

Introduction: Vigilantism and the Policing of Everyday Life in South Africa

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Since the emergence of People Against Gangsterism And Drugs (PAGAD) and *Mapogo a Mathamaga*¹ in 1996, media, law enforcement and some research-based NGOs (see for instance Pigou *et al.* 2001) have shown an increasing preoccupation with vigilante organisations and their relationship with the post-apartheid South African state. By contrast, with a few notable exceptions (such as Ritchken 1995), academics seem largely to have shunned the phenomenon of vigilantism in South Africa as a hostile and anachronistic interloper in the new nation-state with its human rights oriented constitution.

Law enforcement agencies do not have the option of ignoring the phenomenon. However, they have been markedly ambiguous in their responses, ranging from all-out war against the organisations, as with PAGAD, to more accommodating approaches, as those towards a number of local crime-fighting formations² in townships and in rural areas (Jensen forthcoming; Buur 2003a). The state's response has centred on the violence that vigilante organisations use and on the challenge they pose to the state itself. While the ANC government is attempting to revive the South African state's legitimacy, vigilantism has exposed the limits of the new state's capacity to secure justice for all, as well as the limited reach of the new values of human rights and non-violence. Ambivalence arises because vigilantism addresses issues of security and moral order that are pertinent to people living on the margin of the reach of the formal state apparatus. Vigilantism is therefore often accepted at local levels of the state and by local ANC structures.

Media reports have been less ambiguous. Recent media representations talk of the "angry mob" baying for blood,³ "kangaroo courts" that apparently kill

randomly,⁴ “mob assaults” on younger “criminal” members of the community⁵ (SAPA June 22, 2003) and “violent vigilante attack” out of control.⁶ In these reports, vigilantes belong to brutal and undisciplined “mobs” or “crowds” that consist mainly of men (though not invariably) with no clearly defined social or political identity such as membership in known political organisations. Events seem to have been fast-paced, emotionally charged and relatively spontaneous — all in all, descriptions distinctly prone to public excesses of reification, which are not helpful when trying to understand a phenomenon as complex as vigilantism.

Although we recognise that vigilante organisations, in their different forms, challenge the rule of law and the state’s monopoly on the exercise of legitimate force, and often severely infringe on citizens’ rights, we nonetheless suggest that vigilantism and communal forms of identification cannot be reduced to either expressions of the mob or to mere antidotes to formal law. There is no doubt that research into the formal aspects of constitutional democracy has been and remains important in light of recent developments in South Africa’s history. However, the normatism involved in exploring the reach of the new constitution, along with the values underpinning it and the policies aimed at redressing apartheid inequities, seem to take the official ideology as an accurate account of what the new nation-state project is actually about. It conflates what *is* with what *ought to be*, and therefore contributes to the reproduction of stereotypical understandings of the phenomenon of vigilantism. Hence instead of *a priori* deciding what vigilantism is, we propose in this volume to explore, from an inter-disciplinary perspective, the theoretical nature, everyday popular uses, public discourses and empirical reality of vigilantism as the concept circulates in the public domain in South Africa. At the core of the argument expounded here is the recognition that vigilantism should be seen as a practice of what we will call everyday policing. Vigilantism and everyday policing are not phenomena based only in a failed transition nor conditions that will disappear once transformation is complete. Rather, these practices seem to be constitutive of the democratic order and the rule of law by way of negatively identifying everything that law and order is not. This remains the case even as many vigilante structures work closely with the local police and other local official structures. Through the various contributions, this volume will try to disentangle the concept and push it to its limits. Hence, we include analyses of phenomena clearly identifiable as vigilantism, as well as practices not normally associated with it. Through this exercise we do not wish to forge a new definition but, rather, to explore different themes that are inherent in practices of vigilantism. We need to see vigilantism as a form of local, everyday policing. In this volume we explore the relationship between the official forces of the law and vigilantism, and view vigilantism as constitutive of the production of moral orders.

Before we engage more closely with these themes or paradoxes, we need to pay closer attention to the concept of vigilantism as it has emerged in the literature

abroad and in South Africa. The exercise is necessary for two interrelated reasons. First, the concept is, as we noted above, deeply enmeshed in stereotypes and reifications that need to be disentangled to provide the academic space for approaching the phenomenon from an everyday perspective. Second, we need to illustrate that the concept has not been stable. This is particularly true for South Africa, where its usage has been shifting and polyvalent.

Theories and histories of vigilantism

In some of the more influential international literature, notably Les Johnson (1996; 2001), forms of vigilantism are described as: 1) social movements that give rise to premeditated acts of force and corporal punishment or the threat to use violence or corporal punishment; 2) activities that arise as a reaction to transgression of relatively well established, sometimes institutionalised, norms; 3) acts that are focused upon crime and/or social control in the form of providing security to participants and members of established orders; and 4) groups that are seen as constituted outside legal frameworks enforced by the state (see also Abrahams 1998: 8–9). In another important study, by Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1976), the term has been used to classify a broad range of organisations that rely on violence such as death squads and para-military and defence units involved in “establishment violence”, whether these groups were sponsored by, supplementing or working against, the state (see also Fleisher 2000). In much recent literature on South Africa these basic assumptions about vigilantism have been reproduced. First, violence or the threat of it is seen as constitutive (for example, Harris 2001). Second, the organisations are all seen as constituted outside the law, that is, extra-state and popular (Nina 1995). Third, they exist outside legal frameworks of the law, in other words, extra-legal. These assumptions illustrate the trans-historical use of the concept in which vigilante groups challenge the state’s monopoly on the use of legitimate violence. However, the complex development of vigilantism in South Africa defies these trans-historical notions.

Until the mid-1980s in South Africa the concept of “vigilantism” was generally used in the same vein as categories like “popular justice”, “extra-legal justice” or “informal policing”, which referred to ordering activities, often with a violent flavour, that were undertaken outside the ambit of the state. Before the 1980s vigilantism was not primarily seen as negative — it had, as Seekings (2001) has pointed out, “progressive connotations in the 1940s and 1950s” (2001: 89; see also Crais 1998; 2002). This changed dramatically in the 1980s when the concept came to denote “reactionary” tendencies (Seekings 2001: 89) referring to conservative vigilante groupings that fought violently against the young comrades of the ANC/UDF in the black townships and homelands.

This change cannot be separated from the mode in which the apartheid state defended itself.⁷ An integral element here was the emergence of the regime’s

hidden hand or “third force”, involving “the clandestine creation of surrogate armed forces but which organisations appear to emerge ‘spontaneously’ from the ‘people’ themselves” (Haysom 1989: 3). These “conservative vigilantes” (TRC 1998) emerged in several places in South Africa: *Inkatha* on the Witwatersrand (now Gauteng) and KwaZulu-Natal, *AmaAfrika* in Port Elizabeth and *Witdoekers* in Cape Town. Indeed, the TRC produced ample evidence of a range of levels of endorsement, support and management of vigilante groupings by different security arms of the state (see for example TRC Volume 3, 1998: 369), without however blaming only the regime for the emergence of vigilante activity. A part of the violence was blamed on the liberation forces (TRC Volume 2, 1998: 302).⁸

In post-apartheid South Africa, everyday policing and popular justice has commonly been called vigilantism too, drawing heavily on notions of the “hidden hand” that became so prevalent a mode of explanation in the 1980s and early 1990s among activists and academics. However, while the hidden hand is still anti-state, the state is now democratic and ANC-dominated. There is no clear idea about what the “third force” is, except it must be a body — sometimes referred to as “dark forces” or “old elements” — with intentions of obstructing the transition to democracy and undermining the ANC government (Jensen 2001). The late 1980s and early 1990s nevertheless provided another potent understanding of vigilantism — that of the mob.

Images of the “mob” abound in recent media reports. They burn, *sjambok*, flog and stone people to death.⁹ Targets of attack have been people seen as linked to “crime”. In the formal nomenclature of criminology, the attackers are vigilantes in one form or another because they take the law into their own hands in a violent manner. That poor black township residents are prone to spontaneous violent action seems to be a common idea today among police, politicians and the media. This perception expresses and informs the anxieties of the population more generally. The image of the violent black mob is far from new, but draws on the homeland and township struggles of the 1980s — or rather on two converging aspects of the township struggle: the emergence of “people’s courts” and the mode of struggle enforced by groups of young — primarily male — activists known as the “Young Lions” or *amabhuto*, who were often in the front line of the struggle (Seekings 1993).

The people’s courts that emerged in the 1980s were regarded as a continuation of the forms of self-regulation and community discipline that have long been a feature of rural and urban communities in South Africa (Burman 1989). However, with the two key mobilising slogans adopted by the ANC and the ANC-aligned UDF — “people’s power”¹⁰ and “making the country ungovernable” — the notion of self-regulation was radicalised and adapted to the political struggle. The slogans referred to attempts to dismantle the apartheid government and its security forces, and to displace the authority and reach of the apartheid state by seizing control of administrative, welfare, policing, judicial and other

functions in the townships, thus creating alternative sites of sovereignty.¹¹ The people's courts at times severely punished criminals and other forms of behaviour considered deviant by township activists. The construction of "collaborators" as a special target for popular justice introduced the new sanction of killing. Whereas execution had rarely been seen in the longer history of popular justice in South Africa dating back to the early 1900s, it became the icon of the people's courts towards the mid-1980s, particularly in the form of the infamous "necklace".¹² Some commentators argue that the people's courts were relatively well organised and politically disciplined until mid-1986 (see for example Mayekiso 1996; Seekings 2001). However, with the declaration of various states of emergency from 1986 onwards, the imprisonment or exile of most UDF township struggle leaders and the counter-insurgency strategies of the apartheid regime, this discipline gave way to a far more "chaotic" and contingent scenario. The images that circulated during those times were of unruly, undisciplined, immature, uneducated, and disorganised youths or *amabhuto*. Their main activities seemed to be "toyi-toyiing",¹³ "necklacing" political opponents and people considered to be *askaris*¹⁴ and enforcing the ANC/UDF's ungovernability strategy in schools, in the homelands and on the streets of the townships.

These images — at least partly created by the apartheid state-controlled media¹⁵ — became iconic expressions of the behaviour of young black crowds as inherently explosive, disorganised, immature, easy to provoke, prone to violent outbursts and particularly vulnerable to political agitation. The leadership of the various strains of the liberation struggle later acknowledged before the TRC that they did not have control over the youth (see TRC Volume 5, 1998: 383), in part to avoid taking responsibility for a whole range of human rights violations committed by aligned supporters. While neither the people's courts nor the more *ad hoc* activities of the *amabhuto* were actually termed "vigilantism"¹⁶ — probably due to exclusive use of the concept during this time for "conservative" or "reactionary" forces fighting the ANC/UDF-aligned youth — fears of mob justice dominated the political class in the apartheid state, as well as within the leadership of the ANC. As the millennium approached, the fear of dark forces from the apartheid era and the fear of the mob converged under the name of "vigilante", threatening the already uneasy transformation towards a democratic society.

Towards another understanding of vigilantism

In order to resist the easy reifications and reductions of vigilante activity, we suggest complementing the focus on how vigilantism challenges formal law with more historical and ethnographic analyses. These must take as their point of departure what the different groups actually do and how they make sense of their actions. Hence, instead of seeing vigilantism in South Africa as an unbroken continuation of the violence of the past or a singular phenomenon, we need to

disaggregate and periodise the emergence of vigilantism in each instance. The contributions to this issue stress this point. All explore everyday forms of policing but the gulf between them is wide: from formally recognised groupings of vigilantism like *Amadlozi* and *Mapogo a Mathamaga* to the modes of policing employed by migrants of Mozambique. These groups have greatly varying histories, from the evocations of tradition in Limpopo and Kagwane, through the urban forms born out of the struggle against apartheid in Port Elizabeth, to the increasing informalisation of migrants in Johannesburg.

However, the discussions also reveal some common features of everyday forms of policing or vigilantism. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we single out three themes of relevance to the analysis of vigilantism and everyday policing. First, the relationship to the state in general and law enforcement in particular is of crucial importance for the groups' formation and practices. Second, vigilante groups are crucially occupied with the production of moral communities. Finally, what constitutes criminal offence within the formal law does not necessarily resonate with crimes against the moral community. These themes all revolve around issues of why vigilante groups emerge, but also touch on how they work.

Relation to the state

Most analyses argue that vigilantism in its 'benevolent' form is fuelled by the state's incapacity to police and secure the citizens and their rights (for example, Dixon and Johns 2001). We will not contest this claim. More often than not, the emergence of vigilant formations is premised on a deep-seated mistrust of the police and/or perceived lack of initiative by police in providing basic human and economic (usually household goods) security. We will go so far as to suggest that it is a causal relationship. The incapacity of South African law enforcement — even at times its complicity (as Julia Hornberger and Morten Lynge Madsen show in their contributions to this volume) — prompts citizens to take the law into their own hands, often in violent ways. However, the relationship is not as simple as the mono-causal relationship suggested here. Although these organisations claim to be based outside and in opposition to an ineffectual, sometimes even immoral, state, they are involved in state-like performances such as security enforcement and in a perpetual renegotiation of the boundaries between state and society. In this sense, vigilante formations are similar to what Lund (2001) refers to as "twilight institutions", where it becomes difficult to distinguish unequivocally between what is state and what is not.

This perspective on state and society falls in line with what Gupta (1995) and Hansen and Stepputat (2001) have termed "ethnography of the state". In this perspective the focus is on the latter term "languages of the state", that is, practices and discourses engaged in by a variety of groups and organisations that look and act state-like, although sometimes in formal opposition to the state.

Most of the vigilante groups under consideration here are located and operate at the frontier of the state, where they are involved in a perpetual negotiation and contestation over what is state and what is not; what is moral and what is not; what is legitimate exercise of authority and what is not. At these frontiers — zones of contestations rather than boundaries — the distinction between the state and what normally falls outside the state becomes blurred when, just to take two examples, police officers are members of a vigilante group, at the same time as having to police transgressions (see Jensen forthcoming), or when police officers sit in on community courts (Buur 2003a; 2005 forthcoming). Thus, instead of accepting facile distinctions between state and what is not state, we need to analyse who exercises authority, in whose name they act and how they do it. This means that we need to see authority as not necessarily lodged in particular institutions but as practices performed by different groups which can employ several and different registers, where for instance state representatives can tap into the gamut of legally sanctioned uses of violence by using vigilante organisations.

Several of the contributions in this issue speak to the ambiguous relations between the state and residents/citizens. Julia Hornberger's analysis of how the police in Johannesburg are informally privatised in their work is a case in point. She illustrates how the police are involved in private business and how the people use them strategically in their everyday struggle to survive the mean streets of the metropolis. Morten Lynge Madsen's contribution also speaks to the ambiguous role of the police, if indirectly. He illustrates how Mozambican migrants, at the bottom of the city's social hierarchy, must do all in their power to remain invisible to self-serving and corrupt police officers. On a somewhat different level, Barbara Oomen illustrates how the perceived incompetence of the police has led to the formation of a highly violent vigilante group. This complements the picture of a state desperately trying to assert itself but always challenged from below by ineffective and corrupt police officers, as well as by the needs and aspirations of those the state must serve and/or police.

The production of moral communities

Some commentators are hesitant to accept that vigilante groups have virtuous reasons for embarking on crime control initiatives. This was particularly clear in the reporting on PAGAD (and on *Mapogo a Mathamaga*, as analysed by Barbara Oomen in this issue) where far more material objectives were asserted. People hostile to the organisation on the streets of Cape Town, for instance, saw PAGAD as participating in the drug trade they had sworn to fight and as engaging in protection rackets against Muslim businesses. These allegations are of course hard to substantiate, but fieldwork seems to bear out some of the claims. Also, in some of the less publicly known organisations, money played a

central role in motivating people's involvement. This was the case in former homeland KaNgwane, as well as in Port Elizabeth.

Accusations such as these clearly aim to de-legitimise claims put forward by vigilante formations that they work for — rather than living off — the communities they purport to protect. However, charging money for supplying security does not necessarily run counter to viewing oneself or being viewed by others as moral and legitimate providers of safety. First, in some instances the provision of security costs money, as in areas with neighbourhood watches (Jensen 2005, forthcoming; Buur 2005, forthcoming). Secondly, some members of vigilante groups consider their patrolling as a job they perform and for which they are entitled to receive remuneration. Hence, economic performance often converges with the moral policing of communities. Nonetheless, accusations, of “being in it for the money” play an intimate role in negotiations over the exercise of legitimate authority (Jensen forthcoming; Buur 2003a).

We have referred several times to “moral” values and to “the community”. These two concepts form the most important axis in most vigilante groups' claims, as they view themselves as the defenders, indeed the embodiment, of the moral, virtuous community. This assertion rests on two assumptions: that there exists a community that can be readily identified, and that this community faces danger and is in need of protection. From an academic point of view, these assumptions are intensely problematic. As we have argued elsewhere (Jensen 2004; Buur 2005, forthcoming; see also van Beek 1999), the concept of community is far from the pre-discursive category presumed by its defenders. It is over-determined to the extent that it has become, as Laclau (1996) would put it, an empty signifier around which diverse groups contest and negotiate claims to exercise legitimate authority over and for the “people”. One consequence is that the communities in which we find forms of everyday policing are inherently unstable and no groups are permanently able to hegemonise or stabilise a particular reading of the moral community. Due to the inherent instability, the moral community has to be performed on a perpetual basis. What we suggest, then, is that the continual practices of everyday policing are what constitute the formation of the moral community, which is the basis for the production of localised sovereignty and authority.

In this issue three of the contributions explore directly how the formations of everyday policing invoke notions of moral communities. Barbara Oomen's study of *Mapogo a Mathamaga*, the often named but little analysed vigilante group operating from Limpopo Province, argues that the organisation offered a moral alternative to constitutionalism, rooted in the tri-partite notion of “custom, chieftaincy and corporal punishment”. Steffen Jensen and Lars Buur's analysis offers a different but complementary perspective on the production of moral communities in that they illustrate the precariousness of claims made by figures of public authority to represent and defend the community. They do so through

an analysis of how the very same people, those said to be represented and defended, turn to mob violence in relation to witchcraft grievances. Their article illustrates the anxieties and fears that figures of public authority have about the people, viewed as defenceless yet with great capacity for violence. From a very different vantage point, Morten Lynge Madsen argues that Mozambican migrants produced moral communities to protect them from police and other urban vultures who make a living by exploiting migrants.

The criminal

The final theme with which we wish to engage concerns those whom the vigilante groups target in their search to purge the moral community they claim to represent of the dangers facing it. "Crime" as a discursive category then gives shape and direction to local problems of order and disorder such as teenage pregnancy, rape, schooling, theft, and family disputes. The concept of crime, used locally, is profoundly polyvalent. The ever-present criminal can wear the face of illegal immigrants, of undisciplined and over-sexed teenage girls and boys, or of gang members. All of the above are believed to hinder "the community" from accessing development funding, investments and employment initiatives — that is, from realising its full potential. However, criminal activities as defined by different vigilante groups in South Africa are not isolated to acts that are in contravention of the formal law or the constitution. They entail a variety of different activities from theft and violence over witchcraft accusations to particular sexual practices (see also Buur 2005, forthcoming). These criminal practices belong to a range of registers. Some, such as theft and violence, clearly fall under the penal codes. Other activities, such as witchcraft, are considered to be criminal in many communities regardless of laws that penalise attempts to identify witches. Others again would fall within the private sphere and not be a matter of law. It would seem to us, however, that these activities belong to the same register, that is, activities contrary to particular dominant groups' version of morality. In present-day South Africa, the criminal has become the embodiment of evil, who must be exorcised to produce the moral community. In this way, the criminal has come to resemble what Giorgio Agamben (1998; 2000) has termed *Homo Sacer* or "bare life", those who have "relegated their own status to that of subhumans", as Minister of Safety and Security, Steven Tshwete succinctly put it.¹⁷

Violence almost invariably plays a role in performances of moral community but how violence is administered varies a great deal. In some cases, as with PAGAD in Cape Town, execution-style violence is employed, whereas in many others, violence is seen as a necessary *and* corrective means to exorcise evil. In Lars Buur's analysis of community courts in Port Elizabeth (Buur 2003a), violence was used as a means of correcting immoral, anti-community behaviour. Hence, although the criminal has come to epitomise the outsider to the moral com-

munity, he or she can be redeemed through violence and pain, and re-enter the moral community.¹⁸

All the articles in this issue explore the notion of the criminal. What emerges is exactly how ambiguous and context-specific the term is. Lynge Madsen's criminal is a wayward migrant who forgot about "living for home". The criminals in Jensen and Buur's contribution are, for those participating in or promoting witch hunts, the witches, whereas for the formations of everyday policing in KaNgwane and Port Elizabeth, it is a host of people threatening the moral fibre of the people. For *Mapogo a Mathamaga*, in Barbara Oomen's analysis, it is the young men at the receiving end of intergenerational conflicts. In Jensen and Buur's analysis, the police view vigilante formations as criminal, and for vigilante formations the criminals are thieves and youth gangs. Finally, Julia Hornberger's analysis completes the picture of the elusive criminal, as she explains how the police are drawn in to neighbourhood conflicts to criminalise different forms of livelihood strategies.

Measures taken to stop the criminals vary too. Hornberger illustrates how the police, unwillingly, are made to arbitrate between different individuals accusing one another of crimes. Oomen illustrates how corporal punishment is constructed as the mechanisms through which membership of the moral community can be re-established. Jensen and Buur concur, but illustrate also how certain forms of transgressions are punishable by either death or the threat thereof. Finally, Lynge Madsen asserts that the ultimate measure taken within migrant communities is that of exclusion.

Conclusion

In this introduction, and throughout this issue, we explore the phenomenon of vigilantism from a different, more ethnographic angle than is usually the case. What emerges from the exercise is its ambiguity; we need to study vigilantism as practice rather than as an object of analysis with clear-cut conceptual and empirical boundaries. Clearly, vigilantism is concerned with policing where the state is seen to be incompetent or hesitant. It often originates in specific events like the murders of businessmen in Limpopo that triggered *Mapogo* started or the sprees of theft that prompted the formation of the *Amadlozi*. However, when we begin exploring what these formations or organisations do as a practice, it is evident that they do more than simply take over functions of the state. We have identified three themes that should be included in the analysis of vigilante groups: their ambiguous relations to the state, how they produce moral communities and how particular groups are criminalised.

In this issue, the boundaries of vigilantism are challenged. Barbara Oomen's contribution analyses an organisation that fits the conventional image of vigilantism admirably, whereas Morten Lynge Madsen's and Julia Hornberger's

contributions in particular could be said to fall outside the accepted definition of vigilantism. However, in all the analyses there are conceptual and empirical parallels to the more readily identifiable forms of vigilantism that, in our mind, makes it fruitful to posit the different contributions under the same conceptual umbrella. The purpose of this is not to try to push the concept beyond its limit, hence rendering it conceptually empty. Rather, we argue that to confine the *practices* of vigilantism, what we call practices of everyday policing, to the traditional framework of vigilantism is unproductive if we are to understand the complex mechanisms of creating social order in South Africa.

Notes

1. PAGAD and *Mapogo a Mathamaga* both emerged in 1996. PAGAD originates in Cape Town as a predominantly Muslim group targeting drug dealers and gangsters. The group shot to international fame when they torched, shot and eventually killed a famous Capetonian drug dealer in August 1996 (for elaboration, see Dixon and Johns 2001). A local businessman, John Magolego, formed *Mapogo* in the Limpopo province. The organisation falls somewhere between a private security company and a violent vigilante group. This organisation also emerged in 1996 but became notorious for its hard-handed methods in the later part of the 1990s. At the height of its fame, it claimed some 60,000 paid up members (for elaboration, see for instance Pigou *et al* 2001).
2. By using the term “formations”, we indicate that both formal and more ephemeral and temporary groups emerge in response to specific needs such as crime waves or more permanent quasi-courts. “Organisation” would only apply to certain groups that, like *Mapogo*, have a clearly identifiable hierarchy.
3. South African Press Association (SAPA). 27 June 2003. “Angry mob bay for cult members’ blood”. www.iol.co.za/index.php.
4. South African Press Association (SAPA). 3 June 2002. “Mayor ran kangaroo court”.
5. South African Press Association (SAPA). 22 June 2003. “Mob assault alleged robber”.
6. *The Daily News*. 11 June 2003. “This is how we deal with Thieves in Inanda”. www.iol.co.za
7. As Haysom (1989:2–7) has shown, vigilante and counter-vigilante violence coincided with modern counter-insurgency warfare since 1985. Here the emphasis was on “low intensity conflict” management with its theoretical roots in military theories emerging from the French general, Andre Beaufre, and the American colonel, J.J. McCuen (Haysom 1989:2–7). The logic of these theories, according to Haysom, was institutionalised by the apartheid regime from the mid-1980s, first in its “total strategy” and later in its “Joint Management System” approach, which dissolved “normal” boundaries between military and civil society and focused on “winning hearts and minds”.
8. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission cautiously stated: “not all vigilante activity was a product of state engineering. Intolerant actions and coercive campaigns of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and its adherents mobilised genuine disaffection and anger amongst black residents, forming the basis for retaliatory actions by so-called ‘vigilantes’” (TRC Volume 2, 1998:302). The general explanation has been that it was these genuine forms of local dissatisfaction with the liberation movement that the apartheid regime picked up on and turned against the forces challenging the regime.
9. *The Daily News* 20 January 2003 “Gruesome Death for Youth at Mob’s Hands” *News24* 7 May 2003. “Mob hacks ‘gang leader’ to death”, www.news24.com; *News24* 20 May 2003 “Pupils burn down school”, www.news24.com; South African Press Association (SAPA) 30 June 2003. “Kangaroo court kills thief” *The Cape Times* June 24 2003. “Dragged, stripped, bound, stoned and burnt”, p 5.

10. Building "People's Organs for People's Power" was introduced as a campaign in early 1986 following the collapse of the government-created black local authorities (BLAs). Here, residents began forming alternative structures such as street committees, area committees, people's courts, school committees, residents associations and *amabuthos* acting in the name of the 'liberated people'. While the UDF emphasised that it was not an official campaign of theirs, it also acknowledged that the campaign was encouraged in publications and public speeches by UDF leaders (TRC Volume 2, 1998:383; see also Mayekiso 1996).
11. The organisation of residents into street and area committees (see Seekings 2000; Schärf and Nina 2001) where each street would elect or appoint a committee that would in turn elect or appoint representatives to serve on an area committee was seen as a strategy that could be used in the future democracy. The dual face of "ungovernability and organisation", as Nina phrased it in his sympathetic accounts of people's courts creating a parallel authority, "was seen as part of a process of organising the future society" (Nina 1995:7; see also Mayekiso 1996). The hope was that the ideas behind "people's power" would be carried over into the future liberated state, where notions of popular participation would prevail.
12. Necklacing, or burning somebody alive with a fuel-soaked car-tire around their body, is widely associated with "people's justice". Police statistics indicate that around 700 to 800 people were necklaced or burnt to death in the period from 1985 to the end of 1989 (see TRC 1998). Women were not exempted from necklacing, but instead formed a large portion of the victims, particularly those seen as girlfriends of local black policemen.
13. A quasi-military dance step characterised by high-stepping movements, performed either on the spot or while moving slowly forwards, usually by participants in (predominantly black) protest gatherings or marches, and accompanied by chanting, singing and the shouting of slogans.
14. "*Askaris*" were former MK operatives who were caught and forced through torture to betray their former activist comrades and work for the security police. Because they were technically traitors, they were regarded with hatred and contempt, the lowest of the low, by both sides.
15. According to the TRC's Final Report, it "assisted in promoting the view that a crowd of black people equated a 'mob', and a mob of black people was by nature barbaric and likely to engage in violence" (TRC Volume 2, 1998:181). In a strange twist, the images emerging from the TRC's amnesty hearings came to resemble those created by the state-controlled media during apartheid. For example, amnesty hearings like the iconic Amy Biehl hearings presented the image of undisciplined black township youth that were easy to manipulate through political slogans associated with the PAC and Azapo such as "One settler, one bullet" and "Kill the farmer, kill the boer".
16. The concept of vigilante was used by the TRC almost exclusively to refer to "state endorsed, supported and managed" vigilante groupings with, as far as we can assess, only two references to people's courts and *amabutho* as "UDF-aligned vigilantes" to be found in the final report from 1998. Both references were made in the context of human rights violations committed in the Port Elizabeth area, in Volume 3, 1998:97–99 (see also Buur 2003b).
17. *Electronic Mail and Guardian*. November 10, 2000. "Tshwete talks tough".
18. It seems that the construction of redemption through pain draws on practices of initiation.

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