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Rescaling the State, Restructuring Social Relations

Melanie Samson^a

^a York University, Toronto, Canada

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Rescaling the State, Restructuring Social Relations

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT PRIVATIZATION IN POST-APARTHEID JOHANNESBURG

MELANIE SAMSON

York University, Toronto, Canada

Abstract

The literatures on rescaling of the State and feminist analyses of state restructuring have generally spoken past one another. Recent work by feminist theorists that begins to bridge this gap looks at gender in isolation from race and class and focuses primarily on the implications of state rescaling for service recipients. By contrast this article focuses on the relationship between state rescaling in post-apartheid South Africa and the restructuring of racialized, gendered social relations in the labour market. Despite policy commitments to 'developmental local government', rescaling of the State South African style is market-oriented and driven by an accommodationist approach to globalization. Drawing on a detailed analysis of the shift to a 'contracting local state' in Johannesburg and the resulting restructuring in the waste management sector, it is argued that this rescaling of the State was shaped by pre-existing racialized gender relations in the workplace and labour market, which it in turn entrenched and exacerbated, infusing these social relations with new content and meaning. Feminist analysis of state rescaling must therefore include analysis of the gendered and racialized social relations within the scales of the workplace, labour market and the local State.

Keywords

gender, Johannesburg, local government, privatization, rescaling, restructuring, South Africa, waste management

INTRODUCTION

The role of the State in the era of neo-liberal globalization has been the subject of extensive academic debate. While proponents of neo-liberalism argue that globalization has irreversibly limited the role and relevance of the State, scholars such as Panitch (1994) argue that the State is a key agent of globalization and is being fundamentally restructured both to facilitate globalization and respond to its exigencies. A range of scholars has explored different aspects of the form and nature of this state restructuring. Feminist political economists focusing primarily on advanced capitalist countries have unearthed the ways in which the shift from the Keynesian welfare state to the neo-liberal state is predicated on and facilitates a transformation of gendered social relations (Brodie 1994; Bakker and Gill 2003). Simultaneously, scholars focusing on the political economy of scale have revealed that the State is being 'rescaled' (with functions being shifted up to the global level, out to the market and down to local government) to enable and reproduce globalization (Swyngendouw 1996; Brenner 2001; Peck 2001).

Although the restructuring of gendered social relations and the rescaling of the State are each identified as central to the dialectical relationship between state restructuring and neo-liberal globalization, these two literatures have generally spoken past one another. Feminist political economists studying globalization and the State focus almost exclusively on the nation-state. This is somewhat surprising given that within policy circles it is increasingly argued that, as local government is 'closer to the people', decentralization is an important mechanism for improving women's status and participation. However, as Beall (2005) notes, when decentralization is driven by concerns with efficiency as opposed to equity it does not necessarily address gender-based exploitation. Feminist analysis would, therefore, be strengthened by greater attention to the political and economic context within which decentralization occurs.

This issue is taken up by a growing geographical literature that sees scale as a socially constructed relational concept and therefore posits that no one scale can be understood in isolation (Marston 2000). Swyngendouw's (1996) concept of the 'glocal' succinctly captures the interrelation between decentralization and globalization, and transformations at the level of the local state and global restructuring. Research in a range of contexts also demonstrates that rather than undermining the nation-state, decentralization actually requires a strong, though changed role for the central state (Swyngendouw 1996; Tandler 1997; Peck 2001).

As scale mediates and is mediated by social relations (Brenner 2001) analysis of state rescaling is concerned to explore the relationship between rescaling and the restructuring of social relations. For example, Swyngendouw (1996) demonstrates how state rescaling redefines relationships between the State, civil society and citizens, and Tandler's (1997) study of decentralization in Brazil highlights the centrality of public sector workers to rescaling

processes. However, as Marston (2000) and McDowell (2001) each correctly note, there is a pervasive analytical silence with respect to the relationship between scale, rescaling and exploitative gender relations.

Recently feminist scholars such as Katz (2001), Beall (2005) and Mahon (2005) have begun to bring these two strands into conversation with one another by exploring the gendered nature and effect of state rescaling. Katz and Mahon both focus on the provision of childcare services and demonstrate how transformations at the global level are dialectically related to changes in gendered relations of social reproduction at the local level. Although they note the migration of childcare workers they foreground changes in state policy, and analyse how state rescaling affects citizens who are (or were) beneficiaries of state programmes and services. Beall (2005) includes a wider range of activities in her analysis of decentralization in post-apartheid South Africa, and pays more detailed attention to the mutually constituting nature of, and relation between, gender, race, class and rescaling. Nevertheless, like Mahon and Katz, she focuses on citizens. This is in keeping with the theoretical approach adopted by both Marston (2000) and McDowell (2001), which brings gender into scalar analysis by adding scales traditionally associated with reproduction and consumption.

While these are important contributions, they do not engage with the relatively large body of feminist work that explores the ways in which race, gender and class are co-produced within the workplace (cf. Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Mohanty 1997; Nakano Glenn 1991; Salzinger 2003). To date, the gendered and racialized implications of rescaling for workers who deliver (former) state services remain largely unexplored as do the ways in which racialized and gendered processes within the workplace shape the form and nature of rescaling.

This article contributes to the conversation on gender and rescaling by weaving in a new thread focused specifically on workers. It explores state rescaling in post-apartheid South Africa, highlighting the tension between policy commitments to 'developmental local government' and market-based restructuring of the local state. The article focuses on the forging of a 'contracting local state' (Harden 1992) in Johannesburg, in which local government was granted increased responsibilities yet simultaneously restructured its activities along markets lines and offloaded the performance of most key functions to the private sector. The article is based on a case study of restructuring in the waste management sector and the formation of the Pikitup waste management utility that includes fifty-one interviews with key informants, as well as twenty-nine focus groups with workers and a stratified random sample survey of six hundred and twenty-eight workers in five of Pikitup's eleven depots.¹ Based on this case study, it is argued that the shift to a contracting local state in Johannesburg was facilitated by pre-existing unequal racialized gender relations in the workplace and labour market, which it in turn entrenched and exacerbated, infusing these social relations with new content and meaning. The findings indicate that it is crucial that

feminist analyses of state rescaling be attentive to the mutually constituting nature of gender, race and class, and focus on workers as well as citizens.

To provide context for current rescaling, the first section of this article reviews the role of local government within the apartheid state and the gendered and racialized nature of the apartheid city and local government. Next, the post-apartheid local government policy framework and the form of rescaling in South Africa are examined. The model of the contracting local state adopted in Johannesburg and the ways in which it has entrenched old, and created new, forms of exploitation on the overlapping basis of gender, race and class in the waste management workforce are then explored. The conclusion draws together key insights and theoretical implications.

APARTHEID LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Urban-Based Segregation

Dating back to the colonial era, urban racial segregation was deepened and entrenched after the 1948 election of the National Party as it both 'underpinned, and was a necessary precondition for, the formal disenfranchisement of the black majority by the nation-state' (Swilling 1991: ix). The 1950 Group Areas Act banned African residence from white areas, and forced removals created zones of racial exclusion. Although some Africans were initially granted urban residential rights based on birth in the city as well as long-term urban employment, this was later reversed and legislation such as the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act sought to de-urbanize the African population (Posel 1991). A complex range of policies attempted to enforce the new urban doctrine by compelling employers to hire Africans already legally residents in urban areas, requiring industries that exceeded a racial labour quota to decentralize to border areas, limiting African migration to the city and forcibly relocating Africans to homelands.

The apartheid city was racialized in deeply gendered ways. In 1952, the Bantu Laws Act was amended to require African women to carry passes. After seven years of fierce resistance, the law was implemented, severely limiting African women's access to urban areas. Due to strong gender stereotypes, employment opportunities for African women were more limited than for African men, and rural labour bureaux rarely granted them permission to work in urban areas. African women's legal access to urban areas was therefore limited to their status as the wives or unmarried daughters of men with urban qualifications (Boddington 1979; Cock *et al.* 1983). This right was withdrawn in 1964, and there was a 'total embargo on the entry of African women to urban areas' (Cock *et al.* 1983: 281).

These policies sought to minimize the perceived political risks and economic costs associated with the social reproduction of an urban African working class. By denying women urban residency the State hoped to limit the

raising of new generations of urban Africans. Wage bills were sharply curtailed as employers could pay African men the minimum required for their own (as opposed to their family's) reproduction. Women's banishment to the Bantustans further reduced labour costs for capital by providing a reserve of cheap farm labour (Cock *et al.* 1983: 281).

Regardless of these legal restrictions, large numbers of African women migrated to cities. Pushed by extreme poverty and drawn by greater economic opportunities and the desire to reunite their families, they risked illegality. They were joined by many men who failed to obtain legal entry to urban areas. The townships that served as labour reservoirs for industries located within white municipalities therefore became permanent features of the urban landscape (Shubane 1991: 65).

In response to this undeniable reality, the State shifted strategies and attempted to uphold the charade of separate African and white cities governed (at least nominally) by racially based authorities (Swilling *et al.* 1991: 175). Local government did not have an autonomous existence in the highly centralized apartheid state (Croesser 1991). As a result, over the course of apartheid, the central government was able repeatedly to change the form of local government in a futile attempt to enforce racially segregated municipal structures.

White South Africans were enfranchised to participate in whites-only elected local government and received First World quality services (Swilling 1991: xvii). Coloured, Indian and African South Africans received inadequate or no services and were separately governed by a series of unrepresentative, undemocratic, racially based local government structures with few real powers. At the time of the democratic transition, Management Committees (called Local Areas Committees in Natal) in coloured and Indian areas were only partially elected, had extremely limited decision-making power and simply advised the white local authority. The State attempted to impose similarly undemocratic Black Local Authorities in African townships. These structures were widely rejected by the democratic movement and during the 1980s became a focal point for anti-apartheid struggle. Highly effective rent boycotts demanded the end to racially based local government, 'one city one tax base', the upgrading of services and the establishment of affordable service charges. Local government transformation and service delivery thus featured prominently in the demands for a democratic South Africa.

The Municipal Workforce: Racial and Gender Segmentation

Urban segregation was complemented by racially based labour market segmentation. The 'primary labour market' was comprised primarily of white, skilled workers, while coloured and Indian semi-skilled workers were located in the 'subordinate primary labour market'. Africans, a large number of whom were contract migrant workers, were relegated to the secondary labour market (Webster 1985). White workers in the primary labour market

benefited from the key features of the 'standard employment relation' – permanent full-time employment, a family wage, benefits, the right to organize and collective bargaining rights. By contrast, prior to the Wiehann Commission of 1979, Indian and coloured workers could only join unions subsidiary to white unions. Until this date, African unions were neither registered nor recognized, and Africans were excluded from participation in the established industrial relations system. The secondary labour market was further segmented on the basis of gender, and African women received even fewer protections than their male counterparts (Boddington 1979).

As in other urban areas, Johannesburg's municipal workforce was predominantly comprised of contract, migrant labour and was ethnicized, racialized and gendered. Local councils contracted chiefs in different homelands to provide workers. Preference was given to specific ethnic groups for certain jobs, based on racist constructions of their perceived characteristics and skills. Segregation of ethnic groups into different homelands was therefore replicated in the workplace. These contract migrant workers were strongly controlled and deeply exploited (Labour Research Committee 1981: 62–5).

With the breakdown of the contract labour system in the 1980s, more locally based men were employed and rigid ethnic divisions in job allocations were loosened. Due to unionization and mobilization throughout the 1980s, municipal workers successfully increased their wages and eventually secured a number of the benefits associated with the standard employment relation.²

Gender discrimination in access to urban residence was replicated in the municipal labour force. Municipal work was regarded as dirty and labour intensive, and prior to the 1980s there were virtually no women workers in the sector. For example, in 1980, only 0.96 per cent of non-graded workers in the Johannesburg Council were female (Keenan 1981: 4). However, there is evidence that by 1983 the Council began employing women with urban residential rights as part of efforts to limit migration (Cock *et al.* 1983).

Thus, although urban policy and local government structures played an important role in forging and maintaining the exploitative social relations that underpinned apartheid, by the time of the democratic transition, ethnic and gender divisions within the labour force were being eroded, and municipal workers had successfully struggled to overcome some of the worst forms of exploitation and precariousness. Expectations were high that these gains would be consolidated and deepened as part of local government transformation in the post-apartheid era.

POST-APARTHEID LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY: RESCALING THE STATE, SOUTH AFRICAN STYLE

Local government has changed significantly in the post-apartheid era. These transformations have been in line with broader restructuring of the South African state and underpinned by two key political imperatives. The first

pertains to commitments to formally de-racialize the South African state and to use it to promote redress and development. The second relates to the rescaling of the State to facilitate neo-liberal globalization.

Local government transformation was initiated in 1993 with the passage of the Local Government Transition Act and consolidated with the adoption of the Constitution in 1996. Unlike during apartheid, the Constitution creates three distinct spheres of government at the national, provincial and local levels. Local government is granted significant authority in a large number of areas, ranging from municipal health services to waste management. Even greater responsibilities have been thrust onto local government by the *White Paper on Local Government* (Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development 1998) and the Municipal Systems Act of 2000. Thus, although there is no official policy on decentralization in South Africa, Beall *et al.* (2002) argue that there has been 'decentralization by stealth'.

The Constitution enshrines a developmental approach to local government intended to overcome apartheid-era exclusions and inequalities. It requires municipalities 'to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community' (Republic of South Africa 1996: s. 153(a)). Although the Constitution is silent on the gendered nature of developmental local government the *White Paper*, which set the policy agenda for local government transformation, specifically mandates an interventionist approach by local government to promote gender equity. Regrettably, it overlooks the gendered nature of the municipal workforce and assumes that women exist only in the 'community' as service recipients.

Overall, the role of workers in developmental local government receives scant attention in the *White Paper*. However, developments in the sphere of labour law have sought to overcome segregation in the municipal workforce. An interim national bargaining council for municipal employees was formed in 1997, and the South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC) was established in 2001. Like other workers, municipal workers benefited from the establishment of a unified system of labour relations by the Labour Relations Act of 1995, as well as other labour law reforms that aim to eliminate discrimination in the labour market.

The casting of the local state as a proactive agent for development was consistent with the conceptualization of the State within the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which served as the 1994 election platform of the African National Congress (ANC). The RDP committed the ANC to a macro-economic strategy of 'growth through redistribution' (ANC 1994). However, the adoption of the neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic strategy in 1996 radically transformed this view of the State. Despite espousing some developmental objectives, GEAR adopted all the key elements of a structural adjustment policy and firmly implanted market logic into the heart of the State. Most key spheres of post-apartheid social policy since that point have been explicitly market-driven (Pape and McDonald 2002).

Due to local government's location within the broader nation-state, this reconceptualization of the State's role necessitated a significant shift in the role ascribed to developmental local government. As Beall *et al.* (2002: 73, emphases in original) argue, 'the initial statist conception of local government's task (one of *leading* development) was downgraded to one of *facilitating* development'. Accordingly the *White Paper* and Municipal Systems Act explicitly include public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a possible form of service delivery. In the mid-1990s to early 2000s, national government induced local councils to adopt PPPs by using a variety of means (including reducing intergovernmental transfers and capping property rates) to reduce their resource-base, while simultaneously pressuring them to have balanced budgets (McDonald 2002: 23; Ruiters 2002: 79). It also created the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit (co-financed by USAID) specifically to assist municipalities to design and implement PPPs. Thus, the rescaling of the post-apartheid South African state has involved shifting formal responsibilities to local government and actual performance to the market.

RE-FORGING EXCLUSIONS: *iGoli 2002* AND THE PIKITUP WASTE MANAGEMENT UTILITY

The restructuring of the Johannesburg municipality based on the *iGoli 2002* plan (GJMC 1999) provides the prototypical example of this approach to state rescaling. During the final years of apartheid the area that now comprises the Johannesburg municipality was governed by thirteen racially based authorities. In 1995, these were merged to form the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council (GJMC) whose four geographically based substructures retained significant autonomy. Adopted in 1999 ostensibly to respond to a financial crisis within the GJMC and its substructures, *iGoli* effected a fundamental transformation of local government.³

iGoli 2002 was based on market logic, reconceptualizing the city as a business (GJMC 1999: 6). As Barchiesi (2001) notes, it was firmly grounded within the contracting model of the local state. Only a minimal number of council functions were identified as 'core administration' and remained part of the council. The core administration itself was divided into a central administration that played the client role and eleven regional administrations that played the contractor role. A number of Council departments identified as non-core were sold to the private sector. The remaining activities were transformed into utilities, agencies or corporatized entities (UACs). The UACs were all private companies with the city as the sole shareholder. They were differentiated on the basis of their ability to generate profit, with utilities deemed capable of being financially self-sufficient and profitable (GJMC 1999: 20). Ironically, while *iGoli 2002* for the first time established a unified, single-tier metropolitan government encompassing all of Johannesburg, it

simultaneously shifted responsibility for the performance of most traditional municipal functions outside of the local state.

While the *White Paper* and Municipal Systems Act at least genuflected to gender issues, *iGoli 2002* made no mention of women's unequal status in the city, the particular burdens faced by women workers and women citizens in relation to service delivery, or the need to promote gender equity. Similarly, the only references to workers pertained to the need for 'workers to work' and for partnerships to be built with unions in order to implement the plan.

THE MARKETIZATION OF WASTE MANAGEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG

As part of *iGoli 2002*, waste management was targeted for transformation into a utility, and on 1 January 2001, the previously independent waste management units of the GJMC, the four municipal substructures, and Midrand (which was incorporated into the unicity), were dissolved and merged to form Pikitup Pty Ltd. Since then, the Council has contracted Pikitup to deliver all waste management services for which it bears constitutional and legislative responsibility.

As noted earlier, utilities are expected to be financially self-sustaining and to generate profit. Pikitup faces a great challenge in this respect, as in addition to fee-for-service collection activities it must deliver collective public goods such as street cleaning, for which consumers cannot be charged. Pikitup has therefore adopted a sophisticated strategy to minimize expenditure on non-revenue generating activities and maximize income and profits from revenue-generating activities (Pikitup 2002).

Drawing on theorizations that see gender as the construction of dualistic hierarchies, in which the privileged half is associated with masculinity and the devalued half with femininity (cf. Lloyd 1984),⁴ it can, therefore, be argued that the utility's corporate strategy gendered the sector itself by valuing masculinized revenue-generating activities over feminized non-revenue generating activities. As will be argued below, this more abstract gendering of the sector gained potency because it mapped onto a strong gender division of labour within the workforce.

Service Hierarchies and the Gender Division of Labour

Persaud (2003: 129-30) argues that the forging of a labour force is intimately bound up with constructions of race, ethnicity and gender, as well as colonial practices and practices of sovereignty. This is particularly true of the waste management labour force in Johannesburg, the composition of which has evolved and changed over time. As noted earlier, the local government workforce was initially comprised of contract migrant workers. Waste management workers in Johannesburg were almost all men from the amaBhaca group in the

Transkei. After the first major strike by Johannesburg municipal workers in 1980, significant numbers of contract migrant workers were dismissed and deported, replaced by workers from other ethnic groups as well as from Johannesburg.⁵ The formal demise of influx control in 1986 further facilitated a shift towards employing locally based workers.

The weakening of the migrant labour system opened the door for the employment of African women. By the mid-1980s, male workers had secured many of the rights and benefits associated with permanent employment through unionization and collective action. However, most women were hired as casual workers. Because they worked on a continual basis, over time they were included on the payroll and secured some minimal rights. By the time Pikitup was formed, in recognition of their long-term status, these women workers were referred to by the bizarre term 'permanent casual', which differentiated them from the 'casual casuals' who were hired on a short-term basis. As 'permanent casuals' they were transferred to Pikitup and the company committed to granting pay and benefits equal to those of equivalent permanent workers within three years.

Feminist scholarship in other third world contexts has shown how ideological constructions of the supposedly natural characteristics of 'third world' and 'racial-ethnic' women have dialectically shaped and been shaped by the kinds of jobs which they are hired for, as well as the valuation of these jobs (cf. Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Mohanty 1997; Salzinger 2003). Similarly, in the case of waste management services in Johannesburg, African women's entry into the sector was brokered on highly gendered and racialized terms linked to their presumed role in the household. As one woman worker explained: 'They said they're hiring ladies for cleansing because the ladies can clean the house, they can look after the kids, do the washing, cleaning and everything. Now the men, they didn't sweep properly.'⁶ As a result of the association of sweeping with women's 'natural talents' cultivated within the private sphere, women were hired exclusively to work in street cleaning. Jenson (1989) argues that jobs themselves, and the value attached to them, are gendered. The entry of women into street cleaning therefore resulted in a regendering of this section of the waste management sector and the forging of a clear association with femininity. The rest of the sector continued to be cast as masculine, although, due to ethnic stereotypes, it was still derided.⁷

Despite post-apartheid employment equity legislation and the obligation of local government to promote gender equity, the racialized and gendered nature of the workforce forged during apartheid persisted in the Pikitup era. In the five depots surveyed, 99 per cent of Pikitup employees were African and the remaining 1 per cent were coloured. Forty per cent of workers employed by Pikitup were women, 93 per cent of whom were employed in the feminized street cleaning section. Virtually no women (1 per cent) were employed in collection.

The hierarchy between revenue-generating collection services and non-revenue-generating street cleaning services therefore mapped directly onto a

gender division of labour. Virtually all women were employed in the devalued, feminized street cleaning section and they were almost completely excluded from the prioritized revenue-generating collection services. Due to the overlapping of these two hierarchies, the stage was set for Pikitup's market-oriented corporate strategy to have highly gendered effects for the labour force. It should, however, be noted that while collection was an unambiguously male world, street cleaning was not an exclusively female activity, as 40 per cent of men were employed in this section. Any analysis of the gendered implications of restructuring within Pikitup therefore needs to explore the experiences of both men and women in the deprioritized street cleaning section.

Restructuring Social Relations in the Workplace

To minimize expenditure on non-revenue-generating activities, Pikitup focused on street cleaning, which was by far the largest budget item in this category. The utility employed two key strategies to cut street cleaning costs. First, it dramatically reduced its staff complement in street cleaning. Second, Pikitup subcontracted lower-cost private companies to provide street cleaning services. The divisions within the workforce arising from this displacement were exacerbated by the provision of street cleaning services by a number of providers in the private, development and voluntary sectors in various parts of the city in order to compensate for lack of service delivery by Pikitup.

Reducing the Workforce, Increasing the Burden on Women Workers

In 2002–3, salaries and allowances were 45 per cent of Pikitup's total annual budget (Pikitup 2002: 35). It was therefore imperative for Pikitup to reduce its wage bill to cut costs and maximize potential profits. The Agreement of Sale prohibited Pikitup from retrenching workers for the first three years. However, Pikitup retained the moratorium on hiring new workers instituted by the Council in 1997, so natural attrition was rapidly depleting the labour force. The company explicitly identified this as an important way to reduce expenditure on salaries and wages (Pikitup 2002: 36).

Due to attrition, all five depots surveyed experienced cuts in the workforce ranging from 11.8 per cent to 29.9 per cent of the depot workforce. The prioritization of revenue-generating services meant that collection was shielded from the shortage. In order to sustain workforce levels in collection services, management filled vacancies with male street cleaning workers, leaving the non-revenue-generating, feminized street cleaning section to absorb virtually the entire shortage.

Pikitup also suffered from high levels of absenteeism. While in the past management had hired 'casual casuals' to replace absent workers, they now

primarily relied on using male street cleaning workers to replace absent collection workers. Thus, in addition to being depleted by the permanent shift of workers to collection, the street cleaning workforce was raided on a daily basis.⁸ Although the municipality had also redeployed workers, it had consulted them before doing so; now this consultation ended and the frequency of ad hoc redeployment increased.⁹ Management was concerned that redeploying so many male workers to collection made it impossible to keep all of the streets clean.¹⁰ However, the prioritization of revenue-generating services and the need to minimize expenditure on the feminized street cleaning section left them with little alternative.

Management adopted three strategies to cope with the reduction of the workforce in street cleaning. First it reduced the number of workers in each area, which often required workers to work alone. In focus groups workers repeatedly raised concerns that if they fell ill while working alone there would be no one to assist them. They also felt that working alone increased their vulnerability to criminals, and many reported being victims of crime. Given the high levels of rape and sexual assault in Johannesburg, it was particularly dangerous for women to work alone and some reported violating instructions not to leave their work areas in order to eat lunch together and protect one another.

The second strategy was to move from a system in which each worker was assigned to particular streets to one in which workers were deployed more flexibly. In three of the five depots that provided a street sweeping service (as opposed to just litter picking), this was linked to a third strategy called 'gang sweeping'. Under this system, teams of variable sizes were deployed on a daily basis to clean selected areas and then moved to a new area.

Management argued that the shift to flexible deployment and gang sweeping increased efficiency and control over the workforce. However, workers countered that gang sweeping resulted in a deterioration in standards, as streets were only cleaned when in dire need. Workers were demoralized as it was impossible to keep the city clean. As one worker noted, 'with that system we do not see progress'.¹¹

Workers also argued that gang sweeping and flexible deployment decreased their sense of accountability and pride in their work. Moreover, when workers were moved to different areas each day it was difficult for the supervisor to hold any one particular worker responsible for poor quality. This led to a sense of injustice and resentment, and increased tensions and divisions between workers. The shift to gang sweeping also decreased workers' control over their own labour as they were no longer able to determine the pace and rhythm of work. Lastly, flexible deployment severed the relationships workers had developed with the communities they serviced. This compromised workers' health and safety, as when workers were known to both the community and criminals working in the area, they felt less vulnerable to attacks and more confident that community members would help them if they encountered problems. They could also ask residents to let them use their

facilities, which was extremely important given the lack of public toilets in Johannesburg.

As women were ghettoized within street cleaning, they were disproportionately affected by the work reorganization caused by the labour shortage. Men who worked in the feminized street cleaning section were subject to the same changes and pressures. They also suffered from the additional strain associated with ad hoc redeployment to fill in for absent workers in collection. However, overall, work reorganization in street cleaning deepened inequalities between the masculine collection and feminized street cleaning sections, and hence between the majority of men and women workers. Moreover, women street cleaning workers were more vulnerable to attacks and sexual assault, and faced greater challenges due to the lack of toilet facilities.

Re-segmenting the Labour Market: Creating New Gendered Hierarchies

Pikitup further reduced labour costs by subcontracting private companies to deliver services. This practice commenced prior to the adoption of *iGoli 2002* when the municipal waste management departments tried to reduce their own expenditure. In 2003, the 5 depots surveyed had 35 contracts with 20 companies. The costs of these contracts ranged from 16.9 per cent to 41.8 per cent of the depots' annual budgets. Overall, more than a quarter of workers (28.5 per cent) performing work on behalf of Pikitup were employed by subcontractors.

Subcontractors were able to pay workers significantly lower wages than Pikitup due to the nature of collective bargaining in the municipal sector. Pikitup employees were covered by the SALGBC, which negotiates agreements on minimum wages and benefits for workers employed by municipalities.¹² They were relatively well paid for unskilled general workers, with permanent men in the five depots surveyed earning an average of R2,598/month¹³ (US\$343.12)¹⁴ and permanent women earning R2,162/month (US\$285.60). When the field work was conducted in 2002–3, the minimum wage for the sector was set to rise to R2,100 (US\$277.41). The SALGBC agreements also secured a range of rights and benefits for workers in the sector.

The SALGBC agreements did not apply to workers employed by subcontractors. By default, workers employed by these companies were covered by the Road Freight Bargaining Council (RFBC). Although the RFBC's minimum wage in 2002–3 was only 59 per cent of that in the municipal sector, it did provide a minimum, and workers were eligible for benefits such as a provident fund and a sick pay fund.

By contrast, there was no bargaining council that covered non-municipally employed street cleaning workers. As there was no national minimum wage in South Africa, in the absence of company-level collective bargaining, the

private companies set abysmally low wages. Many workers employed by the companies subcontracted by the five depots were paid R35 (US\$4.62) per shift for working the night shift, and two-thirds of women workers surveyed were paid less than R980 (US\$129.46) per month. In clear violation of labour law, a significant proportion of these workers did not receive protective clothing and equipment and did not have access to facilities such as change-rooms and toilets.

In addition to private companies formally subcontracted by Pikitup, a number of other companies and organizations provided street cleaning services to compensate for inadequate provision by Pikitup. In the business areas of wealthy (formerly white) suburbs, this extra-municipal provision took the form of city improvement districts (CIDs) in which businesses paid a levy to finance private security and street cleaning. These street cleaning workers benefited from protection by labour laws, but fell outside of the scope of any bargaining council. They received slightly higher pay (R1,200 or US\$158.52 per month) than street cleaning workers employed by private companies formally subcontracted by Pikitup.

In the impoverished working-class African townships, extra-municipal street cleaning services were provided by the development and voluntary sectors. A poverty alleviation project called Zivuseni run by the provincial government in Soweto employed people for three-month periods to clean the streets. As they worked for a poverty alleviation public works project, the Zivuseni workers did not benefit from the full protection of labour laws. Their terms and conditions of employment were determined by the Ministerial Determination for Special Public Works Programmes (Republic of South Africa 2002a) as well the Code of Good Practice for Employment and Conditions of Work for Special Public Works Programmes (Republic of South Africa 2002b) which granted them extremely limited job security, and significantly fewer rights and benefits than workers covered by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA; see Samson 2004 for detailed comparison of the BCEA, Determination and Code). Although the Determination and Code do not establish minimum wages, they stipulate that wages should be below those paid for comparable jobs in the formal sector, so as not to attract workers away from other employment. Zivuseni workers were paid R40 (US\$5.28) per day. The fact that they were paid more than many workers employed by the private companies subcontracted by Pikitup attests to the excessively low level of wages paid by these companies.

The voluntary sector afforded the least protection and benefits. Although the volunteers worked five days a week and performed similar activities to street cleaning workers employed by Pikitup, the subcontracted companies, the CIDs and Zivuseni, they received no pay, protective clothing or equipment. All informants concurred that volunteers were primarily motivated by the hope that volunteering would help them to secure employment, a finding which resonates with experiences in other parts of the country (Samson 2003; Miraftab 2004). Ironically, by volunteering they undercut the need for

Pikitup and the private companies to hire more workers. It was, therefore, unlikely that volunteering would lead to permanent employment, and indeed many of the volunteers had been labouring unpaid for years.

The privatization of service delivery as part of rescaling therefore led to a resegmentation of the municipal waste management labour market. This can be seen as part of broader processes of labour market re-segmentation in post-apartheid South Africa. However, while current literature identifies contract status as being the primary basis for re-segmentation, with casualized workers excluded from many provisions of labour law (Kenny and Webster 1999; Clarke 2004), in the case of waste management re-segmentation was based primarily on whether the employer was based in the UAC, private, development or voluntary sector.

Re-segmentation of the municipal waste management workforce was strongly gendered, due to the vulnerable position of women in the economy, and the association of street cleaning with women's domestic responsibilities. As previously noted, women were ghettoized within the street cleaning in Pikitup. Similarly, 100 per cent of women workers employed by the companies subcontracted by Pikitup were employed in street cleaning. Although 46 per cent of men also worked in street cleaning, it was women workers who were most uniformly affected by the exclusionary nature of the SALGBC and RFBC collective agreements, and women who were left with the least protection and coverage within the formal sector of the economy.

A similar gendered hierarchy of access to good jobs was at play within the extra-municipal providers. Despite the strong association of street cleaning with women, all but two of the eighty-three street cleaning workers employed by the CIDs were men. Management of the CIDs actively encouraged private companies to hire men in order to capitalize on their masculinity and create a greater sense of security. Male street cleaners wore military-style uniforms that resembled those of the security guards, and were asked to assist in preventing and report on crime. By contrast, 69 per cent of workers employed by the lower paid and more precarious Zivuseni project were women, and informants estimated that the vast majority of volunteers were women. Thus, despite the promulgation of the Employment Equity Act in 1998, market-driven restructuring of waste management service delivery as part of *iGoli 2002* resulted in the creation of new forms of gendered hierarchies and exclusions in the municipal workforce.

The gendered nature of re-segmentation was not incidental. The establishment of bargaining councils is contingent upon the mobilization of trade unions representing workers in the sector. So too is the negotiation, enforcement and extension of bargaining council agreements. At the time that this research was conducted, neither the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU) nor the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), the two largest unions in the municipal sector, had campaigns actively to recruit workers in private companies.¹⁵ In 2003, SAMWU declared a dispute regarding the scope of the SALGBC, arguing that it should include private companies. However, it did not supplement

this with a vigorous campaign to pressure the employer body and it was only in June 2007 that the parties agreed to amend the definition of the scope to include municipal entities and private companies. Even when this change is gazetted, the unions will still need to recruit members in these companies and actively campaign to have the scope applied.

Once they were excluded from the municipal sector, coverage of workers employed by private waste management companies hinged on the level of organization and institutional representation in the private sectors where they were located. Since its inception, the South African trade union movement has been male-dominated and preoccupied with the interests of male workers in key sectors of the economy. Women workers, typically female jobs and the issues that confront women workers have been largely ignored and marginalized (COSATU National Gender Committee 2001). Revenue-generating collection work by private companies is covered by a bargaining council, as it fits within the broader scope of an established, financially lucrative, predominantly male sector of the economy in which both unions and employer organizations have long been organized. Street cleaning by private companies, on the other hand, falls between the gaps. A relatively new phenomenon, it does not fit neatly into any established sector. In terms of skills and activities, it perhaps bears strongest relation to the contract cleaning sector and the domestic work sector. However, neither of these sectors is covered by a bargaining council, and each has been deemed sufficiently unorganized and unprotected to warrant a ministerial determination on minimum wages. Neither SAMWU nor the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (which organizes workers in large private waste collection companies and has had some success in organizing contract cleaning workers) has made any concerted effort to organize street cleaning workers. At the time this research was conducted, none of the unions from which shop stewards and leadership were interviewed had reflected on the ramifications of delivery of street cleaning services by the development and voluntary sectors, and had no campaigns or initiatives to organize and represent these workers. Complacency and the lack of attention to the street cleaning sector by unions facilitated the exclusion of workers in the feminized street cleaning sector from institutional coverage, entrenched gender divisions in the collective bargaining system and facilitated the gendered re-segmentation of the labour market.

CONCLUSION

Despite commitments to 'developmental local government', rescaling of the State in Johannesburg exhibits the main hallmarks of neo-liberal oriented decentralization and shifts to the contracting local state. Accountability for key functions has been downloaded to the local level while, simultaneously, responsibility for delivery has been displaced to the private, development

and voluntary sectors. In addition, the local state itself has been restructured along market lines.

Analysis of the implications of this rescaling within Johannesburg's waste management sector demonstrates that the shift to the contracting local state was shaped and lubricated by existing gendered and racialized social relations within the labour market, which it in turn entrenched and transformed. As part of its cost minimization strategy Pikitup was able to exploit the fact that collective bargaining structures had not previously been extended to feminized street cleaning activities in the private, development and voluntary sectors. The gendered re-segmentation of the labour market thus was fuelled by historical gender inequalities among African workers in the workplace and unions, which were worsened as a result. Within Pikitup, the slow but steady transfer of African male workers out of street cleaning and into collection increased the gender segregated nature of employment within the company. While the ghettoization of African women in street cleaning was not new, the workplace re-organization that resulted from Pikitup's profit-maximizing corporate strategy inscribed these social relations with new content. Overall, decentralization predicated on a contracting model worsened, as opposed to ameliorated, existing exploitative gendered social relations within the workplace and the labour market.

Rescaling of the State is integrally related to globalization. Those who seek to challenge neo-liberal globalization will have to grapple with how current forms of rescaling within different nations are affecting exploitative social relations in order to develop truly transformative alternatives. Current literature on gender and rescaling provides an important foundation by arguing that scale is gendered, and that scalar analysis must include reproduction and consumption as well as production (Marston 2000) and must explore the gendered implications of connections across scales (McDowell 2001). This article demonstrates the critical importance of not separating analysis of gender from race and class within feminist analysis of state rescaling, and of including a specific focus on the gendered and racialized social relations within the inter-related scales of the workplace, labour market and the local state.

Melanie Samson
 York University
 Toronto, Canada
 Visiting Researcher
 Centre for Urban and Built Environment Studies
 CUBES
 Private Bag 3
 WITS 2050
 South Africa
 E-mail: samsonm@yorku.ca

Notes

- 1 The survey population was 2,833 workers at driver/supervisor level and below employed by Pikitup depots and subcontracted companies at the 5 depots. There is a 4 per cent error rate at the 95 per cent confidence interval. The depots were Selby, Avalon, Marlboro, Norwood and Zonde. They covered historically white, Indian, African and coloured areas, bourgeois residential areas, working-class townships, informal settlements and business districts. Thanks to Dr Zaid Kimmie for advice on sample design.
- 2 Interview with P. Mashishi, 11 September 2003, Johannesburg.
- 3 See Barchiesi (2001), City of Johannesburg Council (2001) and Beall *et al.* (2002) for analysis of the process to develop and implement *iGoli 2002*.
- 4 Such approaches, which trace gender hierarchies back to Cartesian thought have been highly influential within feminist theory and provide useful insights. It should, however, be noted that this article is rooted in an understanding that gender hierarchies cannot be analysed in isolation, as gender is mutually constituted together with race, class and sexual orientation.
- 5 Interview with P. Mashishi, 11 September 2003; Interview with J. Mawbey, 3 May 2004.
- 6 Interview with IMATU Selby shop stewards, 29 January 2003.
- 7 Since the 1980s waste management workers have been drawn from a range of ethnic groups. However, community members continue to refer to them derisively as amaBhaca. Beall (1997: 74) notes a similar mutually reinforcing devaluing of ethnicity and waste management work in South Asia.
- 8 Labour brokers also provided limited numbers of workers to address absenteeism. This practice was more extensive in Norwood and Avalon depots where higher average ages of men in street cleaning rendered them less capable of performing collection functions.
- 9 Interview with Marlboro Depot SAMWU shop steward, 22 October 2002.
- 10 Interview with M. Cameron, 6 June 2002.
- 11 Focus Group with Norwood Women Pikitup Workers, 2 December 2002.
- 12 During the *iGoli 2002* negotiations, the Council agreed that the UACs would abide by SALGBC agreements.
- 13 The higher average wage rate for men is partially attributed to the fact that only men hold the more lucrative positions as drivers.
- 14 Average exchange rate for 2003, 7.57 US\$ = 1 South African Rand.
- 15 It should be noted that, in 2006, SAMWU started a pilot project focused on organizing women workers in privatized companies.

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