

## TRANSFORMATION Thiven Reddy<sup>©</sup>

SINCE 1994 MANY WORDS have been used to motivate for and describe the changes from the old apartheid order to the new social relations and practices ushered in by democratic elections. Among the words in the languages of post-apartheid politics are 'revolutionary', 'reformist', 'broad-based', 'elitist', 'grassroots', 'human-rights-driven', 'participatory', 'just' and 'de-racialised'. Topping the list is 'transformation', which denotes a change from one qualitative state to another, and usually implies 'improvement'. As used in South African politics, the term embraces diverse meanings in competing discourses of social change. It arguably occupies centre-stage of the contemporary political terrain and, as to be expected, is the locus of intense contestation.

After apartheid some would reasonably say that it is quite impossible to be against 'transformation'; racism can no longer be easily expressed in the old discourses of white supremacy. After all, as Derrida (1985) suggests, apartheid represented 'racism's last word'. Once the institutional basis of organised state racism was finally overthrown, replaced by a government representing the majority, competing notions of 'transformation' surfaced. Conflicts arose over the grand visions and the minute details of addressing and reorganising historically sedimented power relations in institutional contexts and cultures and in everyday life. In democratic South Africa today, conflicts over power, its movements and distribution, express themselves through conflicts over the meanings of transformation. Why the word 'transformation' has taken centre-stage to represent a notion of social change, and not competing signifiers such as 'structural change', 'radical change', 'liberation' or 'revolution' - words that traditionally resonate with the language of the struggle against apartheid - is an interesting question. A possible explanation is that it is easily incorporated into many diverse, and often conflicting, discourses of politics and conceptions of social change.

In the formative period of its acceptance into South Africa's language of politics, transformation was more popularly associated with resistance discourses, yet these days even opposition parties schooled in Afrikaner nationalist and conservative liberal frameworks rely on its power to make their utterances 'reasonable', understandable and legitimate. Used like this, the word 'transformation' suggests and defines the limits of the 'acceptable' in post-apartheid political language. State and civil society actors invoke it to serve various purposes. In official and popular discourses of social change, it is frequently used to indicate an ongoing process as well as an end to strive for, the two aspects assuming different meanings depending on audience, ideology and the

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political moment. If there is something of a consensus, it is in the reference to some broad notion of societal change away from apartheid (as in 'a break with the past'). In opposition circles, the word is increasingly used to criticise the ANC for failing to adhere to a democratic ethos in its implementation and practice.

This chapter examines the meanings and functions of transformation in the discourses of social and political change after apartheid. The following sections discuss notions of the transformation in the ruling party, the ANC, and government policies and practices as they relate to 'empowering black business' and affirmative action. It also discusses key oppositional views on the ruling official definitions and interpretations of transformation.

#### Notions of transformation in the ANC

As the ANC is the dominant party in the post-apartheid political system and the leading anti-apartheid organisation, its conceptions of change permeate society. Established to fight the discriminatory laws and practices confronting Africans, the ANC views itself as defined by the goal of liberation. The key term denoting social change before the transition period was 'liberation struggle'; the opening of negotiations ushered in a new terrain, and in this context of greater uncertainty and fluidity of outcomes, the signifier 'transformation' became more prominent (Singh 1992). Although the ANC has always been an organisation advocating political change, the precise elements requiring change in the existing society, the way change should be brought about, and the form and ANC-controlled society should take were naturally subjects of debate and intense contestation. Broader societal changes in various historical periods influenced these internal debates. And given that the relationship between whites and blacks, the dominant and the subaltern, involved collaboration as well as resistance, and ambiguous intermingling played itself out in the ANC, too.

For heuristic purposes, we can identify four strands of 'transformation' in the discourse of the ANC: modernist, traditionalist, radical and reformist. These derive from the dominant ideological influences - liberalism, Marxism and Third World ideologies of nationalism - that found expression in the organisation. In its formative period, two contrasting visions of opposition framed debates, both a response to the 'modernising' imperative of colonialism. The first, modernism without radical change, is best associated with the Christian educated elite and some 'non-traditional' chiefs who formed the ANC in 1912 (Karis and Carter 1972). They demanded the extension of the restricted franchise of the Cape to Africans residing in the three remaining provinces of the new Union of South Africa. They saw their role as a reformist political opposition working within the avenues of protest permitted by the ruling political order, reflecting a partially accommodative recognition and acceptance of the political structures imposed by colonialism. This strand remained influential throughout the organisation's history, adapting to different conditions facing black society and advocating a pragmatic political practice that sought compromise rather than an 'all or nothing' approach.

Late, in the aftermath of World War Two, this modernist quest was accompanied by a far-reaching, more radical democratic agenda. However, the pragmatic and accommodationist stance remained. Within the ANC the dominant view embraced 'modernist' political practices and structures and explicitly rejected 'tribalism' and any return to pre-colonial political structures though not all of its myriad cultural manifestations. The metaphors and images of the pre-colonial past and the wars against the colonial state and the Boer armies served as nostalgic reminders of a 'free' and independent past. Consider Mandela's

ambiguous navigation between modernist and 'tribal' interpretations that could perhaps be read as conforming to Orientalist framings of colonial situations. Reflecting on popular participation in the society in which he was brought up, he observed:

Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard ... At first I was astonished at the vehemence and candour with which people criticised the regent. He was not above criticism - in fact, he was often the principal target of it ... The meeting would continue until some kind of consensus was reached. They ended in unanimity of not at all ... As a leader, I have always followed the principles I first saw demonstrated by the regent at the Great Place. I have always endeavoured to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my own opinion ... Oftentimes, my own opinion will simply represent a consensus of what I heard in the discussion (Mandela 1994: 20-1; Nash 1998).

In a similar essentialising move, he emphasised the importance of genealogical roots in Xhosa identity, the organic harmony of such communities, their consequent 'unchangingness', and his attraction to a tradition of curiosity and 'inquisitiveness' associated with 'white culture'.

The Xhosa are a proud and patrilineal people with an expressive and euphonious language and an abiding belief in the importance of laws, education and courtesy. Xhosa society was a balanced and harmonious social order in which every individual knew his or her place. Each Xhosa belongs to a clan that traces its descent back to a specific forefather ... Like all Xhosa children, I acquired knowledge mainly through observation. We were meant to learn through imitation and emulation, not through questions. When I first visited the homes of whites, I was often dumbfounded by the number and nature of questions that children asked their parents - and their parents' unflinching willingness to answer them. In my household, questions were considered a nuisance; adults imparted such information as they considered necessary ... My life, and that of most Xhosa at the time, was shaped by custom, ritual and taboo. This was the alpha and omega of our existence, and went unquestioned. Men followed the path laid out for them by their fathers; women led the same lives as their mothers had before them (Mandela 1994: 11).

This accommodative, adaptive response to domination accounts partly for the ANC becoming the leading body representing the interests of the black majority during the transition to democracy.

A second strand in approaches to social change within the ANC - a militarist and Africanist outlook - stemmed from identification with the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906 and the wars fought against colonial armies by independent African polities during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Although the ANC was formed as a response to the failure of such resistance, this strand contributed to ANC 'tradition' and influenced those who cherished the folk values of pre-colonial society. It rejected elements of the modernising project associated with colonialism and apartheid. Remaining less visible in the formal organisational positions, especially after World War Two and the expulsion of Africanists from the ANC in 1958, this strand emphasised a continuity of struggle with the heroic battles of the past, which functioned as an important ideological element of pride and

mass mobilisation. This viewpoint has been echoed in the Mbeki years, particularly in his 'I am an African' and 'Two Nations' speeches, and has also strongly influenced some conceptions behind the implementation of affirmative action and black economic empowerment policies.

During its exile years following the party's banning in 1960, the ANC drew on this militarist tradition of anti-colonial African wars, but under conditions inspired by nationalist 'revolutionary' struggles in the 'Third World' and particularly southern Africa. This is the third, arguably 'radical' strand of transformation discourse in the ANC. For a number of reasons - the hardened posture of the apartheid state, the isolating, alienating and fragmented conditions of exile politics, dependence on Soviet support and the popularity of Marxist-inspired national liberation victories in China, Vietnam and Cuba, as well as the influence of the first-wave decolonisation movements in Africa - the strand displayed some centralist and authoritarian tendencies. Key ANC documents of this period - such as 'Strategy and Tactics' and 'No Middle Road' - spoke of 'radical', 'fundamental' or 'socialist' transformation (ANC 1969). In the 'Strategy and Tactics' programme adopted at Morogoro, Tanzania, in 1969, the ANC argued that even though 'national liberation was the chief content of the struggle' in Africa, the global and regional context showed that everywhere there was a 'transition to socialism' (ANC 1975).

The ANC saw itself as a national liberation movement fighting the first stage of a 'national democratic revolution' aimed at replacing apartheid with a democratic, majoritarian system. Naturally, this stage would entail the goal of de-racialisation, preparing the conditions for a post-apartheid socialist society, the final and desired stage of transformation. In the stage of national democratic revolution, all oppressed 'racial groups' under apartheid and progressive individual whites would come together to form a united anti-apartheid bloc. The ANC's core constituency consisted of the mass of African poor and exploited, the workers and peasants. At the same time, despite recognising South Africa as a relatively developed capitalist formation, the ANC in exile decided that armed struggle for national liberation - as exemplified by struggles in China and Vietnam and, later, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia - served as an important model for the struggle against apartheid.

The fourth strand in the ANC's thinking about transformation derives from the radicalisation of its understanding of social protest, influenced as it was by the long tradition of socialist struggle in South Africa. This Marxist tradition, emphasising working-class struggles and mass resistance, certainly did not contradict the militarist tradition prevailing in the organisation though, perhaps because it was advocated largely by the more 'non-racial' Communist Party, sat uneasily with the Africanist view. It was a strand derived from the historical changes in the social organisation of black society from the 1940s onwards, the increase in rural-to-urban movement and the emergence of a settled working class in and around South Africa's growing cities. Marxist-influenced bodies, some cooperating with the ANC, such as the Communist Party and the trade unions, increasingly challenged the elitist notions prevalent in the ANC at the time. They demanded the active participation of the urban working poor, focused on the capitalist and imperialist causes of black exclusion from the political system, and envisioned a socialist society as the goal of mass struggle.

Thus, the ideology that took the masses most seriously within the ANC followed rather than led the way for increased mass participation and mobilisation. Already in the 1920s the Communist party of South Africa, under pressure from the

Communist International (Comintern), began to look towards black rather than white workers as its main constituency for socialist revolution. The All African Convention and later the largely Cape-based Unity Movement swerved as other sources of pressure and influence on the ANC. The trend towards radicalisation in the ANC was assisted by a number of events: the 1946 mineworkers' strike, the victory of the National Party in the 1948 elections, and the increasingly militant approach of the ANC Youth League. In 1955 the ANC adopted the Freedom Charter, which brought together some of the radical demands then in currency. In recent years, radical critics within the ANC have come to believe that the goals of the Freedom Charter have been ignored by the government, and trade unions and the Communist Party have been marginalised in the ANC-led Alliance in favour of big business, and emerging black business class and a state-elite. They have waged a concerted campaign to shift the balance of influence back to the concerns of organised labour.

#### Post-1994 programmes of de-racialisation

Under Thabo Mbeki the ANC government embraced a disappointingly technocratic framework of governance, influenced no doubt by the context of the negotiated settlement and the constraints of the global economy exerted by the IMF and World Bank. It found itself in the contradictory position of implementing an austere macro-economic policy, one decidedly neoliberal and favouring business interests, while also aiming to accommodate the expectations of its supporters for far-reaching redress. Faced with a deeply racialised social formation and white dominance of the economy, it set out to de-racialise social relations by relying on affirmative action and black economic empowerment (BEE). The next section of this chapter discusses the narrow BEE policy aimed at changing the composition of the business class. This is followed by an analysis of the diverse notions of 'transformation' and the debate surrounding them.

#### *Black economic empowerment*

Despite the government's intention to present a single meaning of BEE in its policy, there are multiple meanings in relation to particular paradigms. The conflict over the precise meaning of the term is ultimately a political fight, both within and outside the ruling ANC, about the direction of South Africa's economic development and the nature of its democracy. While the voices in the debate are often those of old allegiances - nationalists and socialists - there are also voices that articulate a variety of overlapping positions.

In 2005 Blade Nzimande, general secretary of the Communist Party, characterised BEE as 'white captains of industry and finance ... (lending) an aspirant upwardly mobile elite the membership fees to the country club and the keys to the Porsche' (Nzimande 2005). He distinguished between 'narrow' and 'broad-based' BEE, the former being the high-profile transactions witnessed since the mid-1990s, involving a small elite of beneficiaries, and the latter, which he advocated, being the transformation of material conditions for the mass of the unemployed and poor, with a far-reaching redistribution of wealth and resources.

To date, BEE has largely involved 'black-owned consortiums' buying equity shares in one or other of South Africa's larger corporations or state enterprises; or the appointment of prominent black businessmen to senior positions in company management. This type of BEE has brought many criticisms. The 'black-owned consortium' of investors is often a small group of individuals made privately rich by such transactions. Those selected by white capital are members or former

members of the ANC or have close ties to it (thus revealing the underlying logic as political rather than market-driven or merit-based). The transactions do not demonstrate how they will benefit 'disadvantaged South Africans' more broadly nor do they make a dent in established patterns of ownership in the national economy. Many questions remain about the transparency of the deals. Ultimately, questions are raised whether this kind of BEE constitutes 'de-racialisation' in the wider society to any significant degree or addresses the real transformational challenges facing South Africa. Similar criticisms of BEE have been made by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the media and many academics. Heribert Adam (Adam et al. 1998) labels BEE as 'crony capitalism', similar to developments in the South Asian countries of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and South Korea.

BEE of this kind has had its defenders within the ANC. Saki Macozoma (2005), a member of the then ANC executive, accused critics of expecting BEE to usher in socialism, an outcome that BEE was not designed to accomplish. 'Many critics of BEE accept the need to de-racialise the economy, but they think that the process has "elitist consequences". It is not alleviating poverty, but enriching the few ... What did they expect? Where have you ever seen a capitalist system producing socialist results?' There was a need and a challenge, he maintained, to encourage black people to take up the opportunities offered by BEE. Even without significant shifts in class relations, BEE represented at the very least the 'de-racialisation' of the business class; it has helped create a bigger black middle class and more black businesses. In his view, blacks in management will make a company more sensitive to black interests and such companies will represent themselves in ways that address a broader, historically marginalised community. And certainly, he argued, de-racialisation of any sector of South African society was a step forward from a segregated 'racial' monopoly.

Mocozoma was correct in saying that those who criticise BEE have another political agenda. Their socialist paradigm views BEE as amounting to a series of partial reforms, leaving intact the exploitation of the majority of people, a situation inherited from the apartheid era. For them, BEE constitutes a 'sell-out' when it comes to the real demands of transformation - a more egalitarian society, not a market-driven capitalism. While BEE has had some limited success on the de-racialisation front, it is not making any significant dent in the income distribution inherited from apartheid and it is unlikely to do so in its present form. After more than a decade, we see a failure to narrow the inequality gap, rather, inequality has increased.

From several quarters have come increasing demands for a 'broad-based' BEE that includes more people (outside narrow ruling-party networks), is more transparent and is implemented differently so as to benefit the marginalised sectors of society. It will have to encourage active community participation, a grassroots democratic movement from below, and well-established structures that will hold potential elites accountable.

### *Affirmative action and its contradictions*

After 1994 the new democratic government faced the immediate challenge of changing the composition of the state and its related structures. In the course of negotiations prior to the settlement the ANC had conceded a 'sunset clause', which protected the white civil service from immediate retrenchment, after which affirmative action policies would apply. Despite this clause, the President had the power to appoint the senior management in the civil service, and those appointed after 1994 invariably came from the ranks of the ANC.

In 1996, the government passed the Employment Equity Act, establishing a legal framework compelling employers to meet affirmative action targets that would reflect the 'demographics' of the broader society. This Act defined those previously disadvantaged as 'designated groups' - Africans, coloureds, Indians, women and the disabled - who qualified for affirmative action policies. Employers would incur penalties if they failed to meet the requirements of the Act, and enterprises would be assessed on the basis of annual reports submitted to the Department of Labour.

In their own domains, various state departments defined transformation in broad enough terms to include as many features and criteria as possible, often leading to quite unintended and contradictory outcomes. Take, for example, the definition used by the South African Police Service, which emphasised change in institutional culture as well as an approach to policing itself, leaving very little out:

the overall process of change includes rationalisation and amalgamation. It further includes the transformation of policing styles, approaches, priorities, policies, cultures and attitudes whereby the South African Police Service (SAPS) becomes a community service-orientated police service aligned with values and principles such as transparency and accountability, impartiality and professionalism. It thus entails not only the transformation of the nature of the organisation, but of the very essence of policing (Lue 1995).

While transformation has often been motivated and promoted by ANC spokespeople in broad, far-reaching terms (see Motlanthe 1998), in practice most state departments and civil society organisations have understood and implemented transformation through a focus on numbers, securing representative additions of people who had previously been excluded under apartheid. Since all the institutions of apartheid society were exclusively dominated by whites and resources and opportunities distributed on the basis of a hierarchy of identities - whites, Indians, coloureds and Africans - the new government implemented personnel change by relying on apartheid classification. The result has been a source of tension and has given rise to a great deal of debate.

The debate about transformation has been multi-dimensional and has assumed many forms, depending on issues specific to the institution or sector involved, its political dynamics, and its role in the overall 'trench warfare' between different social forces. We will highlight a few examples - in sport, higher education and job hiring - to map the contours of the debate.

In the arena of sport, where the raw emotions around transformation seem to be most immediately felt, the key issue has been the selection of national teams. Because of deep historical and cultural affiliations between particular sports and particular racial and ethnic identities - cricket and rugby with whites (and coloureds and some Indians), and soccer with Africans and coloureds - team selection has been highly politicised. Though the national soccer team includes a few white players, the cricket and rugby national teams have remained largely white, the proportions not in keeping with the racial demographics of the country. The Department of Sport and Recreation and the ANC-controlled parliamentary committee on sport have on many occasions voiced their disapproval of the minimal number, or even absence, of black players in national sports, threatening to impose state intervention and penalties.

In opposing ANC policies, the sporting federations, media commentators and sports fans have contributed to a highly charged, ongoing battle. Many critics have

spoken of government interference, blaming the government of poor performance at the international level, and echoing the apartheid-era response to international sports isolation: governments should leave sport out of politics. Some point out the importance of government intervention at grassroots level rather than the media-grabbing international level. The ANC and its supporters have responded by emphasising the importance of 'representivity', the need to address past discrimination, and the role of sport in nation-building.

Issues of transformation in higher education have resulted, as expected, in wide differences of opinion about current policies. The extensive legislation governing higher education demands that the sector and individual institutions address issues of equity, democratisation, development, quality, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and effectiveness and efficiency (DoE 1996).

At the historically white universities, there have been dramatic increases in black student numbers. Historically, the low numbers of African students admitted to the universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, which were considered more open and liberal under apartheid than others, were shocking. At the University of Cape Town, 39 African students registered in 1959; the number dropped to 18 in 1969, and then to 5 in 1965, at the height of the apartheid era. At the University of the Witwatersrand, African student numbers decreased from 74 in 1959, to 38 in 1961, and then to 10 in 1965. In the 1980s, though, black student numbers rose steadily, and in the last decade black students have constituted nearly a half of the total student body, in evident contrast to the numbers of academic staff. Among the issues causing widespread tension and disagreement are student numbers, admissions and quotas, staff composition and the promotion of black staff to senior positions, course offerings, Eurocentric curricula content and institutional culture.

While some of these issues have cropped up in the transformation debate at the University of Stellenbosch, the predominant question here is the language of instruction. This has a direct bearing on non-Afrikaans-speaking black students. The change from Afrikaans as the predominant medium of instruction to a 'dual medium' system, allowing for English and Afrikaans undergraduate lectures - the proposal of university reformers - would enable more African students to attend the university. However, 'traditionalists' have waged a well-organised campaign to retain Afrikaans as the only language of instruction, arguing that Stellenbosch has an historical and cultural obligation to protect Afrikaans from the 'threats' it faces in the new South Africa. In their view, African students ought to learn Afrikaans; there are enough coloured Afrikaans-speaking students who already make the university sufficiently non-racial; and an Afrikaans-language university should be encouraged and supported by the state as it promotes a multilingual society.

There are numerous cases, daily reported or spoken about, relating to the issue of transformation in job hiring procedures. One recent controversial case illustrates the tensions caused by affirmative action within communities oppressed under apartheid. An appropriately qualified man classified as 'coloured' was not given a job in the prestatal company Sasol. Instead, another employee with lesser qualifications, classified as African, was appointed. The case was taken on appeal to the Labour Court, where the judge ruled in favour of the company, reasoning that since Africans were the most oppressed under apartheid, affirmative action practices should give preference to Africans over coloureds and Indians in job hiring. Among those who protested, a struggle activist, Zenzile Khoisan, familiar with struggles in the Western Cape, countered that there was no basis to compare 'degrees of Oppression' under apartheid, that coloureds had suffered as much as

Africans, and that they could trace their indigeneity to the Khoi and San communities at the Cape, which predated the arrival of white settlers in South Africa.

The opposition to affirmative action has been extensive. Compared to the criticisms of BEE, which have been made mainly by the old 'struggle' Left, the backlash against affirmative action as a form of transformation comes from diverse sectors of society. These include the Solidarity trade union which represents Afrikaner workers in former parastatal companies, some coloured and Indian people who believe that in practice affirmative action benefits only 'indigenous Africans', and opposition parties. The Democratic Alliance, the main opposition party, aims partly to garner electoral support from those dissatisfied with ANC affirmative action policies (or 'racial quotas', as the party calls them), and the Independent Democrats, another opposition party, has sought to win support specifically from alienated coloured voters.

Opposition to affirmative action assumes various and sometimes contradictory forms, drawing on the political discourses and symbols of the new democratic dispensation. In any situation of social change, of course, vested interest will fight to secure positions of dominance. Common arguments include the fear of falling standards or the importance of 'tradition'. It is said that jobs are given to unqualified people and principles of merit are sidelined to satisfy government targets or win the favours of the ruling party; as a result the employing institution is compelled to invest further in outside consultants, which leads to greater inefficiency, increased costs, wastage and corrupt practices. Critics also claim that the efficient 'service delivery' needed to address the backlog inherited from apartheid is unachievable because the employment of unqualified staff has produced capacity problems for the stat. Notions of 'standards', 'excellence' and 'efficiency', meritocratic criteria and neoliberal values come together, often in ambiguous configurations, to present a powerful counter to ANC practices claiming to redress past wrongs.

For the ANC, while a discourse of 'the apartheid past' organises its approach to post-apartheid politics, as government a depoliticised discourse of policy, inputs and outputs systems, measuring indicators and evaluation permeates its policy and practice. The focus on a change in personnel is quite clearly a necessary stage of the decolonisation process, and hardly avoidable. Fanon pointed out that this was a messy and antagonistic process as it involves 'simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men ... To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up' (1963: 35).

In the main, however, the ANC has conformed to, rather than broken with, decolonisation projects elsewhere; transformation at this stage is viewed as a 'numbers game', in which 'representivity' is the key term. This is the idea that all public institutions ought to have roughly proportional numbers of the different 'race' groups in the whole society. The degree of transformation is thus evaluated according to how 'representative' the institution is, and this is done by the simple method of counting heads, with 'representivity' being considered more important at the level of leadership than among the ordinary members of the institution. While companies sometimes make their overall employment equity targets by hiring more white women, in everyday applications the dominant perception is that the practice is to count how many people of African descent work in a particular institution. Fanon would have criticised the ANC government for conforming to the narrow, elitist programme of change he railed against, where the nationalist

bourgeoisie uses popular ideas of Africanisation or nationalisation merely to promote its own class interests.

If the struggle against apartheid was also the struggle against 'race' classification and the creation of a normative order free from 'race', the re-encroachment of a language of 'race' identification has made many uncomfortable. In a democratic South Africa, even though not by law but by convention, 'race' classification remains paradoxically alive because it is reinforced by dominant state ideology, civil society practices, and various acts encouraging 'transformation'. This is a difficult issue, morally and politically, in post-apartheid South Africa, and it has been the source of the ongoing 'trench warfare' surrounding transformation. Liberal critics argue that the practice reproduces the racial divisions of the past and amounts to a 'reverse racism'. Radical critics, on the other hand, demand a more thoroughgoing transformation of everyday material conditions that will benefit the masses rather than a narrow elite, or else propose that the categories be 'problematized' to demonstrate the fluidity and relational character of identities. But the government, the ANC and perhaps many beneficiaries want to see no other way of correcting and reversing the racial hierarchies of the past. To evaluate progress, they contend, there is a need to classify and count heads - it is a necessary evil.

A more nuanced stance would challenge the politics of reducing transformation to merely personnel changes rather than effecting the deeper structural relations and consequent cultural manifestations inherited from apartheid. In one such framing, it has been argued that the ANC under Mbeki has over-elevated 'race' to a position that undermines the consolidation of a non-racial ethos, which was embryonically developed during the anti-apartheid struggle. Having abandoned its ethical foundation of a non-racial politics, the ANC has replaced it with a narrow African nationalism, emphasising a discourse of indigeneity (Chipkin 2007). These policies promote the interests of conservative elites rather than the masses of poor. All transformation has amounted to is a change from an Afrikaner elite to a black elite with ties to the ruling party. The dominance of the ANC in the political system produces a patronage system in which the ruling party dishes out offices and goods to key societal actors in exchange for support. Even the ANC's attempts to redress the inequities of the past have come under fire. Some of the Left criticise the notion of 'service delivery', arguing that it creates a technocratic conception of politics where citizens assume the role of passive recipients of state goods, leaving state bureaucrats, consultants and expert to dominate decision-making, minimising active and critical citizen participation, and failing to produce any significant changes in development, planning and service delivery.

The examples suggest the difficulty of achieving change beyond the conquest of state power by the majority. They are about struggles for hegemony, since transformation means different things to different societal actors. One side of these debates broadly criticises transformation in terms of 'standards' and. At times, 'tradition' and the undermining of merit and efficiency; the other bewails the lack of transformation, alluding to the continuing prevalence of white racism and the new forms of racism that feed on old networks, double standards in applying institutional rules and procedures, and the resilient interconnection between the institutionalised racism of the past and liberal and Afrikaner ideologies. On each side there are different ideas about what is ethically defensible in terms of the content, goals and practices of implementation. But at the very least communication appears to remain open because both sides are

talking about transformation - a term which, because of its generality in referring to social change, allows for many different interpretations.

### Conclusion

The ANC-led government received an explicit mandate to 'correct' past wrongs and, if possible, reverse the effects of institutionalised racism. The notion of 'transformation' functions variously: to describe, to mask, justify or vilify, or to preserve or mobilise the narrow interests of a few or the broad interests of the many. Conflicts over its content - what should be transformed, by how much, in whose interests - and the way it should be implemented, define the contemporary political terrain. How could it be otherwise, given that apartheid's demise came about through a protracted process of compromise and negotiation, rather than the outright overthrow of the previous order of things? It is a matter of debate as to 'who won'; ongoing battles are the order of the day, and change often commingles with continuity, and sometimes, in a confusing mixture, new elites rely on old conservative discourses. The success of the frontal assault on the apartheid state has been followed by this terrain of trench warfare; in everyday politics, the new democratic society unfolds with much reluctance. The nature of this post-apartheid terrain, an outcome of ongoing struggles, will depend on what meaning of 'transformation' sticks (to borrow from Gramsci) and becomes common sense.

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