Marxisms in the 21st Century

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The political dynamics of contemporary South Africa are rife with contradiction. On the one hand, it is among the most consistently contentious places on earth, with insurgent communities capable of mounting disruptive protest on a nearly constant basis, rooted in the poor areas of the half-dozen major cities as well as neglected and multiply oppressed black residential areas of declining towns. On the other hand, even the best-known contemporary South African social movements, for all their sound, lack a certain measure of fury.

In the face of the government’s embrace of neoliberal social policies since shortly after the fall of apartheid, what are often called ‘service delivery protests’ occurring many thousands of times a year according to police statistics (Duncan and Vally 2008; Mottiar and Bond 2011) are at once the site of poor people’s demands for greater responsiveness to human needs in general, but are also intensely localised and self-limited in their politics. The upsurge of protest since the late 1990s invariably invokes images of the anti-apartheid struggle and thus focuses analysis on continuities and breaks between the old anti-apartheid mass action and the new mass action in post-apartheid society. And yet the majority of community protesters operate in close interconnection with parts of the Tripartite Alliance, composed of the African National Congress (ANC), the trade union movement represented by the Congress of South African Trade
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Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and so the line between insurgencies and governing organisations is not always clear. Yet their geographic and political isolation from one another have contributed to their having little leverage over the Alliance, which notwithstanding some resistance by unions and communists, embraced neoliberal policies in the transition from anti-apartheid resistance to class-apartheid government in 1994.

But beyond the community protests, in many respects, the problems that have faced more traditional radical social movements in South Africa are familiar to students of social movements elsewhere: the problems of moving from movement to governing; of co-optation and shifting roles vis-à-vis the state; of the limits of localism and the problem of how to join community- and workplace-based organising to forge a strong working-class politics. These are all the subject of considerable scholarship, both within and outside of the Marxist tradition and within and outside of South Africa (see for example, DeFilippis, Fisher and Schragge 2010; Katzenelson 1981; Piven and Cloward 1979). We argue here, however, that in the South African context, these can be more clearly seen as symptomatic questions of a larger problematic: what we term, following Leon Trotsky, the problem of ‘uneven and combined Marxism’.

For Trotsky (1962), ‘uneven and combined development’ was a fundamentally dialectical framework through which he sought first to theorise the relations among Russia’s nascent industrial base (and hence, too, Russia’s urban proletariat) and its backward, semi-feudal rural relations and second, following this, the revolutionary potentials for Russia at the time of the Revolution. For Trotsky, this implied understanding the relationship among forms of capital both within Russia and across its borders. Uneven development means that extremely different relations of production coexist within and across territories, while combined development suggests that the ‘less developed’ are archaic and simply bound, at some point, to ‘catch up’ with the more advanced, perhaps going through the same ‘stages’ of development. The South African modernisation narrative since the early 2000s, shared by former president Thabo Mbeki and current president Jacob Zuma, is that the ‘two economies’ are ‘structurally disconnected’ – notwithstanding abundant evidence that poverty created in one place directly correlates to wealth accumulated in another (Bond and Desai 2006; Maharaj, Desai and Bond 2011).

Hence, in order to understand the revolutionary possibilities of a given moment, it is important to understand how more and less advanced relations of production are interconnected, how they often reinforce each other
and how their contradictions may lead to revolutionary advances in developmentally ‘less-advanced’ contexts. ‘Uneven and combined Marxism’ implies a way of considering the difficulties of constructing independent left politics in the conjuncture of a long-term capitalist stagnation in a twenty-first-century South Africa in which some sectors of the economy – construction, finance and commerce – have been booming while many other, former labour-intensive sectors of manufacturing were de-industrialised (or shifted from general production for a local mass market to niche production for a global upper-class market, such as luxury autos and garments) and in which large sections of society are still peripheral to the interests of capital, domestic and global – aside from serving as a reserve army of unneeded surplus labour. The unevenness is also geographical, with small areas of South Africa operating within a circuit of luxury consumption and new technologies, but others such as ex-bantustan rural areas continuing their decline. The unevenness of sector and space is no surprise, of course, since capital has always flowed to sites of higher profitability, not to establish equilibrating trends, but on the contrary to exacerbate differentials and enhance inequalities. The word ‘combined’ is important in South Africa because of the ways capital interacts with the non-capitalist sectors and spaces, including women’s reproductive sites and mutual-aid systems, spaces of community commons, state services and nature.

Unevenness is obvious across the cities and townships (and towns and dorpies or villages) where battles rage among the sectors of capital and across scales of struggle. The ‘combined’ part of anti-capitalism is an area we are yet to see fully invoked (in the spirit of, for example, the Latin American mobilisation which foregrounded indigenous movements’ struggles), because of the complexities of organising the unorganised – especially women – in shack settlements and rural areas where the act of daily survival in the interstices of capitalist/non-capitalist articulations generates many more collisions of political self-interest than standard Marxist urban theory so far elucidates.

To speak of uneven and combined Marxism, therefore, is to invoke a political project on the South African Left that cannot but begin with the contradictory totality of the country’s social relations, both internal and external, at multiple geographic scales and at vastly different levels of development. And yet, the beginning cannot also be the end; the challenge for South African left politics is to create from this unevenness a hegemonic formation that is capable of moving toward fulfilling the global Left’s hopes in the anti-apartheid struggle, which was, in many respects, an anti-capitalist struggle as well. But
to articulate a left politics on this uneven ground is also to enrich the typi-
ally imported Marxist analysis, in the sense that the South African experience
heightens and encapsulates several otherwise familiar tensions – urban/rural,
worker/poor, local/national/global, society/nature, gender and so on – and can
therefore show, perhaps more clearly than can other contexts, the essential rela-
tions among them.

In what follows, we begin by describing the contemporary contours of protest
in South Africa and then return to the problem of the hegemony of the Tripartite
Alliance and its embrace of neoliberal policies, even if this has itself been some-
what uneven and the source of some tension among Alliance members. We
then discuss the development of a strategic impasse among South African social
movements and present and critique several theoretically informed alternative
routes out of or around the apparent cul-de-sac. We conclude by rearticulating
more precisely the stakes in proposing an uneven and combined Marxism and,
rather than proposing solutions, we draw upon it to pose the strategic questions
for an agency-centred South African Left more sharply.

CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN PROTEST

Writing five years after the end of apartheid, Andrew Nash (1999: 61) observed:

The struggle against Apartheid became at times a focus of the hopes of
the revolutionary left around the world. It represents a missed oppor-
tunity for the left not only in the more obvious sense that it did not
result in a real challenge to the power of global capitalism. It was also an
opportunity to transform the historical relationship of Marxist theory
and working class politics, and overcome the division which allows a
dialectical Marxism to flourish in the universities and journals, while
working class politics are dominated by the managerialism of Soviet
Marxism or social-democracy.

This sense of a lost opportunity persists in South African politics today. It is
found in the widespread discontent in townships and shack-dweller commun-
ities on the urban periphery over the rising cost of living and of previously
state-provided services such as water and electricity; it is found among the poor
in the militant protests for redistricting so that poor areas and rich areas are not
administratively separated, thereby hampering the poor’s ability to gain access to resources and public services (as in the towns of Khutsong and Balfour); it is seen in the divisions within the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu; and it is seen in the Treatment Action Campaign’s successful and well-known battle against Mbeki’s AIDS denialism and against Big Pharma’s price-gouging of antiretroviral medicines. And yet, in many of the successful instances of protest – for example, the reconnection of water and electricity (Bond 2011c); the rolling-back of privatisation schemes (Bond 2005) and the reduction in the price of antiretrovirals from $15 000 per person to zero (Geffen 2010) – revolutionary Marxists played important leadership roles, suggesting, perhaps, that Nash bends the stick a bit too far.

Nevertheless, the question of how far to bend the stick remains. There is no question that anti-racial apartheid also had within it the seeds of anti-class apartheid. This can be seen in the Treatment Action Campaign’s successful attack, not just on price-gouging by Big Pharma, but also on intellectual property rights, which were curtailed by the 2001 Doha exemption for medical emergencies. It can be seen in the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee’s work since 2000, not only to fight against the electricity company’s privatisation, rate changes and electricity cut-offs, but also to teach people how to illegally reconnect themselves to the grid. These are only part of what Peter Alexander (2010) calls a ‘rebellion of the poor’. In the wake of the introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) strategy that marked the Alliance’s definitive turn toward neoliberal macro-economic policy, the most militant communities that took to the streets in protest and that formed the new urban social movements were relatively privileged. They already had houses, but were now fighting a defensive battle just to stay on in the urban ghettos. Those who clung on to spaces in the city in shacks appeared to be more patient. The Alliance’s promises to the poor included access to the formal ghetto, while at the same time, its municipal officials were evicting those who already had access for non-payment, as employment became precarious when unemployment increased to more than forty per cent of the workforce. For a while, the enormous legitimacy of the ANC explained this patience.

But from the late 1990s, ongoing waves of protests broke across the country’s formal townships and shack settlements and the ‘new urban social movements’ formed in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town from 1999. Though the first waves ebbed after a national protest at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, more surges were noticed from mid-2004
Uneven and combined marxism within South Africa’s urban social movements in Zevenfontein, north of Johannesburg, and in Harrismith in the Free State (where repression was marked by shooting and death) and in Durban’s Kennedy Road where, beginning in early 2005, shack-dweller protest coalesced into the Abahlali baseMjondolo (shack-dweller’s movement).

Yet, in many cases what started out as insurgencies outside the control of the Alliance were siphoned off into calls for participation, legal challenges and ‘voice’. Furthermore, one of the striking elements of South African protest is its failure to ‘scale up’, or join together either geographically or politically. With a few exceptions, the recent upsurge of service-delivery protests have taken the form of ‘popcorn protests’, that is, movements that fly high, move according to where the wind blows – even in xenophobic directions at times – and then fall to rest quite quickly (Petras and Morley 1990: 53). There have been several attempts at coordination in the mid-2000s: Johannesburg’s Anti-Privatisation Forum brought together service-delivery protest groups, students, left political activists (including, at first, some in the municipal workers’ union and the SACP) and independent-left trade unions; the Social Movements Indaba, which from 2002 to 2008 combined community struggles; and since 2011, the Democratic Left Front (DLF) has taken a similar initiative. Despite these efforts, and in part because of continual splintering of independent left forces and a failure to make common cause with the Left of the labour movement, neither common programmes, nor bridging organisational strategies that can challenge neoliberalism on a national level, have developed. Three elements of this failure – reflecting the uneven and combined nature of anti-capitalism in South Africa today – are worth noting here: the importance of access, localism and leadership.

Access

Social movements often organise around sets of demands on the state that are, at least in principle, winnable. Service-delivery protests targeting the privatisation of water supply or high charges for water use by the local water authority, or targeting the regressive kilowatt-per-hour charge on electricity, or the eviction of shack-dwellers from squatted land, all imply the possibility of success. In Durban’s rebellious Chatsworth community (Desai 2002), for example, in order to achieve de facto recognition and therefore the delivery of services that would keep the movement constituency close to its leadership, movement activists increasingly joined with the city council in various committees to administer and monitor the movement’s success. A decade after the initial
1999 uprising, political work mainly involved technical issues and oversight over upgrading, liaison with welfare departments and a range of other interventions which pressed, not for radical policy change, but focused instead on merely getting existing policy implemented (Hinely 2009). This also inevitably brought the movement into close working relationships with ANC local councillors and limited the autonomy of the movement, ultimately leading to enormous disappointments in Chatsworth when official promises were broken and municipal contractors engaged in fraud.

Likewise, in Durban’s shacklands, in order to get recognition from the local council, shack-dweller activists had to ensure that no more shacks were built. Activists also had to ward off competitors. This was especially so if an organisation defined its role as ensuring delivery. It was paradoxical but increasingly common that movements took political positions sharply critical of neoliberal policies on the one hand, while negotiating for better delivery within those policy frameworks on the other.

Of course, this is a common feature of social movements and of poor people’s movements beyond the South African context. There is a recurring question of how to consolidate a movement’s ‘victories’ without demobilising it and how to move beyond the initial ‘winnable’ demands to more radical ones that cannot be so easily administered. In the South African context, however, this problem is deepened by the sheer weight of the ANC’s presence. Though there are a significant variety of political positions taken by local ANC branches and officials, larger matters of policy and financing are settled at the centre, while implementation – and enforcement – depends greatly on authorities at the local level. Reaching the centre, therefore, is fundamentally difficult given the fact that the service-delivery protests tend to limit their demands to locally constituted authorities, with the possible exception of Eskom, the utility that provides ninety-five per cent of South Africa’s electricity (Eskom sells energy both to municipalities as well as to four million individual households – mainly in black townships and rural areas – who were retail customers dating back to the apartheid era). Access problems therefore imply a need for protesters to ‘jump scale’ from local to national and sometimes also to global, for the World Bank has been known to give ‘instrumental’ advice on matters such as water pricing (Bond 2000 and 2002).

Localism and the geographic scales of protest organisation
Marxist urban theorists, following the geographer Henri Lefebvre, speak of social relations unfolding on multiple geographic scales. Scales combine aspects
of people's own construction of the extent of their social relations and boundaries of the arenas in which they exist. They thus depend, too, on historically accreted understandings of the spatial limitations exerted on these relations and on the physical properties that may inscribe them. As Sallie Marston writes, they ‘are the outcome of both everyday life and macro-level social structures’ (2000: 221). Finally, the framings of scale – framings that can have both rhetorical and material consequences – are often contradictory and contested and are not necessarily enduring. To say, therefore, that contemporary South African protest – with several exceptions such as the Treatment Action Campaign and for a time, the Jubilee South Africa network, as well as some of the more innovative community groups in the major cities – is characteristically local in orientation is to make an observation about the scale of the protests.

There is nothing inherently wrong with the localist orientation of protest. To the extent that participants stop evictions that affect them; to the extent that they force local authorities to increase the free allowance of electricity and water and lower fees for anything above the survival allowance; to the extent that a ‘residue’ of protest emerges as a measure of local institutional safeguard against further abuse; to this extent, they are better off for having protested. From a Marxist perspective, however, limiting protest to the local scale both narrows the immediate transformative potential of social movements and in the longer term, disadvantages both the movements and the people who comprise them. The same can be said about the sectoral narrowness, in which struggles around issues such as the ‘water sector’, economic reform advocacy, gender, energy justice, climate activism, access to education, healthcare advocacy and myriad of more specific struggles fail to connect the dots between one another, both in South Africa and across the world (notwithstanding a World Social Forum movement meant – but apparently unable – to solve this problem) (Bond 2005).

What does going beyond localism mean? To ask the question begs, first of all, a more precise definition of what constitutes the ‘local’ in the present case. Here, we propose that ‘local’ in South African protest denotes a focus on administrative and jurisdictional boundaries, on the one hand and on the site of social reproduction, on the other. The extremely vigorous protest movements in the country focus most of their attention on the failings of local councils and governments which are themselves both the local enforcers of ANC policies formulated on the national scale – often influenced by the demands of global brokers of capital (the South African Treasury sets great store by its
international credit ratings) – and often, political machines in which allegiance to the ANC line at the time is paramount for gaining access to decision-making processes. They are also focused on the circumstances of life in communities in which many people share abysmal living conditions.

As people active in these struggles, we can confirm that these were not originally meant to be narrow and localised. We initially shared the hope that struggles at the community level – at what provisionally could be called the point of reproduction – would have a quality and depth to them that would enable radical social antagonisms to flourish in ways that were unthinkable in the world of regular wage-work, at the ‘point of production’. As an idea, it makes sense. People live in communities 24 hours a day. With a huge mass of unemployed people stuck in these ghettos, many with experience in previous struggles, including that against apartheid, it would be easy for demands made from these sites to be backed up with the force of mass organisations. All that was needed was a focus on bread-and-butter township or shack issues and then an ideological extrapolation to broader political questions. Or so our thinking went, along with that of various segments of the independent (non-ANC, non-SACP) Left.

Focusing on the site of reproduction made sense in another way. In fact, the townships, shack dweller communities, flat dweller communities and dorpies of South Africa are collectively the site of a vast amount of economic activity and the unemployed are, as often as not, also the marginally employed, the unofficially employed and the precariously employed, which also means that they play no role in the pre-eminent labour organisation in the country, Cosatu, which has its base in the country’s heavy and extractive industries and public sector. Only the narrowest view of the working class would ignore the precariat.

And yet, the local community as a site of post-apartheid resistance to neoliberalism has been much more difficult to sustain. Partly this is because of an assumption, seldom made by those actually living in townships, that there exists substantial ground for unity flowing from merely living under the same conditions. One version of this assumption, as articulated in Latin American cities by James Petras and Morris Morley (1990: 53), is that:

The power of these new social movements comes from the fact that they draw on the vast heterogeneous labour force that populates the main thoroughfares and the alleyways; the marketplaces and street corners; the interstices of the economy and the nerve centres of production; the exchange and finance centres; the university plazas, railway stations and
the wharves – all are brought together in complex localized structures which feed into tumultuous homogenizing national movements.

In the South African context, however, while localism produced militancy, it did not necessarily produce solidarity on any regular basis. Indeed, shack-dwellers often face the ire of those with a tighter, but still precarious, hold on stable tenure in the townships. Township residents can be mobilised for violence against shack-dwellers and immigrants as much as they can be mobilised for solidarity.

Another source of optimism for the fusing of proletarian and precariat identities is alluded to by John Saul (1975: 175), recalling arguments made nearly four decades ago:

In a capitalism in crisis the ‘classic strengths of the urban working class’ could become ‘more evident,’ with the ‘the upper stratum of the workers [then] most likely to identify downward [to become] a leading force within a revolutionary alliance of exploited elements in the society’.

In the South African context, therefore, the mobilisation of communities could, in theory, join up with the existing organisation of workers through Cosatu, provided the latter could peel itself away from allegiance to the ANC and the Alliance’s embrace of neoliberalism, especially in the light of clearly deteriorating conditions.

But beyond the disappointments generated by a Cosatu much changed by its entry into the Alliance and the decline of the shop-steward leadership that had provided much of its strength during the anti-apartheid struggle, local communities were themselves difficult to coalesce around consistent analyses of the problems that led to their oppression. Abstraction from the local to multiple scales proved difficult once the problems of evictions, electricity, sewerage and potable water were addressed.

Finally, it must be said that from a strategic point of view, there is some value in being able to organise at a scale commensurate with that of one’s adversary’s organisation. The ANC is organised at the national level and it staffs its organisation by the positioning of cadres in local areas. This means that it centralises power and is able to exert significant – though far from total – control over local cadres. Thus although some local councillors, for example, are more ‘trigger happy’ when it comes to repressing service-delivery and shack-dweller protests (and there have been more than a dozen deaths of protesters at the hands of
police and non-official enforcers), the ANC’s centralised organisation, which is extremely averse to criticism, has set a policy of repression while also trying to channel protest into the least threatening, least direct forms, such as marches, as opposed to land occupations. The ANC’s factional violence against its own cadres is notorious, such as in Durban where in mid-2011 the party’s leader was assassinated. But by December 2011 the ANC city manager and political elites were sufficiently united to unleash violent young party members on DLF activists who staged a march of more than 5 000 against the United Nations climate summit and who put up signs a few days later in the City Hall, during a visit by President Zuma.

Leadership
Another set of problems that arises from contemporary South African protest is also familiar to students of social movements and revolutionary politics, namely, the problem of leadership and particularly, the role of intellectuals in the movement. Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of intellectuals is apposite here. Gramsci (1971) argues, in essence, that intellectuals are those who give shape, through mental labour, to specific sets and sites of social relations. Those he calls ‘traditional’ intellectuals are those whose roles as intellectuals were formed in earlier periods and thus appear as separate from and above contemporary class relations and antagonisms, such as clergy and the professional scholars and teachers. ‘Organic’ intellectuals, by contrast, are those whose intellectual labour shapes the projects of entire groups of people, such as industrialists and union militants. By virtue of their social position, traditional intellectuals can make claims about universals, whereas organic intellectuals allegedly articulate particularities. But as Gramsci (1971: 4–23) makes clear, traditional intellectuals are just as moored to class as are organic ones and in fact newly dominant groups work not only through their own organic intellectuals, such as managers and consultants, but also through traditional intellectuals. In South Africa, many organic intellectuals arose out of the anti-apartheid struggle. Many were linked to the trade union movement, others to the ANC, still others to the SACP and others to the Trotskyist and other independent left-wing formations. Even since the apartheid period, the boundary between organisations of traditional intellectuals – for example, the universities and NGOs – and the organisations that produced and were produced by organic intellectuals in and of social movements has been porous. Student militants were enormously important to the anti-apartheid struggle and post-apartheid South African universities
have been home to some academics who have aligned themselves closely with, and worked within, the social movements. The question this has raised within social movements, however, is that of vanguardism.

In some social movement efforts, significant participation by university-based and foundation-funded scholar-activists and NGOs seemed to other participants to reproduce inequalities. Accusations of ‘ventriloquism’ and ‘substitutionism’ by academics within movements have been traded (Bohmke 2009a, 2009b, 2010a and 2010b). Some university-based intellectuals have argued that since ‘the poor are the embodiment of the truth’, the role of traditional intellectuals is to reflect their positions to the world and simply act in concert with the poor (see critical discussion initiated by Walsh 2008). This kind of analysis sometimes results in the romanticisation of urban social movements and also denies the complex articulations of movements and the education of their leaders. There is no doubt about the dangers of vanguardism. The question is whether a populism that homogenises ‘the poor’ is capable of building the necessary coalitions to bring protest up to a regularly coordinated non-local scale.

The question of leadership has also led to the involution of protest, especially divisions within social movements and their networks, including the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, the Western Cape Anti-Evictions Campaign, the Landless People’s Movement, Jubilee South Africa and the Social Movements Indaba. These divisions are, however, more a symptom than a cause of the strategic impasse faced by South African urban movements today. Scholars of movements have noted that internal tensions often come to the fore when the there is no clear way forward for externally oriented action (Polletta 2005).

Together, the contradictory tendencies of access, localism and leadership have produced a movement sector that is at once extraordinarily militant in its actions and profoundly moderate in its politics. The increasing turn away from electoral politics in poor areas in favour of protest politics signals a strong disenchantment with the apparatus of representative government and with the actual governance of the (mostly) ANC officers. On the other hand, in spite of this disenchantment, South African movements are nowhere close to articulating alternatives and doing so would require movement leaders to engage in the sustained dialogue necessary to abstract from local concerns to national and even international ones. The potential is there: the Treatment Action Campaign’s successful demand for decommmodified and locally made (generic) AIDS medicines and the Campaign against Water Privatisation’s fight against
Johannesburg Water’s outsourcing management to Suez, took activism in these sectors out of tired social policy or NGO-delivery debates and set them at the cutting edge of the world’s anti-neoliberal backlash.

TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE HEGEMONY

Another inescapable feature of South Africa’s contemporary politics is the continued – though increasingly fragile – hegemony of the ANC. The ANC enjoys an enormous amount of legitimacy and ongoing prestige, in spite of the fact that nearly twenty years of ANC rule has resulted in deepening poverty and inequality, and in spite of the visible divisions within the ANC, as for example, in the clashes between President Zuma and his predecessor, Mbeki, and between Zuma and the ANC Youth League leader, Julius Malema. The ANC was the main organisation of the international anti-apartheid struggle and even though it was banned within South Africa from 1963 to 1990, it quickly reasserted itself as the largest, best-organised group capable of taking the reins of power during the early 1990s transition. In establishing its hegemony at the local level, it supplanted already-existing organisations with its own (for example, women’s organisations and youth groups) and has dominated electoral politics since the first post-apartheid elections in 1994.

The Tripartite Alliance is dominated by the ANC, which, under Nelson Mandela, began to separate the ideological strands that had undergirded the most militant elements of the anti-apartheid movement, both in South Africa and abroad. Capital flight increased after the democratic elections of 1994 and, in reaction, in early 1995 the ANC government relaxed exchange controls to prove its new loyalty to the Washington Consensus. By the mid-1990s, indeed, ANC leaders had distanced the party from the interventionist currents in the movement. In his first interview after winning the presidency in 1994, Mandela stated: ‘In our economic policies … there is not a single reference to nationalisation, and this is not accidental. There is not a single slogan that will connect us with any Marxist ideology’ (interview with Ken Owens, Sunday Times, 1 May 1994). Although he inexplicably missed the nationalisation mandate he was given in the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (African National Congress 1994: 80), Mandela’s specific reference to Marxist ideology in many senses reflects the strong strand of anti-capitalist thinking that linked into resurgent struggles against apartheid from the early 1970s. Through its
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Policy and slogan of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), moreover, the ANC deracialised capitalism – albeit for a very few billionaires – and separated the profitability dynamic of South African capitalism from racial domination. The latter has remained strong, of course, but more notable is the rise of class apartheid techniques (Bond 2005).

Mandela’s avowed anti-Marxism did not, however, so alienate the SACP and Cosatu that they abandoned the coalition. To the contrary, the initial redistributive promises in the ANC platform, eclipsed by Gear in 1996 as well as by numerous White Papers starting in mid-1994, gave the SACP and Cosatu power in administering what might, in other circumstances, have been the development of a managerialist, social-democratic welfare state. The SACP chairman, after all, was Joe Slovo (prior to his death in early 1995) and his 1994 U-turn towards a fully neoliberal housing policy (Bond 2000; Republic of South Africa 1994), as the World Bank explicitly recommended, was the main signal that the Reconstruction and Development Programme was finished before it had even begun. Slovo reversed nearly every major mandate he was provided.

Though centralised, corporatist bargaining was not part even of the initial coalition deal, Cosatu had a prominent place at the table to represent the concerns of the organised working class. It did so with enough friction with the ANC to ensure that it could boast of putting up a fight, even while lauding the not-really-corporatist arrangements of the Alliance as corporatist, suggesting that it in fact had codetermination powers (in sites such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council) and that the working class was more institutionally powerful than it patently was. After all, in the post-apartheid era the share of profits to wages shifted in favour of capital by nine per cent. And the SACP gained some power over the state’s redistributionist functions, with the Mandela era witnessing central committee members in positions that included the ministers or deputy ministers of trade and industry, public works, housing, transport, public services and even defence. At once, this meant that the SACP had something to lose from challenging the ANC within the coalition too strongly and it was consistent with the party’s long-standing line that racial democracy had to precede the larger economic project of socialism. It also meant that the party would be at the frontlines of managing a rapidly changing urban landscape as the lifting of residency laws under apartheid resulted in the vast growth of shack communities both on the urban periphery and in already urbanised township areas. That the party endorsed Gear and the neoliberal Africa strategy (the New Partnership for Africa’s Development) and supported
a platform that put private investment at the centre of its housing strategy – in a period characterised by capital flight – suggests that it was a comfortable member of the publicly anti-Marxist ANC-led coalition and that its constant support for the coalition’s neoliberal macro-economic initiatives at multiple scales in 1996, 2001 and 2010 should not surprise (Bond 2000).

Nevertheless, the Alliance’s cohesion and hegemony has not been rock-solid. There have been tensions, from the start, both between Cosatu and the ANC and within Cosatu about the ANC and the union federation’s role in the Alliance and what it gets out of it. These tensions extend backwards in time to before Cosatu’s founding in 1985 and speak both to the shop-floor militancy of 1970s unionism in South Africa and to the tensions around the integration of the union movement into the nationalist project. But these tensions were raised with the introduction of Gear by the ruling party’s neoliberal bloc and ultimately resulted in Cosatu’s support for Jacob Zuma’s successful bid for ANC leadership against Thabo Mbeki in the 2007 ANC National Conference and the ANC’s humiliating firing of Mbeki as president in September 2008.

And yet Zuma’s government has done little better than Mbeki’s and has not changed the country’s neoliberal macro-economic course (Maharaj, Desai and Bond 2011). A three-week strike of public-sector workers in 2010, most of whom were members of Cosatu, which both imposed real hardship and threatened to spread to other sectors of the economy, signalled the ripening of the contradictions of Cosatu’s continued alliance with the ANC. Cosatu’s membership has become older and more skilled as neoliberalism has resulted in segmented labour markets and the proliferation of informal work and a growing proportion of its members are employees of the state. For this – and for the access to a different lifestyle for leaders who move into government positions – Cosatu depends on the ANC-dominated state. On the other hand, continued austerity and attempts to squeeze public-sector workers – visible from Johannesburg to Wisconsin, from Durban to Athens – in the face of already desperately inadequate services and a massive and visible gap between rich and poor (even among Africans), has led at least one Cosatu leader to criticise Zuma’s government as becoming a ‘predator state’ (Vavi 2011).

The fraying hegemony of the ANC with respect to its Alliance partners and the simple refusal of many township and shack-dweller communities to engage in the formal political process any longer, signify South Africa’s deep crisis. Nevertheless, the protests raise the question of whether dissent is solely about the delivery of services, or whether it signifies a bigger dissatisfaction with the
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Do protesters see continuity between the anti-apartheid struggle and the struggle today? Even in extreme cases of struggle (such as the disputes over district boundaries in Khutsong), the lead activists retained connections to the Alliance that, through its legitimacy from the anti-apartheid struggle and its patronage networks, were more durable than the centrifugal pressure to disconnect. And if a crisis consists in the fact that ‘the old is dying, but the new cannot yet be born’ (Gramsci 1971: 276), it begs the question of what ‘the new’ is and what its birthing process could look like.

THEORISING THE STRATEGIC IMPASSE

The question of how to move out of the crisis to a renewed revolutionary politics that separates the nationalist project from the politics of neoliberal development has garnered several answers. Each is partial and each, as we will argue, is inadequate to the task. In this section of the chapter, we will examine three that have particular currency: the expansion of rights through litigation; the claim for ‘the right to the city’, which is distinct from juridical rights-talk; and the creation of spaces for ‘participation’. In the following section, we will revisit the question of the impasse with reference to a reformulated Marxist account of uneven and combined development.

Rights

Community-based social movements have repeatedly gone to court to enforce their rights. And actual ‘victory’ in court is beyond our quibbling and indeed some offensive victories (nevirapine to halt HIV transmission during birth) and defensive successes (halting evictions) are occasionally recorded. Nevertheless, we consider insidious the constitutionalist discourse that envelops individual cases in an overall strategy: the idea that ‘the turn to law’ is a good or beneficial thing to do with the energies, affinities, possibilities and power of a movement.

The ‘turn to law’ discourse bears the unmistakeable scent of reform without a strategic sense of how to make more fundamental demands that bring into question barriers as large as property relations. The result is the kind of ‘reformist-reform’ (as Gorz [1967] put it) that entrenches the status quo. (In contrast, non-reformist reforms work against the internal logic of the dominant system and strengthen rather than co-opt the counter-hegemonic challengers.)
In this sense, the illegal occupation of land is far more powerful than a court’s ultimate granting of tenure to the occupiers. The turn to constitutionalism also has consequences for movement leadership; it is based on the conception that a certain professional legal caste among us can secure in the Constitutional Court meaningful precedents (and consequent compliance by the executive) that advance the struggle of the poor in a fundamental way.

To clarify: we are not opposed to going to court. This may be useful from time to time. But as a strategy – rather than as a tactic – it is limited and unable to compensate for weaknesses in protest organisation and militancy. For example, the Treatment Action Campaign’s victory against Mbeki in late 2003 was spurred, to some extent, by a mid-2001 Constitutional Court ruling that compelled his government to provide nevirapine to HIV-positive pregnant women in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission. In general, it is fair to say that the rights narrative was important to reducing stigmatisation and providing ‘dignity’ to those claiming their health rights. Also successful in the Constitutional Court was Durban’s Abahlali baseMjondolo shack-dwellers’ movement, which in 2009 won a major victory against a provincial housing ordinance justifying forced removals. Such removals continue unhindered, unfortunately, and at nearly the same moment that Abahlali baseMjondolo won the court victory, they were violently uprooted from their base in Kennedy Road.

Thus, as Gerald Rosenberg (1993) indicates, writing in the critical legal studies tradition, rights depend on their enforcement and courts cannot compel this. Further, court judgments can be reversed: a crucial rights narrative test came in the struggle to expand water provision to low-income Sowetans. A victory had been claimed by the Anti-Privatisation Forum in 2006 because after community struggles, water in Johannesburg is now produced and distributed by public agencies (the multinational firm with Soweto’s water contract, Suez, was sent back to Paris after its controversial 2001 to 2006 protest-ridden management of municipal water). In April 2008, a major constitutional lawsuit in the High Court resulted in a doubling of free water to 50 litres per person per day and the prohibition of pre-payment water meters. But the Constitutional Court reversed this decision in October 2009 on grounds that judges should not make such detailed policy and that the prevailing amounts of water and the self-disconnection delivery system were perfectly reasonable within the ambit of the South African Bill of Rights. Once again, this meant that activists were thrown back to understanding the limits of constitutionalism: they recommitted to illegal reconnections if required (Bond 2011c).
We therefore object simply to the subordination of a political discourse to a legal discourse – even if superficially an empowering one, in terms of ‘rights’ narratives – and therefore to the subordination of a radical discourse to a liberal one. As Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham argue, discourse ‘structures the possibility of what gets included and excluded and what gets done and what remains undone. Discourses authorise some to speak, some views to be taken seriously, while others are marginalised, derided, excluded and even prohibited’ (1994: 8–9). By flirting with legalism and the rights discourse, movements have seen their demands watered down into court pleadings. Heartfelt pleas are offered but for the observance of the purely procedural: consult us before you evict us. Demands for housing that could be generalised and spread, become demands for ‘in-situ upgrading’ and ‘reasonable government action’ and hence feed the politics of local solutions to the exclusion of demands that can be ‘scaled up’.

Right to the city
An alternative formulation of ‘rights’ is given by Lefebvre and David Harvey’s ‘right to the city’ argument. Harvey (2008: 23) is clear that the ‘right to the city’ is a collective right, rather than a liberal-individualist one and is based on the idea that ‘the freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is … the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights’. Because Harvey links urbanisation and therefore the way of life of an increasing majority of humanity to the absorption of capitalist surplus, the ‘right to the city’ implies empowering the mass of people to take the power from capitalists to produce their way of life and learn to wield it themselves. The current crisis of global capital has led to some of the uneven developments to which we have already referred in South Africa. The explosive price of real estate (nearly four hundred per cent from 1997 through to a 2007 peak) was facilitated by not only local over-accumulation but by the inflows of surplus global capital, thus contributing to the boom-bust dynamic in the construction trades even as the rest of the economy stagnated or worsened. ‘The results,’ Harvey (2008: 32) writes, ‘are indelibly etched on the spatial forms of our cities, which increasingly consist of fortified fragments, gated communities, and privatised public spaces kept under constant surveillance’. He continues, quoting Marcello Balbo:

[The city] is splitting into different separated parts, with the apparent formation of many ‘microstates’. Wealthy neighbourhoods provided with all kinds of services, such as exclusive schools, golf courses, tennis
courts and private police patrolling the area around the clock intertwine with illegal settlements where water is available only at public fountains, no sanitation system exists, electricity is pirated by a privileged few, the roads become mud streams whenever it rains, and where house-sharing is the norm (Harvey 2008: 32).

Harvey sees the ‘right to the city’ as a ‘both a working slogan and political ideal’ to democratise the ‘necessary connection between urbanization and surplus production and use’ (Harvey 2008: 40). However, in the South African context, the slogan has been taken up both by proponents of legalistic means of struggle and by the more autonomist-oriented shack-dweller campaigns and so the ‘right to the city’ can be seen as a kind of ambiguous hinge that joins quite different political orientations. For example, Marie Huchzermeyer argues that the South African Constitution mandates ‘an equal right to the city’ and that this requires movements to pursue marginal gains through the courts: ‘Urban reform in this sense is a pragmatic commitment to gradual but radical change towards grassroots autonomy as a basis for equal rights’. After all, she argues,

three components of the right to the city – equal participation in decision-making, equal access to and use of the city and equal access to basic services – have all been brought before the Constitutional Court through a coalition between grassroots social movements and a sympathetic middle-class network.

Nevertheless, she also argues that human-rights ‘language is fast being usurped by the mainstream within the UN, UN-Habitat, NGOs, think tanks, consultants etc., in something of an empty buzz word, where the concept of grassroots autonomy and meaningful convergence is completely forgotten’ (Huchzermeyer 2009: 3–4).

Unfortunately, given the power imbalances, Huchzermeyer and others who make the ‘right to the city’ claim run the risk of merely extending a slogan, rather than a strategic vision, to the question of the current impasse in South African social movements. The danger here is particularly felt in the ways in which ‘the city’ can be taken to mean ‘particular cities’ (which, on one level, they must) and therefore to privilege local politics and local solutions, without a larger-scale analysis that could provide a kind of standard by which locally generated choices
Uneven and combined marxism within South Africa’s urban social movements could be subjected to criticism. One result is that like-minded groups often accept one another’s political stances while discounting the possibilities of coalition across types of community: hence, for example, ‘Abahlalism’ – ‘shack-dwellerism’ – arises as a kind of autonomistic-populist practice in which the deep suspicion of non-shack-dwellers, even if sometimes merited, finds its mirror image in the idea that political ideas are invalidated or validated simply by virtue of their issuing from ‘the poor’ (Desai 2006).

‘Participation’

A clause in the Constitution as well as various laws compel municipalities to involve residents in ‘community participation’ processes to enable people to directly influence decisions that affect them. John Williams (2006: 197), reporting on research in the Western Cape, finds that ‘[m]ost community participation exercises in post-apartheid South Africa are largely spectator politics, where ordinary people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes, [and] are often the objects of administrative manipulation’. As a result, formal municipal governance processes are ‘a limited form of democracy [that] give[s] rise to an administered society rather than a democratic society’ since there is no real debate of policy or of social programmes by the working-class electorate and government officials (198). In Durban, a study of community participation in local economic development processes by Richard Ballard and his colleagues reveals that such processes allow ordinary people ‘to demand accountability’ from ‘elected representatives and sometimes quite senior officials’. However, they are ‘consultative rather than participatory’ and ‘invariably become conspicuous for the issues they leave out, and for the voices they did not hear’ (Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006: 4).

This was particularly apparent in the way that the Durban ‘Citizen’s Voice’ process was handled by the city and the main water NGO (Mvula Trust), invoking participation by what might be termed ‘civilised society’ as a way of encouraging poor communities to consume less water just after the municipal prices had doubled in real terms over a period of six years (Bond 2011a).

In a different vein, Williams (2006: 197) concludes that ‘community participation in South Africa is informed by the memory of community struggle – a radical form of participation – against the racist apartheid State’ and that this must be harnessed. ‘It is precisely this repertoire of radical strategies that can and should be revisited and adapted, to advance the interests of the materially marginalized communities at the local level’. Luke Sinwell applies a theoretical
approach first developed in the South African context by Faranak Miraftab (Sinwell 2009: 31), based on a distinction between ‘invited’ versus ‘invented’ spaces of popular participation. The ward committees, imbizos (government-initiated public forums) and integrated development plans of invited participation contrast with spaces invented through ‘self-activity’ such as community self-organisation, direct action and other non-official mechanisms of exerting pressure. Based on extensive research conducted in Alexandra, one of the country’s oldest and poorest black working-class townships, he concludes that progressive change is more likely to emanate from the use of invented than from invited spaces. However, Sinwell laments that community activism in the invented spaces also fails to question power relations and social structures in a fundamental way. Community organisations tend to work within budgetary constraints set by the state and as a result community groups end up competing among themselves for limited resources rather than questioning the neoliberal framework and its ideological underpinnings (Miraftab 2004).

COMBINED AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT, COMBINED AND UNEVEN MARXISM

The importance of Marxist criticism is to uncover, in particular situations, what is ‘systematic’ and what is ‘conjunctural’, as Gramsci (1971: 177) put it. This, in turn, helps to distinguish – and, therefore, to both facilitate and structure discussion about – short- and longer-term demands. The ‘pure militancy’ of an immediate politics of the poor does not do this easily. It is rather through dialogue, not just among the poor but among the several sectors of society caught at various points in the contradictions of neoliberalism, that a larger political formation capable of a sustained revolt against capital and the creation of a new order can be built.

Here, Trotsky’s understanding of ‘combined and uneven development’ is useful. Though it can be read somewhat more broadly, most interpretations of Trotsky understand him to have meant ‘combined’ development to refer to the relations among different levels of development within a given nation (Barker 2006; Trotsky 1962). In South Africa, the logical corollary is to ‘articulations of modes of production’, a concept promoted by Harold Wolpe to explain race–class politics linking sites of surplus value extraction to bantustans (where impoverished women provided for the reproduction of cheap labour power
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at a vast distance), but which is even more relevant in post-apartheid South Africa given enhanced migrancy, xenophobia and adverse gender power relations (Wolpe 1980). Geographers such as Harvey and Neil Smith have emphasised that even within nations, the combined unevenness of development is given spatial expression. Apartheid was, in its nature, both a racial order and a spatial one and it enforced uneven and combined development in almost caricatured forms. The systematic separation of racial groups, the profound under-development of black areas and the racial segmentation of labour markets suggested to many on the Left (including us), as we noted earlier, that the fight against apartheid was coterminous with the fight against capitalism. Though we were correct that capitalism and racism were mutually reinforcing during the twentieth century, the conventional mistake by radicals was in thinking that the defeat of one durable but ultimately conjunctural manifestation of racism, apartheid, would bring the capitalist system to its knees.

Accordingly, we found that apartheid was conjunctural, but uneven and combined development is systematic (Bond 2005; Maharaj, Desai and Bond 2011). The particular spatial manifestations of uneven and combined development are also conjunctural, though, again, they can be extremely durable. Hence, fights against eviction or for clean and affordable water, even while encountering the severe power of state coercion, and sometimes taking years to resolve, do little to change the systemic dynamics of uneven and combined development that are deepened in new ways in neoliberal South Africa.

Trotsky also marshalled the theory of uneven and combined development to argue against ‘stageism’ or the idea that revolutionary politics depended on a given country’s going through the specific, drawn-out processes of capitalist development found in other countries. What this meant, however, was that coalitions among workers across space and across situations in the process of capital accumulation (for example, industrial workers, peasants) were central to revolutionary potentials, but that these potentials were realisable, even if with difficulty. The contemporary conjuncture in South Africa, beset by entrenched neoliberalism imposed by a weakening-but-still-present ruling Alliance dominated by the ANC, has seen the accumulation of protests by township residents over services, by shack-dwellers over evictions and services and by the relatively ‘privileged’ public-sector workers over pay and the quality of services they provide. Though the public-sector workers’ strike was suspended without winning the union’s key demands, it came close to bringing out private-sector workers – all in the formal sector – as well.
The question for an ‘uneven, combined Marxism’ is how to take advantage of the unevenness and particular conjunctural combinations of social relations in South Africa and beyond. The present period in South Africa exemplifies the dynamics of uneven and combined development and its spatial and social consequences. Within South Africa, it is important to think about how, for example, shack-dwellers’ struggles and public-sector workers’ struggles could be linked up, even as the latter’s relative privilege and operation in the formal labour market may make them wary of such an alliance and as the former’s distrust of co-optation creates an equal hesitancy. The Durban climate summit – the Conference of the Parties 17 – illustrated how very difficult it is to conjoin labour, community and environmental considerations, especially in the context of a set-piece ‘Global Day of Action’ march (3 December 2012) when distances between constituencies, political traditions and issue areas remain debilitating (Bond 2011b).

How could a joined-up movement respond to the conjunctural pressures upon it, such as the apparent advantages to the unemployed of labour-market flexibilisation schemes or to the quality of life of township residents of evicting shack-dweller settlements? What kind of ways can – or should – Marxists talk about to take on the systemic problems of uneven and combined development with people who are located in different, and even sometimes opposed, areas of this combination? What organisational forms might be applied to start this conversation and yet keep it focused on the systematic elements of the present? How do we move beyond the concern for access, the localism, the constitution-alism and the anti-political populism of contemporary protest – even as these sometimes yield concrete results – while also moving beyond the ambiguity of a simple slogan? To us, the protests represent a profound critique of neoliberalism by working-class communities. But are protesters aware of the greater significance of their protests? And to what extent do protesters’ demands require solutions that challenge neoliberal policy and even entail a challenge to the capitalist mode of production? Or is it the case that the overarching neoliberal economic framework constrains the realisation of not only the people’s aspirations, but their ability to think beyond capitalism?

We agree with Nash that the answers to these questions will not come through the elaboration of a new, ‘proper’ Marxist line by mainly university-based, white intellectuals and that the great task of a renewal of South African Marxism will depend on the elaboration of a new stratum of organic intellectuals from the movements (though not necessarily bypassing the universities).
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who can, perhaps, move among them in ways that enable them to abstract from the local without abandoning the reality of it. Being able to do this partly depends on the ability of South African movements to look beyond themselves, to a world increasingly resistant to neoliberalism and to contribute to, and take from, a growing global movement. The successes of the Treatment Action Campaign were one such contribution, although this movement also teaches the dangers of self-liquidation into state-conjoined service delivery and narrow sectoral politics, as well as a seeming over-reliance on foreign funding.

In encountering similar-but-different movements and contexts, movement intellectuals gain new perspectives on the possibilities of coalitions and on the similar-but-different permutations of combined and uneven development elsewhere; these can enhance their capacity to reinterpret local conditions by denaturalising existing political categories and divisions. Indeed, in calling for a ‘combined and uneven Marxism’, we intend to suggest that the way forward cannot lie in the search for the pure revolutionary subject, whether the worker, the township ‘poors’, the shack-dweller, the organic feminist, the red-green social environmentalist, or anyone else and it cannot lie in the search for the perfect location, whether the household, community, farm, benefits office, oil refinery or factory. Combined and uneven development makes clear that if the Marxist view that people are a ‘nexus of social relations’ holds, a combined and uneven Marxism must draw on the interdependence of locations in these relations in order to reinforce our interdependence, rather than accept the capitalist combination of unevenness and mutual social antagonisms among those from whom capital is extracted. Of course this is to state a problem rather than to proclaim a new strategy. The development of organic intellectuals from within the movements, and their discussions and alliances with one another as well as with ‘traditional’ Marxist intellectuals, are the only way to move forward on this front.

AFTERWORD: MARIKANA’S MEANINGS (by Patrick Bond)

The prior words, drawn from consecutive (not synthetic) presentations to a Wolpe Lecture at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2010, were drawn together as an essay in 2012, prior to the Marikana massacre. There has not been occasion since for the authors to generate a coherent, joint approach to the massacre, but a few ideas follow the logic of the argument above. First, most obviously,
when a ruling party in any African country sinks to the depths of allowing its police force to serve white-dominated multinational capital by killing dozens of black workers so as to end a brief strike, it represents an inflection point. Beyond just the obvious human-rights and labour-relations travesties, the incident offered the potential for a deep political rethink, unveiling extreme depths of ruling-class desperation represented by the fusion of Cyril Ramaphosa’s black capitalism, Lonmin’s collaboration (through Ramaphosa) with the mining and police ministers, the brutality of state prosecutors who charged the victims with the crime, the alleged ‘sweetheart unionism’ of the increasingly unpopular National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the fragility of a Cosatu split between Zuma/Ramaphosa loyalists and those with worker interests at heart.

The site of the immediate conflict was the platinum belt. South Africa’s share of world platinum reserves is more than eighty per cent. The belt stretches in a distinct arc around the west side of the Johannesburg–Pretoria megalopolis of ten million people and up toward the Zimbabwe border. The area also has vast gold and coal deposits and the nine main mining firms operating mostly in this region recorded $4.5 billion in 2011 profits from their South African operations. In this context, there are six basic factual considerations about what happened at Marikana, 100 kilometres north-west of Johannesburg, beginning around 4 pm on 16 August 2012.

First, the provincial police department, backed by national special commando reinforcements, ordered several thousand striking platinum miners—rock drill operators—off a hill where they had gathered as usual over the prior four days, surrounding the workers with barbed wire and firing teargas. Second, the hill was more than a kilometre away from Lonmin property; the mineworkers were not blocking mining operations or any other facility, and although they were on an ‘unprotected’ wildcat strike, they had a constitutional right to gather. As they left the hill, 34 workers were killed and 78 others suffered bullet-wound injuries, all at the hands of police weapons, leaving some crippled for life, with some shot dead while moving through a small gap in the fencing, and the others murdered in a field and on a smaller hill nearby, as they fled. Third, no police were hurt in the operation—although it appears that a sole miner with a pistol fired as he entered the gap—and some of the police attempted a clumsy cover-up by placing crude weapons next to the dead bodies of several men after their deaths.

That day, 270 mineworkers were arrested, followed by a weekend during which state prosecutors charged the men with the ‘murder’ of their colleagues
Uneven and combined marxism within South Africa’s urban social movements (under an obscure apartheid-era ‘common purpose’ doctrine of collective responsibility), followed by an embarrassed climb-down by the national prosecutor after major social constituencies registered utter disgust. There was no apparent effort by police to discipline errant troops in subsequent months, even when massacre-scene photographs showed that weapons were planted on dead mineworker bodies and indeed the police moved into Marikana shack settlements again and again to intimidate activists in the wake of the massacre, including fatally shooting – with rubber bullets one Saturday morning – a popular local councilwoman (from the ruling party) who sided with the protesting mineworkers and communities.

The details about how the massacre unfolded were not initially obvious, for mainstream media were embedded behind police lines (unaware at the time of the ‘killing kopje’) and it was only a few days later that observers – the September Imbizo Commission, University of Johannesburg researcher Peter Alexander and his research team (Alexander et al. 2012) and Daily Maverick reporters (especially Greg Marinovich and Sipho Hlongwane) – uncovered the other shootings. Most journalists relied on official sources, especially the police and the National Prosecuting Authority, even when they were discredited by the revelation of persistent fibbery. Such media bias allowed the impression to emerge in conventional wisdom that police were ‘under violent attack’ by irrational, drugged and potentially murderous men from rural areas in the Eastern Cape’s Pondoland, as well as from Lesotho and Mozambique, who used muti (traditional medicine) to ward off bullets. Plenty of press reports and even the SACP’s official statement refer to the workers’ pre-capitalist spiritual sensibilities to try to explain why they might have charged toward the police, through the five-metre gap in the barbed wire, with their primitive spears and wooden sticks. In April 2013, the Farlam Commission that Zuma mandated to investigate the massacre was anticipating testimony from the mineworkers’ main sangoma about his influence, but just before the scheduled appearance, he was murdered in his Eastern Cape homestead by someone shooting with an R5 rifle, the same make as the police use.

Another layer of complexity is related to the prior murder of six workers, two security guards and two policemen close by, when a march on 11 August 2012 by striking workers against the NUM – accused of selling out the workers – was met with gunfire, apparently from NUM officials. Tension in the area mounted quickly and when the security guards and police were killed by some of the Marikana mineworkers, this generated a sensibility of vindication; gruesome
footage of the murdered policemen had circulated amongst the police who were on duty on 16 August. Later, the assassination of NUM shop stewards increased in pace, as well. But it must be recalled that this was not brand new conflict, for strike-related violence over the prior year at Lonmin and the other major platinum mining operations had left scores of other workers dead, with 50 murders just six months earlier when 17 000 mineworkers were temporarily fired nearby at the world’s second-largest platinum firm, Implats, before gaining wage concessions.

South Africa learned a great deal about labour’s desperation in subsequent days, because explaining the intensity of the Lonmin workers’ militancy required understanding their conditions of production and reproduction. The typical rock drill operator’s take-home pay was said to be in the range of $500 (ZAR4 000 in 2012) per month, with an additional $225 (ZAR1 800) per month as a ‘living out allowance’ to spare Lonmin and other employers the cost of maintaining migrant-labour hostels. Most workers were from Lesotho, Mozambique and the Eastern Cape’s Pondoland; many therefore maintained two households, having families to support in both urban and rural settings. At the same time, structural changes in the mines were blurring the distinction between shop steward and foreman, hence drawing NUM local leaders into a cosy corporatist arrangement with the mining houses. But controlling the workers would be another matter, and NUM found itself challenged by a new union that had come from its own dissident ranks the Association of Mining and Construction Union (Amcu).

Indeed, tens of thousands of workers who subsequently went on wildcat strikes in the North West, Limpopo, Free State, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and Gauteng provinces did not do so out of the blue. They began leaving NUM in droves from late 2011 because of its worsening reputation as a sweetheart union, mostly moving to Amcu. The workers had participated in various forms of labour- and community-based protests over the prior few years, as the three hundred and fifty per cent price increase for the metal during the 2002 to 2008 boom left the main companies – AngloPlats, Implats and Lonmin – extremely prosperous, without evidence of trickle-down to the semi-proletarianised workforce. So it was that 3 000 Lonmin rock drill operators demanded a raise to $1 420 per month as a basic gross ‘package’ amount; they struck for over a month (three weeks beyond the massacre) and ultimately received what was reported as a twenty-two per cent wage package increase, which in turn catalysed prairie-fire wildcat strikes across the immediate mining region and then
Uneven and combined marxism within South Africa’s urban social movements across other parts of the country in the period September to November. Similar militancy was soon evident in trucking, the auto sector, municipal labour and other sectors.

But as with a vast proportion of ordinary South Africans, this was a time of extreme household indebtedness. It soon became clear that the Marikana workers were victims not only of exploitation at the point of production, but also of super-exploitative debt relations. Financial desperation was compounded by legal abuse, carried out by the same race/gender/class power bloc – white male Afrikaners – who had, in their earlier years and in the same geographical settings, been apartheid beneficiaries. Microfinance short-term loans that carry exceptionally high interest rates were offered to mineworkers by institutions ranging from established banks – one (Ubank) even co-owned by NUM and another (Capitec) replete with powerful ANC patrons – down to fly-by-night ‘mashonisa’ loan sharks. The extremely high interest rates charged, especially once arrears mounted, were one of the central pressures requiring workers to demand higher wages.

Still, none of this labour–capital conflict – implicating mining houses and financiers – would have flared into such an explosive situation at Marikana, many believe, were it not for the relationships between state, ruling party and trade union elites that had developed over the prior two decades with the major mining houses. These cosy relations, even relegitimising companies with very low morals which regularly engaged in labour-broking, apparently incensed the ordinary workers, raising their staying power to such high levels. For example, Lonmin’s successful public relations onslaught and tight connections to the ruling party probably gave its executives confidence that long-standing abuse of low-paid migrant labour could continue – with NUM itself having become so co-opted that shop stewards were reportedly paid three times more than ordinary workers. NUM general secretary, Frans Baleni, earned $160 000 per year at that stage, and gained notoriety when he advised Lonmin to fire 9 000 of the same Marikana mineworkers at its Karee mine in late 2011 because they went on a wildcat strike. Of the 9 000, 7 000 were rehired but they quit NUM and joined the rival Amcu. One result was that of the 28 000 workers at nearby Implats, seventy per cent had been NUM members in late 2011, but by September 2012 the ratio was down to thirteen per cent.

On the ecological front, the entire platinum belt contributes to the toxicity and overall pollution that means South Africa’s ‘Environmental Performance Index’ slipped to fifth worst of 133 countries surveyed by Columbia and Yale.
University researchers in early 2012. The Mineral Energy Complex’s prolific contribution to pollution is mainly to blame, including its coal mining that generates coal-fired power used in electricity-intensive mining and smelting operations. In this context, Lonmin might have considered its ongoing destruction of the platinum belt’s water, air, agricultural and other ecosystems to be of little importance — within a setting in which pollution is ubiquitous.

Moreover, the North West provincial and Rustenburg municipal governments were apparently rife with corruption. Emblematic was the 2009 assassination of a well-known ANC whistle-blower, Moss Phakoe, which a judge found was arranged by Rustenburg mayor Matthew Wolmarans. Again, in this context, Lonmin and the other big mining houses in the platinum belt might have considered South Africa just one more Third World site worthy of the designation ‘resource cursed’ — a phrase usually applied to sites where dictatorial and familial patronage relations allow multinational capital in the extractive industries to, literally, get away with murder. Around two dozen anti-corruption whistle-blowers like Phakoe were killed in the first few years of Zuma’s rule.

Family enterprise suited the Zumas, who had a reported 220 businesses. It was not surprising to learn, for example, that along with the Gupta family — generous sponsors of Zuma’s patronage system — son Duduzane was co-owner of JIC, the platinum belt region’s largest firm specialising in short-term labour outsourcing (sometimes called ‘labour-broking’, though JIC denies this, and NUM has a recognition agreement with the firm). Nor was it a secret that the president’s nephew, Khulubuse Zuma, played a destructive role in nearby gold-mining territory as Aurora co-owner, along with Mandela’s grandson and Zuma’s lawyer. Indeed, that particular mining house had perhaps the single most extreme record of ecological destructiveness and labour conflict in the post-apartheid era, reflecting how white-owned mining houses gave used-up mines with vast acid mine drainage liabilities to new black owners who were ill-equipped to deal with the inevitable crises.

South African observers thus learned a great deal as a result of the massacre and a growing realisation about the socio-economic, political and ecological context. The stage was set, immediately after Marikana, for renewed debates over whether the Tripartite Alliance was a progressive or now regressive political arrangement, especially between the centre-left unionists and communists who are close to official power and thus defensive of the political status quo, on the one hand, and on the other, critical, independent progressives convinced that South African politics could become more acutely polarised. Overlying
the crisis and these debates was the internal ANC split between pro- and anti-Zuma forces, which spilled over into Cosatu prior to its September 2012 congress before, at the Mangaung electoral conference of the ruling party, Zuma squashed his opponent and then deputy president, Kgalema Motlanthe, with three quarters of the vote. It was this political battle that initially paralysed labour leadership, given the danger that Cosatu would unleash centrifugal forces that its popular leader Zwelinzima Vavi could not control. There was even talk of NUM opening up a leadership challenge to Vavi, on grounds that the 300 000-member union (Cosatu’s largest single member) was strongly pro-Zuma and insisted on the official Cosatu support that Vavi had initially resisted.

Such political manoeuvring left Cosatu mostly silenced about Marikana, as NUM’s weight and the parallel subversion of other union leaders made it too difficult for the federation to visibly back the upstart platinum, gold and other mineworkers. In any case, what these wildcat strikers were doing might, more conservative unionists believed, even throw the institutions of centralised bargaining into chaos. The demand for higher wages was both extreme, and thus opposed by NUM, and ultimately successful in the case of Marikana’s courageous workers. The twenty-two per cent raise – at the time inflation was around six per cent – that the workers won after a month of striking was remarkable. It inspired the country’s labour force to look at their own pay packets askance. But by failing to issue immediate statements about Marikana, much less mobilise workers for solidarity against the joint onslaught of multinational capital and the state, Cosatu was simply unable, in late 2012, to intervene when so many cried out for a shift from the proverbial ‘war of position’ to a ‘war of movement’. Cosatu’s longing gaze to Zuma for a genuine relationship reminded many of its support for him during the darkest 2005–2007 days of corruption and rape charges. Yet it was now, in the Marikana moment, even more apparent that Cosatu’s conservatism was the principal barrier to social progress. Its weakness was tangible at two levels.

First, and in sharp contrast to Cosatu’s posture, there was the partial filling of the void by Malema, the ANC’s former youth leader. Malema himself had been partially discredited by his alleged implication in corrupt ‘tenderpreneurship’ (insider deals for state contracts) in the neighbouring province of Limpopo. Yet he managed to gather 15 000 angry people at Marikana two days after the massacre and voiced powerful critiques of Zuma, Lonmin and their associated black capitalist allies, such as Lonmin part-owner Ramaphosa. Meanwhile, the second way in which Cosatu’s weakness was manifested was in
the subsequent rise of Ramaphosa to renewed power within the ANC. Any such rebirth of Ramaphosa had seemed virtually inconceivable immediately after the Farlam Commission began. There, a startling series of revelations emerged about Ramaphosa’s ‘smoking-gun’ emails sent to other Lonmin executives and government ministers exactly 24 hours before the massacre. To further contextualise this, recall that Ramaphosa’s company, Shanduka, was the majority shareholder of the Lonmin black empowerment subsidiary, which gave him nine per cent ownership in Lonmin and a seat on the board. In 2012, Shanduka was being paid $360 000 per annum by Lonmin for providing ‘empowerment’ consulting, not to mention Ramaphosa’s board salary and dividend returns on Lonmin share ownership.

This was not a bad arrangement for the mining house, for one of Ramaphosa’s emails on 15 August 2012 reflected the power relations that Lonmin gained in its association with the former mineworker leader: ‘The terrible events that have unfolded cannot be described as a labour dispute. They are plainly dastardly criminal and must be characterised as such. There needs to be concomitant action to address this situation’. Ramaphosa wrote to Lonmin’s Albert Jamieson:

You are absolutely correct in insisting that the Minister, and indeed all government officials, need to understand that we are essentially dealing with a criminal act. I have said as much to the Minister of Safety and Security. I will stress that Minister [Susan] Shabangu should have a discussion with Roger [Phillimore, Lonmin chairman].

Revealing these emails, the lawyer for the 270 arrested mineworkers, Dali Mpofu, explained:

It’s a long line of emails under, in the same vein, effectively encouraging so-called concomitant action to deal with these criminals, whose only crime was that they were seeking a wage increase … At the heart of this was the toxic collusion between the SA Police Services and Lonmin at a direct level. At a much broader level it can be called a collusion between the State and capital and that this phenomenon is at the centre of what has occurred here …

This collusion between State and capital has happened in many instances in this country. In 1920 African miners went on strike and the government of Jan Smuts dealt with them with violence, and harshly,
and one of the results of that was that they reduced the gap between what white mineworkers were getting and what black mineworkers were getting … and the pact that had been signed in 1918 of introducing the colour bar in the mines was abandoned. That abandonment precipitated a massive strike by the white mineworkers in 1922 and that strike was dealt with by the Smuts government by bringing in the air force – and about 200 people were killed. This is one of the most important happenings in the history of this country, and in 1946 under the leadership of the African Mineworkers Union, the African workers, 70 000 African workers, also went on a massive strike and the government sent 16 000 policemen and arrested, like they did to our, the people we represent, some of the miners under an act called the War Measures Act.

So this has happened, this collusion between capital and the State has happened in systematic patterns in the history of, sordid history of, the mining industry in this country. Part of that history included the collaboration of so-called tribal chiefs who were corrupt and were used by those oppressive governments to turn the self-sufficient black African farmers into slave labour workers. Today we have a situation where those chiefs have been replaced by so-called BEE partners of these mines and carrying on that torch of collusion (cited in Farlam Commission 2012: 218–220).

The BEE billionaire Ramaphosa’s collaboration with white elites was also reflected in his attempt a few months earlier to purchase a prize buffalo at a game auction for $2.3 million, an event underscored by Malema as indicative of the gulf between the new South Africa’s one per cent and the workers. Not surprisingly, Malema was quickly rewarded with overwhelming support from Marikana miners on two occasions – including a memorial ceremony he arranged, at which he kicked out several of Zuma’s cabinet ministers who had come to pay respects. But on his third visit, police denied him his constitutional right to address another huge crowd. Even while contesting fraud charges in his home base (where facilitating provincial tenders had made him rich) Malema thus became, briefly, an unstoppable force across the mining belt in the North West and Limpopo provinces, and even in Zimbabwe, calling for radical redistribution. At one point three weeks after the massacre, the South African National Defence Force was declared to be on ‘high alert’ simply because Malema addressed a group of disgruntled soldiers.
Yet money still talks in South Africa. By December 2012, Malema’s own apparent power had ebbed. And Ramaphosa had won the ruling party’s deputy presidency against Malema’s two main allies – with more than three quarters of the vote. Cosatu was also very clearly in retreat, with Vavi nervously appealing to Ramaphosa not to act like a capitalist. And Malema was completely out of the national political equation, humiliating himself with a co-authored letter to the ANC leadership just before the Mangaung conference began, begging that he be allowed back into the organisation. This request was simply rebuffed by Zuma’s team.

In addition to expressing relief at Malema’s fate, business openly celebrated Ramaphosa’s defeat of anti-Zuma candidates Tokyo Sexwale and Matthews Phosa. The vociferous endorsements of Ramaphosa by big business at the end of 2012 meant the ANC’s economic talk-left-so-as-to-walk-right strategy was well understood. The potential for Ramaphosa to act in the interests of South Africa’s untransformed business-in-general coincided perfectly with his own personal portfolio’s tentacles, from his firm Shanduka, spreading right across the South African economy: Macsteel, Scaw Metals SA, Lonmin (through Incwala Resources), Kangra Coal, McDonald’s SA, Mondi Plc, Lace Diamonds, Pan African Resources Plc, Coca-Cola, Seacom, MTN, Bidvest, Standard Bank, Alexander Forbes, Investment Solutions and Liberty Group. Ramaphosa also held the chairs of the Mondi paper group and MTN cellphones, and was on the board of SABMiller, which he formerly chaired.

With Zuma re-elected ANC president at Mangaung and with Ramaphosa as his deputy and presumed replacement in 2019 after Zuma’s second term ends, the ruling party’s political turmoil appeared to stabilise, and the stage shifted again to the issue of civil society versus state and capital. An early 2013 call for a national strike from the most militant of mineworkers reflected ongoing frustrations. But the forces for genuine change had not, by the end of 2012, been properly gathered from below. Prospects for labour and community activists unifying at the base needed more attention, for to exist in Marikana and similar mining towns was to face incessant police repression bordering on unqualified brutality.

Nonetheless, the brief emergence of a women’s mutual-aid movement amongst mineworker wives and girlfriends, as well as other women from the impoverished Marikana community was one reflection of a new bottom-up politics. At least one martyr emerged from their ranks: Paulina Masuhlo, an unusually *sympatico* ANC municipal councillor in Marikana, who sided with
Uneven and combined marxism within South Africa’s urban social movements

the workers, was shot in the abdomen and leg with rubber bullets during a police and army invasion of Nkaneng on 15 September. She died of the wounds on 19 September. Yet for the subsequent week and a half, police and malevolently bureaucratic municipal officials refused the women’s attempts to memorialise Masuhlo with a long protest march from Nkaneng to the Marikana police station. Persistence and legal support prevailed, so 800 demanded justice in a women’s-only trek from Nkaneng to Marikana police station on 29 September, dignified and without casualties.

But the political opportunities that might fuse worker, community and women’s interests in improving conditions for the reproduction of labour power – perhaps one day too joined by environmentalists – were fragile and easy to lose. Male migrant workers typically maintained two households and hence channelled resources back to the Eastern Cape, Lesotho, Mozambique and other home bases. This process of mixing short-term residents with long-term Tswana-speaking inhabitants was fraught with potential xenophobia and ethnicism, not to mention gendered power relations. Migrancy has also facilitated syndicates of illicit drugs, transactional sex (even forced sexual labour), traditional patriarchy, dysfunctional spiritual suspicions (for example, the use of traditional medicine muti against bullets which allegedly wears off quickly in the presence of women), widespread labour-broking and other super-exploitative relations. An uneven and combined politics would be needed to sort through the complications.

After a month on strike, the Lonmin mineworkers won a twenty-two per cent wage increase based on a determination forged from frustration and anger, but they lacked a sufficiently strong and clear political agenda to follow through against the deeper structural oppressions. Yet some such agenda would be necessary to mobilise the tens of millions of disgruntled South Africans into a force capable of breaking sweetheart relations between state, ruling party, labour aristocrats, parasitical capital and the London/Melbourne mining houses. For some, Marikana was potentially the breakthrough event that independent progressives had long sought, one that could reveal more graphically the intrinsic anti-social tendencies associated with the transition of the ANC Alliance’s elite from revolutionaries to willing partners of some of the world’s most wicked corporations. Such a narrative was indeed the one promoted by the otherwise extremely fractured South African Left.

For example, some factions associated with the relatively broad-based (though labour-less) DLF and the Marikana Support Campaign, did sponsor regular political meetings in Johannesburg and Cape Town and also solidaristic
activities in the platinum belt. These efforts included a rally in Rustenburg a month after the massacre when more than 10,000 workers were mobilised by the Workers Committees and DLF. The extraordinary spread of labour militancy to other mines, to the transport sector and to the Western Cape farms was in part a function of DLF cadres’ energy and vision.

Nonetheless, because the first such DLF meeting at the University of Johannesburg a week after the Marikana massacre provisionally included a leading NUM representative on the programme (he was shouted down and chased from the hall), another left faction led by Johannesburg’s Khanya College broke away to found the ‘We are all Marikana’ campaign. Resistently opposed to any legitimisation of Cosatu’s Alliance unionism, this network also gathered ordinary workers for educational events (although momentum appeared to slow within a month of the massacre). In contrast, one other small revolutionary party in Marikana engaged in much higher-profile recruiting and consciousness-raising: the Democratic Socialist Movement (associated with the Committee for a Workers’ International) and its allies – numbering just twenty at the founding meeting – launched a ‘Workers and Socialist Party’ in late 2012.

Excellent intentions notwithstanding, none of these efforts were adequate to the task. Even though it may often have seemed that a ‘pre-revolutionary’ situation existed in a South Africa that had one of the highest protest rates in the world, the lack of connection between those with grievances remained the most crippling problem. And this disconnect continued amongst traditional critics of ANC neoliberalism in late 2012. One critical example was the lack of any real attempt to coordinate international solidarity. Here, in fact, was a huge void in Marikana-related political work, an opportunity lost by South Africans despite the willingness of NGOs to call on the World Bank to divest from Lonmin just one day after the massacre and the fact that at least a dozen spontaneous protests broke out at South African embassies and consulate offices across the world in subsequent days.

There was, though, the hope that, as another example, the women of Marikana, organising across the divides of labour and community, could set the example so desperately needed by the broader Left. Their organising efforts ranged beyond Marikana itself, as they briefly helped connect the dots elsewhere, in nearby terrains ranging from mining dorpies to sites of land struggle in North West, Limpopo and Gauteng provinces. However, these women were as diverse and ethnically divided as the broader society: wives, girlfriends, mothers, daughters, sisters, health-workers, educators, sex-workers, cooks, cleaners, salespersons.
Moreover, they had the additional burdens of handling trauma counselling for victims of violence and providing mutual aid to the many community members who were suffering, directly and indirectly, because of the reduction in available immediate cash – one of the side effects of the wave of wildcat strikes. In short, as in other sectors of the society, much political work was needed in order to create a truly coherent oppositional voice amongst women.

The same could be said of ‘progressives’ more generally. Such people had long been associated with the ANC because of the century-old party’s liberatory, social-democratic and deep-liberal orientation, but after 1994 many of them continued their determined work of liberation mainly from within civil society. In this political space, one found organisations that jumped into the Marikana political breech with much-needed support activities. These included, for example, the Socio-Economic Rights Institute, Sonke Gender Justice, Studies in Poverty and Inequality, Students for Law and Social Justice, the Treatment Action Campaign and Section 27 (which is named with reference to the country’s Bill of Rights). Yet, here again, where was the coherence, organisational and ideological, that could render this a cumulative and defining force?

As for the official ‘Left’: there was, to be brutally frank, absolutely nothing worth salvaging. As Business Day’s Peter Bruce (2012) wrote four days after the massacre:

What’s scary about Marikana is that, for the first time, for me, the fact that the ANC and its government do not have the handle they once did on the African majority has come home. The party is already losing the middle classes. If they are now also losing the marginal and the dispossessed, what is left? Ah yes, Cosatu and the communists – Zuma’s creditors.

It was almost surreal to find Cosatu and communist leaders anxiety-ridden at the prospect of widening worker revolt.

The worker revolt continued rising through to 2013, despite narratives about social ‘leadership’. Truck drivers received an above-inflation settlement in October 2012 after resorting to sometimes intensely violent methods to disrupt scab drivers, in the process creating shortages of petrol and retail goods in various parts of the country. With Durban’s Toyota workers, municipal offices and then the farm workers of the Western Cape all also engaged in wildcat strikes, no one was taking the signals from Pretoria seriously. This was
not new, of course, for in September 2012, the World Economic Forum’s *Global Competitiveness Report* (Schwab 2012) placed South Africa in the number one position for adverse employee–employer relations (in a survey done prior to the Marikana strikes), whereas using the same measure of class struggle in 2011, South African workers were only in seventh place out of the one hundred and forty-four countries surveyed (Schwab 2012). By February 2013, the farm workers had won a fifty-two per cent wage increase after ongoing strikes had threatened the vineyards’ viability and reputation.

Partly as a result of labour militancy, major ratings agencies began downgrading the country’s bond rating – for example, to BBB level by Standard & Poor’s. The resulting higher interest rates to be paid on the country’s prolific foreign borrowings – about five times higher in 2012 in absolute terms than what was inherited from apartheid in 1994 – created yet more fiscal pressures as well as household and corporate repayment stress. Given Europe’s crisis and South Africa’s vulnerability, much lower GDP growth rates in 2013 and beyond were anticipated. And instead of countering that prospect with an interest rate cut by the South African Reserve Bank in late 2012, as was projected, the country’s shaky financial standing put countervailing upward pressure on rates.

Thus in the period after Marikana, the situation remained fluid and it was impossible to assess which forces would emerge from the chaos. It was here that contemporary South African narratives from within – ‘nationalism’, ‘populism’, ‘Stalinism’, ‘Trotskyism’, ‘autonomism’, ‘black consciousness’, ‘feminism’, ‘corporatism’, ‘liberalism’ and ‘neoliberalism’ – all appeared inadequate to the tasks at hand, be it on the platinum belt or in so many other workplaces and communities. No ideologues posed a vision that could rescue South Africa from the intense pressures that seem to be growing stronger each week.

What was definitive, though, was the waning of any remaining illusions that the forces of ‘liberation’ led by the ANC would take South Africa to genuine freedom and a new society. Marikana had that effect, permanently, and Ramaphosa’s December 2012 elevation could do nothing to restore faith in the ruling party – just the opposite. In coming years, protesters are likely to keep dodging police bullets as they move the socio-economic and political-ecological questions to centre stage, from where ANC neoliberal nationalism will either arrange a properly fascist backlash or, more likely under Zuma’s ongoing misrule, continue shrinking in confusion with regular doses of necessary humility.
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NOTES

1 For a sample of the debates on the independent left see Alexander 2010; Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006; Bond 2005; Desai 2002; Duncan and Vally 2008; Maharaj, Desai and Bond 2011; Runciman 2011; Sinwell 2011 and Williams 2006.
2 See reactions to Bohmke’s debates on PoliticsWeb and Pambazuka.
4 For updates on this facet of the crisis, see http://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/.

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