

“Vans, Autos, Kombis and the Drivers of Social Movements”

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This paper is a contribution in an on-going debate in Durban concerning the nature of left, radical politics in this city and the orientation of but the latest crop of social movements that has, since 1998, taken root here. It happens in the context of wall-to-wall (and somewhat dubious) coverage of these social movements in the academic literature and fairly intense debate and even contestation within an activist and social movement leadership community about the political meanings to be attached to particular social movements. Specifically, the modus operandi of those most responsible for shaping the representations and receptions of these movements within a broader South African activist community and in the wider academic literature is analysed. However, the critique put forward is deliberately general, to enable both a constructive and non-defensive debate on these issues, as well as to describe a general phenomenon that plays itself out all over this country and, I would venture, in many other parts of the world too. While I urge a complete rethink in the way left academics presently relate to – and sometimes impose themselves on – grass-roots organisations, I write this paper much more in a spirit of self-criticism than as polemic against them.

The front page of the Sunday Times, July 9 2006, records that “Black economic empowerment deals created most of South Africa’s 5 880 new dollar millionaires last year”. This figure is almost three times the global rate of increase. We are now fourth in producing dollar millionaires behind South Korea, India and Russia.

Almost all the names mentioned: Smuts Ngonyama, Mohammed Valli Moosa, Popo Molefe, Cheryl Carolus, Manne Dipico and Patrice Motsepe are politically connected to the ruling party. The speed in which they are making money inspires incredulity. “Mining tycoon Mzi Khumalo is one of those who benefited early and is said to have made R1-billion in a single deal as early as 2002. Motsepe, a former mining contractor, has made almost as much in about 10 years as Pick ‘n Pay Group chairman Raymond Ackerman has made in about 40 years.”

Tastes are reflected in these changes. The importer of Porsche told the Sunday Times that he is increasing the supply of Porches from 250 to 400 owing mostly to black executive demand. The Aston Martin dealership has, since January, sold 40 cars. The prices range from R1.5 to R3.5 million. 12 of the 40 buyers were Black.

The world of the emancipated rich is portrayed as a succession of highly active deal-makers, raking in money as a form of racial redress, and then showing off what can be consumed with the fast, imported cars this wealth can buy.

But it is not the driving habits, nor the vehicles of the business class that I am going to focus on in this paper. There are other elites who live in as conspicuous and parasitic a relationship to the constituency they represent.

The following week in the Sunday Times, the newspaper focused on poverty, albeit on page 5. Eleven million of the poor subsist on tiny social grants. The level of misery in rural and urban shacklands is devastating. Although the article was sympathetic to their plight, the poor were still portrayed as living no-hope lives, evincing no agency of their own. Nothing was said about how the poor are organizing, the demands they are making and how they are collectively confronting the system that humiliates and degrades them. There was, in particular, no mention of the various social movements that have sprung up or the sheer number of service delivery protests that have taken place these last few years; one for every new dollar millionaire. There was certainly no investigation into the mode of transport members of social movements used.

Perhaps that was a good thing, for I fear what might have emerged had the journalist looked too closely into who presumed to be driving these movements around, in the vans, autos and kombis I will talk about a little later.

In creating a capital friendly environment, the promise this government holds out is that business will create jobs and general prosperity. So, the poor are asked to suffer some short-term pain for long-term gain. However, notions of social citizenship predicated on access to the labour-market have failed miserably throughout the global South. All that has happened is that a small business class has accumulated fabulous wealth while, in a fine calculus that uses as its base the insignificant income transfers given to Blacks under apartheid, the democratic state now “progressively” rolls out slightly less trifling social grants that are just improvement enough to ward off mass social discontent.

This brings me to the subject of social movements. Much of this mass social discontent, potentially on a revolutionary line of flight pointed beyond this political economy, is mobilized by the many community organizations we have seen being born. Scattered, slightly dislocated and with varying understandings of the reasons they are still marginalised after uhuru, these social movements are nevertheless extremely militant and well rooted within poor communities.

Ironically, the most visible of these movements are known not because of their militant interventions but because they have attracted to them supporters from a largely middle-class background who have broadly left-wing political commitments. In a phrase, they have attracted ‘activists’ who seek to come in from the bitter cold of the post-apartheid struggle landscape to the new fires that are burning in communities. These activists bring a range of important skills, perspectives and, most of all, resources to assist in the development, representation and generalization of these struggles. Celebratory academic papers are produced, books and newspaper articles are written, court cases fought, money for busses, meetings, rallies and T-shirts raised.

Unfortunately, these activists also bring with them certain infectious political diseases. Sometimes they are out to recruit members for their ultra-left sect or political party. Other times, as NGO workers who need to justify their existence, they insert themselves into struggles that may be written up in the next funding proposal. Still other times, one finds ambitious academics keen to distinguish themselves by getting the inside research track on some or other exotic rebellion, whose nuances they are best placed to enlighten their fellows in the academy about, while ratcheting up publication kudos. And, then lastly, one has the somewhat dated, free-floating,

professional revolutionaries who genuinely believe they have something to add to these struggles or, more accurately, that these struggles have something to add to the course of the battles they are already fighting. You see them attending marches, doing political education, writing letters and articles in the press or providing strategic advice to movements that often need assistance on the legal, logistical or financial fronts.

It is hard to think of any social movement that has lasted longer than six-months in South Africa that does not have quite an impressive support crew made up of the kinds of people I have just described. It is quite startling, then, that while social movements have been studied to death, those outsiders who play such a powerful role have largely escaped serious scrutiny. But, before we look more closely at the role of these struggle-magi who come from outside affected communities bearing gold, frankincense and myrrh, let us first consider why indeed they are thought of as being on the outside in the first place.

Unlike the anti-apartheid struggle to which people from varying backgrounds became committed as much for ideological reasons as for reasons rooted in their own experiences of oppression, most members of social movements are said to be mobilized predominantly by their experiences of deprivation. Yes, ideology is wrapped up in taking on struggles for everyday survival. And yes, ideology certainly breeds and develops as these struggles unfold. However, even after months of collective struggle, the over-arching qualification for comradeship based on a commitment to a set of society-wide ideas (such as non-racialism, democracy or revolution) is not the glue that sticks one comrade to another in social movements. It is rather a commitment to a set of particular demands and a commitment to an organizational identity created to achieve them. Legitimate, public and democratic interactions between all of us in social movements, certainly in Durban in my experience, centre around the achievement of these demands and the building of the organizations and leaders deemed necessary to do so.

Put differently, the basis for our communion is to demand delivery or oppose policy. In this process, a comrade is a comrade mainly because he or she is a fellow "resident" who shares our immediate goals and inhabits our organisation. However, we lack a latter day substitute for the term "revolutionary" to describe affinities and principles of desire and consciousness that go beyond these horizons and attach to people and groups with whom we share capacities for subversion not defined by a reaction to specific government policies. Until we find such a language and such a politics, those people who are not directly affected by water cut-offs or slum-clearance for instance (or indeed our water cut-offs and our slum-clearances) - are by the very constitution and imagination of social movements - necessarily, outsiders.

As a consequence of the way social movements are imagined, we have not developed a grammar of power that those outside social movements can use to talk to those within. Nor do those inside have a way of coming to grips with the ways of outside activists or with other social movements beyond them. Indeed, the crudeness of the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" is created by the absence of words and ideas describing levels of action, experience and thought where insiders and outsiders act as one, or where the roles are reversed. We end up using then a rough sign language to communicate what we expect the other wants to see in us. Outsiders are cooperative, sympathetic and resourceful. Insiders, charismatic, wise and strong. Leaders from other communities are respectful, friendly and efficient at bringing a kombi or two of support. This has been a very useful vocabulary up until now. But, for either outsiders or insiders to understand, evaluate, debate and

generate ideas or meanings beyond the tactical exigencies of the moment is rare in this language.

There are those who say that this is as it should be. I agree with them to the extent that the imposition of tired left dogmas and understandings of power are no good. But, there is a distinct difference between mobilizing against the state according to stale, pre-determined programs and the task of provoking, contesting, enabling and generating a collective, universalising ideology of community that increasingly separates itself from the logic and reach of the state. I think here of the difference between movements that are able to make “stealing” water or “invading” land part of their everyday praxis or discourses as opposed to decrying lack of delivery.

This is not to say that ideological ascriptions and strategic programs do not attach themselves to social movements. They do. But it is very seldom a self - or - collectively fashioned event. Perhaps by the default of the insiders, this task of fashioning political meanings that flow from struggles has largely been taken up by the outsiders. It is this “outsider” grouping, who most furiously contest what particular social movements mean ideologically, technically, even cynically, among themselves. These battles sometimes play themselves out on the bodies and campaigns of social movements as various academics try to position social movements to best achieve their vision. At the same time, social movements are incessantly studied and analysed so that factual support for particular theoretical claims academics have made about them can, like any easy victory, be piously claimed.

This can become ethically quite complex and, in certain extreme cases, treacherous. At this very conference, we have had papers presented where the statements of named comrades made in the privileged environment of recent social movement caucuses have been deconstructed as signifying this or that new turn in their politics. I have my doubts about the substance of this reasoning but, even were it to be valid and interesting, there is something galling about information garnered by an academic while posing as a comrade being used to demonstrate a point in an abstruse sociology paper about the level of development of his fellow activists. Please understand, this is not a quibble of sociological ethics but one of political morality and comradeship. It is a random crowd at a conference that is being taken into such a researcher’s confidence about what he really thinks about the politics and ideas of people who are under the impression that he is their comrade, when they themselves are simply not treated with the same level of sincerity or depth of engagement.

The time has now come to ask. While we outside academics are researching the practices and analyzing the politics of the poor, who is researching us, the researchers? Surely, we must continue to develop our ideas about society and struggle but why always circulate these ideas in a separate world from those who inspire us and about whom we write. This behaviour is expected from those who claim only to be researchers and nothing else, who are up-front with their questionnaires. But it rankles when more grandiose claims of membership of these movements are made.

And what exactly is it okay to write about? Is it not patronizing to presume to label the politics of those we consort with in struggle in academic texts but not to engage them in an exchange of ideas over these same issues? What are our rules of engagement with communities who some of us are quite literally feeding off, in a world undeclared to them? I do not mean to single out a particular example of this practice unfairly by asking this question, because this mode of conduct is widespread and few academics are exempt from criticism. But, what it does reveal is a general truism that

is alarming. The actual constituency to which even the most radical academics are beholden are not the poor. Nor is it the singular middle-class. Rather it is the mass of them gathered in conferences, journals, e-mail lists, universities and other sites of the production of bourgeois knowledge.

And since there can be very little benefit to community movements to be gleaned from such detailed and personal disclosures when weighed against the existential bad-faith of this gesture and the embarrassment it could occasion, one has to start thinking about setting some boundaries for the permanent scrutiny of one class of comrades by another caste of them. This constant note-taking and reflection on those one joins in struggle cannot be healthy. It is one thing telling truth to power, colleagues. It is another thing altogether letting out secrets and trespassing on the dignity of those who let you into their space as a fellow traveller, not biographer. I am sorry to say this but this mode of knowledge production from private, semi-clandestine and comradely spaces, for no agreed nor identifiable benefit to social movements, is only a few notches better than spying.

But the most alarming feature of the current, general academic mode of reporting on social movements is that it is often so overblown, romanticized and, in many cases, just plain made up. It is actually difficult to read what is said about certain social movements with a straight face and one sometimes gets the impression that they are written up especially to serve as substantiation for discombobulated chunks of whichever new theorist it is chic to corroborate. We all inflate numbers to tell the press about the size of our marches. But when we begin believing our own propaganda, a dangerous precipice awaits. It is a cliff over which many greater revolutionary subjects than social movements have lurched. At the bottom of this cliff lie the battered bodies of organizations and individuals who simply could not live up to the promises made on their behalf.

The epitome of this mode of thinking is the facile axiom that the poor somehow are an embodiment of the truth and, as long as they organise democratically, the line of march they take will advance the cause of freedom. As a corollary to this mistaken view, criticisms of existing social movements from outside is cast as arrogant, reckless, reactionary and, even, racist. In this regard, we have seen fairly gentle questionings around patriarchal attitudes in social movements responded to in near hysterical terms with labels, "white, middle-class, northerner" being used to put down the heresy that the poor are only human¹.

No. We do each other no favours by flattery dressed up as theory. For, we are all much more compromised than we like to think and we should at least be clear about that among ourselves. Movements are much more precarious and turning a blind eye to their faults is dangerous and patronizing all at once. I think here of the concept of recuperation. This, following Henri Lefebvre, is when

"an idea or a project regarded as irredeemably revolutionary or subversive - that is to say, on the point of introducing a discontinuity - is normalized, reintegrated into the existing order, and even revives it. Shaken for a brief moment, the social relations of production and reproduction - that is to say, domination - are reinforced...The fact that a project or concept has been 'recuperated' does not mean that it was not potentially active for a period of time. It means that 'people' (the opponents of the established order or disorder) did not know how, or were not able, to seize the opportunity, the favourable conjuncture, and carry out the project." (2005, pp. 105-106)

Lefebvre then goes on: "First point: what can be recuperated is not, by the same token, recuperative. Second point, which must be stressed: there is nothing-no proposal, no project, no idea-which cannot be recuperated, that is to say, used by different social or political forces from those in whose name it was advanced." (2005, 106).

So in the present conjuncture, the first thing we need to note is that every single existing social movement is right now, right here, perfectly recuperable. It is simply nonsense to talk them up as the next revolutionary subject. There will not even be talk of "betrayal" should a government minister come, with cheque-book in hand, and make an offer handsome enough to relocate mjondolo residents to Verulam.

The much trumpeted "right to live in the city" is no principled, ideological commitment. Nor does it have to be. But we have to realize and respect that the core demand of many social movements is indeed simply to be placed within "normal" relations of oppression and exploitation: in a normal job, in an RDP house with minimum standards of electricity and water. We might have reasons to tell other people otherwise (although, I can't see what these reasons are) but we ought not to mislead ourselves. And we should not use the poor to satisfy our peculiar (intellectual) fetishes.

Second, there is a warning that there is no movement, no set of ideas that can never be recuperated, hi-jacked and made to serve the interests of the few, of an elite. We have seen how an increase in Black millionaires and the fancy cars they drive is represented as a sign of the success of the anti-apartheid struggle. We also have those in our midst who plainly want power for themselves to serve their own inclinations and needs. So, those of you here who have built an incredible movement of the Poores need to find ways in which that cannot happen.

This brings me to another feature of those who purport to help community movements. There is a tiny but impressive literature on the way in which social movements become dependent on funders, NGOs, researchers, middle-class supporters and even legal representatives. What is almost never written up is the role that those who make these telling and necessary critiques come to play in movements precisely because of the trust they have purchased by denouncing others like them. It's an old trick. The white person who condemns racism the loudest and with the greatest zealotry, often succeeds in having his or her own racism go unchallenged. I certainly agree that it is necessary to decry vanguardism but there comes a point where denouncing outside influence or leadership is worse than vanguardism. It is just gate-keeping: vanguardism without ideology, without strategy. Nietzsche said that "the truth is who gets there first". It seems that the evil vanguardists are, by definition, those who get there second.

I make the following comments in a constructive manner. I do not mean to attack or chastise any particular individuals. To some extent, we are all guilty of elements of the conduct I am about to describe and I would like what I say to be seen in the light of auto-critique. However, having said that, the time has come to very seriously warn about the individual intellectual who claims membership of the movement, but still operates above and beyond its purview in his or her dealings with other intellectuals or activists. In my own experience of this position these intellectuals are quite vociferous about democratic practice and denounce all those who claim in any way to represent the movements but who are not integrally part of them. However, they are quite happy to write academic papers analyzing the movements and their leaders in great detail, take international speaking engagements that centre around the community movements, and demonstrate their dominance over fellow intellectuals

not by means of better arguments but with reference to what the poor really want or what is really good for them.

Strangely, when things in democratic spaces go against them, such academics are not immune to composing private caucuses and having one-on-one, I guess they would call it, “political-education sessions” with key leaders. Here the prestige they enjoy as academics gives them an unelected power many elected leaders of the movement could never dream of exercising over idea production. In all of this, there is a vast, bad-faith tale of monumental, hat-swapping to be told. When, in one role, disputes erupt on the e-mail with fellow middle-class activists or academics, they are content to assume the role of outside commentators while they ascribe a range of qualities to the movements that have obviously been subjected to no authorization by the movements themselves. However, as these disputes develop, they come to claim a far greater affiliation with the movements. To question the position they put or the (exaggerated) claims they make is presented as an attack on the organization itself. The problem here, comrades, is grave. It verges on thuggery.

All the while, these academics rail against vanguardism. And so, while berating people about the fact that community activists have no e-mail, they see no reason, for instance, to share information with community members. Although, this last statement is not entirely accurate. They do share those e-mails that cast their fellow academics and activists in a bad light with the leaders of social movements. This style of operation does not protect social movements. It pimpes them. It passes gossip, megalomania and abuse off as politics and introduces people to the most degraded form of intellectual engagement. I should know. I’ve done it myself.

I gave a lift to a few community activists recently and asked them what they thought about the recent SACP critique of the ANC. They had never been given any information on this but were incredibly excited. It is a trend. I asked them (all in leadership) whether anyone in the academy had circulated the texts that inform the way they are written up by these academics, such as Biko’s “I Write What I Like”. This had not occurred. I find this strange. While the politics of the poor are celebrated as enunciating features of this great book, it seems that as far as the poor themselves go, for the academics it is a question of, “They will Read what I like”.

It is not as if these academics cannot muster intellectual support for their style of operation. One can find a verse in the Bible for anything. And their Bibles, command that the Poor embody the truth. Therefore the Poor must be kept in some kind of quarantine. Adorno’s admonition comes to mind: “In the end glorification of splendid underdogs is nothing other than glorification of the splendid system that makes them so”. As I have said above, this view occasions a massive romanticisation of the condition of wretchedness; not the economic position, but the existential one it supposedly produces. Reading over some of the newspaper writing on social movements that has recently been produced, I was struck by the lurid, almost loving evocation of the condition of wretchedness. It is impossible to miss the obvious pity that is openly evoked. And I began thinking about an interview with Faizal Devji, author of the *Landscape of the Jihad*, which, despite its faults, makes an interesting point about activists driven more by pity than political conviction or ambition:

“Pity can be dangerous, precisely because one is not personally involved in the suffering. One is acting, apparently, on behalf of others. You see this among leftist groups today, as well. It’s vicarious, it’s luxurious in a way, and luxuriant; it is also narcissistic. It is a very dangerous and bitter passion.”

Devji was criticizing suicide bombers, perhaps a bit unfairly, because at least they lay down their life in pity. But when one's lavish praxis of pity advances your career, puts your name up in lights while you live and thrive, I lose all respect for this bitter, calculated passion.

The last aspect of the way in which these intellectuals operate that I am going to look at tonight is the way they ensure dominance through cultivating a couple of leaders. A subtle kind of patronage emerges in this relationship. A dependence. This relationship, of course, helps the leaders because they are then the conduits of transport, t-shirts and access to outside events. In this transaction it is never in the interests of the academics to universalize the crisis or have too wide dealings with other intellectuals for that might mean losing their 'control' over their fiefdoms. And so, when tentacles of outside help and solidarity are put out by other formations, it is resented and slandered by them, and if it were up to these intellectuals, such contact would be cut-off. A consistent theme of their politics is to seek various justifications to keep the gates to their desperate Eden locked shut.

For years, I have been quoting Said, that the craft of the intellectual is critique. To talk truth to power. I am afraid, it is no longer enough to talk truth to power. One must also talk truth within the disempowered. There is simply too much at stake to do otherwise. Ironically, these intellectuals who have made a name for themselves in the academy from their articles on your movements are involved in an anti-intellectualism for they keep saying that the poor are only interested in their immediate interests. So, the poor must not worry themselves about broader issues. Vanguardism is married to a narrow form of autonomism, minus politics. I think Zizek was on to something when he held that those who refuse to universalize a particular experience or political argument, ultimately is involved in a "conservative political gesture: ultimately everyone can evoke his unique experience in order to justify his reprehensible acts."

And so this idea for intellectuals from the academy to be so organically involved, while lauded in some quarters (often by themselves) I think requires much greater scrutiny. And I would really like to encourage you to debate this within your ranks just as I think, all of us, the so-called academics or city-people, should have a proper debate about the way we have related to you. You are more than welcome, if it were up to me, to participate in this debate. Come and research us. Come and observe how we operate on our terrain.

Some of the things we need to consider are structural. What role do the so-called city-people play? Is it not time that, to foster some accountabilities, we ourselves form a grouping? If not, what is our role in social movements while we pursue our plainly, self-interested academic careers that often have the ladder to success composed of your limbs. Should we compose an activist forum with explicit political ideas to which anyone, including those in community movements, can be joined if they like? Or, do we withdraw into a proper respectful, arm's length resource and research role? What is this SMI that we are now supposedly all part of? If a KZN branch exists, is it open to participation only to those who have a mass behind them or is it a city-wide co-ordinating committee? What is the status of political parties? And do we make certain strategic moves in reaching out to social forces such as Cosatu and the SACP that seem similarly discontent with neo-liberal rule? A lot of questions that we need to take seriously if our partnership is going to last.

To link up with the title of this paper, how do we keep from having our vans driven for us by vanguardists? How do we universalize our particular experiences without having our auto's sabotaged from ever leaving our areas by some autonomists? And, how do we avoid our movements becoming populist kombi's where anyone can jump

in no matter their politics, for us to be taken as a passive mass to the next march? In other words, how do we find a vehicle which is responsive to our collective, principled, radical direction?

For, while I might have sounded critical of the movements of the poor that have arisen and sceptical of the motives and methods of those who have helped build them, I do recognize the enormous, potent energies sizzling within social movements and I tip my hat to those who have done the grinding, punishing work to get where we are. The movements of the poor in South Africa are indeed to be celebrated and praised. Not for being what they are not: embodiments of theoretical abstractions and fine-sounding phrases in sociological literature. No, the movements of the poor must be celebrated for being what they are: relatively small groupings of awakening antagonism in a sea of political apathy, nationalist ignorance and informal repression. Groupings that are imperfectly but honestly grappling with the difficulties of campaigning against the policies of an ANC run state. Led by people who must hold down poorly-paying jobs, or look after children, or care for those dying of Aids by day and, at night, feel their way through political minefields in meetings held in dangerous places, with insufficient information, all the while giving heart to others who secretly sometimes feel as vulnerable and unsure as they do. And this is not to speak of the lure of taking office or giving up, the stress of criticism and the risk of alienating those they need to keep on board the broader struggle.

The fact that you have built these durable, potent and inspiring organizations that everyone - from academics, to the readers of *You and Drum* magazines, to activists in other cities and countries, even to the Minister of Intelligence - is talking about is breathtaking. And the fact that this has been achieved even while you are not pure and have made mistakes and found your feet, makes your achievement all the more heroic than if you were somehow programmed by your class position to turn out good. Despite the misbehaviour, from time to time, of the activist set, you have also been incredibly generous in your dealings with us.

It works both ways and out of our interactions a new idea of a political community is emerging that has the capacity to do dramatic things in the present South African ideological landscape. In fact, the landless, the 'squatters', those without basic services are potentially the thick end of the wedge that is being driven in our society at this moment by crime, riot and the Zuma Affair. To perhaps move to another stage, we must recognize that we have all been profoundly shaped by our interactions with each other and with activists and fellow comrades who have joined along the way and to blink or fixate on our own supposed "purity" right now will be tragic.

I believe we make quite a team, despite the problems that are emerging and must be dealt with now. Yes, there are many pitfalls to dodge and disagreements still to settle. And we must constantly re-evaluate the basis of our contact with each other. But, I don't think anyone will disagree that the movements of the poor here in Durban and all those who have built them have quite literally shown the way.

Hopefully, those middle-class women and men who have troubled you so can meet the challenge of how to support movements of the Poor without becoming gatekeepers, vanguardists, losing the ability to be critical and using movements to advance our academic careers. We also need to understand how it is that, like it or not, we are a community. We need to find ways to engage with and communicate to you what we believe in our heart of hearts. This is that some of us consider ourselves part of another community that already involves you and which allows us to approach you as comrades not because we are mere helpers or resource people or because we feel sorry for you but because we desire you to win your demands as part of a

broader fight for freedom. We need to tell you what we are about and where we think you are located in this fight. We have to give you the option to chase us away if you don't identify with our world-view, with our agenda. We need to start respecting you in your you-ness enough to be us in our us-ness. But all of this can only occur, once we start dealing candidly with each other.

To those who may feel angry or wounded by this paper, I am sorry. But ideas and frustrations and angers like this have been brewing for a long time. The only responsible thing to do is to lance the boil, so that wounded relationships can be rebuilt on a healthy, principled basis. It is perhaps appropriate that I end with a quote from the oft-abused Frantz Fanon: "tradition demands that our quarrels which occur in a village be settled in public. It is communal self-criticism ... with a note of humour, because everyone is relaxed, and because in the last resort we all want the same things". Or do we?