

# Failure of the food market means many in our city go hungry

Jane Battersby-Lennard and Jonathan Crush

WITH food price increases outstripping South Africa's official inflation rate, and hunger and malnutrition in Cape Town at worrying levels, the city urgently needs to develop a food security strategy that goes beyond a focus on production.

The fact that the country is nationally food secure and has a well-developed agricultural sector puts into question the prevailing view that food security is fundamentally an issue of improving rural food production, and that this will automatically resolve escalating food needs in urban centres.

South Africa's population is already more than 60 percent urbanised and is expected to reach 80 percent by mid-century. Meeting the food security needs of the country's population is – and will be – an

increasingly urban challenge.

With a population approaching 4 million, Cape Town has a particularly rapid annual growth rate of 3.2 percent. Migration accounts for about 41 percent of this growth and natural increase the rest.

Addressing food insecurity in cities like Cape Town is essential, not simply because access to food is a constitutional right, but also because access to adequate, nutritious, hygienic and culturally important food can assist the city's developmental aims.

The cumulative impact of many undernourished individuals places significant limitations on the economic and social development of the city. Making the food system work for the poor can therefore have significant positive impacts on the economy, employment, environmental sustainability and health costs.

The UCT-based African Food Security Urban Network, which aims to address the challenges associated with rising poverty and food insecurity in Africa's cities, found very high food insecurity in the three Cape Town areas that it researched.

In both Philippi and Khayelitsha, less than 10 percent of households were food secure. Even in Ocean View, the better-off of the areas, only 31 percent of households were food secure. Dietary diversity was also poor.

Given the South African tradition of eating samp and beans as a meal, it was surprising that the proportion of households eating foods made with beans, lentils, peas and other forms of non-animal derived protein was very low. These are generally low-cost, high-protein foods. Among the possible reasons for this finding is the time that it takes to cook them, which in the

context of high-energy costs and long commutes to work makes these foods less viable.

The proportion of households consuming fish was also lower than expected (only 16 percent) despite the fisheries history of Ocean View.

Very little fresh fish is consumed; most comes in the form of canned fish, particularly pilchards, which are sold extensively in retail outlets in low-income areas.

Some 88 percent of households stated that they had gone without food in the previous six months due to unaffordability, while 44 percent had gone without once a week or more. More than 70 percent had not had enough food within the household within the previous year.

There are distinct differences in levels of food security during the year with peaks and troughs in levels of food security, with January being the hardest month for most.

Afsun's (the writers of this article) findings reinforce the fact that, in the urban setting, there are multiple causes of food insecurity.

There is also a range of stakeholders playing a role in the urban food system. As a result, the solution to food insecurity cannot simply be linked to local and national policy interventions. The findings on food sources, in particular, suggest a failure in the current food market. The state and private sector will need to work together to address some of the weaknesses of the current food distribution and sales systems. The informal food economy is a vitally important means for people to access food. In policy terms, enhancement of the informal market as a means of food supply is vital.

Furthermore, considerable strain is being placed on community resources as households borrow and share food. While this suggests

strong social capital in the poor areas of the city, it also points to a failure of the market and of formal social safety nets.

Engagement among NGOs, civil society and the state should be encouraged to put in place safety nets that neither create dependency nor destroy existing social safety nets that perpetuate community relations. The city must consider the geography of the urban food system, in particular planning and zoning regulations regarding the location of both formal and informal retail within low-income areas.

● *Battersby-Lennard is a researcher with Afsun, a programme in the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town. Crush is director of Afsun. Battersby will lecture on "What does it take to feed a city? Understanding the urban food system" at UCT's summer school on January 28-30.*

# Rocks and bullets shatter peaceful memories

PORT POURRI  
Brian Ingpen

I WAS a real kortbroek when I saw the beautiful Hex River Valley for the first time. I was on a train that was drawn by a magnificent Class 15F steam locomotive with a smaller engine pushing at the stern as the "mail train" wound its way around the mountain spurs en route to Johannesburg.

Heading for the pre-cooling sheds in Cape Town harbour, smaller locomotives hauled trains of refrigerated trucks, loaded with fruit from De Doorns, Worcester, the Breede River Valley, Wellington and Paarl, while similar trains carried fruit from the Elgin-Villiersdorp area.

In the busy fruit season, those trains raised the blood pressure of agents, hurrying to their ships, only to find Duncan Road blocked by a line of refrigerated railway trucks bringing fruit to the pre-cooling sheds where reefer ships waited to load.

The northbound Union-Castle mailships also moved significant volumes of fruit that, prior to loading, was kept in a smaller storage facility at A Berth. A devastating fire at the height of the fruit export season 55 years ago destroyed the pre-cooling sheds, forcing the reefer ships to use other berths, and because A Berth was inaccessible during the period of reconstruction, the UK-bound mailships loaded directly from the trains at G Berth.

Among Safmarine's initial reefer sextets was SA Hexrivier, built at the Verolme yard in Holland, and a reminder that the valley is one of the most important fruit-producing areas in South Africa. In a major restructuring of their reefer operations, all six of those ships changed names as Safmarine entered various partnerships in international reefer shipping, and ultimately were replaced by modern, sophisticated ships. All have been disposed of as containerships now move almost all of the fruit exports in hi-tech climate-controlled containers.

The mailships also carried bulk liquor exports in oak barrels and, later, the two cargo mailships had stainless steel cargo tanks for that purpose. Much of the bulk liquor is now shipped in containers fitted with large plastic bladders.

The deregulation of road transport saw the rail operator surrender most cargo, including the fruit and liquor, to versatile road trucks that now collect the containers at the packing sheds in the fruit areas and bring them directly to the terminal to be stacked in the recently completed reefer container stacking area with its characteristic yellow container guides and bright floodlights at night.

Journeys through that picturesque Hex River Valley in recent days meant dodging rocks and police rubber bullets, a sad result of political agitation and expedience, the ramifications of which could extend to the shelves of supermarkets worldwide where South African or Australasian brands could replace Boland ones.

Union leaders and other politicians should concentrate on the broader picture. Along its long logistics chain, the fruit and liquor export industry earns mega-millions, but interruptions to fruit picking operations can have serious consequences.

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## APARTHEID FAULT LINES

# Our past haunts our future

Colin Bundy

THIS is a brief attempt to think historically about 2013. My topic is not the history of the present moment, but rather the presence of history: how the past permeates the present, defining the "now" in obvious and in less obvious ways.

Thinking historically about the present also means locating ourselves – as individuals, as citizens – within our own histories and that of our society. South Africans sometimes seem to think that history began in 1994, or at least that the past ended then... These comments try to chip away at this perception.

Thinking beyond the political moment of 1994 requires us to discern longer-term trends and processes; to identify patterns of accumulation and dispossession over the decades; and the economic structures and social relations that these processes generated and reproduced. This perspective quickly warns us against over-privileging the drama of 1994, significant although it was.

I'm using "1994" as short-hand for the outcome of a negotiated settlement. A great deal has been written on the Codesa proceedings, the concessions and compromises and confrontations. In essence, the negotiated deal was a trade-off between majority rule and capitalist stability.

The NP conceded universal suffrage in a unitary state; the ANC accepted there would be no expropriations, no radical redistribution, and that existing relations of production would be maintained. In return, big business would take steps to bring black people into management and the boardroom – would implement BEE. In other words, 1994 was not only a political compromise but also a class compromise. The regime that took office in April 1994 embodied non-racial democracy and multi-racial capitalism.

The compromise significantly limited the room for manoeuvre available to the successor state – especially as the ANC signed up in advance to a macroeconomic policy loosely defined as neo-liberal. As early as November 1993, the Transitional Executive Council sought a loan of \$850 million from the International Monetary Fund. So the ANC was co-signatory (with the NP) to a letter committing a future government to lowered state spending, balanced budgets, debt reduction and deregulation – provisions intended to attract foreign investment.

This policy package was effectively the entrance fee to the competitive arena of global capitalism. The ANC hitched its wagon to South African capitalism in its existing form – dominated by large conglom-

erates. And so the ANC government lowered corporate taxes; it deregulated; it permitted massive capital flight in the off-shore listings of Anglo, SAB, Old Mutual and the rest.

The conglomerates that dominate the mining/minerals/energy sector have a built-in dependence on exploiting primary resources and a built-in dependence on cheap labour. They are naturally in favour of this policy package – and why not? They have done very nicely out of it.

And ever since 1994, BEE rewarded politicians increasingly dependent on big business, who unsurprisingly promoted business interests in the upper echelons of government. The "black diamonds" – the new billionaires and their poor cousins the millionaires – are satisfied with the policy package – and why not? They have also done very nicely out of it.

Let me return to the theme of history shaping the present. Take three phenomena usually described as "post-apartheid" – which, on inspection, all have longer histories.

● **Deracialisation of state social spending:** it surprises many that old age pensions were first paid equally, irrespective of race, as early as 1993, under FW de Klerk. This was the logical conclusion of a much longer process. Deracialisation of social spending began 40 years ago. From 1970 to 1990 the real value of pensions paid to blacks rose steadily while the real value of pensions paid to whites fell. By 1993 the use of the fiscus as a means of redistribution was established government policy.

● **Emergence of black middle class:** class formation among the African population was a powerful dynamic during the closing decades of apartheid. The number of Africans in middle class occupations grew from 1970-87 from about 220 000 to 600 000.

● **Strong corporatist elements within the state:** since 1994, we are used to Nedlac and the fact that Cosatu and big business both enjoy relatively direct access to government. But of course centralised bargaining and access to the state had been enjoyed by white labour for decades – and after 1973, the new unions entered institutionalised relationships with employers and government.

So these three tendencies predated 1994, and have been accelerated since then. Since 1994, the ANC has substantially increased welfare spending in the form of pensions and grants. South Africa currently spends over 3 percent of GDP on welfare spending. Over 13 million men and women receive state pensions and grants. This has been a crucial form of redistribution by the ANC government; and a major factor in



REPETITION: In the rush to build more and more small houses, it was forgotten that the programme was reinforcing the spatial logic of apartheid, says the writer.

securing for the ANC voter loyalty among the poor: A different kind of redistribution, also very real, has been the use of state employment to entrench new loyal strata.

Exactly as the NP did for Afrikaners, the ANC has populated government departments and the parastatals with its supporters. The beneficiaries have typically moved from townships to suburban home ownership, making social mobility a lived reality. Democracy paid dividends – and black voters invested their political support in the ANC. Again, a process already under way in 1994 – the formation of a black bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie – has intensified, and is crucial to understanding the current moment.

Past and present, countryside and cities: whether one considers rural or urban South Africa, there is a sense of history invading current policy and practice, posing urgent political questions, and imposing constraints on their answers.

The year 2013 sees the centenary of the 1913 Land Act, enacted after a much longer history of colonial conquest, dispossession and subjugation. The 1913 Act codified, ratified, and made nationally uniform various discriminatory practices established in colonies and Boer republics. It

"froze" land ownership into certain categories and debarred Africans from acquiring any further property outside specified "reserves".

For decades after 1913, African families continued to occupy ancestral lands, run their herds, and grow their crops on white-owned land – despite the Land Act. The real assault on share-croppers and labour tenants came in the 1950s and 1960s when the last vestiges of an independent African peasantry were all but eliminated. White farmers, backed by the NP state, evicted hundreds of thousands of tenants and turned those who remained on their farms into underpaid workers.

As a consequence, between 1960 and 1980, the proportion of Africans living in Reserves increased from 39 percent to 53 percent and those living on white-owned farms fell from 32 percent to 21 percent. Water can indeed be made to flow uphill if the social engineers are sufficiently determined and ruthless.

Yet, even after these massive population shifts, 21 percent – one in five of the entire African population – still lived on white-owned land. But since 1994, there has been a tragic rerun of earlier struggles over access to land. The most dramatic demographic trend since 1994

has been the large-scale movement of Africans off farms owned by others (mainly whites). Some 2.4 million people were displaced from farms between 1994 and 2004 – just under half of them actually evicted, the rest because conditions on the farms deteriorated so much.

And in what used to be the Reserves, then the Bantustans – in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and rural areas of KZN – millions of South Africans live in grinding rural poverty.

The face of cities is also scarred by history. Cities were the key arena for segregation and apartheid, for influx control and the *dompas*. In the 1980s they became the major base of organised resistance, and the repertoire of protest developed then has been dusted down and reused over the past decade.

Take Cape Town: before 1950 it was the least segregated city in South Africa. By 1980, after the destruction of District Six and the ethnic cleansing of Harfield, Claremont, Newlands, Sea Point and Simon's Town, after the building of Mitchells Plain and Khayelitsha, it was the most segregated South African city. Cape Times readers may consider that they live in post-apartheid Cape Town, but in fact

# Premier Zille needs to walk her talk on street-lighting crisis in Khayelitsha

Gavin Silber

LAST week, GroundUp and The Cape Times published Doron Isaacs's detailed account of his repeated but unsuccessful attempts to have authorities repair dysfunctional street lights in Khayelitsha.

For six months, Isaacs has been in regular contact with Western Cape Premier Helen Zille on Twitter; a medium through which she has developed a reputation for promptly responding to service delivery complaints.

Despite several public commitments from Zille (as well as Cape Town mayor Patricia de Lille) to address this, much of Lansdowne Road, one of Cape Town's busiest

thoroughfares, remains in darkness. No apology or plan to remedy the situation have been issued.

It is worth taking a moment to reflect on the impact of inadequate street lighting in townships. Residents must routinely walk very long distances at night or in the early morning to access public transport to get to and from their places of work. Similarly, residents must often travel on foot for hundreds of metres (or even kilometres) to relieve themselves in communal toilets or open clearings.

These and other activities often involve crossing or walking along busy streets like Lansdowne Road. There are frequent reports of pedestrians being hit by vehicles in the

process of doing so. Conducting basic activities that some take for granted has cost many Khayelitsha residents their lives.

Western Cape Transport MEC Robin Carlisle recently acknowledged that in 2011, 49 percent of the people who died on the province's roads were pedestrians (648 of the 1 321 total road deaths). This is an 8 percent increase in the proportion of pedestrians killed since 2009.

He noted that the majority of these deaths were in "poorer communities". This claim is supported by a 2008 study published by the South African Medical Research Council in collaboration with the City of Cape Town, which found that one is twice as likely to be killed in

a road accident in Khayelitsha than in Cape Town's CBD and almost five times more likely than in the southern suburbs. Children are particularly vulnerable.

There are, of course, many other factors contributing to pedestrian injuries, including alcohol abuse, but studies have shown that street lighting can dramatically reduce the incidence of pedestrian mortality.

Walking long distances in darkness also increases vulnerability to crime. This is particularly true in Khayelitsha, which has one of the highest crime rates in the country.

The primary response from both the province and city has been to claim that a lack of functional street lighting in Khayelitsha is primarily

due to vandalism, despite the fact that much of Lansdowne Road has no street lights at all.

This argument is adhered to religiously when accounting for poor service delivery in townships, including for other basic services like sanitation. It ignores a host of other factors that deserve equal, if not more attention, in an attempt to absolve government of accepting responsibility for its own failures.

In addition to addressing vandalism, the government must look closer to home. A significant culprit of failing services is inadequate government maintenance and monitoring of amenities in townships.

Despite repeated claims by the city that vandalism accounts for

most sanitation-related faults, a recent baseline survey conducted in Khayelitsha by the city found that only 20 percent of these faults were due to vandalism, while the remaining 80 percent were due to reefer and poor maintenance.

The mere fact that Lansdowne Road has been in darkness for more than six months proves that, at best, the city is failing to monitor and repair basic services, and at worst, that they are aware of the problem but have chosen not to fix it.

Lansdowne Road could well serve as the de facto border between Cape Town's historically neglected and privileged areas. The suburbs to the north and those to its south continue to receive vastly different qualities

of service, a fact that De Lille has acknowledged.

Few would argue that street lights would be allowed to remain dysfunctional in Bellville or Rondebosch, or the city centre for a week, let alone six months. There is a lot that must be done to address these inequities.

A good place to start would be for the government to accept responsibility and respond accordingly, instead of blaming those who have suffered as a result of the state's failure to meet its constitutional obligations.

● *Silber is policy co-ordinator of the Social Justice Coalition. This article also appears on the GroundUp website today.*