

## *Introduction*

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' . . . It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. (Benjamin 1969: 255)

**S**OON AFTER THE local government elections in 1996, a group of newly elected African National Congress (ANC) councilors and community leaders in Ladysmith-Ezakheni called me to account for myself and my research. They wanted to know who I was, what I was doing, who was sponsoring and funding my research, and how, if at all, they could use it. The meeting began early on a bitterly cold morning in July, and lasted until evening. It took place in the tiny front room of a house belonging to one of the councilors in the sprawling, dusty township of Ezakheni, with about a dozen of us crowded around a highly polished dining table that took up most of the space. From my seat at the table I could see hanging on the wall a picture of the owner of the house as a young man taken 40 years earlier, before his arrest and incarceration on Robben Island. In 1994 he had been central in negotiating a peace accord that ended a spate of terrible violence in Ezakheni, and township residents had pressed him to stand in the local elections. 'I am an old tree,' he declared at the start of the meeting. 'Now they have planted a new tree.'

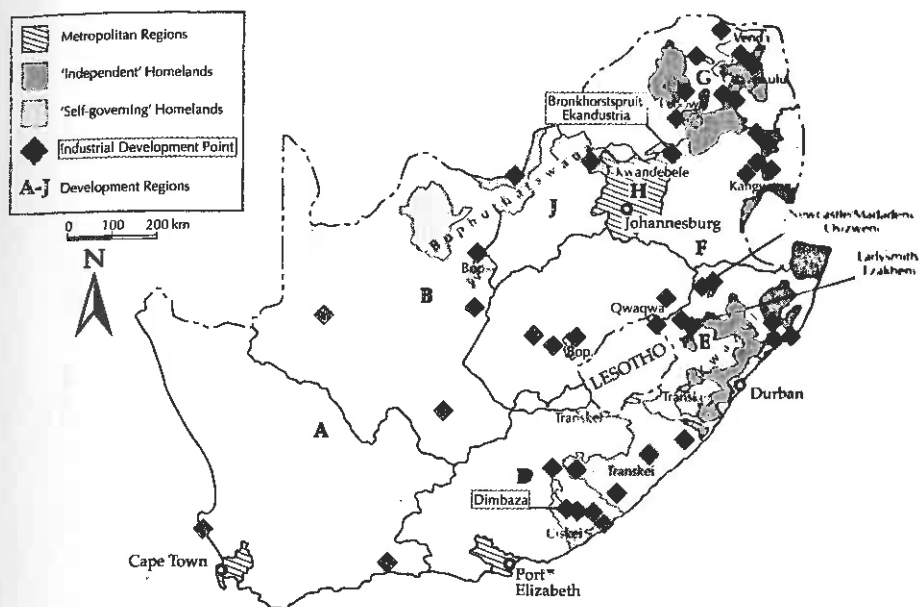
This was, for all of us, a kaleidoscopic moment when everything shifted to form new patterns. For the local councilors this moment of assuming formal power was one of fulfillment of long years of struggle and enormous promise for the future, as well as a moment of profound danger; of being thrust into an arena of power strewn with the detritus of the apartheid past, and sharply circumscribed by the negotiated settlement. It also coincided with the ANC national government's announcement of a package of conservative neoliberal economic policies. Many South Africans closely allied with the ANC were shocked and dismayed not only by this apparent retreat from redistributive social change, but also the arbitrary manner in

which key officials handed it down as a *fait accompli*. For me this was a moment of profound repositioning, a moment when my relationships to different groups in my research sites and in South Africa more generally were reconfigured, along with my understandings of who I was, what I was doing there, and why it mattered.

Participants in the meeting questioned me at some length about my history and my political and institutional location; about how my research was funded; about the information I had been collecting over the past two years; and about its relevance to their concerns. In response I sought to explain how, in the course of this research, I was re-engaging with my native South Africa after years of studying and teaching in the US and doing research on agrarian change in Asia.

On returning to South Africa in 1990 after an absence of nearly 20 years, I was drawn to places like Ladysmith-Ezakheni because they embodied key features of the geographies of racial capitalism: historical and contemporary processes of dispossession; industrial decentralization; and direct connections with East Asia. Starting in the 1960s, millions of black South Africans were ripped from the land in rural 'white' South Africa, and packed into huge relocation townships like Ezakheni on patches of land defined as part of purportedly self-governing 'bantustans.' Many such townships were situated in predominantly rural areas within 15–20 km of former white towns like Ladysmith. In the early 1980s, the apartheid state deployed massive subsidies – reputedly the most generous in the world – to entice South African and foreign industrialists to locate in these out-of-the-way places. More than 40 'industrial decentralization points' mushroomed all over the country, either in or adjacent to relocation townships (Map 1).

At precisely that moment, large numbers of small-scale industrialists came under enormous pressure to leave Taiwan, driven out by rising wages, rents, and escalating exchange rates – conditions created by the stunning pace of their own industrial investment and export drive. During the 1980s well over 300 Taiwanese factory owners moved to these racialized spaces in the South African countryside, bringing with them not only equipment and labor-intensive production techniques that were rapidly becoming obsolete in Taiwan, but also a set of labor practices that proved socially explosive. Ironically, the flow of foreign investment into industries within (or adjacent to) bantustan borders coincided with the increasing isolation of South Africa through sanctions, divestment, and the severing of diplomatic



Map 1 Industrial decentralization areas in the 1980s.

links. Pickles and Woods (1989) explain how it was partly their shared status as international pariahs that drew South Africa and Taiwan together during the 1980s. These diplomatic ties helped pave the way for Taiwanese to become by far the largest group of foreign investors in bantustan industrial estates like that on the outskirts of Ezakheni.

My study started out in 1994 as a critique of how development experts, corporate interests, and state functionaries were deploying 'models from elsewhere' – particularly East Asia – to define and delimit possibilities in post-apartheid South Africa. Political liberalization had coincided with a moment of intense market triumphalism, and powerful political pressures were gathering force from within and beyond to press South Africa to conform to free market neoliberal orthodoxy. East and Southeast Asian 'miracles' featured prominently in these early post-apartheid discourses of development. Both foreign experts and those within South Africa promoting a neoliberal agenda eagerly invoked the (then) Asian 'miracles' to tout the advantages of export-oriented, market-led economic growth. They portrayed South Africa as a 'developing country' that had managed to

evade structural adjustment and retain protectionist policies, but must now liberate its markets along with its newly enfranchised citizenry.

Taiwanese investment in South Africa was my initial point of entry, precisely because it had formed a key transnational connection during the relative isolation of the 1980s. In place of abstracted models of East Asian 'miracles,' I set out to trace how a small but significant group of transnational capitalists had taken hold in former white towns and adjacent relocation townships, and how they and their relationships within and beyond such places were changing in the post-apartheid dispensation. These radically globalized sites offered extraordinary vantage points from which to understand how key remnants of apartheid spatial engineering and racial capitalism – including transnational connections – were being refashioned in the post-apartheid era.

My decision to pursue research in these places crystallized in April 1993, when I came across a press report of how white local government officials in small, conservative, mainly Afrikaans-speaking towns adjacent to relocation townships were bypassing the national government and attempting to lure more Taiwanese into their fiscal nets. Entitled 'China's New Territories in Southern Africa,' the article went on to describe 'a new wave of Far Eastern business invasion into Southern Africa' spearheaded by local officials in Bronkhorstspuit, one such town about 60 km east of Pretoria (Map 1). 'I really love the Chinese,' a senior official was reported as saying: 'They are absorbed into our cultural and social life, and the people of Bronkhorstspuit have great confidence in them' (*Africa South & East* April 1993: 14).

This eager embrace of Taiwanese stood in sharp contrast to more mainstream views. On first returning to South Africa in 1990, I had been struck by the intensity with which both the left and the liberal right in South Africa regarded Taiwanese investment as a distasteful episode in recent economic history. For the labor movement and others on the left, Taiwanese industrialists represented predators intent on undercutting organized labor and worker protection, who had broken sanctions and taken advantage of repressive conditions and cheap labor in the former bantustans and border areas. Diplomatic links between the apartheid state and Taiwan added insult to injury. For large-scale corporate capital, Taiwanese industrialists represented unfair competitors whose presence in South Africa epitomized obnoxious industrial decentralization policies. Such sentiments found expression in South African popular culture, including for example

theatrical productions such as *A Nativity* and *Jozi, Jozi*, in which Taiwanese were portrayed as figures of absurdity. South Africans of widely different political persuasions invoked metaphors such as 'The Great Chinese Take-Away' and the 'Seagull Syndrome' to depict Taiwanese as hungry predators who swoop in, gobble up state subsidies, and swoop off again. At a moment when discourses of non-racialism and the romanticism of the 'Rainbow Nation' were ascendant, Taiwanese stood out as the embodiment of otherness.

In addition to contesting 'models from elsewhere' and engaging some of the complexities of difference, I was drawn into this research by debates over South Africa's future cast in terms of 'the city' versus 'the countryside.' What concerned me were both the dichotomized terms of these debates, and the social and political forces – or lack thereof – that underpinned them. Articulated most forcefully by the Urban Foundation, a corporate think-tank, the metropolitan vision represented a corporatist coalition between large-scale capital and elements of organized labor from which large segments of South African society were excluded. The claim here was that South Africa's future was metropolitan, and that resources should be concentrated in the large urban centers. Critics of this urban bias argued instead for a rural and agricultural strategy, and for creating peasants or small farmers wherever land became available through the market. Ironically, the small farmer vision was spearheaded in the early 1990s by a group from within the World Bank, and cast in predictably technocratic terms. This initiative in turn reflected the lack of an organized coalition from within rural society, as well as the urban-based liberation movement's historic neglect of agrarian questions.

Notably missing from these debates were any questions about the future of densely populated relocation townships – neither rural nor urban – where millions of black South Africans had some sort of home base. For metropolitan and peasant proponents alike such places simply represented unpleasant relics of apartheid spatial engineering, destined soon to disappear. Their logic was that the artificial conditions that had created these places no longer existed. In 1991, the De Klerk government had indeed slashed industrial decentralization subsidies, under pressure from both large-scale corporate capital and organized labor. Industry would 'bleed away' from these godforsaken places, many argued, and residents of relocation townships would pack their bags and move to the cities. Such easy presumptions seemed to me dangerously misleading. Many of these

'interstitial spaces' inherited from the past not only represented nodes of ongoing connection with sites in East Asia. They had also come to constitute major elements of the relations between the city and the countryside, and their transformation was likely to shape the post-apartheid transition more generally.

Shortly after the national election in 1994 I commenced research on two such sites in the province of KwaZulu-Natal – Ladysmith-Ezakheni, and the former white town of Newcastle along with the adjacent relocation townships of Madadeni and Osizweni (Map 1). The process through which I came to work in these places was quite fortuitous, but it yielded a remarkably felicitous design for comparative research. Both Ladysmith and Newcastle originated as British military outposts in colonial Natal in the mid-nineteenth century. Both are situated on major transport routes between Johannesburg and Durban. Both are surrounded by what were African freehold farms from which landowners and tenants were forcibly removed between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s, as well as by white-owned farms from which huge numbers of black workers have been (and continue to be) evicted, further enlarging the townships. Ladysmith-Ezakheni is somewhat smaller than Newcastle-Madadeni, but the structure of racialized spaces inherited from the apartheid era is remarkably similar. White local government officials in Newcastle were in fact the first in the country to launch a global strategy in the mid-1980s. By 1994 some 1,500 to 2,000 Taiwanese immigrants had settled in Newcastle, acquired significant chunks of real estate, and established over 60 factories that drew on African women workers from the townships. The Taiwanese presence in Ladysmith-Ezakheni was smaller, but still significant.

During the first phase of research, which spanned the second half of 1994 and June–July of 1995, I focused on histories of Taiwanese investment in the two places, and how it was changing in the context of sharply reduced subsidies and the new political dispensation. In addition to interviewing Taiwanese and South African industrialists and spending as much time as possible in their factories, I spoke at length with white local government officials in both places about their transnational strategies and their relationships with Taiwanese settlers. In this very early stage of local government restructuring, apartheid municipal structures and bantustan local authorities were still intact. Despite much jostling for position in so-called 'pre-interim' local government structures, it was clear that majority

rule would fundamentally transform the local state as white towns and black townships administered as separate entities under apartheid became united under single local authorities. In other words, the white male bureaucrats who had launched transnational strategies were on the brink of having to cede a large chunk of local state power to a new black majority leadership from the adjacent townships which, until recently, they had defined simply as labor pools to be marketed abroad. Their anxiety at the time was palpable.

The meeting in early July 1996, when newly elected Ezakheni councilors and community leaders called me to account, represented a dramatic turning point in my research practices and political positionings, as well as in larger configurations of political and economic power. Local elections in KwaZulu-Natal at the end of June 1996 coincided precisely with the ANC national government's formal embrace of a package of conservative neoliberal economic policies known as GEAR – an acronym for Growth, Employment, and Redistribution. With the advent of GEAR, even some of the most fervid foes of the apartheid regime formally conceded to the 'natural' (if not supernatural) power of global markets and to the claim that, because of globalization, 'there is no alternative' (TINA) to orthodox neoliberalism. GEAR sits uneasily astride the emancipatory promises of the liberation struggle, as well as the material hopes, aspirations, and rights of the large majority of South Africans. Strong opposition from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) has met with sharp rebuke, and invocations of 'globalization' have become a means to contain dissent, and to legitimize a retreat from promises of redistributive social change.

The coincidence of neoliberal orthodoxy in the form of GEAR with the reconstitution of the local state in mid-1996 was also deeply significant. As in many other parts of the world, fiscal austerity and the nation state's pulling back from direct welfare provision has been accompanied by a wide array of functions and responsibilities being devolved to what has come to be dubbed 'developmental local government.' In the name of both democracy and efficiency, local councilors and bureaucrats have been called upon to confront massive redistributive pressures with minimal resources. Simultaneously they have been assigned major responsibility for securing the conditions of accumulation under the aegis of 'local economic development.' The local state, in short, has become a key site of contradictions in the neoliberal post-apartheid order.

When I met with Ezakheni councilors in mid-1996, we were all keenly aware of the profound importance of the newly constituted local state, as well as the enormity of the task confronting the new leadership. Yet at the time it would have been difficult – if not impossible – to foresee how central the local state would become. What did start to emerge, though, were strong indications that processes of local state formation were taking shape very differently in Ladysmith-Ezakheni and Newcastle-Madadeni. For example, a particularly animated conversation turned around how one of the most controversial Taiwanese industrialists in Newcastle had joined the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in the hopes of becoming mayor. As a consequence, he effectively handed the local government election to the ANC in what was widely regarded as an IFP stronghold. The tenuous hold of the ANC in Newcastle-Madadeni contrasted sharply with the resounding victory in Ladysmith-Ezakheni – a victory that had just prompted the resignations of six senior white municipal bureaucrats.

Early in my research I had been struck by how differently the initial stages of local government restructuring were playing out in the two places. While deeply interested in these divergent conditions and dynamics, I had not delved into them systematically. By 1996 the question of why Ladysmith and Newcastle were so different had become key concerns of ANC councilors, labor organizers and other activists in both places, and the direction in which they wanted our conversations to move. I returned to Ladysmith and Newcastle every year, and each time political dynamics in the two places seemed to diverge more sharply. Ladysmith-Ezakheni was the site of substantive local democracy with high levels of political mobilization and organization, while in Newcastle-Madadeni local political dynamics became increasingly disorganized and chaotic.

Over the years our conversations multiplied and came to resemble lively seminars, cross-cut by intense debates and interwoven with personal histories. They also contrasted sharply with the extractive interviews with industrialists and white local government officials that marked the first phase of my research in 1994 and 1995 – although material from these interviews often provided illuminating counterpoints. Particularly in Ladysmith I was often invited (or just pulled into) a wide array of local government meetings and events, and in both places the people I met in 1996 drew me into much wider networks of connection and arenas of interaction both in the townships and the former white towns. In the course of co-constructing local histories, I came to see myself less as a researcher than a participant in a collective process of meaning-making. Through all of



this, I was profoundly aware of how our efforts to remake the future depend crucially on how we remember – and forget – the past, and of how it has taken a huge dose of official amnesia to render the neoliberal project palatable. By reconstructing dimensions of local histories and translocal connections, we were disrupting elements of this amnesia.

Histories of place are never just a straightforward accounting of 'the facts.' Like the life histories with which they are closely intertwined, they are always multiple, contested, deeply politicized, produced in specific contexts, and made to serve the needs of the present. Yet this is precisely the point: our reconstructions and comparisons of local histories and translocal connections were animated by the political imperatives of a very particular – and particularly crucial – political moment. The question of why the ANC and organized labor were so much stronger in Ladysmith than in Newcastle was the starting point, but the political stakes went far deeper than explaining electoral patterns. They took shape as we delved into how forced removals were more deeply contested in areas around Ladysmith than in comparable areas of Newcastle; into how these differentiated patterns of resistance to removals carried over into township politics and different patterns of connection to the liberation movement; into the complex linkages between township struggles and the labor movement; into the differing relations between different groups of capitalists and the local state, their diverse connections with regional, national, and transnational arenas of state power and capital accumulation; and how interconnected local struggles in turn reshaped these connections and relationships. We also caught glimpses of how people's understandings of themselves as political subjects and actors had taken shape in different ways in the two places through overlapping struggles in multiple arenas; how race and gender played out quite differently in the context of struggles over wages and working conditions; and how Zulu ethnic nationalism assumed startlingly different forms.

What emerged, in short, was a growing appreciation of contingency, openness, and possibilities – of how local worlds, and ways of understanding and acting in these worlds, had been made in quite different ways out of superficially similar conditions. There were moments of real excitement, when it felt as though we were unearthing what one scholar has called 'the sedimented forms of a power that has blurred the traces of its own contingency' (Laclau 1996: 103). Yet the spatio-temporal depth and breadth of these sedimentations also became painfully apparent. So too did

the limits and constraints imposed by globally integrated capitalisms, their historically specific forms in South Africa, the proliferating discourses of globalization, and the multi-layered configurations of power through which post-apartheid neoliberalism made its problematic appearance on the ruins of the past. In short, multi-leveled constraints and limits loomed large and pessimistic, at times threatening to dwarf local contingencies and the sort of optimism they engendered.

Part of my task in this book is to trace the multi-layered arenas, and the key practices and plays of power and meaning, that have produced these different trajectories of social change. I will also trace the translocal connections through which these two globalized sites, and the political subjects who have made them, have themselves been made in strikingly different ways. Divergent dynamics in the two places vividly reveal how racial, ethnic, and gender differences can assume diverse forms, and are partly constitutive of class processes. At the same time, they bring into sharp focus how some of the most intense contradictions and tensions of the neoliberal post-apartheid order are playing out on the terrain of the local state.

Interlocking histories of dispossession and industrialization in this part of KwaZulu-Natal stand in sharp contrast to comparable rural industrial regions in Taiwan and Mainland China. These interconnections not only highlight how variable productions of racial, ethnic, and gendered forms of difference feed into economic life as active structuring forces. They also shed new light on *both* East Asia and South Africa, underscoring how sharply divergent histories of agrarian transformation have shaped the conditions of reproduction of labor, and of global competition.

Small-scale Taiwanese industrialists are a direct product of redistributive land reforms in the late 1940s and early 1950s that broke the power of the landlord class, transformed agrarian relations, and helped to create the conditions for rapid rural industrialization. The same is true of Mainland China, where spectacular industrial growth since the mid-1980s has taken place largely in villages and small towns. In short, redistribution of land and other resources – driven originally by Mao Tse-tung's mobilization of the Chinese peasantry in the first half of the twentieth century – underpinned the massive mobilization of low-wage labor in Taiwan and China, operating in effect as a social wage. By the same token, they represent what appear as distinctively 'non-Western' trajectories of industrial accumulation *without* dispossession of peasant-workers from the land – trajectories

that have, since the 1970s, fundamentally defined the conditions of global competition.

When Taiwanese industrialists moved to places like Newcastle and Ladysmith, they encountered a workforce recently dispossessed from the land, and thrust into commodified forms of livelihood. These contrasts with East Asia compel attention to the *ongoing* significance of histories of racialized dispossession in South Africa. They enable us to see such dispossession not just as a 'natural' precursor of capitalist accumulation, or an event that can be consigned to some distant, pre-capitalist past. Through East Asian lenses, dispossession springs to life as an ongoing process that continues to define the conditions of existence for huge numbers of black South Africans. In short, East Asian histories of agrarian transformation render their South African counterparts peculiar, as well as profoundly significant in the present.

They also bring the politics of the agrarian question in South Africa into sharp focus. In the liberation movement and South African society more generally, invocations of the 'land question' – in particular, how the forces of colonialism and apartheid robbed black South Africans of 87 percent of their land and packed them into reserves or bantustans in the remaining 13 percent – continue to carry tremendous symbolic and moral force. Yet in practice, the mainly urban-based liberation movement has – with a few key exceptions – paid comparatively little attention to agrarian issues or to linking rural with urban struggles. In the post-apartheid era, this historic neglect of agrarian questions is nowhere more evident than in the painfully slow pace of land reform, the meager resources devoted to land redistribution and, particularly since 1999, the ANC's abandonment of a broadly redistributive agenda in favor of a strategy – narrowly defined in terms of agriculture – to create a black commercial farming class. Not surprisingly, these moves have elicited sharp critique from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others who are calling for land reform as part of a broader livelihoods strategy addressed to the escalating levels of poverty and inequality that are defining features of the neoliberal post-apartheid order.

East Asian post-war histories of land redistribution could certainly be used to support such appeals to policy makers. Far more importantly, though, East Asian-South African connections suggest how the powerful moral force of the 'land question' – a force that derives from histories and memories of racialized dispossession – might be harnessed and redefined to support the formation of broadly based political alliances to press for social and economic justice.

Growing out of these connections, a central argument of this book is the need to dis-articulate or delink the land question from agriculture and from individual restitution claims, and to re-articulate or reframe it in terms of the erosion of social security, and the moral and material imperative for a social wage. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, this move extends the definition of the social wage beyond employment-based entitlements or even conventional social policy to insist on basic social security grounded in citizenship rights. By strengthening and extending claims for redistributive justice, this redefinition could also be used as a means for linking struggles in multiple arenas, as well as across the rural-urban divide.

A closely related argument is that any such strategy must be firmly located on the terrain of the local state, engaging with historically and geographically specific configurations of social forces, but also extending out from there to connect with forces at play in regional, national, and transnational arenas. Part of the reason, as my work in Ladysmith-Ezakheni and Newcastle-Madadeni shows very clearly, is that local political dynamics assume sharply divergent forms, even in places that are structurally very similar. More generally, the so-called 'developmental local state' has become a key locus of contradictions of the post-apartheid order, helping to expose the vulnerable underbelly of neoliberal capitalism. At the same time, the contrasting political dynamics in Ladysmith and Newcastle underscore the importance of a highly organized and mobilized civil society in defining (and in part becoming) the state, and pointing the way towards alternatives.

These concrete, intertwined historical geographies also speak to broader questions of 'globalization.' The title of this book conveys the premise that globalization – *both* in the sense of intensified processes of spatial interconnection associated with capitalist restructuring, *and* of the discourses through which knowledge is produced – is deeply infused with the exercise of power. It also seeks to convey how discourses of globalization play a key role in defining and delimiting the terrain of practical action and the formation of political identities, thereby actively shaping the very processes they purport to describe. Most importantly, it lays out the central question of the book: what is it that renders these discourses so disabling, and what might be entailed in more politically enabling understandings?

The discursive power of globalization is nowhere more evident than in what I call the 'impact model' that underpins neoliberal agendas in South Africa and elsewhere. Typically framed in terms of the impact of 'the

global' on 'the local,' these discourses conjure up inexorable market and technological forces that take shape in the core of the global economy and radiate out from there. A number of other binaries map onto the global/local dichotomy. In addition to active/passive and dynamic/static, these include economics/culture, general/specific, abstract/concrete and, very importantly, dichotomous understandings of time and space, in which time is accorded active primacy, while space appears as a passive container. This conflation of 'the global' with dynamic, technological-economic forces restlessly roving the globe defines its inexorable – and inexorably masculine – character. By the same token, 'the local' appears as a passive, implicitly feminine recipient of global forces whose only option is to appear as alluring as possible. This counterposition and gendering of time and space are thus key components of discourses that naturalize neoliberalism. Dualisms of the impact model are pervasive, and underpin a number of more critical formulations of economic globalization. In addition, as we shall see in Chapter 1, portrayals of cultural globalization often share the same disabling elements as their economic counterparts.

The larger contribution of this book is to suggest the political and analytical advantages of rethinking globalization in terms of the multiple, divergent, but interconnected *trajectories* of socio-spatial change taking shape in the context of intensified global integration. The Oxford Dictionary offers two definitions of a trajectory: 'the path described by a flying projectile,' and 'an object moving under the action of given forces.' I am emphatically not conjuring up flying projectiles moving inexorably towards a target or endpoint. My meaning is closer to the second definition, although I intend to invoke neither pre-given objects nor predetermined forces. Instead I use the term 'trajectories' to convey the ongoing processes through which sets of power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life at different spatial scales constantly rework places and identities.

Since my understandings of multiple trajectories grew so directly from practical engagements with comparative questions along two intersecting axes – Ladysmith-Newcastle and East Asia-South Africa – I would also like to clarify my comparative method. I am definitely *not* using comparison to argue for uniqueness and endless difference. Yet neither am I claiming that key differences represent locally specific instances or variants of a more general or universal phenomenon. Rather, I am using what I call a relational concept of comparison that refuses to measure 'cases' against a

universal yardstick. Instead of taking as given pre-existing objects, events, places, and identities, I start with the question of how they are formed in relation to one another and to a larger whole. In this conception, particularities or specificities arise through *interrelations* between objects, events, places, and identities; and it is through clarifying how these relations are produced and changed in practice that close study of a particular part can illuminate the whole.

A third, closely related point is that Ladysmith and Newcastle do *not* represent case studies of the impact of globalization. The concept of multiple trajectories and the method of relational comparison are grounded in an understanding of place not as a bounded unit, but as always formed through relations and connections with dynamics at play in other places, and in wider regional, national, and transnational arenas. These understandings of space, place, and power decisively reject questions cast in terms of the impact of 'the global' on 'the local.' Indeed, one of my ambitions is to wreak such destruction on 'impact models' that those who read this book will never again allow the term 'impact of globalization' to pass unquestioned.

In foregrounding the concept of multiple trajectories of socio-spatial change, I am *not* simply making the claim that capitalism takes different 'path dependent' forms in different places, and fails to converge on a single, 'fully developed' model. Nor am I endorsing culturalist notions of 'alternative modernities' which hold that 'modernity always unfolds within a specific cultural or civilizational context and that different starting points for the transition to modernity lead to different outcomes' (Gaonkar 2001: 15). Instead, I want to advance an understanding of multiple trajectories as spatially interconnected sets of practices – with their associated discourses and power relations – that actively *produce* and drive the processes we call 'globalization.' By insisting that we understand the multiplicity of historical geographies not simply as the *effects* of global flows and processes but as *constitutive* of them, the concept of multiple trajectories and the method of relational comparison fundamentally disrupt impact models and open the way for more politically enabling understandings and critical practices.

Critical engagement with the impact model and other economic discourses of globalization does not imply that we can wish away the real and powerful effects of these discourses in bolstering the structures of the global economy, and the limits they impose. Nor does it imply buying into accounts of cultural globalization that uncritically celebrate mobility and

hybridity, or into related post-Marxist notions of radical democracy that insist on radical contingency and openness. By refusing to recognize historically determined limits and structures, such accounts veer towards a form of voluntarism. The political and practical importance of the concept of multiple trajectories and the method of relational comparison is that they provide a means for steering a course between economism ('only one thing is possible') and voluntarism ('anything is possible') so as to illuminate what Jessop (1982) has called structural constraints and conjunctural possibilities.

I offer this book, then, as a concrete example of how close attention to a specific set of practices, places, and connections, can be used both to shed light on how broader processes are constituted in practice, and to suggest terrains of practical action.