates or public discourses because the apartheid government did not recognise it as a collective problem and had been more concerned with political violence (Moffett 2006: 80). The long public silence on sexual violence was broken when a significant group of women staged a protest march in Soweto in February 1990 (Posel 2005: 239-240). These women sought to raise the cloak on the abuse of women and children which was rampant in the townships (*ibid*.: 244). Stories on rape made regular headlines in the media and there was a growing public recognition that sexual violence not only caused bodily harm but also emotionally wounded a victim, made worse due to the longstanding public secrecy and concealment (*ibid*.: 243).

Public debate about sexual violence was once more muted and only resurfaced at the turn of the century with a significant degree of immediacy expressed in the stories of sexual assault against young township women and children (Morris 2006: 84). Sexual violence was portrayed as a 'crisis of masculinity' brought forth from a much wider anxiety about the morality and violent inclinations of male township youth (Posel 2005: 249). The linkage of sexual violence with township youth was not casual as young women from these areas were particularly prone to sexual assault by male peers either known to them or living in the same areas (Shaw and Gastrow 2001: 247). Particularly when violence against children caught the attention of the media there was a public outcry of moral crisis of township youth and degeneration of sexual attitudes. The

prevalence of sexual abuse was also partially blamed on the government's inability to address the worst excesses of immorality and criminal violence which suddenly launched sexual violence as a subject at the heart of political debates about the fragility of social relations and democracy in post-apartheid South Africa (Posel 2005: 246). Frequent public protests took place, involving men and women, demanding the government to measure out tougher sentences to sexual offenders and raising public awareness (Moffett 2006: 143-144; Posel 2005: 247). The problem of sexual violence was a predicament of the townships from their establishment and rooted in the negative consequences of abject poverty in combination with a patriarchal social system preventing young men from fulfilling the traditional ideals of manhood. Nevertheless, the sudden spotlight on this problem caused several politicians to swiftly condemn the sexually aggressive behaviour of male township youth, whilst other national political figures, including Thabo Mbeki, accused the media of being racist (Moffett 2006: 135).

The inflated public obsession with restoring law and order in combination with a mistrust of the police and justice system to tackle sexual and criminal violence allowed for a return of street justice practices reminiscent of the apartheid days (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004: 515-516). The lack of resources and manpower of the police force has made community policing an absolute necessity in many townships and local volunteer organisations are often the first line for reporting of grievances and crimes in these areas (Harber 2011: 87). The police force collaborates with several of these groups through Community Policing Forums which offer legitimacy to volunteer organisations and allows the police to operate more effectively in these areas and maintain some monopoly over law enforcement (*ibid.*: 88). Nonetheless, there was a fine dividing line between legitimate community policing practices and the sort of street justice practices from the apartheid days. In several townships where police presence was small or ineffective vigilante groups took it on themselves to measure out punishments of suspected criminals and sexual offenders which were often physical in nature and occasionally led to sustained injuries or death.

Politicians condemned these practices and supported the justice system in public statements, however they were equally held for politicising the issue of crime and violence during

election periods (Hamber 1999: 121). In a closing speech at a national conference, Jacob Zuma emphasised that citizens should reclaim their streets from criminals and that street committees had an important role to fulfil in reducing violence and crime (Nxumalo 8 November 2013). Political campaigns arguing for tougher penalties for criminals and community involvement in reducing crime and violence, for example, were fraught with ambiguity and gave street committees the impression that they had *carte blanche* to impose retributive justice on alleged offenders to protect their neighbourhoods. For many years it was clear that the involvement of local politicians in street committees and lack of interference by police officers caused many vigilantes to act with relative impunity which blurred the divide between legitimate force and criminal violence (Buur and Jensen 2004: 139; Hamber 1999: 122).

Several street committees policed the boundaries of the moral order they themselves created which extended from public matters into the most intimate domestic affairs of the township communities of Johannesburg (Buur and Jensen 2004: 149). These street committees and their methods resembled those of some of the activist youth movements of the mid-1980s which projected their utopian visions on the townships through strict codes of conduct and makeshift courts. Even though street committees facilitate community policing and enjoy popular support, their repute for violent punishment make them particularly resented amongst other township youth who are frequently targeted for retribution. Furthermore, the claims that some street committees make about protecting their communities are ambiguous and contradicted by disputed assertions of good morality and conduct by township youth. The violent methods of street committees to tackle crime also risk a provocation of reactionary violence from youth gangs and assert greater division and bitterness within township communities.

Shifting Boundaries of Inequality

With the end of apartheid exclusionary racial socio-economic divisions have been replaced with more fluid differentiations in society based on class, gender, education, association and ethnicity. This change has not been able to transform on a large scale the inequalities between racially defined

groups and as such the socio-economic opportunities and quality of life of previously disadvantaged groups is statically much lower (Natrass and Seekings 2001: 473, 475). The distribution of benefits of the nascent democracy are unequally distributed with the result that people confined to relatively similar living conditions under apartheid nowadays may face each other on the opposite side of the scale of rich and poor (Ashforth 1998: 507). The new lines of stratification are particularly visible in the urban landscape of Johannesburg where impoverished townships are located cheek by jowl with affluent suburbs, often separated through high fences and other artificial barriers. These exclusionary barriers symbolise the shortcomings of society to overcome past divisions and achieve a more equal South Africa. Even within the townships there are significant differences between well-facilitated privately owned residential areas and densely populated shack settlements with little amenities (Harber 2011). Persistent inequality and an absence of meaningful opportunities for township youth make them, likewise to preceding generations, more likely to survive through theft, violence and other risky activities. This is demonstrated by statistics showing that township youth continue to be the main victims and perpetrators of crime and violence in post-apartheid South Africa (Foster 2012a: 28-29). The social consequences are that terms such as 'lost generation' continue to be used to stigmatise township youth without fair chances for employment and educational attainment in South Africa (Letsoalo 14 June 2013). Furthermore, there are fears that soaring youth unemployment produces a young generation distanced from society and absorbed by self-interest without concern for constructively participating in democracy (Letsoalo 14 June 2013). There is indeed a risk that failure to achieve ambitions and disillusionment with poverty provokes some township youth to engage in socially unacceptable behaviour and claim supposed entitlements through violence (Schenk and Seekings 2010: 15; Schwartz *et al.* 2012: 33). This inclination should be seen in perspective of a small fraction of the township youth, however, because in spite of the many hardships that young men and women from the township face the overwhelming majority demonstrate a remarkable resilience to crime and violence and have a great attachment to their communities.

The modern generations of township youth are less inclined to revolutionary ideologies than preceding generations and readily appropriate international consumerism and cultural trends which are modified to fit the context of the townships (Schenk and Seekings 2010: 11). The exposure of township youth to global imagery and information via modern technology strongly influences their perceptions of reality and political aspirations. These provide them the means to develop new meaning and ways of belonging to the township which makes them on the whole more optimistic about the future than older generations (Swartz *et al.* 2012: 32-33). Young township men and women often demonstrate great reluctance to moderate their aspirations because of the hardships of living in the townships and many are actively contributing to their communities to secure a better future for themselves and others (Panday *et al.* 2012: 126). Khunou argues, based on her personal experience, that "young people are less political and more excited about life and the world in general" which makes them more "keen to make it for themselves" (cited in Mbembe *et al.* 2008: 241). The remarkable aspect of many township youth is that instead of seeing themselves as victims of apartheid and modern-day poverty they have a high sense of their own agency and responsibility for realising their aspirations (Panday *et al.* 2012: 128; Schwartz *et al.* 2012: 35). This demonstrates that township youth are not as passive or self-centred as their stigmatisation of a 'lost generation' implies and that they indeed hold much potential to steer in the right direction the future of South Africa.

There have been a number of significant improvements for disadvantaged populations and a gradual change of spatial boundaries during the last two decades in South Africa. Johannesburg has seen a number of drastic reconfigurations in the previously racially divided landscape as, for example; the inner-city nowadays accommodates a mixed population of South Africans and newcomers from other parts of Africa (Vladislavić 2009). Former white-only residential areas nowadays host multi-racial middle-class communities that capitalise on the opportunities of post-apartheid South Africa (*ibid.*). Thanks to the elimination of racial restrictions on education and employment, increasing numbers of previously disadvantaged people have obtained respectable and well-paid jobs. The expansion of social welfare and infrastructural development of poor urban areas

have offered many squatters and poor township dwellers an opportunity to have their own solid-brick houses with connections to running water, sewage and electricity with nearby schools and clinics. The pace of construction has not kept up with demand and there is much criticism about the privatisation of utility services in recent years (Alexander 2010: 26), however during the last twenty years major transformations have taken place in the townships and even for those people still living in shack dwellings there is hope that they will be assigned a permanent house in the foreseeable future.

Exclusionary Politics and Violence

The end of apartheid and the opening of borders brought new opportunities for South African nationals and foreigners and prompted new waves of immigration from abroad as well as domestic rural areas which allowed for a growing ethnic diversity in urban South Africa. Rural-urban migration was an intrinsic contributor to the formation of the mining industries on the Witwatersrand and most resident of Johannesburg trace their roots to other parts of Southern Africa. Nonetheless, the latest newcomers to the townships were treated by many members of the settled population as competitors in a scuffle for definite resources, whilst in a number of cases they were even seen as a threat to a prosperous democratic South Africa (Mosselson 2010: 645). The discriminative and violent policies of apartheid that kept township people trapped in poverty have been replaced with complex socio-economic structures which causes people to identify other factors or people as responsible for sudden and structural problems (Ashforth 2000 cited in Comaroff and Comaroff 2004: 525). Rampant crime and unemployment in the townships have hardened social attitudes and intensified competition over rights and entitlements with newcomers and supposed foreigners being seen as easy scapegoats for socio-economic development deficiencies and benefitting from the gains of the struggle for freedom in South Africa (Alexander 2010: 32). Politicians have played an important role in transforming contestations over resources and opportunities into a competition of indigenous in opposition to non-indigenous inhabitants which has contributed to xenophobic attitudes in South Africa (Neocosmos 2008: 591). The

increase of xenophobic attitudes during the last decade could be observed in the increasing usage of exclusionary and dehumanising language towards perceived foreigners, such as illegal aliens and undesirable outsiders, as well as blaming the latter for many modern social problems such as crime, disease, unemployment, prostitution, witchcraft and other immoral conducts. With xenophobia gaining prominence in political and public domains it was not incidental that this form of symbolic violence led to physical violence in the forms of public assault, looting of businesses and burning of houses against foreigners or in many cases people perceived as foreigners.

The first outbursts of xenophobic violence occurred only several months after the first democratic elections in townships where social relations were exceedingly fragile after a long and violent struggle (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 647). Township youth sporadically attacked perceived foreigners and their businesses after local and personal conflicts, however due to a lack of adequate response from the authorities, xenophobic violence become more frequent in Johannesburg. Police officers were also themselves frequently observed harassing and humiliating alleged illegal immigrants on the streets of Johannesburg which arguably provided a stark reminder to the influx controls and pass laws used during apartheid to target and criminalise urban Africans (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 647-648). The criminalisation of foreigners was perhaps a desperate attempt of politicians to hypothetically demonstrate that they protected citizens from social problems, however in practice the symbolic onslaught on foreigners heightened anxiety and strained fragile social cohesion in townships. Foreigners were an easy scapegoat for at least some politicians to disguise their own failures and that blame the inadequate developmental and redistributive progress on the supposed millions of migrants from across Africa (Neocosmos 2008: 588). This was a dangerous and exclusionary political rhetoric that closely resembled the *swart gevaar* idiom that proved vital grounds for the attempts to rid the urban areas of 'undesirables' during the 1940s, albeit this time it was dressed in the language of nationalism instead of racialism. This exclusionary language demonstrates that the ideals of an equal and inclusive society were still distant and that the violent politics of apartheid were still deeply engraved in the mindset of not only the old generation but more problematically so in the thoughts and attitudes of numerous youth. To a

large extent it can be argued that the rhetoric of politicians was a symbolic onslaught on supposed foreigners and provided the justifications for a number of people to single out supposed foreigners in their communities as the cause for their own hardships and rationalise violence as a collective means to instigate political change and restore law and order from the bottom up.

Fear and disillusionment together led to a fertile environment for xenophobic attitudes to erupt in violence on a national scale in South Africa. This was made painfully clear during a succession of dramatic outbursts of xenophobic violence during May and June 2008. The first xenophobic attacks occurred in Alexandra and spread rapidly to other townships in Johannesburg before affecting other cities in South Africa (Bekker 2010: 126; Steinberg 2008a: 2). Within a matter of few weeks xenophobic violence had claimed the lives of more than sixty people and forced thousands of foreigners to flee their homes and leave behind their livelihoods (Steinberg 2012: 345). What the rapid spread of xenophobic attacks demonstrated was an inherent failure of politicians to develop an inclusive national identity and sufficiently alter the justifications of violence as recourse for people to impose their own law and order or influence their environment. Perpetrators of violence were most often young men from marginal urban environments who arguably were motivated by narrow self-interest to steal the belongings of others and enthused with the politically subjective language of redistribution and citizenship (Mosselson 2010: 649-650; Steinberg 2008a: 6-9). The latter two terms in the viewpoint of many perpetrators meant that they as 'indigenous' citizens were exclusively entitled to the benefits of democracy which was especially significant because it signified that the xenophobic riots were more than sudden acts of disillusioned young men. The persons responsible for the xenophobic attacks instead reiterated the division between "citizens and non-citizens" which were at the heart of political discourses and practices of apartheid and more problematically continue to be so in modern-day democratic South Africa (Mosselson 2010: 654).

The townships of Johannesburg have since the end of apartheid experienced violence of various kinds and natures, however a significant number of townships have remained peaceful and hopeful

of a better future amidst persistently difficult political and socio-economic conditions (Marks 2001: 134). The violent inclinations of a limited number of young people carried great significance in public discourses during the last two decades and were frequently used to reinforce catastrophic portrayals of the violent and immoral nature of township youth. These stigmatisations of township youth are arguably a symbolically violent onslaught on an entire generation of aspiring young people who embody the future of South Africa (Ward *et al.* 2012: 8). Evenly fraught with ambiguity is the role of political leaders condemning youth as inherently aggressive whilst they directly and indirectly provided rationales and incentives for violent action and they therefore can be held responsible for having created a context where violence has become a more acceptable means of collective action. This has been sufficient incentive for some observers to draw comparisons with parallel situations from the apartheid era when the state also manipulated intra-communal rivalries to trigger a violent backlash and advance the interests of a minority (Von Holdt 2011: 10-11). To a large degree young people still consider themselves as defenders of their communities and this can be easily manipulated by local political figures to trigger collective violent action against perceived threats to their communities. Nonetheless, township youth have shown throughout history to equally have the ability to overcome systemic oppression and radically change the course of their communities through non-violence means which makes them rightfully "the germ of a new society" (Morrow *et al.* 2005: ii).

Conclusions

The frequent appearance of media reports on public violence in the townships as well as references of politicians to the role of youth in attacking people and property gives a degree of immediacy and contemporary relevance to the themes discussed in this thesis. The violent actions of the present generation of township youth are often demonised as criminal violence or raised as examples of the shortcomings of democratic governance to reduce socio-economic inequality. Township insurgency during late apartheid symbolised the revolt of the youth against the apartheid system, whilst the apartheid state attempted to deprive youth violence of political meaning and portrayed it as irrational 'black-on-black violence' in order to maintain the *status quo* of white-minority rule (Sapire 2013: 168). This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that township youth who fight against political exclusion or survive through means of crime and violence have a lot in common with their contemporaries during apartheid. The rationales of township youth have changed and are perhaps less revolutionary because of a representative government, however the fact that many ordinary young men still seek violent means to make claims for themselves and others shows that there is an inherent inadequacy in the effectiveness of peaceful means to accomplish a better life. This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that there is a long history of systemic and symbolic violence and more overt physical conflicts that lie at the root of the sorts of violence that are considered as distinctively modern phenomena.

Even though early histories of townships and traumas of oppression and conflict from apartheid are less on the minds of current township youth, their struggles for a better life and motives of some of them to pursue this through the means of violence are not unique. Townships have from their beginnings been places for young people to seek opportunity and challenge the restraints on political participation and face social problems that characterised these deprived areas of Johannesburg. Not long after the first miners arrived at the Witwatersrand after the discovery of gold little more than a century ago a metropolitan development took place which was intrinsically

linked to global capitalist markets and industries and attracted people from across Southern Africa to Johannesburg. The mining industry laid the foundations for townships to be places of refugee from the hardship of the mines and the exploration of new opportunities that came with industrial growth. The first generations of urban settlers and oscillating migrants from diverse backgrounds gave unique shape and character to the townships, however at the same time due to rapid population growth and a lack of investment these areas became overcrowded and offered inadequate facilities and infrastructure to cope with newcomers.

The formation of the urban landscape was from the outset marked by violence and social conflict as a result of overt masculine subcultures and risky behaviours that were brought forth from the dangerous and alienating conditions in the mines. Dunbar Moodie (2005) argued that a combination of racist prejudices and pressures on mining companies to deliver returns on investment contributed to a proliferation of violence against African mineworkers. Because the mining industry held such a dominant influence over the urban landscape it was inevitable that practices within the mining shafts took a toll on developments above ground. Prostitution, excessive alcohol consumption and violent conflicts became an outlet for young male mineworkers to cope with hardship, and resultantly an informal economy emerged that offered opportunity to growing numbers of criminals and unemployed young Africans. Racial attitudes hardened in the wake of growing criminality and violence due to poverty and overcrowding, and resultantly urban planners took inspiration from the mining compound system and looked at racial segregation and stringent influx controls as an answer to confine these problems to the non-white population. The implementation was initially rudimentary, however over time and through means of a large bureaucracy racial segregation dramatically changed the spatial landscape of Johannesburg (Hyslop 2008: 122). This development was arguably the cornerstone of townships becoming racially exclusive and overcrowded areas where systemically violent conditions made everyday life precarious.

Predictably the deprived township environment took a toll on the mindset of successive generations of township youth and drove pockets of them into crime and violence as a means for

satisfying personal objectives and collective survival. The results were social conflicts and growing intra-communal antagonism because social cohesion was still fragile and young migrants from the rural hinterlands competed with a growing settled population for control over resources. Episodes of collective political violence were still sporadic and if it happened such conflicts were mostly between local groups vying for control over certain areas of the township. The youth gang culture of *tsotsism* became more prominent in the streets due to young men's aspirations for consuming popular culture and assimilation to urban life which led to a growing unease about the morality of township youth amongst older residents (Fenwick 1996: 618-619). *Tsotsi* gangs involvement in violent crime eventually led to reactionary violence from vigilante groups who wanted to regain control over the streets and establish greater self-determination. Intense conflicts ensued in several townships and the government and police force at different times enabled vigilante groups and street committees to police the townships and measure out punishments. When the presence of vigilante groups and street committees undermined the government's authority the latter readily used youth gangs to aggravate divisions within township communities. The government also looked at influx controls and oppressive measures for quelling social unrest, however as the author argued this merely contained the social problems that came with a dominantly youthful population cramped into underserviced and overcrowded spaces. What became clear is that throughout the 1930s and 1940s struggles for the township youth daily survival and upward mobility took precedence over political struggles.

Political and socio-economic repression of non-white people intensified under the apartheid programme and through a large bureaucratic and security apparatus the government took a more direct hand in the affairs of the non-white people of Johannesburg. Resentment of the apartheid programme developed rapidly amongst township youth and greater numbers were driven towards political activism which *inter alia* gained shape and organisation under the umbrella of the ANC Youth League. Previously township youth had been embroiled in mostly social conflicts and struggles over local resources, however it can be argued that the introduction of apartheid shifted their attention to the role of the state in their deprivation. The youth from these areas laid the

ideological foundations and aided the organisation of a series of defiance campaigns in the early 1950s which was the first large scale challenge against the implications of apartheid and the legitimacy of National Party government. The latter took rigorous action in their first significant confrontations with township youth, involving intimidation through violence and legislature criminalising any form of political opposition to tackle disturbances and continue with far reaching social engineering policies. Physical violence arguably came in the direct form of police officers assaulting and arresting thousands of activist youth as well as indirect campaigns involving support for *tsotsi* gangs to target ringleaders of the defiance campaigns and sow division within township communities. Furthermore, long term strategies to break the influence of political opposition movements and racially segregate the urban landscape included stricter enforcement of influx controls as well as clearance of townships for redevelopment into white residential and business areas. Predictably these policies and actions came against stubborn and sometimes violent resistance from the township populations. Particularly young men aligned to the anti-apartheid movements started to organise protests against specific apartheid policies and more general discrimination, deterioration of living standards and an absence of freedom of movement.

This thesis has demonstrated that there were vast differences between motives of various youth groups to engage in collective violence as some had strong political agendas whilst others thrived on criminal activity and induced their conduct with political language (Glaser 1998: 301; Kynoch 2005: 499). While physical violence in the form of beatings was a common practice to settle social disputes in many townships, passive resistance and mediation were still the preferred methods of anti-apartheid movements to challenge discriminatory legislation and measures. Lodge (2011) argued that this drastically changed after the shootings of protestors in Sharpeville and the subsequent national riots in 1960 which closed all channels for negotiation with the state and opened up real possibilities for collective violence to become a more commonly accepted means of challenging apartheid. The organisation of armed units by members of political opposition movements to engage in a series of sabotage campaigns is one of the examples described in this thesis of how particularly young township men became more militant and developed a leaning to

political violence. Radicalisation was not merely confined to members of gangs or political combatants, to an equal degree the attitudes of young students hardened which became evident when educational reforms were announced in the mid-1970s.

It can be argued that the Soweto uprising against Bantu education for the first time united youth groups as collective force that brought forth sustained disruptive campaigns and violent retaliations which shook the foundations of the apartheid state. The author argues that frustration with the apartheid system was building for long periods amongst township youth and that this was a momentous change in the anti-apartheid struggle because it had clearly showed the political vigour of township youth to rally themselves and others behind collective endeavours. Township youth were determined to overthrow the apartheid system entirely and this mass-mediated struggle arguably provided the anti-apartheid movements with the prospect that the state could be rendered powerless. The desperation of the state to retain power through all means was evident in the brutality of their response though violently persecuting thousands of township youth and the move towards a total police state. The author argued that instead of instilling fear in the township youth of challenging the state, the actions of the state triggered amongst them a more militant approach and a recourse to violence seemed for many inevitable part of the struggle. This was evident in the eagerness of many township youth to join the armed wings of anti-apartheid movement and their significant participating in the campaigns to make the townships ungovernable during the mid-1980s.

Revolutionary ideas and utopian principles of self-governance enthused significant numbers of youth to challenge the authority and legitimacy of government which seemed to be unable to turn the tide of political opposition. Whilst the government hoped that end of high apartheid offered some prospects for a decrease in militancy, it can be concluded that the opposite effect was true as the majority of township youth were excluded from the little benefits that came with political reform and prepared themselves to fight for a complete overhaul of the apartheid system with the risk of death. The riots that took place in the township of Alexandra, for example, illustrated how plans for investment in redeveloping the area proved futile to decrease social unrest

because the proposed rent increases increased anxiety and triggered a violent backlash from the youth. Even though violence was an intrinsic aspect of political struggles, the author has attempted to explain that forms and degrees of violence varied during this period, and that politically motivated violence was almost inseparable from violent crime as youth gangs competed in the political vacuum that was created after the authorities lost control over the township. The participation in public hostilities amongst township youth was significant as violence serving political ends was much more acceptable, however in the period of disturbances there were many young people that thought of violence as a destructive force and aimed to rally communities in peaceful protests and boycott campaigns. This proved difficult because at some points during the social unrest almost everyone had to defend themselves from the provocative violence of the state and the threat posed by youth groups which eventually had dragged entire communities into conflict.

This was made explicit during the transition years when a multitude of intra-communal conflicts ravaged entire townships and the use of extreme violence brought the role and morality of township youth seriously into question. The call of anti-apartheid leaders to seize the armed struggle at the start of the negotiation process did not instigate a decrease of levels of violence in the townships, in fact intra-communal hostilities increased which suggests that violent struggle involved more than disfranchised youth pitted against the apartheid state (Du Toit 1993: 11). The negotiations for a democratic transition was a victory for the township youth who were involved in the violent struggles, however as the violent conflicts continued to displace entire communities, youth were increasingly seen as a menace to the future of the country during the 1990s. Particularly the conflicts between supporters from IFP and ANC brought havoc upon many townships and resulted in the more severe killings in the history of Johannesburg. The multitude of motives behind violence during the transition period were certainly more difficult to comprehend, however it can be argued that it emerged from a context in which physical had become a relatively normative form of settling disputes and condition of everyday life in many of the townships of Johannesburg (Simpson 1993 cited in Rock 1997: 10).

Traumatic experiences of township violence in tandem with a lack of meaningful opportunities certainly contributed to their involvement in violent crime and a public focus on the dilemmas and behaviours of young people after democratic elections in 1994. To some extent this was not unwarranted considering the upheavals in the preceding years; however repeated episodes of moral panic and condemnations of youth being immoral and aggressive were harmful for an entire generation. This was true for sexual violence which became the subject of moral crisis in post-apartheid society and reinforced the stigmatisation of young urban men from marginal backgrounds. The author has demonstrated how the contentious issue of sexual behaviour became part of a new move for moral regeneration and community policing that was particularly remindful of similar phenomena during the 1940s. The claims of these vigilante groups and street committees that violence is a legitimate force to establish law and order is a product of the post-apartheid obsession with justice. This is recognised by the government and given that the police force is not equipped to deal with the scale of violence and crime, community policing offers at least some response to social problems in the townships of Johannesburg.

Remindful of the apartheid era are also the erection of new exclusionary boundaries and vast economic inequalities which were argued to have turned citizenship discourses into a violent competition over resources. Foreigners or people perceived as non-nationals were arguably not only considered an economic menace, however they became symbols of deep seated anxieties and a social crisis about the lack of progress in democratic South Africa. This was easily picked up by politicians and police officers in order to conceal their own failures and they started in their speech and practice an onslaught that influenced the way several township youth perceived social relations in their communities. Resentment against perceived foreigners had led to several violent incidents in the townships during the first decade after the political transition, however many could not foresee the nationwide violent outbursts that started in the townships of Johannesburg in 2008. Redistribution and retributive justice were often named as the motives for youth violence, however from the personal attacks and lootings of houses and businesses it was plainly clear that individual

motives and criminal opportunism played a significant role as well (Mosselson 2010: 649-650; Steinberg 2008a: 6-9).

The politics of youth and violence is contentious in historical and modern context because it includes the realisation of public and legitimate objectives as well as the destruction of individual lives and social fabrics of township communities. There is an argument to be made for a conservative approach that suggests that the struggle for democracy is accomplished and therefore that youth violence in post-apartheid society is politically obsolete and undermines opportunities for a healthy and inclusive democracy. For many township youth violence serves as a means to fight against their deprivation in a rapidly changing society that is haunted by marginalisation and exclusion (Alexander 2010: 25). The author refrains from empathising with the perpetrators of violent acts or playing down the severe consequences of youth violence, however it is also in this thesis that the violent environment of the township was likely to reproduce itself. The multi-faceted examination in this thesis reveals that young people living in deprived township settings, then and now, are engaged in endeavours for comparable objectives through similar means, including the alluring option of violence. This allowed for more constructive reading than an outright condemnation of criminal and political violence, however the distinction between perpetrator and victim as well as between criminal and political motives and rationales is often not straightforward. Even though young people are individually responsible for violent deeds that cause physical and emotional suffering, it should also be recognised that failure of youth to achieve their aspirations through peaceful means are common in the townships and therefore physical violence is a not an unthinkable answer. The examination of the context and politics of youth and violence in this paper tried to widen the terms of reference for understanding of violence and reveal causes for the high overall levels of physical violence in the townships of Johannesburg.

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