

Inequalities of class and the quality of democracy in post-apartheid South African cities¹

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Abstract

This paper begins to examine the relationship between class and democracy in South Africa, in terms of how attitudes towards democracy differ between classes. More specifically, do urban social movements represent a mechanism for the poor to express their voices in protest not only against non-delivery of services and other material grievances but also against the unsatisfactory performance of political parties and elected representatives, i.e. the core institutions of representative democracy? Do social movements represent – to their participants – an alternative to representative democracy, supported because the poor have become alienated from representative democracy whilst social movements are pro-poor? We use recent survey data from Cape Town to explore the relationships between class, material grievances, attitudes towards the core institutions of representative democracy, and participation in protest or alternative organization. We show that people in Cape Town have a general understanding of the unequal and class-stratified character of the social structure, that poor people are especially discontented with some of the services provided by local and provincial government, but that in some respects the poor are less critical than the rich. The poor in Cape Town are not more alienated from the core institutions of representative democracy than the non-poor; whilst it is not clear that the poor are committed strongly to representative democracy, there is little evidence that they are especially alienated. The poor are more likely to engage in some kinds of protest action and to attend community meetings. Overall, we find that there is weak but not strong evidence for a relationship between grievances, alienation from the core institutions of representative democracy, and enthusiasm for alternative forms of protest and participatory organization.

¹ Please note that this is a very preliminary paper, both in terms of its engagement with the relevant secondary literature and its analysis of survey data. The analysis surely contains flaws and needs to be improved. Findings are offered very tentatively. Our intention in this work-in-progress is to help to open up a discussion of class, the institutions of representative democracy and social movements.

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Introduction: Class, attitudes and political participation in post-apartheid South Africa

Harold Wolpe would have been horrified – and, I guess, surprised – by the rapidity with which a concern with class fell out of the intellectual tool-kit of South African social scientists once negotiations began over the precise form of the new constitutional democracy. Social, economic and political life in capitalist democracies demands class analysis no less than life in undemocratic capitalist countries. If this was not the case, then class analysis – whether Marxist or non-Marxist – would not have survived the adoption of a universal adult franchise in the advanced capitalist countries of the global North in the early twentieth century.

The disappearance of class has not meant a disregard for issues of equity. On the contrary, both social sciences and public debate retain a profound normative content. But equity is understood in both the academy and in public in terms of, first and foremost, 'race', and secondly of 'poverty'. Given the super-racialised character of South Africa under apartheid, it is neither surprising nor misguided that racial inequalities of opportunity and outcome continue to demand attention. But it is both surprising and misguided that this excludes a concern with class, and the relative importance of race and class (and, we should add, gender and even age) is a matter for empirical investigation, not ideological or political presumption. The concern with poverty is more complex. Fuelled by an explosion of policy-relevant scholarship, poverty has come to be seen as a technical problem rather than a lived condition, as a matter of 'development' rather than one of redistribution (with its hint of conflict). Both race and poverty are typically understood separate from the overall structure of society, and the relationships between privilege, interest and deprivation are neglected.

In other work (*Class, Race and Inequality in South Africa*, written with Nicoli Nattrass – Seekings and Nattrass, 2005), one of us argued that class has become more, not less, important over time in South Africa. We suggest an analysis of the South African class structure at the end of the Twentieth Century that distinguishes not only between the owners (or managers) of capital and the rest of the working population, but also between different sections of the non-capitalist working population, and between classes defined by their access to the labour market and an underclass defined by its systematic exclusion from it. Our focus there was on the bases of economic inequality, and the ways in which public policies shaped and reshaped both distribution and redistribution. We paid almost no attention to the *politics* of inequality, although we did offer some suggestions as to why there has been little political pressure for more pro-poor policies in post-apartheid South Africa.

Another recent book – *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Ballard *et al.*, 2006) – offers a bold analysis of the role of social movements in expressing the voices of the poor in the corridors of power. The general thesis is the establishment of representative democracy has neither empowered nor benefited the poor, who have turned instead to extra-institutional movements. The book focuses primarily on urban areas, where democracy is said to have been undermined by 'neo-liberal' municipal policies. But it links also to debates about power at the national level, where democracy is said to have been undercut by the power of foreign or local capital (including the new black bourgeoisie), and even rural areas, where (as Ntsebeza and others have argued) democracy is compromised by the statutory empowerment of chiefs (see, for example, Ntsebeza, 2005).

This paper has the modest ambition (despite the immodest title) of examining the general argument put forward in *Voices of Protest* in relations to survey data on

political attitudes and behaviour. The objective is to assess whether there are class-based responses to South Africa's new institutions of representative democracy, i.e. whether the perceived quality of democracy differs in relation to the inequalities of class. To what extent has the quality of democracy in the new South Africa been compromised by the inequalities of class? Are there class differences in perceptions of and attitudes towards the formal processes of representative democracy, and especially in citizens' perceived efficacy in terms of these processes? Do the alternative processes of direct democracy and social movement action represent an alternative mechanism for political influence, in terms of having distinct class bases?

This paper does not aspire to provide anything close to a comprehensive class analysis of power in post-apartheid South Africa. The paper focuses on one city (Cape Town) and uses only survey on political attitudes and behaviour. Surveys might tell us about citizens, but not about the many special interests in society which deploy considerable power but without organizing significant numbers of citizens. Most obviously, capital does not exercise power through the citizenry. Nor, for the most part, do professional, sectoral and occupational special interest groups. The citizenry is important primarily for representative and direct democracy. This paper can say little about the limits to democratic power in contemporary South Africa.

Class: A methodological caveat

The empirical study of class in South Africa is still in its infancy. Earlier attempts to map the class structure – including by Harold Wolpe – were bedevilled primarily by their reliance on the very poor data available in population censuses (Davies, 1973, 1979; Wolpe, 1977). Crankshaw's careful analysis (1997) of data from manpower surveys allowed an incisive analysis of aspects of the occupational class structure, but the data excluded major occupations and did not permit an analysis of households. Only in the mid-1990s did household survey data become readily available, allowing more comprehensive analyses (including Morris and Hindson (1997) on the class structure of Durban). The availability of a strong empirical base means that class analysis has a promising future (as Goldthorpe famously remarked, about the advanced capitalist societies of the global North). But the now ready availability of data has exposed a second problem: what are the relevant categories for mapping class in a society like South Africa? In *Class, Race and Inequality in South Africa*, we proposed a ten-category class schema, which could be reduced to three major categories, as set out in Figure 1.

As we emphasized in the book, this class schema was provisional. It satisfied weak versions of the tests of 'internal' (or criterion) validity (i.e., broadly, does it have coherent theoretical foundations?) and 'external' (or 'construct') validity (i.e., broadly, does it have observable consequences?) (see Seekings and Natrass, 2005: chapters 7 and 8). But the schema would need to satisfy stronger tests of both forms of validity if it was to be truly compelling.

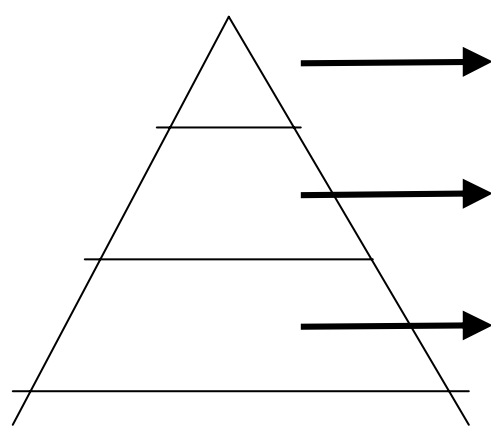


Figure 1: The Class Structure of South Africa

3 'upper' classes, defined by occupation (managerial or professional), wealth or (substantial) business activity:
12% of households, 45% of income

4 classes in a middle position: the semi-professional class, intermediate class, core working class and petty traders:
48% of households, 45% of income

3 'lower' classes: the marginal working class, underclass (defined in terms of systematic disadvantage in the labour market) and a residual 'other' category:
41% of households, 10% of income

We are yet to apply this schema to data on Cape Town. This could be done using data from the 2005 Cape Area Study (CAS), which purposefully asked about occupations and incomes from assets and business. But this application requires considerable coding and cleaning, which we have not yet done. This paper therefore employs a readily available measure of neighbourhood income as a (probably crude) proxy for class. Neighbourhood income will be an unsatisfactory proxy in cases where neighbourhoods are heterogeneous in terms of their class composition (and probably therefore also in terms of income distribution). Whilst it is unlikely that manual labourers will be living in the same neighbourhoods as lawyers and managers, it is likely that there will be unemployed people – and even households in which no one is employed – in the same neighbourhoods as working-class and even perhaps middle class households.

Neighbourhood income is calculated on the basis of data on household incomes from the 2001 Population Census, at the level of the local government ward. Cape Town comprised, at that time, precisely one hundred wards. For each ward, the Population Census data can be used to calculate a mean household income. These means are then used in the analysis of data on political attitudes and behaviour from the 2005 CAS. This raises two further problems. First, relative incomes might have changed between 2001 and 2005. Secondly, the sampling units – or enumeration areas – used for CAS were much smaller than the wards for which we have mean household income data. On average, each ward comprises about fifty enumeration areas, so that it is possible that the mean household income in a ward is different to the mean household income in any particular enumeration area. CAS did ask about individual earnings and household incomes, but these data are also yet to be cleaned thoroughly, and in any case should be viewed with some caution.

The neighbourhoods included in the CAS sample can be divided into five neighbourhood income quintiles, using the Population Census data. Table 1 sets out some key characteristics of each quintile. Whilst (at least) 77 percent of the poorest quintile are African (or, to be more precise, report that they were or would have been classified as African under apartheid), only about 10 percent of the third, fourth and fifth quintiles are African. Conversely, almost no one in the three poorest quintiles was white. White people were concentrated in the two richest quintiles. Coloured people were spread across the entire range of income quintiles, but were concentrated especially in the second, third and fourth quintiles. Figure 2 shows the data on race and class (i.e. neighbourhood income) in another form

Table 1: Selected characteristics of CAS realized sample in each neighbourhood income quintile, using weighted data

		Neighbourhood income quintile					Total %
		1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	
Racial composition	African	77	40	10	9	11	31
	Coloured	15	54	83	60	7	42
	White	1	0	0	28	76	21
	Other	7	5	6	3	6	6
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Education	Not passed matric	77	65	66	51	20	57
	Passed matric	23	35	34	49	80	43
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Of which: Some post-matric education	9	21	21	26	61	27
Labour market status	Working	35	47	55	58	63	51
	Unemployed	39	27	17	15	7	22
	Non-participants	27	26	27	27	29	27
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: These are statistics on the weighted CAS sample, *not* of the Cape Town population; therefore, for example, the total racial composition above is not identical to the actual racial composition of Cape Town, according to census and other data. Race was defined as how the respondent reports he or she was or would have been classified under apartheid; 'other' includes Indian, 'other', 'refused', 'don't know' and missing. Unemployed uses the broad definition, i.e. including non-searchers.

There are also clear differences between the neighbourhood income quintiles in terms of education levels and labour market status. In the poorest quintile, three out of four adults interviewed had not passed matric. In the richest quintile, the proportion was just 20 percent (and this might include some young men and women who are still in school). In the CAS sample, there were more unemployed than working adults in the poorest quintile, but in the richest quintile there were nine times as many working as unemployed adults. Table 2 provides examples of an actual household in each quintile, drawn from CAS.

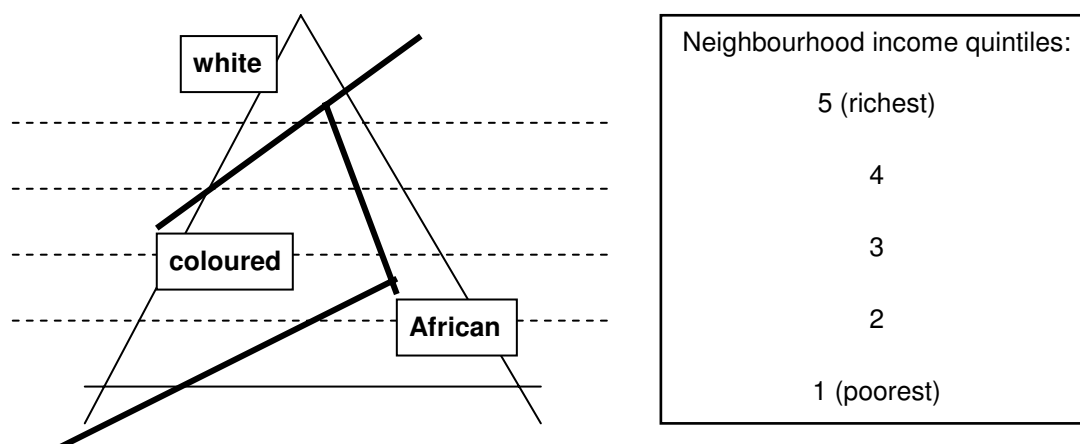


Figure 2: Race and neighbourhood income quintiles in Cape Town

Table 2 will be included about here when it is done!

It is important to note that the social structure of Cape Town is not the same as that of South Africa as a whole. Cape Town's poor are not poor in national terms. Nor are all of the classes identified in Figure 1 present in similar proportions in Cape Town, as represented in Figure 2. Cape Town also has a markedly different racial and cultural structure to the rest of the country. The city also has a distinctive and substantial overlap between race and class: the African minority is overwhelmingly poor, and the white minority is overwhelmingly affluent, although the coloured population spans the range from poor to rich. This makes it difficult often to distinguish between the effects of race and class.

Voices of protest? Social movements, class and democracy in post-apartheid South African cities

On 23 May 2005, residents of Khayelitsha burned tires along Landsdowne Road, while their counterparts in Gugulethu blockaded the township thoroughfare every 100 metres with piles of burning tires. Khayelitsha Town 2 residents dumped buckets of excrement in the house of their ward councillor, a graphic, but 'intentionally non-violent' expression of protest. 'The committee' co-ordinating the action had not yet decided on a name, having formed just days before when the then Cape Town city manager Wallace Mgoqi was booed out of a collective meeting held to address the land occupations. When asked to comment on the 15 arrests and the use of rubber bullets by the police, Premier Ebrahim Rasool said that while the 'grievances may be legitimate, we cannot deal with them through illegitimate actions [which] do not belong in a democratic society in which people have avenues for the legitimate expression of grievances'.³

What is particularly interesting about these protests is the different responses they provoked. Clearly concerned by the scale of the protests in one of its historic heartlands, the ANC denounced the action as the work of a 'secret force' attempting to overthrow democracy and called in the National Intelligence Agency to investigate. President Mbeki told parliament that the protests 'reflect and seek to exploit the class

³ *Cape Times*, 24 May 2005.

and nationality fault lines we inherited from our past, which, if ever they took root, gaining genuine popular support, would pose a threat to the stability of democratic South Africa'. This was somewhat at odds with the comments by participants in the protests, 13 of whom were charged with sedition, that 'their protests had not been intended to overthrow the government' and that 'the committee' was 'non-violent', a position seemingly confirmed by other reports that the 'uneven battle between police and residents was marked by violence only from the police side'.⁴

In their conclusion to *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Ballard *et al.* suggest that whatever concerns there may be about the effect of social movements' apparent explicit challenge, 'through extra-institutional action' on a 'legitimately democratically elected government' (2006: 412), 'in a context where the formal political system has failed to produce a significant political party to the left of the ANC to more directly champion the cause of the poor, social movements contribute to the restoration of political plurality in the political system' (2006: 413).

The contributors to *Voices of Protest* all appear to agree with Desai (2002) that a key function of social movements is that they offer the poor a means of exercising power and are thus 'an avenue for marginalised people and those concerned about their interests to impact on material distribution, and social exclusion, and to claim a certain degree of influence and power over the state itself' (Ballard *et al.*, 2006: 413). In adopting this view, it is desirable, if not necessary, to locate the social bases of the social movements in these marginalised and vulnerable groups, among Desai's 'poors'. Hence while the Concerned Citizens Forum (CCF) launched in July 2001 has a very small number of lower middle-class adherents (academics and other professionals), 'it is underpinned by what can be conceptualised as working-class (largely unemployed but not all or only). As such, in interviews, meetings, rallies and informal discussions, participants commonly referred to themselves and others like them in Durban and across the country as "the oppressed", "the deserving", "the poor" and "the poorest of the poor"' (Dwyer, 2006: 95). Similarly, although the leaders and key activists of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) of Gauteng, an umbrella organization formed in 2000, are 'articulate young and middle-aged men and women with relatively high levels of formal education...all of them [coming] from outside the mass ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance fold or were inside but marginal... the APF draws its affiliates from the unemployed and pensioners as well as some at the bottom end of those in employment...the majority of APF members are women and all members are drawn from black townships, informal settlements and run-down sections of the inner cities in Gauteng' (Buhlungu, 2006: 74). Another social movement comprising (albeit diverse) 'community organizations from poor, marginalized areas' is the (now divided) Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, formed in February 2001 in response to threats and experiences of evictions and water disconnections, discontent with state policies of cost recovery on public services, and dissatisfaction with local political representation (Oldfield and Stokke, 2006: 111). And although Egan and Wafer (2006: 48) acknowledge the 'two emerging strands' comprising the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) – 'the politically organized and articulate members such as [Trevor] Ngwane [a former ANC councillor, dismissed from the ANC for dissent] who form the leadership core', they argue that the SECC's most potent form is at the branch level, the 'survivalist' members or 'grannies' of Soweto.

If the position taken by theorists (and activists) of social movements is that the latter are 'the result of protests against the dominant social structures [implying] a natural

⁴ Independent Media South Africa – http://southafrica.indymedia.org/archive_by_id.php?id=236&category_id=1.

opposition to established politics' (Desai, 2002: ?) then the responses from the ANC government may not be so alarmist: as instruments of independent mobilization among a significant (at least in terms of sheer numbers) constituency against the national liberation movement, illegal protests and action by social movements may well 'pose a threat to democracy'. Responding to such opposition is thus not simply suppression of opposition to ANC rule, it is protection of representative democracy itself.

A different picture emerges in van Heusden and Pointer's study of local political organization and protest in three Cape Town townships (Driftsands, Tafelsig and Vrygrond). They admit their disappointment at having found 'no repository of "community" or "resistance/insurgency" that somehow existed' (2005: 162). Rather, while 'cost recovery' policies did spark mass resistance, residents 'built institutions whose aim was to engage with, rather than oppose, initiatives of the state' (*ibid*).

Xin Wei i Ngiam (2006) argues that 'the poor have inadvertently performed a litmus test for the quality of democratic governance in South Africa' – if a democracy's worth really is measured by how it treats its worst-offs, then the fact that the worst-offs are speaking out needs to be taken seriously. In interviews with the shack dwellers of Kennedy Road informal settlement in Durban, Ngiam discovered how the 'word "politics" has become taboo, ...a euphemism for the hollow, ineffectual gestures of local government officials that are demeaning more than sincere or helpful'. In contrast, the shack dwellers movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo has developed what it calls 'homemade politics', the 'politics of the people' and considers its task to be to 'reclaim the meaning of democratic politics'. What is nevertheless interesting about the movement is that despite members' feelings of disillusionment and betrayal, there is clear reticence, if not an absolute refusal, to turn away from democratic politics: 'the time of defying the government has passed away', said one shack dweller activist; 'now we are just reminding, reminding'.

We get a similar sense from the social movements and community organizations in Cape Town. On 25 May 2006, residents from Newfields Village, Philippi, Hanover Park Phase 1 and 2, Woodridge and Eastridge, and Heideveld gathered at the offices of Dan Plato, Exco member for Housing (and DA representative) after his promise to stop eviction orders did not materialize. The residents, largely unemployed and pensioners, were unable to keep up with bond repayments to the Cape Town Community Housing Company after prices 'mysteriously skyrocketed' once they had taken occupancy of their homes. Supported by the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, Social Movements Indaba and Gympie Street Residents Committee, a mass meeting had been held in Mitchells Plein the previous evening where residents had voiced their demands and protest action was decided upon, action which included rent boycotts, demands for defects to be attended to, the missing R18 million earmarked for repairs to be made available, as well as payment exemptions for pensioners and the unemployed. But as opposed to rejecting the institutions of representative democracy, the protesters wanted to employ them, by holding to account Njongonkulu Ndungane and Wallace Mgoqi who, despite having resigned before the protests began, were regarded by protesters as being responsible.

On 17 September 2005, around 1 000 people from Cape Town townships and squatter camps gathered at the Oliver Tambo Hall in Khayelitsha where speaker after speaker expressed frustration and anger at evictions, the bucket system, the quality – or lack thereof – of housing, corruption in the delivery of services and housing policies as well as severe dissatisfaction with elected councillors. Despite the plan to

develop a 'firm resolution' and 'draft a memorandum',⁵ discussion did not go beyond the expression of grievances to the point of action, and despite the frequent shouts from the stage of 'no housing no vote', differences in opinion among participants (drawn from the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Treatment Action Campaign, the Vrygrond Action Committee and several community branches of the Anti-Eviction Campaign) meant that no consensus was reached regarding local elections – whether to put forward independent ('left') candidates, not to vote and so on. It would seem that if these movements want to present a challenge to the government, whether on a local or national level, it is not, or at least not obviously, an institutional challenge. There is little real action which could be perceived to be disregarding the 'rules of the game'.

We find support for this view when we look at the demands of protest groups in recent months, such as those made by the residents of QQ section in Khayelitsha in February 2006, where communities are using the language of representative democracy, particularly the institution of voting, to try to hold their officials to account. Residents acknowledge that 'the only time they [the city council] come is when they are canvassing for votes and after that they disappear. We are tired of these empty promises. We are wiser now and we won't vote (on March 1)'.⁶ In letters to then Mayor Noma-India Mfeketo, the youth of QQ section expressed similar sentiments: 'If you do not do this [provide basic services] I won't vote'; 'I'm tired of living in informal settlements. You got that position because I voted for you'; 'Your promises are out of order. That's why I say "No land, no house, no vote!"'; 'We voted for you and you don't take note of our complaints today, and if you do not take note of this I'm not going to vote'. And when members of QQ feel that they are not being heard by their local representatives, the next step is to appeal to the President: 'Mr President we are coming to you because our ministers and mayors are not listening to our complaints. We've tried by all means to talk to them but they show no response'; and 'our local councillor Makaleni don't give a damn about QQ section...Mbeki you said you create jobs for all but there is no such'.⁷

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) is a distinct case. The TAC seems to be among the least 'grassroots' of the movements, in that although there are marches and rallies and a real attempt to empower the poor through education and so on, it is still very much a campaign for the poor rather than one of the poor. This cannot be attributed solely to the fact that the 'needy' members of the TAC are too sick often to attend meetings, but because the strategy of the TAC – its use of the courts – requires educated, sophisticated 'elites'. Thus while the TAC 'is regarded by many as the most successful of the South African social movements' (Friedman and Mottiar, 2006: 24), it is not conclusive that the reason for this is because its constituents are indeed amongst the poorest of the poor – activists themselves acknowledge that the TAC needs to become more visible in communities and to increase the role played by grassroots members. It may be that the TAC's approach, that of co-operation with the government where possible, and conflict where not, is the difference. This seems to be the view of activists themselves who point out that 'a major tactical error would be to lose support among our members as other social movements have done when they are seen to be threatening democratically elected leaders' (*ibid*: 25).

Figure 3: Social bases of social movements in Cape Town: to be added!

⁵ *Cape Times*, 17 September 2006.

⁶ *Cape Argus*, 1 February 2006.

⁷ www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?3.69.3.787.

Who gets what? Perceptions of the social structure

The 2005 Cape Area Study (CAS) comprises a survey of aspects of diversity and inequality in the South African city of Cape Town. The survey was designed as both part of an ongoing study of Cape Town (that includes a series of surveys) and part of an international, multi-city study of aspects of urban life. The 2005 CAS was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of its grant to establish the Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a representative sample of about 1200 individuals in 65 enumeration areas. Fieldwork was conducted in African areas by a UCT-based team of Xhosa-speaking fieldworkers and in coloured and white areas by Citizen Surveys. Interviews were conducted in the interviewees' preferred language. As with (probably) all surveys in South Africa, the sample in richer neighbourhoods, i.e. comprising mostly white people, cannot be considered to be reliably representative, because of low access and response rates (see further Seekings *et al.*, 2005).

CAS asked a series of questions about the social structure, only some of which will be reported in this paper. Interviewees were asked how rich or poor they were, 'relative to other people in South Africa', on a scale that ran from 0 to 10 where 0 was 'very poor', 5 was 'average' and 10 was 'very rich'. Despite the fact that incomes in Cape Town are way above the national average, only about 20 percent of interviewees said that they had above average. Interviewees in the poorest quintile saw themselves as markedly poorer, and interviewees in the richest quintile as richer, but the pattern in the middle three quintiles was muted (see Table 3).

	Neighbourhood income quintile					Total %
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	
Very poor (0-2)	36	22	18	10	8	19
Poor (3-4)	19	28	25	28	11	22
Average (5)	32	39	47	47	42	41
Above average (6-10)	13	12	10	15	39	39
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CAS 2005, b7; results are exclusive of 'don't know'; n=1,193

Interviewees were shown the four pictures in Figure 4, and read the following: "These four pictures show different types of society. The first picture represents a society with a small elite of rich people at the top, a few people in the middle, and a large number of poor people at the bottom. The second picture represents a society that is like a pyramid, with a small elite at the top, more people in the middle, and a lot of poor people at the bottom. The third picture shows a society in which most people are in the middle. The fourth picture shows a society with lots of people at the top, some in the middle, and very few at the bottom. Which of these pictures, in your view, describes South Africa today?"

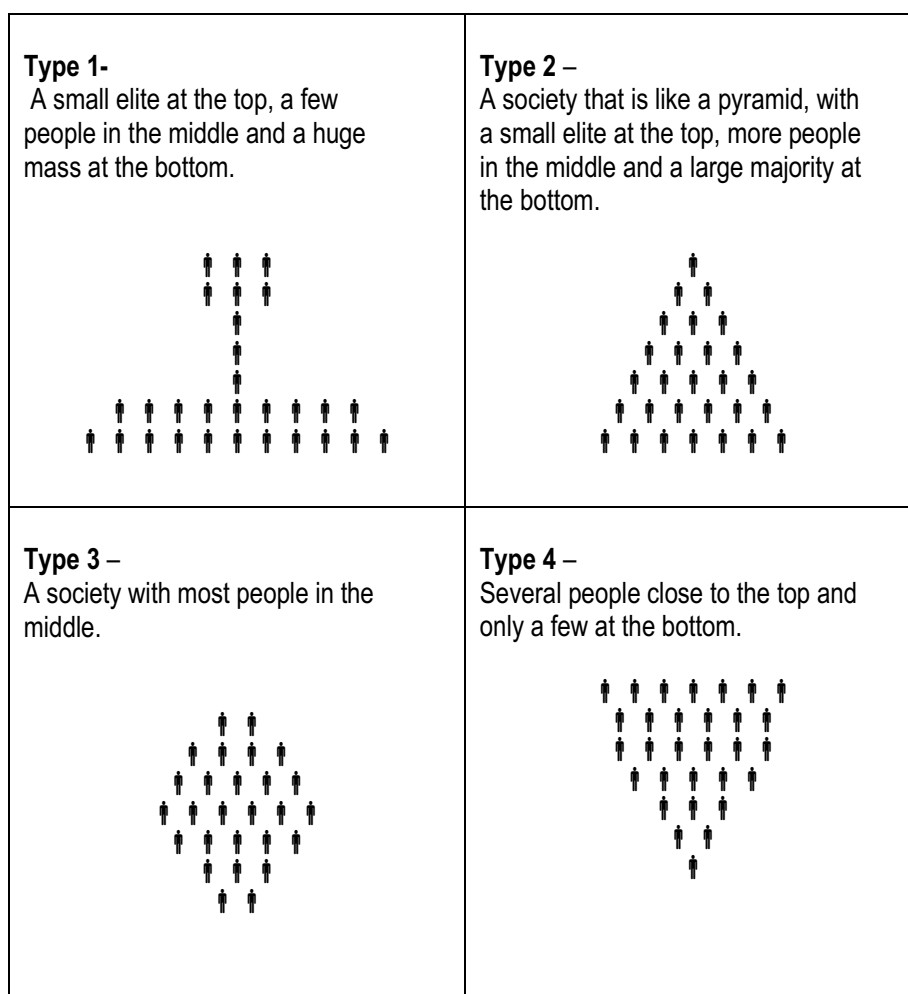


Figure 4: Pictures representing differently structured societies

Type 2 (the pyramid) attracted the most support, being chosen by 38 percent of our respondents, but type 1 (the bipolar distribution) attracted almost as much support (30 percent). Type 3 (the onion) was selected by 19 percent of our respondents, with type 4 (the inverted pyramid) being selected by only 10 percent. The remaining 3 percent of respondents said that they did not know. There was only a weak relationship between self-placement on the rich/poor scale and how respondents saw society, although people who saw themselves as rich were less likely to choose the bipolar distribution.

Interviewees were also asked about their class: “People sometimes think of themselves as being in a class. Would you say that you are in the upper class, middle class, working class or lower class? *If respondent asks for a definition of class, say that “Class is defined in terms of what it means to you.”* Only 2 percent of respondents were unable or unwilling to select one of these four response options. As we can see in Table 4, there is a clear relationship between neighbourhood income and self-perceived class. People in low-income neighbourhoods are much more likely to say that they are lower class, whilst people in the rich neighbourhoods are much more likely to say that they are middle or even upper class. Again, the poorest and richest quintiles are very distinctive, but the pattern in the middle three quintiles is less clear.

Table 4: Self-perceived class, by neighbourhood income quintile

	Neighbourhood income quintile					Total %
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	
Upper class	<1	<1	<1	<1	5	2
Middle class	14	28	31	32	63	33
Working class	29	42	56	53	28	41
Lower class	56	29	13	15	4	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CAS 2005, f6; results are exclusive of 'don't know'; n=1,171

These data suggest that people in Cape Town have a clear sense that South Africa is an unequal society. Whilst people seem themselves as relatively poorer than is probably the case, there are clear differences in how people see themselves in terms of both the rich/poor continuum and class. These suggest an awareness of the social structure.

Who is getting more? Perceptions of the government's role in the reproduction of inequality

Having established that interviewees do have some sense of the social structure and their places within it, we need to explore whether class (or, more precisely, neighbourhood income) shapes perceptions of who is benefiting in the new South Africa, and what the government is doing to affect this. Relevant questions in CAS include the following:

About poor people:

B.11: Would you say that the number of poor people in South Africa today is larger, the same or smaller than ten years ago?

B.12: Do you think that the government is doing too much, enough, or too little for poor people in South Africa?

B.13: Do you think that the number of poor people in South Africa in five years time is going to be larger, the same or smaller than it is now?

About rich people:

B.15: Would you say that the number of rich people in South Africa today is larger, the same or smaller than ten years ago?

B.16: Do you think that the government is doing too much, enough, or too little for rich people in South Africa?

B.17: Do you think that the number of rich people in South Africa in five years time is going to be larger, the same or smaller than it is now?

About the interviewee him/herself:

B.22: Is your overall financial situation today better, the same or worse than it was five years ago?

B.23: Do you expect that your overall financial situation in five years time, in 2010, will be better, the same or worse than it is now?

More than two-thirds of the interviewees felt that there were more poor people in South Africa in 2005 than there had been ten years before. There were no clear differences according to neighbourhood income quintile. At the same time, more than two-thirds of our respondents said that there were more rich people in South Africa in 2005 than there had been in 1995. On this question there were differences by class, with a higher proportion of people in poor neighbourhoods and a lower proportion of people in rich neighbourhoods saying that the number of rich people had grown.

With regard to the future, over half of the interviewees felt that there would be more poor people in South Africa in 2010 than in 2005. Almost two-thirds said that there would be even more rich people in 2010. Poor people were less pessimistic that the numbers of poor people would grow, and more optimistic that the numbers of rich would grow. Unexpectedly, when we asked separately whether the numbers of rich 'African (black)' and rich white people would grow, African interviewees were much more likely to say that the numbers of rich white people would grow and much less likely to say that the numbers of rich African people would grow. In other words, interviewees tended to think that South Africa would become an even more unequal society. The poor were less pessimistic about the growth of poverty but more confident that rich white people would continue to prosper.

Interviewees of all classes concurred that the government was contributing to this trend. About two-thirds of our sample felt that the government was not doing enough for poor people, but three-quarters felt that it was doing too much or enough for rich people. People in rich areas were more critical of the government's performance in fighting poverty, but were much less likely than people in non-rich areas to say that the government was doing 'too much' for the rich.

More of our interviewees (40 percent) thought that their personal financial position had improved over the past five years, than thought it had remained the same (31 percent) or deteriorated (25 percent). There was a weak relationship between neighbourhood income and this assessment, but a strong relationship between how rich or poor an interviewee thought he or she was and how they assessed their position had changed. People who thought themselves poor were much more likely to say that their position had worsened; people who considered themselves rich were much more likely to say it had improved. It is unclear what causes what, as the direction of causality could plausibly run in either direction.

Overall, it is not clear that rich and poor people in Cape Town have very different perceptions of who has gained and who has not in the new South Africa. There is a general concern with poverty, although the poor seem less anxious than the rich, and are also more impressed with their own changing financial situation. The poor are, however, more concerned with the growing numbers of rich white people. There is a general concern with the government's performance. The poor are more impressed by what the government does for the poor, but are more critical of what it does for the rich.

What about grievances? Asked 'what is the most important problem facing the country that the government should address?', interviewees in every income quintile said 'job creation' or 'unemployment' far more often than any other problem. Crime was the second most frequently selected problem in every quintile. This is in line with what just about every post-1994 survey has found. But asked about specific services provided by government, responses are influenced by class. Table 5 reports the proportions of interviewees in each income quintile who say that they are dissatisfied with each of a set of government services. Whilst discontent with some services

(clinics, public transport, police) is broad across neighbourhoods, discontent with other services (electricity, water, housing, refuse collection) is more acute among the poor.

Table 5: Dissatisfaction with government services, by neighbourhood income quintile

	Neighbourhood income quintile					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Electricity	40%	17%	23%	15%	6%	21%
Water	34%	19%	17%	19%	11%	21%
Public health clinics or hospitals	56%	60%	60%	52%	47%	55%
Bus and train services	36%	39%	49%	43%	42%	47%
Police	38%	38%	55%	38%	28%	39%
Road repairs and construction	50%	39%	41%	32%	25%	38%
Housing	69%	54%	58%	48%	36%	53%
Refuse collection	44%	17%	19%	15%	10%	22%

Source: CAS 2005, c28-36, weighted data

Assessments of representative democracy

CAS 2005 did not ask directly what interviewees thought of representative democracy, but a direct question would probably not have been very meaningful. The survey did ask, however, about three aspects of citizens' attitudes towards the core institutions of representative democracy: their assessment of the performance of a set of elected leaders, their commitment to political parties, and their experience of and attitude toward voting.

Interviewees were asked to assess the performance of the president (Thabo Mbeki), the provincial premier of the Western Cape (Ebrahim Rasool), the Mayor of Cape Town (Noma-India Mfeketo) and their local (unnamed) ward councillor. Figure 5 shows the proportions answering 'well' and 'badly', but omits those answering 'neither well nor badly' or 'haven't heard enough about them to say or don't know'. For Mbeki, Rasool and Mfeketo, positive assessments easily outnumber negative ones, in all but two cases. (These partial exceptions are the interviewees in the middle income quintile, who were quite critical of Mbeki; and the rich, who were critical of Mfeketo). Assessments of the performance of ward councillors are more negative, especially in very poor areas where almost one in five interviewees said that their councillor had performed badly. Apathy is common, but much more so among the rich than among the poor.