

NOMKHOSI XULU-GAMA



HOSTELS

IN SOUTH AFRICA

spaces of perplexity

Hostels in South Africa
Spaces of Perplexity

Nomkhosi Xulu-Gama



NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR THE HUMANITIES
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INTRODUCTION

Unveiling the Hostel's Perplexity

While the apartheid regime collapsed more than two decades ago, many of the institutions, social processes and problems that characterised that era are, in various forms, still with us today. The African National Congress (ANC) government took power in 1994 and has brought in new people, policies, plans and programmes. However, the social, economic and political problems they inherited were exceedingly complex and the international context often daunting. Likewise, the implementation of new ideas has not always been as efficient or as effective as hoped and many well-intended efforts have not turned out as expected.

One key South African institution that preceded apartheid, was vastly elaborated during that period and continues in the present, was the single-sex hostel. For this reason, hostels can be seen as sites for exploring or analysing the residues and shifting dynamics over the past century and especially the first decades of the current transition or transformation. Beginning as large, dense housing structures to enable migrant African mineworkers to live close to mine sites, away from their families, hostels were designed to alienate workers while enabling them to live cheaply and send money home to their families in rural areas of the country. In time, hostels were expanded all over (urban) South Africa to house men who had obtained government-issued 'pass books', based on their employment, which allowed them to live in urban areas near the industries and ports where they worked. By the 1990s such hostels were still scattered across the country, with only a few single-sex hostels established for women workers.

One of the largest hostels, in terms of physical space and population, was on the northern edge of the city of Durban in an area known as KwaMashu, alongside a large and rapidly growing industrial and

manufacturing zone. KwaMashu Hostel, established with just a few hundred men in 1960, today has a population of more than 25 000 people, including men, women and children. The original buildings were single-storey structures, each room designed for four men sleeping on concrete pallets in a tiny space. In time, two- and three-storey structures were built and now even four-storey buildings are scattered across the hostel space. In recent years the hostel has been surrounded by tightly packed and socially complex shack (or 'informal') settlements, mostly inhabited by women variously connected (or not) to men in the more formal hostel buildings.

In this book, I argue that hostel formations have now become 'spaces of perplexity', as issues of migration, labour, employment, gender, sex, socially and geographically extended families (rural-urban links), housing and politics have gone through serious changes over the last twenty years. These spaces of perplexity reflect past plans and conflicts, as well as the hopes and dreams in the present post-apartheid transition. This book aims to provide an in-depth sense of the fascinating, complex, frustrating and exciting character of South Africa. It is the significance of the hostel as an institution that illuminates the process, problems and successes of the post-apartheid transition.

The key argument of this book is that in the post-apartheid era KwaMashu Hostel has become a space of perplexity that is sharply at odds with official schemes and dreams embodied in government-introduced community residential units (CRUs). CRUs are the new name given by the post-apartheid government to the former single-sex workers' hostels in South Africa. This name implies a rigorous change and remaking of what these spaces were to something totally new, in line with the vision of democracy. Part of what this book shows is a disjuncture between what the policymakers say and have written compared to what the hostel-dwellers do and how they live on an everyday basis. For example, hostel-dwellers insist on calling the hostel a hostel, rather than adopting the new name of CRU. Hostel-dwellers are not aware of an *isiZulu* translation of CRU. The hostel is still largely referred to as *umuzi wezinsizwa* (house/place of men), even though this is no longer the case. Some hostel-dwellers still insist on living on their own as single men and refusing to have their wives join them, except for very short visits when there is a need. Many

people continue to be against the presence of women and children at the hostel.

The cultural formations approach helps us to understand why and how this is so by looking at (i) gender and sexuality as centrally important constitutive forces; (ii) ongoing rural-urban connections in the context of a collapse of livelihoods at both ends and (iii) how social grants continue to make a significant mark in these conditions. The cultural formations approach assists us to see how and why the CRUs are perplexing in almost every aspect of the hostel-dwellers' lives. In this book, I closely examine gender, generational and employment/unemployment status to show how *inhlonipho* (respect) has been 'lost' and how some of the government-initiated programmes (for example, CRUs and social grants) play a fundamental role in these changes. These factors (gender, generational and employment/unemployment) are the central categories that determine one's roles and responsibilities as an individual within a collective, that is, one's family and the wider community.

The cultural formations approach recognises the positive spirit, the similarities and the goodness of the collective in the midst of all divergences, differences and unhappiness among black working-class people. It is like a binding thread, which cuts across workplace disparities, livelihood challenges, gender differences and language barriers.

This book seeks to identify, analyse and contextualise the changes that have taken place since the segregation era, through apartheid and into the post-apartheid period in what was and still is famously known as KwaMashu Hostel, which is now officially known as the KwaMashu CRUs. It provides a close examination of the sociology of the everyday life struggles of the migrant workers and their 'stretched-out' social relations (Massey 1994) by exploring four main dimensions.

First, what I try to do throughout this book is to show how hostels are construed as spaces of perplexity (described more fully below) and I try to demystify the spaces of perplexity. Second, I trace the persistence of migrancy, while recognising the changing rural-urban character of current internal migration processes. Third, I investigate the everyday livelihood struggles of the migrants because they are of the utmost importance to the existence of migrants, especially in the urban areas. Finally, I argue that the reconstruction and redefinition of

cultural, political, social and spiritual associations in the reconfiguring rural-urban connections are the fundamental drivers of all the changes taking place in the lives of the migrants. I specifically show that, despite the planned and unplanned changes that are taking place at the hostels, hostels continue to be highly gendered spaces, which further complicates household sizes and structures.

KEY CONCEPTS

As a result of the deeply and intricately interconnected and overlapping issues presented in this book, certain levels of perplexity are provoked by the experiences and situations presented. Concepts, phrases and terms have been confused in the process. Most importantly, this can be signified by the way that I interchangeably use 'migrant workers' and 'hostel-dwellers', 'hostels' (sometimes meaning blocks, sometimes meaning shacks and most of the time meaning both blocks and shacks) and 'CRUs'. While 'hostel-dweller' and 'migrant worker' do not always have the same meaning, they are more or less on the same level when looking at the rural-urban relations at large, that is, 'migrant worker' implies that one is formally employed, while a 'hostel-dweller' can be anybody living at the hostel. I say 'formally employed' because, for the most part, the informally employed do not consider themselves workers or as employed.

In *isiZulu*, when you ask a person, 'Do you work?', which is 'Uyasebenza?', if s/he is informally employed, s/he will always say, 'Cha, angisebenzi, ngiyatoha', which is, 'No, I am not working, I am a casual/part-timer' or 'I have a casual job'. This means that if one is a migrant worker, one has a stable/formal employment; if not, then one is somebody who is continuously seeking employment. 'Migrant' also assumes somebody who has an *imuva* (a rural home) while a hostel-dweller is somebody who may or may not have an *imuva*, but basically lives at the hostel. It does not matter whether s/he has an urban or rural base. What seems to be the most important and common feature of migrant workers and hostel-dwellers is the space in which they currently reside.

Historically, being a migrant worker translated into being a hostel-dweller and the hostel/CRU is primarily still used to serve the functions of the old-time hostel. High unemployment rates mean that

hostel-dwellers are not necessarily workers, although they are migrants. However, there is fluidity between being employed and unemployed. Although one may not be employed today, one could have had a piece job two days ago and could be employed again next week.

The most important things about most of the people based at the hostel are that they are in search of employment opportunities and they have strong ties with their rural homes. Their motive for being at the hostel is the other important factor, rather than their current situation, which changes frequently. Furthermore, a migrant worker who lives in the hostel is a hostel-dweller; the fact that s/he is working does not take away the fact that s/he is a hostel-dweller, while if s/he is unemployed, it takes away the fact that s/he is a worker. It is difficult to use these strict meanings because things happen in processes; there is multiplicity and variation. While I use 'hostel-dweller' for both men and women, I am conscious that the 'hostel is a non-static space and is understood in terms of interconnected geometries of heteropatriarchal power negotiated through interpersonal relationships between far-flung "homes" and the locales they inhabit' (Elder 2003b: 923). Moreover, I am aware that while I mostly refer to the 'hostel community', the hostel is not a homogenous unit. The hostel community is deeply divided, always gendered and sexualised and consists of a shifting, transient and fractured group of people.

Mamphela Ramphela (1993: 3-4) notes that the definition of hostel-dwellers over the years as migrant workers has created problems in relation to the delineation of legitimate shopfloor issues versus non-trade union ones. She argues that the separation of these issues into mutually exclusive entities was of immense strategic importance to the conception and maintenance of hostels as labour compounds. They were neither acknowledged as legitimate extensions of the working environment nor defined as domestic spaces accessible to the families of those living there. Currently, while one might think that this problem has been solved by the development of the hostel as a CRU, I feel that this has complicated the situation even further for all the workers, the hostel-dwellers and their families. This problem is highlighted later in this introduction through the voices of the hostel-dwellers, specifically through Baba Makhathini, who said he thought that the hostel was their 'place to rest after work, but now there is no rest'.

Gillian Hart (2006: 995) argues: 'Places are always formed through relations with wider arenas and other places; boundaries are always socially constructed and contested and the specificity of a place – however defined – arises from the particularity of interrelations with what lies beyond it, that come into conjuncture in specific ways.' From this perspective, place is most usefully understood as nodal points of connection in wider networks of socially produced space – what Doreen Massey (1994: 4) calls an extroverted sense of place: 'Instead, space and place are *both* conceived in terms of embodied practices and processes of production that are simultaneously material and discursive.' If spatiality is conceived in terms of space-time and formed through all social relations and interactions, place can be seen as neither a bounded enclosure nor the site of meaning-making, but rather as 'a subset of the interactions which constitute [social] space, a local articulation within a wider whole'.

Using the concepts of the production of space and a sense of place, this book intends to show that 'the spatial' is constituted by the interlocking of 'stretched-out' social relations (Massey 1994). My research challenges the conception of space and place as bounded units. This justifies looking at the lives of migrant workers in urban areas as not separate from the lives they lead in rural areas. This book uses many hostel-dwellers' stories, firstly as a way of unmasking the hostel so that the perplexity can be seen and understood by the people who have not lived in or visited the hostel before. It also uses their stories as a way of highlighting the ongoing reorganisation of social relations, as well as the ongoing reproduction of segregated and gendered spaces. It looks at how the hostels have been reproduced, how gender roles and relations have been redefined and how places have been reorganised and how these continuously shift as they are remade by the hostel-dwellers on a daily basis. Issues of unequal power relations, identity, patriarchy and household remain crucial in the critical engagement of hostels and hostel-dwellers.

Hostels in the post-apartheid South Africa immediately bring to mind issues of history and geography, the migrant labour system, rural-urban interconnections and housing. Poverty, unemployment, HIV and AIDS, sexuality, crime and overcrowding leading to lack of privacy are interrelated issues that cannot be divorced from the 'hostel question'.

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Many inequalities, imbalances and injustices were created by the pre-apartheid government and harshly exacerbated during apartheid. These continue to pose significant challenges to the current democratic government. For the purposes of this book, I refer to hostels in close relation to the informal settlements.¹ The primary reason is that in areas such as KwaMashu, which has one of the biggest hostels in Durban, informal settlements have been fully integrated by the dwellers into the hostels (Nebandla 2005).

Most of the people who live in the informal settlements are, like the hostel-dwellers, migrants from rural areas. Hostels and informal settlements are frequently used as an entry point to urban life (Minnaar 1993a). Taffy Adler (1992), Pieter Kok et al. (2003) and Mark Hunter (2006) argue that it is not only migrants who are to be found in informal settlements. My research findings have also shown that a small number of hostel-dwellers and those in informal settlements are from the townships. Both these groups are primarily poorly educated, unskilled labourers, who mainly live in overcrowded, complex and stretched-out social spaces (Massey 1994), which are highly gendered and have high rates of unemployment, HIV and AIDS and crime (Hunter 2006).

Hostels and 'informal settlements have long been part of South Africa's divided landscape' and the reason they are so important today is 'because of the way they capture important recent economic and demographic changes' (Hunter 2006: 148). Perhaps most importantly, both informal settlements and hostels are indirectly in the top three of the Department of Housing's key priority areas that need an urgent total revamp. As Ramphele did more than two decades ago, I want to argue that hostels should be seen in context of the countrywide crisis in housing, which is why I align them with informal settlements, although discrepancies do exist. This book also acknowledges the differences that exist in terms of the meaning attached to what informal settlements are for different people in different locations and at different times.

Furthermore, the making of livelihoods seems to be an important aspect of migrants' lives. The role played by formal employment (labour), land and livestock seems to be on the decline, according to the migrant workers' experiences. South Africa has an unemployment rate of approximately 40 per cent, in terms of the expanded definition. Many

of those who are employed occupy insecure and informal positions. It is important to note that employment was and still is the primary reason men move to urban hostels. The use of land and livestock in rural areas as a livelihood strategy was part of the mission of *abafazi* (wives) to build a home and make a homestead. The power and identity of migrant workers in rural and urban areas, and in the private and public spheres, was based on the land worked by women (and children), livestock taken care of by women (and children), as well as the presence of children born and raised by women in rural areas.

As a result of the decline of waged labour, land and livestock, the power and identity of migrant workers is also being questioned. This can be substantiated by the fact that the South African labour market has seen a sharp increase in the participation of women, although the kind of jobs they do mostly fall under what is called the secondary segment of the market. However, this allows for their roles at home, in the community and at the workplace to be adjusted accordingly. This adjustment restructures household dynamics, which means a change in household heads, structures, relations and sizes.

HOSTELS AS SPACES OF PERPLEXITY

Social, cultural, economic, political, spatial and demographic conditions in the hostels have undergone tremendous and sometimes harsh, unexpected and undesired changes. The current condition of the hostels is not what the governments – past and present – planned, foresaw or predicted. It is also not what men, the former dwellers at single-sex hostels, wanted at the dawn of democracy. It is still not what most of the men, both young and old, like about the hostel. It is not what the married women yearned for when they lived separately from their migrant husbands during apartheid. The current situation of the hostels is not the realisation of the dreams of young men and women from urban and rural areas. The children at the hostel know for sure that the hostel is not a place where they would one day like to raise their own children, since they are seen as 'unsafe spaces'.² Indeed, the children are vividly aware of the negative effect that the hostel and the CRUs have had on their lives.

The hostels are not the *nice* CRUs that the liberation government planned to house the families of migrant workers. Hostels are also

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not what the men knew them to be, although most of the young women living at the hostel continue to see them as 'spaces full of men'. Conversely, men who are opposed to the presence of women at the hostels see them as 'spaces full of women and children'.³ They are spaces full of chaos, tensions, unhappiness, contradictions, harmonies, ambiguities and continuities, discontinuities, crime and unemployment. The hostels are not what women imagined them to be; instead they are spaces full of unmet needs, unsatisfied desires, ongoing livelihood struggles and they are also '*indawo yamadoda*' (a place for men) or '*indawo egawele abantu besilisa*' (a place full of men). The CRUs did not create space for families as was desired; instead, they demolished the cultural and legal/official space that existed for men and produced something new and unknown. CRUs did not reunite 'divided families' (Murray, 1981) as was intended. Instead, they reconstructed old relations and also constructed new families and new forms of association between men and women, young and old, rural and urban. This book, relying on an ethnographic account, intends to unveil the dynamics at play at the hostel, which have not been adequately researched since the dawning of democracy.

Theoretically and practically, the hostel has been a departure point as well as a point of arrival for me, as it symbolises the new 'spaces of migrancy'. In the process of continually moving back and forth, between past and present and rural and urban areas, confusing and enlightening as it is, I have come to realise that the more things changed in the hostel, the more they remained the same.

The hostel is a key site from which to investigate the complex and interconnected issues of space, place, gender, households, intergenerational relationships, unequal power relations, identity, employment or lack of employment and multiple ways of livelihood procurement. Some of the interesting changes that have been taking place at the hostel include the refurbishment, shrinking formal employment, the increased presence of young, unmarried women and children from the rural areas, increased informal settlements in the surroundings of the CRUs, an increase in the crime rate and failed attempts to abolish the informal settlements in the past 31 years. Specifically, the abolition of influx control in 1986 and the dawning of democracy in South Africa in 1994 were catalysts for ongoing changes in the former hostels.

The participants in this research used many different ways to express the idea that I have articulated as 'spaces of perplexity'. By this I mean that hostels are spaces full of mystification, contradictions, confusion and resistance. Many people are confused about what the hostel is, who is it for and why is it there. People are uncertain about whose interests are served by the changes. What exacerbates the mystification is the fact that some people choose to remain in their understandings of the past about the hostel, which sometimes are no longer relevant. Sometimes people choose to focus too much on the changes brought about by the ANC government and the changing environment, so much so that they refuse to accept or respect the past and what it stands for. The other cause of mystification is how the current government constantly fails to create a comfortable platform for the hostel-dwellers to engage with it concerning crucial aspects of the remaking of the hostel, especially the drastic changes. The participants also raised many reasons for this perplexity. There is no single explanation that can fit everybody at the hostel. The concept of hostels now means many different things to different people and is dynamic and shifting. The spaces of perplexity represent a combination of all positive and negative experiences and expectations of a variety of people from in and around the hostel.

I try to highlight the quotes from interviews that represent the variety of relevant themes – for example, hostel, gender, household and intergenerational conflict – but it is not always possible to divide these themes so neatly because they are intricately connected with one another. For example, when I asked men to talk about their living conditions, they started talking to me about the unwanted presence of women at the hostel. When I asked men to talk about the presence of women at the hostel, they started talking to me about their loss of power, rights and identity, as well as the forsaken homesteads in the rural areas. When I asked men to talk about the CRUs, they started talking to me about how much better the apartheid times were. This illustrates the interesting dynamics in the way hostel-dwellers see and understand their own lives, how they carry their history with them and how resistant and sceptical they are with regards to the changes taking place. At first glance, they appear to be playing along, but when one digs deeper, one realises that they are not totally happy.

Ramphele (1993) observes that one would have to live in a hostel in order to really understand the complicated nature of the lives of the hostel-dwellers. Through this research, I have been lucky to have had a chance to live in this particular hostel – KwaMashu – for almost two years, studying the lives of the hostel-dwellers. I also visited some of the rural areas where most of them come from and was able to learn more about their livelihoods and rural-urban connections.

The following observations were taken from the initial focus group discussions and interviews I conducted at the hostel with older men who had lived there for twenty years or more. These conversations enabled me to better understand the hostel as spaces of perplexity.

Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo is a 54-year-old man from Empangeni.⁴ He is married to two wives, who are both based in the rural areas, with whom he has had twelve children, although only eight remain alive today. He has worked for the same company for 32 years. He started living at the hostel in 1975. He has never lived in an informal settlement and in 2010 he was allocated a room in the CRU. This is from an interview I had with him on 12 March 2009:

Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo: The reason I came to stay here was through my father, but I also liked the idea of moving into a hostel because it was like a famous thing those days. It sounded nice to the people in rural areas to say one is moving into the KwaMashu Hostel. I got to live in this place through lodging. The people who lodged were also registered with the main office. My father invited me to come and live with him in the hostel, but I did not have bed-space then. I used to sleep on the floor until a bed was available for me.

Baba Maphumulo draws a generational and gendered link in terms of the traditions of coming to the hostel. He refers to the positive reputation and the image that existed with regard to the hostel and importantly he makes references to the administration and monitoring processes of the hostel, which are no longer in existence. Many hostel-dwellers who were interviewed between 2009 and 2011 had a similar experience:

Baba Shusha: People do not come to live in the hostels willingly; it is the situation that forces them to do that.⁵

In contrast to Baba Maphumulo, Baba Shusha felt that people do not come to the hostel voluntarily; there are harsh realities that push them out of their homesteads. The majority of the participants concurred that the rural areas are their first choice of residence.

Baba Mthembu: The main reason why we are here [at the hostel] is because of poverty . . . As we are here, we would still like to have families in the rural areas, so when looking at how much we make, one would see that we cannot be able to support and maintain two families.⁶

Baba Mthembu concurs with Baba Shusha about the driving factors behind their migration. He also responds to the idea of having CRUs and how it assumes they should have two families, one in the urban areas and one in the rural areas. The idea of moving the whole family from the rural area to a permanent location in an urban area is not an option.

Baba Sishi concurs with the views of Baba Mthembu above about not wanting to permanently move wives and children to the urban areas, since they cannot financially afford it:

Baba Sishi: It is good for people to live with their families. But the government did not think what would be suitable for us [old married men who choose to live as single, as in the old times]. We have families and children in the villages; we cannot move our families from rural areas to here. Life here is expensive.⁷

Baba Vilakazi and Baba Mngwengwe both note that a hostel is a good place, although Baba Mngwengwe also mentions some of the challenges of living there:

Baba Vilakazi: The hostel is good because people are even able to lodge together, accommodating those who do not have a space of their own.

Baba Mngwengwe: We are all really happy living here at the hostel but we have a problem with crime. It was fine long ago [during the apartheid era], but now it is really bad. There is also a lot of uncleanliness, dirty water flowing all over the place.⁸

Baba Dumisani Ngcobo is a block chairman who has a unit with one bedroom all to himself. He is also married to two wives, one living in a rural area and the other living in the township. He has a girlfriend at the hostel and they have a three-year-old child. The girlfriend lives at the hostel in a separate block with her mother, child and nephew. Below are some of the things he likes and does not like about the hostel:

The things I like: Living by myself, freedom and transport is close by. The things I do not like: the presence of women and crime.⁹

Zethu Mthembu is nineteen years old. She and her siblings were born at the hostel, but were later sent to a rural area for a couple of years and have now come back to live with their father and mother at the hostel. This is from an interview on 17 July 2009:

Nomkhosi: What changes would you like to see taking place in the hostel?

Zethu: I would like to see the crime rate go down . . .

Nomkhosi: Would you like to live here when you get married with your family?

Zethu: No.

Nomkhosi: Why?

Zethu: It is totally not safe.

There is so much concern and worry about the present and uncertainty about the future that the hostel-dwellers argued that 'it was better in Egypt' – Egypt referring to the apartheid era.

Baba Gcabashe: If things went my way, the government would be reminded that a hostel is still a hostel. I am sure that the municipality would want the rent, which could

force you to vacate the house with your family [if you do not pay rent because this is not your house but a hostel].¹⁰

Baba Gcabashe blatantly refuses to accept the changes that are being introduced. He wants to remain in the comfortable and familiar past. He feels that the hostel is still a hostel. This means that he disregards any changes that are taking place at the hostel, as well as at a policy level. On the other hand, it might mean that he does not know that the hostel has been changed into CRUs. While he can see the infrastructural changes, these do not imply changes in the significant and traditional existence of the hostels. For men at the hostels, it is easy to argue that CRUs are meaningless if they are about the presence of women and children because men know that women and children were living at the hostel long before the construction of the 'family units'. They could argue that the hostel was a hostel for men before the presence of women and children; it continued to be the hostel for men when women and children came through and it remains *indawo yamadoda* (place of men), even when the government has constructed what it calls the CRUs. According to many of the men at the hostel, they are happy to continue to observe the rules of the hostels, that is, to pay low monthly rent or be thrown out of the hostel because of non-payment.

Baba Shongwe: Would it not be possible to request that the children, after the retirement of their father and he goes back home, that they continue living there until they finish their studies? Because it would not be humane to take them out of the accommodation while they are studying. He can then continue renting for the children.¹¹

Baba Shongwe is worried about securing the next generations' space at the hostel. This is something they did not have to worry about in the past. During the apartheid era, male children who came to the urban areas to study did not lose their bed when their parent died or retired. Good social networks ensured that others at the hostel looked after them, as was the case with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo, who secured bed-space for the son of his late friend. It is an issue now because girl children are living with their parents at the hostels.

Baba Donda: That all depends on the government, because it is the one which knows what intentions it has about its buildings. Because it is possible that the father cannot pay rent as he lost his job, but children still need accommodation to further their studies. The government should not terminate the initial aim of the hostels because in that way, rent would not go up unreasonably. It [the government] should play a big role in subsidising the housing for people from rural areas.¹²

Baba Donda shows feelings of being excluded by government in information sharing and inferiority, but insists that the original intentions of the hostel should be kept.

Baba Khumalo: I am not happy with the number of the rooms in the newly built hostels. It [the hostel] should go up a bit more so that it can accommodate all these people who are living in the hostel right now.¹³

Baba Khumalo raises concerns about a lack of space and fears the consequences, but Baba Zondo recognises that the past is the past, and the future is unknown:

Baba Zondo: Long ago, while we were still under the old government, it was much better. The municipality had people who cleaned hostels, toilets and cut grass. Everything was all right in the hostels. Since the reign of the new government, all those services stopped; there is no municipal cleaning which took place. But we do not know what will the change in CRUs bring for us. Perhaps there is something better that is coming for us, but we do not know that yet.¹⁴

After living at the hostel for a couple of months, I can say that this it is not totally true that there is no cleaning done by the municipality. Cleaning services are still in existence at the hostel to a limited extent. Cleaning has been outsourced and is not done by the municipality

anymore – hence service delivery is really bad. Baba Gcabashe continues with negative sentiments, comparing the old and new governments:

When the ruling government came into power, everything went wrong. If one complains to the block chairmen, there is nothing much that they can do as well.¹⁵

Others confirm these views, comparing how things used to be with the way things are now at the hostel:

Baba Makhathini: Long ago, we used to be able to formally remove people from certain rooms if they were not able to abide by the rules of that room. We would report them at the office and they would be removed. There was nobody who could tell you that this is not your house because municipality said this is the place for people who came to work. But now, we can't sleep as people play loud music in the night. You can't complain because a person will tell you that this is not your home or house. If the radio is making noise from another room, there is nothing you can do. We used to think that this was our place to rest after work, but now there is no rest.

Baba Zondo: To add on that note, long ago the municipality had hostel police officers [*amaBlackjack*] who were always around to maintain peace, but now there is nobody to do that. There was not so much killing, but now it's not safe anymore. These days anybody can have a gun. While it only used to be police officers who carried guns and could shoot people, but now, one only has to be 21 years and s/he can buy a gun and shoot anybody and nothing happens to them. Even the block chairman is useless these days. There is a man who was a block chairman who died here when he went to resolve a quarrel between the hostel residents.

Baba Shange: I came here at KwaMashu Hostel in 1967. There was so much peace in this community of hostels.

Women were not allowed to come into the hostel area. Now, there is no freedom for us.¹⁶

It is clear that this process has caused much pain and these hostel-dwellers feel a loss of respect and also that safety and security is compromised and their rights have been violated. The participants noted that they do not trust the women who live at the hostels or other men, for that matter.

The following quotes show how I understand the hostel as a space of perplexity, using comments about the household.

I started living here permanently in 1988. I live with my husband here at the hostel. I have three children. One of them lives in the village and two of them live with me here at the hostel. The one who lives in the village is the oldest; she takes care of the home and keeps on making babies while she is not married. She visits us sometimes, like now she is with us for these days . . . Since I started living here, I have never lived outside the hostel, except when I am visiting my village. I came to live here through Mr Luthuli who was then my boyfriend and is my husband now. I do not see myself leaving the hostel now.¹⁷

The above quote represents views that contradict those of the majority of men (and sometimes women) in terms of the importance of the presence of a woman in the homestead.

Baba Zulu: Most of the women here close down their households in the rural areas since they are the heads in the absence of men.

Baba Sishange: Some women have bad intentions about the relationships they have with men. After having broken up with some man in the rural area, she would make sure that the next person she has a relationship with, she never lose him for any reason. She would go to traditional doctors for *muti* [traditional medicine]. This *muti* should prevent you from even thinking about your family in the village.

Women should not be doing this thing, as it is wrong. It is a man who knows where the future of a woman is. He is the one who proposes, anyway.¹⁸

The views of Baba Sishange show feelings of suspicion and distrust and reveal the shifting power relations between men and women. Many men are not happy with living with women at the hostel, including those who actually live with women, whether wives or girlfriends.

Baba Sibiya: Women here are irresponsible. There are female things [sanitary towels/pads] that should not be seen by men, but in this place, the women throw these things anywhere. This is really unbearable. We even find these things in the bathrooms and it is so disgusting.¹⁹

This was a big issue for the men, with everybody wanting to express an opinion. Used sanitary towels/pads, baby diapers and condoms are found all over the place from a bin without a lid to an illegal dumping site, in bathrooms, to wherever there is a burst sewerage tank.

The quotes below show how I understand the hostel as a space of perplexity using comments from the hostel-dwellers about gender.

Baba Ncube: There are not only advantages, but disadvantages as well for having women in the hostel. The good thing about it is that, men use to quarrel [*badelelane*] and then fight [*bese beyolwa izimpi*]. Women are able to somehow weaken men, discourage them from having fights. Even if there is a man who always wants to start a fight, other men can go to his partner and ask her to ask him to behave himself. It is known that the man can listen to a woman when she tells him to stop it. The impact of the presence of a woman in a man's life is really big [in both positive and negative senses].

Baba Hadebe: The thing with women here is that one does not have to pay lobola for them. One can just live with them and enjoy all the benefits that married men enjoy.

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Women will live with you without you paying a cent to their families and they will wash, clean and iron for you, whereas in the villages, men have to pay lobola if they want access to a woman. So, for people who did not get a chance to find a wife in the villages; they have one here. What she will want is money every day before you go to work; it can be money for tomatoes, for potatoes, for cosmetics or anything else that she needs. If I get tired of that one, I leave her and get another one. The neglecting of a home is caused by freebies, things that one does not pay for.²⁰

While there is no shame associated with leaving a person you cohabited with without being married, leaving your wife, somebody you paid lobola for, there is a lot to lose, including *umfazi* (the wife), lobola and your dignity and respect as a man.

Baba Mlangeni: Another reason for men to neglect their homes is if they do not get the love and respect that they want [from their wives and children].²¹

Most men argued that the kind of respect they get from women who come from the rural areas is the best. They claimed that some women in the urban areas would give them a lot of respect at first, in order to make the man forget about his partner in the rural area, but the minute he commits himself to the new partner, she would change to her real self.

What one considers good or bad would mainly depend on the gender and age of the person, since the participants are primarily from rural areas. On the other hand, this is about the choices that individuals make, as well as the meanings they attach to the different things they do – for example, to live as husband and wife while you are not married and lobola has not been paid or not, to forsake a rural home or not. In an interview with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo on 12 March 2009, he said:

There is little that I can say is good about having women here. It is only good for those who live with their husbands

because then they take care of their husbands. It is bearable if they are living in a hostel, but as long as I do not share a room with them.

There was general consensus among men and women that the majority of women at the hostel are not working. Men believe that since women are not working, they must be surviving through men's incomes, quickly forgetting or totally disregarding the role of the social grants and the sexual economy in the lives of women and children.

In an interview on 12 March 2009, when asked why he thinks women come to the hostel, Baba Maphumulo said:

Women come here to find work. It was good that they were not here during apartheid as people did not kill each other. Their presence here is a problem because one cannot say that I do not want anybody to talk to my wife. That would be impossible as other men would meet her in the common rooms like washing place, kitchen and toilets.

Baba Maphumulo, in contrast to Baba Ncube above, argues that men now kill each other because women are here, while Baba Ncube argued that men fight less now because women are here (although fighting and killing are two different things). In a focus group discussion on 4 May 2009, other men at the hostel offered the following views on women and their presence at the hostel:

Baba Makhathini: Women in this place come from all walks of life. There are those who come from the townships and those who come from rural areas. There are those who failed in their marriages and then they come here. There are those who come here for children's maintenance. Some are just looking for any man who can support them.

Baba Dlamini: Women are able to come to the hostel having one boyfriend. When the boyfriend goes to work, she then pays attention to another man who lives in the same house. And then that causes problems. Sometimes that

causes some people to die. As it has been said, women are not the same. There are experienced and inexperienced women. Those who have the experience will use that to their benefit. For example, a woman from the rural areas, when you call her, she will come quickly, kneel in front of you and listen to what you have to say and leave. Even when you are in the bedroom, she will wait for your start, unless you have trained her otherwise, but women from here, they would come to your room for the first time, see the bed, push you to fall in it and that's it. She will do things that you only see on TV or in the magazines, if you even look at those things. You easily get lost in things like that if you are not a focused person or if you did not have a partner.

Baba Ngcobo: We [men] are the people who are oppressed.

Baba Ndwandwe: It's the male hostel-dwellers, the ones who are married who are oppressed. We do not have our private rooms with our wives when they visit.

When I challenged them about the hostel formerly being only for males, they argued:

Baba Ndlela: But there was an area called 14, but now there is no 14. It was only a person with a marriage certificate who could bring a woman in here.

Baba Ngcobo: The coming of women here anyhow finishes [takes away] our space and it finishes our manhood as well. I have not seen a situation where a person can be in a room with a woman who is not his partner and she is covered with only a curtain. There is a lot of trouble that is brought in by women.

The resort to *imijondolo* (shacks) is not the sole doing of women. Each focus group said that privacy is all they wanted. The government's plan

and design for family housing is clearly not accepted by the hostel-dwellers.

Baba Ngcobo: Firstly, here in the hostel, there are all kinds of dirt. Secondly, people are being killed and it is not even reported in the news, while we do see in other places cases like that being reported. Thirdly, the houses are old and damaged since long ago. The pipes are all rotten. There were no doors of the rooms and we used to use cardboards to close houses. These people are in shame; they do not have toilets, and nothing ever gets fixed. Water is getting wasted, not only because it is used, but because when the pipes burst, nobody fixes them. Fourthly, yes we can see development and are we grateful for that, but it is coming in very slowly. I and some other people are not happy with the plan of this development. It would be nice if people had a chance to say what kind of housing they would like for themselves. Houses are supposed to take different shapes and plans. There are people who do not have rural homes [*imuva*], having children and who do not know where to keep their children. There are also very old people who also do not have rural homes. In that case we do not know who can solve our problems, as the government does not even come near.

Baba Ndwandwe: As my brother has said, we do see the signs of development, but we realise that it is not the kind of development that we were expecting. I have not lived very long here in the hostel. The bed that I got is so bad. I cannot even try and let somebody else sleep in that bed because it is broken and kind of divided into half. In terms of development, we were told that we were going to get houses that we were going to be happy with and also that we could live with our families. But now we realise that these houses are not what they promised. These houses do not allow you to be free. You can't leave your wife in your room when there is another man in the next bedroom. It's

easy for the man next door to know that you have left and he can go in your room where there is your wife and start saying things. Even if you suspect something, it would be difficult for you to say anything to anybody. These rooms really do not make us happy. We trusted that the situation was going to be better.

Baba Mhlongo: The problem that we have is that of crime. We are also not happy with the houses they are building for us. It is not what they promised us. We were told that a person can live with his family . . . Another problem, there are no houses suitable for disabled people. This is important as some people get disabled during the stay in the hostel. If one is on the wheel chair, how can he climb staircases?

Baba Ndlela: I just want to remind my brother that there are houses which are suitable for disabled persons. I have told some of the people here. Their rooms are in doubles. They have small suitable toilets as well.

Baba Chili: I would like to talk about education. We need an education institution here at the hostel, as there are many people who are not educated. If this institution can be based here, it would be better.

Baba Manzini: We can see this development, although it has not directly reached us, we have seen it from further away. But I feel that it came to make us fight with each other. Here, we live with our children, not our biological children, but the ones that we meet here at the hostel. The small space that we meet at, which is the kitchen and the toilet, people will mess up those spaces and some of us always have to come and clean the mess made by other people. Some people do not like cleanliness, so our plea is that we be given our own private spaces where we can live either by ourselves or with our families.²²

Below is the story of a young woman who explained why she left a rural area to come and live at the hostel. Nokulunga Zungu is a 23-year-old woman whose story shows that 'visiting' the hostel is one way of beginning the relocation process, which according to most interviewees is never consciously planned. Coming to the city/urban area/hostel to apply for a social grant is the reason some women from the rural areas cited for their first visit. This is prompted by the general lack of services in the rural areas compared to the urban areas.

I started living here in 2007. I had initially come here to apply for the child's grant and then I never went back. I then looked after my young schoolgoing siblings. I lived with my child as well. I dropped out from school at Standard 9. I did not go back to school because my parents would not support me. They were angry with me. I am not married, have one boy child, his surname is Zulu. His father is from Eshowe and we are not together anymore. We met here at the hostel when I was visiting my mother. My mother has never lived in a hostel, but she organised a room/shack for us and the children to live there while she lived in town close to where she works.

The main problem facing people my age here is *ukuhlukumezeka* [abuse]. There are people my age who are forced to live with their boyfriends because they do not have anybody else to look after them. Crime is also a big problem for everybody. There are people who are forced by work to leave their room early hours of the morning and by the time they get into the train station, they have already been robbed of everything they had.²³

Issues of gender-based violence and abuse surface frequently in the women's stories. Young and older women escape the rural areas because of gender-based violence, only to be abused by a new partner at the hostel.

The next quotes show how I understand the hostel as a space of perplexity using comments about intergenerational differences. In an interview with Baba Bhekisisa Maphumulo on 12 March 2009, he said:

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I live with three people, which makes us four. But there are two additional guys, which makes us six. The fourth bed was for my friend who was like a brother and he passed away. I tried to make sure that his son takes over and not any other person. He is the guy who has invited two other people. Now I regret inviting him to live with us.

This comment raises a couple of relevant issues; first, space and overcrowding; second, the bond of brotherhood that is created by living at the hostel in such close proximity; and third, intergenerational issues or differences. Everything mentioned by Baba Maphumulo had a time and space factor. For example, it was normal for the blocks to be overcrowded, meaning more than four people in a room designed for four people. However, in 2009, it was problematic to have six people in a block room, because people could be accommodated in either informal settlements or in the CRUs. As a result of the kind of relationship he had with his late roommate, Baba Maphumulo felt he needed to be a father to the son of his late friend. He did exactly what the late friend would do, as was the norm.

Baba Mkhonza: The problem is that here in the hostel, there are no older men that youth can learn from. A lot of them have died or left the hostel. Very few are left behind.

Baba Phiri: This place is now dominated by young people.

Baba Mhlongo: Some old people are leaving this place because they cannot stand the kind of disrespectful life being led by young people.²⁴

This mainly refers to the way youngsters speak to older people, as well as how they behave when they are around them: loud music, having girlfriends over, refusal to clean their rooms, and so on.

Baba Sibanda: Although there might be house rules, but the youth do not follow that. If you insist on things, he would hire people to kill you.

Baba Nxumalo: Young men of this age are different. Once one has a girlfriend, he would refer to her as his wife, although he has not paid a cent to her family. They are both happy calling each other with names that they do not qualify for.

Baba Bhengu: The problem with a particular group of young men is that they do not appreciate the rural experience and knowledge already acquired instead they want to change and quickly adapt to ways that are new to them. They then say *isidala* [it is out of fashion] to do things as their fathers and forefathers. This attitude is developed and infiltrated to other young men.

Baba Cebekhulu: What I can add is that the government played huge role into these problems we have now. It spoke of rights and it did not explain the responsibilities that are attached to those rights. The ways these rights have been introduced, they came and made it sound like everything else that was done in the olden days was wrong or that it is now out of fashion. The government must go back to the people and explain properly the rights and responsibilities and the relationship it has with our cultures.

Baba Mncube: It is true that one can learn a lot of things in the hostel. But charity begins at home. By the time people come to live here, they should already know the basics of life.

Baba Siphika: People have really changed their way of life. At the hostel, there were cases whereby a person could keep his savings with one of the trusted elderly man and he is the one who would say when he needs all of his money to do whatever he was saving for. But today, it would be almost impossible to trust somebody with your money. People would rather see you dead than have you access your money. Somehow the world has changed.²⁵

There is a high rate of uncertainty, many reasons for confusion, substantial grounds for unhappiness and many levels of perplexity, all happening at the same time in the hostel. No single structure or person is to blame for the situation, but each stakeholder is almost equally responsible for the changes taking place at the hostel. Men feel that they have been stripped of their freedom at the hostel, contrarily, they still prefer to continue living in the hostel, rather than finding other accommodation. They feel they have been deprived of their privacy. They feel that their manhood and headship status has been stolen by the government through the rights that have been given to women and children.

Women have largely been blamed for the high rate of crime at the hostel. I asked them how they feel crime can be alleviated at the hostel. Below are some of their discussion points on this issue. These women are all from rural areas; live at the hostel and are between ages of 18 and 40.

Nosipho: It will never be sorted. The reason I say that is because here if they try to do something good for us as residents, the people would wish that that particular thing belongs to them personally. For example, two days ago, they put six taps in the showers; this morning there was no tap to be found.

Nandipha: What is painful is that you find that it is your boyfriend who does these things, why don't you report him? [This was not directed at any particular person.]

Snothile: But the person who stole the taps is trying to make money. But he is doing it the wrong way.

Maza: I would threaten to report my boyfriend if he would do that.

Mpume: He would kill you after that.

Maza: If your boyfriend is not in the house very late at night or early hours of the morning, you have a right to ask him where he comes from upon his return.

Mpume: What if he promises to kill you?

Zipho: If you sit down with him and talk to him politely, he will not threaten you.

Snothile: What if he asks you how is he supposed to support you if he does not have money?

Maza: I would tell him to look after the children and I will go and work.

Mpume: What if you do not find work?

Nosipho: I think he would have to sell anything in order to support us and not do crime.

Snothile: What if he does prostitution?

Nandipha: It's better than doing crime.²⁶

Since men said so many negative things about women at the hostel, I asked a group of women during a focus group discussion on 8 May 2009 what they felt were the disadvantages of having women in the hostels:

Nosihle: Men normally complain about women, saying they talk too much. They also say that women like to put their own rules and regulations on how to do things around the hostel.

Sphilile: Another problem is that, let's say I am getting ready to go work a night shift, we all share the same showers, and we have to wait for each other in order to use the showers. If I come in first, men would have to wait till I finish before they can use a shower and if they get in first, I have to wait till they finish before I can go in. What happens is that, when you come in, you knock to check if there is anybody inside, if a man hears that it is a woman knocking at the door, he can take even two hours, not caring about the woman waiting. But if a man knocks, the other man is able to get out quickly, so that the other man gets in and showers. What happens sometimes is that after waiting for a while outside the shower as one man is having a shower, another man comes in, knocks and quickly gets in before you, even if you had been waiting for a long time. Sometimes he would say he would only take two minutes. In that case, you as a woman would have nothing to say,

because anyway *this is their place*. Sometimes you even get late for work.

Deli: On the same note, when a woman is taking a shower, a man would come in and peep at her. Every time a man would do the same thing.

Ntombi: We get a lot of abuse. One is not even allowed to have a chat with men younger than her. Once you are seen talking to a young guy, people would say '*uklebe ubamba amatshwele*' [see discussion of this phrase below].

Lethabo: The main reason women fight so much at the hostel is men.

Ayanda: They think we are all here for men.

Thembsile: Women are too authoritative and they do that at a hostel, a place originally for men and that is a problem. Women try to own a lot of things that do not really belong to them, especially those that have been here for a long time.

Zukiswa: I personally wish that the Lord helps me. When I see that the stage of having my own house has arrived, that I leave this place in peace and go to live in my house because here women talk even when there is no need. And even the young girls like to take the side of the older women and also tend to talk too much. These girls would talk negatively about you even when you are not far away from them, sometimes they do not see that you can hear them whispering about you. That is disgusting.

The women's views sadly and interestingly reiterated the men's views presented above. Crime, space and privacy and the lack thereof are as much problems for women as they are for men.

Ntombi used the phrase '*uklebe ubamba amatshwele*'; this is sometimes expressed as 'chicken murder'. It is generally used to express the wrongness of an older woman being involved with a younger guy, as opposed to the phrase 'sugar daddy'. While 'sugar daddy' refers to a man who is about the same age as her father, when there is a 'chicken murder', the woman does not have to be as old as the guy's father, only a few years older than her partner. It is important to note that

is mostly women who use this phrase to and/or about each other. The word 'murder' basically means the person is a criminal and the chicken implies a small, innocent and helpless creature. This shows how harsh and negative the relations between women can be, especially when there is a man involved. On the other hand, where men are older than their partners/women, this is accepted as normal. If a man is between one to ten years older than a woman, it is seen as okay. If the age gap is so big that the man could be the girl's father, then less derogatory terms are used to describe that kind of a relationship, such as 'sugar daddy' or *ikhehla libamba ingane*, meaning a very old man is involved with a child.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK

This book aims to contribute to at least three bodies of literature: hostels and migration; livelihoods and labour studies; and gender, space and place. In terms of hostels and migration, I argue that hostels are spaces of perplexity and that every aspect of the hostel-dwellers' lives contributes to and is affected by this perplexity. I show how migrants continue to make a living through their rural-urban connections, regardless of the precariousness of work and diminishing livelihoods at both ends. In terms of livelihoods and labour studies, I emphasise the importance of moving beyond the shopfloor, investigating the lives of migrant workers and the meanings they attach to their lives and relations. I argue that relying on only labour studies and waged labour is limiting and does not do justice to the everyday livelihood struggles of the hostel-dwellers. In terms of gender, space and place, I argue that people are producing space, reworking their lives and making their histories in conditions not of their own making. I show that while the hostel has always been a gendered space (because it was 'the place of men'), hostel-dwellers (both men and women) have continued to reproduce and redefine the hostel space more closely in gendered terms, which only they understand. The politics of space continue, even if it seems like it is more clear cut, in reality (everyday practice), it is not.

The voices of the migrants help to provide an enhanced version of what the hostel currently is and how it functions, not according to the planners and rulers, but directly from the hostel-dwellers' everyday lived experience. Therefore, this book seeks to understand the hostel space

in various ways, recognising that the space is constantly changing and being contested, resulting in its being a perplexed space. It looks at the hostel as a bed-hold (see Ramphele 1993), hostels as interconnected, sexualised and gendered spaces (see Elder 2003a, 2003b), hostels as sites of resistance, hostels as temporary accommodation, hostels as single-sex accommodation, hostels as a home (per the current government's housing policy), hostels as holiday accommodation, hostels as a community and hostels as a place of displaced people.

Some of the changes since the advent of a democratic government include hostels being upgraded or refurbished into flats, from dormitories to self-contained units, from single storeys to double storeys, in some cases from multistoreys to single storeys and double storeys, from single-sex accommodation to accommodation for men and women, from workers' residences to family housing, including children and students – 'from hostels to homes' (Byerley 2005). 'Spaces under transformation' and 'hostels as sites of resistance' seem to be the best way of conveying the changes taking place in hostels (Elder 2003a: 4, 16).

This book is primarily in conversation with the hostel literature in South Africa. This is a richly researched subject, especially during the prime stages of the apartheid regime (1970s and 1980s) through to the early days of democracy. Studying the hostels in current times is interesting because it not only brings out the idea of men at the centre of the production process and women at the centre of the reproduction process, based in rural areas, or people who have invaded men's spaces in the urban areas (hostels), but also shows the reversal of these trends, which is far from being a neat process.

Glen Elder's 2003 book, *Hostels, Sexuality and the Apartheid Legacy: Malevolent Geographies* is an exceptional study on hostels from the mid-to-late 1990s. The year 2003, almost ten years after democracy, was a good time to check if the government's promises were at least moving in the direction of being met. Political violence had come and gone. Unemployment was at its highest level, female migration, HIV and AIDS and the roll out of social grants were growing fast, rural-urban migration had not stopped and people had not stopped building informal settlements. Elder perfectly located his study within rural-

However, while Elder provides a clearly focused study of hostels based on the gendered and sexualised lives of the dwellers, I do not agree with his pessimistic interpretation that the everyday lives of the women who live at the hostels 'have remained the same, or tragically worsened' (2003a: 2). My findings indicate that women's movement from rural to urban areas is always positive because it is often a move of their own choosing, although under very constrained circumstances, and it presents opportunities and possibilities, as well as new challenges and risks. In addition, social grants are making a positive difference in women's lives. Women are definitely not passive participants being moulded and channelled by men and the apartheid legacy alone; they are also active agents engaging in the circumstances of their lives. They also use and abuse men (through domestic and sexual favours) and the system (through social grants) opportunistically. On the other hand, there is ample evidence of the way in which men's lives are deteriorating in the midst of high unemployment, dread diseases such as HIV, AIDS and tuberculosis and a decline in rural livelihood procurement. Men have lost their space, freedom, privacy, employment, livestock, land, respect and dignity. Men's lives in the hostels have worsened as well.

While I have noted a number of interesting ongoing features and trends in some of the hostel studies mentioned, I also note some limitations. For example, Ramphele's 1993 study discusses hostels in Cape Town and their occupants, but fails to examine the intricate connections that the hostel-dwellers' lives have with rural areas. Although she hints at the fact that her participants have some form of rural background, she does not show how their rural backgrounds are part of their everyday lives. My research differs from hers in the geographical sense (mine is in KwaZulu-Natal) and in the fact that her work is based in more than one hostel (Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu hostels), while mine is based in one hostel (KwaMashu). It is also not only about the time factor (the apartheid versus the democratic era), or the fact that I not only did research in the hostel, but also traced the larger rural-urban connections. The major difference comes from the fact that I spent some time living in the hostel.²⁷ I also visited four rural areas in northern KwaZulu-Natal linked to KwaMashu Hostel and spent a minimum of one full week in each location (Nongoma, Hlabisa, Eshowe and Empangeni), followed by a couple of days' visits as needed.

It is from Ari Sitas (1983) who did his Ph.D. on 'African worker responses on the East Rand to changes in the metal industry, 1960–1980' and wrote an article in 1996 titled 'The New Tribalism: Hostels and Violence' in response to the hostel violence from the late 1980s until 1995–6, which spread to almost every hostel in South Africa, that I have adopted the 'cultural formations' approach. Among other things, I use this to show how and when the ideas of *inhlonipho* gain and lose meaning for different people at different times. Sitas (1983, 1992, 1996, 2004, 2010) has been able to discuss the issues facing black workers beyond the shopfloor. His work has been integral in the way that it lays the foundation for any study to be conducted on workers at the hostels. However, a major weakness of Sitas's work is its failure to capture and theoretically explain the gender dynamics at play in the hostels and sometimes in the workplaces of migrant workers.

In current times, there have been many connecting strands between scholars who do work on labour, livelihoods, gender and sexuality, and I have chosen to use the work of scholars who understand the critical role of space and place in the production of meanings and identities both in the community and in the workplace.

This book not only acknowledges and highlights the links the hostels have with the rural areas; it deeply engages with these links and the processes involved. It should be seen as responding to and engaging with Elder's core interest in the intricate and intertwined role of sexuality and gender in the hostels and hostel violence. It also responds to the challenge posed by Hart and Sitas of moving beyond rural–urban disconnections or dichotomies and seeing land, labour and livelihoods as knitted into each other.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three main parts. Part 1 specifically deals with hostels, from their establishment as single-sex workers' hostels to their current changed status as CRUs. Chapter 1 primarily presents a historical overview of the hostel. Chapter 2 documents the continuation from history to the current state of the hostel. It tries to show the general trends of rural–urban connections in KwaZulu–Natal and beyond.

Part 2 is composed of three chapters and is about the challenges that migrants encounter in the processes of making livelihoods. Chapter 3

is about the everyday livelihood struggles of migrants. It tells stories about the challenges relating to the collapsing livelihoods of migrants. Chapter 4 rigorously moves beyond looking at land, labour and livelihoods as separate; instead it uses migrants' voices to show the linkages between land, labour and livelihoods and their constantly shifting nature. Chapter 5 begins by introducing two livelihood strategies, which can be described as hidden, illegal or immoral, that is, the sexual economy and criminality. The chapter goes on to show the key but ambiguous role played by social grants in the lives of women.

Part 3 is made up of three chapters. Chapter 6 builds on the previous chapters by outlining and discussing the various dimensions of cultural formations. These formations relate to the different circumstances in which perplexity takes place. This chapter discusses issues of identity and belonging and further engages with gender issues, cultural and spiritual issues. Chapter 7 discusses conscious and unconscious forms of producing gendered spaces. It reflects on the history of women at the hostels and draws links to the present state of women in South Africa and their relationships with men. This chapter also examines issues of gendered violence and gendered criminality. Chapter 8 narrows down to the level of household and housing dynamics. It discusses various definitions of household as well as household types. The household is presented as a ground where everything eventually plays itself out. It is a departure and a destination for many migrants. The conclusion attempts to pull all these threads together and to present a summary of my findings.

NOTES

1. The term 'informal settlement', rooted in the language of planners, can serve to homogenise what is a diverse spatial landscape (Hunter 2006: 156). *Imijondolo*, ghettos, shacks, shanties, squatter camps and slums are some of the phrases used interchangeably with informal settlements and I believe that this alone begins to show the diversity represented by the informal settlements.
2. Interview with Zethu Mthembu, 17 July 2009. All names used for participants are pseudonyms and some other identifying details have also been changed.
3. Interestingly, the observation that hostels are now 'spaces full of women and children' was also noted by South African scholars who did research in the hostels and compounds during the apartheid period (conversation with Dunbar Moodie at a South African Sociological Association conference, July 2011).

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4. In the same way that 'Mr' and 'Mrs' might be used instead of first names, in *isiZulu* 'Baba' and 'Mama' are used to denote respect for those older than oneself. I have used these terms where appropriate throughout this book.
5. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
6. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
7. Focus group discussion, 4 May 2009.
8. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
9. Interview with Baba Dumisani Ngcobo, 11 March 2009.
10. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
11. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
12. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
13. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
14. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
15. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
16. Focus group discussion, 9 May 2009.
17. Interview with Mama Hlengiwe Luthuli, 26 March 2009.
18. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
19. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
20. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
21. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
22. Focus group discussion, 4 May 2009.
23. Interview with Nokulunga Zungu, 8 May 2009.
24. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
25. Focus group discussion, 5 May 2009.
26. Focus group discussion, 8 May 2009.
27. I have to acknowledge that my stay at the hostel was made easier by the CRUs. I lived in a CRU, which was safer and had more facilities to accommodate basic needs.

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