

## *Homelands as Frontiers: Apartheid's Loose Ends – An Introduction*

STEFFEN JENSEN

(Aalborg University; DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture)

OLAF ZENKER

(Freie Universität Berlin)

*In this Introduction we discuss the apparent erasure of the homelands from the social imagination of post-apartheid South Africa. We ask what has become of the homelands and reflect on the lives of those millions that still inhabit former homeland areas. In order to explore this, we tentatively evoke and develop the terms 'frontier' and 'the loose ends of apartheid'. We understand the concept of the frontier not as margin or the end; rather the homelands as frontier should be understood not as a stage of the past, but as intense zones of contestation, where the future of post-apartheid South Africa will, in part, be determined. 'Loose ends' refers to the many unresolved questions that are being negotiated in these zones of contestation. This Introduction falls into three parts. First, through a brief historical analysis, we depart from what we, drawing on Cheryl Walker, call the master narrative of loss and restoration, in which 'homelands' signalled loss and 'post-apartheid' a restoration. Secondly, we turn to some of the policy initiatives taken to erase the homeland past, which, ironically, often reproduced them. Third, through the different contributions, we account for the great variety of life and loose ends in the homelands today. It is our contention that only through addressing the loose ends in their complexity and ambiguity can we hope to address the legacies of the homelands in a way that may pave the way to different futures.*

Driving towards the Mozambican border on the N4, just across the Komati river, a sign welcomes the traveller to the 'Wild Frontier'. Accompanied by a graphic representation of a lion's paw, this is the frontier where wild animals are supposedly allowed to roam free. We are now, the sign seems to suggest, far away from the busy life of metropolitan South Africa. A few kilometres before, the traveller will have passed another sign indicating the direction to KaNyamansane, siSwati for 'The Place of Wild Animals'. While both signs indicate a specific form of frontier between human habitation and the wild, an excursion to KaNyamansane will quickly set the traveller straight. KaNyamansane is a bustling township area, home to some tens of thousands of people, next to Mpumalanga's provincial capital, Mbombela (previously Nelspruit). It also used to be the central urban section of the former homeland of KaNgwane, the supposed home of the Swazi population in South Africa, which was consigned to the proverbial dustbin of history in 1994, when democracy was finally introduced to the entire South African population. If one does not know that, KaNyamansane might be like any other of countless townships around South Africa. It is this strange erasure of what used to be one of the more shameful part (and there were many shameful parts) of apartheid South Africa – what Steve Biko famously called 'the greatest single fraud ever invented by white politicians'<sup>1</sup> – that we would like to address and explore in this special issue.

---

1 S. Biko, *I Write What I Like: A Selection of his Writings* (Johannesburg, Heinemann, 1987), p. 83.

The contributions to this special issue cover many of the former homelands – KwaZulu, Lebowa, Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, Transkei and Bophuthatswana. In different ways, they interrogate both how life is lived in the former homelands today and the events that led to the present day; they bring to light the enormous differences between the homelands and they seek to explore the multiple imaginaries and social realities of being within and belonging to former homelands: how and to what extent have people made these areas their home? Do they wish to return to earlier homes (for example, through land restitution) or, rather, long to leave for elsewhere? Did they and their kin ever leave the homeland areas otherwise often seen as incarnations of a history of relocation? What is the place of former homelands in the wider political economy – of South Africa and beyond, of labour migration, consumption and desired biographical futures? And what is the state of homelands’ actual ‘lands’ in their multiple dimensions: as economic resources for agriculture, mining, forestry, tourism, residence and investment; as conflicting realms of political and legal pluralism, in which local government uneasily coexists with increasingly resurrected neo-traditional authorities; as social spaces, in which gender and intergenerational relations are renegotiated and identities remade in the light of equally contested ‘traditions’ and ‘modernities’? In order to explore these diverse questions, we tentatively evoke and develop, in this Introduction, the terms ‘frontier’ and ‘loose ends’ of apartheid.

Frontiers have been the subject of multiple imaginaries as well as explored academically. The classical ‘frontier thesis’, by Frederick Jackson Turner<sup>2</sup> on the USA, constructed the frontier line of westward-moving European settler communities as a genuinely innovative zone for the production of a peculiarly egalitarian, democratic and aggressive American national character. In contrast, Igor Kopytoff<sup>3</sup> suggested, with regard to the ‘internal African frontier’, that these politically open spaces nestling between different societies rather had a conservative function, reproducing within emerging frontier communities traditional social models from the respective African metropolitan societies. For South Africa, Martin Legassick famously explored what he called the ‘frontier tradition in South African historiography’.<sup>4</sup> Rather than focusing on the inherent racism of the frontier, as liberal scholars did, Legassick stressed a need to explore the frontier as a particular form of capitalist accumulation, where patron–client relations dominated over master–slave relations. There are identifiable forms of all these aspects in the former homelands. However, rather than theoretically prescribing homelands as frontiers either innovative or conservative, dominated by race or class, we suggest analysing, in an empirically open way, the former homelands in South Africa as central zones of contestation of important boundaries. While the frontier in older scholarship often focused on the expansion of settlers, we explore the frontier from different angles to locate numerous boundaries. These boundaries might be between white and black; between different ethnicities; between rich and poor; or differentiated by gender, generation and nationality; or between wilderness and human habitation. In this way, our approach to the homelands as frontiers resonates with recent writings within anthropology on what Veena Das and Deborah Poole have termed the margins of the state.<sup>5</sup> Rather than

---

2 F.J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (1996 [1893]), available at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TURNER/>, retrieved 18 March 2014. For a comparison between America and Africa, see also H. Lamar and L. Thompson, *The Frontier in History: Northern America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981).

3 I. Kopytoff, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989).

4 M. Legassick, ‘The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography’, *Collected Seminar Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, 12 (1972), pp. 1–33.

5 V. Das and D. Poole, *Anthropology at the Margins of the State* (Santa Fe, School of American Research Press, 2004).

focusing on the margins as something far away or peripheral, they suggest that what are considered the margins is in fact often constitutive of power, and central to its operation. While we agree with the centrality, the term 'margin' is none the less suggestive of subordination of sorts. This would unduly structure how we interpreted the fault lines between, for instance, traditional rule and democratic dispensation, where we would resist ascribing dominance or marginality to either side. Hence we choose to retain the concept of the frontier as zone of contestation rather than as margin. In this way, we try to reposition the homelands at the centre of South African social and political relations. While homelands are often at the end of a road that leads nowhere, at the physical border of otherness or marginal to the centre, in this special issue we argue that they are central in various specific ways. At the risk of sounding pompous, the promise of liberation and freedom must face its test here. It is here that the future of South Africa is negotiated, and here that the dilemmas of post-apartheid South Africa are particularly acute.

While the homelands evidently are not the only frontiers in South Africa, they embody the end of apartheid with particular intensity. Approaching this end in terms of its multiple ends,<sup>6</sup> we suggest that the many loose ends of apartheid seem to be crystallised or concentrated with specific urgency in the homelands. We use the term 'loose ends' deliberately as a way of talking about remnants, residues and things that should have been put to rest with the fall of apartheid. Here we draw inspiration from Ann Laura Stoler's recent distinction between ruins and ruination, in her analysis of empire. Rather than focusing on the edifice of empire – or apartheid – as a thing of the past, we need to explore how those who remain make a life out of what has been given them. She suggests a need to 'emphasize less the artefacts of empire as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime than to attend to their appropriations, neglect, and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present'.<sup>7</sup>

In this special issue, Shireen Ally's contribution most directly tackles the difference between ruins and ruination, as she tries to locate the missing archive of KaNgwane (the imperial artefact) to find a warehouse full of pulp, surrounded by people – objects of the very archive – about to sell the paper to a paper mill. Hence we explore the re-appropriations of the loose ends (for instance the ruined files of an archive) into new futures. As Deborah James eloquently argues in her contribution, the loose ends are woven together to form specific post-apartheid socialities. However, due to the indeterminacy and ambiguity of the loose ends – these frontier zones of intense contestation – they tend never to be fully stabilised, but open to a range of different post-apartheid projects. It is these attempts to weave projects together from the loose ends that animate many of the contributions, be that the house construction of Mr Siboza (Jensen), the saving club activities of Sophie Mahlaba (James), the oral history fancy of a provincial archivist (Ally), or the legal land battles of Abraham Viljoen (Zenker).

In order to explore these loose ends as part of intense negotiations at the frontier of apartheid's end, the remainder of this introduction will fall in three parts. In the first part we recapitulate briefly and rather cursorily the emergence of the homeland and the critiques that accompanied governmental policy and practice. The purpose of this section is not to outline the huge debates about the homelands – others have done a much more competent job than

---

6 In this, we have been inspired by Vincent Crapanzano's analysis of the end of anthropology in terms of its many ends: see V. Crapanzano, 'The End – the Ends – of Anthropology', in H. Jebens and K-H. Kohl (eds), *The End of Anthropology?* (Wantage, Sean Kingston Publishing, 2011), pp. 113–37.

7 A.L. Stoler, *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2013). For an exploration of ruination in the southern African context, see J. Fontein, 'Graves, Ruins, and Belonging: Towards an Anthropology of Proximity', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 17, 4 (2011), pp. 707–27.

we can ever hope to do;<sup>8</sup> rather, we aim to illustrate how apartheid discourse, as well as its critics, produced a monolithic master narrative, as Cheryl Walker<sup>9</sup> usefully proposed in relation to loss and restoration in South Africa. Ironically, while condemning the notion of the homelands in the ways that they did, critics arguably often reproduced the narrative, although in reverse. In the second part of the Introduction, we briefly explore some of the attempts at doing away with the homelands as part of the apartheid legacy. These attempts include legislation around land reform, customary law and traditional authorities, which are all in different ways related to dealing with the homeland past. The argument that we propose here is that it is exactly the illegibility and radical ambiguity of the homelands that rendered these attempts to deal with the apartheid past so difficult, resulting in some of the legislation being contested in the Constitutional Court. In this way, we hope to illustrate that the master narrative of the homeland and its critics in post-apartheid South Africa could not contain the many loose ends emanating from the frontier zone of contestation. In the final part of the Introduction, and by means of the contributions, we then turn to these loose ends and the contestations. Rather than presenting another attempt at a narrative of what the homelands *really* were, we attempt to situate the homelands among the many fault lines in post-apartheid South Africa. This exercise will show that, while homelands were not necessarily the cause of the contestations, they have constituted spatial, bounded fields of intense contestation where, as, for instance, Isak Niehaus argues in relation to the former Bantustan areas of Bushbuckridge, an elective affinity between witchcraft beliefs and homelands as resettlement sites can be observed.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, it is hardly surprising that land and customary law, gender and generation, ethnicity and class, race and nationality are hotly contested in the former homelands – all these issues are central to the realisation of post-apartheid freedom. We thus suggest analysing homelands as frontiers, in which the necessity to come to terms with the multiple remnants, loose ends and left-overs of the apartheid past reveals itself with a hyper-real urgency.

## The Homelands and Their Master Narrative

In 1959, the South African parliament passed Act no. 46, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, thus inaugurating a period of what was termed ‘grand apartheid’, in which segregation and exclusion was no longer ad hoc but based in the ideology of separate development. As several commentators have suggested,<sup>11</sup> grand apartheid came about not as a result of a blueprint; rather, it developed in nooks and crannies during the 1950s from what Aletta Norval usefully describes as a myth to a fully developed social imaginary. In her analysis, the social imaginary came about as a result of a universalisation of the perceived Afrikaner experience that came to be widely shared. By reconfiguring the South African landscape into one dominated by ethnicity, it managed to incorporate both the Afrikaner experience of oppression at the hands of the British and the fear associated with the so-called

---

8 The literature on apartheid history is quite unique in its richness. See, for example: P. Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal, 1930–94* (Oxford, James Currey, 1997); D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948–1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Oxford Studies in African Affairs, 1991); W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001); A. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London, Verso, 1996); I. Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997); C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Oxford, James Currey, 1987), to mention but a few.

9 C. Walker, *Landmarked: Land Claims and Land Restitution in South Africa* (Cape Town, Jacana Press, 2008).

10 I. Niehaus, ‘Witchcraft and the South African Bantustans: Evidence from Bushbuckridge’, *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1 (2012), pp. 1–18.

11 Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*; Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid*; Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*.

colour question. As a consequence, Africans were divided into a number of different groups – the number varied between six and ten (where it eventually landed years later). Like Afrikaners and English (along with Asians and coloureds) they had equal right to self-determination and to express their own culture in their own territory. As Laura Evans rightly notes, these reasons and forms of legitimacy were not much different from the reasons behind the parallel process of African decolonisation.<sup>12</sup> With this, a process was set in motion that eventually saw four homelands being declared independent (Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana) and six territories getting limited self-determination (Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, Lebowa, KwaZulu and QwaQwa).

Right from the beginning, the homelands and the ideology supporting their creation were shrouded in conflict and resistance from a host of different sides, ranging from political opposition within the white polity to armed resistance, in, for instance, the Poqo uprising in 1961–63 and the establishment of the ANC armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in 1960. After the relative quiet of the late 1960s, marked in no small measure by the collaboration of certain African elites, the protests and the resistance slowly began to coalesce around core elements unearthed and explored by critics of the regime. A central endeavour related to what critics saw as the necessary defacing of the lie of apartheid – that it was a system of the separate but equal, what Biko called the biggest white fraud. In numerous accounts,<sup>13</sup> this was proven wrong, and a smoke screen for the blatant racial oppression of the homeland system; apartheid more generally aimed to destroy African economic prospects and to strip blacks of citizens' rights, in order to perpetuate white rule. The homelands played a central role in the protests against apartheid; they became, for many, the embodiment of the injustice of apartheid. An often quoted work by Laurine Platzky and Cheryl Walker summarised for the critics of apartheid the inequities of the system in numerical terms: three and a half million relocated, many to the homelands; 53 per cent of the population confined to 13 per cent of the most underdeveloped and increasingly crowded land far away from economic activity, and the deleterious impact on African agricultural production of betterment projects (state-driven schemes to 'improve' and 'rationalise' reserve agriculture). Moreover, very limited resources went to the homelands, critics maintained, rendering any semblance of economic autonomy ludicrous.<sup>14</sup> Of course, these figures as such are not wrong and the homeland system surely did perpetrate enormous misfortunes. However, the characterisation of homelands as remote, impoverished no-hope areas was also 'hardwired into oppositional literature', as William Beinart<sup>15</sup> put it in a 2012 revisiting of the critical literature on apartheid. In many ways, Beinart's essay inaugurated a new approach in the study of homelands that this Introduction shares. Beinart's analysis echoes in many ways what Cheryl Walker, in her 2008 analysis of the land reform process, called a 'master narrative'. She writes:

---

12 L. Evans, 'South Africa's Bantustans and the Dynamics of "Decolonisation": Reflections on Writing Histories of the Homelands', *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1 (2012), pp. 111–37.

13 See, for instance, G. Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1987); Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*; Bundy, *The Rise and Fall*; H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid', *Economy and Society*, 1(1972), pp. 425–56.

14 L. Platzky and C. Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1985), pp. 8–12. According to Google Scholar, Platzky and Walker's book has been quoted 321 times at the time of writing (December 2013). While we cannot be sure that everybody quoted this particular section, many did (for example, B. King, 'Placing KaNgwane in the New South Africa', *Geographical Review*, 96, 1 (2006), p. 82; J. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 262.

15 W. Beinart, 'Beyond Homelands: Some Ideas about the History of the African Rural Areas in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1 (2012), pp. 5–21.

The problem [...] is not that the constituent elements of this political fable are in themselves incorrect but that the narrative simplifies, excludes and reduces too much. It runs together very different periods and relationships to land and collapses very different constituted groups into a single category of 'the dispossessed'. It glosses over class and gender and ethnicity and generation, as well as locality. In working at the level of the general, it plays down the contrariness of the specific and fails to accommodate important deviations from the script.<sup>16</sup>

Echoing Walker, the numbers and conclusions are not necessarily wrong, but in their generalised use they reduce the homelands to the locus of the dispossessed. In this way, a monolithic subject of pure resistance is created to counter the apartheid discourse and assumed legitimacy. However, while this was necessary at the time in order to produce an antagonistic front against apartheid, as Norval<sup>17</sup> would have it, it also obscured the insidious nature of the homelands and how they animated and structured the possibilities of life in them. Furthermore, by working on the general level, the narrative was not able to account for variations between the homelands, nor for the important differentiations within them. Let us try to address some of these reservations in turn.

In his insightful revision of some of the homeland literature, Beinart begins by asserting that the figure of 13 per cent of land making up the homelands is somewhat misleading, as this number refers to the whole of South Africa, including the 55–60 per cent of very arid areas, historically comprising few permanent African kingdoms. In fact, the homelands covered about 30 per cent of pre-colonial African heartlands, mostly in the wetter and more fertile parts of South Africa. This number goes up if the High Commission Territories (Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Namibia) are included. While this does not justify the system, it does suggest a need to revisit notions of domination.<sup>18</sup> In similar ways, Beinart challenges and qualifies the narrative on the catastrophes of betterment, the lack of financial support for the homelands and the unity of resistance to the homeland system. For Beinart, these reservations do not provide justification for the homeland system or the forced removals; however, by not rendering count of the multiplicity and the dynamics of the system, we are also unable to understand the true consequences of the system and its implications for post-apartheid South Africa. For instance, as Sekibakiba Lekgoathi argues,<sup>19</sup> the homelands enabled an ethnicisation that had contradictory implications, where, for instance, homeland radio acted as midwife of a vibrant Ndebele cultural creativity, while potentially undermining African unity. More insidiously, as Niehaus<sup>20</sup> argues for Bushbuckridge at least, the homelands as enclosed and confined spaces produced an environment conducive to the spread of violent witchcraft accusations. None of these effects could have been predicted based on the master narrative of loss and restoration, which posited life in the homelands as simultaneously horrific, united and heroic.<sup>21</sup>

One of the central assumptions in the master narrative is the idea of the homogeneity of homelands as victims of apartheid folly and injustice. However, as Brian King argues,<sup>22</sup> there are huge differences between the different homelands in terms of coherence, history and economic possibilities. As Hylton White argues in relation to KwaZulu, betterment was introduced, but its effect was minimal and in no way crucial to displacement and mobility

---

16 Walker, *Landmarked*, pp. 41–2.

17 Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid*.

18 Beinart, 'Beyond "Homelands"', p. 8.

19 S. Lekgoathi, 'Ethnic Separatism or Cultural Preservation? Ndebele Radio under Apartheid, 1983–1994', *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1 (2012), pp. 59–80.

20 Niehaus, 'Witchcraft and the South African Bantustans'.

21 While the anti-apartheid narrative of loss and restoration could not 'see' witchcraft, witchcraft was clearly central to how apartheid ideologues conceptualised 'Africa'.

22 B. King, 'Developing KaNgwane: Geographies of Segregation and Integration in the New South Africa', *Geographical Journal*, 173, 1 (2007), pp. 13–25.

inside the homeland.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, in the KaNgwane homeland, as well as the other homelands on the border of the Kruger National Park, betterment was introduced from the mid 1950s, and had enormous effects on the life of people there. Furthermore, whereas the KwaZulu homeland comprised vast swathes of land that had never been occupied by colonial settlers, and where sizeable African populations lived, much of KaNgwane was wilderness when people were moved there.<sup>24</sup> Bearing testimony to the partial truth of the master narrative, they were forcibly removed from what constitutes one of South Africa's largest land claims, the Ten Bosch area.<sup>25</sup> These removals were still preserved in social memories about the traumatic first nights in the bush with no shelter.<sup>26</sup>

Narratives of loss of livestock and livelihood were also handed down to the young, as were the violent clampdown on, for instance, one of the chiefs, who opposed the forced removals and was jailed for his sins. Lives were put back together only slowly, as roads, schools and clinics were built, cattle raised and land cultivated (see also Jensen's article in this issue). This experience was markedly different from other homeland areas where significant changes occurred, but not change that was directly related to the narrative of forced removals.<sup>27</sup> In this way, it is clearly unsatisfactory to understand the homelands as an undifferentiated entity.<sup>28</sup> There were huge differences, which is also evident in the different contributions to this special issue.

Subsumed under the overarching master signifier of an ethnicised racial identity, or that South Africans primarily held an ethnicised and racial identity, the narrative also implicitly obscures the enormous class, ethnic, generational and gender differences that developed in the homelands.<sup>29</sup> Let us remain with the traumatised evicted of KaNgwane to illustrate this point. As they slowly picked up the pieces of their lives, established forms of authority and began tilling the land, some of them became part of a future homeland rural elite that evolved around the traditional authorities. They had privileged access to the homeland and apartheid authorities and, despite the increasing challenge they faced around the 1986 riots,<sup>30</sup> they managed to maintain what we have called gerontocratic authority.<sup>31</sup> As new waves of migrants came in the late 1960s and early 1970s (as towns were declared), and again in the late 1980s and early 1990s (owing to the war in Mozambique), they consolidated their authority. In the late 1980s, the KaNgwane government began establishing sugar projects from which they benefited. As confirmed by King,<sup>32</sup> only people with ties to the rural elite were given irrigated land. In order to consolidate the sugar projects, people with no ties to the rural elite lost their land. This rural elite was, in the area where we worked, composed of siSwati- (as opposed to Shangaan-) speaking older men, often with important ties to the ANC,

---

23 H. White, 'Outside the Dwelling of Culture: Estrangement and Difference in Postcolonial Zululand', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 83, 3 (2010), pp. 497–518.

24 S. Jensen, 'Through the Lens of Crime: Land Claims and Contestations of Citizenship on the South African Frontier', in L. Buur, S. Jensen, F. Stepputat, *The Security–Development Nexus: Expressions of Sovereignty and Securitization in Southern Africa* (Uppsala, Nordic Institute for Africa Studies, 2007), pp. 193–211.

25 D. James, *Gaining Ground? Rights and Property in South African Land Reform* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2007), p. 90.

26 These experiences resonate with other incidents of colonial and postcolonial evictions. See, for instance, J. Alexander, J. MacGregor and T. Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the Dark Forests of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe* (Oxford, James Currey, 2000), and A. Hammar, "'The Day of Burning": Eviction and Reinvention in the Margins of Northwest Zimbabwe', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1, 4 (2001) pp. 550–74.

27 H. White, 'Tempora et Mores: Family Values and the Possessions of a Post-Apartheid Countryside', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 31, 4 (2002), pp. 457–79.

28 B. King, 'The State of NGOs in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Changing Roles in Conservation and Development', *African Geographical Review*, 23 (2004), pp. 65–84.

29 Evans, 'South African Bantustans'.

30 S. Jensen, 'Shosholozza: Political Culture in South Africa between the Secular and the Occult', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38, 1 (2012), pp. 91–106.

31 Jensen, 'Through the Lens'.

32 King, 'Developing KaNgwane'.

with what they saw as a cultural right to rule.<sup>33</sup> While their authority was in no way uncontested, they managed to take that authority, based on gendered, generational, ethnic and social structures, into the post-apartheid era,<sup>34</sup> where they began fermenting contacts with the burgeoning ANC elite in the political system and in the public sector.

In summary, while the master narrative of homeland dispossession conveys some broad truths, it has failed to account for the internal dynamics inside the homelands and the differences between them. As Evans illustrates in her reading of the (anti-)homeland literature of the 1970s and 1980s,<sup>35</sup> this is also true for notions of resistance. Drawing on Fred Cooper's seminal work on African decolonisation,<sup>36</sup> she shows that there were many and often contradictory responses to the creation of the homelands. Hence, while the master narrative was instrumental in mounting a response to and critique of the homeland system, it reduced the homelands to mere victims of South African racial capitalism, thus denying us the possibility of understanding their complexity on their own terms. While this realisation seems to be more prominent within academia in recent years,<sup>37</sup> the master narrative has more or less made it into post-apartheid politics, which then failed to account for the impact of what Maano Ramutsindela has called 'resilient geographies'<sup>38</sup> – a term coined to capture the extent to which the homeland structures are being reproduced, despite attempts to do the opposite, in post-apartheid South Africa. These attempts and their frequent failures are the subjects of the next section.

## Post-1994 Attempts at Unmaking the Homelands

Many of the government policies enacted after 1994 have involved attempts at undoing the legacies of apartheid and colonialism generally, aiming for profound societal transformations. Besides broad programmes dealing with, among other matters, housing, education, public health and economic development, a number of more specific projects were also established, trying to redress directly the injustices of the past in order to make for a better future. These transitional justice measures prominently included the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, dealing in its hearings between 1996 and 1998 with gross human rights violations.<sup>39</sup> Other attempts, while more rarely discussed in terms of 'transitional justice',<sup>40</sup> importantly addressed human rights abuses within the police, and pursued reforms of the security sector in general (including the South African Defence Force).<sup>41</sup> Land reform has been another important field of post-apartheid reform – a transitional justice measure

---

33 Jensen, 'Through the Lens'.

34 L. Ntzebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa* (Leiden, Brill, 2005); B. Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Culture and Power in the Post-Apartheid Era* (London, Palgrave, 2005); J.M. Williams, *Chieftaincy, the State, and Democracy: Political Legitimacy in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010).

35 Evans, 'South African Bantustans'.

36 F. Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

37 See, for instance, Evans, 'South African Bantustans'; Beinart, 'Beyond Homelands'; Walker, *Landmarked*.

38 M. Ramutsindela, 'Resilient Geographies: Land, Boundaries and the Consolidation of the Former Bantustans in Post-1994 South Africa', *The Geographical Journal*, 173, 1 (2007), pp. 43–55.

39 R. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001); F.C. Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London, Pluto Press, 2003); L. Buur, 'Institutionalising Truth: Victims, Perpetrators, and Professionals in the Work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission', PhD thesis, Aarhus University, 2000.

40 O. Zenker, 'Land Restitution and Transitional Justice in Post-Apartheid South Africa', Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper No. 134, 2011, p. 2.

41 J. Hornberger, *Policing and Human Rights: The Meaning of Violence and Justice in the Everyday Policing of Johannesburg* (New York, Routledge, 2011); S. Jensen, 'Conflicting Logics of Exceptionality: New Beginnings and the Problem of Police Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Development and Change*, 45, 3 (2014), pp. 458–78.



directly related to attempts at erasing the former homelands as identifiable political, legal, economic and social entities, and incorporating them into an increasingly equitable space of a unified democratic South Africa.<sup>42</sup> Below, we briefly discuss some of the post-1994 policies attempting to do away with the homeland legacy, namely the tripartite land reform programme, recent legislation dealing with traditional authorities, and the re-demarcation of municipal, district and provincial boundaries. We show that, by following the master narrative of loss and restoration, many post-apartheid policies have had the inadvertent effect of re-inscribing and reproducing, rather than undermining, former homeland structures, thus leaving untouched many of apartheid's loose ends.

South African land reform is essentially about transformations of property relations. In order to understand this process, we need to go back to the transitional negotiations, in which the question of how to deal with existing property rights developed into a strongly contested issue.<sup>43</sup> The constitutional provisions that ultimately emerged as a strategic compromise simultaneously protect existing property rights against arbitrary deprivation, while establishing a constitutional obligation for a comprehensive land reform 'in order to redress the results of past racial discrimination'.<sup>44</sup> The property clause, in subsections 25 (4–9), provides for the separate demands of land redistribution, land restitution and tenure reform, which have constituted the three legs of South African land reform until today. Using mainly a willing-buyer–willing-seller approach of acquiring land at market value, land redistribution has aimed for a transfer of 30 per cent of agricultural land (24.6 million hectares) from whites to blacks, in order to contribute to more equitable access to land; by May 2012, a total of 7.95 million hectares had been transferred.<sup>45</sup> While this has added up only to one-third of the target 30 per cent, causing much criticism, this leg of land reform has indeed transformed and refigured the spatial distribution of post-apartheid land holdings to some extent at least, thus partly reshuffling the racial segregation as inscribed into the contours of former homelands.

The other two legs – land restitution and tenure reform – have been even more directly concerned with spatial segregation based on race and ethnicity, and both have been related to the master narrative of loss and restoration, although in different and changing ways. Restitution deals with the dispossession of land rights, which occurred on the basis of racially discriminatory laws and practices after the promulgation of the Natives Land Act (19 June 1913), and offers either land restoration or financial compensation as means of redress. Since land restitution paradigmatically deals with black communities that were forcibly removed from 'white' South Africa and relocated into the homelands, helping such past victims to reclaim their lands now has promised to contribute immediately to the dissolution of former homelands borders. This land restitution process has been strongly informed by the mentioned master narrative comprising two central themes: 'the trauma of deep, dislocating loss of land in the past and the promise of restorative justice through the return of that land in the future'.<sup>46</sup>

---

42 O. Zenker, 'The Juridification of Political Protest and the Politicisation of Legalism in South African Land Restitution', in J. Eckert, B. Donahoe, C. Strümpell and Z.Ö. Biner (eds), *Law Against the State: Ethnographic Forays into Law's Transformations* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 118–46; O. Zenker, 'New Law Against an Old State: Land Restitution as a Transition to Justice in Post-Apartheid South Africa?', *Development and Change*, 45, 3 (2014), pp. 502–23; Ramutsindela, 'Resilient Geographies'.

43 H. Klug, *Constituting Democracy: Law, Globalism, and South Africa's Political Reconstruction* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000); R. Spitz and M. Chaskalson, *The Politics of Transition: A Hidden History of South Africa's Negotiated Settlement* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2000).

44 See *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996*, section 25 (8).

45 Africa Research Institute, 'Waiting for the Green Revolution: Land Reform in South Africa', Briefing Note 1301 (May 2013), available at <http://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/BN1301-South-Africa-Land-Reform1.pdf>, retrieved 4 April 2014.

46 Walker, *Landmarked*, p. 34.

However, as an actual guide to the problems of the restitution process and the needs of claimants, this narrative has appeared increasingly inadequate. Cheryl Walker herself embodies the dilemma of the narrative, having co-authored one of the central texts (of which she is rightly proud) producing and perpetuating this narrative – *The Surplus People*<sup>47</sup> – while brilliantly analysing and criticising in recent years how such texts have had problematic effects for the current land reform process.

Whether by oversimplifying or by omitting too much, the narrative has not been very helpful for analysing local dynamics. It has created the implicit assumption that whites' identification with land is, by default, illegitimate, and has projected a romantic idyll of black communities happily restored as full-time agriculturalists to their rural lands. However, the many decades between dispossession and restitution have left their mark on the dispossessed and their descendants, who are typically dispersed throughout South Africa, often deskilled and uninterested in agriculture. In most cases, they chose, perhaps surprisingly, financial compensation over land restoration: by May 2013, of all settled land claims (77,334 out of 79,696 claims lodged), 92 per cent had been resolved through financial compensation rather than through land restoration.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, given the paradigmatic victimhood of the master narrative – black communities deported into homelands – other important forms of dispossession have not been recognised for a long time as legitimating restitution claims, namely the loss of land through betterment within homelands. It is only in the current climate of the re-opened restitution process that victims of betterment are explicitly encouraged to lodge restitution claims; they were turned away during the 1990s.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, when land restoration has taken place, it has often been in the vicinity of, or even adjacent to, homeland boundaries, and has been granted to communities under the contested leadership of traditional authorities. In sum: in most restitution cases, money rather than land was transferred; claims internal to homelands based on betterment dispossessions were mostly prevented; in cases of actual land restoration, homelands and their internal 'customary' structures often have been expanded rather than dissolved. Land restitution has thus unexpectedly and ironically reinforced the bifurcated structures of (historically white) individual land rights of citizens and (again black) communal land rights of subjects under chiefs.<sup>50</sup>

This seemingly surprising effect of reproducing rather than undermining the 'resilient geographies' of the former homeland structures, despite government's expressed intention to use land reform in order to change apartheid's spatial legacy, has been even more pronounced with regard to the third leg of tenure reform. This land reform programme aims to improve tenure security for people without freehold landownership rights, both for the many black labourers and tenants residing on white-owned farms, who could be easily evicted under apartheid, and for those living in the former homelands, where the land, technically still state-owned, is often administered by contested traditional authorities. In 1999, a first Draft Land Rights Bill was tabled, continuing the strong emphasis of the 1990s on the protection of individual land rights – also inscribed into the Communal Property Associations Act (1996), requiring elected land management committees with at least 30 per cent of women's representation and written constitutions – and a deep-seated scepticism towards 'traditional authorities'.<sup>51</sup>

---

47 Platzky and Walker, *Surplus People*.

48 Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, *Annual Report, 2012/13* (Pretoria, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2013), p. 6.

49 Ramutsindela, 'Resilient Geographies'.

50 M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996); Ramutsindela, 'Resilient Geographies'; O. Zenker, 'Bush-Level Bureaucrats in South African Land Restitution: Implementing State Law under Chiefly Rule', in O. Zenker and M.V. Hoehne (eds), *The State and the Paradox of Customary Law in Africa* (Aldershot, Ashgate, forthcoming).

51 E. Fortin, 'Struggles with Activism: NGO Engagements with Land Tenure Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 48, 3 (2010), pp. 383–411.

The election of Thabo Mbeki as President in 1999, however, led to a pronounced policy shift towards ‘African Renaissance’ and neo-traditionalism.<sup>52</sup> In 2003, the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act was passed, transforming the former ‘tribal authorities’ of the colonial regime into newly established ‘traditional councils’, and allowing them to acquire additional roles in local governance. Within this framework, a profoundly different Communal Land Rights Act was passed in 2004.<sup>53</sup> Rather than breaking up the apartheid structures of communal tenure under traditional authorities in former homelands – now called ‘communal land’ – as envisaged by the 1999 Bill, communal land holdings under traditional councils were re-introduced, upgraded to full ownership and even expanded into those ‘communal lands’ outside the former homelands that had already been transferred through restitution or redistribution to Communal Property Associations without chiefs. Within the master narrative of loss and restoration, ‘traditional authorities’ thus switched sides under Mbeki from being seen as co-opted collaborators of apartheid towards embodiments of true and untainted African customs, as recognised and protected by the new Constitution.<sup>54</sup> The Communal Land Rights Act met with strong opposition during the legislative process, and was subsequently challenged in court.<sup>55</sup> In 2010, the Constitutional Court declared the entire Act unconstitutional and invalid, owing to procedural mistakes; at the time of writing, no new legislation dealing with tenure security in the former homelands has been tabled.<sup>56</sup>

Apart from this Act, which unsuccessfully attempted to strengthen traditional authorities in the former homelands regarding their role in land administration, the equally contested Traditional Courts Bill was first introduced in 2008, and, after its intermittent withdrawal due to public protest, re-entered legislative processing in 2012. Despite massive political opposition from numerous civil society organisations, organised in the Alliance for Rural Democracy (ARD), through written submissions and oral presentations during public hearings, the government for a long time pressed on with this Bill. It was only against the backdrop of persistent protests in several provinces, leading to the prospect of even ANC-ruled provinces voting against the government-sponsored draft law, that the Traditional Courts Bill was finally removed from the parliamentary schedule in February 2014.

According to critics, this Bill – had it been enacted – would have centralised customary law in the hand of chiefs without sufficient downward or upward accountability structures, since lower level dispute resolution mechanisms were ignored, and people were also denied the rights to legal presentation (especially, women had to be represented by males), to opt out of traditional courts and to appeal to state courts. At the same time, challenging chiefly (ab)use of power would have been made a criminal offence, and chiefs empowered to deny people land or sentence them to forced labour, among other punishments.<sup>57</sup> Despite its collapse, this Bill further highlights the fact that, for the time being, everyday life in the former homelands in many places still takes place within the parameters set under apartheid,

---

52 T. Lodge, *Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2002); L. Ntsebeza, ‘Chiefs and the ANC in South Africa: The Reconstruction of Tradition?’, in A. Claassens and B. Cousins (eds), *Land, Power and Custom: Controversies Generated by South Africa’s Communal Land Rights Act* (Cape Town and Athens, Legal Resources Centre and Ohio University Press, 2008), pp. 238–61.

53 B. Cousins, ‘More Than Socially Embedded: The Distinctive Character of “Communal Tenure” Regimes in South Africa and Its Implications for Land Policy’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 7, 3 (2007), pp. 281–315.

54 O. Zenker, ‘Judicial Renegotiations of “Customary Law” in Post-Apartheid South Africa’, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper, forthcoming.

55 Claassens and Cousins (eds), *Land, Power and Custom*.

56 Zenker, ‘Judicial Renegotiations’.

57 Rural Women’s Action Research Programme and University of Cape Town, ‘Custom Contested – Views and Voices: Traditional Courts Bill (TCB)’, available at <http://www.customcontested.co.za/laws-and-policies/traditional-courts-bill-tcb/>, retrieved 3 November 2013.

and especially within a climate of an increasing political and legal re-empowerment of traditional authorities, including control over access to justice and land.

The master narrative of loss and restoration underlying land restitution and tenure reform has thus often had the inadvertent effect of re-inscribing and reproducing, rather than undoing, former homeland structures. In fact, the (failed) Communal Land Rights Act, and further legislation on traditional authorities, position chiefs as crucial to the future rather than as part of the problem persisting from the past. Despite explicit attempts at unmaking the former homelands, they have persisted in many places as the political, legal and economic domains under traditional authorities, typically maintaining, if not somewhat expanding, their physical extensions. At least some of the homelands have been maintained, even if only in their general outlines, as Ramutsindela observes with regard to the redrawing of South Africa's internal boundaries after 1994.<sup>58</sup> Largely for pragmatic reasons, the demarcation of municipal, district and provincial boundaries often maintained and reproduced the contours of the former homelands. Given the highly unequal distribution and control of resources across municipal, district and even provincial boundaries that have persisted from apartheid days, this is not merely of symbolic significance; it is central to the reproduction of privilege and poverty. There are, of course, many exceptions, as planners tried to incorporate rural areas and urban centres. For instance, Mbombela includes both KaNyamazane and Msogwaba (formerly KaNgwane) and the relatively well-off Nelspruit, now the administrative centre of Mpumalanga province.

In trying to undo the legacies of apartheid, following the script of the simplifying and ultimately misleading master narrative of loss and restoration, the realities of land reform and re-demarcation in many cases inadvertently helped to reproduce rather than undermine the 'resilient geographies' of the former homelands. As in the past, however, these areas have contained a multitude and excess of attitudes, opinions, discourses and practices, as aptly illustrated, for instance, in the strong and outspoken opposition from many homeland areas to the recent re-empowerment of 'traditional authorities'.<sup>59</sup> The master narrative of the homeland and its critics in post-apartheid South Africa has thus proven incapable of containing – or tying up – the many loose ends emanating from these frontier zones of contestation.

## Disentangling Loose Ends of Apartheid

In the final section, then, we move beyond flawed and simplistic master narratives and turn instead to an engagement with these highly diverse loose ends, as exemplified and analysed in the contributions to this special issue. While we have almost certainly not identified all loose ends, residues and remnants of the homelands, the contributions to this special issue cover a wide variety of topics. We begin with questions of history, custom and tradition as well as the varied attempts to undo the homelands, especially in relation to land and custom. In this section – the loose ends of history – we find Jason Robinson's analysis of homeland politics and its demise in post-apartheid South Africa; Shireen Ally's study of the KaNgwane archive; Steffen Jensen's investigation of homeland temporality; Hylton White's analysis of living custom and finally Olaf Zenker's exploration of the land reform process. These analyses focus on the meaning of history and how it plays out in the former homelands today, how

---

58 Ramutsindela, 'Resilient Geographies'.

59 Claassens and Cousins, *Land, Power and Custom*; S. Mnisi Weeks, 'The Traditional Courts Bill: Controversy around Process, Substance and Implications', *South African Crime Quarterly*, 35 (March 2011), pp. 3–10; see also White's article elsewhere in this issue.

people attempt to envisage the future, and how they cope with the traces and remnants of the homelands. In the second section – the loose ends of everyday life – we find Isak Niehaus’s analysis of magic potions, football and transformation of the political economy of the homelands; Deborah James’s investigation of transforming savings clubs and the meaning of money; Derick Fay’s analysis of the affective value of land in Transkei, and, finally, Leslie Bank’s exploration of migrant workers in Cape Town. The contributions analyse social transformations of race, class, ethnicity, generation and gender after apartheid’s end, the reconfiguration of homeland political economies between the rural and the urban, and how home, lands and homelands are located in the intense, harrowing discussions of the meaning of the rural (homeland) house.

### *The Loose Ends of History*

When apartheid finally came to an end, some of its political edifice came tumbling down or went silently into the night. To take but one example, the Department of Coloured Affairs, in its annual report for 1992–93, reported all well on the Western (Cape) front, and then ceased to exist.<sup>60</sup> Yet other apartheid institutions refused to leave: these included the political structure of homelands and homeland politics. In his analysis of the fate of three homeland government parties, Jason **Robinson** explores how the parties lingered on, trying to establish a foothold in the new South Africa beyond their formal admittance to the electoral process. While in the final analysis they did seem to lose legitimacy, what they stood for in many ways, Robinson suggests, has lingered, for instance in the ethnic politics of KwaZulu Natal and in the ‘nostalgia’ of the past emanating from the perceived failures in service delivery. In this way, Robinson’s analysis sets the tone for the rest of the contributions: while the homelands were apparently confined to the dustbin of history, they linger on as loose ends tenaciously resisting oblivion. In a similar but strangely paradoxical manner Shireen **Ally**’s analysis of the KaNgwane archives performs similar work. Similar to the homelands themselves, the archives disappeared from sight as part of a shameful past. Ally leads us across different sites in her hunt for the files. When she finally locates them, they, not unlike the homelands, have almost turned to pulp about to be sold to the local paper mill. She rescues them only to find out that they do not tell the story of horror or evil; instead they have an uncanny resemblance to (present-day) bureaucratic practices, reminding us that despite all the evils of apartheid being located in the homelands, people lived mundane lives there, and those that ruled faced mundane questions. Hence these two contributions speak against the grain of the narrative, and suggest that legacies from the homelands are still with us, and that, maybe, just maybe, they were not so different after all.

This raises fundamental questions about history and historical periodisation inherent in notions of before, during and after apartheid. In his contribution, Steffen **Jensen** suggests that in this periodisation the homelands are seen as loci of tradition, of unchanging structures of authority and culture. To capture the temporal dimension of the narrative of loss and restoration, he coins the term ‘homeland temporality’. While it has been dominant, it never fully succeeded in closing the social field, as there are other temporalities that are important for how people in the homelands and beyond see their lives. Through the life history and trajectory of one man and his relation to his house in former KaNgwane, he identifies other temporalities or temporal dimensions. Drawing on Achille Mbembe’s work,<sup>61</sup> these temporalities are alternative forms of subjectivity, which weave their way in and out of each

---

60 S. Jensen, *Gangs, Politics and Dignity in Cape Town* (Oxford, James Currey, 2008).

61 A. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001).

other in complex re-appropriations of the loose ends of apartheid. However, due to the economic and political structures which animate homeland temporality, his main protagonist finds himself cornered and stuck in the homeland, even after it has been demolished as a political structure.

Other contributions raise similar concerns. In his contribution, Hylton **White** suggests that, in fact, traditional authority is not central for many of his interlocutors in rural KwaZulu-Natal. He uses this as point of departure to critique the influential claims of Mahmood Mamdani on indirect rule and despotism. Instead of assuming the importance of chiefs, we should look at what White calls ‘vernacular usage’, in which custom is absolutely central, just not in the reified way that is often assumed. This is a living custom endowed with much moral normativity acquired in actual practices, centred not least on notions of the home. Hence the accounts of Jensen and White point to the necessity to carry out historical analysis and to be ready to accept alternative notions of history (different normative temporalities), and that history is in many ways the battlefield between different points of view. If not, we end up reproducing some of the more insidious structures of the homeland period, not least traditional authorities – already one of the more unruly loose ends of apartheid.<sup>62</sup>

In this special issue, Olaf **Zenker** explores the land issue by looking at the land restitution process, but this time with a surprising twist. Zenker considers the land claims that emerged as a result of the establishment of KwaNdebele, one of the last homelands to be created. Fertile and highly productive white-owned land in the Rust-de-Winter area was expropriated and made part of the new homeland, thus disproving widespread beliefs that the homelands were made up only of the worst land. The white owners were compensated at the time, but some lodged new claims after the fall of apartheid. Zenker details the horror felt by the land commissioners over the shamelessness of the farmers, and we can only sympathise – were it not for the central case dealt with in the article, the land claim of Abraham Viljoen, twin to *Volksfront* leader Constand Viljoen, but ever on the side of black farmers against the apartheid regime that his brother defended. This case defies all neat categories of race, resistance and victimhood and hence opens up profound questions precisely about race and class on the frontier and how post-apartheid South Africa labours to find a way to a different kind of justice.

### *The Loose Ends of Everyday Life*

Many of the contributions (including some discussed above) explore contemporary life in, or in relation to, the former homelands. In these discussions, large-scale transformations of the political economy occupy a central position as framework for the analyses. Deborah **James** explores savings schemes in the former homeland of Lebowa, in present-day Mpumalanga. While these savings schemes were not products of the homelands, they were animated by the same political economy that produced the homelands – rural–urban migration, gender relations and forms of capitalism that often excluded rural women. Today, the savings schemes are transformed, not least because members are much more differentiated than before. There is a huge variety of different schemes, which accommodate a diversifying population of rural women living in a world characterised by increasing inequalities. With the advent of public employment and grant systems, the livelihoods of women have changed

---

62 For different perspectives on traditional authorities, see, for instance, B. Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa* (Oxford, James Currey, 2005), and L. Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of the Land in South Africa* (Leiden, Brill, 2005). Where Oomen sees pros and cons in relation to chiefs, Ntsebeza is uncompromising and sees no benefits in preserving chiefly authority.

beyond recognition. The savings schemes help members to live sustainable lives alongside capitalist flows in ways that, once in a while, clash with these flows, and at other times accommodate them. In a similar way, Isak **Niehaus**, in the same region of Bushbuckridge, also explores a cultural form through its different periods. Niehaus explores the role that magic potions have played over time in football, not least how and when the use of magic potions was considered morally legitimate. His historical excavations show that football was in fact introduced at exactly the time that Bushbuckridge ceased to have agricultural significance and became a labour reserve, at the moment when the homelands were created. Hence football and homeland history were intrinsically linked. In the first years, teachers and priests were in charge of the sport as a way of disciplining black bodies. Later, local patrons and strong men, products of the new homeland economy, assumed control of football. Their reign lasted until homeland politics turned violent in the mid 1980s. After the fall of apartheid, new corporate players, mirroring the development of South African capitalism (one can earn money from poor people if there are enough of them), moved into the former homeland areas and took over from the local patrons. In each of these transitions, the morality of potions changed. While the analyses of James and Niehaus to some extent confirm the marginalisation of the homelands as waste products of history, many of the cultural forms associated with the homelands, and the political economy that supported them, have persisted into the post-apartheid era, to which, for instance, the proliferation of savings schemes testifies. Furthermore, as Niehaus documents, national football franchisers are rumoured to be scouting in Bushbuckridge for effective and potent potions to be used in national competitions. In this way, and as other contributions suggest (Jensen, White), homelands are seen by many South Africans as reservoirs of traditional forms of life, even as they have increasingly moved to the rhythm of the new South Africa. This resembles some of the discussions on the traditional ghetto. While people – European Jewry or African Americans, for example – were confined to the ghetto, the ghetto also allowed forms of life to exist and develop, including a sense of community.<sup>63</sup> Lekgoathi's argument on Ndebele Radio is a case in point of the productive,<sup>64</sup> even positive, side of the homelands. Similarly with custom and the occult! While homelands confined people, they were also productive sites of alternative forms of life that animate post-apartheid living also in metropolitan South Africa.

This paradox of the homelands – that they seem to have been erased, or disappeared, but have nevertheless left marks and loose ends in post-apartheid South Africa – is also evident in the contributions on the former Transkei by Leslie Bank and Derick Fay. Both are primarily concerned with urban–rural migration and generational divides, but they address the problem from different angles. In his post-apartheid history of mobility from the Eastern Cape and the former Transkei to, especially, Cape Town, Leslie **Bank** identifies three distinct moments in which the meaning of the rural house has been reconfigured. In the mid 1990s, fuelled by retrenchment packages and good rains, the rural economy in Transkei seemed to blossom for a while, giving life to the notion of a rural, agricultural future. However, as the crisis hit in the early 2000s, this seemed increasingly unlikely and unsustainable. Instead, a new round of migration to Cape Town was initiated, this time under severely precarious conditions. These transitions (rural prosperity, crisis, and renewed migration) have established the rural home as a place where life is 'anchored' – a term that Bank coins to capture a move away from agricultural significance of the house into one in which life – in times of crisis – can be rendered predictable, even when one is located on the slopes of Hout Bay. In many ways, Derick **Fay**'s contribution mirrors Bank's analysis, although the

---

63 L. Wacquant, 'Designing Urban Seclusion in the Twenty-First Century', *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal*, 43, 'Taboo' (2010), pp. 164–75.

64 Lekgoathi, 'Ethnic Separatism'.

looking-glass points the other way. Whereas Bank follows his interlocutors to Cape Town, Fay remains in the Transkei to explore what happens to the sense of house and land in the former homeland. Fay argues that we need to pay attention to the networks of neighbourhood and kin, rather than privileging traditional authorities and migrant perspectives. He coins the term 'attractive value' to account for how those who remain try to build homes that will ensure the safe return of those away. It makes little sense to investigate land tenure only through a lens of production, which will lead the observer to think that land lies fallow and under-utilised. In this way, the value of the land lies not in its production potential but in its ability to maintain ties with those away.

These analyses, and other contributions to the special issue, point to important reconfigurations in the former homelands that speak to heavily contested frontiers of, not least, gender, class and generation. Some people in the homelands have, as testified by James's analyses, done quite well for themselves, not least because of public employment. Others, mainly women and the elderly, have become beneficiaries of an expanding welfare system of social grants to the disabled, the elderly and indigent mothers. This has had unpredictable consequences for gender and generational relations, as witnessed in the anxieties identified by many of the contributors, between the old and the young: will the young return? To what can they return? What are their options, and what future can be imagined? Who will exert influence and authority on their lives? None of these questions is easily answered. They are part of the loose ends of apartheid. These loose ends are not merely notional. They are the stuff that makes up the very intimacy of life at the homeland frontier, the ruinations of a defunct system. While these questions are not unique to the former homelands, they seem to carry particular weight and be asked with particular urgency here. While we do not provide answers to all – if any – of the questions, the contributions to this special issue attempt to address some of these loose ends in order to lay something to rest and show how other things remain with us, although in different forms, depending on how the loose ends have been woven together. It is our contention that only through addressing the loose ends in their complexity and ambiguity can we hope to address the legacies of the homelands in a way that may lead towards a different liberation: perhaps not one defined by the master narrative of apartheid loss and post-apartheid restoration; perhaps one that takes into account the myriad loose ends, of possibility and potential and of danger and injustice, at the frontier of post-apartheid South Africa.