Introduction

OF ALL THE RURAL REBELLIONS that broke out in the middle of the twentieth century in South Africa, the 1960 Pondoland Revolt was the largest and most celebrated. Like the Sekhukhuneland rebellion, it was in part a ‘last ditch defence of land and cattle’ – arguably the end of a sequence of popular struggles by rural based peasants and migrants against state intervention into their land and livelihoods. The revolts had been provoked by the Apartheid government’s so-called Betterment or Rehabilitation policies of the 1940s and 1950s that attempted to induce economic development by forcibly reordering rural society. Equally contentious were the state’s attempts to reshape and control chieftaincy in the Bantu Authorities system. Historians have recognised that traditional authorities did not die in the first half of the twentieth century, despite the long history of colonisation. Rural resistance reflected the still ‘pulsating remains of African kingdoms’.

Yet the question remains: what happened afterwards, when rural communities were more fully incorporated into the state, as peasant production eroded and the grasp of government extended over rural regions? The overwhelming answer by historians has been that the homeland governments in South Africa were essentially dependent on Pretoria which devolved power to reactionary, government-appointed chiefs as the basis for the fiction of homeland independence. Furthermore, the growth of the homeland state crystallised class divisions – the fault-line lying between increasingly impoverished rural communities and the corrupt, comprador elite, centred round the chieftaincy, who enjoyed access to the goods of government. The 1980s saw anomic, runaway youth revolts in rural areas against the collaborating chiefs and Bantustan establishment but the ANC leadership negotiated with the pillars of the old, corrupted regimes in the 1990s. This account resonates with Mamdani’s analysis of the legacy of late colonialism in Africa. In an argument which draws on Ranger’s ideas about the ‘invention of tribalism’, Mamdani suggests the authority of the colonial/apartheid state was extended through its alliance with the local chieftaincy. This left a legacy of decentralised despotism; a mode of rule which has remained unbroken despite the best attempts of post-colonial governments.

This chapter, however, suggests an alternative interpretation of homeland politics in Transkei. It extends the idea that popular political impulses remained significant in the rural areas and draws on recent academic literature that argues for a mutually constitutive relationship between state and

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Questions of political culture – how rural communities and the Bantustan state were constructed in relation to each other, the manner and idiom in which the state worked, and the language by which people made claims on the state – are emphasised in my account. In brief, I suggest that the logic of rural politics in Transkei was the consumption of state resources by impoverished local communities, who accessed Bantustan development projects through local brokers and patrons. Thus ideas of local and ethnic identity; once centred around peasant production and access to land, were increasingly focussed around a locality’s relation to the state. This new pattern of politics was dramatically seen in a second bout of smothered, explosive unrest in Transkei militating for state support of rural livelihoods in the late 1970s, less than two decades after the celebrated 1960 revolt against state intervention. Finally, in an extended conclusion, I tentatively trace a link between this pattern of protest and the populist discontents that have re-emerged in South Africa in the twenty-first century – political forces that have been drawn into the “coalition of malcontents” who supported Jacob Zuma’s successful leadership bid to become President of the ANC. As in the case of some other chapters in this book, I explore continuities as well as change in local popular protest and suggest that they still impact on South Africa’s provincial and national political processes.

Land Rehabilitation Abandoned

The 1960 Mpondo revolt might have been shattered: a dozen shot dead on Ngquza Hill, scores condemned to death, and many more tortured at temporary police detention camps. But on accession to power in 1963, Kaiser Matanzima’s Bantustan government, although supported by the might of the apartheid state, hardly acted as if it had won a resounding victory over the Transkeian peasantry. On the contrary, rumours swept the territory that Betterment measures had been suspended, and that a Commission of Inquiry was to visit all districts to hear the complaints of rural communities. The official opposition, the Democratic Party, toured the countryside holding report-back meetings, drumming up popular anger against Betterment in their stump speeches. Whilst government-backed Betterment policies continued in many rural localities, the intensity of forcible state intervention decreased in many aspects. Instead, economic planners threw their weight behind a series of government-sponsored, local, development schemes. The effect of this was to create a political culture centred on the consumption of state resources by rural communities.

In 1964, Kaiser Matanzima announced that 25% of the total area of Transkei had either reached the first stage of planning, or were in the course of being “rehabilitated”. By the end of apartheid, 25 years later, Betterment planning had been implemented in perhaps 566 (55%) of the 1014 localities that made up Transkei. Nevertheless, Betterment policies were not rigorously pursued, nor backed to the hilt by the full force of the state during the Bantustan era. Increasingly, Betterment was ‘loosely’ planned in an effort to speed it up and diminish the cost. In many locations, stock culling was suspended, in order to minimise opposition, in spite of official ‘doubts about whether rehabilitation could actually succeed without the limitation of stock numbers and the control on grazing’.

The Transkei government increasingly made a virtue of this retreat. Again and again, the Minister of Agriculture, Columbus Madikizela, stood up in the Transkei Assembly to announce the relaxation of a raft of laws, regulations and circulars. In 1964, for instance, he relaxed the laws governing the movement of livestock. Previously, livestock owners’ herds were depleted under rules that allowed them only to buy-in one head of cattle for every two that they sold; now the laws


\[7\] CMT Box 1841, File 42/17, ‘Press Statement by Chief Minister’, 19 August 1964.

\[8\] *Daily Dispatch*, 10 March 1964.


allowed a fair exchange. He then authorised the introduction of 100,000 more cattle into the Transkei.\textsuperscript{11} In 1965 he announced that government agricultural officers would no longer castrate bulls. Not even Tribal Authorities, under government-appointed chiefs, were given these powers; the responsibility went all the way down to local committees and headmen. ‘Now the duty devolves to you and the Department [of Agriculture] has nothing to do with it’, he said. ‘You can keep all the beasts you want, you can have ten bulls to one cow’ – a nonsensical and abject proposition.\textsuperscript{12}

When a chieftainess complained one of her locations had not received new boreholes or windmills, she was told:

The people of the Administrative Area [i.e. the location] made it impossible for the work [of Betterment planning] to be executed. They slashed the tyres of the drilling machine; they attempted to burn out the machine. … Fences were destroyed and lives of officials threatened. … It was unsafe and meant the expenditure of funds fruitlessly.\textsuperscript{13}

By the admission of government officials, Betterment policy had failed. In 1972, a Department of Agriculture survey found that three districts which had supposedly been planned only had 40% of the number of selected bulls that would be necessary to improve the quality of livestock.\textsuperscript{14} A few years earlier officials had admitted: ‘there are no areas where the Betterment scheme has been carried out to the complete satisfaction of the department. … Some of the most important aspects depend on the cooperation of the people, such as strict and voluntary grazing control. No scheme will be completely satisfactory until the residents apply themselves energetically.’\textsuperscript{15}

Having retreated from Betterment planning, the Transkei Government pumped resources into stock improvement and agricultural development schemes that were, in turn financed by Pretoria, which was also anxious that the apartheid project should succeed. Two debacles, above all, came to epitomise the runaway politics of this type of economic development. One large rural co-operatives scheme, which had 30,000 members, received millions of rand of Government loans ostensibly to improve agricultural production. But hardly a cent was paid back; the money disappeared into rural communities. In 1980, with the collapse of many co-operatives, the Transkei Government was forced to send a grovelling letter to the Pretoria detailing the outstanding loans that it had been forced to write off.\textsuperscript{16} A ploughing scheme supposed to boost arable yields was even more disastrous. In the late 1970s, the Transkei Government devised a complicated scheme to increase maize and sorghum production in which hundreds of government tractors would increase agricultural efficiency by offering ploughing at subsidised rates. Yet the scheme was rolled out even before the pilot project had been evaluated, with R4.5 million spent in the first year alone.\textsuperscript{17} Predictably, it failed. Later investigations reporting there had been ‘a great deal of political interference and poor technical control’ and allegations of corruption that went all the way to the doors of the Prime Minister of Transkei.\textsuperscript{18}

The effect of the provision of these economic development projects was to create a political culture centred on the consumption of state resources by rural communities. Certainly, the Transkei Government ruthlessly played this card, favouring friends and punishing enemies, consolidating their wealth and power. But this did not simply create a parasitic state bourgeoisie that was engaged in a top-down politics of neo-patrimonialism.\textsuperscript{19} Instead, influential chiefs, government officials and other

\textsuperscript{12} TLA 1965, p. 187; Daily Dispatch, 25 October 1983.
\textsuperscript{13} TLA 1972, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{15} TLA 1970, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{19} Cf. R. Southall, South Africa’s Transkei: The Political Economy of an “Independent” Bantustan, (Heinemann, London, 1982).
notable figures, of all political stripes, positioned themselves as regional brokers, channelling state resources into their localities. This was, firstly, because the politics of economic patronage was the only game in town. The stagnation of peasant production and the failure of rural economic development schemes meant that the state was an increasingly important source of sustenance. Ideas of community and ethnic identity that had once been rooted in relation to land, livelihoods and locality, were now re-orientated in relation to the state. Secondly, the language of community was important because so many projects – not only agricultural development projects, but also infrastructure such as schools and medical clinics – were goods given by the state not to individuals but to a locality.

This pattern of economic development projects had a couple of long lasting consequences that would continue beyond the end of apartheid. Firstly, even if there were occasional economic successes – the development of tea plantations at Magwa in Pondoland and the Ncora irrigation scheme in Western Thembuland, for example – most development projects failed. These schemes supposed to spark economic growth instead became social welfare handouts of a sort. Secondly, South Africans in rural areas reworked ideas of locality, ethnicity, of social rights and obligations to make sense of their new relationship with the state. Stalwart Bantustan opponents and ANC sympathisers, such as Alfred Xobololo and Chief Ntsikayizwe Sigcau, would complain that:

There is undue enrichment. … Moneys that come from South Africa are exploited by our own Government to the disadvantage of our lower ranks. … We see farmers on the northern side [i.e. in KD Matanzima’s region] developing well … but the implements are not well distributed. … There is no fair economic distribution here.\textsuperscript{20}

\section*{Government Officials and Community Leaders}

The provision of economic development projects was one means by which local and ethnic identities were reworked, rather than obliterated, by the extension of the state into rural communities. A second means by which the ideas of ethnicity were perpetuated was the political culture of the bureaucracy: authority was understood in intimate terms, and regional brokers accessed state power on behalf of their community. These ideas of power and authority flourished in the rottenness and factionalism within the Transkeian Department of Agriculture. Indeed, this factionalism had been written in to the foundations of the Bantustan state, which was, from the outset, riven by racist hierarchies. In 1963, one bemused observer explained:

It is difficult to say just how much control is exercised over each [African] minister [in the Transkei Government] by their secretaries [seconded from Pretoria]. It appears the minister’s … authority [is confined] to areas of policy, drawing very liberally on the advice of top [white] civil servants. … Although some Africans fill very senior posts, none is closer than about 3 steps from the top post … and an African cannot be promoted until all the posts subordinate to the one he could fill are in African hands.\textsuperscript{21}

The desire for African advancement, in the face of racist intransigence, quickly led to the balkanisation of the bureaucracy, riven by cliques, mistrust and suspicions. Black officials’ promotion was held back by the lack of training and opportunity – a legacy of white rule that continued throughout the Bantustan era.\textsuperscript{22} As late as 1981, Tsolo College of Agriculture in Transkei, the main educational institution producing agricultural officers, could only accommodate 10% of their total applicants. Transkei only had 11 university graduates in Agricultural Sciences and related subjects.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} TLA 1984, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{21} Cater-Karis Microfilm Collection, Reel 17, Letter from Hugh White to Professor GM Carter, 26 July 1963
\textsuperscript{22} TLA 1971, p. 80.
\textsuperscript{23} Daily Dispatch, 23 October 1981
The Agriculture Minister admitted, ‘because of the acute shortage of essential skills and professions, his department was heavily dependent on seconded and contract staff’. Under these tense circumstances, African politicians, across political divides, insisted on the dignity and status of African officials, especially when compared their white counterparts. ‘It is not proper that a promoted officer should shiver on a motorcycle everyday, no matter what the weather is like,’ complained one member of the legislature. Another asked that African stock inspectors be given housing, just like their European counterparts: ‘the Transkei is their homeland where they should be privileged to have all the rights’.

From there, it was only a small step for junior officials to refuse orders – particularly from white superiors. ‘Mr Pienaar’s authority [Pienaar was the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture] only goes as far as Umtata’, claimed one agriculture officer, insisting that he alone had the power to close down dipping tanks in his locality. As early as 1975, the Minister of Agriculture worried that ‘a tendency seems to be developing where everybody expects to be the boss. Productivity is in decline and authority is not freely accepted. … A stable and competent civil service cannot develop under such conditions’. A detailed study into this problem made troubling reading.

There is a chronic shortage of graduate specialists and field workers … [and] extension staff are relatively young and inexperienced, and generally have limited formal education, low morale and motivation. … Problems of salary, short length of service in work areas, transport, housing, office accommodation, record and reporting systems place constraints on efficiency. As a result, there was widespread mistrust of officials in the Department of Agriculture. Allegations of corruption and malfeasance were endemic. One study suggested, only 14% of senior agriculture extension officers and 24% of other officers ‘feel they know exactly what is expected of them’, and half were not happy in their job. In turn, less than a third of villagers surveyed in three localities could either name their local agricultural extension officer or explain his function. And during an outbreak of cattle disease, rumours were spread that bureaucrats had profited through “sweet-heart” agreements with the pharmaceutical companies: ‘While our stock is perishing, these officials are merely thinking about their personal gains’. ‘The young agricultural officers are continually causing confusion’, complained another chief, ‘because they maintain they are the bosses… We are then ruled by these boys’.

Facing a bureaucracy that did not operate through formal procedures, many people instead accessed state resources by drawing on personal connections. Thus, ideas about personal authority associated with chieftainship became central in the processes of officialdom and bureaucracy. It was the idiom of complaint: ‘The day when control was removed from the magistrates and handed over to these extension officers, who go by different names, is the day when everything went wrong’, argued one local, community leader. Others suggested that local agricultural officials charged with enforcing government regulations were ‘in danger of being molested by the local people’ as ‘they are unknown either to the people’. Instead, it would be better for a local community to choose these officials just as they would select a headman. But a sense of personal connection was also the idiom

26 *TLA* 1971, p. 221.
27 *TLA* 1973, p. 216.
28 *TLA* 1975, p. 184.
30 ‘Department of Agriculture Ciskei – Memo – Agricultural Extension’, found in KGT Box 112, File N1/3/2/6/T. This report into ‘problems experienced by Bantu Extension Officers’ was written in 1971.
31 *TLA* 1975, p. 240.
32 *TLA* 1975, p. 189.
of accountability in a dysfunctional state when official channels were often blocked and had to be bypassed. One location appealed for the return of two much-loved agricultural officers, who ‘were of great assistance to our people’. Such personal connections went all the way to the top. One ANC supporter was ‘left in tears’ by the departure of the Secretary [i.e. the top official] in the Department of Agriculture who had protected his locality from government harassment.

There was a complaint from the Thembu people that their cattle were not being allowed to graze on the commonage. … It was the Secretary who gave relief to the people of Engcobo. … He showed us respect as … he would personally go to Engcobo to see that the cattle should be allowed to graze on the commonage. 32

Thus, local officials re-invented themselves as both community leaders and local brokers able to access the power of the state. Some chiefs complained that fowls were slaughtered and beer brewed in extension officers’ honour, whenever they provided services in local communities. 36 Another explained how:

The dipping labourer whose duty it is to fill the [cattle dipping] tank [with water] goes about his duties in this way. He brews beer and invites people to assist him in emptying the tank; then he fetches water to refill the tank. In order to do this he runs a furrow towards the tank, but moles and frogs sometimes block the furrow so that the water does not run freely. In the meantime [whilst the celebrations were being held], he expects the tank to be full by morning, but instead it is empty.37

The Cattle Dipping Crisis

The consequences of this pattern of economic development and the re-calibration of the relationship between the Transkeian Government and rural communities are evident in the cattle dipping crisis of the late 1970s. An examination of the cattle dipping crisis also adds a significant caveat to a commonly held view that, under apartheid, chiefs became decentralised despots: the local pillars of the Bantustan state.38 Rather, the breakdown of cattle dipping services suggests that the Bantu Authorities system was more brutally frail than effectively authoritarian.

From the outset, the Transkei Government retreated from maintaining stringent cattle dipping regulations, just as it had backed away from fully implementing Betterment planning. The government had good reason. As sites of state control, where Betterment regulations were announced and cattle were counted so as to be culled, cattle dips had been one of the first symbols of apartheid to be smashed by angry protestors in 1960 revolts. Thus in office, with the memories of the revolt still simmering, Matanzima’s government retreated from renewing its conflict with rural communities. Powers over cattle dipping were given to the nine new Regional Authorities of the Transkei chieftaincy, which had been set up under the Bantu Authorities Act. Regional Authorities were responsible for collecting the levies that paid for cattle dipping, raising the funds to build and repair dipping tanks, employing the associated labourers and supervisors; as well as significant powers to determine how often cows were dipped.39

These policies were designed to enhance the powers and administrative range of traditional authorities but instead exposed their essential fragility. The reasons for this fragility are perhaps threefold. Firstly, it was a question of rural poverty: the rising dipping costs outstripped the ability of the Tribal Authorities to raise revenue. From 1966 to 1976, Transkei-wide, they were able to increase
the money they raised through the dipping levy from approximately R190,000 to R430,000. But this sum was a pittance, when R3 million was necessary to put dipping operations on a sound financial footing. Dipping had long been a ramshackle affair run on a shoe-string, and by the early 1970s some of the ticks that spread stock diseases were becoming resistant to the cheapest dip chemicals that were still used in the homeland regions. The world financial crisis in the mid 1970s also raised the cost of dipping chemicals by a further 40%, at a time when rural communities faced the additional strain of dipping their sheep against an outbreak of scabies.

Secondly, in giving huge swathes of power to Bantu Authorities, apartheid ideologues had half-hoped to transform chiefs into administrators who could take on the functions of the state. Kaiser Matanzima made great display he was the best schooled traditional leader in Transkei and that more should follow his footsteps. Chiefs’ salaries were restructured to reward the efficient collection of taxes. A prominent educated chief and politician, Sandy Majekke, admonished:

> Time is past when a chief has to be paid simply because he is a chief. He must be punished by low wages if he was too lazy to attend school. … When a chief is in charge of an Administrative Area, he is performing a duty and should be paid on the same basis of other people performing duties. I hate the frequent talk that chiefs are always taking bribes and gifts.

Yet these exhortations underlined the corruption and ineptitude of the lower reaches of the state. The language of governance within rural communities, as noted above, was becoming less bureaucratic and reflected the politics of the belly. In some ways this was literally so in that feasts sometimes went in tandem with official meetings. It was metaphorically evident: the Public Accounts Committee noted that ‘the less educated chiefs and headmen are not quite sure … what they can eat,’ and which receipts were to be paid into the public purse. This style of governance was accentuated when power was devolved and financial accounts placed in the hands of Bantu Authorities. ‘No-one understands it, the treasurers least of all. … The more sensitive keep threatening to resign because of the suspicion cast upon them through being unable what to explain what the balances are.’ Too often, administrative records quite literally rotted away in damp huts or were eaten by livestock who were kept in the same buildings as the files. In 1971, auditors found they could not balance any one of the Tribal Authorities’ financial accounts they had inspected. In 1976 were chiefs required by law to both issue receipts when they demanded fines and also receive payments in cash rather than livestock. There were no effective means of implementing of implementing this rule.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the very illegitimacy of the Tribal Authorities hamstrung the system. On the one hand, the Bantu Authorities system was ripe for abuse and became synonymous

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41 TNA 1978, p. 117.
43 TLA 1975, p. 183.
44 TLA 1972, p. 424.
46 Cape Town Archives, Mqanduli Magistrate (1MQL), Box 6/1/103, File N11/1/2, Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Mqanduli, to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 8 September 1961.
47 1MQL, Box 6/1/100. File N11/1/4, Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Mqanduli, to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, November 1962; TLA 1973, ‘Report of the Public Accounts Committee’.
48 TLA, 1973, p. 360; TLA 1976, p. 121. The transcripts of the ‘Reports of the Public Accounts Committee’, which was a committee of the Transkei Legislature, were recorded in the TNA and TLA. Sometimes these pages are numbered, other times they are not.
with local corruption and petty despotism. 49 The unelected appointment of chiefs and councillors ‘deprives the great majority of taxpayers of a voice in the affairs of the district… [and the] people of their ablest men,’ complained a Native Commissioner charged with implementing the system of government. ‘The chief and his cronies are life members of the Tribal Authority. The only way to get rid of them is by murder’. 50 But chiefs were hardly firm pillars of authoritarianism, as some scholars have suggested. 51 Their very illegitimacy hampered their room for manoeuvre. And in the wake of the violent unrest against Betterment, chiefs were wary of implementing government regulations to the letter. One complained that ‘I am not regarded as a headman but as a dipping foreman’. He feared his people ‘are conspiring to kill me’. 52 Regional Authorities often decided to reduce the regularity with which cattle were dipped, against the advice of the Department of Agriculture and scientific wisdom. 53 But conflict with the government officials and the risk of an outbreak of cattle disease was preferable to facing the wrath of the people.

The result was disaster. Noxious dipping chemicals would sometimes ‘overflow the banks and spread on the grass’ because dip tanks were in such disrepair. In other locations, livestock died of poisoning when sheep and cattle were dipped together in an inept attempt to save costs. 54 Matters became so bad, that by the mid 1970s, three coastal districts were incapable of dipping their cattle during the summer months when tick borne diseases were most virulent. ‘Various districts ran out of money and so did not purchase dip or had no money to repair dip tanks leading to a breakdown of the programme’, especially in Pondoland. 55

The Second Pondo Revolt

By the late 1970s, many of Transkei’s agricultural policies were failing – a crisis epitomised by the outbreak of livestock disease that followed from the decline in dipping. Having taken comparatively little interest in animal disease in Transkei since East Coast fever was brought under control, an outbreak of sheep scab in the late 1970s brought stock dipping to the forefront of apartheid officials’ minds once more. Pretoria threatened it would not import livestock from Transkei unless the government improved its cattle dipping. Although there was not a significant decline in stock numbers across Transkei, the state’s increased spending on rural development, specifically subsidised cattle improvement schemes, was undermined by the collapse of disease control. The Transkei Government-backed cattle marketing and meat company lost R92,000 worth of their stock through tick borne diseases in 1976 alone, for instance. 56 There were complex socio-economic reasons for the failure of Transkei’s rural development schemes and the commensurate stagnation of agricultural production; nevertheless, the political outcome was clear. Facing an epidemic of disease, the Transkei Department of Agriculture took over dipping operations from the Regional Authorities in that late 1970s. Within a year, there had been a 40% reduction in the number of deaths caused by tick-borne disease. 57 Significantly, this transfer of power was happily conceded, even demanded – an indication of the changing relationship between rural communities and the Bantustan state. 58

Yet, in the late 1970s, the Transkei state was struggling to take on additional responsibilities and financial commitments. It cost R3 million annually to put dipping operations and a sound

50 IMLQ Box 6/1/103, File N11/1/2 Conference of Bantu Affairs Commissioners at Umtata on 9 and 10 March 1962.
51 Hendricks, The Pillars of Apartheid.
58 TLA 1976, p. 52.
operational footing, and to give the woefully underpaid dipping staff adequate salaries.59 This came at a time of ‘Kaiser-gate’, as South African journalists described ‘Transkei’s perilous state of near bankruptcy’. The Government had run up huge deficits in the three years since Transkei’s “independence” in 1976, turning a surplus of almost R16 million into a deficit of R1.5 million. Of course, these amounts are relatively small and Umtata bitterly argued that financial transfers from Pretoria had declined.60 Nevertheless, the system of state budgeting was in melt-down. Transkei’s government departments had run-up R5 million of unauthorised expenditure, because of a ‘general breakdown of financial administration’ and the ‘complete disregard’ of the Treasury. Transkei’s civil servants were only paid in 1979 because of a last minute, R70 million, bail-out by Pretoria.61 As a result, the Transkei treasury was forced to make swingeing emergency cuts in its budget, from R328 million to R253 million, throttling the spending commitments the other government departments.62

It was during this crisis that agricultural planners dusted down an old plan of introducing a livestock tax, which promised to solve the financial crisis and turn around rural development. The logic of this tax was deceptively simple. Firstly, and most immediately, when the government had taken on stock dipping and veterinary responsibilities, they intended to claw back these costs by introducing a stock tax.63 On top of this, additional revenues generated by the new tax would, secondly, force rural communities to pull their weight in reducing the government’s debt – at a time when Pretoria was arguing it would only give more financial aid if Transkei raised more revenue. It seemed unfair that rural communities hardly contributed to the treasury. Indeed, the tax regime for rural areas was nonsensical: one levy had not been raised since 1925; and the revenue brought in was less than the cost of collection. Raising rural taxes by swinging levels – the general levy and hut tax by a factor of ten, and general tax by 20% - would give the government an additional R6.5 million. On top of that, a new livestock tax on cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys and mules could yield an additional R28 million.64 Together these taxes could help plug the gap in government finances.65

Thirdly, and most importantly of all, the livestock tax promised to teach the importance of self-help to these obdurate rural communities, who irrationally kept disease-ridden cattle for no good reason, and had become dependent on state hand-outs. It was expected that the tax would stimulate Transkei’s cattle keepers to sell their stock; and by commercialising cattle keeping, rural communities would make money for themselves and the national economy. Behind this argument, lay an immense frustration. Planner’s calculations suggested that 80% of Transkei’s land was suitable for grazing, a properly managed livestock industry could make a profit of R40 million per year.66 Yet less than 5% of livestock were sold through commercial channels: in 1976, only R9 million of stock was slaughtered in abattoirs, when approximately R20 million died or was informally disposed of.67 This was shocking when ‘the number of heifers sold at a single pen in one Tribal Trust Land [region in Zimbabwe] exceeded the total sold at auctions in the whole of Transkei.’ Even the tiny Bantustan of Bophuthatswana was able to sell more of its herd through formal marketing channels.68

But when the livestock tax was introduced in the Legislature, on 23rd March 1977, it ‘was greeted with shocked whistles from members of the House, in spite of the prior warning given to them in a caucus meeting before the budget was introduced’.69 Most fundamentally of all, most of Transkei’s stock owners were simply not in a position to sell their cattle to pay for the tax. Only half of Transkeian households had cattle – the number of livestock in Transkei had dropped since its peak

59 TNA 1978, p. 117.
60 ’After 1975/6… the level of budget support [from Pretoria]… declined in real terms’ and Customs Union transfers remained flat too — Transkei Agricultural Development Study, p. 50.
63 TNA 1980, p. 262.
64 TNA 1977, p. 67.
67 TNA 1977, p. 204, 357.
69 Cape Times, 24 March 1977.
in the 1930s, whilst the population had grown more than two-fold. And of these cattle owners, almost 80% had less than 8 head – the minimum number considered necessary to have a surplus to sell to market. The few households that had sufficient cattle to make regular sales disdained the government-run abattoir and marketing scheme. The auctions were rigged at the two stock sales pens at Cofimvaba, complained one chief. Owners were unable to get a fair price because the weighing scales were broken, and there was only one buyer at the sales who could command rock-bottom prices. Ministers instead argued that prices were low because the government-backed corporation, which had the monopoly on the business of buying and slaughtering meat had faced numerous problems: diseased and poor quality cattle; few economies of scale; even corruption and stock theft.

This moment, almost as much as 1960, was a moment of crisis, as the state attempted to exert itself against rural communities and the regional powerbrokers. Tensions were particularly high in Eastern Pondoland. As one of the main cattle keeping areas in the Eastern Cape, it would be hardest hit by stock taxes, and as one of the poorest regions in Transkei, rumours persisted that Pondoland was hard-done-by compared to other regions. In the early 1970s, at a moment of comparative political calm, the Daily Dispatch newspaper reported how, ‘women at Xura location [in Lusikiski district] forced the official car of Chief Minister [KD Matanzima] to stop’, during a time of drought. ‘The women, carrying empty buckets, pleaded with Paramount Chief Matanzima to give them water to drink’, and assailed the Chief Minister until they were driven away by security guards.

Regional representatives now railed against the unfairness of the swingeing new stock taxes. They also gave dark warnings of rural uprisings. Cromwell Diko warned the Government ‘that the 1960 disturbances were the result of an unfortunate decision made by [members of] this House. … In Pondoland the ordinary man, if you have gone too far, will cut your neck… They will tell you: “we sent you to parliament to put right our affairs and now you have decided to join Matanzima”’. (Diko’s warnings regarding the volatility of rural communities were personally prescient. Less than a decade later, during a local chieftaincy dispute, he was killed by a hired assassin.) The Transkei Government hurriedly revised its plans: less than two months later, the tax was reduced by a factor of five. Yet even this was not enough. The people, particularly in Pondoland, were incensed. One member of the legislature reported how:

[At the Great Place] where the Paramount Chief had called us [for a general meeting] … a discussion arose where the Honourable [Government] Minister said it was essential for these taxes to be paid. When we had gone through the agenda the Pondos howled at us. … We did our best … pointing out the tax [on cattle] had been lowered to R2. … We pointed out we were a free country, that if the Transkei is to be developed we would have to raise our own revenue. … Even then they were not satisfied. They instructed us to come and explain the position to the House and have the taxes reduced again.

Quietly, the livestock tax was abolished; a year later a much less expensive General Stock Tax introduced. But even then, it proved unpopular, and tax collectors were only able to net two-thirds of the expected revenues. During the 1980s, the Transkei Agricultural Corporation (TRACOR) was set up and hived-off from the Department of Agriculture, supposedly to re-orientate agricultural policy by sustaining and supporting small-scale rural development schemes. Previous agricultural development projects had failed because ‘unfortunately the people saw it as another government

70 Transkei Agricultural Development Study, p. 9, 55; Bembridge, ‘Aspects of Agriculture’, p. 19; Beinart 1988, XXX.
71 TNA 1977, p. 309.
73 Daily Dispatch, 9 May 1974 – the article referred to an incident that took place in 1973.
74 TNA 1977, p. 71.
75 Daily Dispatch, 7 August 1986.
77 TNA 1977, p. 334.
78 TNA 1978, p. 117; TNA 1979, p. 147.
handout, and the net result of this attitude was that the objectives of various projects were not achieved’, opined the Director of TRACOR. 79 But TRACOR was tainted by the failings of its forerunners – and the old Bantustan patterns of state formation remained unbroken. 80

Consequences and Conclusions

When the ANC came to power in 1994, incorporating Transkei, into a larger, new province of the Eastern Cape, it was hampered by its inability to dismember and dispose of the remains of the Bantustan system. Many critiques of provincial government have focused on the appropriate role of the state in the economy. This debate follows the shift away from the RDP plans and state-led economic growth, to the neo-liberal policies of GEAR, in which the state prioritised welfare safety nets. Nevertheless, provincial governments have attempted to find ways to expand public works programmes and infrastructure spending. In the Eastern Cape, there have been echoes of the homeland era, in that provincial government lacks capacity and has been criticised for incompetence and venality. 81 However, these issues cannot be understood without some consideration of the mutually constitutive relationship between state and society, and the difficulties the ANC government faced in building a better life for all in the ruins of the Bantustan state and apartheid system.

The provincial government inherited agricultural projects that had collapsed in the final chaotic years of apartheid, with state officials losing almost all authority. Dipping officials were no longer able to enforce the more onerous cattle dipping regulations. When the workforce employed by parastatals at Ncora irrigation scheme and Magwa tea plantation went on long strikes, agricultural operations almost completely fell apart. Even Tsolo College of Agriculture – long-established flagship of agricultural education that pre-dated the homeland era - was thrown into a permanent state of strikes and anarchy, looted by students and staff – an indication that government officialdom itself was in tatters. 82

The bloated machinery of government faced an organisational crisis itself. The new provincial bureaucracy was formed out of the old Cape Province administration as well as the two overstaffed, dysfunctional Bantustan bureaucracies of Transkei and Ciskei. Creating a streamlined government machine out of three separate, suspicious bureaucracies was a nightmarish task, which was compounded by the ANC’s historic mistrust of these old apartheid and Bantustan administrations. More insidiously, the provincial government had inherited all of the old Bantustan development projects and corporations. In one sense their activities had provided welfare benefits of a sort – free ploughing and dipping services and the like – to marginal rural communities; but in a very ineffective manner. 83 Newspapers made much of the scandal of the 15 Director Generals inherited from the old administrations, many of whom had been undeservedly promoted in the dying days of apartheid. 84 Yet most of the excess staff bequeathed to the new government were labourers, who had been employed in the Bantustan bureaucracies on make-work schemes that paid wages of perhaps only R2000 per month. These labourers accounted for most of the 11,800 personnel from the Transkei Department of Agriculture who were transferred into the new, 14,000 strong, Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs (DALA). 85 The new provincial government hardly knew what to do with them: nine such workers, sent to repair dipping tanks in an outlying district, were stranded in leaking

81 This is the thrust of the reports of research organisations such as Public Services Accountability Monitor (XX), as well as the tenacious reporting of newspapers such as The Daily Dispatch (www.dispatch.co.za).
tents for three months because they had no equipment, for instance. As a result, DALA spent 55% of its budget on salaries. And as an aggregate across all the province’s departments, bureaucrats’ salaries increased from 41% to 45% of government spending – at a time when the Finance Ministry in Pretoria was demanding it was reduced to 35%.

These local crises were bound into wider debates about the role of the state in society and the economy as the ANC painfully moved from government-centred to pro-market doctrines of development. In particular, the provincial government seemed at the mercy of the national treasury who doled out their budgets. The technocrats in Pretoria tried to use their financial clout to control the strategic direction of state spending. They squeezed DALA’s spending, arguing that government resources were better directed towards social welfare rather than ineffectively subsidising economic infrastructure. Sometimes this argument was made in the neo-liberal language of privatising government assets. At other times, Marxist analysis was brought up-to-date: a parasitic bureaucratic bourgeoisie were denying destitute grandmothers their deserved pensions and social welfare grants. DALA’s spending demands were frequently refused, despite the protests of provincial politicians. Money was taken from DALA to bail-out the struggling, provincial Departments of Education and Welfare.

As a result, the provincial government’s default mode in the late 1990s was to cut their liabilities wherever feasible. DALA announced that the government subsidised, tractor ploughing service would come to an end. Having been advised that many plantations and irrigation schemes owned by parastatals were financially unsustainable, they tried to ‘hand the projects over to the local community’ – a euphemism for cutting thousands of jobs from the provincial payroll. About one hundred agricultural extension officers were cut, saving the Province R20 million. And the 1164 dipping assistants, whose salaries, by contrast, cost the government R28 million per annum, were dismissed from their posts and either transferred to other jobs or placed on the long supernumerary list. This list was another euphemism for excess bureaucrats, whose posts had been cut and could find no other work. Under the “sunset deal” in the national constitution they could not be dismissed, even though this cost the Provincial Department of Agriculture R44 Million each year. ‘They cause most trouble,’ fulminated the politician in charge of the department. ‘They are a hell of a drain on the budget’.

Despite these painful cuts, the provincial government was unable to juggle its spending priorities. It tried to pump its spare resources into more productive expenditures. The veterinary services budget was increased, and they were given 34 bakkies (pick-up trucks) to help their work. Before that, they had ‘basically been carrying cooler boxes with medicines on their heads’, admitted a senior bureaucrat. Nevertheless, ‘animal health and vet services… were deeply affected by the budget cuts’ and in 1996 death rates were seen to be very high. Seven vets resigned or transferred to greener pastures because the Department was unable to pay them comparable salaries to the private sector or other provinces. In 1999, 50% of these posts were vacant; and all the veterinary students from the province’s universities, who graduated that year, immediately left the Eastern Cape. And a further squeeze on spending meant that anthrax and rabies vaccination campaigns were suspended in

86 Daily Dispatch, 2 July 1996.
87 Daily Dispatch, 23 May 1996.
88 Southall, ‘Making Government Work for Poor People’.
90 Southall, ‘Making Government Work for Poor People’.
92 Daily Dispatch, 5 November 1998.
95 Daily Dispatch, 28 August 1997.
‘Cattle dipping… is the cornerstone of beef production’, reported officials in one district, but the ‘faltering of this service [now] results in massive economic losses.’

Local officials, community leaders and NGOs sometimes moved into the space vacated by the provincial government, using the language of personal connections and status to give their work moral authority. Indeed, government policy encouraged this. For instance, they called on local communities to form dipping committees, led by chiefs and other community leaders, when dipping officials were cut from the provincial payroll. In one municipality, a well-known political activist, who now worked in East London but maintained his family’s rural homestead in the Transkei, organised sheep farmers to dip against scab. Elsewhere, local vets made-do with leftover drugs from previous vaccination campaigns. In another municipality, a local government official, Kenny Jafta, helped people in the Mbashe district to negotiate the paying-off of livestock loans that were suddenly called-in by the Eastern Cape Development Corporation. A few years later, he even managed to inspire local farmers to raise R167,000 to buy vaccinations when they were hit by an outbreak of lumpy skin disease. As a result, ‘hundreds of [ordinary] people attend my meetings without [the inducement of] free food’, he boasted.

In one sense, there were continuities in the relationship between rural communities and the state, particularly the mediating role played by well-connected local leaders. However, the differences between the Bantustan and democratic government were immense, and a much wider set of groups now came into contact with the state. For one, the ANC was supposed to be building a better life for all, government machinery was now supposed to be representative of, as well as working for, the people; many local political activists seized the opportunities available to make a mark in their localities. For another, the free-wheeling world of the new South Africa brought together a much wider set of local and national politicians and businesses in all sorts of complicated public-private partnerships. Local success and popularity could quickly lead to political prominence. Jafta, the Mbashe district government official, would turn up late for meetings with soil on his fingers, because he had been called at dawn – contacted on his mobile phone – by rural communities anxious that their crops might be suffering blight. He became the Speaker of the Assembly in his Municipality, now tasked to pressurise other councillors into following his lead. His name was praised in provincial circles and the Deputy President of South Africa, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, even suggested she might encourage a supermarket chain to set up a vegetable processing plant in the district. With her dismissal from office, Jafta feared that these all-important connections might be lost, and the promised investment might not arrive. But just a four hour drive down the road, Mlambo-Ngcuka’s husband was investing his wealth in a community-dairy scheme in his home village of Middledrift, in a public-private partnership also supported by the local Fort Hare University.

Such local successes, however, were few and far between – the increasing incidence of animal disease and death the most painful index of the breakdown in the relationship between rural communities and the state. In part, this was because many rural communities were too divided to work together. A local vet in Pondoland suggested that around half the local communities in his patch failed to form dipping committees, and many were thus unable to access free dipping chemicals. In a village where I interviewed on the coast, disputes between the two parts of the community disabled the dipping committee: one side accused the headmen and his associates, who controlled the committee,
of keeping resources to themselves and misusing money that was collected.\textsuperscript{106} Across the province, dipping tanks fell into disrepair, and equipment was often stolen; there were even rumours that the dipping chemicals were, at times, used as poison in local murders.

Without state provision, relative few livestock owners could afford to purchase medical supplies. ‘The price of the vaccine is not affordable to the communal farmer’, complained officials, particularly when the production prices of drugs increased.\textsuperscript{107} Local leaders faced the ticklish task of collecting monies to buy medicines. Many of their neighbours and community could not pay into the communal pot, but would ask to be favoured with free veterinary treatment. The Government itself felt these pressures too. The mayor of the O. R. Tambo District (a new municipality formed out of half of the former Transkei) often had her skirt tugged by such supplicants when she spoke at funerals in her region. Sometimes, her security guards would have to hold back the rush, so she had space to speak to one at a time.\textsuperscript{108} In this way, the language of personal connection, obligation and shared ethnicity persisted; it simultaneously expressed relationships between political leaders and people, and marked social divides.\textsuperscript{109}

It was in this setting that the provincial government set up a task team to bring back the state support to rural communities.\textsuperscript{110} What emerged, some years later in 2006, was the ‘Green Revolution’ strategy: a large scale government infrastructure initiative for the former homeland areas. The six ‘strategic pegs’ of this plan essentially reintroduced the services once provided by the Bantustan Government: fencing, dipping tanks and dipping material, stock water dams, tractors and farming implements, and irrigation infrastructure. Even dipping assistants were to be re-introduced.\textsuperscript{111} These plans had the laudatory aim of turning the communal areas into a food basket – aspirations were also recognised in National Government development plans.\textsuperscript{112} In this sense, the concerns of local politicians echoed the calls of treasury technocrats, who were now arguing that rural, agricultural development should no longer be ignored, if a dent were to be made into the deep poverty in the former homelands.\textsuperscript{113}

This expanded role promised for the state opened up more opportunities for political brokers – roles that were eagerly taken by many provincial politicians, bureaucrats and local notables. For one, the expansion of infrastructure projects created many more opportunities for local intermediaries and contractors. ‘The high unemployment rate and severe poverty in the province’ was a powerful impetus towards ‘directing funds towards development projects’ and other labour-intensive, infrastructure spending, argued provincial officials.\textsuperscript{114} Also, many ANC leaders understood their role in generating economic development as one of simply providing goods to rural areas. When communities claimed they could not pay back loans on tractors and other farm equipment, provincial politicians often caved in. It was very difficult to ignore these demands when, for instance, a rural communities dumped their broken tractors outside the government offices in Bhisho, demanding they get fixed.\textsuperscript{115} Indeed, there were times when politicians used this language of politics with relish. In 1999, an ANC member of the provincial legislature, who was also a Transkei chief, was sent as an envoy to personally hand out desperately needed dipping materials to local communities.\textsuperscript{116} DALA even faced allegations that its allocation of tractors to chiefs was simply a political gesture. ‘We want Great Places to lead by example in reviving agriculture in communal areas’, claimed officials, in reply.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{106} Interviews William Beinart and Tim Gibbs with Dr Kassim Kasule, Lusikisiki, April 2008 and in Mbotyi village.
\textsuperscript{108} Zoleka Capa, Interview, Flagstaff, 9 November 2008.
\textsuperscript{109} Magadla, Interview. This theoretical point is made by Lonsdale, ‘The Moral Economy of Mau Mau’ \textit{Daily Dispatch,} 4 June 1999.
\textsuperscript{111} Mashwaba Msizi, Interview, Bhisho, 17 November 2008.
\textsuperscript{112} Somdyala, Interview.
\textsuperscript{113} DALA, \textit{Strategic Plan, 2006}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{114} Interviews, Msizi and Allwood
\textsuperscript{115} Daily Dispatch, 26 March 1999.
\textsuperscript{116} Hansard policy speech 2007-8 From Popular Resistance to Populist Politics in the Transkei.
Now, if anything, the pace of this pattern of politics has quickened with the election of Jacob Zuma to the Presidency of the ANC, backed by a coalition of malcontents. Indeed, the O. R. Tambo District, which sent a huge number of delegates to the ANC conference at Polokwane – more than the entire Western Cape – overwhelmingly voted for a change of leadership. This was, in part, a cry against the provincial and national politicians who had been perceived to be ignoring the plight of poor rural areas. Zuma himself adeptly uses the language, handing out food parcels to widows in his home district of Nkandla. He has also talked about reviving institutions from the Bantustan era that brought sustenance to rural areas. This language of communities consuming state resources has become an important discourse of redistribution in South Africa’s highly unequal society. It continues to influence the relationship between national and local politics. And it is one that follows, at least in part, from the social identities that emerged from the transformation rural society and its incorporation into the state.