Chapter 1

Empowerment and Transformation in South Africa

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> The combination of abject poverty at the one end, and a comfortable affluence at the other, compounded by the fact that this describes a black-white divide and most acutely, a black female against a white male disparity, constitutes an explosive mixture which must be addressed if we are to guarantee stability for our country (Thabo Mbeki, President, in his address to the National Council of Provinces, Cape Town, 10 November 1998).

Introduction

The quotation above captures succinctly the persistence of the legacy of colonial and apartheid structural inequality along gender, race and class lines, and as such calls for urgent public action to address it. Delivered at a special debate on nation building and reconstruction organised by the National Council of Provinces, Mbeki's speech as a whole mirrors current debates on the impact of South Africa's transformation on the lives of those who were disenfranchised in general, and the poor in particular. The debates centre on the extent to which states, markets and civil society can empower the poor and reduce inequality in the context of the rapid global integration of finance and markets. The persistence of poverty and inequality is largely a result of major structural problems, the most significant of which is the country's key micro- and macro-economic attributes,

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serious backlogs in investment in human resources and social services, and the structure and operation of the labour market.

The political negotiations, which led to the first democratic election in April 1994, have been variously acclaimed as a "breakthrough", a "miracle of the 20th century", and an "important landmark" in the history of South Africa. The "breakthrough" was characterised by a formal end to white minority political rule, the adoption of a broadly progressive constitution, and conscious efforts on the part of the new government to improve the access of the poor to health, education, water and housing, thus empowering them. However, the poor are still largely powerless. This book therefore takes a critical look at empowerment to provide a window through which the contradiction between structural inequality and democracy can be unpacked.

This (the first) chapter constitutes four sections. Drawing from a large body of literature on empowerment, the first section critically assesses the concept "empowerment". The argument is that the dominant theoretical interpretations of empowerment impose limits and pander to the whim of neo-liberals (Bond, 2000). In fact, "empowerment" has become a buzzword, which means everything and nothing. The second section highlights key aspects of transformation in South Africa. The third section identifies discourses on transformation in South Africa. Depending on their particular premises, the dominant interpretations of transformation focus on the power and limits of civil society, states and markets in empowering the poor and transforming societies. The fourth section presents a set of tentative propositions to assess the usefulness of social democracy in empowerment.

Towards a theoretical framework

In order to unpack the social and political transition in South Africa it is important to understand the dynamics of political regimes undergoing transformation; possibilities and limits of deepening democratic governance; and questions of economic justice within the context of processes that exclude the poor from opportunities.

Empowerment

Empowerment has come to mean different things to different people. According to Pranab Bardhan, economics professor at the University of California, Berkeley, even though the concept may have some progressive or radical origins, it has now come to be co-opted by the right wing largely to dislocate and displace the initial progressive connotations. Bardhan cites, for example, the creation of the Ministry for Empowerment in India by the right-wing party. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have come not only to adopt this new nomenclature, but also to use it consistently in the 1990s.

John Friedmann (1992) has been one of the first scholars to provide a theoretical foundation for the concept. In his book, *Empowerment: The politics of alternative development*, Friedmann (1992, p. 31) defines alternative development as

> … a process of social and political empowerment whose long term objective is to re-balance the structure of power in society by making state action more accountable, strengthening the powers of civil society in the management of its own affairs, and making corporate business more socially responsive.

He also critically appraises the theoretical foundation of "empowerment", by distinguishing between social, political and psychological empowerment.

Social empowerment, argues Friedmann (1992; 1996), is about access to certain bases of household reproduction, such as supportive life space, surplus time, knowledge and skills, social organisation, social networks, instruments of work and livelihood, and financial resources. For Friedmann, poverty is a "state of disempowerment", as "poor households lack the social power to improve the condition of their lives".

Political empowerment is about access of individuals and household members to the process by which decisions, particularly those affecting their own future, are made. Friedmann (1996) does not see political empowerment as the power to vote only, but also the power of voice and of collective action.

Psychological empowerment is about the individual's sense of potency, which is largely a result of successful action in the social and political domains (Friedmann, 1992; 1996).

Friedmann (1996) further claims that traditional development models aim or lead to a direct improvement in the conditions of the poor, especially those in rural areas. An empowerment approach, in contrast, places the emphasis on autonomy in the decision making of territorially organised communities, local self-reliance and experiential social learning (Friedmann, 1992; 1996). This view is supported by advocates of decentralisation, devolution and local control of resources and decision making (Bardhan, 1997). From this perspective, the starting point of empowerment is the locality; empowerment, as such, is seen as a process, which originates from below and within a specific territory. Friedmann's argument is that empowerment cannot be guided by governing elites, but can and should be supported by them. Greater faith is placed in civil society organisations and the state is viewed with suspicion:

> The time when people looked hopefully to the state to resolve their problems has passed. They have learned that the state is neither all-powerful nor greatly concerned with their life situations. (Friedmann, 1992, p. 139.)

According to Friedmann (1992; 1996), empowerment seeks a change in the existing national strategies through a politics of inclusive democracy, appropriate economic growth, gender equality, and sustainability or intergenerational equity. However, he is quick to point out that this approach accepts the existing system of global capitalist accumulation. Friedmann (1992, p. 14) recognises that recent convulsive changes in the organisation of capitalism "have resulted in the virtual exclusion of vast numbers of the world's poor from effective economic and political participation". As only a tiny proportion of people participate in capital accumulation, while the majority participate only marginally, Friedmann (1992, p. 13) suggests that the aim of empowerment is to:

> … humanize a system that has shut them out, and to accomplish this through forms of everyday resistance and political struggle

> that insists on the rights of the excluded population as human beings, as citizens, and as persons intent on realizing their loving and creative powers within. Its central objective is their inclusion in a restructured system that does not make them redundant.

However, empowerment as conceptualised by Friedmann has been criticised as "encapsulated within a highly restricted system of power, unable to break through to the alternative development it seeks". Critics further reject the neo-liberal interpretation of empowerment as incapable of resolving the "Third World Catastrophe", which is characterised by increasing poverty and inequality, unserviceable debt, monetary collapse and capital flight, the rise of parallel markets, degeneration of the public sector, environmental decay, rising lawlessness, revolution and secession in some countries. Shutt (1998), in his critical analysis of the failure of global capitalism, contends that empowerment does not adequately challenge neo-liberalism, which coincides in several countries with the "emasculation of the state" (Shutt, 1998, p. 229) and a "financial holocaust" (Shutt, 1998, p. 230).

Although celebrated by Friedmann, local action is severely constrained by global economic forces and structures of unequal wealth. Moreover, the constraints on the poor are structural in that the power relations that sustain capitalist production also keep the poor disempowered. In fact, in the conclusion of his book, Friedmann admits that "… when we enter the terrain of practice, the conceptual purity of an alternative development [an empowerment approach] must be abandoned" (Friedmann, 1992, p. 158). To move beyond survival, dominant relations of power in society should change and this requires something far beyond increase in access to bases of social power as espoused by Friedmann (1992; 1996).

Ultimately, therefore, Friedmann's theoretical framework raises more questions than answers. The limits of the concept "empowerment" and of its lauded meanings call for new ways of conceptualising and theorising about empowerment. This requires an understanding of globalisation,

increasing inequality, increasing debt, structural adjustment programmes and processes of democratisation.

Theorising transition

A large body of literature theorises about the nature, direction and consequences of political and economic transitions. The earlier debates focus on the interplay between political and economic factors, party politics or lack of it, social and economic implications of regime change, privatisation and the decreasing role of civil society during a transition period (Regulaska, 1998; Smith & Pickles, 1998). More recent foci of transition debates are the local dimensions of transition, and gender dimensions of transitional politics (Meurs, 1998; Regulaska, 1998). Evidence in Central and Eastern Europe suggests that transformation is offering very different opportunities to different groups of people. Some individuals quickly and easily achieve a better quality of life, while others find themselves struggling to find employment (Meurs, 1998). Indeed, economic collapse, an onslaught on labour, social and political disorientation, and abject poverty are juxtaposed to prosperity (Smith & Pickles, 1998).

In their analysis of economic and political transformations in East and Central Europe, Smith and Pickles (1998) argue that transition is not an unproblematic implementation of a set of policies involving economic liberalisation and marketisation alongside democratisation. They further argue that transition is not a one-way process of change from one economic system to another. Rather, transition constitutes a complex reworking of old social relations in the light of processes characteristic of contemporary history. Smith and Pickles (1998) contend that transition can be thought of as a series of techniques of transformation involving marketisation of economic relations, privatisation of property or assets, and democratisation of political life. Each seeks to de-monopolise the power of the state over the economy and civil society.

According to Smith and Pickles (1998), theorising transition revolves around the following central issues: first, a set of questions on how political economies in transitions are regulated; second, an exploration of ways in which political economic transition is both evolutionary and path-

dependent, in that it is based upon institutionalised forms of learning as well as struggles over pathways that emerge out of the intersection of the old and the new; third, a concern that particular trajectories of political economic development result from the ways in which social networks and social relations are moulded and institutionalised in new forms, which requires an understanding of ways in which uneven development reworks sub-national space economies (Smith & Pickles, 1998), as is the case in Eastern and Central Europe, where marginalised regional economies are increasingly left behind in the capitalist restructuring as enterprises decline and plant closures pave the way for the emergence of regions of mass unemployment (Smith & Pickles, 1998); fourth, an exploration of the changing geographies of transition and a reworking of the scales of power in a transitional context; and fifth, an examination of the limits and contested nature of democratisation (Smith & Pickles, 1998). Although these five issues were developed within the context of Eastern and Central Europe, they are important as they counter a simplistic interpretation of transition.

The generalisation of these propositions to South Africa should be explored. This will have to be done through an analysis of concrete processes and case studies. In a recent article on political transitions in Africa, Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle (1994) suggest that the nature of pre-existing regimes shapes the dynamics and outcomes of political transitions. They further suggest that literature on political transitions has focused excessively on the contingent interactions of key political actors and underestimated the formative impact of political transitions. Bratton and Van de Walle outline five important propositions on the nature of political transitions. First, they propose that political transitions from neo-patrimonial regimes originate due to social protection from below and not so much through initiatives of the elite. Second, neo-patrimonial elites disintegrate as a result of the fight for access to patronage. The state elite disintegrates due to self-interest and not ideology (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994, p. 464). Third, elite political pacts are unlikely in neo-patrimonial regimes. Fourth, in neo-patrimonial regimes, political transitions are struggles to establish legal rules. Fifth, during transitions from neo-patrimonial regimes, middle-class elements align with the opposition.

As the concept "transition" implies two polar regimes—that of authoritarianism and that of democracy—it fails to capture the complex and shifting nature of politics and processes. One way to capture this complexity is to examine party-electoral politics, and new attempts at governing the dense mix of public expectations, private interests, bureaucracy and economic constraints (Von Mettenheim & Malloy, 1998). This will require an understanding of governance as an important pillar of empowerment.

Even after introducing new corrective policy measures in South Africa, discrimination and poverty continue to exist. In fact, this was central to Thabo Mbeki's assertion in his speech to the National Council of Provinces quoted above. Aylwin (1998) poses a question very pertinent for the assessment of democracy and transition in South Africa: What use is freedom to the citizen if it does not include the ability to influence important economic decisions? Aylwin (1998) correctly suggests that small but powerful multi-national financial groups make important economic decisions that often result in disempowerment, dislocation and increased poverty for marginalised people. Put differently, what are the prospects of democracy in poor countries in the South as they encounter and contend with the dynamic and contradictory process of globalisation?

Theorising transformation in South Africa

There are three broad interpretations of the political and economic transformation in South Africa. These interpretations are informed by different conceptualisations of the nature of empowerment and transformation. Although they show overlaps, they are discussed separately here to tease out the debate on empowerment.

Neo-liberal interpretation

According to the neo-liberal interpretation, the new democratic state had no choice but to accept a series of historic compromises—neo-liberal policies that favoured big business, foreign investors, deregulation, privatisation and, at best, a "trickle" to the majority who were effectively

shut out of the economy (Mattison, 1998; Pilger, 1998). From the perspective of the neo-liberalist, decentralisation or empowerment is a way of reducing the role of the state, and getting rid of the interventionist and over-extended regulatory and predatory state (Bardhan, 1997).

This view is largely evident within the organised white business sector in South Africa. The Democratic Alliance and the Inkatha Freedom Party also espouse various shades of neo-liberalism, though with different emphasis. According to Robert Price, professor of political sciences at the University of California, Berkeley, by 1990 the African National Congress leadership realised that the redistribution of wealth was tantamount to equalisation of poverty. The World Bank and other multilateral agencies impressed upon them that the transfer of wealth was no longer feasible.

What unites the neo-liberalists is their reliance on markets and the private sector to empower the poor. They believe that more power should be transferred away from the state and given to the private sector and the markets. This shifting of power is seen as one way of empowering the market to offer opportunities to the poor. However, neo-liberalism has come under intense attack from various constituencies, especially the organised trade union movement and civil society organisations.

From the neo-liberal perspective, empowerment, too, involves decentralisation, that is, withdrawal of the state from areas of social life and from the economy, especially from labour market regulation. However, the poverty of this analysis has now been revealed even in advanced capitalist societies where inequality has increased, poverty has not disappeared and livelihoods have been severely limited by global forces.

In contrast to the neo-liberal view of the state as a hindrance, Peter Evans (1995) argues that not all states are predatory, ruthlessly extracting and providing nothing of value in return. For example, Korea has a developmental state that promotes industrial transformation, and in Brazil and India the state is in between, sometimes helping, sometimes hindering (Evans, 1995).

The adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy as a macro-economic framework for South Africa in June 1996 is seen as marking an important shift to neo-liberalism. This

shift has been largely opposed by some activists to the left within the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African National Civics Organisation. These organisations see the adoption of GEAR as the highjacking of the "national democratic revolution". They contend that instead of empowering the poor, GEAR would increase inequality, and could worsen gender and racial marginalisation. This view is supported by evidence in Latin America and Africa where neo-liberal programmes tended to universally cut labour and other groups out of policy processes and hand them a substantial bill for short-term austerity, which actions often provoke confrontation (Von Mettenheim & Malloy, 1998).

Radical democratic interpretation

While retaining a critique of capitalist inequalities, the radical democratic interpretation does not attribute social domination exclusively to capitalist relations of production or class divisions. Instead, it identifies class exploitation as one of several forms of social, economic, political or cultural domination. The radical democratic discourse seeks to transform capitalist development with struggles against patriarchy, racial, gender and ethnic discrimination, environmental degradation, and other forms of exploitation and subjugation. As such, the primary focus of political initiative is seen as a shift from the state to civil society. The radical democratic option is represented by a series of policy packages introduced in the South African parliament, such as the Employment Equity Act, the Skills Development Act and the establishment of the National Economic Development and Labour Council.

Whereas the radical democratic interpretation maintains a vision of grassroots empowerment and radical social transformation, it finds it difficult to translate its vision into alternative political and economic institutions at the national level (Roberts, 1997, p. 316). Where this has been attempted, the benefits to the poor have been unevenly shared. Cases in Latin America appear insightful. In some respects, the radical democratic interpretation has some similarities with the empowerment approach as defined by Friedmann (1996).

Social democratic interpretation

From the social democratic perspective, transformation in South Africa is seen as a platform where dominant class interests are played out. From this perspective, the present juncture is another platform for political and economic struggles to shape the nature and character of the post-apartheid society and state. For the proponents of the social democratic interpretation the issue is whether the interests of the "bourgeoisie" will eventually give way to the interests of the working class and its allies. The social democratic interpretation claims that there is an attempt to create a South Africa that is conducive to massive capital accumulation through privatisation of state assets and the adoption of neo-liberal policies, which will disempower the poor. Thus privatisation could be countered by a strategy for meeting the basic needs of the poor through a strong state, which strategy is supported by the labour movement.

Blade Ndzimande, Secretary General of the South African Communist Party, rejects a neutral or regulatory state, and advocates for a national democratic and development state with the capacity to intervene in order to achieve the goals of the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

However, the political objectives of the social democratic proponents are primarily to transform the left from being an oppositional force into a serious and viable governing alternative within the framework of pluralistic democracy, and to use state power as an instrument for social and economic reform. In fact, with a few protestations, there is consensus that the

> … National Democratic Revolution does not aim to re-shape property relations in the most fundamental way of creating a classless society where there are no exploiters and exploited. It does not seek to eliminate capital or capitalism. However, by definition, the National Democratic Revolution must see the de-racialisation of ownership, accumulation and allocation of capital; and it should do this in a manner that benefits the poor. (African National Congress, October 1998.)

Evidence in Latin America (Roberts, 1997) suggests that the social democratic option sacrifices radical change on the altar of political realism, moderating its objectives and ideals in order to ameliorate opposition and enhance its viability as a governing alternative. This is also evident in an important discussion document prepared by the African National Congress, South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. The alliance acknowledges the state's limits in resolving contradictions within society:

> … the creation of this new society will not eliminate the basic antagonism between capital and labour. Neither will it eradicate the disparate and sometimes contradictory interests … the task of the National Democratic Revolution is to eliminate the basic causes of the national grievance wherever and whatever form they manifest themselves, and to manage the multitude of contradictions within society in the interests of this objective. (African National Congress, October 1998.)

Usefulness of the social democratic interpretation

After analysing the implementation of left-wing policies in Chile and Peru in the 1980s, Roberts (1997) concludes that the social democratic option may be more feasible than other alternatives as it has the potential to garner multi-class political support and neutralise business opposition. However, there are at least two structural constraints to social democracy.

The first structural constraint is the internalisation of economic competition and capital markets. As such, international capital accumulation inherently contradicts the process by which social democratic forms of class compromise are constructed domestically (Roberts, 1997). Increased international capital flows worsen the structural dependence of the state on capital, modify the power balance between labour and capital, and thus complicate or skew efforts to institutionalise class compromise within the domestic policy. Evidence in Latin America further indicates that economic pressure can "suffocate the plans of reformist governments that transgress international norms" (Roberts, 1997, p. 318). Where social demo-

cratic parties do have electoral success, contradictions are highly likely to emerge between their electoral and economic coalitions, given the conflicting interests at stake (Roberts, 1997, p. 335). Roberts concludes that

> … social democratic strategies do not promise a direct and immediate solution to poverty and inequality … At best, they offer gradual, tentative and partial solutions, falling far short of more radical demands for social transformation and popular empowerment. (Roberts, 1997, pp. 335-337.)

Writing about a similar context, Von Mettenheim and Malloy (1998) propose that new types of liberal-democratic governance will be required to meet the dual tasks of building democratic institutions and resolving economic crises. They argue that

> [i]f executives continue to pursue technocratic solutions to political problems, not only will democracy and representation be gutted, but ineffectiveness will also continue to pervade new civilian governments. (Von Mettenheim & Malloy, 1998, p. 16.)

The attempt by the social democracy advocates to impose some discipline on the market is doomed to fail. Prospects for success appear limited as "states can create industries, but not as they choose" (Evans, 1995). This point is apposite within the debates around the macro-economic framework in South Africa.

The second structural constraint to social democracy is the relative weakness of organised labour and the social fragmentation of the popular sector. However, although this may be true in some Latin-American countries, evidence in South Africa suggests otherwise. Even though the labour movement is not united, it is not fragmented. Often alliances within the labour movement are established when there are common issues that labour could address more appropriately when in accord. The case of civil society is different. The departure of several leaders of civil society organisations to the new democratic government and new state agencies, and dwindling international financial assistance to civil society have worsened structural problems facing civil society in South Africa.

Social democracy calls for a state with strong capacity to intervene in the economy when there is market failure. In the words of Blade Ndzimande, nothing short of this would succeed in empowering the poor in South Africa:

> There is no example in this century of a developing country, or even developed countries for that matter, emerging from the ruins of war, economic collapse or colonialism, achieving economic revival led by the capitalist market. Instead, such revivals have been led by a state-driven industrial strategy.

Peter Evans, professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, has explored the role of the state in industrial transformation. Evans concludes that industrial transformation is possible and states do make a difference. However, the character of state institutions helps determine whether and how countries change their policies in the international division of labour. Nonetheless, the limits and potential of states have been demonstrated in the industrial transformation of countries such as Korea, India and Brazil (Evans, 1995). Evans likens states to midwives, capable of building industry by assisting in the emergence of new social groups and interests. According to him, "[s]tates can make their territories attractive, but they cannot dictate the structure of global production networks" (Evans, 1997, p. 66), that is, "states can make industries but not as they choose" (Evans, 1995, pp. 246-256). This conclusion challenges several assumptions on the role of the state in social transformation in South Africa.

Structure of the book

In Chapter 1, Meshack Khosa presents theoretical approaches to empowerment and transformation, three of which are important to understanding South Africa's transformation. The first is the neo-liberal perspective, which appears to be part of the mainstream perspective. The second is the radical democratic perspective, the vision of which is difficult to translate into an alternative political and economic programme. The third pers-

pective is the social democratic perspective, which sees transformation as a platform where dominant class interests are played out.

Chapter 2, authored by Oumar Bouare, gives an exposition of the characteristics of post-apartheid civil society and the post-apartheid economy. Against this background, Bouare discusses the effects of globalisation on the South African civil society and economy, considers the effects of a hands-off and a hands-on economic policy, and argues that South Africa should find an alternative source of revenue by building the basis of its manufacturing industries before its natural resources, which are the mainstay of its export revenues, are depleted.

Patrick Bond argues in Chapter 3 that South Africa's economic, socio-cultural and policy environment has been enormously influenced by global economic processes and institutions. Bond further argues that globalisation often contradicts equitable development towards redressing massive disparities of the past.

In Chapter 4, Logan Rangasamy reviews South Africa's post-apartheid international economic relations. The chapter suggests that while trade and investment relations have strengthened in South Africa's favour, numerous challenges still have to be overcome to ensure further progress.

The role of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) in enhancing democratic participation is analysed by Gregory Houston in Chapter 5. He highlights some of the challenges facing it, and concludes that NEDLAC has had mixed success in generating policies that are in the general public interest.

Meshack Khosa presents the findings of an assessment of institutional arrangements for international trade in general and agricultural trade in particular in Chapter 6. He concludes that co-ordinated, integrated agricultural trade promotion is lacking in South Africa and argues that the perception that agriculture is a Cinderella sector within the Department of Trade and Industry needs to be addressed.

In Chapter 7, Asghar Adelzadeh, Cynthia Alvillar and Charles Mather argue that a strategic programme for poverty eradication and full employment requires a thorough understanding of the major characteristics of poverty and the factors that contribute to sustainable livelihoods. The

authors conclude that major structural problems inherited from the apartheid period are largely responsible for the persistence of the racial, gender and spatial dimensions of poverty as well as massive unemployment. They call for the development of a pro-poor transformation strategy that will promote sustainable livelihoods and achieve full employment through proactive state intervention.

In Chapter 8, Percy Moleke provides an analysis of the first employment experiences of South African graduates in order to identify and describe trends in the local labour market for graduates over the period 1991 to 1995. The author concludes that few graduates had difficulty in finding employment, and where they had, the problem was of short duration. Graduates in all courses were accommodated in the labour market, although graduates in the fields of the humanities and arts encountered difficulties as a result of oversupply.

Much has been written about the government's spatial development initiatives (SDIs). Chris Rogerson provides an analysis of South Africa's SDI programme in Chapter 9. It is evident from the analysis and discussion that the SDI programme is far from a static initiative; rather, the SDI programme is in a constant process of adaptation based on lessons learned. However, the case studies serve to reinforce the conclusion that the different SDI projects, despite the diversity of approaches contained in them, operate within the parameters of overarching principles and the national context.

In Chapter 10, Rogerson draws upon the findings from a research project co-ordinated by Ntsika Enterprise Promotion Agency on the problems of rural SMMEs. He argues that rural SMME development in South Africa is predominantly linked to imperatives for poverty reduction. While survivalist SMMEs play an important role in poverty reduction, they have only limited potential for employment or wealth creation. Hence, according to Rogerson, there is a need for a long-term perspective directed at eliminating rather than simply reducing rural poverty.

Chapter 11, written by Tony Emmett and Gerard Hagg, provides a historical perspective of large-scale infrastructure schemes. Through a case study of the Orange River Dam project, the authors raise pertinent

issues related to the role of the state, interest groups, the private sector and international community in the provision of basic services. Chapter 11 also demonstrates that the vision, launching and further development of the Orange River Development Programme (ORDP) were a specific product of the political, economic and international forces of the time. The scale and original orientation mirrored the massive social engineering of apartheid, and marked the height of Afrikaner self-confidence.

In Chapter 12, Patrick Bond and Greg Ruiters consider post-apartheid water policy, legislation and delivery in systematic detail. The contention in this chapter is that by adopting neo-liberal approaches to water management, the first democratic government failed to resolve the problem of water shortage among the majority of the population, while those with resources to pay gained even better access to water.

Meshack Khosa assesses the impact of social and economic infrastructure on the quality of life in South Africa in Chapter 13. Based on HSRC surveys conducted in December 1998 and November 1999, he concludes that there were some significant achievements in that new policy frameworks were introduced and service delivery was conceptualised, although the inequalities were not eradicated.

In Chapter 14, Tjiamogale Eric Manchidi and Andrew Merrifield address the function of infrastructure in the South African economy and the current status of public investment in infrastructure. The chapter further outlines the forms of engaging private sector management expertise, resources and finance in the delivery of the services traditionally carried out by the private sector.

Miranda Miles suggests in Chapter 15 that the period 1980 to 2000 saw vulnerable groups in a democratising Southern Africa struggling to cope with, and challenging, traditional gender roles amidst economic decline and social crisis. Miles concludes that empowerment has not been achieved if we take into account that many low-income communities and women in Southern Africa still lack access to resources, basic services and infrastructure.

In the final chapter (Chapter 16), Meshack Khosa poses central unresolved questions around empowerment and transition and argues that

the daunting task of redressing past inequality is currently being undermined by the legacy of the past, massive unemployment, and limited human and technical capacity. The negative consequences of globalisation have also been added to the complex web of current challenges.

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