

# **Native Advisory Boards in patriarchal East London, 1950-1970**

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## ***Samevatting***

Gedurende die vyftigerjare was Suid-Afrikaanse stede in 'n periode van normatiewe oorgang en verandering. Betekenisvol in hierdie verband is die patriargale normatiewe rang wat beide die 'blanke stadsvaders' en die swart Adviesrade met mekaar gedeel het. Genoegsame frustrasies het wel binne die sisteem bestaan om die weg te open tot 'n groter toeganklikheid en 'n minder aanmatige houding deur swart stedelike leiers. In hierdie artikel word die argivale bronne, wat betrekking het op Oos-Londen, benut om aan te toon hoe blanke bestuurslui en swart verteenwoordigers gereeld hulle regte, pligte en die versoeke van dorpsbewoners gedebatteer het. So byvoorbeeld het paternalisties-gerigte blanke amptenary daarna gestreef om moderne vorme van stedelike en orderegulasies te implementeer. Daarteenoor het swart lede van die Adviesraad die basiese wense van die stedelike bewoners verdedig. Laasgenoemde is veral die fokus van die bespreking.

## **Introduction**

This article deals with the unresolved and complex relationship between City Councils (and their officials) and 'Native Advisory Boards', from the 1950s through to the early 1970s. The purpose is to lay bare the ambiguities that were inherent in the functioning of the Advisory Boards. These institutions operated within a milieu of widespread confusion about the limitations and content of a patriarchal normative system. As such, they portray a social system in transition, and show how different normative codes can exist side by side in an uneasy coexistence.

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A normative system refers to individuals' normative constitution of their identity, subjectivity, reciprocal rights and obligations. White municipal officials embraced a normative conception of society which can be characterised as 'patriarchalism'.

This consisted of a detailed *weltanschauung* of tacit norms and values, and informed the myriad normative ways in which white officialdom defined African urban residents' status as persons. The crucial question is then: How did black leaders respond to this patriarchal ethos? In sum, they accepted the basic framework, but found themselves increasingly uneasy within it.

### **'Native administration' in South African cities in the 1950s**

During the 1950s, white-black relations straddled two normative paradigms, which can be described as the 'patriarchal family' and 'individualistic civil society'. It was a society in transition. For some City Councillors and municipal officials, the relationship between the white urban authorities and African residents resembled that of the patriarchal family; for others, however, it was beginning to resemble that of modern, individualistic civil society.

Advisory Boards were introduced at a time when the central and local governments felt an increasingly powerful urge to impose some kind of modern order and 'discipline'<sup>1</sup> on cities in flux. After a brief introduction to Advisory Boards, three themes will be pursued in this discussion.

First, it will be argued that Advisory Boards were a brave, but all too frail, attempt to impose disciplinary authority structures on African townships. Second, it will be shown that the patriarchal order produced a complex system of power and powerlessness in the relationships between black and white municipal leaders. While the patriarchal ethos often drew African leaders uncomfortably close to the white 'city fathers', it also conferred significant informal and moral power on Advisory Board members. Third, the application of paternalistic controls to black communities was always problematic. There was a fundamental ambiguity regarding the role of Advisory Boards as representatives of African interests. In this regard there was ceaseless confusion about the relative importance of Africans' needs and interests, as opposed to their opinions and wishes. The paper suggests that the 1950s was a normative

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1 M Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (New York, Vintage Books, 1979).

system in transition, with patriarchy becoming ever more tenuous and contested.

### **Patriarchy as a normative system**

A normative system is not a matter of individual choice. In every society, it creates a prevailing backdrop for individual moral action. It consists of the inter-personal ways in which individuals recognise and constitute one another as social actors. Patriarchy is one such system.<sup>2</sup>

Patriarchy is a rational moral order, in which normative concepts such as 'the person', 'authority', 'responsibility', and 'rights' are given meaning within the parameters of a constant and pervasive hierarchy of status and responsibility. The patriarch is in some respects a more developed and more responsible moral agent, with more rights and obligations, than his juniors and children. He is constituted as such by the recognition accorded him by the rest of the family, and he recognises them in turn as persons with fewer rights but more needs than himself.<sup>3</sup>

The analogy between patriarchy and family life serves to highlight certain dimensions of organic societies. People sometimes prefer hierarchical, organic societies to highly individualistic ones, since the former may meet important emotional needs. There are several possible justifications for patriarchy, either in the family or in broader society. Patriarchy represents a normative system based on feeling and intimacy. In a cohesive family structure, individuals are assured of belonging; their presence is unassailably legitimate within the social unit. A family consists of a constellation of roles and these roles are sustained and reinforced through a system of constant mutual recognition between the different family members. In most patriarchal families, there is little conscious regard for abstract rights.<sup>4</sup> This can be contrasted with civil society, in which the formal equality of persons is recognised, and social interaction is regulated by fixed and impartial rules. In civil society, individuals are constituted through their mutual recognition of each other as holders of abstract, uniform, individual rights.

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2 D vande Veer, *Paternalistic intervention: The moral bound on benevolence* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 23.

3 D Atkinson, "Cities and citizenship: Towards a normative analysis of the urban order in South Africa, with special reference to East London, 1950-1986" (PhD thesis, Durban, University of Natal, 1991), p. 106.

4 WV Doniela, "Hegel and the organic state", D Muschamp (ed.), *Political thinkers* (London, Macmillan, 1986), p. 166.

These themes will be considered in respect of city governments in general, but will be illustrated by using material from East London. In the 1950s, white municipal city fathers still functioned within a patriarchal mould. Township administrators had, for decades, visualised their role as ‘fathers’, which helped to resolve some of the contradictions – providing care as well as discipline – which they had to deal with on a daily basis.<sup>5</sup> A description of the epitome of a good township manager was provided in 1959 by a colleague from Witbank, Mr Ackerman:

[A location superintendent] must have the patience of a Job, he must have the wisdom of a Solomon, he must have the tact and the love of a supernatural creature, he must have the persistence to plead like an advocate, and the experience of a judge, and he must have ongoing personal contact with the inhabitants of the location which he administers.<sup>6</sup>

But increasingly, local black leaders were beginning to shrug off this doctrine. This caused confusion and conflict between them and the white municipal officials. In the process, different normative strands are evident in their discourse. The municipal minutes of East London, in the 1950s, indeed provide a rare snapshot of a transitional moment in history.

### **The shaping of black administration: The legislative framework**

The first attempt to introduce a systematic form of black African administration was the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. In terms of the Act, ‘Native Advisory Boards’ were introduced in each township, to serve as a form of black representation in municipal affairs. This Act was equivocal about the nature of segregation. On the one hand, the legislation was substantially influenced by the philosophy of Colonel CF Stallard. According to Stallard’s doctrine, the towns were essentially the creation of whites, and blacks’ presence there could only be justified in so far as they served the needs of whites.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, segregation, in terms of the Act, could be taken to mean the partition of urban areas, and that Africans had permanent rights in their section of town.<sup>8</sup> This left a fundamental ambiguity.

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5 J Robinson, *The power of Apartheid: State, power and space in South African cities* (Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996), p. 73.

6 Quoted in G Robinson, *The power of Apartheid...*, p. 74.

7 D Atkinson, “Cities and citizenship...,” pp. 120-121.

8 TRH Davenport, “African townsmen? South African Native (Urban Areas) legislation through the years”, *African Affairs*, 68(271), 1969, p. 98.

The political future of the African 'locations' had always been uncertain. The Advisory Boards were an uncomfortable compromise between a belief in perpetual subordination, on the one hand, and putative political equality (albeit on a segregated basis), on the other. Some officials were even prepared to move beyond the notion of duality, to contemplate the eventual merging of the white and black communities (a 'proto-liberal' position, which would have entailed the beginnings of a modern civil society).

Even though these ambiguities had not yet been resolved, white officials strove for some form of inter-racial co-operation in the practicalities of municipal administration, within a patriarchal discourse. At the same time, the white officials needed to impose a form of modern order on the townships.<sup>9</sup> The result was frequent disagreement about the proper role of the Boards, and their relationship with the white city fathers.

### **The functioning of the East London Advisory Board**

The constitution of Advisory Boards in the East London Location Regulations amounted to an attempt to impose modern regulations and controls on a very confused urban order. The prescriptions were intended to structure the contacts between the local authority and the 'natives' in as predictable and systematic a way as possible. Officials also shared the assumption that their efforts were directed at promoting progress and advancement. Everyone agreed with the need to 'develop the natives' – although there were often disagreements about what this meant in practice.

The East London Regulations provided for the demarcation of the Duncan Village Location into wards, each to be represented by one Board member. Their tenure was set at three years. Through the institution of 'ward committees' to assist Advisory Board members, the Board was intended to reach deeply into the location community to establish modern forms of social order and grievance management. Detailed formal provisions also governed the activities of these committees.

The white local authorities retained overriding formal powers. If there were no nominations in a specific ward, the Council had the right to appoint a member to the Board. Furthermore, Advisory Board meetings were chaired

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<sup>9</sup> J Robinson, *The power of Apartheid...*, p. 65.

by the Chairman of the Native Affairs Committee, or in his absence, by any available member of the Council. This meant that the chairman would always be a white person.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, the meetings could be attended by an array of white office-holders, including any Councillor, the manager or his deputy, the magistrate of the district, the Native Commissioner, a superintendent, the senior police officer, or “any other person whose presence the chairman considers to be desirable or necessary”. The black public was excluded.

The Advisory Board’s existence was fragile (it ceased to function between February and November 1961). It was never fully accepted as a representative body, either in the patriarchal order, or within the emerging individualistic civil society of the black townships. Even when it was functioning, it experienced a distressing level of popular apathy. The East London Council’s Native Affairs Committee (NAC) reflected that only one ward was contested in the 1956 and 1957 elections, the latter with a 13 percent poll. In two wards, there were no nominations (Manager’s Report to NAC).<sup>11</sup> As Davenport noted:

the system never really brought alive a responsible interest in local government among Africans.<sup>12</sup>

The discourse of the regulations reveals the extraordinary minutiae of a modern legal-rational order. Detailed provisions describe how the superintendent was to convene a meeting to call for nominations; how the nominations, signed by at least ten registered voters, had to be submitted “not later than the tenth day of September”; what monetary deposit was payable by each candidate; and how the voting process should be carried out. Similarly, the procedures of the Advisory Board meetings were carefully spelled out. Motions had to be sent to the secretary at least seven days before a meeting; and no Board member could address the Board more than twice on any matter under discussion.

However, notwithstanding these formal provisions, the whole issue of formal township regulations retained an air of unreality. Because of the social environment in which they were supposed to obtain, there was a marked discrepancy between the formal rules and the actual experiences of the participants. The regulations seemed incongruous when applied to a community which was largely illiterate and poor; and one whose experience of public

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10 East London City Council (ELCC), “Location Regulations”, Chapter 2. 1956.

11 ELCC, Native Affairs Committee (NAC), Files, January 1957.

12 TRH Davenport, “African townsmen...,” *African Affairs*, 68(271), 1969, p. 99.

institutions had been shaped by the traditional structures of chieftainship, or by the coercive role of the police. Instead of being an effective prescription for real-life activities, or a reflection of an existing communal ethos, the regulations constituted the local authority's brave effort to impose modern legal-rational structures on a community in flux. The location regulations were artificial constraints at odds with the spontaneous social patterns of the African community.

In various cities, the black Board members often did not live up to white officials' expectations. Officials were exasperated by their lack of technical sophistication. Basic points sometimes had to be explained at length before any meaningful discussion could take place. Councillor Hurd of Johannesburg described his experience thus:

The Boards no doubt deliberate with a great deal of wisdom..., and they study plans with a great deal of absorption. But I venture to suggest that in not one single case have any of the members of the Board any technical knowledge or experience or qualification whatsoever. It takes them a jolly long time to study these things...<sup>13</sup>

The East London Board members were also often less than conscientious. On occasion, the East London Township Manager "took the Board members to task for shirking their duties". Most of the Board members had never even read the regulations.<sup>14</sup>

While overtly recognising the importance of proper procedure, the Board's functioning was hampered by the apathy of several of its members. Punctuality was an ideal seldom achieved; motions were repeatedly introduced without the prescribed notice; and, on occasion, it was necessary to terminate members' terms of office because of non-attendance.<sup>15</sup> Part of the reason for this was that Board members received no remuneration for their duties. East London's Township Manager constantly tried to improve the Board's performance:

The Board must get out of the habit of unnecessary talking and concentrate on the business before the meeting. There can only be a real agenda if mem-

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13 Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs (IANA), Annual Conference proceedings, 1954, p. 132.

14 Joint Locations Advisory Board (JLAB), East London, Minutes, 23 March 1959.

15 JLAB, Minutes, 26 November 1962.

bers of the Board submit Notices of Motion at least seven or eight days, but preferably fourteen days, before the meeting ...<sup>16</sup>

Despite their uncertain performance, East London's Board members accepted that the procedures and values that the officials were attempting to inculcate, were, in principle, a good thing. Mr Gaqa, for example, had said in response to some of the Manager's criticisms that:

He felt ... it was time that the Board pulled up its socks. If the Board went wrong, it was its duty to apologise...<sup>17</sup>

The quest for modernity was, however, constantly bedevilled by ambiguous patriarchal community ties. In the next section, we will consider the complex normative system of rights and obligations, and of power and powerlessness, with which the various parties had to contend. The case of East London will be used to illustrate these dynamics.

### **Advisory Boards in practice: Power and powerlessness**

The formal powers of the Boards were slight. They could advise the Council on all matters affecting the welfare of the residents; make recommendations on any relevant legislation; and they served as a channel of communication between residents and the Council. For the officials, Advisory Boards were important institutions. "They bring to our notice frictions that we do not know of, and we and the Councillors usually consider these grievances in a sympathetic manner..."<sup>18</sup> The Advisory Boards were, however, also tied in numerous and complex ways to the people they represented. Many of the Board members valued the authority which their Advisory Board status conferred on them, and they saw themselves as legitimate spokesmen for the black community.

The importance of the Advisory Board's ties with the community was appreciated by many white officials. As the Township Manager of Pretoria stated at a meeting of the Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs (IANA), the most important function of an Advisory Board was "actively to assist in promoting decent human relations between the Bantu and other

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16 JLAB, Minutes, 14 October 1963.

17 JLAB, Minutes, 23 March 1959.

18 IANA, Conference proceedings, 1954, p. 133.

racial groups".<sup>19</sup> Requests made by the Boards seem generally to have been taken very seriously by officialdom. The minutes of the Joint Locations Advisory Board (JLAB) in East London reveal numerous instances of this. These requests ranged from large new projects to small ways of making township life more comfortable. For example, an urgent plea for a Non-European hospital in East London was accepted by the NAC;<sup>20</sup> additional ablution blocks were built;<sup>21</sup> a request for a grandstand at the sports field was granted;<sup>22</sup> cricket fields were established;<sup>23</sup> and an additional ambulance was purchased.<sup>24</sup> On each occasion, the Board duly expressed its appreciation and satisfaction, and the patriarchal order remained intact.

From time to time, the Board's requests even brought the East London City Council (ELCC) into conflict with central government departments. On such occasions, the Board and the municipality stood side by side against rigid and authoritarian injunctions emanating from the National Party government in Pretoria. For example, in July 1969, the Board recommended to the Council that facilities be made available for African entrepreneurs to establish restaurants in East London.<sup>25</sup> The ELCC agreed to make representations to the government to ask permission for such a Bantu restaurant in the white area. After lengthy correspondence with the Department of Bantu Affairs, the request was turned down. A great deal of time and energy had been wasted, and the municipal officials shared in the Board's disappointment. Incidents such as these had the effect of demonstrating to the Board that the local authority indeed cared about the welfare of their constituents. A mutual loyalty was sustained, especially in the face of the Department's blank bureaucratic intransigence.

Often enough, however, the Boards failed to achieve their goals. In East London in 1954, almost all the Board's suggestions for the easing of housing regulations were refused by the East London Council.<sup>26</sup> In 1962, requests for tennis courts and sports facilities in West Bank Location were repeatedly

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19 ELCC, NAC, 16 March 1956.

20 JLAB, Minutes, 6 February 1956; ELCC, NAC, 23 February 1956.

21 JLAB, Minutes, 17 October 1960.

22 JLAB, Minutes, 26 May 1969.

23 JLAB, Minutes, 18 January 1971.

24 JLAB, Minutes, 17 August 1971; ELCC, Health, housing and Non-White Affairs (HHNWA), Committee Minutes, 7 July 1971.

25 JLAB, Minutes, 21 July 1969; 28 October 1969; 17 November 1969; 21 September 1970; 18 January 1971; ELCC, HHNWA, Minutes 6 August 1969; 3 February 1971; 8 November 1971; 2 December 1971; ELCC Town Clerk's Reports 11 November 1970; 5 April 1971, 8 November 1971.

26 JLAB, Minutes, 23 April 1956; ELCC, HHNWA, Minutes, 27 April 1956.

turned down, on the grounds that it was unjustified to incur expenditure on such non-essential facilities.<sup>27</sup>

The relationship between the Board and the city fathers was not, however, shaped by township regulations alone. Certain procedures had acquired the hallowed status of tradition, and were consequently considered by the African residents to constitute rights. Because the ruled largely shared the developmental norms of the patriarchal city fathers, the city fathers were prepared to grant certain tacit rights to the subordinate group. These included the right to decent treatment, the right to have some form of property or security, to accumulate wealth, and the right to be left alone as long as residents obeyed the panoply of laws that governed mobility and residence. Many white officials could identify with these basic human needs and wants. The patriarchal moral order produced a system of governance which was informal, intimate, and based on precedent, as opposed to formally designed regulations.

For African leaders, participation in Advisory Board activities sometimes produced outcomes which were hardly empowering. It was difficult to participate in the system without being drawn into officialdom's patriarchal ethos. The case of Mr. Fazzie serves to illustrate these dynamics at play in East London. Mr. Fazzie, a leading member of the African National Congress (ANC), was elected to the Board in 1956. He proved to be a most assertive member but had to contend with the powerful paternalistic ideas which informed the interactions with the Township Manager, the Chairman of the Council's Native Affairs Committee, and the Native Commissioner, as well as certain of his Advisory Board colleagues. These dynamics were clearly revealed by the discussion, in January 1957, of the City Council's proposal for a 'Bantu Festival'.<sup>28</sup>

When the issue of the Bantu Festival appeared on the Board's agenda, Fazzie aggressively criticised the Council for proceeding with its plans without having consulted the Board beforehand. Furthermore, he demanded to know what the Council planned to do with the festival proceeds.

A senior Board member, Mr. Godlo (who, ironically enough, was also an ANC member), was the first to respond. Godlo was prominent in the national Locations Advisory Board Congress. Due to his long experience in the Advisory Board, he claimed to know a great deal about proper local authority

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<sup>27</sup> JLAB, Minutes, 25 June 1962; 27 August 1962; 1 October 1962; ELCC, NAC, November 1962.

<sup>28</sup> JLAB, Minutes, 18 February, 1957.

procedures. He stated that, although he shared the same sentiments as Mr. Fazzie, he found Fazzie's attitude offensive. He made a point about Advisory Board procedure: in matters such as the Bantu Festival, the Council was not obliged to consult the Board. It was actually a gesture of courtesy on the part of the Council that they had informed the Board at all.

The Manager then took the floor, to defend the loyal Godlo. In stern and exasperated tones, he reproached Fazzie for his ill-considered opinions, especially as the latter did not know the true facts of the matter. In true paternalistic spirit, he pointed out that all the proceeds from the Festival would be paid into a trust account and used for the benefit of the residents of the location. The Native Commissioner, a Mr. Pike, also happened to be present at this particular Board meeting. With the ponderous authority of the dyed-in-the-wool patriarch, he proceeded to rebuke the Board for its constant adverse criticism and the recalcitrance of its co-operation.

The result was extraordinary. In the face of this onslaught of authority, Mr. Fazzie, whose radical political convictions were beyond doubt, "thereupon apologised for his outburst, and together with other members of the Board, indicated that in the future they would assist to the fullest possible extent".

How might one account for Fazzie's capitulation? On the one hand, it could be dismissed as a strategic retreat, in the hope of fighting other battles in future. On the other hand, however, it probably also indicates how difficult it was to withstand the weighty moral and institutional authority of individuals steeped in a patriarchal ethical order. It was difficult to challenge these paternalist officials' claims to superior knowledge and values. In practice, officials usually did have relatively good information at their disposal - or, at least, information which passed the test of modern, formalised knowledge. Furthermore, officials did make relatively convincing claims to represent universally admired values - such as commitment to duty, co-operation, courtesy and proper procedure. Mr. Fazzie's ignominious capitulation was the result of very compelling patriarchal dynamics. Patriarchalism involves the moral education of subordinates; and if patriarchs appear confident in their knowledge and authority, they are not easy to challenge.

The fact that the members of Advisory Boards were often quite prepared to co-operate with the city fathers did not necessarily mean that they were simply complacent lackeys of the Council. In general, Advisory Boards saw themselves as the responsible leaders of the townships, or in other words, as

subordinate patriarchs. They were participants in a social and ethical order, without which urban life would have been a great deal less meaningful to them.

As with any social being caught up in the here and now, Fazzie could not have been expected to possess the omniscience needed for an understanding of the broader picture in which he found himself. He could not critique the paternalistic ethos where it was weakest - viz. the increasingly inappropriate application of patriarchalism to modern urban conditions. One measure of this inappropriateness was the increasing difficulty paternalists had in deciding whether to determine, unilaterally, what Africans' real needs were, or whether to give credence to Africans' articulated wishes. The next section considers this problem in more detail.

### **Patriarchalism and the problem of needs and interests**

It could be argued that the dynamics outlined above invariably promoted the interests of the white power-holders. On many occasions, this was no doubt true. However, as we have seen, the relationship was not a one-sided one – the white officials' rights came along with moral obligations towards their subordinates. The black Advisory Board members became quite adept at promoting the interests of their constituents within the prevailing moral order. White officials wanted voluntary co-operation from the township residents, and this meant that they had to take the Board's suggestions fairly seriously. The East London experience shows that officials did not conceptualise the Board as being their lackey at all. For one thing the regulations provided that "Every member of the advisory board shall ... strive at all times to become the real representative and the faithful voice of the aspirations and wishes of the community within his ward...".

In East London, white Councillors were undecided as to whether they should act on the never-ending stream of criticism and complaints emanating from the Advisory Boards. After all, the Board had no formal powers vis-a-vis the Council. Yet the Council wanted to believe that the Board was really doing its job, providing an accurate indication of the residents' wishes. The city fathers did not always feel equal to claiming that they knew the real interests of the 'natives', especially in the face of Advisory Board opposition. The white officials and Councillors preferred to believe they were subscribing to a shared

moral order, based on the voluntary compliance of their subjects. Sharing a patriarchal order meant that overt conflict could be evaded.

The Boards' attempts at representing the views of the African residents exposed a deeper philosophical problem within patriarchalism. A patriarch ultimately has effective power to decide what is in a child's real interests, as opposed to the child's own whims. However, nearly every parent also feels obliged to satisfy their child's wishes - up to a point, of course, but that point is usually unarticulated. A patriarchal order offers little guidance on what constitutes its wards' genuine needs and what are simply their wishes. The Council wanted the Advisory Board to play a representative role, but there were no procedural ways to determine which requests represented needs and which were mere whims and wishes. The underlying question was: Did the Advisory Board members really know what was good for the ordinary residents? Did they know this better than the white officials?

In the case of the Advisory Board, the quest to be 'the faithful voice' of the community was bound to create dilemmas for the Board members as well as for the Councillors. The Boards were often caught between the wishes of their constituents and the imperatives of city management. Where were their primary loyalties supposed to lie? This dilemma was especially acute because the Advisory Boards of many towns, including East London, were constantly pressured because they were the only outlet for the grievances of the residents. In certain towns, the Advisory Board consisted of ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) supporters, who saw their task explicitly as an oppositional one. In Germiston, for example, Board members stated that they did not regard themselves as instruments of the municipality, and did not feel it was their duty to carry out every policy proposed by the authorities.<sup>29</sup>

The fact is that the patriarchal order did recognise the rights of urban black people to be part of the city. Westernised blacks were not citizens in the political sense, but they were legitimately part of the urban society. While their presence may have produced practical administrative problems, they had a quasi-right to be there. This ethos gave ambitious Africans some space to advance themselves through education, religion or social service.

During the 1950s, the Advisory Boards began to develop a nascent political consciousness of their own. In several towns in the Orange Free State, Advi-

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<sup>29</sup> RE Pretorius, "Banishment: Germiston's answer to opposition in Natalspruit location, 1955-1957," History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987. p. 9.

sory Boards became radicalised during the early 1940s and associated with African trade unions and the Communist Party.<sup>30</sup> The Duncan Village Advisory Board was an enthusiastic participant in the Location Advisory Boards' Congress, which united Advisory Boards throughout the country. This Congress, which had existed since at least the 1930s, took up urban Africans' practical grievances.<sup>31</sup> The East London Advisory Board was well represented amongst the Congress leadership. Mr. Godlo served repeatedly as President and Mr. V.M. Kwinana (also the founder of East London's ANC branch) was elected Assistant Secretary in 1956.<sup>32</sup>

The Advisory Boards' Congress also issued political statements. In 1953, for example, it criticised the concept of labour bureaux, and it unanimously opposed the Native Services Levy Act on the grounds that it would place black employees' jobs in jeopardy.<sup>33</sup> The Congress also demanded that Africans be employed in all Native Affairs Departments, and that influx control raids be reduced. Mr. Godlo's Presidential address in 1956 revealed how critical of government policy the Advisory Boards' Congress had become. Godlo reminded the Congress of all the rights which had been denied the urban native under the present government:

- (i) The right to participate in the local self-government granted to urban local authorities; (ii) The right to possess and own a home in the urban area; (iii) Freedom of movement; (iv) Freedom of contract; (v) The right to be and to feel safe in one's own home; and (vi) Freedom of speech and assembly.<sup>34</sup>

In East London, the ambiguities in the role of the Advisory Board were therefore felt by white officials and Board members alike. The Board had simultaneously to be a credible representative of township residents, as well as a partner in an often unpopular administration. Consequently, the matter of needs and wishes was never resolved. At times, black patriarchs were deemed to be competent spokesmen for black residents' needs; at other times, the city fathers overrode the Board in order to promote their own view of black

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30 P Rich, "Managing black leadership: The Joint Councils, urban trading and political conflict in the Orange Free State, 1925-1942", P Bonner, I Hofmeyr, D James and T Lodge (eds.), *Holding their ground* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 187, 192.

31 PM Rich, "Managing black leadership", pp. 182, 186.

32 T Lodge, "Political mobilization during the 1950s: An East London case study", S Marks and S Trapido, *The Politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth century South Africa* (London, Longmans, 1987), p. 321; ELCC, NAC, 4 October 1956.

33 ELCC, NAC, January 1953.

34 ELCC, NAC, 4 October 1956.

interests. Ironically, this vacillation undermined the very attempt at imposing modern discipline of which Advisory Boards were a part.

## **Conclusion**

In theory, Advisory Boards were introduced as an attempt to impose modern, disciplinary, formal patterns of order and authority. In practice, as the East London experience indicates, the results were muddled compromises on the part of the white officials. These alternated between stern prescription, pleas for co-operation, verbal support for the Board's leadership role, assertion of the Council's benevolent intentions, and the evasion by the Council of the responsibility for unpleasant decisions. Due to this vacillation, the East London city fathers' behaviour was regulated only by their patriarchal intuitions, which produced attitudes ranging from sympathy and indifference to anxiety and exasperation.

The exercise of true disciplinary order and rationality needs to be grounded in a coherent social philosophy - a philosophy which has such unassailable authority that disciplinarians and reformers have no qualms in imposing whatever unpalatable measures it may entail. The patriarchal order provided no such coherence, for its definition of rights and obligations was fatefully unresolved. This problem became especially acute when Africans started to make political demands, as was increasingly the case during the 1960s.

