

Laurent Fourchard

CLASSIFY EXCLUDE POLICE

Urban Lives in South Africa and Nigeria



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CLASSIFY, EXCLUDE, POLICE

**Urban Lives in South Africa and
Nigeria**

LAURENT FOURCHARD

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Series Editors' Preface

IJURR Studies in Urban and Social Change Book Series

The IJURR Studies in Urban and Social Change Book Series shares IJURR's commitments to critical, global and politically relevant analyses of our urban worlds. Books in this series bring forward innovative theoretical approaches and present rigorous empirical work, deepening understandings of urbanisation processes, but also advancing critical insights in support of political action and change. The Book Series Editors appreciate the theoretically eclectic nature of the field of urban studies. It is a strength that we embrace and encourage. The editors are particularly interested in the following issues:

- Comparative urbanism
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The series is explicitly interdisciplinary; the editors judge books by their contribution to the field of critical urban studies rather than according to disciplinary origin. We are committed to publishing studies with themes and formats that reflect the many different voices and practices in the field of urban studies. Proposals may be submitted to editor in chief, Walter Nicholls (wnicholl@uci.edu), and further information about the series can be found at www.ijurr.org.

Walter Nicholls
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Classify, Exclude, Police

Nigeria, 2006: Human Rights Watch published a report on discrimination against the country's non-indigene*^{[1](#)} populations:

'The population of every state and local government in Nigeria is officially divided into two categories of citizens: those who are indigenes and those who are not. The indigenes of a place are those who can trace their ethnic and genealogical roots back to a community of people who originally settled there. Everyone else, no matter how long they or their families have lived in the place they call home, is and always will be a non-indigene.' (Human Rights Watch, April 2006, p. 1.)

The report indicates that many states refuse to employ non-indigenes in the civil service, discriminate against them in the provision of basic services, and often deny them the right to stand for office in local and state government elections, thereby treating them as second-class citizens. Furthermore, the report asserts that the division between indigenes and non-indigenes has led to extreme violence in some localities: 1,000 people died in the city of Jos (in the centre of the country) in September 2001, more than 600 in the small town of Yelwa (200 km from Jos) during the first half of 2004, and several hundred in 1997 and 2003 in the city of Warri (Niger Delta).

South Africa, May 2008: xenophobic violence engulfed the whole country during the month of May, leaving 60 dead, 700 injured, and more than 100,000 displaced. A third of the victims were South Africans, although foreigners from other African countries were the main targets (Landau [2011](#), p. 1). The violence began in the township of Alexandra in Johannesburg, then spread to other townships chiefly in the province of Gauteng, and later to the cities of Cape Town and Durban. The 140 zones involved were mostly townships and informal urban areas.

The violence of the attacks was unspeakable. For the moment, we would simply note that it was grounded in the exclusion of a group based solely on nationality (other than South African) or origin (non-indigene), and that it took place on a national scale and in urban environments.² National affiliation or supposed origin are only one among numerous repertoires of exclusion and one of the categories that potentially generates the use of violence, but their repetition and widespread protean nature – offences against the integrity of persons, mob violence, repression by security forces – and the countless forms of exclusion are indeed at the core of the historiography of these two countries.

Metropolises function as command posts, overseeing a concentration of population, production and consumption. As such, they offer an ideal observation point for studying the day-to-day practices of power and the genealogy of forms of exclusion. Lagos, Ibadan and Kano in Nigeria and Cape Town and Johannesburg in South Africa have been metropolises for over a century (see [Figures I.1](#) and [I.2](#)). All of them house government agencies and influential political networks.³ By the end of the nineteenth century, they had become leading labour markets at the regional or countrywide level, and their rapid growth (see [Table I.1](#)) soon gave rise to new forms of poverty and social violence (unemployment, delinquency, maltreatment, prostitution, gangsterism, procuring) and problems integrating migrant populations. Their increasing social diversity generated a profusion of discourses and they became privileged places for producing knowledge and testing, developing and implementing new apparatuses of power.⁴ These apparatuses contributed significantly to turning the metropolises into laboratories for exclusion and the use of violence. Some initiatives were introduced by state agents to target categories of people whose socialisation to urban life was deemed problematic (temporary migrants, non-natives*, delinquents, children in need of care, single women). Over time such instruments became permanent features of city life, but they remained politicised, conveying values that embodied

a particular interpretation of society and ideas about how to regulate it (Lascoumes and Le Galès [2004](#), p. 13).



FIGURE I.1 States and cities in Nigeria

Source: Realised by Christine Deslaurier. IRD, UR 102, 2007.



FIGURE I.2 Provinces and cities in South Africa.

TABLE I.1 The population of Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, Johannesburg and Cape Town (in thousands)⁵

	1866	1891	1911	1952	1963	1970	1991	2010
Lagos	25	32	73	272	542	1266	5195	8048
Ibadan	100	120	175	459	427	998	1835	2551
Kano	30			127	255	882	2167	2826
	1866	1891	1904	1951	1960	1970	1996	2011
Johannesburg	—	3	327	969	1247	1561	2638	4434
Cape Town	22	51	77	500	803	1300	2565	3740

From the early twentieth century onwards, South African labour policies divided workers into two separate groups: on one hand, a category of urban workers who were to be made into stable residents by granting them rights related to housing, employment and family life, and on the other, a population of temporary migrants destined to return to the countryside once their labour contracts were completed. For the members of this second group, the hostel* – or more precisely the assignment of a bed ('bedhold') – became the institution structuring their daily lives, as well as relationships with their employers and administrative authorities, fellow workers at the hostel, apparently favoured neighbours living nearby in family quarters and women whose unauthorised residence depended on the goodwill of the men to whom they had to be attached (Ramphela [1993](#)). During the same period, labour policies in Nigeria led to the creation of a new category of urban resident called 'non-native' – defined in opposition to 'native' – which was the norm at the time. These policies authorised the presence of migrants needed by the colonial economy, but required them to reside in reserved neighbourhoods and placed them under a separate authority to avoid diminishing the power of native chiefs.

The historical invention of these categories is at the heart of the processes of exclusion and the reification of differences between natives and non-natives, and between urbans and temporary migrants, which had enduring legacy in post-colonial and post-apartheid periods. In the 1930s, further categories were added in both countries to define and classify urban youth as delinquents, children in need of care and minor girls in need of protection. When South African social workers and their British imperial counterparts in Nigeria embarked on a mission to have boys released from prison and protect girls from the dangers of street life, they set up social services that criminalised the presence of these young people on the streets. In Lagos, they sent the boys to the countryside, and prohibited minor girls from street trading. Girls were regularly rounded up, forced to undergo gynaecological examinations, and

confined to hotels in the company of prostitutes, thereby arousing the indignation of their parents. The notion of delinquency as a form of criminal behaviour came into being during this period, but it is difficult to ascertain whether it applied to street children, girl street vendors, occasional thieves or hardened criminals. A similar ambiguity surrounds contemporary local expressions (*tsotsis* or *skollies* in South Africa, *boma boys* or *jaguda boys* in Nigeria) used to describe groups of boys engaged in activities on the borderline between legality and illegality, ranging from shoplifters and groups of neighbourhood mates to hierarchically organised gangs.

These examples attest to the new mode of governing populations introduced during the colonial period. Migrants, non-natives, delinquents, children in need of care, minor girls and single women became administrative categories that had little in common other than being part of a nomenclature designed to rule by classification – a process that paralleled the invention and reification of ethnic groups in the countryside.⁶ Indeed, the new categories constituted more than just an administrative taxonomy: they were also associated with rights (regarding work, access to housing or place of residence), punishments (prison, deportation, fines, flogging) and prohibition (from circulating freely, engaging in trade, working, living alone or with a family). The individuals concerned used these categories to define and describe themselves as well as to describe, stigmatise and exclude other groups they considered their opponents. As a result, these categories left a deep imprint on the collective imagination long after such social engineering was abandoned.

In the 1930s, new security apparatuses were also developed by non-state actors at the neighbourhood level. After identifying the most obvious threats, local organisations in South Africa and Nigeria introduced schemes for policing everyday life in low-income districts. These actors were given substantial power for the reason that the authorities had neither the resources nor a compelling need to ensure a police presence in areas that played a minimal role in the colonial economy. Such

organisations acquired considerable operational autonomy and, in some respects, actually governed the neighbourhood, especially at night. They were free to use undue violence against unruly youths or 'foreigners' whose access to the neighbourhood was regulated after certain hours. By drawing the boundaries between insiders to be integrated and outsiders, they built a political community at the neighbourhood level.

These organisations or their successors still operate in the two countries today, but their *modus operandi* has been partly transformed. The violence is perhaps better regulated nowadays; corporal punishment no longer enjoys the same legitimacy, and it has become more discreet or rare but it has not disappeared. Neighbourhood policing organisations have become more bureaucratised, politicised and, in some cases, feminised. They now charge low rates for their services, rather than performing them for free. But, as in the colonial period, policing still consists in identifying specific threats to neighbourhood cohesion and controlling target populations.

Finally, other apparatuses are used at the micro level of bureaucratic and political spaces (local government offices, the residence of a political boss) and public spaces (the street, bus stations, markets). Access to these places is constantly being challenged and brokered between individuals in positions of authority (civil servants, trade union leaders, godfathers, governors) and subordinate actors (street vendors, bus drivers, unemployed workers, students) seeking a service, an authorisation, a document, a stall in a market or a place at university. Observing the myriad negotiations between street-level bureaucrats, private agents working on behalf of the state and economic players whose livelihoods depend on the street provides an up-to-date picture of the opportunities for inclusion in a clientelistic network or in a local political community as well as the forms of discrimination at play in granting access to a service, a job or a space for trading. Above all, these negotiations reveal a whole range of diverse practices. For a street vendor, the process may involve

bargaining for a reduction in the amount to be paid to a municipal tax collector; for a student, complying with what local government agents present as the rules for obtaining a certificate and finding a job or a place at university; for a tax collector at a bus station, being paid by the road transport union to intimidate or attack bus drivers who refuse to yield to union authority; for an unemployed unskilled worker, to benefit from the largess of a godfather, including food, in exchange for intimidating his political opponents if need be during electoral periods.

By exploring these varied apparatuses, we can measure the effects of classifying populations in terms of exclusion and inclusion, the violence they sometimes engendered, and the forms of social differentiation they brought about. For example, one might examine how state agents identified and analysed different (or similar) problems in Kano, Lagos, Cape Town and Johannesburg and how this process led to policies that simultaneously altered the limits of the state, claimed to govern conduct and produced social differentiation; or we might look at why the relationships between political bosses and their clients in Ibadan and Lagos, which for many years were quite similar, began moving in different directions in recent times, conditioning the violent (or non-violent) nature of mobilisations, state intervention and the integration of city dwellers in political networks; or we might question why the everyday work of patrolling neighbourhoods, which appeared to be identical in Ibadan and Cape Town, has had radically different effects on the construction of community boundaries within these cities, on the use of coercion, and on what these practices tell us about the nature of a state that outsources its security functions in this way.

This book does not tell the story of how most of the population was denied political rights – the foundation of apartheid and colonial and military regimes – nor of the inequalities and the enrichment of a racial or political minority at the expense of the majority, or of repression and attempts by the police or the army to subject citizens. Instead, bearing in mind this

historical matrix, it invites us to step away from the national frameworks to study the myriad of urban arrangements used to manufacture exclusion. By articulating insights across the various local, national, imperial and global levels, and the colonial, apartheid and contemporary periods, it will bring to the fore the everyday practices of power and a genealogy of different forms of classification, exclusion and policing. By focusing on power relationships in daily life and understanding objects that extend across the twentieth century into the twenty-first, I am seeking to open up a dialogue including equal parts of history, political sociology and comparative urban studies. I am seeking to account for the chaotic historical formation of the state – which could not be reduced to its fragile or weak dimensions – and an unforeseeable changing urban social reality that cannot be adequately explained by planning nor by informality. Essential components of the repertory of public actions such as providing security, attempting to monopolising violence, and producing or reproducing social, racial or generational differences are not restricted to state agents but carried out by numerous social groups that change their concrete implementation, often in very accidental ways.

This process echoes the genealogical analysis of Foucault, whose aim is to retrace the historical conditions of emergence of specific apparatuses of power. Foucault was largely influenced by Nietzsche's own interpretation of history, as shown in his key text published in 1971 (Foucault [1971](#), pp. 1004–1024). Genealogy aims to 'detect the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality' (Foucault [1971](#), p. 1004). It requires the meticulousness of knowledge, a large number of materials piled up, details, random beginnings, accidents, small deviations or complete reversals, errors, misjudgements, miscalculations. Foucault is said to have challenged 'traditional history', but according to his friend, the historian and philosopher Paul Veyne, Foucault believed only in the truth of the facts, of the countless historical facts that fill all the pages of his books; he was sceptical towards any

universal concepts and started from the concrete practices of the state, and ordinary places of power rather than from general and well-known ideas (Veyne [2008](#), p. 9, 19, 33). Interpreting history as a series of accidents and considering 'that the forces at stake in history do not obey a destination or a mechanism but the randomness of the struggle' (Foucault [1971](#), p. 1016) was quite unusual in the 1970s. Foucault's genealogy was opposed to meta-historical forms of writing (Foucault [1971](#), p. 1005), to historians who focus excessively on causal relationships (Veyne [2008](#), pp. 38-39), and to a history that does not take into account ordinary mechanisms of power (Foucault [1971](#), p. 1019). As David Garland explains (2014, p. 372), 'genealogical analysis traces how contemporary practices and institutions emerged out of specific struggles, conflicts, alliances, and exercises of power, many of which are nowadays forgotten'. This book is an attempt to discover exercises of power, often located outside state power, sometimes within it.

In keeping with sociological traditions from its founding fathers to Michel Foucault and Paul Veyne, this book calls into question the antinomy between past and present. In an age of fragmented, hyper-specialised and standardised knowledge, this choice reflects a scientific conviction – a unified conception of the social sciences including history – and a taste for intellectual and methodological cross-pollination and comparative approaches. Such an endeavour entails articulating periods, and in this case, taking stock of the legacy from the colonial era and earlier periods, some of which are present in the forms of postcolonial power (Bayart and Bertrand [2006](#), p. 142). It means searching for the traces of the past in the present day (including the present of the historical actors) by making intelligible how 'the things of the past are objectivised and crystallised in mental structures, in material things, in habitus' (Noiriel 2010). This approach is characteristic of comparative historical sociology, which calls into question the opposition between idiographic and nomothetic disciplines (Bayart [1989](#); Déloye 1997) and of