

NOMKHOSI XULU-GAMA

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HOSTELS

IN SOUTH AFRICA

spaces of perplexity

Hostels in South Africa

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Spaces of Perplexity

Nomkhosi Xulu-Gama



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This book is dedicated to my sons: Mikhosi, Zanda and Libo Gama.

The completion of this book testifies that indeed He who began
the good work in me will complete it (Philippians 1:6):

Thank you Lord Jesus, *umuhle ngezikhathi zonke*.

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INTRODUCTION

Unveiling the Hostel's Perplexity

While the apartheid regime collapsed more than two decades ago, many of the institutions, social processes and problems that characterised that era are, in various forms, still with us today. The African National Congress (ANC) government took power in 1994 and has brought in new people, policies, plans and programmes. However, the social, economic and political problems they inherited were exceedingly complex and the international context often daunting. Likewise, the implementation of new ideas has not always been as efficient or as effective as hoped and many well-intended efforts have not turned out as expected.

One key South African institution that preceded apartheid, was vastly elaborated during that period and continues in the present, was the single-sex hostel. For this reason, hostels can be seen as sites for exploring or analysing the residues and shifting dynamics over the past century and especially the first decades of the current transition or transformation. Beginning as large, dense housing structures to enable migrant African mineworkers to live close to mine sites, away from their families, hostels were designed to alienate workers while enabling them to live cheaply and send money home to their families in rural areas of the country. In time, hostels were expanded all over (urban) South Africa to house men who had obtained government-issued 'pass books', based on their employment, which allowed them to live in urban areas near the industries and ports where they worked. By the 1990s such hostels were still scattered across the country, with only a few single-sex hostels established for women workers.

One of the largest hostels, in terms of physical space and population, was on the northern edge of the city of Durban in an area known as KwaMashu, alongside a large and rapidly growing industrial and

manufacturing zone. KwaMashu Hostel, established with just a few hundred men in 1960, today has a population of more than 25 000 people, including men, women and children. The original buildings were single-storey structures, each room designed for four men sleeping on concrete pallets in a tiny space. In time, two- and three-storey structures were built and now even four-storey buildings are scattered across the hostel space. In recent years the hostel has been surrounded by tightly packed and socially complex shack (or 'informal') settlements, mostly inhabited by women variously connected (or not) to men in the more formal hostel buildings.

In this book, I argue that hostel formations have now become 'spaces of perplexity', as issues of migration, labour, employment, gender, sex, socially and geographically extended families (rural-urban links), housing and politics have gone through serious changes over the last twenty years. These spaces of perplexity reflect past plans and conflicts, as well as the hopes and dreams in the present post-apartheid transition. This book aims to provide an in-depth sense of the fascinating, complex, frustrating and exciting character of South Africa. It is the significance of the hostel as an institution that illuminates the process, problems and successes of the post-apartheid transition.

The key argument of this book is that in the post-apartheid era KwaMashu Hostel has become a space of perplexity that is sharply at odds with official schemes and dreams embodied in government-introduced community residential units (CRUs). CRUs are the new name given by the post-apartheid government to the former single-sex workers' hostels in South Africa. This name implies a rigorous change and remaking of what these spaces were to something totally new, in line with the vision of democracy. Part of what this book shows is a disjuncture between what the policymakers say and have written compared to what the hostel-dwellers do and how they live on an everyday basis. For example, hostel-dwellers insist on calling the hostel a hostel, rather than adopting the new name of CRU. Hostel-dwellers are not aware of an *isiZulu* translation of CRU. The hostel is still largely referred to as *umuzi wezinsizwa* (house/place of men), even though this is no longer the case. Some hostel-dwellers still insist on living on their own as single men and refusing to have their wives join them, except for very short visits when there is a need. Many

people continue to be against the presence of women and children at the hostel.

The cultural formations approach helps us to understand why and how this is so by looking at (i) gender and sexuality as centrally important constitutive forces; (ii) ongoing rural-urban connections in the context of a collapse of livelihoods at both ends and (iii) how social grants continue to make a significant mark in these conditions. The cultural formations approach assists us to see how and why the CRUs are perplexing in almost every aspect of the hostel-dwellers' lives. In this book, I closely examine gender, generational and employment/unemployment status to show how *inhlonipho* (respect) has been 'lost' and how some of the government-initiated programmes (for example, CRUs and social grants) play a fundamental role in these changes. These factors (gender, generational and employment/unemployment) are the central categories that determine one's roles and responsibilities as an individual within a collective, that is, one's family and the wider community.

The cultural formations approach recognises the positive spirit, the similarities and the goodness of the collective in the midst of all divergences, differences and unhappiness among black working-class people. It is like a binding thread, which cuts across workplace disparities, livelihood challenges, gender differences and language barriers.

This book seeks to identify, analyse and contextualise the changes that have taken place since the segregation era, through apartheid and into the post-apartheid period in what was and still is famously known as KwaMashu Hostel, which is now officially known as the KwaMashu CRUs. It provides a close examination of the sociology of the everyday life struggles of the migrant workers and their 'stretched-out' social relations (Massey 1994) by exploring four main dimensions.

First, what I try to do throughout this book is to show how hostels are construed as spaces of perplexity (described more fully below) and I try to demystify the spaces of perplexity. Second, I trace the persistence of migrancy, while recognising the changing rural-urban character of current internal migration processes. Third, I investigate the everyday livelihood struggles of the migrants because they are of the utmost importance to the existence of migrants, especially in the urban areas. Finally, I argue that the reconstruction and redefinition of

cultural, political, social and spiritual associations in the reconfiguring rural-urban connections are the fundamental drivers of all the changes taking place in the lives of the migrants. I specifically show that, despite the planned and unplanned changes that are taking place at the hostels, hostels continue to be highly gendered spaces, which further complicates household sizes and structures.

KEY CONCEPTS

As a result of the deeply and intricately interconnected and overlapping issues presented in this book, certain levels of perplexity are provoked by the experiences and situations presented. Concepts, phrases and terms have been confused in the process. Most importantly, this can be signified by the way that I interchangeably use ‘migrant workers’ and ‘hostel-dwellers’, ‘hostels’ (sometimes meaning blocks, sometimes meaning shacks and most of the time meaning both blocks and shacks) and ‘CRUs’. While ‘hostel-dweller’ and ‘migrant worker’ do not always have the same meaning, they are more or less on the same level when looking at the rural-urban relations at large, that is, ‘migrant worker’ implies that one is formally employed, while a ‘hostel-dweller’ can be anybody living at the hostel. I say ‘formally employed’ because, for the most part, the informally employed do not consider themselves workers or as employed.

In *isiZulu*, when you ask a person, ‘Do you work?’, which is ‘*Uyasebenza?*’, if s/he is informally employed, s/he will always say, ‘*Cha, angisebenzi, ngiyatoha*’, which is, ‘No, I am not working, I am a casual/part-timer’ or ‘I have a casual job’. This means that if one is a migrant worker, one has a stable/formal employment; if not, then one is somebody who is continuously seeking employment. ‘Migrant’ also assumes somebody who has an *imuva* (a rural home) while a hostel-dweller is somebody who may or may not have an *imuva*, but basically lives at the hostel. It does not matter whether s/he has an urban or rural base. What seems to be the most important and common feature of migrant workers and hostel-dwellers is the space in which they currently reside.

Historically, being a migrant worker translated into being a hostel-dweller and the hostel/CRU is primarily still used to serve the functions of the old-time hostel. High unemployment rates mean that

hostel-dwellers are not necessarily workers, although they are migrants. However, there is fluidity between being employed and unemployed. Although one may not be employed today, one could have had a piece job two days ago and could be employed again next week.

The most important things about most of the people based at the hostel are that they are in search of employment opportunities and they have strong ties with their rural homes. Their motive for being at the hostel is the other important factor, rather than their current situation, which changes frequently. Furthermore, a migrant worker who lives in the hostel is a hostel-dweller; the fact that s/he is working does not take away the fact that s/he is a hostel-dweller, while if s/he is unemployed, it takes away the fact that s/he is a worker. It is difficult to use these strict meanings because things happen in processes; there is multiplicity and variation. While I use 'hostel-dweller' for both men and women, I am conscious that the 'hostel is a non-static space and is understood in terms of interconnected geometries of heteropatriarchal power negotiated through interpersonal relationships between far-flung "homes" and the locales they inhabit' (Elder 2003b: 923). Moreover, I am aware that while I mostly refer to the 'hostel community', the hostel is not a homogenous unit. The hostel community is deeply divided, always gendered and sexualised and consists of a shifting, transient and fractured group of people.

Mamphela Ramphele (1993: 3–4) notes that the definition of hostel-dwellers over the years as migrant workers has created problems in relation to the delineation of legitimate shopfloor issues versus non-trade union ones. She argues that the separation of these issues into mutually exclusive entities was of immense strategic importance to the conception and maintenance of hostels as labour compounds. They were neither acknowledged as legitimate extensions of the working environment nor defined as domestic spaces accessible to the families of those living there. Currently, while one might think that this problem has been solved by the development of the hostel as a CRU, I feel that this has complicated the situation even further for all the workers, the hostel-dwellers and their families. This problem is highlighted later in this introduction through the voices of the hostel-dwellers, specifically through Baba Makhathini, who said he thought that the hostel was their 'place to rest after work, but now there is no rest'.

Gillian Hart (2006: 995) argues: 'Places are always formed through relations with wider arenas and other places; boundaries are always socially constructed and contested and the specificity of a place – however defined – arises from the particularity of interrelations with what lies beyond it, that come into conjuncture in specific ways.' From this perspective, place is most usefully understood as nodal points of connection in wider networks of socially produced space – what Doreen Massey (1994: 4) calls an extroverted sense of place: 'Instead, space and place are *both* conceived in terms of embodied practices and processes of production that are simultaneously material and discursive.' If spatiality is conceived in terms of space-time and formed through all social relations and interactions, place can be seen as neither a bounded enclosure nor the site of meaning-making, but rather as 'a subset of the interactions which constitute [social] space, a local articulation within a wider whole'.

Using the concepts of the production of space and a sense of place, this book intends to show that 'the spatial' is constituted by the interlocking of 'stretched-out' social relations (Massey 1994). My research challenges the conception of space and place as bounded units. This justifies looking at the lives of migrant workers in urban areas as not separate from the lives they lead in rural areas. This book uses many hostel-dwellers' stories, firstly as a way of unmasking the hostel so that the perplexity can be seen and understood by the people who have not lived in or visited the hostel before. It also uses their stories as a way of highlighting the ongoing reorganisation of social relations, as well as the ongoing reproduction of segregated and gendered spaces. It looks at how the hostels have been reproduced, how gender roles and relations have been redefined and how places have been reorganised and how these continuously shift as they are remade by the hostel-dwellers on a daily basis. Issues of unequal power relations, identity, patriarchy and household remain crucial in the critical engagement of hostels and hostel-dwellers.

Hostels in the post-apartheid South Africa immediately bring to mind issues of history and geography, the migrant labour system, rural-urban interconnections and housing. Poverty, unemployment, HIV and AIDS, sexuality, crime and overcrowding leading to lack of privacy are interrelated issues that cannot be divorced from the 'hostel question'.

Many inequalities, imbalances and injustices were created by the pre-apartheid government and harshly exacerbated during apartheid. These continue to pose significant challenges to the current democratic government. For the purposes of this book, I refer to hostels in close relation to the informal settlements.¹ The primary reason is that in areas such as KwaMashu, which has one of the biggest hostels in Durban, informal settlements have been fully integrated by the dwellers into the hostels (Nebandla 2005).

Most of the people who live in the informal settlements are, like the hostel-dwellers, migrants from rural areas. Hostels and informal settlements are frequently used as an entry point to urban life (Minnaar 1993a). Taffy Adler (1992), Pieter Kok et al. (2003) and Mark Hunter (2006) argue that it is not only migrants who are to be found in informal settlements. My research findings have also shown that a small number of hostel-dwellers and those in informal settlements are from the townships. Both these groups are primarily poorly educated, unskilled labourers, who mainly live in overcrowded, complex and stretched-out social spaces (Massey 1994), which are highly gendered and have high rates of unemployment, HIV and AIDS and crime (Hunter 2006).

Hostels and 'informal settlements have long been part of South Africa's divided landscape' and the reason they are so important today is 'because of the way they capture important recent economic and demographic changes' (Hunter 2006: 148). Perhaps most importantly, both informal settlements and hostels are indirectly in the top three of the Department of Housing's key priority areas that need an urgent total revamp. As Ramphele did more than two decades ago, I want to argue that hostels should be seen in context of the countrywide crisis in housing, which is why I align them with informal settlements, although discrepancies do exist. This book also acknowledges the differences that exist in terms of the meaning attached to what informal settlements are for different people in different locations and at different times.

Furthermore, the making of livelihoods seems to be an important aspect of migrants' lives. The role played by formal employment (labour), land and livestock seems to be on the decline, according to the migrant workers' experiences. South Africa has an unemployment rate of approximately 40 per cent, in terms of the expanded definition. Many

of those who are employed occupy insecure and informal positions. It is important to note that employment was and still is the primary reason men move to urban hostels. The use of land and livestock in rural areas as a livelihood strategy was part of the mission of *abafazi* (wives) to build a home and make a homestead. The power and identity of migrant workers in rural and urban areas, and in the private and public spheres, was based on the land worked by women (and children), livestock taken care of by women (and children), as well as the presence of children born and raised by women in rural areas.

As a result of the decline of waged labour, land and livestock, the power and identity of migrant workers is also being questioned. This can be substantiated by the fact that the South African labour market has seen a sharp increase in the participation of women, although the kind of jobs they do mostly fall under what is called the secondary segment of the market. However, this allows for their roles at home, in the community and at the workplace to be adjusted accordingly. This adjustment restructures household dynamics, which means a change in household heads, structures, relations and sizes.

HOSTELS AS SPACES OF PERPLEXITY

Social, cultural, economic, political, spatial and demographic conditions in the hostels have undergone tremendous and sometimes harsh, unexpected and undesired changes. The current condition of the hostels is not what the governments – past and present – planned, foresaw or predicted. It is also not what men, the former dwellers at single-sex hostels, wanted at the dawn of democracy. It is still not what most of the men, both young and old, like about the hostel. It is not what the married women yearned for when they lived separately from their migrant husbands during apartheid. The current situation of the hostels is not the realisation of the dreams of young men and women from urban and rural areas. The children at the hostel know for sure that the hostel is not a place where they would one day like to raise their own children, since they are seen as ‘unsafe spaces’.² Indeed, the children are vividly aware of the negative effect that the hostel and the CRUs have had on their lives.

The hostels are not the *nice* CRUs that the liberation government planned to house the families of migrant workers. Hostels are also

not what the men knew them to be, although most of the young women living at the hostel continue to see them as ‘spaces full of men’. Conversely, men who are opposed to the presence of women at the hostels see them as ‘spaces full of women and children’.³ They are spaces full of chaos, tensions, unhappiness, contradictions, harmonies, ambiguities and continuities, discontinuities, crime and unemployment. The hostels are not what women imagined them to be; instead they are spaces full of unmet needs, unsatisfied desires, ongoing livelihood struggles and they are also ‘*indawo yamadoda*’ (a place for men) or ‘*indawo egcwele abantu besilisa*’ (a place full of men). The CRUs did not create space for families as was desired; instead, they demolished the cultural and legal/official space that existed for men and produced something new and unknown. CRUs did not reunite ‘divided families’ (Murray 1981) as was intended. Instead, they reconstructed old relations and also constructed new families and new forms of association between men and women, young and old, rural and urban. This book, relying on an ethnographic account, intends to unveil the dynamics at play at the hostel, which have not been adequately researched since the dawning of democracy.

Theoretically and practically, the hostel has been a departure point as well as a point of arrival for me, as it symbolises the new ‘spaces of migrancy’. In the process of continually moving back and forth, between past and present and rural and urban areas, confusing and enlightening as it is, I have come to realise that the more things changed in the hostel, the more they remained the same.

The hostel is a key site from which to investigate the complex and interconnected issues of space, place, gender, households, intergenerational relationships, unequal power relations, identity, employment or lack of employment and multiple ways of livelihood procurement. Some of the interesting changes that have been taking place at the hostel include the refurbishment, shrinking formal employment, the increased presence of young, unmarried women and children from the rural areas, increased informal settlements in the surroundings of the CRUs, an increase in the crime rate and failed attempts to abolish the informal settlements in the past 31 years. Specifically, the abolition of influx control in 1986 and the dawning of democracy in South Africa in 1994 were catalysts for ongoing changes in the former hostels.

The participants in this research used many different ways to express the idea that I have articulated as ‘spaces of perplexity’. By this I mean that hostels are spaces full of mystification, contradictions, confusion and resistance. Many people are confused about what the hostel is, who is it for and why is it there. People are uncertain about whose interests are served by the changes. What exacerbates the mystification is the fact that some people choose to remain in their understandings of the past about the hostel, which sometimes are no longer relevant. Sometimes people choose to focus too much on the changes brought about by the ANC government and the changing environment, so much so that they refuse to accept or respect the past and what it stands for. The other cause of mystification is how the current government constantly fails to create a comfortable platform for the hostel-dwellers to engage with it concerning crucial aspects of the remaking of the hostel, especially the drastic changes. The participants also raised many reasons for this perplexity. There is no single explanation that can fit everybody at the hostel. The concept of hostels now means many different things to different people and is dynamic and shifting. The spaces of perplexity represent a combination of all positive and negative experiences and expectations of a variety of people from in and around the hostel.

I try to highlight the quotes from interviews that represent the variety of relevant themes – for example, hostel, gender, household and intergenerational conflict – but it is not always possible to divide these themes so neatly because they are intricately connected with one another. For example, when I asked men to talk about their living conditions, they started talking to me about the unwanted presence of women at the hostel. When I asked men to talk about the presence of women at the hostel, they started talking to me about their loss of power, rights and identity, as well as the forsaken homesteads in the rural areas. When I asked men to talk about the CRUs, they started talking to me about how much better the apartheid times were. This illustrates the interesting dynamics in the way hostel-dwellers see and understand their own lives, how they carry their history with them and how resistant and sceptical they are with regards to the changes taking place. At first glance, they appear to be playing along, but when one digs deeper, one realises that they are not totally happy.

Ramphele (1993) observes that one would have to live in a hostel in order to really understand the complicated nature of the lives of the hostel-dwellers. Through this research, I have been lucky to have had a chance to live in this particular hostel – KwaMashu – for almost two years, studying the lives of the hostel-dwellers. I also visited some of the rural areas where most of them come from and was able to learn more about their livelihoods and rural-urban connections.

The following observations were taken from the initial focus group discussions and interviews I conducted at the hostel with older men who had lived there for twenty years or more. These conversations enabled me to better understand the hostel as spaces of perplexity.

Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo is a 54-year-old man from Empangeni.⁴ He is married to two wives, who are both based in the rural areas, with whom he has had twelve children, although only eight remain alive today. He has worked for the same company for 32 years. He started living at the hostel in 1975. He has never lived in an informal settlement and in 2010 he was allocated a room in the CRU. This is from an interview I had with him on 12 March 2009:

Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo: The reason I came to stay here was through my father, but I also liked the idea of moving into a hostel because it was like a famous thing those days. It sounded nice to the people in rural areas to say one is moving into the KwaMashu Hostel. I got to live in this place through lodging. The people who lodged were also registered with the main office. My father invited me to come and live with him in the hostel, but I did not have bed-space then. I used to sleep on the floor until a bed was available for me.

Baba Maphumulo draws a generational and gendered link in terms of the traditions of coming to the hostel. He refers to the positive reputation and the image that existed with regard to the hostel and importantly he makes references to the administration and monitoring processes of the hostel, which are no longer in existence. Many hostel-dwellers who were interviewed between 2009 and 2011 had a similar experience:

Baba Shusha: People do not come to live in the hostels willingly; it is the situation that forces them to do that.⁵

In contrast to Baba Maphumulo, Baba Shusha felt that people do not come to the hostel voluntarily; there are harsh realities that push them out of their homesteads. The majority of the participants concurred that the rural areas are their first choice of residence.

Baba Mthembu: The main reason why we are here [at the hostel] is because of poverty . . . As we are here, we would still like to have families in the rural areas, so when looking at how much we make, one would see that we cannot be able to support and maintain two families.⁶

Baba Mthembu concurs with Baba Shusha about the driving factors behind their migration. He also responds to the idea of having CRUs and how it assumes they should have two families, one in the urban areas and one in the rural areas. The idea of moving the whole family from the rural area to a permanent location in an urban area is not an option.

Baba Sishi concurs with the views of Baba Mthembu above about not wanting to permanently move wives and children to the urban areas, since they cannot financially afford it:

Baba Sishi: It is good for people to live with their families. But the government did not think what would be suitable for us [old married men who choose to live as single, as in the old times]. We have families and children in the villages; we cannot move our families from rural areas to here. Life here is expensive.⁷

Baba Vilakazi and Baba Mngwengwe both note that a hostel is a good place, although Baba Mngwengwe also mentions some of the challenges of living there:

Baba Vilakazi: The hostel is good because people are even able to lodge together, accommodating those who do not have a space of their own.

Baba Mngwengwe: We are all really happy living here at the hostel but we have a problem with crime. It was fine long ago [during the apartheid era], but now it is really bad. There is also a lot of uncleanliness, dirty water flowing all over the place.⁸

Baba Dumisani Ngcobo is a block chairman who has a unit with one bedroom all to himself. He is also married to two wives, one living in a rural area and the other living in the township. He has a girlfriend at the hostel and they have a three-year-old child. The girlfriend lives at the hostel in a separate block with her mother, child and nephew. Below are some of the things he likes and does not like about the hostel:

The things I like: Living by myself, freedom and transport is close by. The things I do not like: the presence of women and crime.⁹

Zethu Mthembu is nineteen years old. She and her siblings were born at the hostel, but were later sent to a rural area for a couple of years and have now come back to live with their father and mother at the hostel. This is from an interview on 17 July 2009:

Nomkhosi: What changes would you like to see taking place in the hostel?

Zethu: I would like to see the crime rate go down . . .

Nomkhosi: Would you like to live here when you get married with your family?

Zethu: No.

Nomkhosi: Why?

Zethu: It is totally not safe.

There is so much concern and worry about the present and uncertainty about the future that the hostel-dwellers argued that 'it was better in Egypt' – Egypt referring to the apartheid era.

Baba Gcabashe: If things went my way, the government would be reminded that a hostel is still a hostel. I am sure that the municipality would want the rent, which could

force you to vacate the house with your family [if you do not pay rent because this is not your house but a hostel].¹⁰

Baba Gcabashe blatantly refuses to accept the changes that are being introduced. He wants to remain in the comfortable and familiar past. He feels that the hostel is still a hostel. This means that he disregards any changes that are taking place at the hostel, as well as at a policy level. On the other hand, it might mean that he does not know that the hostel has been changed into CRUs. While he can see the infrastructural changes, these do not imply changes in the significant and traditional existence of the hostels. For men at the hostels, it is easy to argue that CRUs are meaningless if they are about the presence of women and children because men know that women and children were living at the hostel long before the construction of the 'family units'. They could argue that the hostel was a hostel for men before the presence of women and children; it continued to be the hostel for men when women and children came through and it remains *indawo yamadoda* (place of men), even when the government has constructed what it calls the CRUs. According to many of the men at the hostel, they are happy to continue to observe the rules of the hostels, that is, to pay low monthly rent or be thrown out of the hostel because of non-payment.

Baba Shongwe: Would it not be possible to request that the children, after the retirement of their father and he goes back home, that they continue living there until they finish their studies? Because it would not be humane to take them out of the accommodation while they are studying. He can then continue renting for the children.¹¹

Baba Shongwe is worried about securing the next generations' space at the hostel. This is something they did not have to worry about in the past. During the apartheid era, male children who came to the urban areas to study did not lose their bed when their parent died or retired. Good social networks ensured that others at the hostel looked after them, as was the case with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo, who secured bed-space for the son of his late friend. It is an issue now because girl children are living with their parents at the hostels.

Baba Donda: That all depends on the government, because it is the one which knows what intentions it has about its buildings. Because it is possible that the father cannot pay rent as he lost his job, but children still need accommodation to further their studies. The government should not terminate the initial aim of the hostels because in that way, rent would not go up unreasonably. It [the government] should play a big role in subsidising the housing for people from rural areas.¹²

Baba Donda shows feelings of being excluded by government in information sharing and inferiority, but insists that the original intentions of the hostel should be kept.

Baba Khumalo: I am not happy with the number of the rooms in the newly built hostels. It [the hostel] should go up a bit more so that it can accommodate all these people who are living in the hostel right now.¹³

Baba Khumalo raises concerns about a lack of space and fears the consequences, but Baba Zondo recognises that the past is the past, and the future is unknown:

Baba Zondo: Long ago, while we were still under the old government, it was much better. The municipality had people who cleaned hostels, toilets and cut grass. Everything was all right in the hostels. Since the reign of the new government, all those services stopped; there is no municipal cleaning which took place. But we do not know what will the change in CRUs bring for us. Perhaps there is something better that is coming for us, but we do not know that yet.¹⁴

After living at the hostel for a couple of months, I can say that this it is not totally true that there is no cleaning done by the municipality. Cleaning services are still in existence at the hostel to a limited extent. Cleaning has been outsourced and is not done by the municipality

anymore – hence service delivery is really bad. Baba Gcabashe continues with negative sentiments, comparing the old and new governments:

When the ruling government came into power, everything went wrong. If one complains to the block chairmen, there is nothing much that they can do as well.¹⁵

Others confirm these views, comparing how things used to be with the way things are now at the hostel:

Baba Makhathini: Long ago, we used to be able to formally remove people from certain rooms if they were not able to abide by the rules of that room. We would report them at the office and they would be removed. There was nobody who could tell you that this is not your house because municipality said this is the place for people who came to work. But now, we can't sleep as people play loud music in the night. You can't complain because a person will tell you that this is not your home or house. If the radio is making noise from another room, there is nothing you can do. We used to think that this was our place to rest after work, but now there is no rest.

Baba Zondo: To add on that note, long ago the municipality had hostel police officers [*amaBlackjack*] who were always around to maintain peace, but now there is nobody to do that. There was not so much killing, but now it's not safe anymore. These days anybody can have a gun. While it only used to be police officers who carried guns and could shoot people, but now, one only has to be 21 years and s/he can buy a gun and shoot anybody and nothing happens to them. Even the block chairman is useless these days. There is a man who was a block chairman who died here when he went to resolve a quarrel between the hostel residents.

Baba Shange: I came here at KwaMashu Hostel in 1967. There was so much peace in this community of hostels.

Women were not allowed to come into the hostel area. Now, there is no freedom for us.¹⁶

It is clear that this process has caused much pain and these hostel-dwellers feel a loss of respect and also that safety and security is compromised and their rights have been violated. The participants noted that they do not trust the women who live at the hostels or other men, for that matter.

The following quotes show how I understand the hostel as a space of perplexity, using comments about the household.

I started living here permanently in 1988. I live with my husband here at the hostel. I have three children. One of them lives in the village and two of them live with me here at the hostel. The one who lives in the village is the oldest; she takes care of the home and keeps on making babies while she is not married. She visits us sometimes, like now she is with us for these days . . . Since I started living here, I have never lived outside the hostel, except when I am visiting my village. I came to live here through Mr Luthuli who was then my boyfriend and is my husband now. I do not see myself leaving the hostel now.¹⁷

The above quote represents views that contradict those of the majority of men (and sometimes women) in terms of the importance of the presence of a woman in the homestead.

Baba Zulu: Most of the women here close down their households in the rural areas since they are the heads in the absence of men.

Baba Sishange: Some women have bad intentions about the relationships they have with men. After having broken up with some man in the rural area, she would make sure that the next person she has a relationship with, she never lose him for any reason. She would go to traditional doctors for *muti* [traditional medicine]. This *muti* should prevent you from even thinking about your family in the village.

Women should not be doing this thing, as it is wrong. It is a man who knows where the future of a woman is. He is the one who proposes, anyway.¹⁸

The views of Baba Sishange show feelings of suspicion and distrust and reveal the shifting power relations between men and women. Many men are not happy with living with women at the hostel, including those who actually live with women, whether wives or girlfriends.

Baba Sibiya: Women here are irresponsible. There are female things [sanitary towels/pads] that should not be seen by men, but in this place, the women throw these things anywhere. This is really unbearable. We even find these things in the bathrooms and it is so disgusting.¹⁹

This was a big issue for the men, with everybody wanting to express an opinion. Used sanitary towels/pads, baby diapers and condoms are found all over the place from a bin without a lid to an illegal dumping site, in bathrooms, to wherever there is a burst sewerage tank.

The quotes below show how I understand the hostel as a space of perplexity using comments from the hostel-dwellers about gender.

Baba Ncube: There are not only advantages, but disadvantages as well for having women in the hostel. The good thing about it is that, men use to quarrel [*badelelane*] and then fight [*bese beyolwa izimpi*]. Women are able to somehow weaken men, discourage them from having fights. Even if there is a man who always wants to start a fight, other men can go to his partner and ask her to ask him to behave himself. It is known that the man can listen to a woman when she tells him to stop it. The impact of the presence of a woman in a man's life is really big [in both positive and negative senses].

Baba Hadebe: The thing with women here is that one does not have to pay lobola for them. One can just live with them and enjoy all the benefits that married men enjoy.

Women will live with you without you paying a cent to their families and they will wash, clean and iron for you, whereas in the villages, men have to pay lobola if they want access to a woman. So, for people who did not get a chance to find a wife in the villages, they have one here. What she will want is money every day before you go to work; it can be money for tomatoes, for potatoes, for cosmetics or anything else that she needs. If I get tired of that one, I leave her and get another one. The neglecting of a home is caused by freebies, things that one does not pay for.²⁰

While there is no shame associated with leaving a person you cohabited with without being married, leaving your wife, somebody you paid lobola for, there is a lot to lose, including *umfazi* (the wife), lobola and your dignity and respect as a man.

Baba Mlangeni: Another reason for men to neglect their homes is if they do not get the love and respect that they want [from their wives and children].²¹

Most men argued that the kind of respect they get from women who come from the rural areas is the best. They claimed that some women in the urban areas would give them a lot of respect at first, in order to make the man forget about his partner in the rural area, but the minute he commits himself to the new partner, she would change to her real self.

What one considers good or bad would mainly depend on the gender and age of the person, since the participants are primarily from rural areas. On the other hand, this is about the choices that individuals make, as well as the meanings they attach to the different things they do – for example, to live as husband and wife while you are not married and lobola has not been paid or not, to forsake a rural home or not. In an interview with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo on 12 March 2009, he said:

There is little that I can say is good about having women here. It is only good for those who live with their husbands

because then they take care of their husbands. It is bearable if they are living in a hostel, but as long as I do not share a room with them.

There was general consensus among men and women that the majority of women at the hostel are not working. Men believe that since women are not working, they must be surviving through men's incomes, quickly forgetting or totally disregarding the role of the social grants and the sexual economy in the lives of women and children.

In an interview on 12 March 2009, when asked why he thinks women come to the hostel, Baba Maphumulo said:

Women come here to find work. It was good that they were not here during apartheid as people did not kill each other. Their presence here is a problem because one cannot say that I do not want anybody to talk to my wife. That would be impossible as other men would meet her in the common rooms like washing place, kitchen and toilets.

Baba Maphumulo, in contrast to Baba Ncube above, argues that men now kill each other because women are here, while Baba Ncube argued that men fight less now because women are here (although fighting and killing are two different things). In a focus group discussion on 4 May 2009, other men at the hostel offered the following views on women and their presence at the hostel:

Baba Makhathini: Women in this place come from all walks of life. There are those who come from the townships and those who come from rural areas. There are those who failed in their marriages and then they come here. There are those who come here for children's maintenance. Some are just looking for any man who can support them.

Baba Dlamini: Women are able to come to the hostel having one boyfriend. When the boyfriend goes to work, she then pays attention to another man who lives in the same house. And then that causes problems. Sometimes that

causes some people to die. As it has been said, women are not the same. There are experienced and inexperienced women. Those who have the experience will use that to their benefit. For example, a woman from the rural areas, when you call her, she will come quickly, kneel in front of you and listen to what you have to say and leave. Even when you are in the bedroom, she will wait for your start, unless you have trained her otherwise, but women from here, they would come to you room for the first time, see the bed, push you to fall in it and that's it. She will do things that you only see on TV or in the magazines, if you even look at those things. You easily get lost in things like that if you are not a focused person or if you did not have a partner.

Baba Ngcobo: We [men] are the people who are oppressed.

Baba Ndwandwe: It's the male hostel-dwellers, the ones who are married who are oppressed. We do not have our private rooms with our wives when they visit.

When I challenged them about the hostel formerly being only for males, they argued:

Baba Ndlela: But there was an area called 14, but now there is no 14. It was only a person with a marriage certificate who could bring a woman in here.

Baba Ngcobo: The coming of women here anyhow finishes [takes away] our space and it finishes our manhood as well. I have not seen a situation where a person can be in a room with a woman who is not his partner and she is covered with only a curtain. There is a lot of trouble that is brought in by women.

The resort to *imijondolo* (shacks) is not the sole doing of women. Each focus group said that privacy is all they wanted. The government's plan

and design for family housing is clearly not accepted by the hostel-dwellers.

Baba Ngcobo: Firstly, here in the hostel, there are all kinds of dirt. Secondly, people are being killed and it is not even reported in the news, while we do see in other places cases like that being reported. Thirdly, the houses are old and damaged since long ago. The pipes are all rotten. There were no doors of the rooms and we used to use cardboards to close houses. These people are in shame; they do not have toilets, and nothing ever gets fixed. Water is getting wasted, not only because it is used, but because when the pipes burst, nobody fixes them. Fourthly, yes we can see development and are we grateful for that, but it is coming in very slowly. I and some other people are not happy with the plan of this development. It would be nice if people had a chance to say what kind of housing they would like for themselves. Houses are supposed to take different shapes and plans. There are people who do not have rural homes [*imuvu*], having children and who do not know where to keep their children. There are also very old people who also do not have rural homes. In that case we do not know who can solve our problems, as the government does not even come near.

Baba Ndwandwe: As my brother has said, we do see the signs of development, but we realise that it is not the kind of development that we were expecting. I have not lived very long here in the hostel. The bed that I got is so bad. I cannot even try and let somebody else sleep in that bed because it is broken and kind of divided into half. In terms of development, we were told that we were going to get houses that we were going to be happy with and also that we could live with our families. But now we realise that these houses are not what they promised. These houses do not allow you to be free. You can't leave your wife in your room when there is another man in the next bedroom. It's

easy for the man next door to know that you have left and he can go in your room where there is your wife and start saying things. Even if you suspect something, it would be difficult for you to say anything to anybody. These rooms really do not make us happy. We trusted that the situation was going to be better.

Baba Mhlongo: The problem that we have is that of crime. We are also not happy with the houses they are building for us. It is not what they promised us. We were told that a person can live with his family . . . Another problem, there are no houses suitable for disabled people. This is important as some people get disabled during the stay in the hostel. If one is on the wheel chair, how can he climb staircases?

Baba Ndlela: I just want to remind my brother that there are houses which are suitable for disabled persons. I have told some of the people here. Their rooms are in doubles. They have small suitable toilets as well.

Baba Chili: I would like to talk about education. We need an education institution here at the hostel, as there are many people who are not educated. If this institution can be based here, it would be better.

Baba Manzini: We can see this development, although it has not directly reached us, we have seen it from further away. But I feel that it came to make us fight with each other. Here, we live with our children, not our biological children, but the ones that we meet here at the hostel. The small space that we meet at, which is the kitchen and the toilet, people will mess up those spaces and some of us always have to come and clean the mess made by other people. Some people do not like cleanliness, so our plea is that we be given our own private spaces where we can live either by ourselves or with our families.²²

Below is the story of a young woman who explained why she left a rural area to come and live at the hostel. Nokulunga Zungu is a 23-year-old woman whose story shows that ‘visiting’ the hostel is one way of beginning the relocation process, which according to most interviewees is never consciously planned. Coming to the city/urban area/hostel to apply for a social grant is the reason some women from the rural areas cited for their first visit. This is prompted by the general lack of services in the rural areas compared to the urban areas.

I started living here in 2007. I had initially come here to apply for the child’s grant and then I never went back. I then looked after my young schoolgoing siblings. I lived with my child as well. I dropped out from school at Standard 9. I did not go back to school because my parents would not support me. They were angry with me. I am not married, have one boy child, his surname is Zulu. His father is from Eshowe and we are not together anymore. We met here at the hostel when I was visiting my mother. My mother has never lived in a hostel, but she organised a room/shack for us and the children to live there while she lived in town close to where she works.

The main problem facing people my age here is *ukuhlukumezeka* [abuse]. There are people my age who are forced to live with their boyfriends because they do not have anybody else to look after them. Crime is also a big problem for everybody. There are people who are forced by work to leave their room early hours of the morning and by the time they get into the train station, they have already been robbed of everything they had.²³

Issues of gender-based violence and abuse surface frequently in the women’s stories. Young and older women escape the rural areas because of gender-based violence, only to be abused by a new partner at the hostel.

The next quotes show how I understand the hostel as a space of perplexity using comments about intergenerational differences. In an interview with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo on 12 March 2009, he said:

I live with three people, which makes us four. But there are two additional guys, which makes us six. The fourth bed was for my friend who was like a brother and he passed away. I tried to make sure that his son takes over and not any other person. He is the guy who has invited two other people. Now I regret inviting him to live with us.

This comment raises a couple of relevant issues; first, space and overcrowding; second, the bond of brotherhood that is created by living at the hostel in such close proximity; and third, intergenerational issues or differences. Everything mentioned by Baba Maphumulo had a time and space factor. For example, it was normal for the blocks to be overcrowded, meaning more than four people in a room designed for four people. However, in 2009, it was problematic to have six people in a block room, because people could be accommodated in either informal settlements or in the CRUs. As a result of the kind of relationship he had with his late roommate, Baba Maphumulo felt he needed to be a father to the son of his late friend. He did exactly what the late friend would do, as was the norm.

Baba Mkhonza: The problem is that here in the hostel, there are no older men that youth can learn from. A lot of them have died or left the hostel. Very few are left behind.

Baba Phiri: This place is now dominated by young people.

Baba Mhlongo: Some old people are leaving this place because they cannot stand the kind of disrespectful life being led by young people.²⁴

This mainly refers to the way youngsters speak to older people, as well as how they behave when they are around them: loud music, having girlfriends over, refusal to clean their rooms, and so on.

Baba Sibanda: Although there might be house rules, but the youth do not follow that. If you insist on things, he would hire people to kill you.

Baba Nxumalo: Young men of this age are different. Once one has a girlfriend, he would refer to her as his wife, although he has not paid a cent to her family. They are both happy calling each other with names that they do not qualify for.

Baba Bhengu: The problem with a particular group of young men is that they do not appreciate the rural experience and knowledge already acquired instead they want to change and quickly adapt to ways that are new to them. They then say *isidala* [it is out of fashion] to do things as their fathers and forefathers. This attitude is developed and infiltrated to other young men.

Baba Cebekhulu: What I can add is that the government played huge role into these problems we have now. It spoke of rights and it did not explain the responsibilities that are attached to those rights. The ways these rights have been introduced, they came and made it sound like everything else that was done in the olden days was wrong or that it is now out of fashion. The government must go back to the people and explain properly the rights and responsibilities and the relationship it has with our cultures.

Baba Mncube: It is true that one can learn a lot of things in the hostel. But charity begins at home. By the time people come to live here, they should already know the basics of life.

Baba Siphika: People have really changed their way of life. At the hostel, there were cases whereby a person could keep his savings with one of the trusted elderly man and he is the one who would say when he needs all of his money to do whatever he was saving for. But today, it would be almost impossible to trust somebody with your money. People would rather see you dead than have you access your money. Somehow the world has changed.²⁵

There is a high rate of uncertainty, many reasons for confusion, substantial grounds for unhappiness and many levels of perplexity, all happening at the same time in the hostel. No single structure or person is to blame for the situation, but each stakeholder is almost equally responsible for the changes taking place at the hostel. Men feel that they have been stripped of their freedom at the hostel, contrarily, they still prefer to continue living in the hostel, rather than finding other accommodation. They feel they have been deprived of their privacy. They feel that their manhood and headship status has been stolen by the government through the rights that have been given to women and children.

Women have largely been blamed for the high rate of crime at the hostel. I asked them how they feel crime can be alleviated at the hostel. Below are some of their discussion points on this issue. These women are all from rural areas; live at the hostel and are between ages of 18 and 40.

Nosipho: It will never be sorted. The reason I say that is because here if they try to do something good for us as residents, the people would wish that that particular thing belongs to them personally. For example, two days ago, they put six taps in the showers; this morning there was no tap to be found.

Nandipha: What is painful is that you find that it is your boyfriend who does these things, why don't you report him? [This was not directed at any particular person.]

Snothile: But the person who stole the taps is trying to make money. But he is doing it the wrong way.

Maza: I would threaten to report my boyfriend if he would do that.

Mpume: He would kill you after that.

Maza: If your boyfriend is not in the house very late at night or early hours of the morning, you have a right to ask him where he comes from upon his return.

Mpume: What if he promises to kill you?

Zipho: If you sit down with him and talk to him politely, he will not threaten you.

Snothile: What if he asks you how is he supposed to support you if he does not have money?

Maza: I would tell him to look after the children and I will go and work.

Mpume: What if you do not find work?

Nosipho: I think he would have to sell anything in order to support us and not do crime.

Snothile: What if he does prostitution?

Nandipha: It's better than doing crime.²⁶

Since men said so many negative things about women at the hostel, I asked a group of women during a focus group discussion on 8 May 2009 what they felt were the disadvantages of having women in the hostels:

Nosihle: Men normally complain about women, saying they talk too much. They also say that women like to put their own rules and regulations on how to do things around the hostel.

Sphilile: Another problem is that, let's say I am getting ready to go work a night shift, we all share the same showers, and we have to wait for each other in order to use the showers. If I come in first, men would have to wait till I finish before they can use a shower and if they get in first, I have to wait till they finish before I can go in. What happens is that, when you come in, you knock to check if there is anybody inside, if a man hears that it is a woman knocking at the door, he can take even two hours, not caring about the woman waiting. But if a man knocks, the other man is able to get out quickly, so that the other man gets in and showers. What happens sometimes is that after waiting for a while outside the shower as one man is having a shower, another man comes in, knocks and quickly gets in before you, even if you had been waiting for a long time. Sometimes he would say he would only take two minutes. In that case, you as a woman would have nothing to say,

because anyway *this is their place*. Sometimes you even get late for work.

Deli: On the same note, when a woman is taking a shower, a man would come in and peep at her. Every time a man would do the same thing.

Ntombi: We get a lot of abuse. One is not even allowed to have a chat with men younger than her. Once you are seen talking to a young guy, people would say '*uklebe ubamba amatshwele*' [see discussion of this phrase below].

Lethabo: The main reason women fight so much at the hostel is men.

Ayanda: They think we are all here for men.

Thembsile: Women are too authoritative and they do that at a hostel, a place originally for men and that is a problem. Women try to own a lot of things that do not really belong to them, especially those that have been here for a long time.

Zukiswa: I personally wish that the Lord helps me. When I see that the stage of having my own house has arrived, that I leave this place in peace and go to live in my house because here women talk even when there is no need. And even the young girls like to take the side of the older women and also tend to talk too much. These girls would talk negatively about you even when you are not far away from them, sometimes they do not see that you can hear them whispering about you. That is disgusting.

The women's views sadly and interestingly reiterated the men's views presented above. Crime, space and privacy and the lack thereof are as much problems for women as they are for men.

Ntombi used the phrase '*uklebe ubamba amatshwele*'; this is sometimes expressed as 'chicken murder'. It is generally used to express the wrongness of an older woman being involved with a younger guy, as opposed to the phrase 'sugar daddy'. While 'sugar daddy' refers to a man who is about the same age as her father, when there is a 'chicken murder', the woman does not have to be as old as the guy's father, only a few years older than her partner. It is important to note that it

is mostly women who use this phrase to and/or about each other. The word 'murder' basically means the person is a criminal and the chicken implies a small, innocent and helpless creature. This shows how harsh and negative the relations between women can be, especially when there is a man involved. On the other hand, where men are older than their partners/women, this is accepted as normal. If a man is between one to ten years older than a woman, it is seen as okay. If the age gap is so big that the man could be the girl's father, then less derogatory terms are used to describe that kind of a relationship, such as 'sugar daddy' or *ikhehla libamba ingane*, meaning a very old man is involved with a child.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK

This book aims to contribute to at least three bodies of literature: hostels and migration; livelihoods and labour studies; and gender, space and place. In terms of hostels and migration, I argue that hostels are spaces of perplexity and that every aspect of the hostel-dwellers' lives contributes to and is affected by this perplexity. I show how migrants continue to make a living through their rural-urban connections, regardless of the precariousness of work and diminishing livelihoods at both ends. In terms of livelihoods and labour studies, I emphasise the importance of moving beyond the shopfloor, investigating the lives of migrant workers and the meanings they attach to their lives and relations. I argue that relying on only labour studies and waged labour is limiting and does not do justice to the everyday livelihood struggles of the hostel-dwellers. In terms of gender, space and place, I argue that people are producing space, reworking their lives and making their histories in conditions not of their own making. I show that while the hostel has always been a gendered space (because it was 'the place of men'), hostel-dwellers (both men and women) have continued to reproduce and redefine the hostel space more closely in gendered terms, which only they understand. The politics of space continue, even if it seems like it is more clear cut, in reality (everyday practice), it is not.

The voices of the migrants help to provide an enhanced version of what the hostel currently is and how it functions, not according to the planners and rulers, but directly from the hostel-dwellers' everyday lived experience. Therefore, this book seeks to understand the hostel space

in various ways, recognising that the space is constantly changing and being contested, resulting in its being a perplexed space. It looks at the hostel as a bed-hold (see Ramphela 1993), hostels as interconnected, sexualised and gendered spaces (see Elder 2003a, 2003b), hostels as sites of resistance, hostels as temporary accommodation, hostels as single-sex accommodation, hostels as a home (per the current government's housing policy), hostels as holiday accommodation, hostels as a community and hostels as a place of displaced people.

Some of the changes since the advent of a democratic government include hostels being upgraded or refurbished into flats, from dormitories to self-contained units, from single storeys to double storeys, in some cases from multistoreys to single storeys and double storeys, from single-sex accommodation to accommodation for men and women, from workers' residences to family housing, including children and students – 'from hostels to homes' (Byerley 2005). 'Spaces under transformation' and 'hostels as sites of resistance' seem to be the best way of conveying the changes taking place in hostels (Elder 2003a: 4, 16).

This book is primarily in conversation with the hostel literature in South Africa. This is a richly researched subject, especially during the prime stages of the apartheid regime (1970s and 1980s) through to the early days of democracy. Studying the hostels in current times is interesting because it not only brings out the idea of men at the centre of the production process and women at the centre of the reproduction process, based in rural areas, or people who have invaded men's spaces in the urban areas (hostels), but also shows the reversal of these trends, which is far from being a neat process.

Glen Elder's 2003 book, *Hostels, Sexuality and the Apartheid Legacy: Malevolent Geographies* is an exceptional study on hostels from the mid-to-late 1990s. The year 2003, almost ten years after democracy, was a good time to check if the government's promises were at least moving in the direction of being met. Political violence had come and gone. Unemployment was at its highest level, female migration, HIV and AIDS and the roll out of social grants were growing fast, rural-urban migration had not stopped and people had not stopped building informal settlements. Elder perfectly located his study within rural-urban connections, South Africa's historical legacy and the geography of apartheid.

However, while Elder provides a clearly focused study of hostels based on the gendered and sexualised lives of the dwellers, I do not agree with his pessimistic interpretation that the everyday lives of the women who live at the hostels 'have remained the same, or tragically worsened' (2003a: 2). My findings indicate that women's movement from rural to urban areas is always positive because it is often a move of their own choosing, although under very constrained circumstances, and it presents opportunities and possibilities, as well as new challenges and risks. In addition, social grants are making a positive difference in women's lives. Women are definitely not passive participants being moulded and channelled by men and the apartheid legacy alone; they are also active agents engaging in the circumstances of their lives. They also use and abuse men (through domestic and sexual favours) and the system (through social grants) opportunistically. On the other hand, there is ample evidence of the way in which men's lives are deteriorating in the midst of high unemployment, dread diseases such as HIV, AIDS and tuberculosis and a decline in rural livelihood procurement. Men have lost their space, freedom, privacy, employment, livestock, land, respect and dignity. Men's lives in the hostels have worsened as well.

While I have noted a number of interesting ongoing features and trends in some of the hostel studies mentioned, I also note some limitations. For example, Ramphela's 1993 study discusses hostels in Cape Town and their occupants, but fails to examine the intricate connections that the hostel-dwellers' lives have with rural areas. Although she hints at the fact that her participants have some form of rural background, she does not show how their rural backgrounds are part of their everyday lives. My research differs from hers in the geographical sense (mine is in KwaZulu-Natal) and in the fact that her work is based in more than one hostel (Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu hostels), while mine is based in one hostel (KwaMashu). It is also not only about the time factor (the apartheid versus the democratic era), or the fact that I not only did research in the hostel, but also traced the larger rural-urban connections. The major difference comes from the fact that I spent some time living in the hostel.²⁷ I also visited four rural areas in northern KwaZulu-Natal linked to KwaMashu Hostel and spent a minimum of one full week in each location (Nongoma, Hlabisa, Eshowe and Empangeni), followed by a couple of days' visits as needed.

It is from Ari Sitas (1983) who did his Ph.D. on ‘African worker responses on the East Rand to changes in the metal industry, 1960–1980’ and wrote an article in 1996 titled ‘The New Tribalism: Hostels and Violence’ in response to the hostel violence from the late 1980s until 1995–6, which spread to almost every hostel in South Africa, that I have adopted the ‘cultural formations’ approach. Among other things, I use this to show how and when the ideas of *inhlonipho* gain and lose meaning for different people at different times. Sitas (1983, 1992, 1996, 2004, 2010) has been able to discuss the issues facing black workers beyond the shopfloor. His work has been integral in the way that it lays the foundation for any study to be conducted on workers at the hostels. However, a major weakness of Sitas’s work is its failure to capture and theoretically explain the gender dynamics at play in the hostels and sometimes in the workplaces of migrant workers.

In current times, there have been many connecting strands between scholars who do work on labour, livelihoods, gender and sexuality, and I have chosen to use the work of scholars who understand the critical role of space and place in the production of meanings and identities both in the community and in the workplace.

This book not only acknowledges and highlights the links the hostels have with the rural areas; it deeply engages with these links and the processes involved. It should be seen as responding to and engaging with Elder’s core interest in the intricate and intertwined role of sexuality and gender in the hostels and hostel violence. It also responds to the challenge posed by Hart and Sitas of moving beyond rural–urban disconnections or dichotomies and seeing land, labour and livelihoods as knitted into each other.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three main parts. Part 1 specifically deals with hostels, from their establishment as single-sex workers’ hostels to their current changed status as CRUs. Chapter 1 primarily presents a historical overview of the hostel. Chapter 2 documents the continuation from history to the current state of the hostel. It tries to show the general trends of rural–urban connections in KwaZulu-Natal and beyond.

Part 2 is composed of three chapters and is about the challenges that migrants encounter in the processes of making livelihoods. Chapter 3

is about the everyday livelihood struggles of migrants. It tells stories about the challenges relating to the collapsing livelihoods of migrants. Chapter 4 rigorously moves beyond looking at land, labour and livelihoods as separate; instead it uses migrants' voices to show the linkages between land, labour and livelihoods and their constantly shifting nature. Chapter 5 begins by introducing two livelihood strategies, which can be described as hidden, illegal or immoral, that is, the sexual economy and criminality. The chapter goes on to show the key but ambiguous role played by social grants in the lives of women.

Part 3 is made up of three chapters. Chapter 6 builds on the previous chapters by outlining and discussing the various dimensions of cultural formations. These formations relate to the different circumstances in which perplexity takes place. This chapter discusses issues of identity and belonging and further engages with gender issues, cultural and spiritual issues. Chapter 7 discusses conscious and unconscious forms of producing gendered spaces. It reflects on the history of women at the hostels and draws links to the present state of women in South Africa and their relationships with men. This chapter also examines issues of gendered violence and gendered criminality. Chapter 8 narrows down to the level of household and housing dynamics. It discusses various definitions of household as well as household types. The household is presented as a ground where everything eventually plays itself out. It is a departure and a destination for many migrants. The conclusion attempts to pull all these threads together and to present a summary of my findings.

NOTES

1. The term 'informal settlement', rooted in the language of planners, can serve to homogenise what is a diverse spatial landscape (Hunter 2006: 156). *Imijondolo*, ghettos, shacks, shanties, squatter camps and slums are some of the phrases used interchangeably with informal settlements and I believe that this alone begins to show the diversity represented by the informal settlements.
2. Interview with Zethu Mthembu, 17 July 2009. All names used for participants are pseudonyms and some other identifying details have also been changed.
3. Interestingly, the observation that hostels are now 'spaces full of women and children' was also noted by South African scholars who did research in the hostels and compounds during the apartheid period (conversation with Dunbar Moodie at a South African Sociological Association conference, July 2011).

4. In the same way that 'Mr' and 'Mrs' might be used instead of first names, in *isiZulu* 'Baba' and 'Mama' are used to denote respect for those older than oneself. I have used these terms where appropriate throughout this book.
5. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
6. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
7. Focus group discussion, 4 May 2009.
8. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
9. Interview with Baba Dumisani Ngcobo, 11 March 2009.
10. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
11. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
12. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
13. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
14. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
15. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
16. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
17. Interview with Mama Hlengiwe Luthuli, 26 March 2009.
18. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
19. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
20. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
21. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
22. Focus group discussion, 4 May 2009.
23. Interview with Nokulunga Zungu, 8 May 2009.
24. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
25. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
26. Focus group discussion, 8 May 2009.
27. I have to acknowledge that my stay at the hostel was made easier by the CRUs. I lived in a CRU, which was safer and had more facilities to accommodate basic needs.

PART 1

Hostels

This part of the book begins by introducing the significant and complex space called KwaMashu Hostel. This hostel came about as part of the broader migrant labour system, which enabled employers to draw black people from the rural areas in South Africa, as well as from across the country's borders, to work for minimal pay in the cities. It was part of how the system was designed that the workers would not be permanent residents in their areas of work, but would oscillate from rural to urban areas for work and back to rural areas at the end of the contract period. Hostels were only for men; women were not allowed to live there and married quarters were built only for short visitation periods.

KwaMashu Hostel was created during apartheid, between 1958 and 1960, at the same time as KwaMashu Township was established. It went through various challenges, as internal and external forces were opposing the apartheid system. The creation of the hostel was legislated by the Group Areas Act of 1950. In the mid-1980s apartheid laws began to be relaxed and this had a huge impact on the hostel structure because its design was dependent on the functioning of apartheid. This is when informal settlements started emerging and women began arriving 'unofficially' in large numbers. Abolishing apartheid and its key institutions was discussed in the 1980s and eventually implemented in the 1990s. This was coupled with an effort to clean out the hostel by demolishing informal settlements. Although there were delays, the community residential units (CRUs) were the new structures put in place. CRUs were intended to replace the old hostel structures, as well as the surrounding informal settlements, which were always associated with poverty, overcrowding, unhygienic and dirty conditions, criminality and sexually transmitted diseases.

Hostels as structures for accommodation, and the migrant labour system as a complex process, have been going through tremendous changes, interwoven with highly active political, dwindling economic and strongly contradicting social forces. Issues of large numbers of both young and old women flowing into the hostel; political violence between old political parties and new breakaway parties; overcrowding of the three kinds of structures (old hostel blocks, informal settlements and CRUs) have all contributed to what KwaMashu Hostel has become

in the post-apartheid era. Part 1 of this book shows hostels in history – as they were intended and created – as well as hostels in the current form of CRUs coexisting with the other above-mentioned structures.

The fundamental argument this part of the book makes is that the hostel is a complex space and it continues to change in many unpredictable ways. It is an anchor; it is a magnet, a point at which people straddle the rural-urban divide; women and men; young and old; unemployed and unemployed. I argue that people are producing the space, reworking their lives and making their histories in conditions not of their own making. The migration process, which in this case can be regarded as a defining feature of the hostel, is also being redefined in various interesting and complex ways.

Hostels in History

The story of KwaMashu Hostel cannot be told without considering its history and that of South Africa as a whole. This chapter situates the book in a particular space-time frame by giving a historical overview of the hostel. It also aims to show the significance of changing rural-urban connections, which originate in the stubborn survival of migrancy. Controversially, rural-urban labour migration is still a key form of livelihood procurement for large numbers of black working-class people.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the labour migrant system because it gave birth to the hostel and compound system. Irrespective of the fact that influx control was abolished in 1986, the survival of rural-urban migration continues to pose a challenge to urban planners. The migrant labour hostels are estimated to provide accommodation to millions of people. Ari Sitas (1983: 245) argues that influx control policies and the hostel and compound system were the fundamental pillars of the migrant labour system in South Africa (see also Zulu 1993a). John Rex (1971) powerfully advocates that compounds, reserves and urban locations are the systematic and most essential institutions of southern African labour exploitation. He adds that the purpose of the reserve policy was to ensure that employers were not saddled with unemployment benefits and family support. The reserve was created as an economic and social system that would supplement waged labour as a means of support for households in the rural areas.

It is important to note that *segregation* refers to the period before 1948 and its ideology, policies and practices, while *apartheid* refers to the period after the National Party took government office in 1948 (Wolpe 1972). The apartheid government consolidated already existing segregation policies and, beginning in 1951, adopted a system of 'independent' African homelands upheld by influx control and forced

removals (Thurman 1997: 45). The role of the apartheid regime and the changes it brought to South Africa, the establishment of KwaMashu Hostel, the growth of informal settlements around the hostel and the issue of violence at the hostel are also explored in this chapter, so as to better gain an understanding of the context of the hostel. I attempt to trace the way in which this system has evolved and how large numbers of black people, especially from the rural areas, are still experiencing its after-effects. Throughout this chapter I show that apartheid manipulated not only spatial relations and processes, but also social, sexual and gender relations (Elder 2003a).

THE MIGRANT LABOUR SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA (1886)

The migrant labour system is one of the few clearly distinguished links between urban and rural areas (Mamdani 1996). It ensured that black people were 'temporary sojourners' in white urban areas and that the reproduction costs of labour were met in the 'reserves' (Thurman 1997: 45). Examining the significance of the migrant labour system in the process of giving a historical and geographical account of the hostels is essential because of 'an increased awareness of the importance of studying forms of spatial organisation' of employment (Massey 1984: 3). The spatial organisation of social relations is an inherent and recurring feature throughout this book because this framework allows us to recognise the relations between the 'spatial' and the 'social'. Francis Wilson (1972: 1–2) argues:

Migrant labour is nothing new in South Africa. One hundred years ago, a decade before the birth of the Witwatersrand gold mining industry [in 1886], generations before the evolution of the policy of apartheid, the system whereby men oscillate between their home in some rural area and their place of work was already firmly established as part of the country's traditional way of life . . . The pattern thus established whereby men continued to live in the rural areas but left their families for several months at a time whilst they went to earn money has continued to the present day.

In the 1860s, Indian people began to move from India to South Africa as indentured labourers to work on the sugar cane plantations in Natal. In 1866 the first diamond was discovered and by 1874 there were 10 000 black people employed in Kimberley. In the 1870s, farmers in the agricultural industry made use of the migrant labour system, recruiting workers wherever they could be found. Sheep shearers from the Ciskei moved through the Eastern Cape and sheep shearing also expanded to the Free State (Wilson 1972). As can be expected, the terms and conditions of labour migration contracts differed, not only across different time periods and the governments of the day, but also between the different gender and racial groupings. For example, Indians were allowed to bring their families with them when they came to South Africa, whereas blacks were not allowed to bring their families when they temporarily migrated from the rural to the urban areas. Racial segregation was in the interests of capital for two main reasons: facilitating labour control and releasing land for industrial purposes (Maylam 1995).

The discovery of gold in the north of the country in 1886 altered the course of South African history. It serves as a significant reference point through which to make sense of our history today. However, prior to the 1860s, black people survived on pre-capitalist modes of production, which are more distributive, hence balancing the economic and social parts of their lives. While this mode of production continued after the discovery of gold, because of the pressures imposed by capitalists, fewer people relied on it as a primary survival strategy (Wolpe 1972). The burgeoning gold-mining industry led to a high demand for cheap and unskilled labour and, as one of South Africa's major employers, it provided a model for the country's labour policy. In 1893, the Chamber of Mines set up a special labour department to organise recruitment from what was then the Transvaal and from neighbouring Mozambique. In 1896, the Rand Native Labour Association (subsequently the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association) was formed to co-ordinate the supply of labour. By 1899, gold mines employed about 100 000 black people. The gold mines employed more non-South Africans than any other industry at that time (Wilson 1972: 3). The migrant labour system gave birth to the hostel and compound system and migrant workers are a key link in a complex chain of relationships (Mamdani 1996).

THE HOSTEL AND THE COMPOUND SYSTEM (1923)

The construction of hostels was made possible and maintained through Section 2 of the Native (Urban Areas) Act 21 of 1923 and later amended as Act 25 of 1945. Since their establishment, hostels have always been linked to the migrant labour system. The hostel and the compound system were created at a time when, according to Harold Wolpe (1972: 433), the economic and political power of the capitalist system was already dominant. Pre-capitalist modes of production could not compete, which resulted in a weakening of the black economy, so that black people could not present any threat to white capitalists. The relations between the two were created so that the pre-capitalist sector only served to benefit the capitalist sector. Controlling where and how people lived, as well as their movements, seems to have been one of the most essential parts of the migrant labour system (Wolpe 1972). The single-sex hostels, where the migrant workers were housed, were tightly controlled by the government of the time. Hostels were primarily for the containment of labour and not for human comfort; they were badly designed and poorly built (Thurman 1997).

A clear distinction was made by the Johannesburg municipality between hostels and compounds at the end of the Second World War. Hostels were declared Bantu areas for the housing of single men and constituted a labour pool of migrants for all employers in a given area, while compounds were only for workers on the gold mines and in essential services (Wilson 1972).

A compound is a kind of bachelor barracks, where workers go when not working. There were bunk beds in communal dormitories and the workers received their meals in specially provided communal kitchens. This was to seal off workers from subversive forces, which might lead to their trying to form unions to bargain over the price of their labour (Rex 1971: 8; see also Wilson 1972; Mamdani 1996). Men in compounds generally worked for the same employer and could be more tightly controlled in times of unrest. There were enormous differences between hostels and compounds in terms of living conditions and the general atmosphere, although they served similar functions (Wilson 1972).

The organisation of a compound may be described as both authoritarian and paternalistic and definitely did not maintain traditional

tribal patterns, as some officials argued (Wilson 1972: 10). Wilson argues that the hostel system was formed out of the compound system on the mines. Sitas (1996: 237) adds that although there were differences, hostels can be regarded as an extension of the compound system; the difference was in 'operational contingencies'. After many decades, both continue to be closely tied to migrant labourers, regardless of the many changes that have taken place in South Africa since their establishment.

The hostel was designed to facilitate the control of migrant workers at their place of work; however, control quickly became a contested terrain. This has created a complex dialectic between obedience and resistance in the spaces of this institution. It has been shown that black workers constructed a 'public world' (a world of 'seeming obedience' to the system) and a 'private world' (a world of black brotherhood, which marked an attempt to adjust to and defend themselves in this alien world). These worlds allowed black hostel-dwellers to come to terms with the arbitrary impositions of the hostel system (Gordon 1978; Sitas 1983: 247; see also Ramphela 1993).

Both hostels and compounds conformed to a sociological definition of 'total institutions' (Goffman 1961; see also Thurman 1997; Cooke 1996). A total institution is 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (Goffman 1961: xv). Some of the features of total institutions are: all aspects of life are conducted at the same place under a single authority; people do things in groups; there is a tight schedule of daily activities, designed to fulfil the aims of the institution (6).

According to Erving Goffman (1961: 4–5), there are different kinds of total institutions: (i) those established to care for persons felt to be both incapable and harmless; these are the homes for the blind, the aged, the orphaned and the indigent; (ii) those set up to care for persons felt to be both incapable of looking after themselves and a threat to the community, albeit not intentionally; for example, mental hospitals; (iii) those organised to protect the community against what is felt to be intentional danger; for example, jails and concentration camps; (iv) those established for work purposes; for example, colonial compounds and boarding schools; and (v) those designed as retreats from the world, even

while often serving as training stations for the religious; for example, convents and monasteries.

From the groups identified above, hostels and compounds were established 'to pursue some work like task' (Goffman 1961: 5). The hostels during apartheid were fully representative of total institutions. However, it is critical to mention that the concept of hostels as total institutions was challenged in many ways by the hostel-dwellers, who were not passive participants in the apartheid regime. While some of the challenges to the system were presented in the form of social movement unionism against the authorities (Von Holdt 2003), sneaking people of the opposite sex into the single-sex hostels was also a form of challenge. During my fieldwork at KwaMashu Hostel, the few women who have been at the hostel since the early 1980s related how they had to wear men's clothes to disguise themselves in order not to be caught by the police.¹

According to Marie Wentzel (1993), the closed compound system was seen as effective in disciplining migrant workers; reducing costs; preventing theft from the workplace, especially in the mines; preventing drunkenness, especially on the weekends, and establishing an efficient labour force. In the diamond-mining industry, the closed compound system was primarily established 'to prevent illicit diamond buying' (Wilson 1972: 2).

Migrant workers were sealed off from contact with the outside world during their employment period and their stay at the compounds and hostels (Wilson 1972; Minnaar 1993a; Mamdani 1996). They carried out their working lives in compliance with a vision that trapped them in rurality because the authorities wanted to avoid men living in the city since they thought this would 'create a large mass of men without local or family ties' (Wilson 1972: 2). All efforts were made to subordinate them to a regime of indirect rule: 'The laws criminalised even the most human of impulses like parents and children wanting to be together' (Mamdani 1996: 228). Mamphela Ramphele (1993) adds that there was a constant effort to keep the hostels isolated, anonymous and invisible. Men could live in the hostels as long as they had work in the cities and family members were prohibited from residing in the urban areas. They were only entitled to short-term visits and only if they had permits.

HOSTELS IN THE APARTHEID ERA (1948)

No doubt the ideal world of apartheid would be one in which all native people lived in reserves except during temporary periods when the able-bodied were summoned to live in urban compounds and do labour service . . . But this cannot be simply achieved since the urban migration of *families* has been going on for a very long time. Moreover, so long as uncostly arrangements can be made for providing the minimum necessary service for the unemployed and the families of workers in the towns, so that this cost does not fall on the employers, there are positive advantages in having a further reserve of labour, including female labour, readily at hand in the urban areas. The existence of a residential community of families and other complex households, however does present certain difficulties to the system. Above all it raises the possibility of community-based political and trade union action. It is, therefore, imperative that the urban migrants should be subject to total control and perpetual scrutiny (Rex 1971: 12).

The infamous Section 10(1) of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, as amended in 1955 and 1956, provided that no 'native' shall remain for more than 72 hours in an urban area unless he produces proof in the manner prescribed that: (a) he had since birth, resided continuously in such area; (b) he had worked there continuously for one employer for ten years, or had been there continuously and lawfully for fifteen years and had thereafter continued to reside there, and was not employed outside the area, and while being in the areas has not been sentenced to a fine exceeding 50 pounds or to imprisonment for a period exceeding six months; or (c) was the wife, unmarried daughter or son under eighteen years of age – the age at which he would become liable for the payment of general tax under the Native Taxation and Development Act 41 of 1925; any Bantu mentioned in paragraphs (a) or (b) of this subsection and after lawful entry into such prescribed area, ordinarily resided with him; or (d) had been granted a permit to remain by an employment officer appointed to manage a labour bureau in terms

of the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection 6 of Section 21 of the Native Labour Regulation Act 15 of 1911, due regard being had to the availability of accommodation in the Bantu residential areas in the case of a work-seeker or otherwise by the local authority (Wilson 1972: 221–2; Sitas 1983: 212).

Section 10 of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act was not at first applied to women, but with the extension of the pass laws to women and finally (in Johannesburg from 1959; in Cape Town from 1963) the requirement that women needed to have permits to be in the prescribed area for more than 72 hours, their entry into the cities was severely curtailed. The Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1964 signified the crowning of this purpose. This Act required that wives, daughters and children under eighteen had to prove that their original entry into towns had been ‘lawful’ (Sitas 1983: 212).

The Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act 67 of 1952 repealed earlier laws (for example, the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911), which differed from province to province, relating to the carrying of passes by black male workers and instead required *all* black persons over the age of sixteen in *all* provinces to carry a ‘reference book’ at *all* times. They were required by law to produce the book when requested by any member of the police or by an administrative official. The ‘pass’ included a photograph, details of place of origin, employment record, tax payments and encounters with the police.²

The Bantu Affairs Administration Act of 1971 restructured the administration of places of residence of South Africa’s labour force. In a discussion Sitas had with N. Lutie in Johannesburg in March 1981, Lutie said: ‘We are all migrants, even we Section Tanners live here by grace and exemption’ (Sitas 1983: 211). Thus, ‘the spatial organization of society, in other words, is integral to the production of the social, and not merely its result. It is fully implicated in both history and politics’ (Massey 1994: 4).

KwaMashu Township is one of those places of residence established by the apartheid government for the black labour force. Townships are defined as formally planned and racially segregated residential areas for non-white residents at the peripheries of South Africa. Under the apartheid government, townships were characterised by very tight

control, but there was a gradual breakdown of control mechanisms during the 1980s (Godehart 2006: 1). While KwaMashu Township was primarily known to accommodate disgruntled residents because of displacements from Umkhumbane from the late 1950s to the 1970s, in the 1980s and 1990s it was largely known as a site of political violence (Nebandla 2005).

KwaMashu Hostel has been used as a primary research site for this book because of its importance in accommodating the majority of people who migrate from the rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal in search of employment opportunities. This site is critical and meaningful for the hostel-dwellers because more than half of their lives is spent in this place. They spend the most productive and important part of their lives here. KwaMashu Hostel was a 'men's hostel', which mainly accommodated rural men from northern KwaZulu-Natal (traditional Zulu territory), with the rest coming from the Natal Midlands and southern KwaZulu-Natal (Zulu 1993a). It is one of the biggest hostels in the province and, as a result of the new reconfigurations at the hostel, it also probably has a larger population than any other hostel in KwaZulu-Natal.

KwaMashu Township is approximately 32 kilometres north of the central business district of Durban. It was originally a location for the black community and established in 1957 in terms of the Black Authorities Act 68 of 1951. This area was initially designed for the population that was forcefully removed from Umkhumbane (now called Cato Manor) in terms of the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950. Houses were erected in phases and occupied by blacks from March 1958. These people experienced high levels of political mobilisation in the 1980s and the area also became notorious for criminal and gang activity.³ Before the establishment of the township, the area was a sugar cane plantation, owned by Marshall Campbell (1848–1917), a pioneer of the sugar industry in the Colony of Natal and a parliamentarian concerned with 'Bantu' affairs, whom the township was named after.⁴

The KwaMashu Hostel, established between 1958 and 1960, consisted of large single-storey blocks of eight rooms each. Each room housed 4 residents, thus making a total of 32 residents per block. Four men shared a common kitchenette with four cupboards, a table and two bunks, which acted as chairs. Each man had his own cupboard, a bed of bricks and a cement base as a mattress, a built-in wardrobe made

of cement and a lockable wooden door. Four blocks (128 men) shared a common set of cold showers, toilets and cement washbasins, where the occupants washed their pots, cutlery and utensils. The physical set-up is such that the blocks are situated in rows and these elementary amenities are located at the corner of every second block. The toilets and washbasins are situated exactly opposite each other in adjacent blocks. There are four toilets, four showers and two washbasins in a block, all within an enclosure.

The facilities are generally in a rundown state since official cleaning services came to an end after the collapse of apartheid. This was at the same time that the services of the Blackjacks were withheld (Zulu 1993a: 5). The Blackjacks were a special wing of the police force that served to closely monitor and control the lives of black people in the city – including townships and hostels. The Blackjacks were known to be inhumane in how they handled black people.

There were three shopping centres inside the hostel. Each shopping centre consisted of a butchery, a grocery shop, a bottle store, a beer hall, a barber shop and tearooms. There may have been one or two other small businesses, such as a tailor or greengrocer. With the advent of deregulation just before the first democratic elections, a number of informal entrepreneurs set up shops in shacks, caravans and other structures, selling various commodities, including clothing. This has resulted in fierce competition for space and consequently caused a measure of conflict within the hostel (Zulu 1993a: 5–6).

According to the hostel-dwellers, the highest position at the hostel was the superintendent, who was responsible for the administration and management of the hostel (Von Holdt 2003). He had an office at the hostel where residents paid their monthly rent, reported broken water and sewerage pipes and drains needing repairs and contacted the township officials for any business requiring bureaucratic attention. Residents started by paying a monthly rent of R2.50 in the 1980s; this went up to R4.50 in the early 1990s; to R13 in the mid-1990s and then to R45 early in the democratic era. In the early 1990s hostel-dwellers decided to march and boycott paying rent until negotiations were finalised, incorporating the CRUs.

Control was exercised through the administration board's police force, the infamous Blackjacks. Regular and violent raids were carried

out both day and night. Any person found in the urban area illegally (without a pass or permit) would be chased away, arrested or deported back to the homelands (Thurman 1997; Sitas 1983). Hostels and compounds were normally fenced off from the surrounding township and the municipal police controlled access: 'The "Blackjacks" tried control the payment or non-payment of rents and through raids, checked passes and hostel permits. This was an unenviable task as admitted by the administration board and migrants' (Sitas 1983: 253).

At the time of my fieldwork, the Blackjacks remained vividly in the memories of those hostel-dwellers who had been there long enough. During apartheid, they were undesirable and disrupted the lives of the hostel-dwellers and their visitors, but now they serve as a vantage point to draw differences between the past and the present, what works and what does not work and what is good and what is bad. As a result of the changes that have taken place, some hostel-dwellers even wish for the Blackjacks to return to enforce order and discipline and to bring back the identity and image of the single-sex hostel.

While a number of authors agree that the 1960s and 1970s were the peak period for the apartheid government (for example, Thurman 1997), Sitas links what was happening in the cities with what was happening in the rural areas. He argues that this period was marked by control over the conditions of black labour power:

The signs were evident in a multiplicity of areas: in the countryside, one witnessed a rapid decline in subsistence production relative to a rapid population increase. This was aggravated by one of the deadliest droughts in living memory, with widespread outbreaks of typhoid and cholera in KwaZulu and Transkei. Adjacent to the homeland 'border' industrial areas colossal urbanisation was afoot with its resultant slum conditions and poverty (Sitas 1983: 242).

While KwaMashu Hostel might have been the only hostel in Durban that had married quarters, it was not the only one in South Africa. Wilson (1972: 9) argues that 'by law, the gold mines were until 1969 allowed to provide family housing for not more than 3% of the black

labour force excluding “foreign natives”. Practically it is only 1% which was eligible because the proportion of South Africans was not more than one-third of the total.’ Between 1969 and 1970, a circular was sent out by the local Bantu Affairs Commissioner to the effect that ‘children were no longer allowed to stay in the married quarters of the workers’.

The married quarters in KwaMashu were not for the permanent accommodation of women and children. Married men were allowed to have their wives visit them at the hostel, but they could only be accommodated in the married quarters and the men had to apply for permission before the arrival of their wives. A wife could stay for a maximum of fourteen days and then she had to go back to the rural areas. The married quarters are famously known by the migrant workers as *kofotin* or *ko-14*. *Ko* means ‘at’ and ‘14’ refers to the maximum number of days that a man could spend with his wife at the married quarters. They are also known by the people from KwaMashu Township as *emadabulini*: *ema* means ‘at’ and ‘*dabul*’ is a borrowed *isiZulu* version of ‘double’. This basically means double houses because these four-roomed houses are joined together (semi-detached).

The married quarters are directly behind the main hostel buildings, across the main road. Geographically and according to the KwaMashu sections’ demarcation, the hostel is in section A of KwaMashu and the married quarters are in section E. Essentially the whole of KwaMashu section A is composed of the hostel, while section E is primarily a township. A lot of people who move from the hostel to seek accommodation in the township go to either E section or F section, which is within walking distance of the hostel. During the apartheid era, back rooms were available for rent from R60 per month; now they have gone up to approximately R600 per month.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AT THE HOSTEL (1980s TO THE PRESENT)

The hostel has almost ceased to cater for single sex accommodation as the number of womenfolk residing with men has increased dramatically. This is a source of ill-feelings from a number of residents who claim that this is an abrogation of moral standards and an encroachment on their privacy. This and the spiralling of the informal sector have contributed greatly to the increase in the number of

informal structures within the hostel. In absolute numbers there may be more informal structures than the formal blocks. Spatially, the hostel appears overcrowded and aesthetically objectionable. There is a terrible stink from the ablution blocks and the uncollected garbage which spreads all over within the premises contributes to this poor state of affairs (Zulu 1993a: 6).

The abolition of influx control in 1986 had a tremendous effect on the hostels (Sitas 1996; Segal 1991). Influx control measures and systems were put in place pre-apartheid and continued during the apartheid era to control and limit the presence of black people in the urban areas. Informal settlements in the urban areas have largely been understood as a form of resistance by black people to the policies of racial segregation. Since racial segregation pre-dates apartheid, it can be argued that as apartheid proper reinforced segregation policies and created new racially biased laws, resistance and militancy also grew strongly and violently.

It is important to note that conditions in informal settlements are not homogenous. The social existence of migrants in informal settlements is complex and diverse. The diversity in income groups is not only apparent in the hostels, but also within the informal settlements, which are often well positioned in terms of the opportunities offered by the surrounding environment. Below I discuss three situations that took place because of and through the presence of the informal settlements, especially at the hostels.

First was the 'total disregard of the hostel and their [municipal] services' (Sitas 1996: 242). In one of my focus group discussions, in March 2009, with men who have lived in the hostels since the apartheid era, hostel-dwellers referred to the biblical context of the children of Israel, arguing that 'it was better in Egypt', meaning that they feel things were better during the apartheid era. They argued that 'at least there was basic service delivery and there was no high crime and unemployment rate like in the democratic era'. Those who are still against the presence of women in the hostels further argued that all the social ills in the hostels are exacerbated by the presence of women and children, who started arriving after 1986. Interestingly, most of the women participants subscribed to this perception as well.

Second, the abolition of influx control changed the parameters of migrancy. This included the emptying of hostels, followed by overcrowding as migrants moved out to seek different forms of accommodation (in shacks or townships) and women and children came in large numbers (Sitas 1996; see also Ngcongco and Mtshali 2006). ‘Homeboy’ (or homegirl) refers to someone who comes from the same area as you – *umkhaya* in *isiZulu*. It is always a strength for people if there are a lot of them from the same area, especially if they are the majority. This strengthens their social networks and sense of belonging and identity (Sitas 1996; James 1999). Livelihood procurement through informal sector activities mushroomed. Sitas (1996: 242) notes that the same informal sector activities are still popular today in the hostels, including ‘taxi, welding shops, fresh fruit and meat vending, herbalist outlets, and a trade in dagga, weapons and guns’. However, the socio-economic challenges have taken on a somewhat different shape, including high levels of gender-based violence, compared to the political violence that continued throughout the early 1990s and for some months after the 1994 elections (Sitas 2004), high internal crime rates, increased unemployment, as well as the restructured political landscape of the hostel (as will be seen in Part 3 of this book).

Third and most important, informal settlements were never fully eradicated under the apartheid regime. Instead, according to Doug Hindson and Jeff McCarthy (1994) they were reduced to small hidden pockets in the 1960s. Informal settlements have been said to be the fastest-growing component of the population in KwaZulu-Natal (see also Hunter 2006). Informal settlements are defined by Hindson and McCarthy (1994: 1) as dense settlements of communities housed in self-constructed shelters under conditions of informal or traditional land tenure. This term covers a range of different kinds of settlements in terms of shelter type, ranging from settlements built from metal scrap, plastic, mud, planks and cardboard, and forms of informal tenure and degrees of official recognition in the rural-urban spectrum. The functional roles of settlements change with time and within the hostel setting. Some people use them only as sleeping spaces, since they spend their whole day at work and when they come back they spend a lot of time with their friends and/or family in the hostel blockhouses. Some do not even cook and or dine in their informal settlements, but do so

in the hostel blockhouses. Some use informal settlements as trading spots. Most of the businesses found in the hostels are run from informal settlements. Some use the informal settlements as 'hotels' where they spend special days entertaining their visiting partners. The period that the partners visit can vary from just one day or night to a whole month.

Some men from the hostel blockhouses do not allow women to spend a night in their rooms. Therefore, if a man who lives with three others in a hostel blockhouse is expecting a female visitor, he needs to 'rent' an informal dwelling where he can spend time with his partner. 'Renting' generally means borrowing, as exchanges are hardly ever monetary. A hostel-dweller might own an informal dwelling or he might ask a person from his social network to allow him some time with his partner in the informal settlement. The length of the stay is influenced by the ownership of the informal dwelling and/or the kind (friend, brother, *umkhaya*) and level (strong or weak) of relations that exist between the person who owns the informal dwelling and the person who needs to use the room.

Informal settlements began mushrooming after the abolition of influx control. With the lifting of these laws, one might expect that the pattern of temporary migration would be replaced by permanent migration, particularly to urban areas, and that migrants' ties to their households of origin would have weakened considerably. However, Dorrit Posel and Daniela Casale (2003: 460) did not find strong empirical evidence to support this idea. In fact, the number of households with at least one labour migrant as a household member increased slightly between 1993 and 1999. This basically confirms the continuous rural-urban migration that my book documents, even after the death of the apartheid regime.

Families in the townships started growing to an uncontrollable extent because of rural-urban migration. As a result, people started moving to the informal settlements. Hostels were overcrowded and this also led to people building their own little informal homes close to the hostels. More people, young and old, men and women, found reasons to migrate from the rural areas to the urban areas. Being in an informal settlement can basically be understood as having moved from one area of insecurity to another space full of insecurities. Some of the reasons why people move to informal settlements are: the search for safety and security from all forms of violence; shelter from displacement and

dislocation; the search for food security and sometimes their own space and privacy.

One of the reasons I consider hostels and informal settlements as spaces of perplexity, specifically in relation to the issue of informal settlements, is that one might find that a person leaves a rural area, where they could always rely on food from a backyard garden, and comes to an urban areas to look for work, believing it is a better option, only to later realise that their situation has got worse. One can run away from a particular area because of violence only to find that informal settlements can be unsafe spaces in comparison with rural or other urban areas (see Hunter 2006).

Overcrowding is endemic and privacy is scarce at the hostel (Thurman 1997). Depending on how one defines privacy, some people move away from hostel blocks to live in informal settlements because 'there is more privacy'. But informal settlements are generally very close to each other, especially at the hostel; one can hear all kinds of sounds from neighbouring settlements. This is not only because of the proximity, but also because of the material that is normally used to build the settlements. Generally there is almost nothing that one can do without one's neighbour knowing about it. What is significant to note is that as people move from one location to another, what they are actually looking for are improved conditions and better opportunities. Informal settlements always present a good opportunity for small traders who stock loose candles, paraffin, cheap tobacco and other goods (see Makhathini 1994); they also extend social network structures.

In the mid-1980s, migrants started to build *imijondolo* (shacks) for all sorts of reasons, but primarily to accommodate their wives and/or partners who started breaking the rules by coming to the single-sex hostels. Almost every participant in my research mentioned that women are the reason for the presence of shacks.

Between the establishment of the hostel and the abolition of influx control, unofficially the discretion resided with men to decide whether they wanted a woman in their space or not. Women could not invite each other to the hostel space when they did not have a space that belonged to them. When shacks were first built, they were either constructed by a man who was preparing for the coming of his wife, or where the wife was already living with the men in the blockhouse as an

imbamba.⁵ If a man had a wife or partner coming to visit at the hostel before the building of the shacks, he would either let his wife/partner sleep on the kitchen floor, while he slept on his concrete bed in the bedroom, together with the other three or more men who all slept in their concrete beds. Otherwise he would share his bed with his wife in the bedroom he shared with three or more other men. In this case, they would use some material, for example a bed sheet or curtain, to cover the corner on which their bed was built. This material covering them was called *umdiyadiya*.⁶ It was up to each couple what activities took place behind that curtain.

When it came to building a shack, sometimes a woman would ask for permission from her partner to build a shack near the blockhouse where he lived. Her partner would in turn ask for permission from his roommates for his wife to put up a shack close to their room. Initially, in most cases, these shacks were only used for sleeping purposes, but that quickly changed. While women and men formerly used the common bathrooms and kitchenettes, they started doing most things in their shacks. Women found the shacks important for bathroom purposes, particularly when they came to live on a full-time basis with their partners at the hostel.

There are times when a man builds a shack while not living with his partner permanently. Some men live in informal settlements with their wives, partners or girlfriends, while other men live by themselves, but often have girlfriends or wives who visit them. Some men claimed that they moved out of the hostel blocks because they wanted privacy, although they do not have full-time live-in partners. Some argued that they moved out to enable them to accumulate their own possessions since it is impossible to do this when living in a blockhouse. In a blockhouse one is forced to live in a concrete bed that cannot be moved. Even if a man can afford to buy his own bed, there is no space to put a bed or anything else except a small fridge and two-plate stove in the kitchenette.

Baba Sibonelo Lukhozi is in his late thirties and has two wives who both live in the rural areas. He owns a shack that he built. He would not like either of his wives to come and live at the hostel, but he invites them every once in a while to come and visit him. They never come at the same time. The basic understanding between the three of them

is that he needs to invite them before they can come. I was lucky to be able to interview all three of them at different times and in different spaces. I interviewed Baba Lukhozi first. He works as a security guard. One of the many times I visited him in his blockhouse he had his second wife visiting him and I asked to interview her. They both agreed. She was in the shack and that is the space she sticks to because she felt 'the hostel was full of men'.⁷

When I conducted my fieldwork in the rural areas I interviewed his older wife. The three of them basically had similar answers about their relationship with the hostel: first, the hostel is a place for men; second, the women would not like to live in a hostel and it is only people who work who should live there; third, the women cannot come to the hostel without being invited by Baba Lukhozi. The maximum time that they can visit the hostel is one month. Baba Lukhozi gets paid monthly and it is important that they come after he gets paid and also leave after he has been paid, so that they can always have enough bus fare and some money to take with them.

My research data has shown that most men who live in the hostels are not open to living with women in the hostel, regardless of the fact that women started moving into the hostels even before the repeal of the influx control policies of the apartheid past. Of course, the migration of women to the cities, and to the hostels specifically, accelerated after the relaxation of influx control. Ramphele (1993) notes a number of reasons why it was not easy for men to welcome and accept the presence of women. Generally, she argues that it is not because hostel-dwellers are not 'gender conscious', but because it requires taking risks to change a well-established and familiar situation.

The attitudes towards women and where they belong conflict with the idea of their living in the hostel. Many black men believe that women are inferior to men, so the men do not want anything that would challenge that perspective in any way. During my fieldwork men often said that a hostel is not a woman's place; her place is in the rural areas, *ukwakha umuzi* (to build a homestead), a process involving a lot of responsibilities, including household chores and taking care of children, in-laws, livestock and the land. This attitude can be associated with what Tamara Shefer et al. (2008: 159) call 'hostile sexism', the belief that women are inferior and are threatening to take over men's rightful

dominant place, while ‘benevolent sexism’ emphasises that women are special beings to be cherished and protected.⁸ As Ramphele (1993: 111) makes clear: ‘Culture was and still is used as a resource by some African men in the hostels to justify the undesirability of women living in the urban areas.’ Women’s presence in the hostels threatens the legitimacy of the traditional male authority structures (Elder 2003). Ramphele (1993: 111) also argues that this denial was a desperate strategy ‘to symbolically protect “men’s spaces” from pollution by the intrusion of women’.

When I asked the African National Congress (ANC) councillor about his views on the presence of informal settlements at the hostel, he said:

If you look at KwaMashu as a township, it does not have *imijondolo*; we prevented *imijondolo* to erupt even in places that are closer to our township. While there are many open spots here at KwaMashu where people could build *imijondolo*, but you will not find them. When you go to Umlazi Township, you will find *imijondolo*. Every open land at Umlazi you will find *imijondolo* and when you go to the [KwaMashu] hostel, you will find the same thing. This did not occur on its own. Because I was here, I was there when we made the decision that we did not want *imijondolo* in KwaMashu. Every time they started building them, we demolished them. We had this idea that we wanted KwaMashu to be a nice and clean township. We were young, but we were focused. We were young and we were activists. We took a sober decision that we do not want *imijondolo* in KwaMashu. And that became a reality. There is an area called Isolezwe, it is now full of RDP [Reconstruction and Development Programme] houses, before that, they had started building *imijondolo* and we made them demolish them. In Thembalihle they had built them and we made them demolish them. There is an area called Lovezone, they had built them and we made them demolish them. We did the same thing in all the spots. I want to explain something about the hostel and the Siyanda

area. The Siyanda area is located near the hostel. The reason why there is *imijondolo* at Siyanda is because when we tried making them demolish them, there was this thing that we were attacking them as IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party] since we were ANC activists. We did not want that because we were the champions of peace. We knew very well that there was nothing that we could gain through violence. So, the reason there is *imijondolo* at Siyanda is because those people carried that mentality that they were IFP and always against ANC. We could not get inside and stop them because indeed it was an IFP stronghold. So they built them. But *imijondolo* mainly developed at the hostel towards 1999 national elections. We saw that as a political strategy for the IFP, iTheku [eThekweni] as a region was seen as dominant of ANC, so since the KwaZulu rural areas were a stronghold for the IFP, in order for them to cement themselves in this area, they erected lots of *imijondolo*. Many people from the rural areas moved to those *imijondolo*. *Imijondolo* started mushrooming in an unprecedented way at the hostel. So it is a cause for concern because it was not really needed, but it was a political decision of that time. But now it has become our [ANC] problem, firstly, there is a high crime rate because of *imijondolo*. Secondly, it is difficult to develop the hostel because of *imijondolo*. Every time a new structure needs to be erected, some informal settlements need to be demolished. In order for the infrastructure (sanitation, electricity, etc.) to be put in place – because what existed is not now enough for the hostel-dwellers – *imijondolo* need to be demolished. They are always in the way for development. This becomes a challenge for the government because it can't remove somebody from somewhere and not give him or her alternative place to reside. Firstly, this delays the way we would like see the development at the hostel. Secondly, the police cannot properly function as the presence of *imijondolo* prevents them to drive around either patrolling or running after *izigebengu* [criminals]. The lack of proper streetlights and proximity of *imijondolo* compromises

their own safety. This is a huge setback for our society. This is also a bigger challenge for us as the municipality because according to the Millennium Development Goals as agreed in the United Nations by 2014. So, we also aim that we would have finished demolishing all the *imijondolo* at the hostel (26 November 2011).

This councillor, aged 44, grew up at KwaMashu. He is married and has a family in KwaMashu Township. The councillor relates an interesting take on the presence of informal settlements in townships. He responded not only as a ward councillor, but also as a citizen who is quite conscious of his roles and responsibilities in relation to the space where he was designated to reside. He speaks as a political activist and he is even able to relationally compare his township with surrounding and or similar kinds of spaces – Umlazi Township – which also has formerly single-sex workers' hostels.

From what he says, we can also see the different ways in which political parties comprehend the reasons for the presence of informal settlements at the hostel. It is true that KwaMashu Hostel and Umlazi Township were IFP strongholds during apartheid and, for the most part, the hostels in these townships remain so, although with a number of interesting changes, as will become apparent later in this book. It is not only the KwaMashu Hostel that has been infiltrated by informal settlements. Sarah Thurman (1997) notes that women started moving into the LaGuNya hostels as early as the late 1960s, often slipping into the buildings at night and leaving before dawn to escape the vigilance of the security forces.⁹ She further explains that despite the long-term presence of women, the status and rights accorded to them are still low, with informal rules serving to ensure that they have fewer rights than men. Indeed, there is a tendency towards patriarchal hierarchy in the allocation of bed spaces and male domination of the committees (Thurman 1997: 59). The views of the ANC councillor above resonate with Sitas's observation that 'Inkatha's "counter-mobilization" to check the rise of an alternative movement in the province started in 1985' (2004: 832).

This is significant as 1985 was the year that the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was launched, although it had taken

at least four years of groundwork before it was officially launched. COSATU was and remains a pro-ANC confederation of unions and was organised primarily by unions that opposed apartheid. Workers are known to have played a critical role in the liberation movement and they successfully integrated with the community – which was representative of those who did not work. ‘Social movement unionism’ is what Karl von Holdt (2003) calls this integration. This means that in the urban areas things were heating up and whatever the liberation movement was doing was being noticed, even by those who could be in denial of its potential. The pressures exerted by the liberation movement resulted in the relaxation of influx controls, so that people could move freely without the legislative framework that had bound them before. This was also a symbolic year for the movement of people, especially women, because it was just one year before the official abolition of influx control. The relaxation of these controls allowed the entry of women into the hostel, which the ANC councillor argued increased dramatically just before the 1999 elections. Whether it was 1985 or 1999, these views agree that it was political strategy to wrestle with the ANC.

VIOLENCE AT THE HOSTELS (LATE 1980s TO THE PRESENT)

Violence, for [Henri] Lefebvre, is unavoidable in radical struggle. Breaking things up, making nonsense out of meaning (and meaning out of nonsense) throwing bricks through windows, driving tractors into buildings, burning cars, daubing graffiti on walls – all are justifiable responses to state repression and corporate injustice, to the ‘latent violence’ of power. Hence they are legitimate forms of ‘counterviolence’. In this sense, violence expresses what Lefebvre calls a ‘lag’ between ‘peaceful coexistence’ and ‘stagnating social relations’, symptomatic of ‘new contradictions super-imposed on older contradictions that were veiled, blurred, reduced, but never resolved’ (Merrifield 2006: 72–3).

The quote above could be describing the actions, situations and feelings that once engulfed KwaMashu hostel-dwellers. Lefebvre explains the

circumstances in which violence takes place; he presents violence as an unavoidable process in response to the repression and injustices that people experience. Violence has to take place in order to break through and get over a stage where social relations are decaying.

There have been times in history when hostels have been closely associated with violence, both politically related violence and dramatic confrontations involving strikes, riots and revolts. As a result, it seems that every other study on hostels in the early 1990s was about violence (see Elder 2003; Mamdani 1996; Sitas 1983, 1996; Zulu 1993a; Minnaar 1993a; Goldstone 1993; Segal 1991; Delius 1990; Nebandla 2005). Different researchers came up with similar but varying explanations for the violence in the hostels. The interesting thing about this violence is that it was not only bound to the KwaMashu Hostel; it sprang up at more or less similar intervals in different geographical spaces, including in Johannesburg hostels.

Most of the above-mentioned authors argue that violence was used as a way of drawing attention to the structural violence of the conditions of hostel-dwellers' lives; it was a way of resisting marginalisation. This violence was among hostel-dwellers, informal settlements and township residents, as well as between hostel-dwellers themselves.¹⁰ After the outbreak of violence in the hostels, it seemed as if each hostel was representative of a particular political party, which exacerbated violence, as it emphasised divisions along the lines of ethnicity. For example, KwaMashu Hostel is dominated by *isiZulu* speakers and was always known to be an IFP stronghold. Paulus Zulu (1993b: 83) argues that since a meeting that took place in 1990 at Ulundi, KwaMashu Hostel, along with other IFP strongholds outlawed the selling (and wearing) of ANC T-shirts on hostel premises; expelled all ANC-supporting comrades from the hostel; pressurised business persons operating within hostel premises to become members of the IFP and exerted pressure on hostel-dwellers to attend all IFP meetings.

What most studies on hostels and violence dismally failed to do was to show how the violence in the early 1990s was as gendered as it was political. Gender does not come second to politics; they are interwoven and occur simultaneously as a result of the multiplicity in/of space. It is also important to note that political violence in hostels erupted just after the large influx of women from rural areas and the

release of Nelson Mandela in early 1990 gave the IFP-dominated hostels, such as KwaMashu, an impetus to resort to violence. In addition, intergenerational differences and clashes were not static. Older hostel-dwellers were regarded as IFP supporters in KwaZulu-Natal, while the younger township youth were ANC supporters. Divisions between the ANC and IFP, as well as Zulu and Xhosa ethnicities, were orchestrated and maintained by the apartheid government through the 'divide and rule' system (Mamdani 1996). Ramphele (1993: 1) describes hostels as spaces full of politics and ideologies.

As a result of the high levels of violence, said to be caused by hostel-dwellers, people started coming up with a number of solutions they believed could solve the problem. Some argued that hostels should be demolished; some argued that they should be converted into family housing. Family housing was proposed as a way of preventing diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis in migrant miners (Rees et al. 2010). Some believed that fencing hostels would solve the problem, but others made it clear that the problem was too complex to be solved by ad hoc solutions.

The political and socio-economic changes currently taking place at the hostels are one of the reasons why I have come to describe them as spaces of perpetual perplexity. The short stories below show how political and gendered violence continues at the KwaMashu Hostel into the present day. In 2009 a group of young women who live in an informal settlement within the KwaMashu Hostel related a very interesting story to me about political and gendered violence in the hostel. In total, they had all been living there for less than two years. In one of our conversations they told me that they had witnessed a very brutal act by a group of hostel-dwellers when they threw out a young woman, who resided in an informal settlement within the hostel. She was known to be an ANC supporter, so after a brief caucus meeting between the dwellers, they all went to her room and asked her to vacate it within few minutes if she did not want to die inside her room. Apparently this happened in the late evening and this woman had to leave while her stuff was being thrown out of her room by the hostel-dwellers.

One of the research participants related that although she was not an IFP supporter, she did have the membership card, as was expected.

One day, when attending a community youth meeting in 2008, she was nominated to be one of the organisers (*abagququzeli*) of the political party and this meant going around pulling people out of their rooms (in both hostels and informal settlements) to attend community/political meetings and rallies. If they refused to come out, they would be beaten with a sjambok. She made it clear that she does not like to play this role, but she could not say no when she was nominated. Saying no would give the hostel-dwellers the wrong ideas about her and her political affiliation.¹¹

CONCLUSION

In 1971 Rex wrote that families had long started migrating from rural to urban areas and in 1993 Zulu observed that there seem to be more informal structures than formal structures at the hostel. Hindson and McCarthy (1994) argued that women outnumber men in informal settlements and the participants of my research argued that women outnumber men at the KwaMashu Hostel. The same informal sector activities that Sitas wrote about in 1996 are still popular today in the hostels. These processes and situations show that while the different critical points I have documented above imply changes at the hostel, there are other processes that have remained the same, and some changed slightly, while others changed drastically. Interestingly enough, most of the historical changes I am highlighting did not follow the policy of the time – whether it was segregation or apartheid. People produce their own histories and spaces in conditions not of their own making. Joan Wallach Scott (1988: 3) argues that history is as much the object of analytical attention as it is a method of analysis and this chapter has found significance in that view and made meaning from it. It has analysed history as a process that is resolving, yet also used it as a method of analysis. Taken together, this provides a means for understanding and contributing to the process by which knowledge is produced. In this process, the next chapter, relying on the history outlined in this chapter, introduces what hostels have become since the end of apartheid – the CRUs in policy documents, but persistently referred to as hostels by the dwellers.

NOTES

1. Interview with Mama Phindile Shangase, 2009, and Nonhle Kheswa, 2011.
2. See <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/apartheidlaws/g/No67of52.htm>.
3. Department of Provincial and Local Government, 'INK Joint Government Annual Business Plan, 2004–5'. <http://www.dplg.gov.za>.
4. In a competition held by *The Daily News* newspaper to find a name for the township, 'KwaMashu' was suggested. This name was strongly opposed by the Native Advisory Board in Durban, which favoured 'Mahlatanyane' (after A.W.G. Champion – Mahlati) or Mafukuzela (after John Langalibalele Dube). Two of Marshall's children, Margaret (Killie) and William, were instrumental in founding the Killie Campbell Collection, now housed at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
5. An *imbamba* is someone who relies on other(s) for a livelihood. So in the case of the *imbamba* at the hostel, it would be somebody who does not have a room of his own and who also would not have a job, so he would be sharing resources with another person(s).
6. *Umdiyadiya* is a curtain that was used by men during the apartheid era to cover/hide themselves in their beds when they had their partners visiting. The curtain only covered his side of the bed so that the other people in the room could not see what happened behind it.
7. Interview with Sophie, MaZulu Lukhozi, 2009.
8. It is possible for a single individual to endorse both of these seemingly contradictory views about women. 'Men who score high in both kinds of sexism are termed "ambivalent sexists" and have polarised beliefs about women . . . On the hostile sexism scale, South African men had one of the highest scores . . . On the benevolent sexism measure, South African men had the third highest mean score' (Shefer et al. 2008: 159).
9. The three African townships of Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga in the Western Cape are collectively known as 'LaGuNya'.
10. It is important to note that during the first part of the apartheid epoch, informal settlements were not as integrated with the hostels as they are now (see Slums Act 1979 and Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951).
11. Interview with Londiwe Mgaga, 21 July 2009.

Hostels as Community Residential Units in the New South Africa

This chapter introduces the many changes that took place at the dawn of democracy and shows that, regardless of the first democratic elections in 1994 and the conversion of the hostel and compound system into community residential units (CRUs) in the post-apartheid era, rural-urban migration remains a challenge. I present the CRUs as a complex and controversial space and process in time that is partly allowing rural-urban migration to continue and causing reconfigurations to take place, but also causing further perplexity in the lives of the migrant workers.

The 'new' South Africa did not, of course, start in 1994. The Constitution enshrined the principles of non-racialism and of equity, but before the 1994 elections and before the Constitution was finalised, the vision for social and economic programmes for addressing the legacy of apartheid found expression in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP had its roots in the Freedom Charter of the 1950s. It had a strongly redistributive intent, committing itself to the delivery of basic infrastructure to previously excluded groups as an intrinsic part of economic policy in post-apartheid South Africa. Alongside a programme of land distribution were policies for free primary healthcare, free education, a commitment to early childhood development (ECD) and adult basic education and training, and a housing subsidy for the poor. There was also a commitment to provide

affordable water, electricity and telecommunications to rural and urban areas (Lund 2008: 1).

CRUs were formerly single-sex workers' hostels, established during the segregation and apartheid eras. The establishment of CRUs can be seen as an important government initiative to reverse the apartheid past and, to a certain extent, CRUs can be understood as housing assistance for the poor. The policy framework and implementation guidelines for the CRU programme were approved with effect from 1 December 2006. The objective of the CRU programme is to assist low-income individuals and households earning below R3 500 per month, which are not accommodated in the formal private rental and social housing market. The programme seeks to bridge the divide between social housing and lower-income markets, which posed a significant problem (Department of Housing 2006).

The post-1994 dispensation aimed to decisively address the legacy of the compound and hostel systems. The transformation of such places was brought about under the ambit of the national housing policy. Therefore, the CRU programme is complementary to and runs parallel to the national social housing programme, but serves a different target market. The CRU programme replaces the national redevelopment programme, which was announced by government in 1991, and the proposed affordable rental housing programme. The national hostels redevelopment programme was meant to 'guide and support the upgrading of public sector hostels' (Thurman 1997: 46). In order to facilitate and address access by the target market and to meet the demands and needs of this market, the CRU programme provides a variety of accommodation options:

1. Public hostels, owned by provincial housing departments and municipalities;
2. 'grey' hostels, which, for historical reasons, have both a public and private ownership component;
3. public housing stock, which forms part of the Enhanced Extended Discount Benefit Scheme (EEDBS), but cannot be transferred to individual ownership and has to be managed as rental accommodation by the public owner;

4. post-1994 newly developed public residential accommodation owned by provincial housing departments and municipalities; and
5. existing dysfunctional, abandoned and/or distressed buildings in inner city or township areas that have been taken over by a municipality and funded by housing funds.

The CRU programme supports the transition of individuals and households from informal and inadequate housing into the formal housing market (Department of Housing 2006: 4).

The CRU programme is regarded as part of the government's poverty-alleviation strategy.¹ The target market includes existing residents, displaced persons (from informal settlement upgrading and evictions), new applicants and qualifying indigent groups. Since 1994 provincial housing departments and municipalities own the newly developed public residential accommodation. CRU housing stock remains in public ownership and cannot be sold or transferred to individual residents. Hostels and accommodation for public sector employees do not form part of the CRU programme. Rent-setting is supposed to be conducted in a manner that makes certain that operating costs are recovered, while ensuring affordability for the target market (Department of Housing 2006).²

The principles of the CRU programme are to facilitate communication with and participation of residents throughout the process; to provide a variety of rental housing options; to ensure that equity is part of the programme; to provide rental options for low-income persons and households and to ensure long-term rental charge structures. The Department of Housing (2006) argues that a range of issues needs to be resolved: affordability, rent collection, the target market, historical issues, stock condition, maintenance, property management and alignment with other policies.

The CRU programme does not only focus on the formerly single-sex public hostels, but also on 'grey' hostels and public housing stock that forms part of the EEDBS. This excludes free-standing units and post-1994 newly developed public housing stock (Erasibo 2008). There are three kinds of hostels: private compounds attached to specific places of work; public hostels owned by provincial or local authorities, which offer accommodation to workers from a range of industries; and 'grey'

hostels, where the structure is owned by private companies and the land by the local authority. The public and 'grey' hostels are generally situated in townships (Thurman 1997: 43).

It is interesting to note that in the 2004–7 strategic plan, the first three key focus areas of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Housing are the eradication of slums in KwaZulu-Natal in the next six years; accelerating housing delivery in rural areas; and accelerating the hostel redevelopment and upgrade programme, the first two being regarded as national priorities. What is intriguing are the linkages and entwinements across these three areas and how they all directly and indirectly relate to hostels and hostel-dwellers and their rural-urban connections. The official policy discourse does not seem to recognise the ongoing importance and implications of rural-urban migration; instead, it simply seeks to cater for nuclear families that have moved from rural to urban areas.

In 2009 the minister of housing said that the government would strike a balance between quality and quantity, as well as working between, in and through the first and the second economy with regard to the key priority issues. The issues of quality and quantity become problematic when dealing with the above-mentioned key focus areas. The way these issues are dealt with, especially by an important body such as the government, has significant implications for society at large. The Mercury newspaper of 17 November 2009 reported: 'The cost of demolishing and rebuilding defective RDP houses has shot up to R1.3 billion after a national housing audit uncovered shoddily built homes in every province . . . This figure amounts to 10 percent of [Human Settlements' Minister Tokyo] Sexwale's total budget allocation for this year.'

While the concept of hostels has always meant long periods of separation from stable family life, the CRU programme has not yet been able to fully undo this situation in concept or practice. Siphon Pityana and Mark Orkin (1992: 30) correctly argue that although many of the legal trappings of apartheid have been abolished, it effectively still prevails in township and hostel life. Despite the fact that they made this point 25 years ago, it is unfortunately still just as relevant today.

According to Anthony Minnaar (1993b) and Mamphela Ramphele (1993), the proposal to convert and upgrade hostels into family housing

originated in the mid-1980s. Since that time, most hostel-dwellers across South Africa have not been happy with this proposal.³ It also met with resistance from the white local authorities, which made it hard to implement the policy as proposed (Minnaar 1993b: 35). Whereas there are data available to show why hostel-dwellers were against the conversion of the hostels into CRUs, there are no clear explanations for why the white authorities opposed this proposal in the late 1980s. Since apartheid was still the law of the land at that time, it is arguable that they feared that creating family housing in urban areas would cause an influx of black people from the rural areas, which they wanted to prevent.

While the proponents of the programme were interested in the bigger picture and changing apartheid structures and institutions, the migrants were more interested in their well-established social relations and ways of survival, including maintaining their powers as male heads of their families and as breadwinners. Ramphele (1993: 123) correctly argues that 'merely erecting family housing units to replace existing hostels will not necessarily change the nature of power relationships between those involved'.

Although male migrants wanted freedom, they did not want their wives to come and live with them in the cities. While they wanted privacy, this was not necessarily in order to permanently accommodate their wives and children. And although they wanted a better life, they did not want a life that would displace their wives and children or challenge their dominance. 'Freedom' and 'independence' are some of the reasons most male migrants mentioned as reasons why they liked to live in a hostel. It is important to note that these concepts were uttered not from a political perspective, but from a socio-economic one. The analysis of this perspective in context shows that the men view the presence of women and children as taking away their freedom and independence while they are in the hostels.

Ramphele (1993) suggests that the fact that migrant workers did not want to accept the proposal to change hostels into family units is a reflection of the way they have internalised the hostel life. Her argument is probably true to a certain extent, but in addition, it can be argued that hostel-dwellers were not given an appropriate platform or adequate time to engage with this proposal. Although it was mainly the liberation movement that made this proposal, the way it communicated

this proposal to the hostel-dwellers was not adequate. However, some hostel-dwellers argued against the CRU programme because they felt that the family units would not cater for the size of African households, especially for those men involved in polygamous relationships. In addition, converting hostels to CRUs raised the spectre of privatising the hostels, which would inevitably mean paying much higher rent. Some rejected the idea of CRUs solely because they strongly believed that a woman's place is in the rural areas. Mark Hunter (2005b: 220) correctly argues that the 'opposition to new notions of mutual respect and universal rights may have more to do with attempts to preserve gendered and generational hierarchies'.

Migrants further argued that CRUs would not work because of the differences between rural and urban ways of life. They did not want their wives and children exposed to the unacceptable and disrespectful values found in urban areas. On the other hand, Minnaar (1993b: 30) argues that 'from April 1990 onwards, there were persistent public calls by the civic and political leaders at rallies and community meetings that hostel residents should vacate hostels to make way for exiles (this was linked to the call for the conversion of the hostels into family units)'. This was even more reason for hostel-dwellers to be against the conversion, as it not only threatened them socio-economically, but also politically. They risked being displaced and probably losing their employment as a consequence.

I have not come across any research that states precisely how many hostel-dwellers agreed to have the hostels converted, but similarly to Ramphela (1993), the author of the concluding chapter in Minnaar (1993a: 238) argues that hostel-dwellers are caught up in the 'politics of change', clinging to known and trusted ways and struggling with experiencing the new and unknown reality. With regard to the upgrading of informal settlements, Udesch Pillay (1994: 53) shows that that people from KwaZulu-Natal often reject the claim that upgrading is in everyone's best interest. Indeed, upgrading sometimes translates into displacement of the people affected.

A study conducted by Catharine Payze and Trevor Keith (1993) in seventeen hostels across South Africa presented the perceptions of families and single people living in hostels. Firstly, they argued that singles believed hostels were never meant to house families

and therefore are not equipped to do so, despite refurbishment and upgrading. Second, the lack of proper delivery of basic services leads to overcrowding of public facilities, which in turn leads to health hazards and a lack of hygiene. This also translates into a lack of privacy. Third, singles saw family units as a threat, as they felt they could one day lose their single accommodation to family units. Fourth, recreation and educational facilities were seen as a motivation for children to trespass into the spaces of the singles. Families, on the other hand, feared that singles might gang up against them. Families also felt that singles did not respect their privacy; hence, they felt it would be better if all hostels were converted into family housing. Singles were also accused of taking young girls away from their families in the hostels. Crime and unemployment were the two major problems that the two parties blamed each other for (Payze and Keith 1993: 50).

Although there has been a lot of criticism of the CRU programme by hostel-dwellers, it is not without its advantages for both male and female migrants. These include opportunities for a healthy family life and for men to play a more appropriate role as the head of the family; financial benefits – establishing and supporting one home and reducing the time and expense of travelling – and greater job security in view of the perception that businesses were opting for a local recruitment policy. Some of the disadvantages that remain are that the relocation of the family could lead to a loss of land and property in rural areas; leaving behind elderly parents who do not want to transfer to the city; a loss of culture and tradition; a lack of safety and security; a violent and hostile environment for the family; disrupted schooling for children and an increase in the cost of living (Rubenstein 1993: 152).

FUNCTIONING OF KWAMASHU HOSTEL

The hostel, which is made up of the old blocks, informal settlements and CRUs, is theoretically administered by seven main structures, which ensure its proper functioning. These are: the block chairmen committee; the zone committee; the *izinduna zezinsizwa* (heads of young men) committee; the community policing forum; political party committees; ward committees and the Siyanqoba Development Committee. Below is a brief description of each of these structures.

Block chairmen committee

The block chairmen committee reports to the ward councillor. Since the hostel is made up of two municipal wards, those based in ward 40 should be reporting to the ward 40 councillor, an African National Congress (ANC) member, but because of the political tensions at the hostel, all block chairmen report to the ward 39 councillor, who is an Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) member. Block chairmen are supposedly elected by the community to help facilitate the management of a particular block. In reality block chairmen are sometimes chosen by the ward councillor or by political activists who might be serving in other committees in that geographical area. The block chairmen committee seemed to be the most powerful body at the hostel (after the ward councillor), perhaps because they closely work with the ward councillor. They serve as *izinduna* (headmen). Each block chairman usually has an assistant, whom the community members loosely call 'block chairman' as well.

Zone committees

There are 27 zones in the KwaMashu Hostel. A zone is a conglomeration of a couple of blocks. The zone committee reports to the block chairman, who is the councillor's right-hand man. This can be understood as a smaller version of the ward committee since a ward is widely geographically spread out. This committee is not fully functional probably because its roles and responsibilities overlap with what other committees are doing already.

Izinduna zezinsizwa

This traditional structure committee, organised by areas of origin, reports to the *inkosi yase* (chief of) Mthunzini, for example. This committee is responsible for organising men in different cultural activities. This is a more socio-cultural structure, which is voluntary, and being part of the traditional activities is seen as more of a hobby. The main activity here is Zulu men's traditional dance and the men practise every weekend. Those not taking part also enjoy their rehearsals since they take place in open spaces. The traditional dance groups enter competitions, both at the hostel and in their places of origin in rural areas. These groups are mostly organised according to specific geographical origin, such as those from the north coast or those from the south coast.

Community Policing Forum

The Community Policing Forum (CPF) is organised by the community and reports to the local police station commander. It is composed of members who are either elected or volunteer. People are not so eager to participate in this forum because of the vulnerable position it puts them in because of the high crime rate at the hostel. People are scared of being killed for giving information.

Political formations

Political bodies have branch/executive committees, as well as youth structures (for example, the IFP Youth Brigade) and structures for women (for example, the ANC Women's League). However, the IFP is currently – and always has been – the dominant party at the hostel. While other parties never had any political space, this is being forged since the establishment of the National Freedom Party (NFP). The ANC has also been able to capitalise on the weakening of the IFP. ANC meetings take place outside the hostel for safety and security reasons.

Ward committees

There are two municipal wards (39 and 40) that make up the hostel. Most of the hostel (KwaMashu section A) falls under ward 39, while ward 40 also embraces KwaMashu Township sections C and D. Ward 39 is and has always been under the leadership of the IFP. As a result of the strong political tensions that still exist between the IFP and ANC, the ANC does not enter the IFP's jurisdiction at the hostel. The NFP was born at the hostel and cannot escape that space and its members therefore face the IFP head-on.

Siyanqoba Development Committee

Siyanqoba was established in 2004 and is composed of 24 hostel community members who were elected at the start of the development process. This committee is representative of the two wards, with each ward electing twelve members. This committee has a number of portfolios – for example, health, transport and agriculture. In a focus group discussion with Siyanqoba on 3 February 2011, one of its members said:

This structure has its own constitution and holds elections once in three years. The functions of the committee are to develop [*thuthukisa*] the lives of the people in many ways, to make sure that people get employment opportunities, looking out for the social welfare of the people and disaster management. It is basically responsible for everything at the hostel.

This committee works closely with the councillor and municipality and is also strongly affiliated with the IFP, although its members argued that it is a neutral body. For example, when the ANC councillor wanted to call a meeting, the committee told him that he had to get permission from approximately seven other committees/structures in order to be able to have that meeting. In an interview with the ANC councillor on 26 November 2011, he said:

I am a councillor, and in practical terms, they are the ones who should be coming to me to get permission to hold any meetings in this area. I am above them. In other ways, I understood that as a statement which said, 'You are not allowed here. This is not your territory and stay away.'

As in the case of Siyanqoba, I found that most of these structures serve political functions, even when they are supposed to be neutral bodies.⁴ Some only exist theoretically – for example, the CPF and zone committee. Most of them are composed of the same powerful IFP organisers – the block chairmen committee, Siyanqoba and the IFP branch committee (political formation). Finally, the power is concentrated and centralised: in cases where committees should be reporting to the superintendent (a senior administrative officer employed by the municipality), they are found instead reporting to the ward councillor and the superintendent can only sometimes participate or attend some of their meetings.

While KwaMashu has Siyanqoba, Cape Town has the Umzamo Development Project (known as Umzamo).⁵ This is one of the few organisations in South Africa involved in hostel redevelopment. Umzamo is active in the three African townships of Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga (collectively known as LaGuNya).

The difference between Siyanqoba and Umzamo is that Siyanqoba is a committee formed by and for KwaMashu hostel-dwellers and hence only serves KwaMashu, whereas Umzamo is an organisation that tendered for and was awarded the position of social co-ordinator to serve three hostels in Cape Town. They are both key stakeholders in the hostel redevelopment programme. They both play an important role in facilitating the process of converting public hostels into family accommodation. Both are convinced that development is about the people as much as it is about the buildings. They promote social development as an integral part of the project, ensuring the central engagement of the hostel-dwellers in the conversion and subsequent management of their places of residence. At KwaMashu there is a social facilitator and in Cape Town the same position is called the social co-ordinator. The social facilitator/co-ordinator manages the social aspects of the projects, a role that was identified and defined by the national government (see Thurman 1997). The social facilitator is one individual, while the social co-ordinator refers to an organisation, but the functions and responsibilities are similar. Although Siyanqoba is a committee formed by KwaMashu hostel-dwellers, the project manager and social facilitator serve all the hostels in Durban and not only the KwaMashu Hostel.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This process refers to the 'hostel redevelopment programme' proposed by the liberation movement pre-democracy and implemented by the post-apartheid government. The key stakeholders in the development process are the project manager and the construction company that wins the deal through a tender process. The project manager coordinates the project and is responsible for appointing and supervising the work of architects and engineers. The construction company employs the social facilitator and his secretary, but the funding for their posts comes directly from the municipality. They assist in facilitating the development process; they serve as a bridge between the hostel community and the construction company. The senior administrative officer (superintendent) of Siyanqoba acts not only as an observer in representing the municipality in all the development processes, but also ensures implementation of the municipality's rules and regulations. The

last and most important stakeholder is the hostel community, which is the target of this development. All these stakeholders are based at the hostel, except the project manager, whose presence is represented by the social facilitator, since he reports to the project manager.

The development process started in 2004 at KwaMashu and was supposed to be finished in 2014. However, during my data collection in 2010, almost all of the above-mentioned stakeholders said that they would not be able to meet this deadline because of a number of ongoing, unexpected challenges. At the time of publication of this book (2017), the development process was still not complete. The process does not go according to wards or zones, but takes place according to the phases proposed by the construction company. Phases one to four have been completed. Phase one consists of 21 blocks, phase two 20 blocks, phase three 13 blocks and phase four has 7 blocks.

At the beginning of the development process, a set of CRUs was built as transitional accommodation. They are referred to as sites A and B. Hostel-dwellers were placed there temporarily while they awaited their own rooms. A unit is a two- or three- bedroom dwelling with a kitchenette and bathroom. A block is a row of units, although it is important to note that blocks are not the same size. Site A has six blocks and site B has three blocks. Each block has 72 people in singles (heads of households). There are 24 units and each unit is occupied by one person/head of household (who can decide if s/he brings his family and/or friends to live there as well). In total, 5 184 people (heads of households) have been accommodated in the CRUs, excluding their partners and families. One bedroom can accommodate a minimum of one and a maximum of five people. Most people are accommodated in the kitchen by their families. In 2017 rent is R125 per month per head of household. After disagreements between the municipality and the hostel-dwellers, it was agreed that the rent would be inclusive of water and electricity, which means that the pre-paid meters that were installed are now defunct.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS CHALLENGES

As has been highlighted above, a number of challenges have prevented the smooth running of the development process in the hostels. The research participants narrate some of these below.

The new identity of the hostel

Participant 1: We have gone to the government to challenge him about the identity of the hostel. We asked him what does it mean and who named it because all hostels in eThekweni do not know what this thing is. We also do not know what is a CRU and what does it mean in *isiZulu* and we also seek an explanation of it. Nobody has ever explained it to us until now. We asked Mabuyakhulu and continued asking the one who took over after him [as MEC of Housing]. Now the hostels are not a respected place to live with dignity. Hostels did have dignity at their time. This was a place where *abanumzane* (heads of households) lived without women. Now you find that there are women and children.

Nomkhosi: So this means women have taken away the dignity of the hostel?

Participant 1: Yes.

Participant 2: No, let us not put it that way. It is the way that things have turned out which resulted in loss of dignity. The coming together of both genders in such a place was problematic. At this stage we cannot say we really want to go back to having hostels. The name 'hostel' was new to us at some stage as much as the name 'CRU' is new to us now, so all we want is an explanation of what this thing is. All we want is development (*intuthuko*) and dignity (*nokuhlonipheka*). But we should not be forced to live with families. This is a migrants' place. People should come here to work and then go back home. The overcrowding in eThekweni is caused by the fact that households are shut down. People leave enough land at home and come to live in informal settlements here. If people were restricted to live or come here, iTheku would not be this full/overcrowded.⁶

The KwaMashu Hostel has now become an unknown to the hostel-dwellers, although it is generally accepted that they like the new look: it is bigger, better and more attractive. It consists of flats – something

hostel-dwellers only saw in the cities and now they live in these dwellings. However, as can be seen from the quotations above, they have a serious problem with the term ‘CRUs’, which has not been explained to them. One of the participants has been in a position to challenge and question this in the municipality office, though without getting adequate answers. The other challenge in the identity of the hostel is the meaning that the new name of CRUs brings to the hostel. In the past, hostels were clearly understood to be single sex and now the new name has strong connotations of family units. The targeted population (formerly single-sex hostel-dwellers) and the government have different concepts of what a family is, where a family home should be and how a family should handle itself.

It seems that the government and the hostel-dwellers are using different vantage points to understand and work with the issue at hand. Most of the hostel-dwellers are uneducated or less educated and the government is using its education and power to make decisions for the hostel-dwellers. The hostel-dwellers are rooted in past traditions and the government is modernised and trying to modernise everybody in the process. Hostel-dwellers primarily rely on *isiZulu* as the main language and the government uses English; migrants prefer face-to-face communication with the government, which primarily uses written policy documents to communicate with the migrants. The government seems to promote urbanisation, while migrants want to continue moving from rural to urban areas only in order to make a living. The government promotes nuclear families and acknowledges female-headed households, while hostel-dwellers are happy with their polygamous marriages and extended families. Most hostel-dwellers do not believe in women’s and children’s rights, but the government promotes these rights. In short, the government and the hostel-dwellers do not see eye to eye on many issues.

Logistics on a national/provincial level

According to an ANC councillor I interviewed on 26 November 2010:

There are many development challenges that face the hostel. One of those is the fact that the hostel was managed

by the provincial government. The provincial government does not provide any kind of infrastructure [such as water or electricity] and that is a mandate of the municipality. In provision of this infrastructure, the municipality used to bill the province for the different amounts of the services that were used by the hostel-dwellers. It really did not monitor how electricity was used, whether it was stolen (*izinyoka*) or if they had their own bakery shops or had welding businesses using free electricity. Now the management of the hostel is under the jurisdiction of the housing department from the municipality. Now this makes the question of development to be even more important because if the dwellers have a problem with electricity, they cannot go direct to electricity department because they are not a client to them; the client is the housing department of the municipality; they have the responsibility of liaising with electricity. Now it takes lesser time to deal with kinds of problems compared to the past, that's where we start when we talk of development. When the stakeholders meet to discuss certain issues and water and electricity are not on the agenda items, then that meeting is non-existent because these are the everyday life challenges at the hostel. It is the same challenge with water and sewage tanks, if they have a problem at the hostel, the dwellers cannot go straight to that department responsible for that, but they have to go to municipality housing. This becomes very much bureaucratic, which does not help them at all. Putting a meter system was also a huge debate before it was put in place because the units are communal, so who could take the responsibility of the other's accounts? Development issues become bread and butter issues. The hostel is a small space with many people and it is not well managed.

The quote above begins to highlight what the ANC councillor correctly calls 'bread and butter issues'. The appalling service delivery at the KwaMashu Hostel is something that confronts the hostel-dweller as he sleeps on his bed made of cement in the blockhouse. It confronts him

when he sleeps in an informal settlement as wind gets in through the material used to build the shack. The harsh reality persists even after being allocated a CRU, which he, as a single man, has to share with the two families in that unit. As he tries to sleep at night, he hears noises coming from the next bedroom, which is occupied by its owners, a young couple busy enjoying themselves and their enclosed space. When he wakes up in the morning, he has to first jump over a patch of dirty water, which confronts him each time he comes in or goes out of the CRU. As he walks a few metres towards the train station, there is an illegal dumping site, which means he has to cover his nose and mouth for protection from the odour. With all the above-mentioned management structures at the hostel, there is not even one that is able to successfully assist this dweller with all these sources of frustration and struggle.

Logistics on a local level

There was a big challenge between 2009 and 2010 when the allocation process commenced. Phase four was complete and the CRUs remained empty for at least a year. The main problem was that the municipality had installed pre-paid meters for water and electricity. These did not exist in the old buildings (hostel blocks) or even in phases one to three of the CRUs. The old blocks and the initial CRUs had bulk meters. The Siyanqoba Development Committee mentioned that the project manager had told them that the municipality had proposed that pre-paid meters be installed in the latest CRUs and the committee said no; they should not do it, as it would make the lives of the people difficult since three different (and sometimes unrelated) individuals and/or families live in the same unit. They argued that it would have been better if only one family lived in one whole unit. Only billing one family head would mean that he was responsible for the other two families as well, how they used water and electricity and if they paid on time. The other two people/families had to give their financial contribution to the head, who then paid the municipality. If one person refused to pay on the allocated day, people would end up fighting. What was even more challenging was how to measure how much electricity each unit used in order to inform him/her of the amount s/he would have to pay at the end of the month. In a focus group discussion with the Siyanqoba

Development Committee on 3 February 2011, one member raised some serious concerns:

The idea that the municipality had was that there was going to be a head of the household between the three people/families, whether they were related or not did not matter. The head was going to be the one whose name would be registered and he would sign the lease agreement and get billed. If in any event the two other people/families died, the head of household would be in a position to occupy the whole unit and our question was: how many people were going to remain alive here at the hostel with that proposal? This was the government's suggestion and we opposed it totally. Instead, we had a couple of questions that we directed to the government: (1) How safe are the other two people/families if the head knows that he will have the unit to himself once they are dead? (2) How safe is the head from being blacklisted if the other two people/families refuse to pay? We just thought that this was a way for the government to encourage people to continue shooting and killing each other.

FUNDING

According to Siyanqoba and the office of the social facilitator, there was no budget allocation for 2010 from the Department of Housing and the development process had to be halted. Initially funding was drawn from the national government through the National Hostels Redevelopment Programme. The funds were approved and disbursed through the provincial administration and channelled through the local authority (Thurman 1997). However, the management of the hostels switched from the provincial government to the municipality, eThekweni Municipality in this case. In the case of LaGuNya, it was the municipality of Cape Town. The various hostels, which were all in the process of being refurbished, went through different but similar challenges when it came to funding. Sometimes the officials caused delays; sometimes it was the construction company and sometimes it was the political parties or political figures.

After phase four was completed, which was in 2010, there were no funds allocated for further development. While the municipality was engaging with this issue, in January 2011, political issues arose at the hostel. It can be argued, therefore, that what really halted further funding and development are the changes that took place politically. The IFP councillor at the time moved to the newly established NFP. Although the NFP was quite powerful at the beginning, it still did not make the numbers at the voting stations in May 2011. As a result, a new IFP councillor had to be voted in. The well-known and powerful now NFP councillor did not want to lose his power or position as the hostel councillor. He claimed it, by refusing to leave office, as well as refusing to hand over roles and responsibilities. These challenges pushed the Siyanqoba office to close, as it could not function without a budget or buy-in from powerful political spheres. The new councillor (who later died) tried to push for the development process to continue, but things went very slowly, as the former councillor refused to share his knowledge. Apparently the ward councillor needs to sign for the budget when it is being released. The new IFP councillor began to negotiate the relationship with the ANC. This benefited the new IFP councillor, as he was able to work and get some assistance from the ANC councillor and it also benefited the ANC councillor in regaining powers that he could never exercise with the old IFP councillor.

Since then, one can note the differences in terms of the success of the development process from the wards that are headed by IFP and ANC: development moves faster in the ANC municipal ward (40), where informal settlements are getting flush toilets, which has not happened in ward 39 (IFP). The development process came to a halt again after the new councillor died. They elected another one, who ended up in jail, and so the current councillor was elected. As a result of the challenges with councillors at the hostel, there was a suggestion that there be three party representative councillors: IFP, NFP and ANC. Now, in the municipal (councillor's) offices at the hostel, there are three representatives and if you need a service you need to say which party you belong to and you will be directed to the relevant office. The development (construction) process has started again and it is moving forward – as long as these councillors can work together. As of

2017, the development process is ongoing: KwaMashu still has a lot of informal settlements as well as a lot of the old hostel blocks.

ALLOCATION PROCESS

The allocation process refers to how hostel-dwellers are allocated the new CRUs, moving from the old hostel blocks and/or informal settlements. The first step is the identification of the old blocks and shacks, which need to be demolished in order for the new CRU buildings to be erected. This is carried out by the project manager; social facilitator; superintendent; councillor; a representative of Siyanqoba and the block chairman of that particular block. The identification is based on the planning of the construction company and its planners and architects. The block chairman and the social facilitator have to go door-to-door taking down a list of the names of the people who reside in that space. This includes those who live in blocks and those in informal settlements. The block chairman and the social facilitator each have to have their own lists, but the lists have to match. When the demolition process starts, the committee and the block chairman find vacant spaces for temporary accommodation in the hostel to move the people from their original spaces, which are about to be destroyed. Women and children are especially considered when allocated spaces that might already be occupied by men. People are never made to wait/live in the shacks as temporary accommodation, since the intention is to do away with shacks.

Although the CRUs at sites A and B were only supposed to provide temporary accommodation, these CRUs have been permanently occupied, which has made the transition period difficult to co-ordinate. People who had been temporarily allocated in the transition sites refused to move when they had to. This is a failure on the part of the key stakeholders facilitating this process, as it was their responsibility to make sure that people allocated to those sites were reallocated to their new rooms. Six months is the estimated waiting period while the construction process takes place, provided that there are no problems. Experience has proved that it usually takes more than six months. Once the construction process is complete, it should not take more than a month for the residents to be allocated their new rooms. Again, experience has proved that it can take up to a year for people to

be allocated their permanent space after the construction process is complete.

Once the construction process starts, a security company is contracted to look after the property and the building materials until the handing over of keys takes place between the construction company and the hostel leadership/management. During the day there is one security guard per block and two during the night. When the construction process is finished, their contract expires. When the new CRUs are ready to be occupied, the social facilitator and the block chairman get their lists and continue to facilitate the allocation process, in order to make sure that all the people who were removed get space in the new buildings. According to a focus group discussion I had with the Siyanqoba Development Committee on 3 February 2011, the block chairman knows his or her people and it is easy for him/her to remember who was placed where and when they need to be called back to occupy the CRUs.

Before the residents take over the new rooms, there is a workshop on how to take care of the CRU, facilitated by the social facilitator. Representatives from the main stakeholders – the municipality, the electricity department and the water department – are invited. The block chairman and Siyanqoba are also part of this workshop. The social facilitator leads the workshop, inviting someone from electricity and water to talk about the rights and responsibilities of the user. As they get allocated new rooms, the residents have to sign a lease agreement with the municipality. The person who signs the lease is the one who gets billed by the municipality for rent as well as other municipal services.⁷ The facilitation of the workshop and the signing of the lease are sometimes theoretical. When I asked the ANC councillor on 26 November 2011 how the allocation process worked, he said:

I don't quite know because I am not hands-on in it. I can't even implement it in the zones under my jurisdiction. Allocation is a big part of development. Once its development, it becomes political and then the political leaders try to monopolise that process and that is what they are doing.

The allocation process is not only a power and political struggle over space between the political leadership (ANC, IFP and NFP) of the hostel, it is also a point of tension for men and a reason for bitterness against women. Most men have been at the hostel for longer than the women, but most women who have come after the men have already been allocated to CRUs. The 'first come, first serve' principle does not apply in the allocation process.

Another point of tension that I could not ignore is the intergenerational group dynamics caused by the allocation process. There are younger men in the CRUs and older men who remain in the old hostel blocks. Older men feel that they have been cheated; they feel that they have been forever waiting for this development process and now they are not even sure if it will ever reach them. This is because it is so slow, but also because women and young men have moved ahead of them. In the next couple of years they will need to retire and go back to the rural areas without having experienced 'development' first-hand. They can 'only see it from far like a sun setting', as Baba Bandile Makhathini put it in 2011. When I went back to collect data at the hostel in 2014, I found that Baba Makhathini had retired and gone back to Empangeni to live with his wives and grandchildren.

The common underlying feature of the political, gender and intergenerational dimensions is power. Power is being challenged and power is being resisted. Traditional norms and values do not matter anymore. Masculinity, seniority and headship are being redefined by new situations and processes, which individual men do not control. Democracy rules, even if democracy is not what people want and even if it does not seem fair to them.

One of the most critical changes taking place is the role played by some of the structures mentioned above. For example, Siyanqoba and the IFP ward councillor made it vividly clear that the allocation of an individual to a CRU does not imply the allocation of the CRU to the whole genealogy (this used to be the case in the past, as highlighted by the views of Bhekisisa Maphumulo in the introduction to this book, who got his place in the hostel through his father). This means that if an individual lives alone and passes away while living in a CRU, it will be the responsibility of the block chairman and the social facilitator to go back to their allocation lists to see who is on the waiting list. The person

at the top of the list will be allocated that room. The committee and the councillor said this is to prevent making the CRUs *ifa lomndeni* (family inheritance). The committee members even said, '*ibhekwe ngehlo lokhozi leyoyinto*', which is an indication that they are paying special attention to this tradition:

We are running away from making the rooms an inheritance so that when people die, their rooms have to be taken by their children who did not live with them at the hostel. It is the responsibility of the block chairman to report if there is anyone who passed away so that we would know that there is a vacant room in that block. We then make plans of getting somebody who would occupy that room and not for a person to be fetched from rural areas far from here to come and occupy that room.⁸

I found it quite strange that these old men from rural areas, traditionalists who had been at the hostel for a very long time would make this argument, although I understood that it was because of the positions and roles they played as councillors and committee members. Later I realised that it was easy for them to make such an argument because all their children were already accommodated in the CRUs. Some of their children occupied a whole CRU on their own, without sharing it with other families, as was the norm.

This obviously changes not only the definition of the hostel as the hostel-dwellers knew it, but it has also changed the roles played by the different people or structures within the hostel, particularly the policing role of the councillor and Siyanqoba. It is because of these and other such issues that the older hostel-dwellers would say 'it was better in Egypt' because at least they knew that through their getting a bed at the hostel, their sons were almost guaranteed space in the same bed if they were no longer there. The same principle often used to apply in workplace, where a father or uncle could easily find work for a son or nephew (see Zulu 1993a; Ramphela 1993; Sitas 1983). It is cases such as these that prompted Baba Mthembeni Njobo to say to me in a conversation in 2011: 'We are all foreigners here and I do not understand how can some of us be dictating to others how they should be living their lives.'

Baba Njobo was an old and very conservative man from Nongoma who started living at the hostel in 1965. He was formally employed by a big company, which he had served for many years. He did not like women and children living at the hostel. He had never brought any woman to the hostel and has at least three sons living at the hostel; two of them were enrolled in a tertiary institution. Baba Njobo was allocated to a CRU in 2010. While he did not share his room with anyone, he shared the unit with two other young, unemployed and unmarried women and their two small children.

Clearly the allocation process has turned out to be a very dangerous process. It is not only at KwaMashu Hostel that people have died because of this process. Sarah Thurman (1997) notes that in the Hostels to Homes Pilot Project in 1994 in Cape Town, 29 demonstration units were destroyed by arson. The motive for the attack was unclear, but suggestions range from political dissent to dissatisfaction with the allocation process. These are exactly the same reasons given after the death of a block chairman responsible for the biggest zone at Kwa-Mashu Hostel. He was the councillor's right-hand man. He also held powerful positions in the different hostel structures. He was shot two months after the allocation process of the blocks that he was responsible for. I lived in one of his blocks and he was one of my main contact people at the hostel. From March 2009 until October 2010 he helped to facilitate all my arrangements with the hostel-dwellers and introduced me to the other block chairmen I needed to speak to during my fieldwork. He was a real father figure to most of the youth residing at the hostel.

Later people started alleging that he was killed because of not following the right allocation procedures, as explained above. Some people have argued that sometimes he would sell the rooms to those who would give him money. Each room was going for approximately R2 000. Apparently he was also known to prefer to give young women rooms, regardless of whether they were on the list or not.

The allocation process does not only directly or indirectly cause death, but it also displaces people. As a result of the corruption that is sometimes involved in allocating people, some have to suffer the consequences of losing accommodation. If the demolition or construction process takes place at a time when one is visiting the rural

areas, there is no way of ensuring that one is still able to be listed for a new room in the CRUs. If you miss it, you miss it.

CONCLUSION

According to Ari Sitas (1996: 236), throughout their history hostels 'have been unremitting sources of grievance and anger'. In the post-apartheid era and with the introduction of the CRUs, I argue that anger and grievances have been redefined and/or redirected. Often these frustrations are directed against the government for introducing the CRUs against the will of the hostel-dwellers, for not providing a 'better life for all' as promised, for not only giving them low-paid jobs, but also for the high unemployment rate, as well as continuing overcrowding in the hostels, and for failing to control the crime rate in the hostels. It is also directed against women for not being obedient and submissive enough and for wanting to compete with men in the hostels while 'abandoning' the rural homesteads. Living in the hostel or informal settlements has never been out of choice for most of the rural migrants; rather it is seen as the only option.

Methodologically, Part 1 of this book has regressed in order to progress as theorised by Henri Lefebvre (1991). Reflexive science has allowed me to discuss the history of the migrant labour system and its relationship to the hostel and compound system in South Africa and its changing governing systems across time and space. Through ethnography I have been able to use the KwaMashu Hostel as one nodal point of interconnection with the rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal, but also with other hostels in the province and in other provinces such as the Western Cape. This is where Doreen Massey's argument about space being linked through social relations becomes relevant. The historical and geographical account of hostels given in Part 1 has also shown the intricacy and profundity of the connection of space and place with gender and the construction of gender relations (Massey 1994: 2). Massey's argument about this connection working through the actual construction of, on the one hand, real-world geographies and, on the other, the cultural specificity of definitions of gender is directly relevant for the production of space, place and gender in the KwaMashu Hostel.

The hostels and the people who live in them have always made themselves visible through the different everyday life situations and

events they face and that in turn engages them, whether negatively (violence) or positively (retaining strong connections to the rural areas). The current state of the hostel has been produced by the hostel-dwellers as much as by the government. The role played by township residents should also not be disregarded. The hostel has been produced and reproduced in ways that are both gendered and political. What is important to note about these gendered spaces is that they do not always conform to the official discourse of what hostels and CRUs are.

The repeal of apartheid laws and the coming into power of the democratic government in 1994 merely validated the challenges that were already posed by the hostel-dwellers and their families. While Lauren Segal (1991) and Sitas (1996) believe that the abolition of influx control unleashed processes of social, economic and political dislocation for urban and rural communities, it did not put a halt to migrant labour. An important feature to note is that significant symbolic features of the pre- and post-apartheid era remain in and through the CRU programme. One major setback in the conversion process from hostels to CRUs is that what Erving Goffman (1961) calls barriers to social intercourse have not been removed. In other words, the geographical location and social relations have not been comprehensively reworked between hostels and townships (political) and among the hostel-dwellers (gender). Furthermore, hostels still mainly accommodate migrant workers from the rural areas, as migrants have not been presented with many viable options post-1994. Instead, what happens is that those who do not want to live in the hostels are pushed into the informal settlements or have to rent back rooms in the township or go back to the rural areas (Ngcongco and Mtshali 2006; Sitas 1996). Anthony Christopher (2001) argues that black people's residential options are severely limited by the wider circumstances within which they exist. The articulation of the hostel continues despite its shifts in meaning and its spatial reconfiguration. In the next chapter I show how the traditional rural-urban interconnections because of and through the struggles for livelihoods have also been changing. This is reflected through changes in the labour market and gender dynamics. I try to paint a picture of what livelihoods are for the hostel-dwellers and how they make a living.

NOTES

1. See <http://www.housing.gov.za/Content/CRU/Home.htm>.
2. A typical example of rental calculation is as follows: operating budget per annum = R10 000; total housing stock = 1 000 m²; rental rate charged = R10 per m². A unit of 40 m² will therefore command a rent of R400 per month or R100 per week, R15 per day. Deductions and premiums may be applied to this rental. Water and electricity charges are collected through a pre-paid system and flow-control. http://ftp.shf.org.za/stock_hostels.pdf.
3. Thurman (1997: 59) seems to be the only author who says that 'the calls for conversion originally came from the [hostel] residents'.
4. 'I would not know how many block chairmen are under my zones because I do not quite work with them . . . these block chairmen do not recognise me as a councillor' (ANC councillor, 26 November 2011).
5. 'Umzamo' can be translated as 'trying'.
6. Focus group discussion with Siyanqoba Development Committee, 3 February 2011.
7. Focus group discussion with Siyanqoba Development Committee, 3 February 2011.
8. Focus group discussion with Siyanqoba Development Committee, 3 February 2011.

PART 2

Livelihoods

This part of the book is concerned with the various livelihood strategies that migrant workers utilise in trying to make a living as they straddle the hostel and their area of origin. It highlights the challenges they encounter, as well as the successes they are able to achieve in the processes of making a living. Chapter 3 begins with telling the stories of the hostel-dwellers, both men and women, young and old, employed and unemployed. It shows the variety of the dynamics of livelihoods, as well as how exactly the same circumstances can prove to be positive for one individual yet negative for another. This chapter also begins to show the diversity in how different people from similar situations forge livelihoods.

Chapter 4 documents the conditions in which the hostel-dwellers exist. The 'stretched out' livelihoods between rural and urban areas have come to be defined by collapsing livelihoods on both ends. While in the past people in urban areas knew that being in the cities had the advantage of employment and those based in the rural areas knew that they had land and livestock to rely on for survival, both these strategies are diminishing, to the detriment of migrant workers and their livelihoods. Chapter 5 focuses on documenting additional strategies that migrant workers have found useful in the face of declining urban employment and rural subsistence. It discusses sexuality, criminality and social grants as some of the prominent survival strategies. These strategies are highly gendered and mostly used in urban areas.

The essential argument this part of the book makes is that the livelihoods of migrant workers are complicated and highly diversified. Their everyday life shows that what migrants say is not always what they do when caught up in a situation. It is the combination of livelihood strategies that allows the survival of the individual, as well as the household, in both urban and rural areas. I argue that people are producing livelihoods, reworking their lives and making their histories in conditions not of their own making. The role of social grants has been crucial for migrant workers in seeking employment, making a living and supplementing any kind of income in a particular household. Sexuality and criminality are livelihood strategies that people are neither proud of nor confident to talk about. Conversations about these two livelihoods usually emerge through critical ethnography, whereby the researcher immerses herself or himself in the lives of the research participants.

Everyday Livelihood Struggles across the Rural-Urban Divide

Most migrant workers are accustomed to the migrant labour system of the past, when the roles of the rural and urban areas were clearly marked out, unlike the current situation in which there is high unemployment in urban areas and drought and livestock theft negatively affect subsistence farming in rural areas. In the past livelihood strategies employed in the rural areas served to supplement the urban wage labour, but now it seems that both are dwindling at the expense of the struggling migrant worker. This chapter examines how male and female hostel-dwellers collectively utilise various forms of capital to complement their incomes in the face of collapsing livelihoods in both rural and urban areas. It details the stories of three men and four women, highlighting their everyday livelihood struggles. Both young and old women, who were known to hold rural homesteads together while men were working in the cities, have also started migrating to and from urban areas in huge numbers, primarily seeking employment opportunities. The men in this chapter are faced with different circumstances caused by the expanding rural-urban migration tendencies across gender and across generations.

Contrary to what most men at the hostel attest, women at the hostel are actually working or want to work – in the interviews held with women, they all said their primary reason for being at the hostel is to find employment. Most men are convinced that women are at the hostel following men to spend *their* hard-earned money. Although there is a high unemployment rate in South Africa and consequently at the hostel, many of the women are earning an income, which promotes financial independence and stability. However, their working conditions are often not good. While most women at the hostel were involved in some form

of informal activity, they did not always feel confident enough to call this employment. They are trying, struggling and surviving; they are fighting and insistently resisting the harsh negative realities thrown at them: *kodwa bayahlanganisa*, *bayaphanta*, *bayashizila*, *bayazizamela* (they are struggling but they are working hard, hustling, trying and surviving). On the other hand, men are fighting their own battles, sometimes similar to women's and sometimes totally different. Men's and women's stories mainly differ when one begins to see him/herself as different, better, superior or more hardworking than the other.

EVERYDAY LIVELIHOOD STRUGGLES

The stories of the men and women that follow show that space, place, roles, relations, responsibilities and rural-urban interconnections are continuously reworked depending on the particular circumstances of the individual and his/her points of interconnection. The stories of these migrants are used as key points to explain settings that are larger than the individuals and larger than the hostel.

Philile Ngcobo's collapsing livelihood

Philile Ngcobo is from Eshowe and is in her mid-twenties and her husband is in his late thirties. She came to join him at the hostel, leaving their two children with his parents in the rural area.

Her circumstances in the rural area are a good example of what people face there and why so many women have continued to come to urban areas. A single trip to Eshowe town from Philile's home in the rural areas costs R20. In addition to the R40 return bus fare, there are no proper forms of public transport, such as buses or taxis; instead they use vans. When she goes to buy groceries in town, she has to pay for the space taken by her groceries in the van as well: for example, a 10 kilogram grocery item (such as rice, sugar, flour, beans, potatoes or mealie meal) costs R3 extra. This means that if she is buying all of the above-mentioned items, then she has to pay R12 for transport, in addition to her own fare. If one buys a 25 kilogram grocery item, it costs R7 to have it in the van. One pack of cement cost R20 extra and a goat the same price. When I asked if it made a difference to carry your 10 kilogram pack in your lap, the answer was that it is impossible to do that in a van because of the number of the people who get transported in one van at the same time and the mere fact of having it with you is

enough to make you pay. Whether one carries it on one's lap or even on one's head while sitting in a van, one has to pay for the transportation of that item. This means that one does not even begin to think about going to town until one has done the calculations.¹

Considering the fact that these are the kind of items that black families buy on a monthly basis, it really makes living a struggle for anyone living in the rural areas. Many families in the rural areas have large households; they prefer to buy groceries in large quantities. One 10 kilogram or two 10 kilogram packs per month are a normal amount consumed by an average size black family in the urban areas. These are some of the reasons why people, especially young people, decide to come to urban areas and remain, even when there are no job opportunities.

Philile came to the hostel not only to be united with her husband, but also to look for *amatoho* (casual jobs) to supplement her husband's income. Currently she is unemployed and a housewife and her husband is permanently employed. While she continues to look for *amatoho*, Philile relies on a child maintenance grant (R380 per month in 2017), as well as the support of her husband. Her retired father-in-law and mother-in-law also assist with their old age grant (around R1 600 per person per month in 2017), since they are the primary caretakers of the children.

Philile's husband came to live at the hostel before he got married. He got his place there through his father and he used to live with his two younger brothers in a blockhouse. When people at the hostel had to register for community residential units (CRUs), at the beginning of the development process, Philile and her husband were in the rural area and could not register. When the construction of their CRU was finished, the two other Ngcobo brothers were allocated their own rooms, but Philile's husband, the oldest brother, could not get a room. Of the two younger brothers he lived with, one lived with his fiancée (the mother of his child) at the hostel and the other lived alone. So for quite some time, he stayed with the brother who lived alone. Philile and her brother-in-laws are all from the same area (Eshowe) and they all go to the same church (*abaphostoli*).² Unlike most hostel-dwellers who do not continue going to church when they are at the hostel, Philile and her in-laws have continued to attend church.

After Philile and her husband tried and failed to get a room in the CRU, they started looking for accommodation outside the hostel and they were able to get a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) house in Westridge (Newlands). Going back to a blockhouse or even to a shack was not an option for them anymore. They were looking to upgrade from a blockhouse to a CRU and they were really disappointed when they could not. It took them a while before they made a decision to move out of the hostel and go to live in their RDP house. When asked about the reasons for the delay in relocating, Philile's response was:

The life in Westridge is more expensive than the life at the hostel. Firstly a return trip to work costs [my husband] R60 per day whereas at the hostel it cost only R10 per day. He works in Montclair. At the hostel he used the train to go to work and in Westridge he has to use taxis.

Getting a CRU was now not only about safer, cleaner and more resourced housing or being located close to family members, it was a survival issue – it was about how much they would spend on a daily basis.

Although they are not paying rent at the RDP house, they have to buy electricity and pay for water, whereas at the hostel they did not pay for anything since they did not have a room of their own. Only because the brother they lodged with was unemployed, they would pay the R114 per month that everybody in the CRU had to pay, which was inclusive of rent, water and electricity, according to the hostel-dwellers. In addition, living in close proximity to family members is totally different to living 15–30 kilometres away. It is even more difficult when one cannot take one taxi in order to reach work or to visit family, but has to take two taxis because there is no public transport that goes straight from A to B. There are many benefits (for example, security, support and sharing provisions) to living with or closer to one's family.

Faced with being a housewife in the rural area with a husband who was a migrant worker, Philile decided to come and live with her husband, who was not very happy with her coming to live at the hostel

full time. She decided to leave her two children (who are of primary school age) with their grandparents in order to be with her husband and only visit them once a month, if she can afford it. While the idea of living with her husband was a point of comfort, her actual living conditions were not comfortable. She used to sleep on the floor because her brother-in-law could not sacrifice his space for her to sleep on the same bed with her husband. Sleeping in the same bedroom with a male in-law was unacceptable, so she slept on the floor in the kitchenette. It was clear that the issue was gender and not the in-law relationship per se. Had the in-law been female, Philile would have been allowed to sleep on the floor in the same bedroom with the sister or mother-in-law. The fact that the two other families shared the unit made her life even more difficult. The other families lodged a complaint about her being in the way on the floor when they had to wake up early in the morning and prepare to go to work or when they came back late at night.

Philile is a good example of a 'submissive' woman who tries to work against pressing circumstances. She is seen as somebody who follows a man around, forsaking her responsibilities in the rural areas. Her unfortunate circumstance of unemployment makes her life even more dependent and vulnerable.

Londiwe's collapsing livelihood

Londiwe Mgaga, a mother of three children, is a 31-year-old single woman from Hlabisa. Her children have different fathers; her first child lives with the father's family in Phuthaditjhaba (formerly Witsieshoek or Qwaqwa) in the Free State province. Her second child (eight years old) lives with Londiwe's mother in Hlabisa. The child's father passed away and the paternal grandmother lives in Johannesburg. Londiwe takes her third child (three years old) to and from the hostel. In 2014 she was not in a relationship with any of these men. She came to the hostel in 2008 to look for a job, following her female cousin and friends, and was unemployed for more than a year. She then got a dangerous job at a local factory, but found it difficult to quit because of her pressing circumstances. Her colleagues had their fingers cut by the machines they were using; it was insecure employment with bad working conditions. Finally, Londiwe decided to quit, compelled by

the fact that the company relocated about 10 kilometres away from its original location and it was too expensive for her to travel. Initially she used to walk to and from work every day and when the company relocated, she had to take a train, which is not really expensive. The problem was that she still had to take a taxi after the train. She felt that taxis were an unreliable and expensive form of transport and she came late to work every day; as a result she would get shouted at and threatened. This became too much for her and she quit.

Londiwe's mother lives in a rural area with Londiwe's younger siblings. She is a self-employed woman who has been able to move from one level of strength to another. She buys her merchandise, which ranges from clothes to shoes and jewellery, from urban areas to sell in the rural areas and is a very successful businesswoman. This is her main survival strategy, followed by social grants for her younger children. She rarely got money from her husband until they had a big fight, which landed them in court. She has built a nice brick house where Londiwe has her own fully furnished bedroom, which was built while she was away at the hostel.³ When she first arrived at the hostel, Londiwe shared a one-room shack with her three friends who are her neighbours from Hlabisa and her late cousin. This room only had one single bed and two girls slept on the floor while the other two slept in the bed.

When I came back for the second phase of my fieldwork, I found that the other three girls were not living with Londiwe anymore. Two of them had gone back to Hlabisa for a job opportunity. Both of them had worked in a tavern there, but stopped because of certain challenges at the time, including bad working conditions. After a long time of being unemployed at the hostel, when they heard that the same tavern was looking for employees, they decided to go back to work there. In December 2010 when I went to Hlabisa, I visited them at their workplace. One of the two was pregnant with her second child; the other girl had moved out to go and live with her boyfriend near the hostel.

It was in this way that Londiwe ended up living by herself in the one-roomed shack. After a couple of months of living by herself, she decided to fetch her son, who was then four years old (2011), from Hlabisa to live with her. During the first phase of my fieldwork, she was involved with a man who was from Hlabisa and lived in KwaMashu

Township. When I came back for the second phase, I found that she had broken up with him. She said that he got arrested for assault. He and his friends assaulted someone while they were drunk one night. The man she was seeing after that was from Maphumulo and lived in the hostel in a blockhouse. This new boyfriend seemed decent; he worked and he and Londiwe always walked to and from work together, although they did not work in the same place. He spent a lot of time with Londiwe and her son and he played a fatherly role to Londiwe's son. He babysat any time there was a need and he even promised to marry Londiwe. After a short while it was discovered that he was a possessive and abusive cheater. He verbally abused Londiwe and sometimes beat her in public spaces. Londiwe tried several times to break up with him, without success. She claimed that she loved him and was able to forgive him every time he did something bad to her.

Londiwe's mother knew about her boyfriend, but did not know about the abuse. She also knew about the shack Londiwe lived in, as she had visited once and could not believe what her daughter's accommodation was like, and she knew about the bad conditions at Londiwe's workplace. She constantly encouraged Londiwe to come back home, to sleep in her own beautiful and spacious room and to work with her in her business, but Londiwe refused. She wanted to prove to her mother that she could make it on her own. Immediately after she resigned from her job, she started joining network-marketing companies and was involved in stokvels. She did not want to go back home because she felt life was easier and more interesting in the urban area (at the hostel). She did not want to depend on her mother for anything as her mother had done a lot for her already and made a lot of sacrifices for her. She has also witnessed her father abusing her mother and she did not want to go back to that situation. She also 'hated' the idea of running after the people who owed her mother cash. She did not like doing the house chores and other responsibilities she is confronted with when she lives in the rural area.

When I visited the hostel in November 2011, I found that Londiwe was pregnant with her third child, the youngest boy, from the same man who abused her. She was in her eighth month and the man had not gone to pay for damages. He promised to go early in December, but Londiwe said she would believe it when she saw it. She had not been

home in eight months. Her mother supposedly did not know about the pregnancy and Londiwe was terrified of her mother's reaction. She gathered that her mother already knew about the pregnancy, adding that her 'mother is not stupid'. While I was at the hostel I also saw Mbali, one of Londiwe's friends from Hlabisa, whom I had last seen in December 2010, working at the tavern. I was informed that she and the other woman had lost their jobs because there was a robbery and the owner suspected that they had something to do with it. Mbali told me that she intended going back to Hlabisa in December.

Londiwe continued to live with her boyfriend and was up and down from the hostel to the rural area. One of the girls who had gone back to Hlabisa and got pregnant with a second child was back at the hostel doing a piece job in a factory in Phoenix. The other girl (neighbour-friend) was all over the place, occasionally being at the hostel, sometimes in the rural area and sometimes her whereabouts was unknown to her friends. She had also fallen pregnant with her third child.

In mid-2014, I got a phone call from Londiwe's mother begging me to go to the hostel to tell her to come back home. Her mother said she did not understand why Londiwe always wanted to stay at the hostel because every time she was there she fell sick; she was also unemployed more than half the time. Furthermore, she said that it was not a safe place for children and her children needed her in Hlabisa. I went to the hostel a week after the phone call and found that Londiwe had already gone back home. When I called her mother a month later, she told me that Londiwe was back at the hostel. She had failed to register with some school for a security course, but she had found a school where she could do nursing. Her first day at the school was 14 July 2014 and her mother asked me to check whether the school was registered with the nursing council. The mere fact that she had only paid a R400 deposit in order to register gave me a clear sign that this could be a one of those fly-by-night schools.

Londiwe is a very good example of somebody who moves up and down looking for greener pastures, refusing to be satisfied with the often negative circumstances that confront her, in both the rural and urban areas. She seems to have suffered all kinds of defeats, but she refuses to remain down.

Mama Nonhle Kheswa's collapsing livelihood

Mama Kheswa is 65 years old and is from Melmoth. She came to live at the hostel in the mid-1980s. Her first stop from the rural area was Umlazi Township, where she lived for a couple of years before she decided to come to the hostel to live with her new partner. She had to come to the city to look for job opportunities in order to be able to support her two children, especially since she was not married. Her son moved to Johannesburg, worked, got married and settled there. Her daughter joined her at the hostel. Mama Kheswa worked her whole life until she took early retirement because of ill health. She lived in a shack with her partner, who was from Maphumulo, for about 25 years, but they never married or had children.

She lived with this man until he retired about six years ago, went back home, fell sick and passed away. He had never been to Mama Kheswa's home in the rural area and she had never been to his home; this was how he and Mama Kheswa showed respect to his wife in the rural area. Mama Kheswa was not able to attend his funeral, not only because this was a married man who had his wife and children in the rural area, but also because when he retired there was a communication breakdown as he did not have a cell phone and there was no other way for her to contact him. This was also the reason she did not know about his ill health. However, they probably both knew it was over between them since the migrant status of the man had come to an end and, unlike Mama Kheswa, he went back to his rural home. Although she knew a relative of this man who also lived at the hostel, and she had met his children when they visited him at the hostel, when he died, nobody told her about it. She got to know about his death a couple of months later through an old friend of his. The retirement and death of this man meant financial and social support had gone for Mama Kheswa.

About five years ago, she got really sick and she could not go to work. She fell ill during the period when people from her zone were being moved in order for shacks and blocks to be demolished as the new CRUs were going to be erected. She had to ask for a special favour from her block chairman that she not be moved to the area where everyone else was going because this would be too far for her to reach public transport, especially in her ill health. Instead, she and her family (daughter and grandchildren) were temporarily placed in a

nearby blockhouse, which was mostly vacant. This block chairman was her daughter's boyfriend. He was married, with two wives, neither of whom lived at the hostel. The relationship that the daughter had with the block chairman made it easier and quicker for this family to get a CRU. This CRU has three bedrooms, which normally means it needs to accommodate three families, but Mama Kheswa's family got the whole CRU to themselves. One bedroom was for Mama Kheswa, another for her daughter and the third for her grandchildren.

Despite her ill health, Mama Kheswa could not go back to Melmoth where she came from because her parents had passed away a long time ago and her siblings had got married and built houses in different parts of KwaZulu-Natal. She also could not go back home because she had basically forsaken the home during her stay in the urban area. She had not saved any money, which could have served as a back-up plan for her in ill health and old age. A neighbour now lived in the family home in Melmoth, taking care of it in their absence. In summary, faced with staying in the rural area and trying to find a husband to marry and take care of her children, Mama Kheswa decided to come to the city to look for employment. While she could have continued to give birth to more children, as is the norm with black women of her age, she decided to stop at two children and focus on working to support them. When her parents passed away, she decided to invite her daughter to come and live with her at the hostel since her son got a job in Johannesburg and was settled there. Faced with a situation of being old, sick, close to retirement age and not having a source of social support, she decided to stay at the hostel with her daughter and grandchildren until she recovered. She is now healthy, but too old to go back to work.

Mama Kheswa considers herself very urbanised, since she came to the city when she was very young. She did not get the kind of training that one gets in the rural areas in terms of parenting,⁴ since she left her very young children with her mother, nor the kind of training she would have received as *umakoti* (bride), since she has never been married. The rural part of her life has been emptied and her life situation has sucked the value out of the rural part of her life.

In 2013 when I visited, Mama Kheswa told me about the passing of her son who was based in Johannesburg. She lived with his teenage son at the hostel. In June 2014 she told me about the passing of

her daughter-in-law. She also mentioned how she still feared for her daughter, whom she lived with at the hostel, saying she had been walking with a political activist who was shot dead at the hostel. She thought that the people who killed this woman could come back for her daughter, if they believed that she saw them when they shot the other woman.

Mama Kheswa is a good example of somebody we call *ibhunguka*, which is an *isiZulu* word describing somebody who leaves home and never comes back; s/he forgets and forsakes his or her responsibilities of supporting his or her family whom s/he left in the rural area. She is also a good example of an independent woman who has taken her life's decisions strategically.

Her partner died. Her son and daughter-in-law died. Her possible future son-in-law died. She is in her old age and retired. She now primarily relies on an old age grant and her daughter relies on a child maintenance grant. Although people were supposed to pay R114 per month per bedroom in 2014, most people did not pay rent at all and there did not seem to be a problem with this. Mama Kheswa is a good example of somebody who suffers from insecurity in all aspects of life. Healthwise, *unamahlala khona* (she suffers from chronic diseases), financially she relies on a government grant and socially she only has her daughter, who is also under threat.

Baba Maphumulo's everyday livelihood struggles

Yes, we have land in the rural areas. We have a garden although our wives do not want to work the land. They are lazy because they know that their husbands are working. Instead they like going to buy from the big retail stores and showing off to their neighbours. What I believe is basic groceries is 80 kg of mealie meal, oil and beans – everything else can follow. With those ingredients, people will never go hungry. When I am at home I do not like to live the way people live here [in the urban area] or even eat the same kind of food. For example, I do not see the need to buy juice. I do not mind if [my wives] buy it, but basics come first . . . My father works the land . . . We have goats

and cows and livestock produce is decreasing because it is expensive to buy more livestock.⁵

This is the long answer I received when I asked Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo if he has agricultural land in the rural areas. In his answer he saw fit to raise his frustrations about how that land is not used to its optimum level. He saw his wives not playing a supportive role in working the land in order to supplement the remittances he sends home. He further mentions that his father still works the land, although he is old.

Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo is 54 years old. He is originally from Empangeni, married to two wives, who are both based in the rural areas, and had twelve children, but only eight have survived. He has worked for the same company for 37 years. He started living at the hostel in 1975. The reason he came to stay at the hostel was through his father, but he also liked the idea of moving into a hostel because it was like a famous thing in those days. It sounded good to the people in rural areas to say one is moving into KwaMashu Hostel. He got to live in this place through lodging. His father invited him to come and live with him in the hostel, but he did not have bed space at that time. He used to sleep on the floor until a bed was eventually available for him in 1986.

When I interviewed him for the first time in 2009, he was living in a hostel block and when I interviewed him again in 2010 he had been allocated a room in a CRU. Baba Maphumulo still likes the hostel space. He said that he loved staying there, knowing that he is working for his children and nobody bothers him. He once lived in the township for a small period of time and he did not like it. He noted that if you are renting a room in the township, everybody pays attention to the kind of lifestyle you lead – what you buy and where – whereas at the hostel, if you have maas, beans and mealie meal, you know that you are covered. He told me that when he is hungry and does not want to cook, he can eat bread with sugar water and that is enough for him.

In the blockhouse, he originally lived with three people, but in 2009 another two guys came to live with them and this made six people living in a space for four people. In the room he lived in, the fourth bed belonged to his very good friend who was like a brother to him, but he died. Baba Maphumulo made sure that this man's son took over his bed

and not any other person. His friend's son then invited two other people into their room. While Baba Maphumulo took pride in his actions of *ubuntu* and brotherhood, he ended up regretting inviting the son to live with him because of his crowding their space without consulting him, which showed a lack of respect and appreciation.

This situation raises a couple of relevant issues: space, the bond of brotherhood created by living at the hostel in such close proximity and intergenerational differences. Everything mentioned by Baba Maphumulo had a time and space factor. For example, it was normal for the blocks to be overcrowded, with more than four people in a room that was only designed for that number. However, in 2009, it was problematic to have six people in a block room, because people could be accommodated in informal settlements or in the CRUs. As a result of the kind of relationship he had with his late roommate, Baba Maphumulo felt he needed to be a father to the son of his late friend. He did exactly what the late friend would do, as this was the norm.⁶

During apartheid male children who came to the urban areas did not lose their bed space when their parent died or retired. Good social networks ensured that others at the hostel looked after them, as was the case with Baba Maphumulo, who secured bed space for the son of his late friend. Baba Maphumulo mentioned that it is an issue now because girl children are living with their parents at the hostels. He felt that he would not have been able to bring his friend's girl child because the hostel is a place for men: there is no proper allocation of space for women and the hostel is not a safe space for women. Generally, he is against the presence of women at the hostel. This is what Baba Maphumulo had to say about the presence of women in the hostel in my interview with him on 12 March 2009: 'What is not nice about living with them is that they finish money. Most of the women here are working. I do not like living with women here at the hostel as it causes problems.'

Contrary to Baba Maphumulo's assertion, there was general consensus among men and women at the hostel that the majority of women there are not working. Many men believe that since women are not working, they must be surviving through men's incomes, quickly forgetting or totally disregarding the role of the social grants in the lives of women and children, as well as other survival strategies employed by women.

When asked why he thinks women come to the hostel, Baba Maphumulo confessed that women come to the urban areas to find work. However, he further mentioned that it was good that women were not here during apartheid and people did not kill each other then. He insisted that their presence at the hostel is a problem, 'because one cannot say that I do not want anybody to talk to my wife. That would be impossible as other men would meet her in the common rooms like washing place, kitchen and toilets'.⁷ This speaks to one of the dominant views by men and some women at the hostel. They collectively argued that the presence of women at the hostel is the main reason that men kill each other so frequently and so violently. Baba Maphumulo argued that once a woman is there, whether one is married or not, it is impossible that other men would not communicate with her in one way or another. Men have this understanding that they do not like their wives and girlfriends to have any contact with other men at the hostel. Hence if a married woman or one who has a partner is seen by their partner conversing or being friends, that would be a reason for one man to kill the other. The husband can kill the guy he sees as making moves on his woman. Or, the other guy could kill the husband so that he could take over the wife. This is the sad reality of hostel life.

Samke Zulu's livelihood choices

Finding casual jobs is the main reason almost every person has moved from the rural to the urban areas. What is interesting is that in their search for casual jobs, they are not always looking for the same thing. Expectations vary from one person to another, as the following extract shows. Samke Zulu is a 25-year-old woman who now lives with her boyfriend, who is also the father of her child. He provides her with accommodation, as well as everything she needs, since she is not working.

Nomkhosi: What did you say you were coming here to do when you left home?

Samke: I came to look for *amatoho*. I looked for a long time without finding anything.

Nomkhosi: When your aunt stopped working as a domestic worker, why did you not take over her job?

Samke: I have done domestic work and the problem was that I felt like a slave in that place. Now I know that I cannot cope working as a domestic worker.

Nomkhosi: Why?

Samke: There is too much work in the domestic arena.

Nomkhosi: You felt like a slave? Did you live there?

Samke: Yes. The work never ends in that place. I started working in the morning till the night. You find that I would be done by eight, but at eight they would call me and tell me to come wash the dishes. Sometimes it would take me two to three hours to wash the dishes.

Nomkhosi: It took you that long?

Samke: Yes. I am not talking about a dish, I mean dishes. Perhaps you do not know the life of Indians. When an Indian woman is cooking, she takes out every kind of a dish she has and uses it, so that is why it took long to wash dishes because after that I would have to dry them and put them back in the cabinets where they belonged.

Nomkhosi: How much did you get paid there?

Samke: We had agreed on R800 per month, but I did not even finish a month working there, it was only one week.

Nomkhosi: Did you get paid for that?

Samke: Yes, I got paid R200. After that I stayed for a while and then did security guard training, this is what I have for now.⁸

The story of Samke shows clearly that the situations and expectations of people vary enormously. While Doda (story below) appreciated R2 because he could eat from it, Samke left an R800 per month job because she felt like a slave working there, while her aunt was able to do the job and hold on to it until she got something better. Samke's story brings me back to Philip Bonner's (1990) argument that women prefer informal work to domestic work. I agree with Bonner on two accounts. The first is that many women work seven days a week in their preferred informal work. They do so because they want to get the maximum output compared to domestic service where the 'madam' will tell them when to come and when not to as well as how much they will get paid at the

end of the month. No matter how hard you work for 'madam', you will always get the agreed income, whereas in informal work, the harder you work, the better your chances of making more money. The second issue is that in informal work, the worker has a sense of ownership of the business, no matter how small it is, whereas in domestic service, you are always serving somebody, working in somebody else's space. In informal work you can claim your space. While informal work can be as hard as in the domestic arena, if not more so, the differences in ownership of produce and space and determining your own pace of work are very important to the worker.

The story of Bheki Mkhize

The way I came [to the hostel] is I was visiting my brother who was living here, to see where and how he lived and I ended up staying for good. I came and shared a room where he stayed. But now I do not share a room with him anymore. The thing is there are a lot of other guys who come from the same area as we are coming from. So it was easy for all of us to get along. When I came, I did not have a bed of my own, but the other guys invited me to stay in their room as there was a bed that was available. We are all used to sharing and we get beds as people die. I never thought of going back home as was the initial plan. I came here in 2003. I do not know for how long I will live here; it's really difficult to say. It depends on the changes that can take place while a person is living here.

For now I can say that I love staying here, because I have not seen a problem by staying here. What I like the most about living here is that one does not pay a lot of money for accommodation. Since I came here, I heard that it only costs R13 to have a bed, but I have never paid anything and I have also never seen anybody paying anything. Another reason why I like living here is because I have my brothers here. It is very easy to get assistance if I have a problem with something, because I just go and talk to them. It is not like living in a foreign place where one could live with people he does not know and is not used to. It would be difficult

to communicate or have a good relationship with those people. For example, if I do not have enough money in my pocket, I am able to access it very easily from my brothers.

What I do not like about living here is the overcrowding that is here. There are four of us sharing one room. There are no women in our room. Each room has to have four people as each room has four built-in beds in it. But it happens sometimes that if your relative does not have a place to stay, then he can share a bed with you, which increases the number of the people in one room. It's difficult to think of the second thing I do not like. There are not too many bad things about this place.

In terms of keeping the room/house clean, we do our own cleaning. We do not agree on any system of cleaning, it depends on who is available at a particular time. We are not all always there. So if one is there and the room is dirty, he will clean and wash the dishes. We do not have rosters, if we have a roster that would mean the house remains dirty at all times. For example, if I am the only one who is always present during the day and all the others are at work for the whole week that means the house will be clean only for one day because the others would not be available to clean the house as they are at work. In our room, we cook together.

It happens that we encounter problems sometimes, especially caused by the way we live. It is especially for us as youth; the problem is that we like consuming too much alcohol. This becomes a problem for us as we work different shifts. For example, let's say I am working, starting early morning, and there are people who work from Monday to Friday and who do not work during the weekends, and if people want to drink they would drink at any time of the day. And as there is four of us in one room, one cannot stop his roommates from drinking at any time of the day. If one wants to quickly go to bed, at about eight in the evening, whereas they would drink until midnight that causes some disturbances. That is a problem with the way we live; it

would be better if a person had his own bedroom. With the issue of respect, it depends on how well you know each other. It happens that you live in one room and you are not from the same origins. Another factor is the one of age – if you are all of the same age, it is difficult for you to respect each other. Whereas if there are huge age gaps, one finds it difficult to be disrespectful because you know that the other person is older than you.

In our room, we are all almost of the same age group, but that is not a problem as we respect each other. We respect each other because we know each other from our original rural areas. We are all from Empangeni. There is one from Hlabisa, but he has been here for a short while. He has been here for less than a year, but we have not seen anything wrong with him.

In that room, I only own my clothes and sleeping blankets. I do not have anything else; the TV that we have belongs to another guy we live with. The problem with things like that is that once one person buys it, you cannot really buy another one in the same room. The municipality does not give us anything else other than the built-in stuff like cabinets, beds, wardrobes. In the new rooms that are being built [CRUs] where people do not share bedrooms, there do not have any kind of built-in furniture, they have to buy everything themselves. Even in that, it depends on what kind of people live there, do they get along with each other or not. For example, they could have more than one stove in the kitchen.

In our room, we share everything in the kitchen, pots, stoves and cooking. There are people who do not cook together although they live together. With us it was easier because we all come from the same area. If there is anything that breaks from a radio or TV, although we do not all own these things, but because we share them, then we raise enough money to fix that thing. There not one of us who is not working from this house.

With regards to visiting home, I go there at the end of every month. I do not ever write a letter; instead, I call them

if there is something urgent that I need to communicate with them. There is some kind of support that I give them. I am the only male child at home and the only one who is working. My father has retired. My mother is old now. My sisters are still living with my parents. They have their own ways of making a living, but I also support them. I send about R500 every month, depending on how much I have made in that particular month. I do not really send any kinds of goods home. As it is, I am busy building at home. I send money to buy the building material or if I am at home, I go for myself to buy the material needed for building.

I love my village more than this place. I was born there and I know a lot of things from that side, whereas I am only here to work. At home there is somebody whom I am in love with; she is based in the rural areas. There is why my heart is back there. And there are my parents and my sisters, if I want to see them, I always have to go home. I do not have any relatives here in the urban areas.

If everything went well financially, I would continue living in the hostel because living in more expensive areas would just be a waste of money. The reason we are here is we need money so we cannot afford to waste it. The minimal rent paid at the hostel is the best thing about living here. If I had all the money, I would still not like to take my family and bring them here, I would rather go back home and live with them. I would not have a right to do otherwise. The main reason is: as I was growing up, at home we always had livestock, we still have it and we like it, so when you are living here with your family, you cannot be able to have the livestock.

I am working as a security. I am employed as a casual, since it can end at any time. I am based in New Germany in Pinetown. In August, I will have two years in the current company. The situation is very bad as yesterday when I came to work; I heard that some of my colleagues have been fired because of certain situations. The place that one

works in is mainly the reason why people get fired. For example, if you are caught sleeping. One never plans to sleep at work and if that happens, one is gone. Sometimes we do get warnings, but some cases are complicated.

I am in level D; hence I get R1 900 per month; if lucky one gets overtime if working on a Sunday. The first job I did was working for a contractor which was based in La Mercy near Tongaat. I was a builder. I got that job through my brother, who was working as a security guard in the neighbourhood of the contractor. He heard that people were needed. I worked there for about seven months and that was the end of the contract. I used to get R50 per day working for five days a week. Ending of the contract was the reason for me to stop working there. When the contractor moved to another place, I could not go with it. My ideal job was being a medical doctor, but because of not being able to further my studies, I had to settle for less. I do not have other means of survival other than my current job.

Crime is the major problem in this place. People get robbed mostly in the night. Personally I really do not have a problem living in a hostel. In most of the cases people who come from the rural areas live in the hostels, there are a few that live in the townships. As a result, there are not much problems they face as this is a normal life to them. If one loses his job that is only known by the people you live with. You continue living in that room and sharing the same food with everybody. There is no way that people discriminate you because we come from the same area. People do not discriminate you because you are not contributing to buying food anymore – when you find a job again, you go back to your normal life. One cannot deprive his brother food to eat just because he is not working.

People sometimes start their own little businesses, which become their way of making a living. In terms of work, people are divided, some are employed permanently and some on a casual basis. Sometimes that is the reason

why people do not leave the hostel, even when they can afford to pay more than what they are paying here; they get used into living here.

Personally I do not own land; my family owns a lot of land. I cannot say it is mine as I am the youngest at home. People now do not really work the land in the rural areas. I am not sure that I know the reason for that. At home we have livestock, mainly goats, as the cows all died while there was drought. My father is the one who takes care of the livestock. Livestock is a very important part of our culture. For example, if there is a grandmother who died and she needs to be invited back home, the family can quickly take the chickens in order to carry out the ceremony. People can sell the goats to make money. People can milk the cow and get something to eat.

Women are now very much allowed to live in the hostel for as long as the men live here. I am not sure why they like living here because this is originally a place for men and not them. There is no hostel for women here. I can say that it is good in some way that they are here. They are able to disempower men to be involved in violence. They are also able to help men if they are at work and do not have enough time to do housework, women do it for them. Men without partners can also ask neighbouring women to wash their washing and they pay them a certain amount. Men do not necessarily help each other with those things. If you ask your brother to wash for you, he will ask you if he is your wife, and you say no, then he says he can't wash for you as he is not your wife. In terms of bad things about them, I can say *bangabaqhathi* (they are the cause for quarrels). Some of them would come here not necessarily looking for a place to stay, but following her boyfriend, while he is at work, another one will propose to her and after a while, she is interested in this other man and they fall in love. When her first boyfriend finds out about that, this would be the beginning of a fight. Hence women in that sense are the major cause why men fight.

Nobody can accept the fact that his girlfriend has fallen in love with somebody else, especially since they are still in a relationship.

Men have to leave their houses and go to seek work. If he does not do that, then who can take care of the family? The negative impact of that is that if a man is not present in his home, his home is not properly respected as it would be if he were living there permanently. Even criminals are able to take advantage, especially if there are no other males in that family. The presence of a man brings dignity to the house.

It is difficult to say there are women who do not have partners here at the hostel. The reason is because one finds that a woman is living by herself in a shack, but she has a partner who lives in a blockhouse. Most of the women are working. They are given respect by men since they also have their rights. If one does not respect a woman, that could lead to having a man arrested since women are protected by their rights. From the hostel, I do not know if there are rules specifically for women. Personally I have never brought anybody to the hostel.⁹

When I visited the hostel in 2014, Bheki Mkhize's brother told me that he passed away in 2012. He had an accident at work. His brother was really bitter about how he died, especially mentioning how well behaved he was and that he had paid lobola in full and was about to get married. This was a great loss to all who knew him.

Doda Mkhaliphi's perception of urban livelihoods

Public transport and basic groceries are more expensive in the rural areas. The excerpt below is from an interview I did with Doda Mkhaliphi on 15 January 2011 and it demonstrates the differences between the rural and urban areas from a migrant's point of view. Doda Mkhaliphi is a 25-year-old man who is originally from KwaMaphumulo and lives in the hostel with his four brothers; he works as a security guard. He passed Matric in 2007 and came to live at the hostel the same year he finished school.

Nomkhosi: So what was your reason to come to the hostel?

Doda: I came to look for *amatoho*.

Nomkhosi: Since you say you came for *amatoho*, would you say that you found them?

Doda: Yes, we can say that because we are able to eat something before going to bed.

Nomkhosi: Would you say that all you are struggling for is to eat something before going to bed or you would like something a little better than that?

Doda: There is not much that we can say because we are not educated.

Nomkhosi: But you said you passed your Matric?

Doda: That does not help because I was not able to further my studies because of not having finances to do so . . .

Nomkhosi: What are the three things you like about living at the hostel?

Doda: I like it because the public transport that I use when I go to work is very close. Secondly, shops are closer and quite cheap.

Nomkhosi: Cheap, compared to where?

Doda: Well, they are very cheap here compared to the ones in the rural areas. You cannot go to bed on an empty stomach in the hostel when you have a R2, but R2 will do nothing for you as it can't buy anything in the rural areas. You can buy one onion, one tomato and make *ushatini* [a mixture of chopped onions, tomatoes and chillies, sometimes with a pinch of salt and some vinegar] if you have margarine or oil. The third thing I like is the fact that rent is not expensive here; actually, it is very cheap.

The story of Doda shows an interesting part of the urban struggles that migrants face living at the hostel. Those I interviewed mostly gave the same reason for coming to live at the hostel: looking for work. The hostel is a highly preferable place to stay for the very reasons mentioned by Doda above. Many migrants feel satisfied by the limited opportunities that are available to them because they always feel they are better than the poverty they are faced with in the rural areas. Some migrants even

said that it is a good place to be at as long as you know what you are looking for. It is also a place full of frustrations.

CONCLUSION

The stories documented above begin to show that although wage labour is still the core livelihood strategy for most families in both urban and rural areas, it is not the only thing determining survival for the hostel-dwellers. Wage labour can be seen as cementing all the other survival methods together. It is still quite crucial, but on its own it fails to serve the purpose of maintaining families. In all sorts of diverse livelihoods, one can trace the important role played by wage labour. These stories also show the intricacy and negotiation of space, place and gender roles and relations.

The stories above highlight some of the urban struggles encountered by both men and women. Criminality; overcrowding; (headship) roles and responsibilities, which overlap between urban and rural areas; negotiating the space and activities of the people one lives with at the hostel; alcohol abuse; being involved in a long-distance relationship; dealing with intergenerational conflicts; negotiating and balancing the role of women at the hostel, looking at both the positive and negative things they bring. These struggles are coupled with some of the ways people have found to deal with such challenges – for example, reliance on family and friends for food and accommodation.

The stories demonstrate the livelihood struggles, challenging situations and difficult choices made by the hostel-dwellers. One cannot say the stories have a gender or urban bias because it is precisely the intent of this book to show that dichotomous distinctions do not and will not work: 'it is important to emphasise that these are *not* simply "case studies" of the impact of larger economic and political forces. Instead, they represent vantage points for illuminating processes of social and spatial interconnection, and a means for gaining a fuller understanding of the possibilities for social change' (Hart and Sitas 2004: 37).

In each story, life in both rural and urban areas was reflected upon and the role of formal and informal labour was highlighted. This was not an attempt to create balance, but it was the reality of individual histories and interconnected geographies. What seems to be the most

important feature in all the stories starts in the decision to come to the city to look for employment – the role of labour migration. Philile has never worked, Londiwe has worked for a year or two and Mama Kheswa worked from the mid-1980s till the late 2000s. Samke had never worked before the domestic job she got and resigned from within a month. Philile came to the city and to the hostel because of her husband. Londiwe came to the city and to the hostel because of the presence of her late female cousin. Mama Kheswa came to the city to look for a job and moved into the hostel because of and through her partner. It was easier for Mama Kheswa and Londiwe to leave the rural areas because they were not married, while it was easier for Philile to come to the hostel because she was married to somebody who worked and therefore lived in the urban area. Her husband is the only link she has there. It was easier for Samke to relocate following her partner because there was the hope of marriage, especially after they had a child together.

Baba Maphumulo came to live in the hostel because of his father, who has now long retired, but is still strong enough to work the land. He acknowledges the expensive food prices from the big retail shops both in the urban and rural areas. Most of the challenges he highlighted seemed to be caused by women: his wives make life difficult by not wanting to work the land; the women at the hostel make life difficult because they take men's space at the hostel and they spend men's hard-earned cash and they are also the main cause of the high death toll at the hostel. Doda and Bheki found it easy to come here because of their brothers and uncles who were already here before them.

These stories show that livelihood strategies of migrants are always multiple, diversified and stretched out across the rural-urban areas. Rural-urban migration remains important and plays a crucial role in the diversification and multiplication of livelihood strategies of migrants.

NOTES

1. Interview with Philile Ngcobo, 22 January 2011.
2. *Abaphostoli* means 'apostles'. The full name of the church is '12 Apostles of Jesus'.
3. I remember when Londiwe told me that she had heard from a younger brother that her mother had built a room for her, but she had not seen it. When she came back, she told me that it was true and she was quite excited about it.

4. Mama Kheswa relayed to me how I should not one day bring my child to her for *ukuchatha* (an enema) because she seriously did not know how to *chatha* (to use a rectal bulb on) a child.
5. Interview with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo, 12 March 2009.
6. This reminded me of a funeral that I attended at Nongoma. The man who had passed away had worked at Toyota. During his funeral, which was attended by his former colleagues, his relative and friend told the colleagues that they had to see what they could do about the situation left by the deceased person. The deceased had been married and had eight children; the first-born son was already out of school and looking for a job. The relative made it clear in public that they were expecting the former colleagues to source/seek job opportunities for the deceased's older son in order for him to be able to continue where his father left off in terms of heading the household. He explained that the deceased was the only employed person in the household.
7. Interview with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo, 12 March 2009.
8. Interview with Samke Zulu, 22 January 2011.
9. Interview with Bheki Mkhize, 5 May 2009.

Shrinking Opportunities

This chapter takes as its departure point the idea that migrants come to the city for employment opportunities. Hence, their livelihoods are always ‘stretched out’ (Massey 1994) between the rural areas, where they originate, and the urban areas, where they find a base through employment. These stretched-out livelihoods do not negate the interconnections of family, friends and homeboys/homegirls who are scattered across rural and urban geographical spaces. It is these interconnections and their diversification that bring migrants’ livelihoods to a totality. Another important unit in livelihood making is the household. Most migrants do not depart from an individual point, but from a collective household. Some writers have even argued that the decision for an individual to migrate to the urban areas is mostly a collective household decision.

Primarily, for most migrants, the status of being employed is what signals a goal achieved, since they go to the urban areas to look for such opportunities. Hein Marais (2011: 181) concurs that access to employment is the single most important factor affecting the poverty status of households in South Africa. How much workers are getting paid and if it is enough for their whole family become secondary considerations. When what they are getting paid is not enough, they look for opportunities to supplement their income. They use the diversification, which is all kinds of capital (social, economic, cultural and political), available to them in order to satisfy their needs and those of their family members.

As an introduction to shrinking opportunities, I list ten different but interrelated livelihood strategies that migrants use in their everyday lives. At this stage, it is essential to emphasise the importance of moving beyond the shop floor, to investigate the lives of migrant workers and

the activities they are involved in, organisations and social groups they are part of and the meanings attached to their lives and relations. The title of this chapter may seem contradictory in light of the ten or more possible livelihood strategies migrants use to survive. However, the discussion below will shed some light on how these work together, but not always for good.

As advocated by Sithembiso Bhengu (2014) and Gillian Hart and Ari Sitas (2004), the chapters in Part 2 of this book attempt to move beyond the urban–rural divide. Looking at the rural–urban continuum allows us to appreciate the fact that migrants’ livelihood strategies are always multiple, diversified and stretched out across the rural and urban areas. This multiplication and diversification is reflected in the ten livelihood strategies used by participants in my study:

1. formal employment
2. casual employment
3. support from family, relatives and friends
4. informal and/or self-employment
5. social grants
6. the sexual economy
7. criminality
8. livestock ownership
9. land – agriculture
10. informal money-saving schemes: stokvels and *umholiswano*.¹

It is important to note that the order of livelihood strategies above is not according to importance and also that they are also not utilised individually, but always diversified. It is also significant that the way these livelihood strategies have been outlined can further be broken down into many smaller categories – for example, informal and self-employment can belong to two separate groups, depending on their dynamics. The main point in outlining these different livelihood strategies is applying the ‘new theoretical framework’, which tries to move away from the dichotomy of a formal sector and an informal sector, from urban-based and rural-based livelihood strategies. I accept the permanence of the traditionally secondary livelihood strategies (the informal economy) and try to look at the whole continuum of livelihoods procurement and the links between them (Lund 2002). Following Doreen Massey

(1984: 6), this book ‘adopts a mode of explanation which tries to break the dichotomy between formal models and empirical description. It recognises underlying causal processes, but recognises, too, that such processes never operate in isolation; for it is precisely their operation in varying combinations which produces variety and uniqueness.’

My research shows that relying on wage labour alone is restraining and does not paint a comprehensive picture of the everyday livelihood struggles of migrants. Wage labour (meaning both formal and casual employment) is fundamental in the South African labour market because when references are made to the employment/unemployment rates, it is primarily wage labour that is considered. This has changed more recently as more authors are beginning to highlight the role of supplementary income-generating activities. For example, since the early 2000s, those earning an income through hunting and gathering, begging or subsistence farming are counted as employed (Marais 2011). Many people argue that casual employment is unstable, vulnerable and precarious, but also that it perhaps unrealistically raises employment figures, despite being temporary or unstable. The reality is that about half of the total number of employed people in South Africa is made up of those in casual and temporary jobs.

With the repeal of apartheid laws post-1994, many new opportunities arose for migrant workers, which were previously forbidden to them. Informal labour and street hawking are two survival strategies forged by black people, especially in the cities, but they were punished or detained for being engaged in such activities during apartheid. What is important to note about informal labour in South Africa currently is that, among many other strategies, it plays a fundamental role in the survival of many households. The high unemployment rate has done two main things: it has pushed many migrants into the informal sector and it has also pushed many people into relying primarily on social grants, although there is a limitation there in the form of the means test. One thing the unemployment rate has dismally failed to do is to discourage people from the rural areas from coming to the urban areas for employment opportunities. We see this in the continuous inflow of migrants to the hostel, causing overcrowding and many other challenges.

Informal money-saving schemes are not joined by people who are idle (helpless and hopeless) – they are sometimes employed and

sometimes not employed, they are sometimes social grant recipients and sometimes not. What is important about these people is that they must have other ways of getting money in order to contribute on a monthly basis. In most stokvels one can skip payment for a month or two and pay later with interest. With *umholiswano* one cannot afford to skip a month because every month somebody must get paid the full amount. If one misses a payment to *umholiswano*, it causes a major disturbance not only to the one who is supposed to be getting paid, but also to everyone else. Most people even go to loan sharks to get money to pay their share to the stokvel or or *umholiswano*.

Social grants are fairly new, compared with other survival strategies, and are paid on a monthly basis, but they are means-tested, meaning not everybody can access them. One has to go through a long and sometimes ineffective administration process, but it is an assured and legal survival strategy. There is also support from family, relatives and friends. This is the oldest and most profound way in which many people survive, but unfortunately it receives less attention or recognition from those involved. The challenge is that it is difficult to quantify, but it is the most trusted and used by all – the employed and unemployed, the young and old, men and women.

The above-mentioned livelihood strategies utilised in the rural-urban spectrum also include illegal ways of making a living. Omitting criminality as a livelihood strategy would not have done justice to the underlying intention of this book. Sarah Mosoetsa (2011: 72) argues that illegal shebeens and the sexual economy are two examples of 'hidden livelihoods' that have emerged as a response to poverty. She further argues that such livelihoods are generally branded as bad and immoral, which leads to their becoming 'hidden livelihoods'. Indeed, there is a high crime rate at KwaMashu Hostel and an increasing crime rate in the rural areas (for example, livestock theft and car hijacking) and at least half the crimes are related to robbery. Discussing criminality and the sexual economy with the interviewees was a sensitive issue. However, when it comes to how people make a living, there is information that is only available to the researcher through the kind of relationships s/he develops with the interviewees, the venue used for the interview, as well as the time taken to get the answers from the interviewee (Lund 2002).

Some households concurrently use as many as five or more livelihoods strategies. An example is that of Baba Alfred Mkhize's household. He has been formally employed in an urban area for 30 years; he informally sells clothes for women and men, and jewellery and sweets every time he gets a chance, at the hostel as well as in the rural areas. He has two wives living in the rural areas who look after his livestock; they are also involved in agricultural farming and receive different kinds of social grants.

The numbers of unemployed and the casually employed are very fluid and constantly changing. A lot of women and some men whom I interviewed in the first round of fieldwork (2009) had a different employment status when I interviewed them in the second round of fieldwork (2010–11).² The diversification of livelihoods attempts to work against the effects of unemployment. In most cases, when people are unemployed, they are still able to rely on one or more of the above-mentioned survival strategies. The life story of Zethu Mkhize below accurately demonstrates these dynamics.

Zethu Mkhize is 39 years old and was born in Hlulhuwe. In Hlulhuwe, 'everybody died' – her father was the last to die after only being sick for a few hours. They believe he was bewitched. Zethu was about six years old then. She does not have any siblings. Her late husband was also from Hlulhuwe and her three children live there with their grandmother and aunts. She was first married to an Mthembu and he also died. She had four children with him, but the last-born passed away. She has also been sick, saying, 'I had a stroke.' When I interviewed Zethu on 8 May 2009, this was what she had to say:

I do not have other means of survival. I used to have a tuck shop. All the stock I had was taken away by the in-laws when they came to take my husband's stuff. Everything that I have now is all new; I bought it after everything was taken away. Now it is difficult to start it up again as I am not working and am living alone there is nobody who would look after it while I am too sick. I do not trust anyone anymore. My in-laws are so bad that when my husband passed away, I had to go back home to Hlulhuwe where the funeral was going to take place. They went behind my

back and came to the hostel to collect everything from our shack. They got the key from the person I had left it with, who is related to them.

When I talked to her again, just over a year later, on 10 August 2010, some things had changed, but her situation was still precarious:

I work as a casual at Isibaya Casino, employed by EnviroServ cleaning services. Started in July 2010, get paid R1 900 per month. This is the very first job that I have since I started living here. I got this job through my late husband's brother, who is a manager in this company. My ideal job is being a business person. I can learn sewing and become a dressmaker. What is a problem for now in acquiring my ideal job is that I do not own the place where I live. As I said, my in-laws can chase me out any time when they want to. I do not know what I would do if they were to chase me out. I would have built my own shack long ago, but now we are not allowed to build shacks anymore. I can't fight with them if they chase me out. The main problem is that I am in love with another person now . . . I would like to buy a big stove with an oven. I need it for baking. I could bake scones that I could sell to people while I am at work.

When reliance on her husband's income was not enough, Zethu opened a tuck shop. When she became too sick to run the tuck shop and her in-laws let her down and she could not 'trust anyone anymore', she looked for a job. Upon finding employment, she continued to look for other opportunities for maximising her income – by wanting to buy a stove to bake and sell scones. Zethu's story reflects the diversity of livelihood making and the many struggles that confront hostel-dwellers, especially women, as well as the strength and scope of their hopes and dreams. They are challenged not only by unemployment, but also by people who one would expect to help them. They rise and fall as they fight these battles, but one thing they do not do is give up: they keep on

having great ideas of how to make money, how to survive, how to fight unemployment.

Zethu's story also shows that urbanisation, a lack of proper housing and high unemployment rates demonstrate a high correlation with wage labour in South Africa and my research shows that rural-urban migration continues, even if employment is not available. Mark Hunter (2010: 5) argues that we have shifted from 'mostly men *earning a living* and supporting a wife to many men and women *making a living* in multifarious ways' (see also Webster and Von Holdt 2005).

It is important to note that the high unemployment rate raises the possibility that many job-seekers may not perceive the work they are doing as constituting a 'proper job' (Barker 2007: 183). So, for example, although the cigarettes and sweets that Thembeni Sikude (see later in this chapter) sells enable her to buy a loaf of bread, she does not consider it a source of income. Identifying and discussing 'coping strategies of the unemployed' (Erasmus 1999) is no longer relevant, considering the rising number of vulnerable jobs and lack of formal employment. My research has established that the same survival strategies that researchers label 'coping strategies of the unemployed' are also largely used by individuals who are employed and households with employed people, as they are by people such as Baba Alfred Mkhize above.

The diversification of livelihood strategies can be grouped according to the social class that the person or household belongs to. It is not only the working poor who diversify livelihoods, but in fact the majority of the South African population. While the working poor might have a casual job on weekdays and sell fruit and vegetables over weekends, while also paying monthly towards stokvels and *umholiswano*, they might also be relying on social grants to make ends meet.

An interesting example of multiple and diversified livelihood procurement, which crosses the lines of legal and illegal; rural and urban; men and women is a situation I experienced one day as I was conducting a focus group discussion with a group of *amathwasa* (people in the process of training as traditional healers) with their spiritual mother (*isangoma*, traditional healer) at KwaMashu Hostel. In the middle of the discussion, the eleven-year-old daughter of the *isangoma* came running in with a newspaper in her hand, looking very worried and excused herself for interrupting the discussion. She quickly handed the

newspaper to her mother, who passed it on to the most educated *thwasa* to read out the relevant article. The story that concerned all of them was about a 24-year-old *inkabi* (hitman), who been found guilty in a murder case. This man was hired by his cousin, who was a police officer, to kill his colleague (also a police officer). The *inkabi* was sentenced to 24 years in the Durban High Court. Suddenly, everybody in the room became sad and they later explained to me that the *inkabi* was a client of the *isangoma*. He came to her often, seeking traditional medicine, not only to protect him from the police, but also to make sure that he was successful. The *isangoma* went on to explain that she was partly to blame for his defeat in court because she had heard that he had come looking for her the day before the court case and she was not available. Now she was concluding that he had come to get traditional medicine to help him win the case. She was sure that if she had been there, she would have been able to give him something that could have helped him. However, the *inkabi* had confessed in court that he had killed the police officer after being hired by his cousin.³

In another example of multiple and diversified livelihoods that cut across the rural-urban divide, one day I sat down with a female interviewee from Nongoma who lived with her children and her siblings' children in her home in a rural area. She had lived there since her grandparents had passed away. I asked her about her sources of income and she only mentioned the money she gets monthly from her siblings whose children she is looking after, as well as occasional cash from her mother who works and lives in a suburb, in a cottage belonging to her employer. During the course of the interview, after noticing a couple of people coming in to buy cigarettes, I asked her about it and she told me she was the owner of a little business, which had not been mentioned before, as she did not see this as a source of income worth mentioning.⁴ People underestimate the role of the informal activities they do (Lund 2002; Erasmus 1999).

The first key argument of Part 2 is that there are collapsing livelihoods in both rural and urban areas. Below I discuss each of these in turn, focusing mainly on wage labour and the South African labour market in urban areas, and the use of land and livestock in rural areas, which has greatly declined, primarily because of the lack of an adequate water supply, human capital and government support.

URBAN AREAS: WAGE LABOUR AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET

Historically, urban areas were well known for providing wage employment for migrant workers and this was their primary appeal. Although the labour market was always segmented and gendered, Mosoetsa (2011) argues that now it has become fragile and highly insecure. She finds that in the absence of formal employment and wage income, the work done by women, mostly based in or around their households, has become critical for household survival. Authors such as Mosoetsa (2011), Bhengu (2014), Marais (2011), Hunter (2010) and Franco Barchiesi (2011) write about the crisis of the reproduction of capital in post-apartheid South Africa. The failure of the government to curb escalating rates of unemployment results in people seeking survivalist and precarious strategies in order to take care of their families. Unemployment, poverty and inequality all play a big role in the exacerbation of the HIV and AIDS problem and seem to be the strongest indicators of the ongoing social crisis in our country.

The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) is a household-based sample survey conducted by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA). It collects data on the labour market activities of individuals aged 15–64 who live in South Africa. In 2014 StatsSA reported:

The number of unemployed persons increased by 87 000 over the second quarter of 2014 to 5.2 million, the highest level since the inception of the QLFS in 2008. This resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate to 25.5 per cent . . . while the absorption rate remained virtually unchanged (in Steyn 2014).

Lisa Steyn (2014) argues: ‘More people are in fact being employed than before, but the unemployment rate has risen because the available labour force has grown more rapidly than the rate at which people have found employment.’ The report documented that compared to the first quarter of 2014, the expanded unemployment rate increased by 0.5 of a percentage point to a high of 35.6 per cent in the second quarter of 2014. During this period, five of the nine provinces recorded increases in the expanded unemployment rate. The largest increase was recorded

in Western Cape at 2.8 per cent, followed by KwaZulu-Natal at 2.3 per cent.

Almost half of South Africa's population lives in poverty and more than one-third cannot find wage work (Marais 2011: 5). Unemployment is rife among women and youth and in certain geographical areas, including KwaZulu-Natal (Barker 2007; Erasmus, 1999; see also Standing, Sender and Weeks 1996). South Africa, like other developing countries, has an excess of unskilled workers and a shortage of skilled workers (Erasmus 1999; Barker 2007).

Guy Standing, John Sender and John Weeks (1996: 103) note that unemployment is hard to define partly because it combines a condition (being without employment); a need (for work or income); an attitude (desire for paid work); a capacity (an ability to accept an opportunity, or at least, availability to do so) and an activity (searching for work). In South Africa, an unemployed person is generally taken to mean someone who is without work, is currently available for work and is seeking work or wanting to work (Barker 2007). This broad definition is usually refined in certain respects and in this regard the definition used in the QLFS is relevant: the unemployed are those people within the economically active population who (i) did not work during the seven days prior to the interview; (ii) want to work and are available to start work within a week of the interview and (iii) have taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview. The definition above is the so-called 'strict definition' of unemployment.

The limitation of this definition is that the last criterion, namely 'have taken active steps to look for work' is not always realistic in a country with such high unemployment and poverty rates. If there is a high unemployment rate, the unemployed person may have lost hope of finding a job and for that reason does not take active steps to seek employment, although they may be desperately in need of a job. In addition, active steps to seek employment may involve expenses such as transport to the nearest employment office or factory site. In such cases, an unemployed person would not take active steps to seek a job and would be regarded as 'discouraged work-seekers' (Barker 2007: 174). Expecting unemployed persons to actually look for work in order to be regarded as unemployed therefore understates the true rate of unemployment.

The everyday life experience of previously disadvantaged South Africans could tell you that even the first criterion is problematic. If one loses one's job today and is interviewed about employment status, why should one be considered employed because the reality is that one is unemployed as s/he lost their job today? It could even be the case that s/he does not know where the next meal will come from if s/he is not engaged in supplementary livelihood strategies. In most cases, even supplementary income activities suffer once wage labour stops because activities such as informal money-saving schemes and informal labour are financially supported by wage labour. Perhaps it would make more sense if unemployment were defined in the sense of not having paid work.

However, there is also what is called the 'expanded definition of unemployment', which simply excludes the third criterion – the requirement for people to look for work. Although the official definition of unemployment in South Africa is the strict definition, mentioned above, StatsSA refers to people who do not fulfil the third criterion as 'discouraged work-seekers' and they do not form part of the labour force or the unemployed. The fact that people want to work and are able to take up employment within a short space of time is regarded as an adequate indication of their need and availability to work. The number of people that could be counted as unemployed if the expanded definition is used – thus including 'discouraged work-seekers' – could be quite substantially more.

The strict definition of unemployment excludes many rural people because they find it more difficult to 'actively take steps to find a job'. The unemployment rate for black people living in rural areas ranged between 34 and 40 per cent in the 2000s. In 2005, a quarter of those unemployed had been searching for a job for one to three years; 35 per cent had been looking for three or more years; and the remaining 40 per cent had ceased looking for work because of discouragement (Altman 2007: 7; see also Marais 2011: 177). In 2007, the expanded unemployment rate stood at 38 per cent (Marais 2011).

A research study by Taryn Dinkelman and Farah Pirouz (2002) argues that the reason the expanded definition of unemployment should be taken into account is that there may be a link between the two definitions. As the economy starts creating more jobs, people who

were previously discouraged from seeking a job may actively begin to seek work. This will then move discouraged work-seekers to the ranks of the 'unemployed'. The implication is that, while the number of jobs is increasing, unemployment is also increasing. Dinkelman and Pirouz decisively reject the idea that non-searching individuals are people out of the labour force. As education improves and unemployment rates fall, people are encouraged to actively seek work because the probability of finding employment rises. This research by Dinkelman and Pirouz is an exact reflection of the everyday lives of migrant workers based at KwaMashu Hostel during the different times I conducted fieldwork for my research.

According to Frans Barker (2007), the official unemployment rate in rural areas is higher than in urban areas; however, when using the expanded definition, there is a much larger difference. This is because of the greater difficulties people in the rural areas experience in 'actively taking steps to find a job', which is required for them to be officially counted as being unemployed. Public transport and basic groceries are more expensive in the rural areas, which makes it even more difficult for unemployed people there to decide what to do with the little money available.

Unemployment in South Africa is influenced by many critical interrelated factors. It is also not a new phenomenon; it just keeps changing structure, colour and size. In terms of how it can be viewed or interpreted, the position at which the viewer or the interpreter stands is crucial. A good example of this is the specific reasons why some people choose to focus on the strict definition of unemployment when the majority of the unemployed feel that the real figure is best expressed by the expanded definition.

Going back to the apartheid era allows us to see more clearly the differences between the past and the present. Apartheid had industrial decentralisation policies, whereby companies were incentivised for being based in rural areas in order to help to control the large inflow of migrants to the cities. In line with the 1950 Group Areas Act, in the late 1950s and 1960s, the apartheid government started building townships for black people, which were approximately 20 to 45 kilometres away from the cities. In the 1970s South Africa started feeling the effects of the oil crisis in the labour market in the form of a recession, wage

price control, stagnant economic growth, high unemployment and high inflation. In the 1980s the anti-apartheid liberation movement started getting stronger, with most support coming from the trade unions. The economy began to face serious challenges in dealing with the unions that were made up of a majority of black workers. Black South Africans also continued to migrate from rural areas to the urban areas in great numbers at the promise of the dawn of the new democracy. However, the creation of employment did not keep up with the growth of the labour force. Some apartheid laws were slowly eroded until the early 1990s when apartheid was officially ended through national democratic elections. Black South Africans saw themselves as having been delivered to the world of milk and honey, just like Moses was supposed to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan; from apartheid to a democratic South Africa where everyone was equal.

This transition actually began with the Freedom Charter in 1955 and was formalised in 1994 through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Little did the majority of South Africans know that 1996 was going to mark a turnaround from all that they had hoped for, fought for and struggled for. The African National Congress (ANC) government adopted the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme. Marais (2011) notes that the plan provided no linkages between its macroeconomic adjustments and its industrial policy and it had no set redistribution targets. GEAR was set to reduce deficit; restrict state expenditure; liberalise financial controls; privatise 'non-essential' state enterprises; reduce most tariffs; seek wage restraint from organised workers and introduce regulated flexibility into the labour market. Marais (2011: 117) reports that after short-lived economic growth in 1998, StatsSA had to come up with a new methodology for presenting the reality in a 'rosier picture' in 1999. Global processes and players took great advantage of South Africa as a new playground as well as a partner. South African workers started competing harshly with workers from all over the world. Job loss was tremendous in a trend that pointed back to the 1970s and 1980s. The real shocks of neoliberalism were felt at the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s. Among many other responses from the South African public, social movements continuously sprang up like popcorn, with people toyi-toying in protest against the various disappointments and

lack of service delivery by the ANC government, which the people had voted for faithfully in 1994, 1999 and 2004. In response, the government adopted the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) economic framework in 2006.

In 2003 President Thabo Mbeki described South Africa as having a dual economy – the first economy was desirable and it was our future and the second economy was black, marginalised and undesirable. The ‘second economy’ was something that had to be eliminated. The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was said to be available to people in the second economy so that they could cross to the first economy. The second economy was seen as backward, not sustainable and totally separate from the first economy. However, there are a couple of serious points I feel Mbeki failed to consider: the role of history in how South Africans have been divided and given different privileges, depending on their race and gender; the role played by the ANC government in keeping South Africa divided after the 1994 democratic elections, through its social and economic policies; and, most important, the role played by the second economy in assisting the poor to stay alive. When casual employment, social grants and the EPWP are not enough, it is the same survivalist black and backward economy that keeps the poor keeping on.

In 2008–9 South Africa experienced a severe economic depression and the misleading nature of the official definition of unemployment was even more evident at this time. Unemployment was described as being relatively stable, yet the number of people defined as not economically active miserably grew. Most people fell into the unstable and precarious informal sector, which in turn somewhat falsely increased the employment rate. Blame for the high unemployment rate was now being shifted to low rates of economic growth, the restructuring of production in an increasingly globalised economy, a skills shortage, the increased entry of women into the labour market and population growth. Additionally, there were subsequently complains about wages being too high, productivity too low and too much red tape. However, what really seems to have been happening are conscious choices that aim at shifting the balance of power in favour of employers in line with the government’s neoliberal policies (Marais 2011: 179).

The story of unemployment, poverty and inequality continues in South Africa. What is interesting is that even when the government seems to be failing, poor South Africans continue to find ways of surviving. The urban has never been separate from the rural. This is why when urban survival strategies seem to be failing, people make a blend of rural and urban livelihood strategies, so that they can continue to survive and support their families and relatives.

RURAL AREAS: LIVESTOCK AND LAND

Livelihoods in the rural areas are influenced and informed by the various survival strategies in the urban areas. This is generally caused by the fact that most of the black people in urban areas originate in the rural areas and they maintain strong links to these areas. There are many interconnections between the people who live in these separate yet highly interrelated spaces. Furthermore, livelihoods in urban areas are strongly supported by livelihoods in rural areas, through the relations and connections people have in both these areas. Livelihoods in both these areas are therefore not independent of each other; instead they are informed by and supplement each other, especially in times of hardship. However, this does not mean that life's experiences, opportunities and challenges in these areas are the same or that they are equal.

In this section I discuss only two of the many livelihood issues that are significant in the everyday lives of black people in northern rural KwaZulu-Natal. First, I discuss the many roles of livestock, both direct and indirect, in livelihood procurement. There are five main reasons why people still keep livestock: for utility purposes; prestige and status; educating children; agricultural farming and ritual slaughter. And there are five main challenges livestock owners encounter: drought; theft; livestock diseases; lack of water supply and lack of human resources to care for the animals.

Second, I discuss the role of land in livelihood procurement. Similar to livestock, the three main reasons for declining use of land for livelihoods are: drought (land degradation), a lack of human resources to take care of the land and a lack of water supply from rain and the municipalities.

The participants in my research constantly made references to land and livestock, and these have therefore been identified as fundamental

issues from the interviews that I conducted at Eshowe, Hlabisa, Empangeni and Nongoma, as well as at KwaMashu Hostel. The main argument here is that currently the quality and the usage of land and livestock in these rural areas is greatly diminishing.

It is widely acknowledged that the main form of livelihood procurement for black people in both urban and rural areas was and still is wage labour. Land, livestock, social grants and other supplementary survival strategies are seen as playing a supportive role. From the perspective of everyday life in the rural areas, wage labour has a long history, especially the migrant labour system and rural-urban migrations. There was no wage labour for black people without the rural-urban linkages. Black people were the reserve army of labour, which was needed to come periodically to urban areas to minister to the needs of the white population. Black people were also burdened with the principal cost of reproducing that labour supply (Marais 2011: 9). Other than offering cheap wage labour, there was no official way that a black person could be in the urban areas.

The role of livestock in livelihood procurement

This section examines the role of livestock comprehensively because I understand the importance of the relationships between these animals and livelihood procurement, as well as the spiritual and traditional roles livestock plays in the everyday lives of black people. This is unlike the study by Andrew Ainslie (2002) in the Eastern Cape, which looked at cattle production and ownership in isolation from goats, sheep and other stock owned by rural people. Livestock in South Africa, especially among the black population, carries immense historical, symbolic, political and traditional meaning, which cannot be divorced from the concept of rural-urban connections and livelihood procurement. As has been highlighted above, the lives of the majority of South Africa's black population cannot be separated from the rural areas, regardless of where they currently live – whether in hostels, informal settlements, townships, city centres or suburbs. The symbolic, political and traditional meanings that are attached to the role of livestock are also continuously evolving. Other than the fact that culture changes, there are other internal and external challenges that emerge with regard to livestock

ownership, such as changing spiritual beliefs, drought, livestock theft, a lack of government support mechanisms and a shortage of people who can take care of land and livestock. While some literature in South Africa argues that rural economies are going through what has been called ‘deagrarianisation’ (Jacobs 2004), others maintain that the role of land and livestock is larger than is appreciated (Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins 2001; Ainslie 2002; James 2001).

My research found that at least two out of five households keep livestock and the primary owners of livestock are men, who are mostly heads of households. These heads of households are mostly married and retired or have become unemployed or self-employed. A few of them are still employed and based in the cities. In some households with livestock, the men have passed on and the livestock is left to the rest of the family to take care of. Men generally leave their livestock in care of their wives when they die. However, this is never directly communicated; it is only through household headship, which women normally take over after their husbands have died.

I found that for most people keeping livestock is not primarily for utility reasons, but for storing wealth. I also found that some men would only buy livestock upon retirement, when they can directly manage it themselves. However, households that keep livestock do benefit in terms of utility as well. Some of the utility purposes are: relying on the milk provided by cows or goats and using cow dung for polishing floors or as fertiliser. A few households still use milk and maas directly produced by their livestock and sometimes they sell the milk to other households. The households that sell milk are generally the ones not doing so well and they sell to households of a similar status that are without livestock. The better-off households prefer to buy milk from the shops and also do not sell the milk produced by their livestock – instead, they often give it generously to those who ask.

The idea of livestock as a measure of one’s prestige and status is declining. Historically, how much livestock one possessed was used as an indication of one’s wealth and status. There is even a saying in *isiZulu* to this effect: ‘*Ubuhle bensizwa izinkomo zayo*’, which can be translated as ‘the beauty of a man is measured by his livestock’. However, people have found different ways of measuring prestige and status these days – for example, the material used to build one’s house and the size of the

house; if one has a car and what kind it is (year and model); what schools or institutions the children attend, what kind of work they do or where they work. If you have a lot of livestock, but do not have a car and have uneducated or unemployed children, you are not necessarily recognised as a person with high status. However, it is rare that one would have a lot of healthy livestock and not have a car and or have uneducated children. There is normally a positive relationship between livestock ownership and these other factors.

I would like to use the Ndimande family to demonstrate the point about prestige and status. Baba and Mama Ndimande, both older than 50, have two sons in their late twenties. Both sons are engineers, both live in Johannesburg and are now working. The eldest son was getting married in 2015, after he had finished paying lobola and had all the relevant traditional ceremonies before the wedding. The same son has just bought a site in a rural area, where he intends to build a home for his new family. These sons drive the most expensive sports cars and they change them all the time. Baba and Mama Ndimande have professional jobs and they live with their grandchildren and some relatives' children.

Livestock owners usually keep livestock to support them when they need money to educate their children. Tertiary education is expensive, but they are able to sell a cow in order to get cash to register their children at tertiary institutions. It is not always an easy decision to sell livestock in order to do something else, but owners are often pushed by their circumstances. The main question normally is: is it worth selling a cow for that particular purpose? What results will that purpose yield for the livestock owner? Can the result be guaranteed? Educating children through selling livestock is always a risk because the parents never know if their child will pass or even complete a course of study. It is also an issue whether the child gets the job that s/he was trained for or not because employment opportunities are not always there when needed. Finally, can this child be trusted to take care of his/her own family and parents before s/he goes start his/her own family?

An interesting example on this note is Baba Gamede, a 58-year-old married man, a retrenched bus driver, with more than ten children. He used to work in eThekweni, but is now based in the rural area because of unemployment. He owns a large number of cows and goats. He was persuaded by his wife to sell a cow in order for their first-born

daughter, who had just passed Matric, to register at a tertiary institution in another province.

Men always find it easy to say children have to go look for jobs once they finish Matric or even if they don't finish school. But they fail to realise that the kind of jobs children get with only Matric does not give them a decent life. Children can't even take care of their parents with the wages they get from those kind of jobs.

This was Mama Gamede's response in a conversation we had about livestock and children's education. Baba Gamede eventually sold a cow and the daughter registered at a university. Unfortunately, the daughter fell pregnant during her first year. However, she was still able to finish the year, with her mother fully supporting her. She came home to deliver the baby, left it with her mother and went back to university. During that first year, she passed five modules and failed three. Her father was upset; he decided that he would not sell his livestock again for children to then get pregnant. He did not even understand his wife supporting the daughter after what she had done. Again, the father was saying the daughter should find a job, while the mother thought it would be wiser for her to finish her studies. When I last had contact with the family (in 2014), the daughter was in her final year and her baby was living with her mother in the rural area, while she continues her life in the city. Her father stopped paying for her in the first year and now she is supported by a loan from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. Her mother also does her best to support the daughter and the grandchild, together with her other children.

People now understand that qualifications alone do not secure a job; connections and networks are also important. Among both the unemployed and employed people I spoke to, there is general agreement that one of the most important ways of finding a job is through personal social networks, although not yet through digital/online social networks. Miriam Altman's (2007) view, which is based on Cecil Mlatsheni's (2007) study conducted in Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha, leans towards similar research findings. In Mlatsheni's study, 55 per cent of respondents found their current jobs through friends and

relatives. I would add that space and time matter greatly. In the hostel, as well as the rural areas linked to the hostel-dwellers, searching for employment through networks is the first option. As correctly argued by Johan Erasmus (1999) and Barker (2007), a large percentage of the unemployed relies on the support of family members, relatives and friends. According to Standing, Sender and Weeks (1996) some workers enter and remain in employment for longer than intended because relatives are unemployed, which implies that the unemployed relatives depend on those employed. Black people have been proven to have the highest dependency on relatives compared to other racial groupings, especially in rural households (Erasmus 1999).

The other significant use of livestock, specifically cows, is for agricultural farming – as long as there is usable land for agricultural purposes. However, as a result of declining land usage, the reasons for which are outlined in the next section, this is no longer the case in the areas studied. Instead, people use tractors to work the land. They hire a tractor for a certain sum, which is determined by the size of land that needs work. Of course, a limitation of using a tractor is that it demands that the person who needs it has cash to pay the owner. It became a point of frustration for some people who had paid for a tractor to work the land and then drought hit the area. This translates into a double loss because the person has paid for something that is not yielding a result. On the other hand, the advantage of using a tractor instead of livestock is that the tractor can work for an extended period of time. The tractor only needs a driver and diesel – although one has to pay for the driver if one cannot drive it oneself, as well as for diesel.

Finally and most importantly, livestock is predominantly used for ritual slaughter. Those who keep livestock are always proud that when something major happens (for example, a death) they do not have to run around trying to find money to buy a goat or a cow – depending on the kind of ceremony. Ceremonies such as funerals and weddings are some of the most significant functions in rural communities (and in black families in general) and they also tend to be very expensive for the host family. With regard to the payment of lobola, almost all the livestock owners (mostly elderly men) were married already. When I asked if they would give their sons their livestock for lobola, all said they would, but on certain terms and conditions: the son needs to be

somebody who ‘knows his home’ (*ingane elaziyo ikhaya*), meaning that he needs to be responsible, somebody who can be trusted to take care of his parents before he starts his own family.

When I asked Baba Phiwokuhle Dlamini why he kept livestock, he responded: ‘It is like our bank. Through land and livestock, people in the rural areas do not need money. Livestock is used for many things, traditional and ritual ceremonies, weddings, funerals.’⁵ This was an interesting response because in urban areas, most people have some kind of relationship with a bank, but in the rural areas the bank is the land and livestock for most people. One does not have to be formally employed or even be employed at all to have a relationship with a bank in a rural area. For some, the relationship is based on the fact that they get their social grants through the bank. Some people go to a bank when they are in need of a loan, while some keep their investments in the bank. This shows that there are many kinds of relations that different people have with a bank, almost like livestock. When there is a funeral or wedding in the rural areas, the families slaughter livestock and use some of their crops to prepare food for the people attending the special ceremony. However, they normally still have to go to the shops to collect ingredients they do not produce. In urban areas when there is a funeral or a wedding, people go to the bank to apply for a loan and occasionally to cash in their investment(s) in order to perform the special ceremony – with the cash they get from the bank they buy the animal(s) to be slaughtered, as well as food to be enjoyed by the people attending the ceremony.

When I had a conversation with Baba Ndimande about his livestock, he said that what he really loves about the relationship he has with his livestock is that he knows for sure that his livestock will never disappoint him, unlike people. Baba Maseko is a retired man who spent 30 years in the city as a migrant worker, leaving behind his wife and children. His children later followed him after completing Matric to look for job opportunities. With some of his provident fund/retirement money, he bought a few cows and goats, which he did not have for years, as a migrant worker. He argued that keeping livestock keeps you busy because you take them out every morning and have to bring them back every afternoon. This also keeps you healthy as it involves long walks to the field where the cows are grazing.

However, most people have been discouraged from keeping livestock because of losses they suffered during a drought. All the respondents said that livestock lost during drought had not been replaced or recovered. Some of them still keep livestock, but some failed to recover from the loss. Many are satisfied with having a limited number of livestock – for example, five cows and approximately ten goats. When they start accumulating more livestock, they sell it and keep the cash instead. Drought is clearly one of the most serious and uncontrollable challenges that face livestock owners.

Another challenge is livestock theft. I found that in some cases the people who steal livestock are known by the community and it is always difficult for people to take the law into their own hands. Community members generally feel that the police do not do their jobs and thieves never get caught. They argue that livestock theft could be easily prevented, if the government had functional policing services. A community policing forum was mentioned as a body that could play a big role in terms of eliminating livestock theft. On the other hand, the community generally felt that police are sometimes connected to the people who steal livestock, which is the reason they never get caught.

The third challenge is a lack of adequate water supply by the municipalities. Water is a critical resource for the survival of livestock and if weather conditions let people down through drought, they felt the government had to do something to help them. If there was not enough rain, but there was running water in the yards, the problem would not be insurmountable. However, if there is no rain, no running water and no dams and rivers are drying, the life of the livestock is compromised.

A further challenge to keeping livestock is a lack of human resources to take care of the animals. Barker (2007: 43) argues: 'Most people do not keep livestock anymore because household elders are working and the children go to school; as a result there is nobody who is able to look after the livestock.' This is really a big challenge because livestock need people who will actively take care of them. To keep livestock requires a healthy and fit individual who will be able to run after them if needs be.

Finally, what participants in my research complained about bitterly is the lack of government support in terms of the challenges they face as livestock owners. There are times when animals suffer from certain

diseases, which livestock owners do not generally have the means to prevent or cure. Participants felt that the government should make assistance more easily available to them. Moreover, one participant mentioned that the government had promised to compensate those who had lost livestock in the drought and he said this promise was never honoured. Although he still owned a lot of cattle and goats, he was bitter about his loss. He had gone through all the processes to prove that he did own a certain number of livestock and lost some during drought, but he never received compensation. In all the above-mentioned challenges, the government is seen as having a duty to provide a service when the community cannot help themselves.

The role of land in livelihood procurement

Much of the literature on 'land issues' in South Africa post-1994 has focused on what has been loosely called the 'land question' (Ntsebeza 2004; Ntsebeza and Hall 2007; Lahiff 2008). However, I am concerned with the role that land plays in the lives of migrants and their families on a day-to-day basis. This refers to the land they currently have, regardless of whether it is big or small, or whether it was attained through the land reform programme or not.

There are at least two main sets of discourses that argue against each other in terms of the relevance of land as a major form of livelihood procurement. One set argues that the role of land is constantly diminishing as a major form of making a living. In contrast, the other set argues that land still forms the core of livelihood procurement. Both sets acknowledge the role played by the remittances of migrant workers; again, some argue that this only makes a small mark on well-being and livelihoods, especially for people who reside in the rural areas, while others argue that migrant workers remit a reasonable amount of their income to the rural areas.

My research found that the role of land in the diversification of livelihoods is diminishing. While the significance of land was acknowledged by all participants, they all said that land is not used in the same way it was some time ago. This puts more pressure on the remittances from the migrants. Some migrants blamed everything on the laziness of those that remain in the rural areas. However, what seems to be the biggest challenge when it comes to using land as a method

of livelihood procurement is drought and consequent land degradation. Changing climate conditions can be primarily blamed for this.

Whatever position one takes in these debates, it seems important to emphasise that 'land represents a sense of security, identity and history rather than just an asset to be used for farming alone [or to be sold]' (James 2001: 93). Land remains an essential asset for those to whom it belongs. It carries a lot of sentimental and historical value, especially for migrants. People who were born in the rural areas insist on being buried in the rural areas, regardless of how long they have been based in urban areas. They also disregard the costs involved in moving a dead body from one place to the other; instead, they want to be buried in the land of their forefathers. In the rural areas, people do not have to pay for the space in which the dead will be buried. It is normally an allocated space for the people of a particular clan or tribe. The burying of a person in the same area where his or her umbilical cord was buried holds a particularly significant meaning for most of the migrants. The death and burial of a person have become important in the sense that funerals in the rural areas have become like Christmas: this is a time when all the family and relatives, who are scattered all over, reunite. Different people come from the various cities where they work to bury their friends, family and neighbours.

However, land is more than a space to bury dead people. It is a source of pride. My key informant picked up a stone as we were walking across dry fields and he asked me if I had ever seen such a stone in eThekweni. I was puzzled and said, 'Maybe, maybe not.' He said, 'No, you have never. Such stones do not exist in eThekweni.' He assured me that I could only find them at Nongoma. One of the old women we were walking with added: 'My child, these are the stones that you use to decorate with in your houses in the city. I was also helped by the white people I worked for in eGoli [Johannesburg]. They taught me a lot of things that I did not know before.'⁶

The fact that women have been migrating in increasing numbers to urban areas can also be considered a reason for the land not being used as an effective way of making a living. Women have always been the primary caretakers and users of the land because men historically migrated to the cities to look for employment opportunities. As a result of the drift to urban areas, one finds that there remain few people

interested in or fit to work the land. As is the case with livestock, if the head of the household is a man, he is the owner of the land. Land is not owned by women – for example, Gogo Mthembu was widowed in 1981, but she still refers to everything in her household as belonging to the late Baba Mthembu. Although women say, ‘*Ukhona umhlaba ekhaya*’, meaning there is land at home, practically this is something that belongs to the whole family as it benefits everyone and everybody in the household is generally expected to work on the land. This brings a sense of security and belonging to the family.

Xolile Dumakude, a 30-year-old woman from Eshowe with three children, unmarried and unemployed, lives with her sisters and their children. Their parents passed away and they do not have a brother. She told me that the livestock and land that they have belongs to her father and she cannot claim ownership, although she is the eldest living daughter. In an interview on 16 August 2010 Mama Lungile Dubazane from Nongoma said:

But other than the weather conditions, what I feel has had a big influence in diminishing the role of agricultural farming is education. Although there are still a few people here at Nongoma who, when you go to a shop, would ask you to read the price for them because they are illiterate, that is a tiny portion. The Nongoma people took education seriously because when we came it was really bad in 1960. So they got educated after that – they are the ones now filling the urban areas and the tertiary institutions. As a result now people cannot get their Matric and then come back to work the land. This is how I understand our current situation. You also cannot spend your money educating your children and then tell them to come back and work the land. This is one of the main reasons for the decline in agricultural farming. Nobody can allow her children to get education and then come back to square one like you, that’s impossible . . . But now the people have changed and the situations have changed as well. I also do not wish that my child can finish Matric or more and then come back work on the land just like me. I am sorry. I also would like

them to be like those who sit in the offices and have very cold air [air conditioner] when it is hot and very warm air [heating] when it is cold.

Mama Dubazane and her family arrived in Nongoma in 1960, while she was of schoolgoing age. She is a hard-working woman and, as will be seen below, she uses a couple of survival strategies (social grants, gardens, support from her children) to make ends meet for her extended family.

Another challenge for land usage is the lack of an adequate water supply. I found that in some rural areas people still fetch water from a river, although some have running water in their yards. Some were collecting water from a communal water tank in a central area. Most areas have big JoJo tanks, which they use to collect and store rainwater and these belong to the communities. Many households have started buying their own JoJo tanks. In times when rain is unreliable, community members find these very helpful.

Mama Dubazane: There is a garden – can you see it over the window – and it kills me as there is no water. But on the radio we are always told that one home, one garden, while they do not supply us with water . . .

Nomkhosi: So what do you do about the availability of water?

Mama Dubazane: That really negatively affects me because as it is I have to cross the road to get the water that is when the flu got hold of me. I have to get into the water and dip my bucket in it.

Nomkhosi: What would you get from there?

Mama Dubazane: It's a dam and not a tap where you easily and conveniently get water. The taps that they installed for us are useless – they are really failing to deliver water as sometimes we go for a month without having water from the tap. When there is no water from the tap, one has to see for herself where she gets water from. That is why I easily catch flu because the conditions of life are harsh.

Nomkhosi: But your garden is doing well?

Mama Dubazane: Yes I am trying, but since I made those seedbeds, the rain has not come even once because that is where we used to depend on for our gardens. Now they keep on telling us that each home should have a garden, but they do not provide us with water.

Nomkhosi: But you would recommend one to have a garden?

Mama Dubazane: Yes, a lot, because as it is I do not buy cabbage. In the next few days my onions would come all right and I am able to get my fresh food from my garden. I can go there anytime and get my carrots from it. But for the first time in my life I have been experiencing a huge challenge of rats in the garden.

Nomkhosi: What do they do?

Mama Dubazane: They eat the very same food I plant for myself and family. I have learnt a lesson that I did not know before. You know, as you are learning, I am also learning in life and my knowledge of gardening is getting enhanced. People [meaning Christians] always say, '*Izinyoni zezulu azitshali azilimi kodwa ziyadla*' [Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Matthew 6:26, New International Version]. Those people say that not knowing that we are the ones who do the work for them since they eat our food from the garden

Nomkhosi: How can you say that?

Mama Dubazane: I am telling the truth that I also did not know for a long time. People always quote that scripture, especially when there is a person who passed away.

Nomkhosi: Yes, I know that scripture.⁷

The extract above raises a couple of interesting issues about the dynamics that people face in the rural areas: the lack of an adequate water supply for the garden; the lack of relevant support from the government; ill health, resulting from the hard work involved in working the garden, including fetching water from far away and the availability of fresh vegetables from their own garden, which are expensive to buy from the

shops. Finally, as a point of immense frustration, rats are reaping from their gardens, consuming the same foodstuff they plant for themselves and their families.

In the area where I conducted my research at Nongoma, there is a general agreement that the rain has not come in the past few years as it used to. Therefore, the land, which used to be utilised for agricultural farming, has been neglected to a large extent. By 'neglected' I mean it has not been in used in any way – they have not ploughed and the remaining livestock has not been able to graze from the land. To the naked eye, it looks very dry and eroded. Ploughing fields are usually very large pieces of land. Often fields are almost joined together, while belonging to different families from the same tribal area. In this particular area the Bhengu family decided that since they do not use their fields anymore, they would sell them to people who wanted to buy land for residential purposes. When I say 'Bhengu family' I am referring to an extended family, which is a combination of more than five 'nuclear families'. This decision came to the attention of the community. The community was not at all happy; their main concern was that the fields would be sold to people who were not originally from that area. The community argued that this would be problematic because the community does not know where those people come from or the reasons for them leaving their previous place. The community's main concerns were safety and security. They felt that they could not trust people from outside their tribal area. They pointed out that since 'new people' had started moving into to their space, criminal activities had increased. Again, in this case, we can see the same attitude that hostel-dwellers have about outsiders, who tend to be seen as criminals.

A few weeks after I heard about this situation, I called Gogo Mthembu, the household head of the family that I lived with when I was at Nongoma, to check how she was doing. She told me that one of the rooms not occupied by anybody in her household was broken into and household goods were stolen, among them her valuables, which she told me during my stay she was keeping for her grandson's wedding. The thieves came during the night and stole as much as they could carry and then left without going into the main house where she was sleeping with her two grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Five of Gogo Mthembu's children had passed away a few years ago and the one

remaining is a widowed son who lives at Mandeni. She stressed that crime is rising in this area.

With regard to the selling of fields, the community gave the Bhengu family the option of building on that land for their children and grandchildren, instead of selling the space to unknown people. Discussions took place at a series of community meetings, which were facilitated by the community members, but primarily led by a retired man, Baba Siyabonga Maseko, who had worked in an urban area for almost 30 years. This man was also a political activist for a party that was not the ruling party at Nongoma at that time. After a long series of family discussions and community meetings, the Bhengu family agreed not to sell their land.

CONCLUSION

It is very difficult to separate issues of land and livestock. These two ways of procuring a living are interrelated through and through. Water supply, weather conditions and human resources are key to both of them. Livestock feed on the produce of the land; livestock are able to produce fertilisers for the land and livestock are also able to work the land to benefit the owner. Both land and livestock carry significant meaning. Their declining use is unfortunate, as these are the core types of investment for black people's everyday lives in rural areas. As has been shown above, this decline is caused by closely interrelated factors.

Unlike in the Eastern Cape, the impact of drought in KwaZulu-Natal, more specifically in the areas studied, has not only resulted in fluctuations in rainfall (Ainslie 2002), it has also reduced the level of usage of land and livestock in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The accessibility of water in the rural areas says a lot about the role that land and livestock play in livelihood procurement. It is important to understand that water is needed for consumption purposes (cooking, drinking, washing, bathing and laundry) as well as productive purposes (kitchen gardens, livestock and farming). In most households I found that people are now only able to have kitchen gardens, instead of fields, because there is not enough water to cover the hectares of land they have. One of the conclusions that can be reached is that an adequate water supply in the rural areas could uplift the lives of not only the poor, but all the people living there. Marais (2011: 159) notes the then

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism reporting that global climate change is playing a role in the local weather challenges. It was forecast that rain would decline by 5–10 per cent overall; we would experience extended summers; higher daily maximum temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns.

While water pipes are now within the reach of millions of people, many of them cannot afford the user fees (Marais 2011). The role of water supply in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal has been partly demonstrated by Mama Lungile Dubazane's interview above, which tackles the lack of basic service delivery: water. Many, unlike Mama Dubazane, have given up on agricultural farming, primarily because of water shortages and also because of health/age-related factors, to focus on different ways of making a living. For example, Gogo Mthembu is a pensioner who lives with her grandchildren, who are all attending school. She has a hectare of land that she does not use because of weather conditions and old age. She does not have livestock as it all perished during the dry seasons. Her secondary livelihood strategy is selling food at the local schools that her grandchildren go to. She has been doing this for more than ten years. She goes to the schools every morning just before tea break to sell snacks and fruit and goes back home after the lunch break.⁸

This chapter has shown that the different ways of making a living cannot be separated or distinguished according to whether one is a rural- or urban-dweller, in formal or informal employment, or engaged in legal or illegal survival strategies. It has shown the intricate relationship between rural and urban areas through a close investigation of the livelihoods of migrant workers living in the hostel. My research has found that migrants are poor and rich, landed and landless, with livestock and without livestock. Some originate from regions steeped in long migratory traditions and others from those without such traditions (Simone 2003: 5). Men and women, young and old, educated and uneducated, all primarily get involved in these rural-urban movements, migrations and interactions because they are seeking to improve and sometimes diversify their livelihoods. While interconnected livelihood struggles shape the connections and relations between the rural-urban areas, I acknowledge that not all rural-urban movements are prompted by economic necessity (labour migration); some are caused by non-

economic factors, such as health (see Andersson 2001). However, Pieter Kok et al. (2003) argue that the only real root cause of migration is economic.

Mosoetsa (2011) correctly says that the economic, environmental, social and political contexts of both rural and urban areas are dynamic, multifaceted and contradictory. I argue that the rural poor have their own set of challenges and vulnerabilities in their everyday lives. What makes it even more difficult for me to argue that either rural or urban areas are more complex is their intricate interdependence. My fieldwork has shown me that views on this issue differ from one migrant to another. It is also only fair to acknowledge that rural and urban areas are not fixed or static categories. What defines and characterises these areas keeps on changing, influencing and also being influenced by the people who straddle these areas.

NOTES

1. Webster and Von Holdt (2005: 39) define a stokvel as 'a community saving scheme common in the black community, it provides small-scale rotating pay-outs to its members'. This, as shown below, is actually *umholiswano*; a stokvel is when a group of people collect and save the same amount of money (although sometimes amounts can vary) monthly. The money is then kept in a safe place (such as a bank) and distributed to each member accordingly at the end of each year. Each person gets paid according to what s/he contributed, including interest. *Umholo* is pay/income. *Umholiswano* means helping each other to get paid. This is slightly different to a stokvel: people contribute the same amount of money every month and on a particular set day they pay the whole amount to one person, taking turns. The number of people participating begins at two and the limit is set by the group.
2. Between these two sets of fieldwork (2009 and 2010) there was a break of nine months. I spent the nine months at the University of California, Berkeley, on a Fulbright Scholarship.
3. Focus group discussion, 30 June 2010. See *Isolezwe*, 29 June 2010; *IOL News*, 25 June 2010; *The Witness*, 29 June 2010 and *Sunday Tribune*, 29 June 2010.
4. Interview with Thembeni Sikude, 15 August 2010.
5. Interview with Baba Phiwokuhle Dlamini, 27 May 2009.
6. Conversation with Mama Myeza, my key informant (Aphiwe) and myself in November 2014.
7. Interview with Mama Lungile Dubazane, 16 August 2010.
8. Interview with Gogo Mthembu, 17 August 2010.

Sexuality, Criminality and Social Grants

This chapter begins by discussing livelihood strategies that are ‘hidden’ as Sarah Mosoetsa (2011) termed it: criminality and the sexual economy. The sexual economy involves interesting ways in which people use their sexuality to make a living, not by being involved in prostitution, but using gifts to say thank you for sex or using sex to say thank you for gifts. Crime, as with the sexual economy, is never easy to discuss openly until people begin to feel comfortable in your presence and begin to open up. The third livelihood strategy I discuss in this chapter is social grants. I argue that while social grants play a key role in the lives of the beneficiaries and their households, they simultaneously play a contradictory and ambiguous role for the direct beneficiaries.

SEXUALITY: GIFTS AND SEX

The theme of ‘immorality’ looms large . . . concerning all who sought to understand why the rural order was under threat. Its prevalence suggests that female independence and assertiveness were threats not only to the economic and political order, but to the moral order as well. Women were redefining their own sexuality in ways not acceptable to those who cast them as ‘reproductive’ potential wives of respectable Bafokeng men (Bozzoli 1991: 108).

The sexual roles of individuals (especially women) in livelihood struggles are also of paramount importance to the subject of this book (see Mosoetsa 2011). Mark Hunter’s key argument is that intimacy, what he calls ‘the *materiality of everyday sex*, has become a key juncture between production and social reproduction in the current era of chronic unemployment and capital-led globalization’ (2010: 4). The sexual

economy has become an important source of survival for many women, especially young women living in hostels and informal settlements. Although married people engage in extramarital affairs, in the hostel, sexual liaisons outside marriage are very prevalent among young, unmarried women. It seems that it is easier to have many partners if you are not committed or married. In his article on 'cultural politics and masculinities' Hunter (2005b) shows how masculinities are redefined in changing material conditions. Almost three decades ago Philip Bonner (1990) pointed to the degree to which sexual relations were being transformed by market relations. The high unemployment rate has been the primary cause for the growth of the sexual economy. Declining rates of marriage, although related to unemployment, are the second most important reason for the prominence of the sexual economy. The introduction of the Bill of Rights, as well as other policies and legislation empowering women (for example, the Gender Commission and the Domestic Violence Act of 1998), can also be interpreted as having a reasonable impact (see Shefer et al. 2008). Some women have understood these structures as giving them the right to have multiple partners, a right that many men thought was theirs only (see Hunter 2010).

Gillian Hart (2002: 41) argues that tracing connections

across dispersed and differentiated sites [rural and urban areas, the hostel and the township] enables us to show how the production of commodities is inextricably linked with the production of racial, gendered and ethnic forms of difference, and how these dimensions of difference are produced in relation to one another as active, structuring forces (see also Hall 1980).

Traditionally, work done by a woman was supplementary to what the man, the head of the family, brought to the household. Today, men cannot afford to get married, let alone take care of their families, which might include illegitimate children from different women. Young women see the need to have more than one partner because one man alone cannot satisfy all their financial needs. Concurring with Hunter's (2002) findings, my research shows that a woman tends to have one

boyfriend who takes care of transport needs (this might mean he has a car or that he gives her bus fare), then she might have another boyfriend who takes care of her cosmetics and perhaps another for her wardrobe. Young women face more pressure to look fashionable than young men. Mamphela Ramphele (1993: 80) argues that ‘attractiveness becomes a matter of survival’. Because these young women living in the hostels and informal settlements often have children living at home in the rural areas, who are cared for by their parents, they are also expected to send some money for the maintenance of their children (see Hunter 2002), which they do not always do. Thus different pressures on women come from various sources.

While Paulus Zulu (1993a) and many other scholars have argued that prostitution is rife in hostels, I would like to lean more on Hunter’s (2005b) description and explanation of ‘cultural politics and masculinities’ in townships and informal settlements as he explores ‘multiple-partners in historical perspective in KwaZulu-Natal’. Having multiple sexual partners has become more prevalent and perhaps acceptable within certain social groups in South Africa and Hunter encourages us to ‘think beyond “prostitution”’. He describes the ‘close association between sex and gifts – resulting in what has been called “transactional sex” – a central factor driving multi-partnered sexual relationships’ (2002: 100). He further argues: ‘Transactional sex has a number of similarities with prostitution, i.e. non-marital sexual relationships, often with multiple partners and receiving gifts or cash as a result.’ Hunter also points out:

Non-marital sexual relationships, often with multi-partners, are underscored by the giving of gifts or cash. Transactional sex differs in important ways: participants are constructed as ‘girlfriends’ and ‘boyfriends’ and not ‘prostitutes’ and ‘clients’ and the exchange of gifts for sex is part of a broader set of obligations that might not involve a predetermined payment (2002: 101).

Some scholars have called this ‘sexual networking’. Although having multiple sexual relations might not be an ideal situation either morally or medically for men or women, in this case it can be interpreted as serving to mark the challenges to the ‘dominant masculinities’. This is

an important point because men have long been known to be *amasoka* (singular *isoka*: a smooth talker/operator; somebody who has many girlfriends at one time) and it has always been acceptable and even celebrated by African societies (see Hunter 2002).

There is a general agreement among men and women that most of these relationships are characterised by mutual abuse and that both partners derive whatever benefit they can, while they can. The benefit for men is mainly that of having a domestic slave to attend to their laundry, cooking and cleaning, in addition to providing an outlet for their sexual needs (Ramphela 1993: 78; see also Hunter 2006). Sexualities are unstable and are produced through men and women's practical engagements with shifting economic, cultural and spatial conditions and relations (Hunter 2002: 101). Although most of the women in informal settlements come from the rural areas, on their arrival, they go through a process of adjustment, the levels of which differ from one individual to another and from one context to another. It can be argued that the location, context and geography of the informal settlement play a significant role in the reconstruction of gender identities. Additionally, it is important to note that those in informal settlements are not only rural migrants, but also those who have moved from the townships to live in informal settlements. This means that the behaviours found there will surely differ; they will converge and diverge at particular points.

Men and women both use each other to release stress; they do not always get into relationships because of love. While *ukuqoma* (for a woman to choose or accept a lover, after being proposed to) can be understood as a survival strategy, as documented by Hunter, in addition, I understand it as an action of wanting to belong; it is a search for a sense of belonging. *Ukuqoma* could also be validated as a social/leisure activity. Although here *ukuqoma* is explained in terms of economics, it is relevant to look at it from a social point of view as well. For example, a lot of people in my research population said that they have seen women who have live-in partners who are working, while the women are unemployed. While the partner is at work and she has finished doing her house chores, she finds herself a boyfriend to keep her busy. With this other boyfriend, she might engage in different and interesting activities compared with the one who works during the day, comes back in the evening and needs food and rest. Interestingly, although this was attested

to by a large number of men and a reasonable number of women, it was difficult to find a woman who would confess to doing such a thing.

Mbali Zikode, an unemployed young woman who lives in an informal settlement with her friends, told me that she has a fiancé (somebody who has started the lobola process); he works in Johannesburg and lives in Pongola. They only see each other a few times a year, but he calls her often. After being in the hostel for few months to seek work, she has *qoma'd* another man who lives at the hostel. She said she did not do this for money, although the man partly supports her financially, but her fiancé also sends her money at the end of every month.

Positioning multiple-partnered relations as one element of 'distinct and internally coherent African system of sexuality', influential demographers have stressed the prevalence of such relationship patterns in African society and their embeddedness within its underlying social structure (Caldwell, Caldwell and Quiggin 1989: 187; see also Hunter 2002). On a deeper level I want to argue that there has always been a strong link in African societies between gifts and sex. When one examines the processes that take place between two people and broadly two families, what is called the lobola process; it is basically a long series of exchanges of gifts from one family to another, including gifts from the groom to the bride and vice versa. These families are brought together by two people who intend committing themselves to marriage. Traditionally the couple is allowed to engage in sexual activities after the African wedding service. However, Hunter (2002) argues that often through brutal and economically coercive relationships, women have access to power that is not allowed by the lobola process, which is based on male-to-male transactions.

To be more specific, the difference is that in the past, for a woman to have more than one sexual partner was an abomination. If women had multiple sexual partners, they had to keep it a secret; once it was known they were called derogatory names, such as *isifebe* (bitch). A man, in contrast, might be known as an *isoka*, which is more complimentary. Today more women are engaging in multiple sexual relationships and they do not always feel shy about it; some go to the extent of justifying it as a survival strategy (see Hunter 2002). These changes introduce a new set of concepts, dimensions and interpretations. Hunter (2006: 147) argues that we should not look at these engagements as prostitution or

as short-term market exchanges since they often stretch over time and space in many important ways.

One fact that has established itself quite clearly is that migrants, especially women, are not passive victims of processes, but are social actors, drawing on personal and cultural resources to shape their choices and to structure their lives (James 1999). Hunter (2002: 101, 2006) further argues that women approach transactional relations not as passive victims, but in order to access power and resources in ways that can both challenge and reproduce patriarchal structures. This has been 'a confirmation of the assertion that the "domestic struggles" within a society are crucial determinants of the patterns taken by its response to economic hardship (they are, of course, not the only determinants)' (Bozzoli 1983: 153).

Hunter (2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2006) has put forward a number of reasons why marriage rates are declining in South Africa. Men find it difficult to afford lobola and *ukwakha umuzi* (building a home). Being 'away from home' also has a lot to do with it. People, perhaps especially women, tend to behave differently in urban areas from the way they behave when they are at home. For example, some go to church back home, but not when they are in the hostel. Some women do not wear trousers at home, but they do at the hostel. Most have a responsibility to their children (and younger siblings perhaps) in the rural areas, but they do not generally have this at the hostel. Most importantly, most of their parents are not in the hostel. Some find it easy to have multiple sexual partners in the city, although this is something they would rarely do back home in the rural areas. All these differences have an impact on the individual. This person becomes a changed being, which results in changed actions and reactions. S/he changes the role that s/he plays in the hostel setting and in the village; this impacts on the social relations that s/he has in both places. S/he redefines his or her sexuality, gender roles and relations in the process of moving back and forth between the two.

CRIMINALITY

Deteriorating economic conditions, particularly increasing unemployment, have precipitated a struggle for scarce resources and desperate individuals have resorted to crime and violence (Zulu 1993a). Further-

more, the employment status of a person is not the only determinant of whether one is successful or not. There are illegal survival strategies that people use – sometimes these are combined with legal strategies and sometimes they are used in isolation. This is when one is generally known as an *isigebengu* (criminal), for example, an *inkabi* (hitman).

Baba Bandile Makhathini is from Empangeni. I was lucky because I got an opportunity to interview his son at the hostel, then his two wives in the rural area and then back to him at the hostel. He can be said to have four wives: the first is deceased, the second and third are present and the fourth left after having two children with him. The third wife has two children and the second wife has only one child. The first wife had one child. I interviewed the two wives together in their family home at Empangeni and they told me that there are four of them, counting the late wife and the wife who left. Baba Makhathini came to the hostel when he was between eighteen and nineteen years old, through his neighbour who worked in Durban. He started by working as a ‘garden boy’ for eighteen months, before he started long-term employment. He has been working for the same company since 16 November 1966 and is approaching retirement. At the hostel he lives in a blockhouse with one other man and also has a shack close by, which has a couple of rooms with separate doors. His son lives next door to him in a blockhouse with three other men who all come from the same area as the Makhathini family. Below is an excerpt from an interview I had with him on 16 January 2011:

Baba Makhathini: I start work at eight.

Nomkhosi: Where do you work?

Baba Makhathini: Macsteel at Isipingo.

Nomkhosi: What form of transport do you use?

Baba Makhathini: A train.

Nomkhosi: I used to hear that there are a lot of criminal activities in trains. Since you have been taking the train to work for decades, would you say that you have noticed anything with regard to crime?

Baba Makhathini: We have had a lot of that in trains.

Nomkhosi: Is it better now?

Baba Makhathini: I have never witnessed violent and criminal acts, but there were times when we got on the train in the morning to go to work and we would find pools of blood on the seats and floors and we would know that people were being attacked. But luckily I have never had to work in the night, to experience those things.

Nomkhosi: So you would say crime mostly happens in the night?

Baba Makhathini: Yes, especially when people sit scattered and not in groups in the train. Then started the issue of preaching in the trains. This is the thing which I feel reduced the crime rate in trains.

Nomkhosi: How? Is it because people hear the Gospel and repent or that they are sitting in big groups?

Baba Makhathini: The fact that they sit in big groups. But I would also say that it depends on a person's luck because as I said it has never happened to me or in front of me. You know, even here at the hostel, *kuyabulawana stelek* (people kill each other too much), but again I have never witnessed those acts. But it happens that as I walk to the train station early morning, I would hear somebody screaming for help.

Nomkhosi: What time do you leave the hostel to go to the train?

Baba Makhathini: Between 4.10 and 4.15 a.m.

Nomkhosi: And you only start work at 8 a.m.?

Baba Makhathini: Yes.

Nomkhosi: How many trains do you take?

Baba Makhathini: Two.

Nomkhosi: You take four hours to get to work every day, whereas you could take 30 to 45 minutes by car?

Baba Makhathini: The thing is when we change trains from one to the other we need to wait for a while in the train station for the second train.

Nomkhosi: But 4.10 a.m. is still too early!

Baba Makhathini: It takes getting used to this routine. There are people who go to the same workplace, but leave later than this time and they still get to work on time.

Nomkhosi: What time do you reach work?

Baba Makhathini: At 6.30 a.m.

Nomkhosi: 6.30 a.m.? But what time did you say you started work?

Baba Makhathini: 8 a.m.

Nomkhosi: And what do you do all this time?

Baba Makhathini: I get there and read my newspaper and at 7.30 a.m. most people come in to work and then I would go to the kitchen to drink tea and at 7.50 a.m. go to my workstation and get ready to start working. I don't get tired from sitting and waiting at work because I am used to it . . . As I told you before the hostel was really like home. Alcohol was never allowed in our rooms, it could only be consumed at the beer hall. People started sneaking it into our rooms and selling it to each other in the rooms until that became a norm. There was a white person who used to sell alcohol that was called *ubhokweni* – it used to be very strong. One would get drunk from it and not even know where one's room is located and end up sleeping on the pavement. As I said to you, we used to respect each other very much in this place. When people found somebody drunk on the road, they would take him and send him to his room. They would not take or steal anything from him – no matter how much money he had, they would not take it, but bring him back to his room and report to other men in the room what possessions they found on him. This thing [crime] started later when women came in and this place is now full of tsotsis.

Nomkhosi: Can you say that women are tsotsis?

Baba Makhathini: It's not them directly. People confuse things. But that's how respect got finished. This place became a jungle and there is no trace of *inhlonipho* [respect].

Crime is obviously a big problem at the hostel and it is highly gendered. The issue of criminals and their activities was discussed a lot by the migrant workers, who argued that criminals are people from the

townships, mostly Inanda and Ntuzuma, who come to the hostel through their relations with women living in the informal settlements of the hostel. The African National Congress (ANC) councillor I interviewed on 26 November 2011 said:

Criminals use *imijondolo* [shacks] to hide. People who have money live in *imijondolo* because that is where they hide. Not long ago, we found a car that was hijacked there and it was hidden in such a way that it was difficult to find it. There is a long distance between the main road and those *imijondolo*. People die in that place; there are also a lot of *izinkabi* [hitmen] at the hostel. I always contest the idea that the high crime rate at the hostel is caused by the high rate of unemployment. I don't believe that. I always say that when our parents raised us, they were basically poor, but they never turned to crime. I think it is the lifestyle that people choose for themselves. They want lives that they cannot afford or qualify to live. People basically want to live lives that are fake and not theirs.

Sometimes when migrants realise that some of the people who do crime at the hostel are mostly young men who come from the rural areas, they argue that this is caused by the fact that migrants do not come from the same place of origin. There is an assumption that if people all came from the same area, there would not be a high crime rate, as they would be held together by mutual relations and interests. Basically what makes the hostel-dwellers and the councillors feel better is the knowledge that 'it is the other people and not us who are doing crime'. This 'othering' can be geographical, generational, political or any other category that confirms difference. On the other hand, Ari Sitas's work shows us that misdemeanours were there even in early days of the formation of the hostels:

It was this intensification of 'illegality' at the hostels that brought about its obverse: an intensification of 'blackjack' [hostel police] raids to stamp it out . . . On the average

'blackjack' raids happened two to three times a week. For a short period in 1977 and 1980, all the inmates reported raids almost every night. Feelings of discontent exploded into large meetings of hostel workers that debated ways and means of stopping the blackjacks (Sitas 1983: 264).

Hostel-dwellers I spoke to said that young men are tempted into becoming *izinkabi* in order to get paid at the end of the day.¹ 'For many, "robbing the rich" has become the only means of survival' (Barker 2007: 172; see also Erasmus 1999).

Below is an example of how the ANC councillor used 'othering' to explain the crime at KwaMashu:

Although I might not know the crime statistics of the hostel because the police sometimes refuse to release them, but KwaMashu as a township, I know. The AIDS activist, Gugu Dlamini, who was killed, it was reported all over the news that she was killed at KwaMashu only because she disclosed her HIV status and she wanted to live a positive life that she is HIV positive. But the truth is, Gugu Dlamini was not killed at KwaMashu, she was killed in the outskirts, the periphery of KwaMashu, she was killed at KwaMancinza, which is not the township, it is a squatter settlement outside the township. But it was reported that this thing happened at KwaMashu. Statistically, this township has the highest rates of murder, for two consecutive terms when police released their statistics. But when we check why and where in KwaMashu, we find that it is at the KwaMashu Hostel and secondly at Besters area. Crime is really rife at the KwaMashu Hostel more than any other area. Even when car hijacks of cash-carrying vehicles take place, they get planned at the KwaMashu Hostel. Police officers from the organised crime unit always track them down to the hostel. The petty crimes are also more prevalent at the hostel. I once called a meeting with KwaMashu section B community, where the IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party] councillor and his committee and the police were present,

we gathered to discuss the problem of crime. The section B community proposed that I put a fence around the hostel because the people who brought all the trouble are the hostel-dwellers. I did not take that proposal seriously because it felt that they wanted a Berlin Wall, which was also demolished. The fact that ward demarcations have been like this is also partly to re-integrate societies that are doing well and the ones which are not doing well. So, in short, yes, we have high rates of crime at the hostel, and we cannot control it at the moment because of the congestion.²

Hostel-dwellers also made links between alcohol abuse and criminality:

The idea of having many beer halls in the hostel is a problem, but what is even worse is having these places opening till late. What criminals do is going to the beer halls in the night, drink a lot of alcohol while passing time for people to fall asleep, then in the early hours of the morning, they would go and do crime in the different places.³

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Social grants have come to play a significant role in the lives of poor South Africans. Although not everyone has access to social grants, most households have at least one person who receives some form of grant. South Africa does not have a universal social security framework; instead, it has what is referred to as a comprehensive social security system in the form of means-tested payments to protect particular stages of the life cycle and certain contingencies. Social assistance means a grant in terms of the Republic of South Africa Social Assistance Act of 2004. A grant means income support awarded to an eligible beneficiary. A beneficiary means a person who receives social assistance. The table below shows the different grants and the amounts that the beneficiaries receive. These amounts were effective from 1 April 2017.

Grants and amounts

SOCIAL GRANT	AMOUNT
Old persons grant (old age grant)*	R1 600
Disability grant	R1 600
War veteran's grant	R1 620
Grant-in-aid	R380
Child support grant	R380
Foster child grant	R920
Care-dependency grant	R1 600

* If the beneficiary is more than 75 years old, s/he receives another R20 per month.

Basic income grant debate

A universal income grant, known as the basic income grant (BIG) or 'solidarity grant' was proposed in the late 1990s, leading to the formation of the BIG Coalition in 2001. This coalition was formed to develop a common platform among advocates for a universal income grant and to mobilise popular support for the introduction of the grant. This proposal was largely endorsed and actively campaigned for by, among others, a wide range of civil society organisations, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the Taylor Committee of Enquiry for Comprehensive Social Security (Standing and Samson 2003). A grant was proposed that would be paid monthly to every individual as a right of citizenship, without any form of means test. It was proposed that it start at R100 per person per month. Basically this was understood as a 'right to income security' (Standing and Samson 2003: 3). BIG advocates departed from section 27 (1) c of the Constitution in proposing and substantiating the BIG. This section argues that 'everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance'. In section (2) it says: 'The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights.' The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) is said to be one of the most progressive in the world (Peberdy 2008; Shefer et al. 2008), protecting the human rights of all, regardless of race,

gender, sexuality, nationality or immigration status. It obliges the state to take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights.

While the South African government commissioned the Taylor Commission to research this issue and make recommendations, it did not accept the BIG proposal, although the Commission recommended that BIG be rolled out because of the need to reduce poverty. The government used a couple of arguments to dismiss the BIG proposal. The first was that rolling out BIG would be expensive and the state could not afford it. Second, the state was concerned with the grant not being properly targeted since it was supposed to be universal. Third, BIG was criticised on the assumption that it would become ‘uncontrollable with benefits rising as a result of populist political moves’ (Standing and Samson 2003: 13). Fourth, there was a concern that BIG was a ‘disincentive to labour’: handing out the grant to everyone without their doing anything in return would create lazy citizens. Finally, it was argued that ‘the payment of a guaranteed solidarity grant to workers would allow employers to lower wages and increase “exploitation” of workers’ (14). Contrary to these five points, Guy Standing and Michael Samson documented five advantages of BIG for South African society: advantages for children; women; the unemployed; social equity and for the economy.

While I was among the BIG critics in the mid-2000s, I must acknowledge that after conducting this rich historical and critical ethnography on migrants and their livelihoods in KwaZulu-Natal, I have seen that social grants play a bigger and more important role than I previously understood (see Xulu 2005). My ethnography has proved to me the relevance of situating yourself in the circumstances that you are studying for three main reasons. In my 2005 journal article I argued that BIG would promote a dependency culture, just as the migrant labour system made black people depend solely on wage labour. Second, I argued that South Africa has never been a welfare state and that welfare states have faced major challenges throughout the world. Third, I argued that getting people to work and giving them the means to be active and productive should be a priority. I argued that more could be done with state interventions such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Lastly, I maintained that the EPWP cannot simply be substituted by a BIG, especially since it has been

argued that the welfare state is an ineffective method for addressing mass unemployment and extreme poverty and is responsible for many challenges in developing countries.

Social grants and the gender dimension

The availability of social grants, especially to young, rural, unemployed, unskilled women, has enabled them to become more mobile than in the past. Social assistance in South Africa has a gendered dimension and, as a result, it tends to have a substantial positive impact on household poverty (Mosoetsa 2011; Wittenberg and Collinson 2007; Burns, Keswell and Leibbrandt 2005; Posel 2001), especially the old age pension and the child maintenance grant. With regard to the old age pension grant, Justine Burns, Malcolm Keswell and Murray Leibbrandt (2005) argue that the different age eligibility and the mortality rates for men and women ensure the grant reaches more women than men. However, the amendment of the Social Assistance Act in 2010 saw men aged 63–4 qualifying and receiving an old age pension for the first time. The full implementation of the Act ensured that from 2010 onwards, men also receive an old age pension when they turn 60. Before that, male migrants were only able to start receiving their pensions after they had retired (between ages 64 and 65) and were either in the process of going back to the rural areas or were already based there. At this stage it is not clear what positive effects this amendment has had on household members or whether the existing trends in social grant usage will change.⁴

The child support grant continues to be one of the most widely accessible social grants.⁵ It is thus seen as a key aspect of the South African government's poverty alleviation programme (Burns, Keswell and Leibbrandt 2005). It is widely accepted in South Africa that it is women who assume the primary responsibility for care of children; as a result they are the ones who normally are in a position to apply for and qualify to receive the child support grant. It is also a cause of tension between men and women. My research has shown that many young mothers do not always use the child support grant to take care of the needs of their children; instead they use it for their own personal needs and the burden of childcare is often left to the grandparents (see Mosoetsa 2005, 2011; Burns, Keswell and Leibbrandt 2005). This is an excuse sometimes used by men not to support their children.

During my interviews, women acknowledged the huge role played by social grants in their households (see also Mosoetsa 2005, 2011). Men, on the other hand, claimed not to know the amount of the social grants received by women and what they used them for. Men also claimed that they do not reduce or limit the amount they remit home because of the social grants being received by women.

Social assistance has been seen by some scholars (Meth 2004; Standing and Samson 2003) as creating conducive conditions for people to go out and seek employment. They use this income to go to different places to seek work and sometimes to prepare the relevant documents for a job search. Women are able to travel from rural areas to urban areas and vice versa, relying on this income for bus fares and later for livelihood while unemployed in urban areas.

The social grants that seem to be playing the most influential role in terms of the changes in gender, generational relationships and households are the child support grant and old age pension (see Mosoetsa 2005, 2011). The foster care and dependency grants seem to be secondary. Having access to these grants has given women a degree of power within their households, which most of them did not have before: the power to purchase, to make decisions and the power to change their life circumstances. While the availability of these grants makes it easier for women to attain some level of power, it also sometimes makes their burden much heavier. A grant that normally belongs to an individual does not become an individual's business, but the household tends to benefit from it in one way or another. As Mosoetsa (2005, 2011) and Burns, Keswell and Leibbrandt (2005) put it, where there is a pensioner, household sizes tend to increase and there is an increased burden of care of grandchildren. The middle generation is forced to migrate in search of work or have passed away due to HIV and AIDS. Unemployed children tend to attach themselves to the pensioner of the household as part of their survival strategy. In addition, the elderly (especially women) also tend to suffer from domestic violence and become vulnerable to criminals because of their monthly pensions (Mosoetsa 2005, 2011). Burns, Keswell and Leibbrandt (2005) argue that the households that mainly rely on social grants are not only black and poorer, they are also larger in size. Mosoetsa (2011: 26) explains:

The extension of the size of the extended family is not viewed as a strategy for survival by most people. It is viewed, rather, as a natural phenomenon. Cultural or traditional values are generally cited as the reason for accepting additional household members. Women consider it as part of their extended parental responsibilities.

The issue of social grants is another reason for women to go to urban areas to seek the Department of Social Development (DSD) services provided by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). As from 1 April 2006, the responsibility for the management, administration and payment of social assistance grants was transferred to SASSA. People often go to the urban areas because they believe the services are more effective and efficient than in the rural areas. For some of them, the DSD/SASSA offices are too far from where they reside, there are always long queues and the service is poor. Once they have accomplished what they came for, they often stay in the urban areas, finding new reasons to remain there. Perhaps one of the most important things that can bind them together is the mere fact of being 'women'. They are regarded as a 'vulnerable group', mainly because of high HIV and AIDS infection rates, unemployment or informal employment, as well as the patriarchal nature of our society and the resultant effects, which are gender-based violence and poor reproductive health.

The paradox of social assistance

Social assistance can be said to have ambiguous effects on the changes taking place with regard to gender relations, household sizes and generational relations (specifically between parents and children of prime age). Firstly, there is the issue of the shrinking size of households. This is associated with the fact that young women are now more mobile as a result of the financial muscle obtained through social grants. They go out and forge nuclear families and sometimes are forced to fall back on single-parent households, until they return back home because of pressing situations, such as ill health and/or financial reasons (see Mosoetsa 2005, 2011).

Second, there is the issue of what Mosoetsa (2011) calls 'clustering'. This is where family members come together in order to benefit from

each other in times of difficulty. Belinda Bozzoli's research in the early 1980s already showed that there was a time when African families, specifically women who had moved to the cities, had to go back home to rely on the pensions of their mothers to take care of themselves, as well as their children (1991: 239). This shows that clustering as a result of the grant(s) is not new; it is a continuum that shifts in changing times and circumstances. Bozzoli wrote at a time when the unemployment rate was not as high, the child support grant in its current shape and amount was not in place, the scale of women's migration was not the same and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and community residential unit (CRU) housing were not in effect. Households are clearly being reshaped and recomposed all the time. Transitions occur across all types of households (Wittenberg and Collinson 2007).

Third, families in the rural areas reported that some family members 'only know *ugogo* [or *umkhulu*, grandmother or grandfather] when she has to get the grant at the end of the month'. This means that the elderly do not get support and love from family members on a day-to-day basis, but only when they get their payment. These family members know that they will get some cash from the elderly when they get their grants. Fourth, abuse and gender-based violence have been directed at the recipients of social grants. This comes from sons and grandsons and sometimes daughters and granddaughters who demand a share, if not all of the grant. Clearly the role of social assistance is praiseworthy, but it must also be acknowledged that it also plays a contradictory and ambiguous role in the lives of the beneficiaries and households as a whole.

Below is an example of the role played by the social grant in the life of Mama Lungile Dubazane from Nongoma. She is a widow who lives with her grandchildren, while their parents are in the urban areas, some working, some searching for work and some attending tertiary institutions.

Nomkhosi: Do these children get social grants?

Mama Dubazane: Yes.

Nomkhosi: Who gets those social grants?

Mama Dubazane: I get grants for three and the other two get paid to their parents.

Nomkhosi: Do those parents give you that amount when they get it?

Mama Dubazane: Yes, they do that a lot and they give over and above the social grants. They are not the kind of children who get grants and spend them in their own things; they bring it to me and even give me more when they have casual jobs.

Nomkhosi: Do they have a set amount that they give to you every month or they give you any amount?

Mama Dubazane: They give me any amount. There is no set amount. I am not somebody who would ask or demand money from them; they see or decide for themselves on that issue. But there is oldest who is struggling with piece jobs and the youngest one is not working, as I said.

Nomkhosi: That means that is just two main people who really give you money?

Mama Dubazane: Yes, or I can say there is actually three of them.

Nomkhosi: Do they give you separately or together?

Mama Dubazane: They give me separately, any time when one has it, s/he gives it to me, unless they have some pressures on their side. But they are not children who do not pay attention to this household; they take care of it.

Nomkhosi: How much do they normally give you?

Mama Dubazane: No, it comes to a thousand rands or more – it depends on when they give me . . .

Nomkhosi: Do you get a pension?

Mama Dubazane: Yes.

Nomkhosi: How do you use the grants?

Mama Dubazane: Grants and pension all come in one amount, then I buy all household needs from that amount.

Nomkhosi: Which includes food?

Mama Dubazane: Yes. And clothes and save in case there is a health-related emergency.

Nomkhosi: What do you do with the money you get from your children because you are able to cover the household needs with social grants and pension?

Mama Dubazane: That is never enough; there is always a need for cash, although I said they give me cash, but I cannot say that it satisfies me, the rand has no value. It would have been better if the government had made different retail stores for different people. For example, the people who get paid the minimum of R5 000 should have their own shops that they buy from and people who get more money should buy from more expensive shops, those who get R20 000 a month. In my case I buy Omo [washing powder] from a shop together with a *squmama* [wealthy person] who gets R20 000 a month, that is not right. The government was wrong on that, he did not think properly on that issue. There should be certain programmes which take care of the poor people and people who are rich and those who are in the middle and those who are poor should not all be eating from the same pot. Because at the end of the day, although I get grants, pension and the support from children, I still do not feel happy about my situation. As it is, you would not be sitting in that kind of a sofa if the rand had any value. Suddenly one hears that it has lost value. One should be able to afford all basic needs and still have a little money saved aside. Sometimes it happens that one has flu and one cannot even go to the doctor because she does not have money; this is all about the value of the rand. As for me, there is not even hand work that I can make [to sell] because I am *gugile* [very old] now. I normally try to do *amacansi* [traditional mats] and find that within a short while I feel back pain.⁶

While Mama Dubazane receives her old age grant, as well as the child support grants for some of her grandchildren, her story not only shows the role of social grants across rural-urban connections. She is also involved in informal/self-employment; she also uses land and really believes in its capacity to curb poverty, provided that the government supplies the relevant services to make life manageable for people who engage in agricultural farming livelihoods. Most important, it shows the value of wage labour, through the remittances from her children

based in the urban areas. However, it also shows the paradox of social assistance: as a grandmother, she is given the job of looking after her children's children. Although some of the children give her money, she still has to supplement the child support grants with her old age pension and other sources of income and sustenance.

CONCLUSION

Rural-urban migration remains important and plays a crucial role in the diversification and multiplication of livelihood strategies of migrants. In this chapter I recognise the underlying causal processes and point out that such processes never operate in isolation; for it is precisely their operation in varying combinations that produces variety and uniqueness. Mostly, young men and women have voluntarily or involuntarily adapted and are learning to become comfortable with a way of life in which gender equality is forged (sexually), and traditional and stereotypical ideas of gender roles are challenged. Criminality is an everyday life experience for the hostel-dwellers. It is seemingly inescapable in these dire and vulnerable hostel living conditions. I also demonstrate the role of social grants as a survival strategy for many poor black women and the benefits and challenges this creates in their lives.

NOTES

1. Interview with Londiwe Mgaga, 21 July 2009 and 28 December 2010.
2. Interview with an ANC councillor, 26 November 2010.
3. Focus group discussion with women, 21 January 2011.
4. Initially, in order to apply for the older person's grant, the applicant had to be a South African citizen/permanent resident; be resident in South Africa; if a male, be 63 years or older; if a female, be 60 years or older; and their spouse had to comply with the means test. S/he could not be cared for in a state institution or be in receipt of another social grant for him- or herself. As a way of bridging the gendered dimension of the social assistance, SASSA has now said: 'All South African males aged 61 and 62 years will qualify for Grant for Older Person from April 2009; males aged 60 years will qualify for Grant for Older Persons from April 2010; provided they meet the above criteria' (<http://www.sassa.gov.za/index.php/social-grants/grants-for-older-persons>).
5. In order to apply for the child support grant, the applicant must be a South African citizen or permanent resident; both the applicant and the child must reside in South Africa; the applicant must be the primary caregiver of the child/children concerned;

the child/children must be under the age of fifteen; the applicant and spouse must meet the requirements of the means test; the applicant cannot apply for more than six non-biological children and the child concerned must not be cared for in state institution (<http://www.sassa.gov.za/index.php/social-grants/child-support-grant>).

6. Interview with Mama Lungile Dubazane from Nongoma, 16 August 2010.

PART 3

Producing Perplexity

The next few chapters concentrate on the ‘cultural formations’ approach, which forms the basis of this book in terms of how the research was conducted. This approach argues that ‘people [are] more than pieces of chalk, more than purveyors of stories or data. They [are] *also* a revolutionary force and they [need] to be studied’ (Sitas 2000: 879). The real value in working with and through this approach is that it applies a sociology that is in dialogue with communities and their cultural formations, a dialogue that involves a joint project of discovery. As a young, black and female researcher studying hostels and migrant workers, I have seen great value in taking seriously my own time-space, class, gendered, generational and cultural positioning, which have been further enriched by my intellectual formations. Understanding the narratives of the migrants became an imperative to understand their ways of life and the patterns of community they exist in.

Through using the cultural formations approach in Chapter 6, the production of space in Chapter 7 and a critical discussion of housing and household dynamics in Chapter 8, Part 3 aims to show how the perplexity introduced in introduction and woven throughout this book is being continuously produced and reproduced by both internal and external forces at KwaMashu Hostel. Chapter 7 deals comprehensively with the issue of gender. This is the largest dichotomised and politicised issue at the hostel. The process of the production of gendered spaces at the hostel is as old as the formation of the hostel itself; however, there are ongoing and new forces at work, which really make the hostel a space of perplexity. Through focusing on the household, in Chapter 8 I zero in on the most commonly shared space by migrant workers. This chapter presents debates on the issues of households and tries to link these to the everyday lives of rural-urban migrants based at KwaMashu Hostel.

Cultural Formations

While I was conducting the interviews during the first and the second phases of my fieldwork, I met a lot of migrants who, on greeting me, would ask a very interesting question: ‘*Kukephi ekhaya?*’ (Where is your home), actually meaning, ‘Where is your homestead? (*Lapha kwasala khona inkaba yakho* – where your umbilical cord remains). Of course, they included the latter part of the question either if they saw that I took time to respond and looked confused or if I provided a ‘wrong answer’, such as, ‘I am from Inanda Township.’ These migrants were convinced that there is no African person who belongs in a township; one’s roots have to be in a rural area. Obviously, the meanings they construct about the townships are totally different to the meaning the youth (including myself) have constructed about what the township is, about culture, belonging and identity.

Clearly, for these migrants ‘home’ ‘does not merely signify a geographical area in the country whose inhabitants, when in town, could share resources and provide material and social benefits for each other. It also embodied a wealth of local knowledge about the pre-colonial past, about the significance of that past for present-day migrant experience’ (James 1999: 22). A home, for migrants, is not only about one’s current location, but also signifies an important part of one’s life, which is the beginning and the end, birth and death. Traditionally in rural areas, upon one’s birth, some part of the umbilical cord is taken and buried somewhere near the homestead. It is usually the same ground where many migrants want to be buried; even after settling well in urban areas, they insist on returning home to be buried.

Cultural formation is a form of identity and gives a sense of belonging (Sitas 1983: 37).¹ Power, race, gender and class are all scripted within people’s cultural formations (Sitas 2004). According to Harri Englund (2002: 137):

To admit that one does not have a *mudzi* [homestead] is to reveal a grave social predicament. Social as much as spatial demarcation is at issue; the above question inquires into the stranger's sense of belonging. The city is rarely thought to provide an adequate place for belonging, and even those who have lived most of their lives as labour migrants, or who were born abroad as the children of labour migrants, usually have no difficulty in stating their village and district of origin.

In terms of my personal-professional experience referred to above, together with the quote by Englund, it is clear that sometimes it is not about an individual who might be born in an urban area, but it is the roots of the family, the collective, that matter the most. For example, in my case, my father is from Mtubatuba, which is in the greater Zululand area, where most of the migrants I interviewed also come from. However, I was born in McCord Hospital in Durban and I grew up in Inanda/Ntuzuma Township. But the migrants expected me to say that I am from Mtubatuba because that is where my father is from. So, throughout the time I spent living at the hostel, I changed the way I responded to such questions. This is part of the reason why I believe the concept of family (meaning much more than mother, father and children among African people) is still very strong. For migrants interviewed for this research, it did not matter how long they had lived in an urban area, they still insisted on being buried in the rural area they originally come from (see Andersson 2001). The beginning and the end of one's life is seen as most significant with regard to one's identity and belonging and it is this identity and belonging that intimately links urban areas with rural areas and vice versa.

When I asked which area migrants preferred, urban or rural, participants in my research said the rural areas. 'That's where I was born'; 'That's where my family is at'; 'Life is not as expensive as in the urban areas' and 'That's where my home is at' were some of the reasons given. While Glen Elder (2003a: 152) has argued that 'the linkages between areas of origin and the hostel are also at the core of the struggle for identity that hostel dwellers have experienced since the collapse of apartheid', I would suggest that this is not a phenomenon 'since the collapse of apartheid'; it has always been the case. The quote

from Englund above, although in the context of Malawian migrants, fits perfectly with South African rural-urban migrants. As Belinda Bozzoli (1991: 7) observes: 'In the case of interviews such as these, which take the form of dynamic conversation, expression of consciousness and social identity are evident.' And Lauren Segal argues that migrants' 'rural consciousness is deeply internalised, and their responses to happenings in the city are strongly determined by an ingrained set of values and expectations' (see also Delius 1990; Zulu 1993a).²

This chapter, using the cultural formations approach, traces issues of belonging and identity; it begins to tie together the different kinds of formations that hostel-dwellers produce, in addition to what the government produces for and through them. It looks at how the various types of formations across the rural-urban axis connect, disconnect, reconnect and fragment the socially, economically, geographically and politically produced patterns of relationships. It investigates issues of belonging/identity; spirituality/religion; work; gender and the rural-urban dichotomy. And it engages with the bitterness and the divisions among people at the hostel, which is caused by the fact that some people feel that they belong to the hostel more than others, relying on time frames and gender, as well as political affiliations.

The formations discussed here include both formal and informal associations, as well as the fragmentation, disintegration, separation and dissociations that hostel-dwellers have formed, unformed and deformed across the rural-urban spectrum. To echo Ari Sitas (1983: 9):

My intention here [is] to explore and investigate what these pillars of their social being entailed and signified, recognising that society [and not just the household and the workplace] is about conflict and power relations rather than harmonious whole. The method of inquiry most pertinent for this chapter's purpose is one that recognises that the task at hand becomes gathering of an *experimental mosaic* that both defines and is defined by the *dramatis personae* of the conflicts at the hostel.

According to Sitas (1996), there are four dimensions of cultural formations:

1. alienation;
2. disvaluation;
3. disoralia; and
4. degendering.

This chapter uses these four dimensions in order to understand the everyday lives of migrant workers, closely looking at their associations and formations. When using the cultural formations approach,

the emphasis is on the *content* of activities, of the ‘way of life’, of what workers do, though adds no explanatory power to the term ‘culture’. What is important to argue is that culture is *also* about *form* not only content. If one were to talk about ‘culture’ it is not so much *what* people do, but more importantly the *form* the activities take. It is not *that* a worker sings or drinks, it is the *way* he or she sings or drinks; it is not *that* he works, but the *way* he works. Culture is about forms of social behaviour. It itself therefore enjoys a degree of autonomy and is thus a *formative* process, irreducible on the one hand, yet related on the other, to the economic structures of the society. How then is this irreducibility conceptualised? Cultural formations in working class life arise out of a variety of worker associations and combinations. These, usually *defensive* combinations, are the sources of the nexus of rules and regulations defining, prescribing and shaping social interaction (Sitas 1983: 39–40).

PRODUCING PERPLEXITY THROUGH ALIENATION

According to John Macionis and Ken Plummer (2008: 105) alienation is the reason that Karl Marx condemned capitalism. Alienation is the experience of isolation resulting from powerlessness. Dominated by capitalism and dehumanised by their jobs (especially monotonous and repetitive factory work), proletarians find little satisfaction in, and feel individually powerless to improve, their situations. At this point it is useful to begin to reflect on how Part 2 of this book, through examining in detail various forms of livelihood strategies, shows how alienated migrants feel at times as they engage in their everyday livelihood

procurement activities. Even in Part 1, migrants are presented in shifting spaces in shifting times and sometimes this is happening against their will; the familiar being taken away from them and the known being harshly challenged.

While it was relevant for Sitas (1996) to perceive the main livelihood strategy (wage labour) as alienating, these days it is difficult to say who the employer or the capitalist (or the enemy) is, with growing numbers of self-employed and so-called tenderpreneurs, as well as individuals in the survivalist or informal economy. Alienation takes place even when people are working in their own households or communities. The four ways in which capitalism alienates the worker, according to Marx, are not always all applicable to the life of the worker, the informal worker or the self-employed. Employers are not always necessarily capitalists. Owners of the means of production are not always capitalists; income recipients are not always workers. Sitas's theorising narrowly focuses on employer-versus-employee workplace relations and how the worker is always alienated from the products s/he produces. While the worker was never the owner of the means of production, in Part 2, I show that migrants have many different ways of livelihood production; hence there are different kinds of relations, processes and feelings involved in livelihood procurement. Edward Webster and Karl von Holdt's *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace* (2005) also provides a highly complicated picture of the post-apartheid workplace: where people work or where and how they make a living.

For the purposes of this book, the relations between work and the worker are pertinent for many reasons, but especially because work is the primary reason why these migrants are migrants. When I asked migrants what they think the main rural-urban connections are, the first and most important response was: '*Amathuba omsebenzi*', employment opportunities. Without taking much time to think, they said the only reason they are in urban areas is because of employment opportunities. They explained that they send the money earned through work in the urban areas to the rural areas to take care of their families. The employment opportunities they seek are a continuation of the tradition started by their forefathers. However, work is that which alienates them from themselves, alienates them from what they produce and alienates them from fellow workers, as well as from the owners of the means of production. In this case what is formed culturally is the identity that

ties the migrants together, their migrant status, the fact that they have one common objective in coming to urban areas from the same rural origins.

PRODUCING PERPLEXITY THROUGH DISVALUATION

Once the migrants have reached an urban area, whether they find what they came for or not, they experience the second dimension of cultural formation: disvaluation. For Sitas, 'disvaluation' means an experience of loss and defamiliarisation, as normative patterns and reciprocal relationships are challenged in the urban centres, being in essence a disvaluation from the way of life generated through the history of a people, its folklore and meanings. He argues that while there was very little in the institutional life of hostels and factories that facilitated reciprocity, migrants still fought to generate binding norms, values and systems of socialisation.

Basically this implies that in moving from rural areas to look for job opportunities in the city, migrants reached urban areas and started noticing the vast differences between the two and began to experience disvaluation. Or, to put it differently, disvaluation begins even before one reaches the urban area, as one imagines the migration process and realises the loss of the known and the familiar.

One of the participants in my research said: 'The city is the place for work. Home is where everyone belongs and there are lots of activities that can be done there to make a living, such as farming.' This quote resonates with the views of many migrants who argue that no African person belongs in a city, as stated at the beginning of this chapter. Here one sees the stark dichotomies that migrants continue to live with, which were created by colonial and apartheid governments. It is interesting to note not only the dichotomies, but also the contradictions between what is real and what is idealised by migrants. Home, in the rural areas, is presented as a place where there are a lot of options for survival; the city is presented as a place where one only exists to work. This perspective ignores the many interesting and sometimes enjoyable activities that migrants engage in in urban areas, such as the formation of various cultural groups and starting/extending their families. In the hostels, they basically create a home away from home, without ever fully acknowledging it. The city, the hostel, is often perceived as an unfriendly, unfamiliar place, which does not have much meaning, except for work.

However, in agreement with Sitas, my research shows that migrants forge various cultural formations, which mitigate the unfamiliarity and unfriendliness of the hostel setting.

The contradiction in the quote above is in the fact that the migrant who uttered these words would probably be at home in a rural area if the livelihood opportunities he mentions were still available as much as he says. Why would he leave home, where there are so many opportunities, to come to the city where there is only one opportunity and that is to find work, the same kind of work described as alienating? The work he came to seek is what does not allow him to travel home any time he wants to because it does not give him enough money or time for leisure.

One of the participants in my research said: 'People do not pay rent here and they also do not pay rent at home. There is nothing positive that can make me want to live in the city if I have all the money I need.' The migrant in this quote is trying to draw out some similarities between the hostel and the rural areas. It happens that he picks up on the interesting issue of payment of rent by the hostel-dwellers. Those residing in municipal hostels always used to pay rent until they boycotted it in the early 1990s (at the dawn of democracy). Some resumed paying rent upon being allocated community residential units (CRUs), but some still do not pay any rent. The migrant quoted above probably falls in the group that does not pay rent, since he is young and he has only been at the hostel for few years. He implies that those who came before him are also in the category of not paying rent. I have learnt that young migrants really re-live the lives lived by their elders, those who brought them to the hostel.

This quote speaks of disvaluation: the loss of familiar experience (as there is nothing positive in the city) and imagination of the unknown ('if I have all the money I need'). He is comparing his two realities and tries to find common ground between them. Not paying rent is a consoling factor, especially because most migrants are already not making enough money to take care of their families. However, this migrant fails to remember that although he does not pay rent in rural or urban areas, at the hostel, there is an expectation from the municipality that all hostel-dwellers pay rent. At home in the rural areas, the house normally belongs to the parents or family and nobody is expected to pay rent. One is only expected to take care of the family, especially if one is employed. Migrants always say one does not need a lot of money

in order to reside in the rural areas and they add that all those who have lots of money are based in the city. Hence my interpretation of the quote above is that if he really had all the money he needed, he would be based in the city, where he would have a lot of options of how to spend his money.

Another migrant said:

There is a long way to walk before one reaches industries in the rural areas, otherwise people would not have to come here and leave their homes. This causes men to be absent for a very long period of time, when they do not even make enough money. Sometimes they are forced to only send money home and not go there frequently because it is expensive to travel.

Again, employment opportunities are mentioned as the reason for migrants to be in the city. Migrancy is good because it allows men to take care of their families and it is bad because it takes them away from their families for long periods of time. The concept of alienation is invoked by the fact that migrants are away from their families and homes for so long, but they do not make enough money. He also uses a negative term – ‘forced’ – which implies that it is against their will. This has connotations of disvaluation in the sense that reciprocal relationships are challenged in the processes of migration.

Another migrant explained his view: ‘The kinds of lives that we live are not the same [as those in rural areas]. We have access to a lot of services that make our lives better and easier in the urban areas.’ He implies that living in an urban area would be preferred, which alienates the person from the rural areas. It turns things around: initially, the urban area is unfamiliar, but long periods there result in unfamiliarity in the rural areas as well. This is when people become disengaged from their original realities – they become *amabhunguka* (plural of *ibhunguka*, a person who never comes back home from migrant work). *Amabhunguka* do not only become disengaged from rural areas, they also lose reciprocal relationships with their fellow brothers and sisters. *Amabhunguka* are also sometimes harshly judged by migrant workers who have not forsaken their areas of origin. They are seen as confused, dislocated and not deserving of respect.

Furthermore, there were a number of migrants who believed that there are vast differences between the rural and the urban and there is nothing that connects the two; they cannot be reconciled. For example, one man in his early twenties, when asked, 'What do you think is the relationship between the rural areas and the urban areas?', responded:

There is a huge difference between the life here [hostel] and the life in the rural areas. There are a lot of things that happen there [homestead] and do not happen here and vice versa . . . Here we have people who sleep on the streets and in the rural areas we do not have people who sleep on the streets. Even in town, you find people eating from the bins, whereas you do not find that in the rural areas.

I found this interesting because, in noting the differences, he somehow focused on the bad things about the city. Additionally, these bad things are normally curbed in the rural areas by basically having a strong concept of family and a stronger social network than in urban areas. In the rural areas, everybody has a home. Even if you are a stranger in that place, you find a home because of the way people receive you and understand who you are and where you come from. Those people would embrace you and take care of you, as I personally experienced when I visited the four rural areas where I conducted this research, in following migrant workers from the hostel to their homes in Nongoma, Empangeni, Eshowe and Hlabisa.

PRODUCING PERPLEXITY THROUGH DISORALIA

According to Sitas (1983: 237), disoralia:

denotes the pressures that affect the possibility of communication, language, its meaning-generating capacities, the way ordinary migrants' symbolic capital becomes devalued – a process affecting hundreds of millions of oral people gripped by the tides of noise, distortion and meaning embedded in capitalism's new spaces. Migrants' cultural formations create new language contexts.

This is referring to communicative means – language, meaning, symbols (cultural), oral forms of communication and regional ties. I demonstrate how gender (the roles of men and women) the spatial (rural-urban; hostel-village) and spiritual (Christian-Shembe) come together or fracture in whatever ways that are produced by the migrants and their families.

Despite the abject conditions faced by many migrants living in urban hostels . . . their artistic production has been characterised by a vibrant and challenging creativity. Thus although the migrant labour system has undoubtedly had a devastating impact on the lives of countless South Africans, migrants have nevertheless managed to find ways of shaping and making sense of their experiences through music, dance, dress, and other household and personal items . . . A lot of what the migrants have produced tends to affirm a sense of continuity between the past and the present, the rural and the urban, the homesteads where these migrants grew up and the [hostels] where these migrants were, and still are, confined during their long absences from home (Oliphant, Delius and Meltzer 2004: 67; see also James 1999).

Social life at the hostel tends to be organised around regional or ethnocentric arrangements, in spite of the existence of activities that cut across such affinities, such as work and religion. For example, traditional musical groups often comprise men from the same geographical districts and soccer clubs may follow the same pattern. This is because of the mutual trust inherent in close neighbourhood relationships (Zulu 1993a).

According to Baba Vusokwakhe Zondi, the leader of an *indlamu* dance group and also a block chairman, *indlamu* (Zulu traditional dance) is a way of *ukwakha* (building) people; it also facilitates *inhlonipho* (respect). It gives you an identity, *igama lobunsizwa* (youthful nickname): Baba Zondi is known as *uMasiniya* (*uMa-senior*; of the seniors). He got the name because he used to like dating older women. In an interview on 12 November 2010, Baba Zondi said: '*Indlamu* is like a hobby, it is about the past as well as the present. It disciplines you; it prevents you

from being involved in all dangerous and unnecessary commitments. We practise after work and compete during the weekends.'

Baba Zondi's statement depicts the ways that migrants fight against the loss of symbolic capital, when they engage in such activities; it is like communicating in a language that only the homeboys and homegirls would understand.

Frantz Fanon (1967) also writes about the importance of language as a powerful tool in cultural formations. While he recognises what he calls 'cultural imposition', for him, this is secondary to a psychological response. He notes that every man who has spent some time in the city will strive to be seen and heard, to be different from the local people. Unlike Sitas, Fanon tends not to focus on the different resistance mechanisms of different people in these situations individually and collectively. His analysis misses an important cultural approach, which cannot be avoided, especially in dealing with black people. In the case of South Africa, Sitas (1996), Andries Oliphant, Peter Delius and Lalou Meltzer (2004) and Deborah James (1999) acknowledge the resistance mechanisms used through cultural formations.

Fighting against disoralia is a crucial part of migrants' everyday lives. As part of that struggle they communicate among themselves and their families in the rural areas on a daily basis. For example, when asked, 'What is the relationship between the rural and the urban?', one migrant said, 'The relationship between rural and urban areas is the living together of people where they use the same cultures and languages.'

In contrast to Sarah Mosoetsa's (2011) interpretation of her findings, when she argues that the rural is a place to hide the sickly, 'for most migrants [at the hostel], the village is not the distant site of "retirement" – it is an ever-present aspect of their lives' (Englund 2002: 153). Dorrit Posel (2003: 4) argues that as rural-urban migration became more extensive in South Africa, many communities sought to develop 'internal moral sanctions', making migrants feel morally bound to their groups of origin and to increase the incentives for migrants to remit income.

We must understand that when we talk about identity and belonging with reference to migrants, we not only refer to their rural sources of identity, but both rural and urban identities, which are continuously being merged. There is an active reconstruction of a cohesive identity in the urban context. Rural-urban divisions have always been actively

resisted by migrants. Although colonialism came about at a time when there were ethnic divisions, Mahmood Mamdani (1996: 292) argues that these tribal cultures were highly textured and elastic.

Hostels have always been about the articulation, negotiation and redefinition of the complex realities and identities that continue to be developed, shaping and in turn being shaped by the lives of the hostel-dwellers. Although some people tend to live for very long periods – up to 30 years – in the hostels, they never really feel like they belong there. They always feel tied to the areas they come from and derive a sense of belonging from those places.

PRODUCING PERPLEXITY THROUGH DEGENERATING

Sitas (1983: 238) uses the term ‘degenerating’ to refer to the ‘pressures on gender roles as men and women are thrown into the mill and ground’. In the introduction to this book I explain how and why I chose to use Sitas’s cultural formations approach. Among other things, I outline the limitation in his work on hostels and livelihoods – in particular, issues of gender. In his theorising, he fails to problematise the taken-for-granted roles of men and women in migrant labour and hostel literature. When he refers to ‘gendering’, his focus is on strength, masculinity and the role of men in everyday life, specifically livelihood procurement. Although he acknowledges the way men and women are ‘thrown into the mill and ground’, he never clearly addresses or engages with the role of women and how it complements or challenges what men in the urban areas were doing at that time.

The intention of this section is to show the complexity of gender at the hostel, as well as in rural-urban connections. Most importantly I also want to show that the spatial does not come second to gender and/or livelihood procurement, but these are all interwoven and occur simultaneously as a result of the multiplicity in and of space. Therefore, below I discuss the different convergences and divergences that men and women, together and separately, perform.

For most people who live in the hostel, it is always in their conscious mind that they do not belong there. This is particularly the case for women, since the hostel was originally known as a man’s place. Women really did feel out of place in most cases. There is a phrase that was often used by a group of young women at the hostel: ‘*Phela sisekuhambeni*’, which means, ‘After all, we are on a journey’ or ‘We are foreigners’.

They said this in relation to unfriendly and unfamiliar situations that they encountered while at the hostel. For example, with regard to poverty, such as not having anything to eat, their response would be ‘*Phela sisekuhambeni*’, hence, we cannot expect everything to be like it is at home. This is basically their way of consoling themselves and trying to be positive about the future. This future, as in the case of bell hooks, might well lead them to go back home, because at home at least they have a sense of belonging. No matter what happens, ‘belonging’ serves as a point of security for them. The phrase as uttered by these young women can be understood as a depiction of devaluation and degendering. The challenges that face these young women, whether poverty or a lack of bus fare to go and look for work, are because they are women and migrants.

On the other hand, for men the situation can be interpreted slightly differently. With the assistance of the traditional hostel/social system and structure, men have created a home away from home for themselves through strong social networks and a support system. It is in that sense that I argue that they do not always feel a ‘sense of crisis and of impending doom’ (hooks 2009: 1). As discussed in Part 1, men normally have each other’s backs.

However, the fact that I perceive men’s circumstances to be slightly different and better than women’s does not mean that they are not ‘thrown into the mill and ground’ as Sitas suggests. The fact that a male migrant lives in the hostel results in his being called an *impohlwa* (bachelor), even if he is married and has children. Studies have found that workplaces often differentiate work according to whether one is a migrant or not. Migrant workers used to be given the toughest and dirtiest, lowest-paid jobs compared to township residents (Von Holdt 2003). The status that men have at the hostel is totally different to the one they have in the rural areas. They would even further argue that the presence of women at the hostel further brings down their status, as well as challenging the roles they play. As explained earlier in this book, men normally see the presence of women at the hostel negatively. The fact that they are all migrants from the rural areas is not a unifying point, but one of contention because of their gender.

Regardless of their strengths through social relations, hostel-dwellers are constantly socially polarised from the broader society in which

they exist.³ This argument takes into consideration the general low educational levels of migrants in hostels and informal settlements, the unskilled and semi-skilled nature of their labour, resulting in low income levels, and the complicated gender dynamics at play in these residential units. Education, skills and gender are all largely intertwined and are influenced by the previously disadvantaged identities of hostel-dwellers.⁴

An African National Congress (ANC) councillor I interviewed on 26 November 2010 explained his view of gender dynamics at the hostel:

So what I mean is that there is a tendency for men to look down upon women and take them as subjects. There are many chances that you experience those kinds of things at the hostel because most of the things that oppress women are religious and traditional, and most of the people who live at the hostel are traditionalists. A woman to those people is junior, a subject and does not have a voice.

It is important to note that culture and religion play controversial and contradictory roles at times. For example, in the quote above, religion and tradition are presented as points of oppression, especially for women. However, they can also serve as places to draw strength from, a positive point of love and belonging, as in, for example, the *manyanos* (separate women's Christian organisations). Both men and women creatively and strategically apply and practise culture and religion in ways that are supportive and beneficial to them at particular points in time.

Interestingly, KwaMashu Hostel has a particular history with the Nazareth Baptist Church (NBC, also known as the Shembe Church). Shembe is an African-initiated religion founded in 1910 by the prophet Isaiah Shembe. While it relies heavily on Christian teaching, its followers believe that Shembe was the chosen one to come and save Africans. They believe Jesus Christ was sent to save the Jews and not all nations. The NBC is a highly patriarchal church and has its headquarters in Inanda, approximately five kilometres from KwaMashu Hostel. Baba Zondi's household belongs to the NBC. He personally does not belong to any church, but his wives in the rural area go to the NBC. He said he feels like he is a member because he does not drink alcohol or

smoke cigarettes, which he believes are some of the requirements of the church. As a result of the influence of his wives, he conforms to their practices when in the rural area, such as not using fire on the Sabbath, which starts on Friday at sunset and ends on Saturday at sunset.

This story shows interesting gender relations between the husband and wives influenced by a religious formation. It also shows a continuation of faith/religion in the rural-urban continuum. Interestingly, it is a reversal of gender relations where, for a change, the husband follows his wives.

In my research I found that after retirement, many men who were members of the NBC would return to the hostel on their way to the NBC headquarters in Inanda. The church's main services (mainly in January and July) go on for days, so men such as Baba Gumede spend some time at the hostel. Men have a more active membership than women. This can be associated with the high powers that they get from and through the church compared to women, who are always given an inferior and secondary position. NBC men are also allowed to have more than one wife.

Tamara Shefer et al. (2008) found that churches were seen as supportive of traditional gender roles and 'traditional culture' – women were expected to get permission from their husbands for their actions and men were supposed to be obeyed. James (1999: 51) found that the rejection of church membership by both widows and those who are single suggested that the independent churches, characterised as an important source of identity for migrants, were more effective for male migrant workers than for women. However, in my fieldwork I found that church membership in urban areas was generally 'rejected' by both men and women. Women, on the other hand, said they were members of churches in their areas of origin, whereas most men did not subscribe to any church (except some to the NBC).

Similar to James (1999) I found that the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) was one of the most popular churches. James notes that ZCC appealed more to migrant men (and to the women attached to them) than to unattached migrant women. She interprets this trend as a way for women to move away from dependence on men, especially because they were actively engaged in dance groups. Another reason James offers for women's lack of interest in church is that they did not have enough

time to attend church because they had to work productively as well as reproductively, they had to attend dance sessions and they had to take time to visit home, as well as to attend burial societies that they were part of.

On the other hand, Bozzoli (1983: 165) found that *manyanos* could be interpreted as an organised form of 'domestic struggle'. This is a site of struggle that was used 'to express [women's] grievances in however confused fashion, and as a way of redressing them'. Deborah Gaitskell (1990) argues that women came together in these unions explicitly as *mothers* and that these organisations could be seen as a response to gender segregation on the part of mostly uneducated African Christian women. The domestic and spiritual aspects of *manyanos* reinforce each other, as they offer priority and support to motherhood in times of economic and social upheaval. Furthermore, Bozzoli (1983) notes that women demonstrated a 'standing back', a distancing from religion, a capacity to regard it as a resource to be taken or left, depending on its usefulness. From the responses of the rural-urban women I spoke with, I would say this still holds true more than 30 years later.

CONCLUSION

The intention of Part 3 is to show how perplexity is produced at the hostel and across rural-urban links. This chapter discusses a few aspects that play a fundamental role in producing perplexity: work; identity/belonging; gender; the rural-urban dichotomy/continuum and spirituality/religion. People's identities sometimes bind them together, but also sometimes divide them. Identities help to build people, but also break them. It is in how they identify themselves that people are able to create meaningful lives. Their spirituality, whether it is closely linked to tradition or church or even both, plays a huge role in directing them or determining where they belong.

In *Belonging: A Culture of Place* bell hooks talks about the importance of people having a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging for her, after travelling the United States for a number of years, eventually brings her back to her home, Kentucky, where she was born and raised. She comes back to her family and to her community. She acknowledges the importance of 'the past as a resource that can serve as a foundation for us to revision and renew our commitment to the present, to make a world

where all people can live fully and well, where everyone can belong' (hooks 2009: 5). She defines a culture of belonging as having an 'intimate connection with the land to which one belongs, empathic relationship to animals, self-restraint, custodian conservation, deliberateness, balance, expressiveness, generosity, egalitarianism, mutuality, affinity for alternative modes of knowing, playfulness, inclusiveness, non-violent conflict resolution, and openness to spirit' (13).

A sense of belonging is what everybody has a longing for. Some have satisfied this and are quite grounded in where they believe they belong. Some are going through processes of redefinition of their identities and hence where they belong. It is also important to note that people use different frameworks to formulate who they are and where they belong. A lot relies on crucial points in history, but a couple of people realise and recognise the role played by the present changes and challenges in identity formation. Some are overwhelmed by the future, what they will become, what they want to become, and by the unknown, and sometimes by their idealised worlds.

NOTES

1. 'The emphasis on cultural formations originated in South Africa in the writings of "black consciousness" intellectuals . . . the term "culture" became a synonym of the *totality* of black experience. In the process everything that one cared to mention was reduced to an aspect of "culture": whenever economic relationships, processes of political struggle, artistic forms of expression and modes of behaviour or working class norms were referred to, culture became their definite source. This led to an ambiguous usage of the term that did not assist any sociological investigation of its subject-matter' (Sitas 1983: 37).
2. <http://www.csvr.org.za/publications/1794--the-human-face-of-violence-hostel-dwellers-speak>.
3. 'The uniqueness of cultural formations in the hostels has to be understood within a profound degree of alienation arising from their concrete experiences as industrial workers. This alienation has to be situated on the basis of three pillars of domination: historical, spatial and structural pillars' (Sitas 1983: 276).
4. Being a black woman or man and living in the homelands of South Africa meant being deprived of proper education and access to relevant training institutions. Women always suffered much more than men.

Production of Gendered Spaces

Social relations within hostels are characterised by tensions at every level. These tensions contain opportunities for creative transformation, as well as the danger of defensive rigidity. There is tension between the formal regulations defining hostels as a 'man's world' and the reality of the presence of women and children within the hostel environment (Ramphela 1993: 88).

This chapter examines the varying relations that women and men have with each other, as well as relations between women and women and between men and men, the roles they play in relation to each other and the tensions and contradictions in their social relations. It shows that together with changing rural-urban connections, gender roles and relations at the hostel are changing. Historical patriarchal dominance and hierarchical structures are being challenged by the changes taking place at the hostel and in broader society. In the early 1970s Francis Wilson conducted research on migrant labour and one of his findings was that when families (women and children) moved into the family housing, closer to migrant workers' place of work, men complained that it became far less safe, 'for example, for women to walk about than it was when all men were living in one place at some distance from the township' (Wilson 1972: 13). In the early 1990s Mamphela Ramphela argued that it was necessary to recognise

the particularities of relationships between men, between men and women, between women and other women, and between adults and children. These distinctions are important because of the different resources available to

the various participants, and their effect on the quality of negotiated outcomes. Social relations in this context constitute the politics of space (Ramphela 1993: 68).

It is clear that the way in which men and women, women and women, and men and men relate to each other in rural areas is not the same as the way they interact in urban areas: men are drawn more to each other, women are drawn apart and women and men are in tense (contradictory) or sometimes comfortable relationships. This is caused by changes in the roles and responsibilities of both genders and changes in identity and consciousness. For example, women used to access urban areas through men, but now they are doing it themselves, sometimes with the assistance of other women (sisters, aunts and friends). Thus Doreen Massey (1994) argues that there is a profundity in the connections among space and place, gender and the construction of gender relations.

In rural areas, women normally assume a secondary position. Neville Pule and Khabele Matlosa (2000), Siphon Pityana and Mark Orkin (1992) and Belinda Bozzoli (1983) have all argued that in rural areas authority for strategic household decisions lies with absent men, while the women make the simple, day-to-day decisions. Gogo Mthembu is a good example. When I went to Nongoma I lived with her and her family. Earlier I noted that out of six biological children, she had only two married sons left. One day during the course of my fieldwork, on 24 May 2010, I found out that one of her sons who had been sick had passed away. The following day I called her to ask about funeral arrangements and she told me she did not know when the funeral would take place because she could not make that decision without first hearing from her (male) relatives. Her husband, the father of all her children, had passed away in 1981. He was from Newcastle, where they lived after getting married. He and his brothers worked in Johannesburg. When he passed away Gogo and her six children relocated to Nongoma, which is where she had been born and had grown up.

The relatives she was referring to were close relatives in the sense that the men from Newcastle are the brothers of Gogo's late husband. In *isiZulu* we say, '*Bangabakhwenyana bakagogo*' (they are Gogo's husbands), as they are all Mthembus. So, the deceased son referred to these men as '*obaba*' (fathers). Although they could not make it to his wedding,

upon his death, Gogo felt that she could not continue with the funeral arrangements before hearing what they said about it.

They are actually distant relatives of the deceased in three ways: firstly, in the sense that they lived and worked approximately 600 kilometres away; second, in the sense that they were not really close to each other. They never called or visited except when there was somebody getting married or if somebody died. Third, these brothers never really offered any form of support to Gogo Mthembu when her husband passed away and she had to raise six children all by herself, and she had not been working. She worked as a teenager and stopped working when she got married and became a housewife. When her husband passed away, she had to go back into the labour market and look for a job and ended up resorting to informal labour, which, at the age of 84, she is still engaged in.

Two other things that are important about this story are that when I asked Gogo why she would wait for the *obaba* from Newcastle to make a decision that primarily affects her and her immediate family, she said, '*Phela angiyena ubaba walomuzi mina*' (after all, I am not the head of this household), sounding irritated, and I knew I had to withdraw my questions. The second thing I have noted since getting to know Gogo is that when she talks about the relatives from Newcastle, she makes mention of the fact that they call her *umakoti*. Although *umakoti* basically means 'the wife of', it has connotations of a new bride. The difference between these two interpretations is that the second has the idea of newness, which comes with a certain expectations and responsibilities. Perhaps the latter interpretation of *umakoti* allows us to understand why Gogo took the decision to relay the powers of strategic decision-making to the Mthembu family in Newcastle and Johannesburg while she was based at Nongoma. She knew that these relatives have certain expectations of her and also have a role to play and responsibilities to take care of.

When Gogo Mthembu's son was sick, I went to Nongoma on 22 May 2010 to visit him at the hospital. He worked and lived in Durban and went back to Nongoma for a month when he was seriously ill before he passed away. His wife and children live at Nongoma. During my short visit, Gogo told me that she had received a phone call from Newcastle and the relatives reported that there was a family

member there who was also really ill. Although Gogo herself had a sick son and had told them about it, she really felt bad that she could not go to Newcastle to see the sick relative. She moaned bitterly saying, 'They will say *umakoti* has forsaken us.' She was planning to take a bus to Newcastle once her son recovered. With regard to the funeral arrangements, the family in Newcastle eventually called and said that the funeral should take place not on 28 May, but on 4 June, which was the following Saturday because they needed more time to make the funeral arrangements. The family from Newcastle was expected to start arriving from Wednesday 1 June till the funeral day.

Not all the women from the rural areas are comfortable with being secondary, as Gogo Mthembu is; in fact, some actively resist. For example, Fikile Ngcamu is successfully fighting the idea of everything coming to a standstill until a male gives authorisation. She is in her early forties and lives at Hlabisa with two grandchildren and three of her children, while one child lives at KwaMashu Hostel. When I visited her in December 2010, she took me around her whole house, showing me the rooms she had built for her children and the furniture she had put in. She also showed me concrete building blocks that she had bought to build more rooms. She said that she asked her husband, who is also a migrant worker, to take time to build a room she planned to use as a kitchen. She told me that her husband had not done this and more than six months had passed with the blocks in their yard. She said she was giving him a couple of more months and after that she would find a contractor who would do the job and she would pay him. She said that if she had to wait for her husband for every important decision, she would not have achieved as much as she had. She had a very big house with many beautiful and newly furnished rooms. She was able to accumulate all this through the informal self-employment she had been engaged in for many years. When I visited her again in December 2011, I found that the room was almost done; she had indeed hired a contractor.¹

RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

There is a continuous and subtle fight over space between men and women at the hostel. This conflict is expressed in many ways across the various structures and spaces. One of the first and most important

is the fact that the hostel is still widely known as a men's place. The perceptions of the hostel-dwellers across genders attest to this. Below are Baba Bandile Makhathini's views about gender relations from an interview I did with him on 16 January 2011. He is a man who strongly believes in tradition and has been at the hostel since the mid-1960s.

Nomkhosi: What are the three things you like about the hostel?

Baba Makhathini: I do not want anything about this place now. I want to go home and I have been away from home for a very long time. There are many things that I do not like here now. There is also the current way of accommodation [the community residential units, CRUs]. We are married and have wives in the rural areas and we live here as bachelors. I do not desire the life they live over there [in the CRUs; he is still based at the old hostel blocks].

Nomkhosi: Does this mean you prefer the blocks compared to CRUs?

Baba Makhathini: Wait, I will get there. I like the life in the CRUs as well. What I like about the block is that as I live here, that's all I do, whereas over there [in the CRUs], there are two or three bedrooms with a kitchen and bathroom. Each person has his/her own bedroom. What I don't like about the life over there is that they just allocate everybody in the same unit. They do not allocate according to gender, that is, males only, just like it was in the blocks. Let's say they allocate me in a unit with only women and I am the only male and we all share the kitchen and the toilet, that's not totally healthy.

Nomkhosi: Why?

Baba Makhathini: You guys are female and we are male. You have been created by God to be the way you are and we have also been created by God. Perhaps you guys have partners here and I do not have a wife here.

Nomkhosi: Then you can bring her here.

Baba Makhathini: *She has a right to remain in the rural area and I have a right to live and work here* [own emphasis]. I

would not fetch her from home just because you guys are living comfortably with your partners. She is fulfilling her position and role as she is based in the village and I am doing the same here. But my life here won't be comfortable anymore. I would be bumping into your men in the kitchen. Those are the kind of things which shorten life at the hostel. Also, when you women get used to the people that you live with, you don't fully clothe, you wrap your towels around and that's it.

Nomkhosi: Yes, when it's hot.

Baba Makhathini: And you show your thighs as the towel flips and there are men around. There is a man in the house who does not have his wife here.

Nomkhosi: He must fetch her.

Baba Makhathini: No, no, no! That is why I say this is not a good setting anymore.

Nomkhosi: But women used to come and stay with you in the blocks, anyway. Is it not better that at least now you are separated by the bedrooms because long ago, you shared one bedroom with other men and women who were visiting or even if they slept in the kitchen?

Baba Makhathini: Yes, they were only visiting and they were not based here full time.

Nomkhosi: What if she stayed there for the whole week or more that is still a long time?

Baba Makhathini: It is not long; it is not the same as being full time. There is a difference between being here visiting and being here full time.

Nomkhosi: So you think sharing the bathroom and the kitchen is the problem?

Baba Makhathini: Yes, it is a problem as it is.

Nomkhosi: So you think what is better is if people choose if they want to be based in 'only males' and 'only females' block?

Baba Makhathini: Yes, that is exactly how I thought it was going to be. This is my personal view and not everybody's.

Subtle gender fights in hostel bedrooms

As can be seen in the above interview extract, one of the ways in which the conflict between men and women is expressed is in the spaces related to the hostel blockhouses. As has been highlighted above, the *umdiyadiya* is not accepted anymore; this means that there is no way a woman can be living with men in a blockhouse in the hostel.² That particular couple has to resort to getting a shack if they do not yet have a room in a CRU. One can conclude that men do not want a woman in their place, which is in this case, a bedroom. Ramphele (1993: 20) uses the ‘notion of bedhold’, arguing that the common denominator of space allocation in the hostels is a bed. She further argues that ‘the need to maintain the “brotherhood” established over the years had led occupants of a particular hostel block to debar women from staying overnight’ (131). Other men say if a man wants to spend time with his partner, he has to find an informal dwelling.

Subtle gender fights over common areas

In addition to fighting over bedroom space, men and women also fight over the common areas related to the blockhouses (and informal settlements). In the interview with Baba Makhathini above, he expressed the challenge he would encounter in sharing common areas, even when in CRUs. Men, especially the ones who do not have their partners in the hostel, fight with women over the common washing sinks where they do laundry. Some men feel that weekends should be theirs to wash and dry their clothes since they are at work during the week. They argue that most of the women are unemployed and therefore have time to do laundry during the week. However, the reality is that the women wash almost every day; if they are unemployed, doing house chores is a daily business – it is their unpaid work. They do it every day as much as men do their paid work every day. This is where they find pleasure and fulfilment and even recognition from their male counterparts.

Women and men also fight over bathrooms. Those who live in blockhouses and informal settlements have to share the same bathrooms. At the time of my data collection there were no bathrooms for women only since this was originally a men’s hostel. The abolition of influx control and the post-apartheid era did not correct this arrangement. Women do not feel that their need for private bathroom space is

respected. In many cases, women are pushed into bathing in their shacks within the available limited space, in basins; it seems safer that way. The hostel bathrooms do not have proper locks; anybody can come in at any time. Furthermore, as with the washing sinks, men have imposed restrictions on when women can use bathrooms, which are sometimes adhered to and sometimes not. Stemming from the incorrect assumption on the part of men that women at the hostel do not work and have come to consume the money of men, they have set specific times when women can use bathrooms to bath or shower. They have put up a notice that says women are not allowed to use the bathrooms between 2.00 and 4.00 p.m. This period is for men preparing to go to work on night shift. The first assumption is that women are unemployed and the second is that even if they do work, they do not work night shift. In addition to the fact that many of the women do work, some of them do night shifts as well. When a woman finds herself in this situation, she either has to use her shack to bath or use the common bathrooms and risk taking a bath with a group of men at the same time.

Subtle gender fights in hostels/informal settlements

Another way in which the conflict between men and women is expressed is with regard to informal settlements. Although I show in Chapter 2 that both men and women contribute to the building of informal settlements, women bear all the blame for the negative effects of informal settlements on the hostel. There is a general agreement between the hostel-dwellers and hostel leadership that the informal settlements play a big role in the high crime levels at the hostel. Since there is an idea that the hostel has informal settlements because of women, the implication is that there is a high crime rate because of women. Women are said to have boyfriends who are involved in criminal activities and they hide them from the police. Men argue that these criminals do not have the same origins as them, but are mostly from the surrounding INK (Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu) townships.

Subtle gender fights in CRUs

Another way in which gender disputes are expressed is with regard to CRUs. In this case, because of the arrangement of sharing space with

people from different backgrounds (similar to the blockhouses), the problems encountered are similar to those in a blockhouse, except that the bedroom is not a common space/resource anymore. The common resources, such as washing basins and bathrooms are now only shared by three people or three families, depending who occupies each bedroom. What becomes a subtle gender fight in the CRUs is the relationship between the people who live in one unit. They have to have a plan to keep the whole unit clean, especially the shared spaces. In a focus group discussion on 21 January 2011, these difficulties become very clear:

Nomkhosi: How is it sharing the unit with a different gender and also with different age categories?

Participant 1: There should not be any problems because when I enter my room, I enter my house/household [*ngingena kwami, angingeni kwakho*]. I am entering my space and not yours.

Participant 2: Even if I can break up with one boyfriend and get another one, that should not be anybody's business. If you are married, you should just focus on your partner.

Nomkhosi: Is it really that easy?

Participant 2: The point is I am going to my bed and not his bed; we only meet in the bathroom and kitchen.

Participant 3: I would say it is difficult, especially because the people I live with are older than me. If I have to bring over a boyfriend, I make sure that he only comes during the night and leaves early morning because they should not see that.

Participant 4: They should also respect me because they have sex [*bayalala*] when I am in the house therefore they should understand that I also have feelings.

Participant 5: Although they do that, you cannot take away the fact that they are older than you. You must stick to your values and principles of respecting the elderly.

Participant 1: We are not a family as we live in these units. Every person/room has a different surname and we even come from different places of origin and we cannot pretend that we are related.

This shows that it is really difficult to live with different genders and generational categories in one unit. People have different beliefs and expectations of one another. It also shows that even young women on their own differ in terms of their perceptions and life choices. Two women from this focus group discussion mentioned that they live with a man who is married and has grown-up children. Some of his sons are at the hostel as well, but he lives by himself in a CRU. Some of his sons live in blocks and some are in different rooms in the CRU. These women's main complaint about this man, who is old enough to be their father, was that while they clean up after him sometimes in the common rooms, they really get irritated when his sons come over for a meal and do not clean up after themselves. When the old man does it, they do not like it, but they can live with it, but when his sons do the same thing, they really cannot take it; clearly age is an issue here.

Underlying problems in affairs

There has been a drastic reduction in marital rates in South Africa. This is a very important factor because in the rural-urban migration framework, getting married used to be an important initial measure of one's success and the main purpose of working. The reduction in marital rates can be associated with a number of other interrelated critical factors: (1) unemployment or being informally employed makes it difficult to save up for lobola (affordability);³ (2) parents are not as financially supportive of their sons as they used to be; (3) young women have better work prospects and are thus more independent of men and are more mobile (Hunter 2007, 2010); (4) young women now easily submit themselves as wives, even if lobola has not been paid. They do this by having a child (or children), living with a man and performing duties as if they were already wives who have been paid for. Young men do not see a need to save for lobola when they already have live-in partners who do everything for them; (5) some young men are not impressed by young women who have what they see as a loose value system.⁴

On the other hand, women can be understood as providing more than social security for men. They take care of their partners whenever there is a need, be it financial, social or emotional. Ill health on the part of men was one reason for women, especially married ones, to come

and reside in the hostels. Women bear children for men and men have more control over sexual and sometimes reproductive matters. Women in the rural areas take care of the land and livestock, which belongs to men. Women take care of the husband's parents and extended family. When men left for the cities to look for employment, women's labour doubled, if not trebled. Now that women have come to the cities, they once again find themselves heading households. They have had to take on wage labour as well as family headship, while not forsaking their traditional roles and responsibilities. 'It could thus be argued that women are not rejecting their commitment to family responsibilities, but rather redefining its scope, with the maternal role taking precedence over the conjugal' (Walker 1990: 20). The division of labour has always been and continues to be unequal between men and women, as well as across age groups.

In a study conducted by Tamara Shefer et al. (2008) in the Western Cape, participants reported that traditional gender relations of male dominance and female subservience were still in evidence, along with traditional gender roles mandating a division of labour in the household. However, they also reported a shift in gender roles and relations in the direction of increased power for women. Hostile resistance by men to changes in gender power relations was also observed (157). Although context-specific interpretation becomes important in such cases, these findings are similar to the results of my research, as illustrated by excerpts from my interviews throughout this book.

One of the major challenges in the relationships between men and women (specifically in the dominance of men over women) is the issue of multiple sexual partners. This is becoming more prevalent and perhaps acceptable within certain social groups in this community. The province of KwaZulu-Natal has the highest HIV prevalence rates and the prevalence of multiple sexual partners directly goes against efforts to fight the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The issue of multiple sexual partners is significant because men have long been known to be *amasoka* (smooth talkers/operators, charmers; those who have many girlfriends at one time) and *ubusoka* (the act of charming and/or cheating, having more than one partner) has always been acceptable and even celebrated in our culture – but only for men. Philip Bonner, writing in the context of Lesotho, says:

Of course what was promiscuity for Basotho men often represented independence for Basotho women. This independence seems to have been consciously asserted, and drew its strength from two principal sources. The first was Basotho women's experiences of poverty, abandonment and neglect. The second was the independent income that could be earned from brewing and prostitution (1990: 247).

This is precisely the situation faced by women at the hostel. Many men at the hostel believe that women who come to live at the hostel are 'loose'. They even argue that most of the women who have come to live at the hostel are the ones who have *failed* to manage the issues of their homesteads in the rural areas. They see them as 'hopeless' and 'women with no future and no past', '*abasenalo imuva futhi abanalo nekusasa*'.

Furthermore, Pule and Matlosa (2000: 2) argue that male migration increased the power of women, who became de facto household heads, although authority for strategic household decisions still rests with the absent men.⁵ On the other hand, women in the South African context, when left in the rural areas to be 'independent', as argued by Pule and Matlosa, often move to the cities for different reasons. The majority of men from the hostel argued that most of the women living there are following their partners, while the women interviewed said that they moved from the rural areas in search of employment opportunities.

An interesting contradiction from the discussion above is further expressed by the views of the migrant workers. Most of the male research participants – married and unmarried, young and old – claimed that independence is one of the three main things they like about living in a hostel.⁶ While both men and women were asked the question 'What are the three things you like about living at the hostel?' not one woman mentioned 'independence' in response. This is the very same group of male participants who claimed to prefer rural areas to urban areas and who would choose, if not constrained by work-related reasons, to go back to the rural areas to live with the rest of their families. The conclusion that I drew from these responses is that their 'independence' has to do with the absence of women and children, who would then

be understood as being a burden to the daily life of a man at the hostel. Men's interpretation is that women and children's presence at the hostel is a burden to them, but women and children's presence in the rural areas is their right and responsibility. This is an expectation from men and seen as the right thing to do.

Further examination shows that most of the sexual relationships that women in the hostels are involved in are informal (for a lack of a better word). For the purposes of this book, this means they are unmarried, no lobola has been paid and no formal introduction with families has taken place. Partners might be involved with other people and there is no real commitment. The children they give birth to are 'illegitimate'. This is a really big issue because the participants said that it is very important that a child be known and accepted by the family of the father.

In trying to convey the extent to which the relations are informal between men and women at the hostel, both men and women said that most of the children who are born at the hostel are not known by the families on both sides and this means that those children do not have a home. The reason for this could be that the mother is too scared to go home to say that she is pregnant or has given birth. The father has not said anything about long-term commitment or paying damages for pregnancy. I got to know a girl who had a child that was not known by her family in the rural area. After the baby was born, she used to leave him at the hostel with a friend for two years, until she decided to take the baby to her home. She said she was too ashamed as she already had two older children out of wedlock and damages were not paid for those children. The child will not know his father's family because even his mother has never been invited by the boyfriend to meet his parents or get to know where he comes from. It is generally accepted that guys only take home those that they feel they might have a longer relationship with or might want to commit to in the future.

The argument is that the hostel is not a home, but a migrant workers' place. I have to add that the informality of the sexual relationships between men and women is not only between young people, as might be assumed. It is fully applicable to older women as well, as will be seen below in the story of Mama Pretty Zulu and that of Mama Nonhle Kheswa (see Chapter 3).

RELATIONS AMONG WOMEN

What is also very interesting about the social relations between the two genders is that for women, most of the people who helped them to come to the hostel (aunt, boyfriend or girlfriend) no longer live with them. When Ramphele (1993) conducted her research in the mid- to late 1980s, it was important for women not to risk losing their urban accommodation base. This shows that women might use relations with anybody as a stepping stone, just to get into the hostel, to get a job, accommodation or financial support.

As acknowledged by Ramphele, women often do not really support each other. Women's responses during my interviews revealed that they do not trust each other. Unlike men who have strong networks, women do not have strong support structures among themselves. When men serve as support structures to women, men also turn out to be their enemies or competitors. Their presence and/or absence tends to become a point of emotional insecurity, depending on the circumstances of the woman. Women are generally not able to pour out their sorrows to men. Because of their lack of organisation and unity in the hostel, pouring out their sorrows to other women is also not common. What Bozzoli (1991) called 'feminine solidarity' was not apparent in the hostels, CRUs or informal settlements in my fieldwork.

The apparent inability of women to organise effectively as a group and fight for a better deal is surprising, particularly considering how much time they spend together while most men are at work. Several factors contribute to this. First, one has to recognise the reality of the dividing lines between women in this setting are age, marital status, length of stay . . . and the degree of economic dependence on men. These lines of division are stronger than the ties that bind them by virtue of their common oppression (Ramphele 1993: 81).

With regards to men and women living together, I have observed that a couple would live together in a shack for a while before realising that they have irreconcilable differences and cannot live with each other. Depending on who owned the shack, the man would either go

back to the blockhouse or the woman would have to find her own place. A woman would either build or buy her own shack or find a shack to rent or get involved with another man who owns a shack. Bonner (1990: 247) confirms this finding, saying that women do not stick to the men through whom they get their lodgers' permits. When a woman thinks she has sufficient resources, she drives the man away and gets another. What normally happens is that in her own place, she can invite her sisters or girlfriends and/or children to come and live with her. Deborah James (1999: 99) says that particularly for migrant working women, households have been created based on structured co-operation between sisters, siblings of both sexes or mother and daughter. Paulus Zulu (1993a) argues that the women are not always the wives of the men from the hostels, nor are they necessarily girlfriends of specific men living in the hostels.

Mark Hunter (2006) also found that most women who arrived in the informal settlements stayed with an older sister or other relatives or friends. On the other hand,

the fact that [some of] these women come from a totally distinct area of the country, and from rural backgrounds very different from those of their male counterparts illustrates a point made by Bozzoli about female migration: 'One cannot assume that the later women who leave the land "belong" to the men who left earlier' (James 1999: 44).

Bozzoli, writing in 1983 from a Marxist feminist point of view, acknowledges that it is grossly incorrect to make this assumption. She notes that a complex process is involved in such a move, including matters of culture, ideology and family structure.

What I found to be the most essential fact about the presence of women at the hostel is that contrary to what many men at the hostel think, they are actually working. Although there is a high unemployment rate in South Africa, women are earning an income, which promotes financial independence and stability, although their working conditions are not always good.

There was also an initiative, although not widespread, to have relevant structures for women to complain to in case of any problems.

Some participants argued that these structures are dominated by men, but Mama Phindile Ntshangase was one of the active women in these structures. Mama Ntshangase, who was a prominent member of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Women's Brigade and is now a member of the National Freedom Party (NFP), has been living in the hostel since the late 1980s. She now lives in a two-bedroomed CRU. In one bedroom another man lives by himself. He has a wife in the rural areas and she visits occasionally. In the other bedroom Mama Ntshangase lives with her husband and her three teenage girls. The girls sleep on the kitchenette floor. Mama Ntshangase's teenage son lives in a shack, which has belonged to his mother since the late 1980s. This is what she had to say when I asked her about the living conditions of women during the apartheid era:

It was difficult at that time because as a woman, you did not have any rights in the hostel. We lived under the authority and rules of men and we did not have a say in what was happening. If there were meetings, women were not allowed to attend those meetings because although they existed, it was not legally. It was important as a woman to make sure that there is no fault or mistake that you made because if something like that happened, other men were quick to tell your husband to send you home . . . Sometimes you would be shy to tell the people that you live in a hostel because it was known that it was a place for men. We are also grateful for a lot of work that has been done by the [IFP] councillor. We are now free, we have a voice and we can talk about everything.⁷

Hunter (2010: 9) says of that time: 'Moreover, to my surprise, older women recalled that "traditional" institutions like Inkatha had actually brought them some rights, albeit tied up with the preservation of hierarchies based on *inhlonipho*, or respect.'

While most scholars strongly associate gender and gender issues with women, their vulnerabilities and weaknesses, Hunter (2005b: 401) eloquently declares that gender is more than simply a one-dimensional expression of male power, but is also embodied in male vulnerabilities

and weaknesses. According to Hunter (2002: 104), gender inequalities have been accentuated by

rapid in-migration despite an erosion of jobs and working conditions . . . Migrants still continue to tread the same paths from Northern KwaZulu-Natal that their relatives and friends have taken for the last three decades, although this time there is a crucial difference – there is often no work at the end of the road. Consequently, every weekday, hundreds of unemployed people move from factory to factory to *fesa* (seek work). Some have done so for more than two years without finding employment.

RELATIONS AMONG MEN

Social relations in the hostel environment continue to be one of the strongest support structures and reference points for male migrants. Men have stronger ties with each other than women do; hence their socio-economic support system in the urban areas is stronger. They know each other. They support each other. It is true that this has a lot to do with the reproduction of the structures and the system of the hostels. Men have avenues to get together. They have long histories of those practices. They have extensive experience and strong networks. They easily carry on the traditions of their forefathers and uncles. As Ramphele (1993) and Ari Sitas (1996) have acknowledged, regardless of the degrading circumstances that they live in, male migrants have found ways of surviving.

The situations facing men in the hostels are not the same as the situations facing women. Men are mostly sure of secure shelter and their next meal (through social support from fathers and uncles, or other men from their area of origin). If and when they want to go home, even if they are not working, they can rely on an uncle who is going back to the village for few days to help them. Some young men liked the fact that they can learn and get guidance from older men in the hostel; they have financial and psychosocial support. Ramphele (1993: 128) calls this an 'economy of affection' involving kin, 'home people' and friends, which protects any man from falling off the edge of society. It appears that the rewards of accepting the system are greater for young men

than for young women (Bozzoli 1991: 81). The present system seems to work well for the men and there is no reason why they should change it (Ramphela 1993: 69). Ramphela adds that men have a vested interest in the perpetuation of a system that gives them considerable power. As Ramphela (1993), Hunter (2002, 2005a, 2005b) and Shefer et al. (2008) have all argued: culture is frequently used in multiple contexts to legitimise gender inequalities.

GENDER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

What became another interesting point for me from all the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork is that when people were asked how they share cleaning responsibilities, none of them said they had a cleaning schedule. It seemed that a timetable was not a feasible system for them. The reason often mentioned for this was that if it was someone's turn to clean, but that person was at work, the house would remain dirty. Unsurprisingly, there were those who complained about roommates who 'did not even know how to hold a broom'. Although women also did not have rosters, their case is a bit different; it is possible to find four unrelated men living together in one house, whereas it was highly unlikely to find two or three unrelated women living together. Women mostly lived in one-roomed shacks, while men mostly lived in the blockhouses. Women who live in a shack often have a male live-in partner and cleaning responsibilities lie with the woman. Changing gender and household dynamics do not imply that women's roles and responsibilities have been reduced.

The traditional role of a man was to be the primary home builder, the *umnumzane* (household head) and the provider, maintaining the well-being of the household. His responsibilities were to find employment, pay lobola and get married, establish a homestead and earn an income to take care of the whole family. The traditional role of a woman was to be a secondary home-builder, *inkosikazi* (wife) and suitable helper, playing a supportive role through and through. Her responsibilities were to become a housewife: do the house chores and take care of the children, the in-laws, the livestock and the land, everything and everybody at home, as well as to engage in secondary survival strategies for the household's well-being.

Most men believed that a woman's place was in the rural areas, taking care of the family and making sure that the household thrives. Hunter (2005b) argues that material and cultural change are inseparable and co-determining; hence both married and unmarried women have moved from rural areas to the hostels and informal settlements in great numbers (Hunter 2007) to do that which is not 'traditional'. Traditionally, it was the role of men to support the family from all sorts of insecurities, but there are a lot of contradictions, discontinuities and tensions with regard to the traditional roles and responsibilities of men and women. Considering the changes currently taking place in gender and household matters, I argue that women constantly have to find new ways of survival in cases where men are failing to play the headship roles as dictated by tradition.

Whether at the hostel or in the rural areas, household chores remain women's primary responsibility. Women at the hostel during my research argued that this is the reason why men have extramarital relationships when they have wives who are in the rural areas; they just want somebody to wash, clean and cook for them. Although one could argue that hostel-dwellers are quite well trained in performing these duties for themselves, the trend is that if a woman arrives on the scene, the man will leave every household chore to her as long as she is there. Child-rearing also remains women's responsibility, whether at the hostel or in the rural areas. However, women tend to leave their children of all ages with their grandparents in the rural areas and look for jobs in urban areas. Ramphela (1993) argues that for children to be born and grow up in the hostel is good because men get to play a role that they normally never really play, as they are always away from the children, working in urban areas.

There are a number of factors that force women to leave their rural homesteads to go to urban areas. Sometimes they are seeking independence and financial freedom, but sometimes their struggle doubles. Mama Pretty Zulu, a 51-year-old woman, lost her husband a few years ago. He was the breadwinner of her household, while she was unemployed. She came to the hostel to seek job opportunities to support her children who were all still at school. Upon coming to the hostel through a relative, she has found herself a middle-aged man as a boyfriend. This boyfriend has stopped working and now Mama Zulu

has to support him as well as her children and grandchildren in the rural area.

On the other hand, Siboniso Mkhize is a 23-year-old man who lives at the hostel, is studying part time and works as a casual petrol attendant in a nearby garage. After coming to the hostel and finding work, he told his mother to stop working. She had been a housewife for many years, but when she separated from the father of her children, she had to come to the hostel, through her brother, to find work. She has worked for few years. Once she had two sons working she could go back home and continue taking care of her younger children, relying on social grants and support from her sons. Both sons used to live at the hostel, but one has relocated for work-related reasons.

CONCLUSION

This chapter shows the production of perplexity through gendered spaces at the hostel and in the rural areas. It mostly refers to the negative aspects of gendered spaces. Men and women's stories demonstrate how spaces are gendered and in what circumstances these pose a threat for the other. These stories reflect beliefs as well as actions of the migrants together with their families based in the rural areas. Gendered spaces are produced, reproduced and redefined continuously in both rural and urban areas.

People are much more complex creatures than economic agency allows. Gender agency is part of making sense of people's worlds. All of this happens through a dynamic process with no fixed destination, but with the household as the common ground. What is obvious is that people are producing their own spaces, meanings and identities that do not always fit with their traditional cultural norms.

NOTES

1. When I visited her in December 2011, she had not seen her husband since January 2010; he had left after the December 2010 holidays and not come back. He was expected to return on 17 December 2011 for holidays.
2. *Umdiyadiya* is a curtain used by men during the apartheid era to cover themselves in their beds when they had their partners visiting. The curtain only covered his side of the bed so that other people in the room could not see behind it.

3. Lobola is paid by a man to the bride's family.
4. For men, this means that women do not behave well and do not take as good care of themselves as their parents used to. They involve themselves with multiple partners and fall pregnant while young and unmarried with no secure income – except relying on a social grant. Women are negatively judged for *ukukupita* (co-habiting, living with somebody you are not married to). They are seen as *abantu abangenasimilo*, people without a value system or self-respect.
5. Pule and Matlosa's two hypotheses are that 'male migration increases the power of women in Lesotho's rural economy, although the social system, patriarchy and ideology of domesticity restrict the boundaries of this power'. Secondly, 'retrenchment of Basotho migrants leads to diminution of power of rural women and when it combines with the patriarchal social system and ideology of domesticity, the marginalisation of women is further deepened' (2000: 3).
6. This question referred to the single-sex hostels, not to family housing (CRUs).
7. Interview with Mama Phindile Ntshangase, 16 July 2009.

Household and Housing Dynamics

This chapter intends to show how the various formations discussed in previous chapters manifest themselves at a household level. This is where I apply what Ari Sitas (1996) calls ‘disvaluation’ to show how individuals, families and communities find ways and reasons to stick together when everything seems to be against them – for example, HIV-related sickness, unemployment or destitution. This chapter also aims to show, as argued by Sarah Mosoetsa (2011: 116–17), that social, economic and political resources are an integral part of daily and long-term livelihood activities in households and communities. Social alliances and networks, formal or informal, are continually reformed and renegotiated in order to respond to the changing social and economic context. Mosoetsa takes seriously the idea that households should not be seen as the only resource at the disposal of the poor in their livelihood struggles – organisations also offer social, economic and political resources (84). Similarly, it is crucial to continue to see the hostel as a departure point in understanding the broader processes and connections that become relevant for the making of livelihoods for individuals and their social networks, understanding the hostel as just one of many nodal points of interconnection.¹ I would also argue that changing hostels into family housing perhaps did not consider the changes in the demographics of the hostel population or the changes in rural–urban flows.

A household is defined as ‘all those persons who share a living unit, among whom there is a degree of economic cooperation and mutual dependence, who share a common kitchen and eat meals together’ (Steyn 1995: 177). Housing is defined as a variety of processes through which habitable, stable and sustainable public and private residential environments are created for viable households and communities. This recognises that the environment within which a house is situated is as

important as the house itself in satisfying the needs and requirements of the occupants.² This section, in discussing the household and the housing structures of the sample population, unveils a number of other issues directly relevant to other factors related to households.

A variety of household arrangements has become prominent in black people's lives. The different kinds of households identified in the South African context include single-person households. Susan Ziehl (2002: 45) adds that a single-person household has a structure and a specific household size – there is only one position and one person. Ziehl also notes that these are extremely rare among black South Africans. Then there are couple households, which are defined as a household head plus one spouse (Wittenberg and Collinson 2007: 132). There are nuclear households, which are defined as a household head plus spouse plus children. Single-parent households are defined as a household head plus children. There are also extended households, such as three-generation linear, which are defined as a household head (with or without spouse) plus children plus parent (or parent-in-law) or a household head (with or without spouse) plus children plus grandchildren. Three-generation skip households are defined as a household head (with or without spouse) plus grandchildren, but with no children present. There are also multiple-generational households, which are households with great-grandparents and/or great-grandchildren. Siblings-only households include a household head with his or her siblings. There are complex but related households, which are defined as households that do not fit any of the previous categories, in which everyone is related (directly or indirectly) to the head of the household. Finally, there are complex and unrelated households, which are households in which at least one member of the household is not related to the household head (Wittenberg and Collinson 2007: 134).

Martin Wittenberg and Mark Collinson (2007) try to provide a comprehensive list of the different kinds of households that can be found in South African society, but it seems to me that the hostels – in their former sense – were either unrepresented or misrepresented by the above categories. Probably there are categories above that one could slot them into, but I would argue that this would be a misrepresentation of what they are, as well as of the relationships that exist between the different persons at the hostels and in rural areas. I would strongly argue

against the classification of hostel-dwellers as belonging to 'single-person households' (Wittenberg and Collinson 2007: 136). The category that *could* be associated with hostel-dwellers is that of 'complex and unrelated households'. I say '*could*' because while in most cases hostel-dwellers living in one room or block are related, it is not always the case that four people living in one blockhouse are related. There are cases where four men all have different surnames, backgrounds and origins. Upon living together, they create a new form of brotherhood. My findings indicate that some households qualify for classification in more than one category.

Furthermore, a number of scholars have investigated whether extended family living arrangements have disappeared or are disappearing in African society and the dynamics related to this phenomenon. One important point I would like to make is that regardless of the 'stretched-out' (Massey 1994) social relations and the different and changing household and housing structures for black families, the concept of family is still very strong. This can partly be proven by the fact that black people, especially migrants as has been shown by my research findings in this book, retain strong ties between rural and urban areas.

As Ziehl (2002: 28) argues, it is important to draw 'distinctions between cultural ideas about family life (who should be living with whom and how people should be treated) and the composition of household (who is living with whom, sharing resources, etc.)'. Nombulelo Siqwana-Ndulo (1998: 410) argues: 'The study of African family forms, both in Africa and African diaspora, requires a recognition of the fact that family or household organization is part of a social system with a cultural heritage based on a value system quite distinct from the western.' She further argues that although there have been some changes in the ways black families are organised, the basic difference is that while Western marriage is based on individualism and independence, African families are based on principles of collectivity and interdependence.

My research has shown that black people do not differentiate between the nuclear family and the extended family. For African families, family is family; there is no primary or secondary category. One way this fact was communicated during my fieldwork was through participants making references to their parents or siblings. At some stage of an interview I would hear that the participant's parents had passed away.

But in the next moment s/he would make references to his/her mother as if she were still alive. When I asked for clarification, s/he would explain that s/he is referring to his/her aunt. The aunts and uncles that we as Africans call mothers and fathers are normally our father's younger or older brother and our mother's younger or older sisters. However, in *isiZulu* the other way of referring to aunts and uncles is 'ubaba omncane' or 'ubaba omdala' and 'umamncane' or 'umamkhulu'. *Ubaba* means 'father'; *umama* means 'mother'. *Omncane* means 'the smaller one' and *omdala* or *omkhulu* means 'the older' or 'bigger one'.

To give a specific example, Phinda is in his mid-twenties. He is from Nongoma and lives at the hostel with his girlfriend. His mother passed away nine years ago and he lost his father nineteen years ago. His mother did not marry his father; he also did not know his father. When his father passed away, his grandmother from his father's side handed Phinda over to his father's younger brother. This *baba omncane* was the one who had to take over the responsibility of being a father to Phinda, although his biological father had never taken responsibility for him. This is the man that Phinda calls 'Father'. While he was still living in the rural area, he lived with his maternal grandmother, his mother and his siblings. His mother worked and only came back home twice a month when she had a day off. So, it was through this household arrangement that Phinda got used to calling his grandmother not *gogo*, but mother. Now Phinda, his two younger siblings (nineteen and fifteen), as well as Phinda's five-year-old son all refer to *gogo* as mother because this is the woman who has been with them for as long as they can remember and she continues to take care of their primary needs as is the role of a mother.

His late biological father had twenty or more children from different women and Phinda only knows fewer than five of his father's children. The man he now calls father has fifteen or more children and again they are from different women and he does not know all of them; he knows only eleven. When you talk to him about all his known and unknown step-siblings and half-siblings and cousins, he consistently refuses to call them cousins or step-sisters, step-brothers or half-sisters or half-brothers. He will tell you that they are his brothers and sisters, nothing more and nothing less.³

Although Mark Lurie (2007: 94) has been able to prove that the average household size has decreased, this does not in any way weaken the concept of family (what is generally called 'the extended family') for African people. Wittenberg and Collinson (2007: 135) argue that their findings do not imply that African families are moving towards a Western understanding of families: single or couple or nuclear. They further argue that three-generation linear and complex households are less likely to disappear. This idea of three-generation skip and complex households is perfectly demonstrated by Phinda's story above.

In addition, I want to argue that these household structures are on the increase. However, this does not negate the fact that a variety of family and household structures can be found in South African society today. Ziehl (2002: 35) defines a household structure as a particular configuration of relationships between individuals who live together at a particular point in time (see also Russell 2003; Steyn 1995). The way one defines 'family' and 'household' becomes critical to the conclusions one reaches about the changes taking place in these contexts.⁴ I find Margo Russell's conception and understanding of black South African households useful in this context. She argues that many urban-dwellers are still embedded in a broader set of relations and that they will return to their base in the extended family eventually. In other words, one needs to understand not only the current position of the individual, but rather the trajectory, their 'life course' (Russell 2003).

There are a number of housing structures that this book is directly concerned with: hostels, community residential units (CRUs), informal settlements, homesteads and Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses. The first four housing structures are part of the research sites where most of the data was collected for this book. They have constantly been found to be highly gendered and contested spaces, which is why I label them 'spaces of perplexity'. The fifth is included because, like the CRUs, RDP houses were formally introduced at the advent of democracy and are a direct poverty-alleviation strategy on the part of the government. All of the above-mentioned housing structures (except the homestead) have similar characteristics, located in or close to the townships in urban areas and accommodating people in the lower stratum of the economic hierarchy.

According to the Department of Housing (2003: 1):

Housing the Nation . . . is one of the greatest challenges facing the Government of National Unity. The extent of the challenges derives not only from the enormous size of the housing backlog and the desperation and impatience of the homeless, but stems also from the extremely complicated bureaucratic, administrative, financial and institutional framework inherited from the previous government.

CRUs and RDP houses have been part of the democratic government's direct interventions to redress the apartheid past. Hostels and informal settlements have successfully resisted their abolition by the democratic government. The difference between the latter two is that they served different purposes during the apartheid era and while the government wanted and needed the hostels, it did not want the informal settlements. Informal settlements served a purpose to the detriment of the apartheid regime: the influx of unregistered black people into the cities. On the other hand, they housed people from the rural areas and were normally seen as a point of entry into urban areas. In addition to hostels and informal settlements, I argue that the establishment of the CRUs and RDP housing structures has exacerbated changes in the household, as well as in terms of generational and gender relations.

It has often been argued that labour migration in South Africa was one of the first major processes that brought about drastic changes in the household size and structure of the African family. It is from this notion that Belinda Bozzoli (1983) questioned theories that did not explain why it had to be men who left and women who were left behind. In her Marxist, feminist approach she chose to focus on the 'struggle' – domestic struggle – rather than the 'structure' – of the household.⁵

Zolani Ngwane (2003), on the other hand, argues that there is no reason to suppose that the 'fluidity' of the household originated with migrant labour (see also Amoateng, Heaton and Kalule-Sabiti 2007). He argues that it only intensified the shifts and complicated the means by which they were to be made sense of (Ngwane 2003: 699). The migration process itself has undergone a number of changes, which have been constantly but inconsistently bringing about changes in the

construction, definition and organisation of the household, as well as in gender relations. Mark Hunter (2006: 155) contends that it is a clear fact that most young black men and women find it difficult to establish a marital home with any degree of geographical and economic stability.

There are many factors that have contributed to changing housing and household structures; it is not only the size of the settlement or household, there are also health factors (such as HIV and AIDS) and economic factors (such as unemployment), which play a bigger role than they played three decades ago. In addition, RDP houses and informal settlements can be further understood as having contributed to the presence of child-headed and an increasing number of female-headed households. There is a saying in *isiZulu* that says, '*Awukho umuzi wentombazane*' (there is no homestead for a girl), which basically discourages but also disregards an unmarried female heading a household. This phrase is sometimes used when a female is doing well enough that she wants to move out and have her own house, so the rule is that she should not; she should remain in her father's house until she gets married. This is why also when a woman becomes pregnant before getting married, the child she gives birth to is generally known as the child of her mother and father. This is because they technically take care of the child, including providing shelter. It also implies that an unmarried woman is not really capable of doing anything sound because she does not have the support or leadership of a man, other than her father. Bozzoli (1991: 44) argues that even a 'single parent autocrat was lessened by the presence of other adults' in the household. The concept of a child-headed household is traditionally unheard of in African communities. The children that are now heading households should be living with their grandparents and/or their relatives. If there are no relatives, there is a point at which your neighbours become part of your family in African communities, as much as I have suggested that hostel-dwellers form a new bond of brotherhood with those they live with.

I do not mean to argue that it is wrong for people of adult age to move out of their parents' households, but it is clear that the traditional foundations of African society do not allow for this to happen easily. Deprivation, dispossession, inequality, unemployment, increased HIV and AIDS rates and slow rates of higher education are some of the

characteristics challenging the foundations of our society, those of interdependence and collectivity.

Perhaps the problem with the democratic government in terms of the housing crisis is that it continues to push black South Africans into the small segregated spaces that the apartheid government allocated to them. This is where the question of housing becomes relevant to the question of land. Realistically speaking, there is minimal urban or rural land available to previously disadvantaged communities. In the urban areas, one has to be in a financially favourable position to be able to afford to buy land and/or proper housing for one's family. The low income of the majority of the black community does not match the cost of urban land for residential development. For most, it is not an issue of choosing where to live; rather, it is being pushed into particular spaces allocated to low income earners (see Godehart 2006).

HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP AND GENDER RELATIONS

This section looks at intra-household, familial and intergenerational relations. I try to make sense of the household, both as a site of struggle and one of harmony. I am in agreement with Mosoetsa (2011: 132), who argues: 'The broader societal norms and values in which households are embedded also have a deep influence on struggles and decision making within the household.' This is the reason that I saw participants in my research as more than just individuals; I went to households and lived in their communities (urban and rural) in order to have a better understanding of their everyday life experiences. From this research I have come to appreciate the fact that specific variables, such as gender, marital status, income (or lack thereof) and seniority, are important factors in understanding household relations and dynamics since these relate to the consumption, production and allocative patterns within the household. Mosoetsa found that 'the increasing inability of men to earn income and the greater access to income by women by means of state transfers has led to serious tensions in households, not only between men and women, but also between young women and older women'. The evidence she presents in her book makes it clear that gender and age are critical components of the relationships that shape intra-household dynamics (121). While she found that intergenerational

conflict often arose because of a lack of resources, I found that the primary reason for intergenerational conflict is the rights that have been given to women and children by the government. An example is given below, from an interview Baba Makhathini on 16 January 2011:

Baba Makhathini: Your rights would not allow me to have a driver's licence at this age. They close doors for us. They say I am too old now and I can't see properly in my eyes and they change their books all the time, whereas they never changed during our times. You see this current governance, there are many ways in which it has enslaved us. There are many laws that hinder us from doing what we would like to do.

Nomkhosi: But if you were to get the licence this year, would you buy a car?

Baba Makhathini: Yes, as it is, I am really wishing for a car.

The views of Baba Makhathini and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) councillor stood out for me from everybody else's. The latter comes from Melmoth and came to KwaMashu Hostel in mid-1960s. He has no formal education and has three wives, two in the rural area and one who lives with him at KwaMashu. He has eighteen children. Some are in the rural area, but most of the male children are scattered all over the hostel. They all have rooms in the CRUs in different zones and they serve as their father's bodyguards. There are certain similarities between Baba Makhathini's and the IFP councillor's perceptions. Both arrived at the hostel around the same time, both are in polygamous marriages and both have strong views against the government, especially about the 'rights' that have been given to women and children. They believe the government has taken away what was rightfully theirs – their families and the roles and responsibilities of running a family. The councillor said that he really does not understand and dismisses the role of the state in his family, between him and his wives and children. 'There is no such thing as rape between two married people,' he said during our interview. He said the government is confused and is confusing the whole country. He also said:

The government is failing to look after issues like crime and unemployment in the country, but it is busy interfering in personal and family matters. The government is making it even more difficult for families to raise children with morals and values because children have 'rights' as well. If the parent disciplines the child, the child can go and report abuse to the police and the police will arrest the parent. While the parent is in prison, who is supposed to look after and provide for this child?⁶

The IFP councillor also severely criticised the government for providing social grants, saying it is the reason why 'children are going to continue giving babies without fathers and home because they get paid to do that'.⁷ Unfortunately, it is all too easy for people to blame the government for these intra-household and intergenerational conflicts. The ways in which the government has tried to stabilise the country are the same ways that are being criticised by some hostel-dwellers and their families as causing problems in intra-household relations, such as the development of the CRUs, social grants and women's and children's rights.

Dorrit Posel's (2001) data shows that the household head is usually the oldest person in the household and the highest income earner and this is linked to the decision-making responsibility. She further argues that the fact that the head is usually the oldest person in the household may reflect structures of authority related to age. For the African community, it is important to know that although it is mainly gender, age and income that determine the headship, there are times when income and gender does not become a defining feature in headship.

For example, in the Magwaza household at Eshowe, I interviewed Mama Magwaza, who lives with her retired and crippled husband, her mother-in-law (estimated to be more than 90 years old), her children and grandchildren. Her husband was a migrant worker until he retired and her sons are migrant workers. When I asked her who the household head was, she pointed at her mother-in-law who was sunbathing in their yard. Nobody knew exactly how old she was. The mother-in-law only gets an old age pension as income. Her household headship

position is more out of respect (*ukuhlonipha*) than the actual roles and responsibilities that have to be performed by a household head.

What is important to keep in mind about household headship is that it may not be uniform across different cultures and contexts. Posel (2001) argues that in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal specifically, there is an increase in female-headed households. She further argues that female-headed households are more likely than male-headed households to be concentrated at the lower end of income distribution. Hunter (2005a), in his work at Mandeni in Sundumbili Township and Isithebe informal settlement, found that men can earn ten times more than women. He adds that even retrenched men can still be in a better position than women who are in informal jobs. My research at the hostel substantiates this view. Even when men start informal businesses, they manage to stay out of poverty. Female-headed households that are particularly vulnerable are those that include unemployed male adults (Posel 2001: 653).

Whether women head households with the assistance of social grants, the sexual economy or casual and/or informal employment, their roles as household heads do not diminish their traditional roles of household reproduction, including childcare. Instead, their responsibilities increase, as they take on men's traditional roles and responsibilities concerning 'larger decisions' about household investments (Posel 2001; Bozzoli 1983). Gender inequalities remain endemic in South Africa, regardless of the changes that have taken place since the end of legal apartheid (Shefer et al. 2008).

While the positions of children and adults have changed in the household realm, this does not imply that gender roles and responsibilities have been radically restructured. In total, women's responses to their situations can be seen as a mixture of assertiveness and conformism (Bozzoli 1991: 237). Mamphela Ramphele (1993: 129) argues that conformism is also a necessary part of creating harmony under the severe space constraints in hostels and informal settlements. As in other parts of South Africa, 'these new developments did not challenge existing gender stereotypes about women head-on. In many respects they worked to reinforce them in new settings. Nevertheless they did necessitate some adjustments in attitudes of women to the benefit of [households and gender relations]' (Walker 1990: 332).

CONCLUSION

This chapter explores patterns of integration and disintegration that take place throughout the life trajectories of hostel-dwellers and the families linked to them. There is a constant process of struggles and changes in meanings, identities negotiated and renegotiated, and contested and reconstructed spaces and formations. The different formations examined in the context of the rural-urban connections continue to be major points of harmonies and tensions, agreements and contradictions, securities and insecurities and triumphs and struggles. Formations are constructed and defined according to the needs and functions of the particular community at a particular time and in a particular space. Gender dynamics and challenged patriarchal dominance represent the (old) struggles in new ways and at different times. Lack of space, overcrowding, uncleanliness, unemployment, social reproduction and social inequality have always existed, but both men and women are finding new ways of dealing with them. Women have not merely been passive victims of externally imposed codes of behaviour and men have also not been consistent forces working against women.

Although prioritising one's gender may leave little room for stepping outside the ongoing current construction of gender (McClintock 1995), I argue that whether one is talking about social grants, rural-urban migration, casual employment, informal employment or transactional sex, what is clear is that all of these are issues of struggle; struggles of mostly women, struggles to make a living, struggles with and through the self, the partner/spouse, household members, community, society and the state. Undeniably, hostels continue to be highly gendered spaces, which further complicates household and housing structures. Household structures, and generational and gender changes have been exacerbated by the mushrooming of informal settlements and the establishment of CRUs and RDP housing.

NOTES

1. Hunter (2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2010) draws on the importance of the interconnections between unemployment, low marital rates and the collapse of agrarian livelihoods and the consequences this has for the formation of households and sexuality.

2. 'A New Housing Policy and Strategy for South Africa', 1994, <http://www.gov.za/documents/new-housing-policy-and-strategy-south-africa>.
3. Interview with Phinda Msomi, 20 December 2010.
4. Ziehl (2002: 37) has defined a family as a social institution comprising an ideological component (ideas about marriage, procreation, residential patterns and so on) and a concrete component in the form of residential patterns or household arrangements.
5. Bozzoli (1983: 147) further differentiates between 'internal domestic struggle' and 'external domestic struggle'. The internal domestic struggle concerns the extent to which the domestic sphere is the site of labour, income and property relations. External domestic struggle relates to the conflicts and compromises that take place between the domestic sphere and the wider capitalist society.
6. Interview with IFP Councillor, 12 September 2010.
7. This specific point was also made by a woman from Empangeni, referring to her own children who have not finished school, but are already having babies.

Conclusion

In an effort to comprehend the ongoing changes at KwaMashu Hostel, I have termed the hostels ‘spaces of perplexity’. In this book I argue that hostels are spaces of perplexity by examining the social (gender, cultural, spiritual and familial), political, spatial and economic changes that have taken place at the hostel, especially through and because of the ongoing conversion to community residential units (CRUs). Although I maintain that the hostel is highly paradoxical, hostels are still a preferable form of accommodation for many rural-urban migrants, primarily because they are cheap. Relations of brotherhood and sisterhood, generally known as *umkhaya*, and long trends of migration across generations in various households and communities serve as points of attraction as well. Hostels have always been strategically positioned geographically in relation to workplaces. Seeing hostels as spaces of perplexity comprehensively negates the policy vision of transforming hostels into nuclear family units; instead, hostels are full of variation, confusion, multiplicity and differentiation. This acknowledges the elements of history, of change and of continuity in hostels, as well as the conflict in ideas and visions between the government and the citizens.

While hostel(s) have always been seen as either *umuzi wezinsizwa* (a place for men) or *indawo yabantu basemakhaya* (rural people’s space), after doing ethnography at the hostel for nearly two years, I can conclude that hostels are much more complex than the policy documents suggest and much more complex than how the hostel-dwellers themselves see them. By using the term ‘spaces of perplexity’ with regard to hostels, I am trying to capture the multiple meanings and experiences that are embedded at the hostel through the lives of the hostel-dwellers and their families. The hostel is a space full of conflicts of interests (between the government and hostel-dwellers; residents and migrants; men and

women; elders and young people; political parties), confusion (about roles and responsibilities) and challenges (lack of employment, an inability to build a homestead and the HIV and AIDS pandemic).

What the hostels have turned out to be is a highly complicated form of social setting, which cannot be explained solely by the past (although some people are still stuck in old frames of reference when they refer to hostels). It is also difficult to rely on the current policy language because it isolates many people who do not identify with CRUs because they do not have families in the urban areas and are against the presence of women and children in these spaces, as well as women who are not interested in making families, but rather in making a living. It is also difficult to rely on the current policy framework because it deems the presence of shacks 'illegal' and the people who live in them (the majority of whom are women) 'unlawful'. The reality challenges this view: some of the women who live in shacks have been there since the abolition of influx control (1986), if not earlier.

While hostel-dwellers were once regarded as alienated and marginalised from both the townships and informal settlements, this is not the case with KwaMashu, as I have tried to show through a close examination of the migration processes of cultural formation, changes in gender roles, integration and disintegration, connections and disconnections and contradictions that have resulted in perplexity. The migrant labour system and the establishment of hostels created a revolution in the way that black people make a living and live their everyday lives. Post-apartheid hostels have been integrated through the development of CRUs, but migrants have been challenged by collapsing livelihoods in both urban and rural areas, which many migrants have mitigated through social grants and some by resorting to illegal and immoral survival strategies.

Examining change at the hostel has demanded that I pay specific attention to issues of livelihoods and spatiality – the production of space and place. It has also required sensitivity to gender issues and engaging with rural-urban migration and movements. The critical part of the changes at the hostel involves the conversion of the hostel system into CRUs. Issues with the conversion can be traced back to mid-1980s when it was proposed by the liberation movement and widely discussed and rejected by the majority of the hostel community in South Africa.

Using KwaMashu Hostel as a starting point has allowed me to move from the micro to the macro, from the hostel community to South African society. Through critical ethnographic work, I engaged with stretched-out social relations, everyday life practices and meanings. Through a regressive–progressive method (going backwards in order to be able to go forward), I was able to get the bigger historical and geographical picture by not only looking at the migrants’ lives at the hostel, but also their homes at the rural areas of Eshowe, Empangeni, Nongoma and Hlabisa and to explore the history of the hostel from its establishment. I was able to trace the particularities of rural–urban movements and migration, as well as livelihood strategies and struggles. I used the production of space and the cultural formations approach to frame and make sense of the findings.

The research process reminded me that ‘histories of place are never just a straightforward account of “the facts.” Like the life histories with which they are closely intertwined, they are always multiple, contested, deeply politicized, produced in specific contexts, and made to serve the needs of the present’ (Hart 2002: 9). I have used KwaMashu Hostel as a particular vantage point in time to trace the apartheid legacy in one vital black township area, so as to see the impact, results and consequences of the shift of the ruling government from Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policies to neoliberal policies and the effects this has had on livelihood strategies. The stories in this book are not only about the history of hostels, but also about how the subjective and collective meanings of hostel-dwellers are constructed and deconstructed through the refurbishment of the hostels. One thing that stands out starkly from the data is the contradictions brought about in the post-apartheid era. These contradictions can be strongly felt and seen by everybody at every level – spatially, culturally and spiritually, as well as in terms of gender, rural-urban contexts and migrations, land and livelihoods.

Gender and sexuality are centrally important constitutive forces in the making of the hostels and the livelihoods of the hostel-dwellers. This book provides an analysis of how gender hierarchies are constructed, legitimated, challenged and maintained, so as to fit the ideal setting for the hostel-dwellers’ livelihoods. In the words of Joan Wallach Scott (1988: 4): ‘Perhaps the most dramatic shift in my own thinking came

through asking questions about how hierarchies such as those of gender are constructed and legitimized. The emphasis on “how” suggests a study of processes, not of origins, of multiple rather than single causes.’

There are ongoing rural-urban connections, but in the context of the collapse of livelihoods at both ends. Migrant workers continue to move from rural to urban areas in search of employment, even when there are inadequate employment opportunities at the other end. While land and livestock in other parts of South Africa (for example, the Eastern Cape) continue to play a prominent role as a source of wealth, my research in northern KwaZulu-Natal indicated the opposite. Unfavourable weather conditions, a shortage of human capital and a lack of adequate government support are the three main reasons for this trend.

By examining rural-urban migration as a means of multiplying and or diversifying livelihood opportunities, I have tried to show that rural-urban connections did not originate with the democratic era in South Africa (1994), or with the abolition of influx control (1986) or the beginning of the apartheid era (1948), but with the actual production of the hostels as gendered spaces, which was influenced by the establishment of the spatial division of labour through the labour migration system in South Africa. The idea of seeing the urban as sites of production and rural spaces as sites of reproduction is continuously and strongly contested by changing socio-economic forces.

Social grants play a vital but ambiguous role in supplementing and sometimes substituting household income in rural and urban areas. Social grants continue to make a difference in conditions where waged labour is diminishing and informal work is prevalent but inadequate. The role of social grants has been imperative in all the processes of seeking employment, making a living and supplementing any kind of income in a particular household. KwaMashu Hostel and its links to the rural areas are a perfect example of communities that primarily rely on informal work and social grants, both in rural and urban areas. However, social grants, as a result of their gendered nature, have a tendency to burden female recipients with responsibilities of care and maintenance.

The development process can be understood as bringing changes, which are not all good for or favoured by the hostel-dwellers.

Displacement of hostel-dwellers is an unavoidable process in the different stages of development as they are being moved from one spot to another, but some were moved and not allocated new housing. The current concentration of people both within and around the hostel means that the upgrading must involve a degree of de-densification. A fraction of the hostel-dwellers would have to be found land or housing elsewhere and this might be unpopular with those being relocated. People are moved from a single-storey hostel to a multistorey hostel, instead of being moved from a hostel to family housing/home. This results in refusal to move into a room where R125 would be paid instead of paying R26 (or nothing) as in the old blockhouse (single-storey hostel) or nothing if one owns a shack.

Transformation has only partially taken place in the hostel infrastructure and now it needs to take place in the socio-psychological frames of reference of the hostel-dwellers and the larger township community. South Africa did not only go through political transformation; the era post-1994 has also entailed transformation in the meaning of spaces.

In an effort to address the housing crisis, the democratic government continues to push black South Africans into the small segregated spaces that the apartheid government allocated to them. This is where the question of housing becomes relevant to the question of land: geographical and political positioning are everything to hostel-dwellers. The changing of hostels into family housing did not consider or create enough space for the changes in the demographics of the hostel population or the changes in rural-urban flows. The articulation of rural-urban connections is continuously being reconfigured through shifting meanings and spaces.

The main problem with gender issues at the hostel is that the majority of men (and some women) still feel that the hostel is a men's place, although some women feel that the hostel is for everyone. The other problem related to gender at the hostel is 'rights', women's rights, to be more specific. To take a fairly minor example, many women believe that they have a right to play soccer as much as men. They are happy with themselves and claim that soccer helps with many aspects of their lives, including health and psychological and physical fitness and that it takes them away from petty quarrels. More interestingly, they mentioned that it helps them to be fit so that when their partners hit

them, they can fight back. Most of the responses of men and women showed vividly that their expectations are very different – both in terms of what they expect of each other and their expectations with regard to the government.

Most men believe that the hostel is not a place where they can find themselves wives. They believe the hostel is a dirty place, both figuratively and literally. The most confusing part about gender dynamics at the hostel is that most men argued that it would have been better if women lived in separate blocks from men. This means they would be happy with the development/refurbishment process if they were not forced to share all spaces with women. They could share the hostel at large, but not spaces such as bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens.

Approximately 5 per cent of the people I met, either for an interview or for formal or informal discussion and conversations, came to the hostel for reasons other than to look for job opportunities. These are the people who either came to look after their male partners or for medical attention or traditional healers or in order to apply for social grants because of lack of efficient government services in the rural areas. These people have mostly remained at the hostel, even after their initial goals have been achieved.

While the hostel has emerged as the most hated space by men, it is also the most preferred space by men. While the hostel is the most criticised space by women, it is also the most desired space by women, especially while they are still based in the rural areas. The hostel is loved by many and hated by many. The reasons that hostel-dwellers love the hostel are the same reasons why others hate it.

Because of a lack of recent scholarly work on hostels, I feel that, in conducting this study, I have waved a flag to the South African community of scholars about the current state of the formerly single-sex hostels. Hostels offer a crystallised vantage point through which the observer can see the continuously evolving relationships, processes, production of meanings, spaces and places, rural-urban connections and disconnections, redefinition and renegotiation of household, sexual and gender roles, relations and responsibilities. In addition, conducting this research has allowed me to understand many aspects of my own sex, gender, race, class and position in society. I have been exposed to and experienced many interesting things that most South African scholars

have not experienced because of the two-year period I spent at the hostel, including the time spent in the rural areas to collect data. In the process, I have been loved and cared for and I have made friends and met family.

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HOSTELS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This book is about the transformation of KwaMashu Hostel in Durban in the twenty-first century – from a single-sex men’s hostel to family accommodation in community residential units. It presents the continuities and discontinuities that take place as hostel-dwellers grapple with everyday livelihood struggles. The broader South African labour market does not make it easy for rural-urban migrants, who continue to make the same journeys their grandfathers, fathers and uncles, and later their grandmothers, mothers and aunts took, in search of employment opportunities, although the context for these journeys has changed immeasurably.

Hostels in South Africa engages with the challenges and triumphs of hostel-dwellers, as they both resist and embrace the process of transformation, the clashes between men and women and across generations, and feelings of nostalgia for the past. Because the author spent time living at KwaMashu Hostel during the two years of her fieldwork, this book presents an intimate view of hostels from the inside.

'Hostels in South Africa is a path-breaking ethnography of hostel life that shows the profound importance of understanding the urban and rural as connected spaces. Bringing the voice of residents to the fore in a place originally built for single men, the author skilfully shows how men and women navigate gender, love, violence, the state and economic insecurity – all the time reworking one of apartheid’s most notorious spaces.'

— Mark Hunter, author of *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender, and Rights in South Africa*

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