Post-Apartheid Social Movements and the Quest for the Elusive 'New' South Africa

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The South African Constitution guarantees justiciable socio-economic rights such as the rights to access to housing; to sufficient food and water; to social security and health care services. This 'transformative constitution' is meant to help rid the country of legacies of apartheid such as huge economic inequalities and entrenched poverty. The government's embrace of neoliberalism has, however, meant that these legacies have not only remained largely untreated but have also become entrenched. Poor communities have started organizing themselves in order to challenge the government's neoliberal policies as well as marginalization from structures of governance. This paper evaluates the nature of these 'social movements' as well as their impact on democracy and development.

> The leader ... asks the people to remember the colonial period and to look back on the long way they have come since then. Now it must be said that the masses show themselves totally incapable of appreciating the long way they have come. The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly colored though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives.[1]

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1 F. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (1963) 136.

Mandela has been the real sell-out, the biggest betrayer of his people. When it came to the crunch, he used his status to camouflage the actual agreement that the ANC was forging with the [white] South African elite.[2]

INTRODUCTION

Just over a decade ago progressives all over the world looked admiringly as Nelson Mandela became the first democratically elected president of South Africa. For those who were involved in the international anti-apartheid movement, this was a sign that the mission had been accomplished. Given the legacy of centuries of racial oppression and conflict, many observers were confounded by the relative peace that accompanied the transition period and quickly declared South Africa a 'miracle nation'.

Twelve years down the line, and three successful elections later, democratic institutions are being consolidated. These include a robust and independent Constitutional Court as well as a very vibrant media. All of this takes place against the background of a Constitution that contains a supreme Bill of Rights which entrenches an impressive catalogue of first-, second-, and third-generation rights ranging from the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, to justiciable rights to access to adequate housing, health care services, and sufficient food and water.[3] It is because of these advances that globally, the country is often hailed as a successful model of 'Third Wave' democratization. This, however, is only one side of the story.

Apartheid left a legacy of great economic inequality and abject poverty. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) election campaign tagline, 'a better life for all', is therefore recognition that the struggle for liberation was also a struggle to eradicate the effects of racial capitalism. Indeed, township struggles that were taking place in the 1980s were about 'transforming the racial status quo, the prevailing set of stultifying and subjugating conditions of existence for those deemed not white.'[4] However, twelve years down the line, not much has change for South Africans now grappling with unemployment that stands at around 40 per cent. Half the population is living below the poverty line and millions remain landless and ravaged by HIV and AIDS.

The ANC's decision to embrace a liberal macroeconomic paradigm was made official in 1996, when the Growth, Employment and Redistribution

2 Trevor Ngwane, former ANC councillor, now a leading member of the Anti Privatisation Forum, cited in A. Desai and R. Pithouse, ' "But We Were Thousands": Dispossession, Resistance, Repossession and Repression in Mandela Park' (2004) 39 *J. of Asian and African Studies* 239-69, at 239.
3 See Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution of 1996 ('the Constitution').
4 D. Goldberg, *The Death of Race* (2004) 9, cited in Desai and Pithouse, op. cit., n. 2, p. 246.

Programme (GEAR) was unveiled.[5] GEAR promised to 'increase annual growth by an average of 4.2 per cent, create 1.35 million jobs by the year 2000, boost exports by an average 8.4 per cent per annum through an array of supply-side measures, and drastically improve social infrastructure.'[6] In order to achieve these targets, the plan hinged on massive increases in private sector investment. This would be achieved by, amongst other things: cutting government spending; keeping inflation in single digits; encouraging 'wage restraint'; speeding up privatization of 'non-essential' government assets; provision of tax breaks for corporate capital; and creation of a flexible labour market.[7]

GEAR was drafted in very secretive conditions. As one participant in its drafting would later comment:

> close affinity with the 'Washington Consensus' characterised not only the substantive policy recommendations of GEAR, but also the process through which it was formulated and presented publicly ... This was 'reform from above' with a vengeance, taking to extreme the arguments in favour of insulation and autonomy of policymakers from popular pressures.[8]

GEAR was quickly declared 'non-negotiable' by the Minister of Finance, Mr. Manuel, and by Mandela. Members of the Tripartite Alliance (consisting of the ANC, South African Communist Party (SACP), and the Congress of South African Trade Unions) who expressed dissatisfaction with the new policy were ordered to toe the line, threatened with disciplinary measures, and regularly marginalized from the centres of decision-making and power.[9] This authoritarian imposition of neoliberal policies is to be expected because, as Marais points out:

> neoliberal policies require a powerful, centralized and effective state - not to manage national development projects, but to neutralize and/or co-opt those social formations that under normal circumstances mediate relations between individuals and the market. Key among them is trade unions and other social movements.[10]

In the case of South Africa, the embrace of neoliberalism has led to policy-making that Bassett aptly describes as 'relatively closed hierarchical and expert-driven ... [making] it difficult for popular movements to par-

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5 Unveiling the new macroeconomic policy, Mbeki told journalists to 'call me a Thatcherite', *Business Day,* 13 May 1997, cited in S. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652-2002* (2002) 145.
6 H. Marais, *South Africa Limits to Change: the Political Economy of Transition* (2001) 163.
7 id., p. 164.
8 S. Gelb, 'The Politics of Macroeconomic Policy Reform in South Africa' (History Workshop of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 18 September 1999) 16-17, cited in id., p. 162.
9 D. McKinley, 'Democracy, Power and Patronage: Debate and Opposition within the African National Congress and the Tripartite Alliance since 1994' in *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa,* ed. R. Southall (2001) 183-206, at 192.
10 Marais, op. cit., n. 6, p. 153.

ticipate.' The centralized and closed manner in which important economic policies are being drafted run contrary to the ANC historic commitment to participatory democracy.

Given this background, not many would disagree with Andreasson's assessment that the ANC's neoliberal restructuring of the economy has become an instrument 'for empowering (ANC) elites' hold on state power and for, simultaneously, marginalizing and disempowering opposition to this neo-liberal turn from within the Alliance and from society in general.' He further argues that this neoliberal restructuring of the economy fits in with the definition of 'predatory liberalism':

> a cocktail of market capitalism, the neoliberal restructuring manifested in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic pro-gramme, state authority (government neo-liberal restructuring and black empowerment as instruments for disciplining and marginalizing opposition) and oligarch power (entrenched apartheid-era capitalists along with an ANC-affiliated emergent 'black bourgeoisie').[13]

Under GEAR, unemployment, wage disparities, landlessness, and poverty have worsened. At the same time, the privatization and commodification of municipal services has meant that basic services such as health care and the provision of water and electricity have become inaccessible to the majority of South Africans.[14]

The state's turn to neoliberalism has effectively negated the Constitution's promise to 'improve the quality of life of all citizens and to free the potential of each person'.[15] In line with the logic of neoliberalism, most of the socio-economic rights that are guaranteed in the Constitution in order to realize the Constitutional values of 'dignity, equality and freedom' are only realizable 'progressively' and not immediately and only when there are 'available resources.' John Saul has thus accurately elucidated that South Africa has experienced a 'dual transition' in the early 1990s: on the one hand, a transition from a racially driven, authoritarian rule to a more democratic (institutional) system of governance; on the other, a reintegration in the global capitalist economy along neoliberal lines.[17]

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11 C. Bassett, 'The Demise of the Social Contract in South Africa' (2004) 38 *Cnd. J. of African Studies* 544, cited in S. Andreasson, 'The African National Congress and its Critics: "Predatory Liberalism", Black Empowerment and Intra-Alliance Tensions in Post-Apartheid South Africa' (2006) 13 *Democratization* 303-22, at 310.

12 Andreasson, id., p. 304.

13 id.

14 For comprehensive and critical analyses of the effects of GEAR, see Terreblanche, op. cit, n. 5; Marais, op. cit., n. 6; P. Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (2005).

15 See the preamble to the Constitution.

16 See, especially, ss. 26 and 27 of the Constitution.

17 J. Saul, 'Cry the Beloved Country: The Post-Apartheid Denouement' *Monthly Rev.,* January 2001, as summarized in D. McKinley and A. Veriava, *Arresting Dissent: State Repression and Post-Apartheid Social Movements* (2005) 8.

Because of the horrors occasioned by neoliberalism, poor communities throughout the country have banded together to challenge the effects of the state's macroeconomic policy and also to demand to be included in governance, an arena which is increasingly the sole preserve of state officials, NGOs, and other experts and professionals. Community organizations that are mounting these struggles have been characterized as new social movements. The state's response to these poor communities has been at best to marginalize them and at worse to criminalize them.

McKinley has argued that the rise of these social movements is due to the need to 'push for more inclusive and meaningful forms of direct and participatory democracy, that have little to do with the institutional forms of representation within bourgeois democratic society', and that 'these movements have arisen out of the very failures and betrayals of the "main currents" and the institutional framework that gives them contemporary legitimacy.'[18] This article evaluates the counter-hegemonic prospects of these social movements. It is therefore a tentative evaluation of whether these movements will manage 'to dislodge their national and local government's commitment to neoliberalism and increasingly repressive governance'[19] and whether they have the ability to ultimately 'open up new spaces and prefigure forms where alternative ideas of post-apartheid South Africa can be organized and discussed.'[20]

Before engaging in any in-depth analysis of these movements, it is first necessary to place them in a historical context. The first section of this article therefore aims to show that South Africa has a long and proud history of highly politicized community organizations. It was these organizations, together with the trade unions, that mobilized oppressed communities around issues of social justice and active citizenship. These community organizations banded together to mount a formidable resistance against apartheid. It is therefore important to see what lessons post-apartheid social movements could obtain from the struggles of anti-apartheid social movements. An attempt to get to grips with post-apartheid social movements and to evaluate their prospects is made after that section. By most accounts, South Africa's democracy is a very limited one. McKinley has thus proposed that 'it is the ANC that has now become the standard-bearer of liberal democracy in South Africa ... This has happened despite the ANC's long history of association with more radical notions of mass participatory

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18 D. McKinley, 'Democracy and Social Movements in SA' (2004) 28 *Labour Bull.* 39-42, at 40.
19 P. Bond, 'South Africa's Resurgent Urban Social Movements: The Case of Johannesburg, 1984, 1994, 2004' in *Challenging Hegemony: Social Movements and the Quest for a New Humanism in South Africa,* ed. N. Gibson (2006) 103-24, at 124.
20 N. Gibson, 'Calling Everything into Question: Broken Promises, Social Movements and Emergent Intellectual Currents in Post-Apartheid South Africa' in Gibson, id., 1-53, at 41.

and non-capitalist democracy ...'. This article takes as its point of departure the claim that if democracy is to be meaningful to the millions and millions of South Africa's poor and unemployed, a more human-centred development trajectory is needed. This in turn requires the presence of effective social movements in South Africa.[22]

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE

Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, when the two major anti-apartheid political parties, the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress were banned, there was no effective national movement that mounted a challenge against the apartheid regime. Such a popular national movement only came to the fore in the 1980s with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The UDF brought together under its umbrella a coalition of civic associations, student organizations and youth congresses, women's groups, trade unions, church societies, sports clubs, and a multitude of organizations. The formation of the UDF was made possible by the emergence and proliferation of community organizations which began in the 1970s and continued throughout the 1980s.[23] The first wave of township resistance after the 1976 uprising was caused by the decision by the state to introduce community councils in 1977. The main cause of popular resentment against these community councils was the fact that because the state wanted to make these councils self-financing, the major source of revenue for the community councils was rent and service charges.[25] Community organizations mobilized communities in resistance, employing a wide variety of tactics including electoral boycotts, calls on councillors to resign, and physical attacks on some councillors or their property.

Most of these organizations mobilized locally around single issues and in relative isolation from each other. The effect of this was that they were not

21 McKinley, op. cit, n. 9, pp. 183-4. Also, see K. Johnson, 'State and Civil Society in Contemporary South Africa: Redefining the Rules of the Game' in *Thabo Mbeki 's World: The Politics and Ideology of the South African President,* eds. S. Jacobs and R. Calland (2002) 221^1, at 222.

22 See R. Ballard, A. Habib, and I. Valodia, 'Conclusion: Making Sense of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Voices of Protest' in *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa,* eds. R. Ballard, A. Habib, and I. Valodia (2006) 397^17, at 415.

23 For a detailed history of the emergence and proliferation of these organizations, see A. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990* (1990) and M. Mayekiso, *Township Politics: Civic Struggles for a New South Africa* (1996). Also, see G. Houston, *The National Liberation Struggle in South Africa: A Case Study of the United Democratic Front, 1983-1987* (1999) 37-57.

24 Houston, id., p. 46.

25 id.

26 id.

able to keep their members actively engaged in collective action, let alone link up their struggles with other organizations in order to mount a decisive challenge against the entire system that oppressed and exploited them. It was only with the formation of the UDF that isolated struggles could be linked together and directed against the apartheid juggernaut. Popular struggles, which were both national and local, were soon extended to resist state reform initiatives, to fight against hikes in rent and service charges, bus-fare increases and food prices, forced removals, and incorporation into the homelands.[27]

The inaugural conference of the UDF in August 1983 brought together 565 organizations with a total membership of 1.65 million.[28] The creation of the UDF brought together a range of independent organizations of differing class origins and with differing political and ideological agendas. The main thing that brought these organizations together was that they had a common enemy: the apartheid system of exploitation and domination.[29] The opposition that emerged under the banner of the UDF was therefore shaped more by pragmatic efforts than by ideology. Guidelines that were drawn up at a conference that called for the establishment of a 'united front' against the apartheid regime included dedication to the '"creation of a non-racial, unitary state, undiluted by racial or ethnic considerations as formulated in the bantustan policy", the adoption of a non-racial form of organization, and the need to consult with "all democratic people wherever they may be".'

With the formation of the UDF, struggles over grassroots issues were combined with those that amounted to direct challenge against apartheid state power. The leaders of the UDF obtained momentum for action from below, where the people were themselves politicized and mobilized.[32]Although the prevailing view when it was formed was that the UDF would just coordinate

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27 id., p. 48.
28 id., p. 56.
29 id., p. 5.
30 See Marx, op. cit, n. 23, pp. 106-46.
31 Houston, op. cit., n. 23, p. 63.
32 Murphy Morobe, then acting publicity secretary of the UDF, explained what the Freedom Charter catchphrase 'The People Shall Govern' meant for the UDF:
> When we say that the people shall govern, we mean at all levels and in all spheres, and we demand that there be a real, effective control on a daily basis ... The key to a democratic system lies in being able to say that the people in our country can not only vote for a representative of their choice, but also feel that they have some direct control over where and how they live, eat, sleep, work, how they get to work, how they and their children are educated, what the content of that education is; and that these things are not done for them by the government of the day, but [by] the people themselves.

  See M. Morobe, 'Towards a People's Democracy: the UDF View' (1987) 40 *Rev. of African Political Economy* 81-7, quoted in M. Neocosmos, 'Intellectual Debates and Popular Struggles in Transitional South Africa: Political Discourse and the Origins of Statism' (1999) Seminar Paper, Centre for African Studies UCT.

opposition to government reform, by the mid-1980s, the role of the UDF included the coordination of resistance to apartheid and thus around 1987, the UDF is said to have claimed a prime role for itself in the struggle for liberation: 'that of organising the masses of people in an unstoppable tide towards liberation.'[33]

If we accept the definition that says that social movements could be seen as collective enterprises that have their inception in conditions of unrest and seek to create a new order of life, it is clear that the UDF was a social movement. Although the UDF was formed as a response to fake state reforms and thus engaged in 'reactive' politics, it later metamorphosed into a movement that focused on the total liberation of South Africans.

Houston has therefore argued that the UDF strategies conformed to three of Antonio Gramsci's central requirements for a revolutionary movement in its struggle for hegemony:

> These are the need to 'begin with the concrete particulars of people's everyday lives' (which was done by focusing on rent and education issues), the need to be 'prepared to seek durable alliances that transcend a class base' (which the UDF did by gathering organizations 'under the broad Charterist rubric of non-racial democracy') and the need to 'transform the particular, often economic, demands of interests groups into a universalistic political challenge of the dominant system' (which the UDF did in its popular campaigns which 'systematically sought to unite participants in the expression of national political demands').[3]

For the purposes of this article, it is important to note that although the UDF was the coordinating body for the liberation struggle in South Africa, its expanding political and ideological leadership was made possible by its affiliates such as the civic associations, student and youth organizations as well as women organizations. The key roles played by these organizations were in the form of mass mobilization and the spread of revolutionary consciousness.[35] However, during the last phase of the UDF, Houston argues that state repression on the structure and activities of the UDF 'resulted in the centralisation of decision making and the transformation of the UDF into a vanguard party.'

At the time when mass mobilization was happening under the umbrella of the UDF, the ANC found itself at the 'leading' position of the liberation against apartheid. This leading position:

> had come about not as a result of being at the practical forefront of the student, worker and community struggles that had erupted across the country but rather as a result of the ANC's ability to politically absorb these struggles within their broad-church strategy of the 'national democratic revolution' (NDR). [7]

33 Houston, op. cit., n. 23, p. 85.

34 id, p. 2.

35 id, p. 5.

36 id, p. 7.

37 McKinley and Veriava, op. cit, n. 17, p. 5. For an extensive treatment of these developments, see D. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* (1997) and M. Neocosmos, 'From Peoples' Politics to State

The ANC's 'capture' of the UDF was made 'official' in 1987 when the UDF leadership adopted the Freedom Charter, a move 'symbolizing the centralization of the movement under its leadership and the reduced concerned for accommodating alternative views.'[38] The language that was used during the adoption of the Freedom Charter as a 'comprehensive political program' shows the lack of tolerance for ideological plurality that had up until then been the mainstay of the UDF. The leadership of the UDF then declared the UDF to be the only viable political home for those in the legal opposition movement and who stand for genuine change.[39]

The hegemony of the ANC and its allies over the national liberation struggle had devastating consequences for ideological and organizational diversity represented by grassroots organizations affiliated to the UDF. According to McKinley and Veriava:

> [b]y the time the ANC was firmly in the seat of institutional (state) power, the vast majority of those community organisations that had been so central to the radicalisation of the anti-apartheid struggle and that had sustained the hope of millions for a more radical (and potentially anti-capitalist) transformation of South African society, had been swallowed by the ANC and, to a lesser extent by its Alliance partners.[40]

This section was not an attempt to give an exhaustive history of the UDF, let alone that of the liberation struggle in South Africa. Rather, my intention here was to demonstrate the rich history of popular struggles through social movement activism in South Africa. The UDF experience has been described as an 'attempt to develop genuinely popular forms of democracy in both ideology and practice'.[41] The tactics, repertoires and orientations of the 'new' or re-emerging post-apartheid social movements display some continuities and discontinuities with these social movements. It is important to record the history of demobilization of popular organizations as it might account for the lack of popular resistance in the face of the ANC's shift to the right. It is also important to have reference to these organizations as this might go a long way in explaining the character of most post-apartheid social movements as well as providing valuable historical lessons on how to organize, how to build up counter-hegemonic discourses and power, and the need to be cautious when building alliances.

Politics: Aspects of National Liberation in South Africa' in *Opposition in Contemporary Africa,* ed. A. Olukoshi (1998) 195-240.
38 Marx, op. cit, n. 23, p. 177.
39 id.
40 McKinley and Veriava, op. cit., n. 17, p. 7.
41 Neocosmos, op. cit., n. 37, p. 206.

POST-APARTHEID 'SOCIAL MOVEMENTS':
CAUGHT BETWEEN A ROCK (STATE REPRESSION)
AND A HARD PLACE (MIDDLE-CLASS LEFTISTS)

1. *Post-apartheid 'social movements'*

According to Desai and Pithouse:

> revolts have ebbed and flowed in poor communities all over the country since 1996 ... [when] the African National Congress [ANC] became the first African government to ever voluntarily seek the help of the World Bank to design and impose a structural adjustment programme on its people.

While most of these revolts have often been the result of acts of mobilization by community organizations, some of them have been uncoordinated violent revolts by poor communities against poor service delivery, cost-recovery policies in respect of basic services as well as marginalization from structures of governance. Do these community protests amount to the emergence of 'social movements'?

In its 'social movements directory', the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) - a research institution based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and a leader in research projects that pertain to post-apartheid social movements - lists seventeen South African organizations as 'social movements'. In the preface to this directory, the constituting elements of what makes an organization or collective a social movement are not listed. As a result, the directory contains diverse organizations including NGO-type organizations like Earth Life as well as political parties such as the South African Communist Party. So what makes a social movement a 'social movement'?

Definitions for what constitutes a 'social movement' abound. Snow et al. suggest that although most definitions of social movements differ in terms of what is emphasized or accented, most are based on three or more of the following axes: 'collective or joint action; change-oriented goals or claims; some extra- or non-institutional collective action; some degree of organization; and some degree of temporal continuity.'[44] In his seminal study entitled *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics,* Sidney Tarrow defines social movements as 'collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities.' [5] From this definition, Tarrow distils the following as constituting the 'basic properties of movement': collective

42 Desai and Pithouse, op. cit, n. 2, p. 241.
43 See <http://ukzn.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?6,20>.
44 D. Snow, S. Soule, and H. Kriesi, 'Mapping the Terrain' in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements,* eds. D. Snow, S. Soule, and H. Kriesi (2004) 3-6, at 6.
45 S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (1994) 3^1.

challenge, common purpose, solidarity, and sustained interaction. From the above outline, it should be clear that social movements come in all shapes and sizes and with varying agendas.

In a conclusion to a collection entitled *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa,* Ballard et al. have proposed a typology to show the heterogeneity that is found in the social movements' landscape in South Africa. [7] This typology is based on what social movements in South Africa are opposing.[48] The first set of social movements are said to be those which direct much of their activism against government on distributional issues especially with regard to access to basic services by poor South Africans.[49] These organizations perceive privatization and cost recovery policies as the key elements debilitating delivery. Some of the most prominent social movements engaged in these campaigns include the following movements:

- The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). This organization campaigns for the provision of affordable, or where possible, free electricity to the poor residents of Soweto township. The most commonly used tactic by the SECC is the illegal reconnection of electricity supply that has been cut-off; [50] and

- The Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF): the APF is an umbrella body made up of organizations and activists who share an anti-privatization agenda. Some of the key issues that have been undertaken by the APF include electricity cut-offs, evictions, and support for workers' struggles against the privatization of Johannesburg and the University of Witwatersrand.[51]

The second set of organizations are said to be ones that 'oppose the state, banks and private landlords through opposition to evictions and attempts to secure land tenure'.[52] Some of the most prominent organizations in this regard include the following:

- The Landless People's Movement (LPM): the LPM is a national movement of landless people dissatisfied with the slow pace of the government land reform programme. Besides engaging in protest marches to highlight issues facing landless people, the LPM has also engaged in campaigns urging its members not to vote and have also threatened to occupy vacant land.[5]

46 id., pp. 4-6.
47 Ballard, Habib, and Valodia, op. cit, n. 22, p. 399.
48 id.
49 id., p. 399.
50 For a detailed study of the SECC, see A. Egan and A. Wafer, 'Dynamics of a "Mini-Mass Movement": Origins, Identity and Ideological Pluralism in the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee', id., pp. 45-65.
51 See 'About the APF' at <http://www.apf.org.za/article.php3?id_article=2>. For more on the APF, see S. Buhlungu, 'Upstarts or Bearers of Tradition? The Anti-Privatisation Forum of Gauteng', in Ballard, Habib, and Valodia, id., pp. 67-87.
52 id, p. 399.
53 See S. Greenberg, 'The Landless People's Movement and the Failure of the Post-Apartheid Reform', id, pp. 133-53.

• The Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC): the AEC is an umbrella movement that consists of various community organizations from poor, marginalized areas in Cape Town. These community organizations are said to 'share threats and experiences of evictions and water disconnections, discontent with state policies of cost recovery on public services, and dissatisfaction with local political representation'.[5]

The third set of social movements that Ballard et al point out are unions that oppose government policy on employment conditions as well as the labour practices of business.[55] These would include most of the labour unions that are affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) as well as COSATU itself which, although is part of the Tripartite Alliance led by the ANC, has nevertheless continued to engage in adversarial mass action and other protest actions.[5] The fourth set of social movements outlined by Ballard et al. consists of those who advocate around issues of pollution and degradation of the environment.[57] A very active umbrella organization here is the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF). This movement describes itself as a:

> democratic network, a shared resource, a forum which seeks to advance the interrelatedness of social, economic, environmental and political issues to reverse and prevent environmental injustices affecting the poor and the working class.

Fourthly, Ballard et al. identifies those organizations that campaign for the right of vulnerable groups in society such as refugees and sexual minorities by seeking to influence government policy.[59] The last category is identified as those movements, notably Jubilee South Africa (JSA), that campaign against multinational corporations in relation to debt incurred during apartheid, or in terms of claiming reparations from multinational corporations that operated in South Africa during apartheid.[60] From the brief outline above it should be clear that post-apartheid South Africa is inhabited by a wide variety of 'social movements'.

The 'political opportunity structures' that gave rise to post-apartheid social movements are first, the political openings made possible by

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54 See S. Oldfield and K. Stokke, 'Building Unity in Diversity: Social Movement Activism in the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign', id., pp. 111-32, at p. 111.
55 See id., p. 399.
56 id.
57 id.
58 See J. Cock, 'Connecting the Red, Brown and Green: The Environmental Justice Movement in South Africa', id., pp. 203-24, at p. 207.
59 id, p. 399.
60 id.
6l Tarrow defines 'political opportunity structure' as 'consistent - but not necessarily formal, permanent or national - dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action', see Tarrow, op. cit, n. 45, p. 18.

democratization, and secondly, the adoption of GEAR which has led to social dislocation and hardships as well as the state's lack of responsiveness to the plight of the poor.[62] Put differently, the re-emergence of social movements is due to the fact 'the poor are progressively squeezed between state repression and the commodification of the basic means of life.'[63]

As can be expected in such a diverse setting, relations amongst various social movements are sometimes beset by a lot of tension. One reason that may account for this tension is the fact that unlike their anti-apartheid counterparts, post-apartheid social movements do not collectively share a common counter-hegemonic political project. From the above typology of social movements, Ballard et al. submit that the political projects of post-apartheid social movements can be taken in one of two directions: rights-based opposition and counter opposition. In the former position, 'rights-based opposition attempts to hold the government to constitutionally enshrined rights within the current liberal order',[64] whereby the problem is understood to be one of 'deficient policy or its compromised implementation'. [5] On the other hand, those social movements that see themselves as articulating a counter-hegemonic project suggest that they draw from 'class-based ideologies with notable self-descriptions such as: anti-neoliberal, anti-capital, anti-Gear, anti-globalisation, anti-market, socialist and Trotskyist.'[66] Movements represented in this school of thought include the ones that fall under the first set of social movements in the typology above. Although these movements campaign on the basis of single-issues, Ballard et al. point out that 'they can become vehicles for articulating broader challenges against the state's economic path and have, at times supported the need for a socialist alternative.'[67] These movements see themselves as constituting the '"real" social movements of the country in contrast to more collaborationist and reformist organizations'.

The way in which an organization sees itself obviously influences the choice of tactics it uses. Tactics and strategies employed by post-apartheid social movements could be said to run along a continuum with one end being more 'in-system' tactics and, on the other extreme, more extra-institutional actions. However, as Ballard et al. point out the distinction between movements that practice in-system tactics and those that undertake extra-institutional action cannot be drawn simply because:

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62 See M. Mbali, 'TAC in the History of Patient-Driven AIDS Activism: The case for Historizing South Africa's New Social Movements' in Gibson, op. cit, n. 19, pp. 129-55, at p. 131. For a contrary view see Mbali, id.
63 Desai and Pithouse, op. cit., n. 2, p. 21.
64 Ballard, Habib and Valodia, op. cit., n. 22, at p. 400.
65 id.
66 id.
67 id.
68 id., p. 401.

in their efforts to avoid collaboration, movements that frame their operations in explicitly counter-hegemonic terms would adopt a mix of strategies, but in-system strategies would often be used as a supplement to more extra-institutional action. Conversely, movements with an explicit rights-based agenda would be at the in-system pole of the continuum, practicing a mix of strategies with extra-institutional action often used to supplement in-system strategies. [69]

Examples here would be a movement like the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) which has successfully used the courts to force the government to offer treatment to HIV-infected people. However, in instances where the government is perceived to be slow in implementing court orders, the TAC has engaged in civil disobedience campaigns. Conversely, Jubilee South Africa, an organization that mainly engages with the state and multi-national companies in very adversarial terms, also supports the international reparations lawsuit that has been instituted in New York by Khulumani Support Group. Of course, strategies of contention also depend on how other actors react to forms of innovation and mobilization undertaken by adversaries and allies. Koopmans has thus convincingly demonstrated that:

> selection of contentious innovations takes the form of strategic decision-making by individual contenders, either in the form of anticipation of other's reactions, or by way of a process of adaptation in which previously unsuccessful strategic models are abandoned, and successful ones are retained. [70]

Response by the state to agitation by social movements has varied. In most instances, various organs of state have responded by criminalizing [71]

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69 id, p. 407.

70 R. Koopmans, 'Protest in Time and Space: The Evolution of Waves of Contention' in Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, op. cit, n. 44, pp. 19—46, at p. 41.

71 See, in general, McKinley and Veriava, op. cit, n. 17; Desai and Pithouse, op. cit, n. 2 as well as Mzi Memeza, *A Critical Review of the Implementation of the Regulation of Gatherings Act 205 of 1993: A Local Government and Civil Society Perspective,* at <http://www.fxi.org.za>. The view that the state is engaged in systematic harassment and repression of social movements, is quite pervasive among social movements organizations. In August 2002, a week before the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Social Movements Indaba (SMI) organized a march dubbed a 'freedom of expression march' to highlight issues of harassment and imprisonment of social movement activists. This march was violently disrupted by members of the South African Police Services. The SMI reacted by releasing a press release that made the connection between the horrors of apartheid-era repression and repression allegedly carried out by the post-apartheid government. In part, the press release said the following:
The events of this evening are only further confirmation of the ever-narrowing space in the 'new' South Africa, for the exercise of constitutional and human rights to freedom of expression and assembly. If it was not before, it should now be crystal clear that the South African government is hell-bent on smashing legitimate dissent by whatever means they deem appropriate, including peaceful marchers and terrorising children. The ghosts of the South African past are returning with a vengeance. Cited in McKinley and Veriava, id, pp. 43-4.

and marginalizing the various movements and imposing harsh restrictions on them. In some cases the state has only made strategic and temporary concessions. These are usually granted just before elections. However, overwhelmingly, the state has been careful not to make concessions that could amount to it being perceived as moving away from its commitment to neoliberalism.

2. *Post-apartheid 'social movements', democracy, and development*

If we agree with McKinley's submission that:

> it is the ANC that has now become the standard-bearer of liberal democracy in South Africa [and that] [t]his has happened despite the ANC's long history of association with more radical notions of mass participatory and non-capitalist democracy .. .[73]

what can social movements do to reverse this? In their study of the impact of community organizations that have risen to challenge government on lack of basic services, Desai and Pithouse proclaim that 'it is in organizations like these that our nation has come alive and it is here that the real fight to defend and deepen our democracy is being fought'.[74]

Neocosmos is however more circumspect and warns against an uncritical enthusiasm for social movements because:

> an organization cannot be said to be either democratic or progressive (despite the possible justice of its demands) just because it is opposed to the state. Its politics may simply be concerned with incorporation into the existing system, and/or with providing a simple mirror image of state politics, and not with transformation in a popular democratic direction.[75]

In the absence of a strong political party to the left of the ANC, social movements represent an avenue for channelling the interests of the poor and putting their agenda on the national psyche. Post-apartheid social movements thus add a welcomed political plurality to South Africa's political landscape. As Barchiesi so convincingly argues:

> [t]he growth and transformation of social movement politics in South Africa over the past few years have not only redefined the terrain of contestation over communities' solidarity, identity and loyalty. In a more far-reaching way, social movements have grown into a potent and decisive force in shaping the political agenda and strategies of the state, showing cracks, lines of fissure and

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72 This mainly consists of acts of intimidation and vilification of movements as 'ultra-leftists', 'counter-revolutionary', and 'enemies of the people'. The general tone of an article by Michael Sachs, a key ANC strategist, exemplifies this approach. See M. Sachs '"We don't Want the Fucking Vote": Social Movements and Demagogues in South Africa's Young Democracy' (2003) 27 *Labour Bull.* 23-7.

73 McKinley, op. cit, n. 9, pp. 183^.

74 Desai and Pithouse, op. cit., n. 2, p. 24.

75 M. Neocosmos, 'The State of the Post-apartheid State: The Poverty of Critique on the South African Left' (2004) 23 *Politeia* 137-57, at 151.

potential basis of anti-systemic support in what, on the surface, seems an almost monolithic political mandate for the ruling party.[7]

In an assessment of the impact of post-apartheid social movements, Oldfield and Stokke take as their point of departure that 'in simplified terms, the South African political field is marked by a competition over the right to be the legitimate representatives of poor people in struggle'.[77] They then argue that 'whereas the government alliance relies on extensive objectified political capital, the power of movements ... originates in their ability to mobilise communities for public acts of resistance';[7] and further that 'this symbolic capital holds the potential of being transformed into institutionalised political power through political negotiations or future electoral contestation.'[79] This 'symbolic capital' should not however be overestimated. The fact is that most of the members of these organizations still have some affinity to the ANC. Further, as Friedman and Mottiar warn, 'the legitimacy of the government and the popularity of the ruling party are also new realities which activists tackling the government policy forget at their own peril.'[80] In fact, in every instance when these social movements have fielded independent candidates in local elections, they have fared very badly. From the section preceding this one, it is clear that struggles of poor communities that make up post-apartheid social movements respond largely to the impact of poverty and marginalization. Their struggles are often localized and issue-based. Desai and Pithouse bring this point to the fore by pointing out that:

> it must be remembered that people are fighting militant struggles to keep themselves in apartheid's satanic ghettoes ... The community movements respond to attempts to evict people from their homes or to exclude them from water, electricity and education with actions designed to prevent and reverse dispossession. Their actions are largely defensive and reactive. Generally, they are periodic mobilizations around single issues that do not develop into an ongoing mass-based confrontation with the ANC's neo-liberal juggernaut. The lack of resources and the ANC's ability to enforce repression and make strategic concessions all feed into the inability to sustain mobilization.[81]

As we have seen with the practices of the community organizations affiliated to the UDF in the mid-80s, fundamental change can only come

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76 F. Barchiesi, 'Classes, Multitudes and the Politics of Community Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa' in Gibson, op. cit., n. 17, pp. 209^12, 214-15.

77 Oldfield and Stokke, op. cit., n. 54, p. 130.

78 id.

79 id.

80 S. Friedman and S. Mottiar, 'Rewarding Engagement?: The Treatment Action Campaign and the Politics of HIV/AIDS' at <http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/files/FRIEDMAN%20MOTTIER%20A%20MORAL%20TO%20THE%20TALE%20L-ONG%20VERSION.PDF>.

81 Desai and Pithouse, op. cit., n. 2, p. 260. This is the unequivocal position of Zakie Achmat, chairperson of the TAC, who asserts that: 'We want to get medicine to people - we don't want to cause a revolution'. Cited in Friedman and Mottiar, id.

about when community organizations engage in sustained collective actions that focus the struggle on wider social change and not just single issues impacting on their communities. This might involve building strategic alliances with others, and forming a 'united front' which will ensure that particularistic struggles of different communities gets coordinated at a national level. In an empirical study of social movements worldwide, Rucht demonstrates that:

> most social movements would not come into existence, let alone survive, if there was no cooperation between groups and organization that consider themselves to be parts of a broader entity. Though these components may differ considerably in size, shape, concrete aims, and preferred activities, they tend to exhibit a readiness to participate in joint activities or structures, be it at a major protest event, a loosely coordinated but temporary campaign, or permanent umbrella organization or federation.[82]

In the same vein, in their analysis of whether the TAC is a model for other social movements, Friedman and Mottiar conclude that 'the TAC experience also suggests that social movements who do not "think alliances" are likely to remain isolated and weakened.'[83] While this is clearly true, the history of the UDF also shows that, taken too far, the idea of building alliances at all cost could be detrimental to community organization and the richness of their plurality. The unification of particularistic struggles, and eventual replacement thereof, by grandiose ideas of national struggle was a factor that led to the demise of many of the UDF affiliates. Yet, it seems that this historical lesson was never learned. A number of prominent leaders of various post-apartheid social movements have recently displayed a very centralist attitude. As Greenstein points out, 'in this process, the incoherent and untidy diversity and multiplicity of social movements are overcome and superseded'. How can community organizations strike a balance between the need for sustained nationally coordinated actions that would pose a challenge against the neoliberal juggernaut, whilst at the same time retaining their autonomy?

On how this balance is to be struck, Barchiesi incisively deploys Paolo Virno's concept of 'multitude',[5] to define the way in which the plurality of social experience can be a condition for progressive social movement politics. He indicates that in the politics of multitude:

> the convergence of multiple social experiences around unitary forms of political representation (as in discourses of 'class,' 'people' and 'nation') is

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82 D. Rucht, 'Movement Allies, Adversaries, and Third Parties' in Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, op. cit, n. 44, pp. 197-216, at p. 203.

83 Friedman and Mottiar, op. cit., n. 80.

84 R. Greenstein, 'Civil Society, Social Movements and Power in South Africa' (2003) 17, unpublished RAU Sociology seminar paper, available at <http://general.rau.ac.za/sociology/Greenstein.pdf>.

85 P. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004).

seen as the contingent and often contested product of historical circumstances, rather than as the necessary outcome or the expression of a higher, truer form of collective consciousness.[86]

Barchiesi further argues that:

the process of social change ushered in by the politics of the multitude is non-teleological, in the sense that it does not assume pre-constituted finality and direction for change as a source to validate practices of social conflict. Rather than building a cumulative path towards social transformation, the politics of the multitude 'inhabits' events and situations, shifting power relations by acting upon a multiplicity of sites of contestation.[87]

Similarly, Greenstein argues that:

it is the emphasis on self-organization, internal diversity and resistance to forcible unification of social movements under a universal banner, which allows elements within civil society to develop its radical potential.[88]

Just like the community organizations of the 1980s, post-apartheid community organizations are providing new spaces for popular democracy by empowering its participants to *take their lives in their hands* and organizing organically. If this popular democracy is to be preserved, these community organizations must see to it that they preserve their autonomy and that their particularistic interests are not sublated by universalistic claims. As to the question of how these issue-based and particularistic struggles could still be harnessed into a force that could contest the way state power is put, Greenstein submits that this could be achieved:

not by trying to impose unity that will meet power with counter-power, but by allowing the untidy nature of the new social movements to flourish and spread to hitherto unaffected aspects of society ... [t]he kind of politics advocated here conforms to Unger's notion of 'transformative polities', which focuses on shaping the practical and discursive routines of social life. It works towards 'empowered democracy' precisely by adopting a piecemeal and cumulative approach and eschewing grandiose revolutionary rhetoric that sounds radical but ends up achieving very little because it is removed from people's daily concerns.[9]

Another obstacle faced by social movements is one posed by middle-class left activists and academics who have been accused of having:

systematically tried to recruit social movements' politics for the pursuit of political agendas that developed entirely above their heads: national liberation, the party of the working class, sustained development, international workshops.[91]

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86 Barchiesi, op. cit., n. 76, p. 215.
87 id, p. 216.
88 Greestein, op. cit, n. 84, p. 16.
89 Slogan displayed at the launch of the Social Movement Indaba.
90 Greestein, op. cit, n. 84, p. 17.
91 Indymedia South Africa as cited in id, p. 14.

These activists and academics are also the ones engaged in the framing processes *for* some community organizations. These framing processes are meant to 'assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner support, and to demobilize antagonists.'[92] In an evocative piece, Ashwin Desai, a very prominent academic-activist, has recently argued that middle class academics and activists - 'outsiders' - are the ones who take up:

> [the] task of fashioning political meanings that flow from struggles ... It is this 'outsider' grouping who most furiously contest what particular social move-ments mean ideologically, technically, even cynically, among themselves. These battles sometimes play themselves out on the bodies and campaigns of social movements as various academics try to position social movements to best achieve their vision.

Consider the following remarks by McKinley who portrays post-apartheid social movements as arenas of free democratic debate and participation epitomised in a 'principled internationalism, a socialist vision, and independent mass-based mobilisation and struggle as an ideological and organizational alternative to the capitalist ANC!'

In conclusion, it is clear that, although the plurality and horizontality in the practices of community organizations provide space for participants to engage in popular democracy, this autonomy is threatened by vanguardists, who have appropriated for themselves the collective framing processes for these organizations. Following, Barchiesi's usage of politics of the

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92 D. Snow and R. Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization' (1988) 1 *International Social Movement Research* 197-217, at 198, as cited by D. Snow, 'Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields' in Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, op. cit, n. 44, pp. 380^12, at p. 384.

93 A. Desai, 'Vans, Autos, Kombis and the Drivers of Social Movements', Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture 28 July 2006, available at <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs>.

94 D. McKinley, 'The Rise of Social Movements in South Africa' (2004) *Debate: Voices from the South African Left* 17-21, at 20, cited in Ballard, Habib, and Valodia, op. cit., n. 22, p. 398. The role of these mainly white middle-class activists has recently come under fire from a number of black activists. Thus, Andile Mngxitama, a former activist with the Landless People's Movement has complained that:
to date, what has often happened in these social movements in South Africa is that historically dominant voices - primarily white-left intellectuals - have been the main mediators of the identity and aspirations of the poor of the country. In a sense we are witnessing the re-inscription of racial domination in the service of a 'greater good' - to hold back the tide of neo-liberal attack on black bodies. See A. Mngxitama, 'Let Black Voices Speak for the Voiceless' *Mail and Guardian Online* 22 January 2004, available at <http://www.mg.co.za/articledirect.aspx? articleid=131236&area=%2finsight%2fmsight __comment_and_analysis%2f>. See, also, M. Ndlovu, 'Social Movements, Representation and the Role of Supporters of People's Struggle' 14 September 2006, electronic paper available at <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?2,40,5,1126> and N. Mthembu, 'The Role of White Activists in the Liberation of the Black Race', 12 September 2006, electronic paper available at <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?2,40,5,1125>.

'multitude', it is important that community organizations engage in alliance with others without being coerced into unity, but where they converge with others, this should be based on 'commonality'. One way of achieving such commonality, whilst eschewing 'unity', is to join forces with others around specific issues and on a temporary basis. It is not a bad idea for organizations coming into an alliance to draft and agree on a Memorandum of Understanding which will specify areas of cooperation, broad tactics to be used, and who shall speak for the alliance, as well as the period of cooperation. This might go a long way in ensuring that organizational autonomy is maintained and that there is mutual accountability amongst the alliance partners.

CONCLUSION

One clear characteristic of post-apartheid South Africa is the 'stabilization of capitalist relations'.[5] To be sure, Szeftel has argued that the ANC had three options when it took over state power. The first option would have been to embark 'on what we might term a "revolutionary path" in which the commanding heights of the economy were expropriated by government and land and other resources redistributed by compulsion'.[97] The second option, which Szeftel terms the 'radical reforming path', entailed a scenario 'in which liberal democratic political institutions would have been combined with high taxes, high spending on public projects and social investment as well as some nationalization'.[98] A third option, the 'neo-liberal path,' 'would emphasise the expanding links with the global economy, improving human capital and making the economy more internationally competitive by emphasizing growth and monetarist orthodoxy in fiscal policy'. Szeftel correctly concludes that 'in the years since the 1994 elections, the South African government moved progressively away from the second option towards the third'.[100]

The result of this choice is a transition which Bond has described as follows:

> it is abundantly clear that the [South African] society suffered the replacement of racial apartheid with what can be accurately considered to be class apartheid: systemic underdevelopment and segregation of the oppressed majority, through structured economic, political, environmental, legal,

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95 Saul, op. cit, n. 17.
96 M. Szeftel 'Two Cheers? South African Democracy's First Decade' (2004) 31 *Rev. of African Political Economy* 193-202, at 194-5.
97 id., at p. 194.
98 id.
99 id., at p. 195.
100 id.

medical, and cultural practices largely organised or codified by Pretoria politicians and bureaucrats.

In this article, I evaluated the prospects of post-apartheid 'social movements' in mounting a serious challenge against the South African state's embracing of neoliberalism. The ANC government's turn towards neoliberalism has not only left the legacy of massive inequalities and structural poverty inherited from apartheid, but has actually exacerbated them. The turn to neoliberalism has also been accompanied by intolerance of dissent on macroeconomic policies as well as the conception of development as a top-down process. A minimalist conception of democracy had meant that democracy has become meaningless for the millions of 'poor' and unemployed who have been marginalized and disempowered.

Largely due to the neoliberal assault visited on poor communities, these communities have started organizing themselves to demand affordable basic services and an inclusion in decision-making. Because they are often organized organically, these 'social movements' have ensured a degree of popular democracy for their members. In order to mount a powerful resistance against the macro-economic policies of the state and their exclusion from governance, there is a need for these 'social movements' to come together with others, to come up and fight for counterhegemonic discourses that would provide alternatives to liberal capitalism. In joining with others, they need to remember the lessons that were taught by community organizations that were affiliated to the UDF, whose particularistic interests were sublated into the universal - a move which eventually led to their demise. Building strategic alliances is encouraged but it should only take place under conditions that eschew vanguardism and unity for 'commonality' as described by Greenstein and Barchiesi above.

Although the contribution of middle-class activists can be very useful to poor communities as they bring with them resources, useful contacts, and solidarity, the terms of engagements with community organizations needs to be reassessed. Similarly, academics and others reporting on social movements need to be honest about the faults and limitations of community organizations with regard to the possibilities of expanding the democratic space and influencing the state to turn away from its neoliberal policies. In his latest reflection on the role of intellectuals in the struggles of social movements, Desai decries what he sees as a dangerous and patronizing trend amongst those who report on social movements but turn a blind eye to their faults. He explains:

> the most alarming feature of the current, general mode of reporting on social movements is that it is often overblown, romanticized and, in many cases, just plain made up ... the epitome of this mode of thinking is the facile axiom that the poor, somehow are an embodiment of the truth and, as long as they

101 P. Bond, 'Ten Years of Democracy: A Review' in *Articulations: A Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture Collection,* ed. A. Alexander (2006) 37.

organise democratically, the line of march they take will advance the cause of freedom ... It is simply nonsense to talk them up as the next revolutionary subject .. ,[102]

It is only by dealing with these community organizations honestly and respectfully that we can help them obtain their immediate needs, whilst at the same time ensuring that they survive. Any hope for a more popular democracy as well as a move towards a more human-centred development depends on the survival and flourishing of these social movements.

102 Desai, op. cit., n. 93.