PROGRAMME

INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SOUTH AFRICA (IKESA)

23-27 OCTOBER 2017
CAPE TOWN
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The aim of this visit is to facilitate conversations around the following question: **How can localized interventions of improving living conditions of the urban poor link to city-wide impact that addresses socio-spatial inequalities?**

This theme has been one of the key concerns that the Advisory Board of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) has pointed out for SLURC to approach more explicitly in its activities. Freetown based civil societies have also requested SLURC to make a contribution to help them to link localized interventions with city-wide impact.

Cape Town is a particular interesting place to explore this issue. Local civil society groups have a long experience in implementing initiatives that improve quality of life in informal settlements in a city that has been heavily shaped by its socio-spatial inequalities generated by colonial, apartheid and more recently market enablement urban policy and planning.

Through seminars, site visits and workshops, we hope to meet a series of urban practitioners and academics in Cape Town that has been attempting to move beyond localized targeted spatial initiatives and enabling practices aimed at policy impact and wider urban transformations.
INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SOUTH AFRICA (IKESA)

PROGRAMME

MON 23 OCT
CITY TOUR

09:00 – 17:00

This city tour has been organised by Development Action Group (DAG), and they will take us to see different sites that represent useful cases of addressing socio-spatial inequalities in the city of Cape Town.

Sites to be visited include experiences from different organisations, such as DAG and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU).

TUE 24 OCT
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN (UCT)

09:00 – 12:00

In the morning, there will be a networking session where Sierra Leonean delegation will meet a series of lecturers and researchers from UCT, exchanging views on issues around urban risk, housing and co-production of knowledge. There will be a short presentation of African Centre for Cities (ACC) and SLURC in the beginning, but then we will break up in small groups to discuss these issues and share points of interest, commonalities and differences. This event will finish with lunch, when we will be able to mingle more informally with participants.

12:00 - 13:00

Lunch at UCT

13:00 – 16:00

In the afternoon, the Sierra Leonean delegation will have a conversation with ACC team, discussing issues related to sustainability, development of partnerships and human resources. This will be quite informal, but hopefully a sincere moment to discuss institutional issues that we can learn from ACC experience.

16:00 – 17:30

The SLURC team was asked to present the experience of SLURC to wider UCT staff in a public talk, and embedded in the ACC seminar series.
**WED 25 OCT**

**NGOS EXCHANGE**

09:00 – 12:00

In the morning the Sierra Leonean delegation will be at DAG’s office, where we will have a dialogue with their team and wider network, discussing about the practice of trying to address socio-spatial inequalities at the city scale. We will be having two panels with representatives from both cities. The first panel focusing on policy and planning processes and needs to address city wide inequalities; and the second on organisational strategy, reflecting on issues around ethics, partnerships and power relations.

12:00 – 13:00

Lunch

13:00 – 17:00

In the afternoon the Sierra Leonean delegation will be meeting the team from the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) programme in their offices and talking about participatory management initiatives as well as the role of interventions in public spaces.

**THU 26 OCT**

**POLICY IMPACT**

09:00 – 11:00

Meeting with CORC to discuss about their methodology and practices of social mobilisation. This meeting will discuss about the relevance of international networks to the implementation of localised action, as CORC works closely with the network Slum/Shack Dwellers International.

12:00 – 13:30

Lunch at ISANDLA

13:30 – 18:00

ISANDLA will be hosting the Sierra Leonean delegation to discuss about how to achieve policy impact. The topics of conversation will include discussions on the initiative to strengthen a community of practice in Cape Town around urban development issues as well as the role that ISANDLA played in influencing the development of new policy on informal settlement upgrading.

**FRI 27 OCT**

09:00 – 10:30

In the morning, there will be a potential visit to with the spatial development unit of the Cape Town City Council.

11:30 – 13:30

ISANDLA and DAG are hosting a final exchange between the Sierra Leonean delegation and the actors met during the visit, exploring synergies, differences and potential areas for further exchange.

13:30-14:30

Networking lunch: closing social event between all those who attended the final exchange of the workshop to discuss reflections and potential areas of collaboration

14:30 – 17:00

Free afternoon for delegates to visit Cape Town.
INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SOUTH AFRICA (IKESA)

PARTICIPANTS

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Slums Livelihood Project Manager; YMCA

Sallieu Timbo
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Samuel Sesay
Programme Coordinator; CODOHSAPA

Abu Bakarr Jalloh
Director of Housing, Ministry of Works Housing and Infrastructure

Yirah Oryanks Conteh
Chairman, Federation of Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP)

Frank Spencer Williams
Research Officer, Office of National Security

Frank Williams
Research Officer
INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SOUTH AFRICA (IKESA)

VENUES

Lady Hamilton Hotel
Lotus Park Community Centre
University of Cape Town
ISANDLA Institute
Philippi
CORC Office
DAG Office
VPUU Office
Khayelitsha
Context

- Global Cities in the South: Deepening social and spatial polarisation in Cape Town, Charlotte Lemanski
- Persistent Polarisation Post-Apartheid? Progress towards Urban Integration in Cape Town, Ivan Turok
- Politics/matter: Governing Cape Town’s informal settlements, Ash Amin and Liza Rose Cirolia

University and the City

- City/University interplays amidst complexity, Edgar Pieterse

Practices from Civil Society

- Development Action Group Annual Report, DAG
- The Scalability of Shack/Slum Dwellers International Methodology: Context and Constraint in Cape Town, Richard Tomlinson
- Incrementalism and Informal Settlement Upgrading, ISANDLA
- Informal settlement upgrading and safety: experiences from Cape Town, South Africa, Mercy Brown-Luthango, Elena Reyes, Mntungwa Gubevu
Viewpoint

Global Cities in the South: Deepening social and spatial polarisation in Cape Town

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Global Cities are characterised by their dominance in world affairs, linked to population size and political, economic, social and cultural infrastructure. As urban centres expand, particularly in the developing regions of the South, a new generation of Global Cities seems likely to emerge. Indeed, non-Western Global Cities have already emerged in some Asian (e.g. Hong Kong, Singapore) and Latin American (e.g. Mexico City, São Paulo) contexts. However, Global Cities remain rare in Africa, although Johannesburg has emerged as the region’s dominant metropolis, followed by Cape Town, Lagos and Nairobi. This paper considers firstly, the development of Global Cities in the South, and secondly, the implications of this drive for global competitiveness on social and spatial division in cities of the South, with a particular emphasis on Cape Town. Given arguments that Global Cities demonstrate increased social and spatial polarisation, aspirations for global competitiveness are problematic for cities in the developing world, where poverty is widespread and resources are limited. This is particularly the case in South Africa where apartheid legacies already provide a strong infrastructure of inequality. This paper uses the case study of Cape Town to consider whether it is possible for a city to be both globally competitive and address domestic socio-economic redistribution. Given evidence elsewhere that the former can inhibit, or at least dilute, the latter, the wider question of whether cities in South Africa (and more broadly, cities of the South) should perhaps be avoiding the drive for globalised status is considered. But if so, what other choice exists in the global milieu?

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Keywords: Global City, segregation, polarisation, cities of the South, South Africa, Cape Town

Introduction

Global Cities are characterised by their dominance in world affairs, linked to population size and political, economic, social and cultural infrastructure. The notion of ‘Global Cities’ as an academic discourse was popularised in the late-1980s and early-1990s by writers such as Friedmann (1986), Castells (1989) and Sassen (1991, 1994). The emphasis was on cities that functioned as essential ‘nodes’ in the global economy, with London, New York and Tokyo cited as prime examples. Their dominance of the global city agenda is a consequence of the strength of their financial institutions, corporate headquarters and service-related industries, with obvious implications for their population size and property market. Global Cities require strong infrastructure, particularly telecommunications and transport, as well as a stable socio-economic and political...
system in which to thrive as economic ‘hubs’. Indeed, Derudder’s (2006) summary of the Global Cities literature lists corporate organisation and infrastructure as the two key empirical criteria for Global City status. This status is also reliant on networks, through which goods, information, people and money flow between different Global Cities, and in doing so, ultimately determine the nature of the world economy (Beaverstock et al., 1999; Sassen, 1994; Short and Kim, 1999; Taylor, 2001). Thus, entry onto the Global City stage provides access to significant prestige and resources for both the city and its national economy.

The dominance of achieving Global City status as the overarching criteria for urban (and national) success is criticised for its emphasis on economic measurements (Smith, 1998) alongside its Anglo-American ethnocentrism (Robinson, 2002). Global City theories and discourses are predominantly drawn from Western approaches and use Western economic criteria for success. Thus, the concept itself is situated in a specific economic and geographical realm rather than an international model of urban achievement. Indeed, Robinson (2002, p. 539) indicates that a map of Global Cities would appear very different if, for example, Islamic nodes of global socio-economic activity were seen as a principal criterion. Robinson (2002, 2006) further develops this idea to highlight the inadequacies of distinguishing between cities of the South (or ‘Third World’ cities) as a ‘Development Studies’ problem, while cities of the North (or ‘Western’ cities) exclusively dominate the ‘Urban Studies’ agenda. Although empirical research on Global Cities theoretically enables a fusion of cities of the North and South under the same banner, in fact, rather than recognising their relative achievements within the Global Cities standard, the former are seen as the model to which the latter are striving. Thus, the division between North and South continues through the Global City categorisation, in which the former remains dominant.

This paper considers firstly, the development of Global Cities in the South; and secondly, the implications of this drive for global competitiveness on social and spatial segregation and polarisation in cities of the South, with a particular emphasis on the city of Cape Town, South Africa. The case study of Cape Town is used to consider whether it is possible for a city to be both globally competitive and address domestic socio-economic redistribution. In addition, this paper ultimately considers the validity of the Global City label for cities in the South, using the example of Cape Town to highlight the problems of implementing such Western constructs and agendas in non-Western settings.

Global Cities in the South

Despite the dominance of Global City criteria as principally Anglo-American, Global Cities have emerged in some Asian (e.g. Hong Kong, Singapore) and Latin American (e.g. Mexico City, São Paulo) contexts. Although Global Cities are absent in sub-Saharan Africa, Johannesburg has emerged as the region’s dominant metropolis, closely followed by Cape Town, Lagos and Nairobi (Van der Merwe, 2004), representing a new generation of African cities serving as financial, political and infrastructural ‘nuclei’ for their region (albeit not the globe). However, the criteria for success in these Asian, Latin American and African cities are predominantly based on Western measures, such as the need for their economies to be integrated into (Anglo-American) economic networks and capital flows. Indeed, Mexico City is considered a Global City largely because of its economic links with the United States and European Union (Parnreiter et al., 2004). Furthermore, the common measurement of Global Cities according to the size and number of international producer service firms produces a very Western map dominated by London and New York (Taylor, 2004), while a focus on less Anglo-American criterion, for example, the location of NGOs, places Nairobi at the top of the list (Taylor, 2004; Robinson, 2005). As Robinson highlights (2002), while countless cities in the South are rendered “off the map” by Anglo-American criteria, in fact many of these poorer cities are crucial to the world economy, but because they do not house the world’s leading economic firms are considered ‘failures’. This highlights the irrelevance of Global City criteria and labels for many cities in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East (Gilbert, 1998), indicating the need for new models and theories based on the experiences of cities in the South. However, while more South-centric understandings of urban success are arguably necessary, the international hierarchy of Global City dominance ensures that city leaders in these regions continue to strive towards this Anglo-American standard, often to the detriment of vast sectors of their population. Thus, this paper recognises the inadequacies of the Global City label for non-Western contexts, and analyses the consequences of the drive for global competitiveness in cities of the South (while recognising that most, including Cape Town, are not Global Cities according to the dominant criteria). Although the mimicking of richer countries by smaller/poorer states is nothing new, the problems of this are considered within the Global City context.

‘Third World’ cities are traditionally perceived as places with a strong informal sector, weak economic growth, rapid population growth and crumbling infrastructure, quite different to the formal, regulated and sanitised spaces of cities in the North. In order to ‘upgrade’ these cities, to match the acclaimed Global City experience of places such as London and New York, poor cities have prioritised spending scarce resources on projects focused exclusively on promoting their city in the global economy, often at the expense of domestic needs. This homogenising endeavour, to achieve an externally-determined standard, fails to value the differences that diverse cities bring.
This segregation takes two key forms: firstly the categorisation and division of urban spaces according to investment and development; and secondly the separation of urbanites, according to income and class, into polarised socio-spatial sectors. For example, expansion in US cities has led to the development of dual cities, in which networks of highly-developed spaces of residence, work and consumption for prosperous groups do not intersect with the neglected and under-developed spaces used by the city’s poor (e.g. Los Angeles, Davis, 1990).

Obviously, the specific nuances of polarisation differ from city to city, and indeed differ significantly in cities of the South which are more likely to have a colonial/post-colonial history involving ethnic polarisation than the Fordist/post-Fordist employment-based economic restructuring of their Northern counterparts. However, given that cities of the South are encouraged to adopt the criteria established in the North in order to secure global competitiveness, it seems likely that increasing social and spatial polarisation will follow in these already poverty-stricken and divided cities.

In a city that is being marketed (often by both external agents and domestic municipal and business leaders) as a key global player, the goal of urban regeneration is often not urban revival per se, but to undertake whatever is necessary to attract investment. In other words, the key agenda is to make the city marketable rather than to solve the city’s problems. By focusing attention on improving the image and financial power house of the city in order to compete in the global economy, other aspects of the city are either neglected or their needs become superseded by the dominant global agenda. This is particularly the case in cities of the South where planning and investment patterns have historically segregated different groups and spaces. By investing in core areas of the city that are already affluent, in order to demonstrate global strength for both the outside observer and internal elite (to encourage further investment), existing segregation is deepened. In the context of scarce resources, investment in core areas occurs at the expense of poorer areas, thus resigning them to ever-increasing poverty and distinction from the city’s attractive spaces (marketed as the city’s only spaces). Although many cities (including South Africa’s) are promoting pro-poor strategies alongside the drive for global competitiveness, there are concerns that the polarising consequences of the latter inhibit the effectiveness of the former.

In addition, as urban centres become increasingly global in their approach and outlook, this inevitably brings rapid population growth, as both white- and blue-collar migrants (internal and external) flock to the economic opportunities offered by infrastructural and corporate expansion. Whether this is preceded by a post-Fordist decline in manufacturing (as in the North) or post-colonial economic and political change (as in the South), diverse Global City populations are polarised according to social class and income (and often race). This socio-economic fragmentation also manifests at the spatial level, creating cities with “at one extreme … massive poor communities living in shanty-towns, favelas and bidonvilles, and at the other the more spacious and well-equipped communities of the middle-classes and the rich” (Scott et al., 2001). Although the extremes of wealth are perhaps more evident in cities of the South (and those in the North lacking a strong welfare system), social and spatial differentiation appear to be increasing rather than declining throughout the world. As fear of crime pushes the middle-classes into even more extreme enclaves with perimeter fencing and guarded entry in both cities of the North (e.g. Blakely and Snyder, 1997) and South (e.g. Caldeira, 2000), there is a corresponding increase in separation between different social groups and spaces. Obviously, non-global cities suffer equally from polarisation, but the argument highlighted is that the drive for global status further encourages (and certainly ignores) segregation, thus impeding and contradicting pro-poor strategies of integration (if not directly increasing polarisation as well).
Examples of this social and spatial polarisation are evident in diverse cities such as Hong Kong (Breitung and Günter, 2004), Sydney (Baum, 1997; McNeill et al., 2005) and Mexico City (Graizbord et al., 2003). Given that Global Cities demonstrate significant social and spatial polarisation, an aspiration for Global City status is problematic for cities in the developing world, where poverty is widespread and resources are limited. This paper analyses the impact of the drive for global status on social and spatial polarisation in the South by providing a case study of Cape Town in South Africa.

Case study: South Africa

South Africa is widely recognised as the political and economic leader in sub-Saharan Africa despite little more than a decade having passed since its internationally-condemned apartheid regime collapsed and democracy was installed. Despite significant socio-economic progress South Africa remains a country of ‘the South’, although its vast inequality creates a context described by President Thabo Mbeki as ‘two nations’, one of wealth and one of poverty. Although the concept is highly criticised for its crude and simplistic interpretation of national dynamics, South Africa’s cities strongly demonstrate this dichotomy between the first world and third world, where people and spaces from the two worlds are juxtaposed in close proximity, and many inner-city spaces have shifted back and forth between the two worlds over the past decade. This paper considers Cape Town as South Africa’s key aspiring Global City (by contrast Johannesburg is well established globally), alongside an exploration of the impact of its increasingly global status on social and spatial polarisation. That is not to suggest that any of South Africa’s cities have a sufficiently significant role in the world economy to be considered Global Cities, but rather, the implications of the drive for increased global links are considered.

The potential for Global City status to increase inequality and segregation is particularly problematic in South Africa where the legacy of apartheid already provides a strong infrastructure, both spatially and socially, of inequality and division. While the government seeks to overcome this legacy of urban fragmentation in favour of city integration within a pro-poor environment, there are concerns that the drive for global recognition and competitiveness (alongside other conflicting agendas such as appeasing local capital) undermine these goals. Indeed, the South African Minister for provincial and local government simultaneously urges South Africa’s city leaders to on the one hand create cities that function as “engines of global connectivity”, competing for foreign investment by focusing on hi-tech telecommunications and infrastructure, and making their cities attractive places for high-skilled workers, while at the same time responding to “substantial population influxes” from domestic and international migrants, and providing adequate services for the poor (SACN, 2006, p. i). This paper analyses the consequences of these competing demands on the city of Cape Town, investigating whether a city can function both as a global economic contender and provide a redistributive pro-poor environment for its citizens.

Cape Town: an aspiring Global City

Cape Town is South Africa’s oldest city, lovingly referred to as ‘the Mother City’, established in 1652 as a trading post for the Dutch East India Company. It is a popular tourist destination, with the majestic Table Mountain towering over its beautiful beaches and celebrated wine farms. However, the city is also home to sprawling informal settlements and desperate poverty, with significant inequality within its population of 3 million (SACN, 2006, p. 3-3). The city is also South Africa’s legislative capital, hosting national parliament and, despite the relatively small size of its economy (compared to Johannesburg), is increasingly attracting international business.

In July 1999, the Cape Town Partnership (CTP) was established, dedicated to regenerating Cape Town’s central city and promoting it as a destination for global business, investment, retail, entertainment and leisure. In other words, the CTP, a non-profit project between the private sector and provincial and local government, was created to launch Cape Town into the global arena, with the former CEO Michael Farr stating that “we are building a globally competitive city for residents, investors and visitors to enjoy” (FDI Magazine, 2003). The CTP functions as a development facilitator, working with domestic and international investors, commercial property owners, developers, financiers, businesses and managers to encourage economic investment, activity and development in the central city zone.

One of the CTP’s major projects is the Central City Improvement District (CCID), established in November 2000. The additional revenue raised by the CCID (all property owners in the district are levied a supplementary rate) has been used to ‘clean up’ the city centre in terms of crime (the CCID employs over 200 security personnel and operates an extensive CCTV network) and dirt (CCID-employed refuse collectors and street cleaners have doubled the City council’s cleaning personnel), thus making the city a more attractive place to invest and/or locate business (Nahnsen, 2003). In the six years of CCID operation, Cape Town’s central district has undergone a significant transformation with massive private investment including upgrades, new developments and new lease agreements as businesses have flocked to the city’s central spaces. This is a significant change from the late-1990s era when businesses and residents were fleeing the decaying and crime-ridden city centre that had become dominated

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2 His ‘two nations’ concept was first used in a 1998 debate – Statement of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki at the Opening of the Debate on ‘Reconciliation and Nation Building’, National Assembly, Cape Town, 29 May 1998.

3 Obviously, there are gradients of experience between the ‘two nations’ of wealth and poverty, but the stark difference between the two groups in which the majority of urbanites function is significant.

4 The CTP works closely with Wesgro, the official Trade and Investment Promotion Agency for the Western Cape province.
by street-hawkers and vagrants (De-
war, 2004; Nahsen, 2003).

Clearly, Cape Town’s leaders are
striving for global eminence and have
achieved significant urban renewal;
however, whether this transformation
merits the ‘Global City’ label accord-
ing to the criteria used elsewhere is
doubtful. Matthew Gibb’s (2006a,b)
recent research highlights Cape Town
as displaying “Global City characteris-
tics” based on internationally-focused
strategies of both economic develop-
ment and global marketing, manifest
in a growing real-estate, tourist and
business economy (2006b). While the
following section briefly considers
Cape Town’s record as an aspiring
Global City, more in-depth discussion
evidence can be found in Gibb’s
work (Ibid).

The history of Cape Town is
decidedly global, originating as an
international trading post and accom-
modating a population drawn from
the across the world (e.g. Malay,
Dutch and African). During the apar-
theid years global connections were
annexed. In the early-1990s, as South
Africa began to re-enter international
markets following the demise of apar-
thed, Cape Town’s economy under-
went significant structural changes to
match global demands. Although
Cape Town was already experiencing
a decline in manufacturing industries
such as textiles, clothing and food pro-
duction from the mid-1980s, due to
competition from lower-waged mar-
kets elsewhere in South Africa, this
manufacturing ‘depression’ was argu-
ably augmented by international com-
petition as South Africa opened to
global markets and tariff barriers were
dropped in the early-1990s. As South
Africa opened up its markets to the
world following the demise of apar-
thed, its non-competitive sectors,
which had been previously protected
by the government, were doomed to
fail. Furthermore, in line with post-
Fordist changes in the North, contem-
porary Cape Town has experienced an
expansion in service-provider and fi-
nance-based firms such as ICT, the
film industry and investment corpora-
tions (Jenkins and Wilkinson, 2002),
with the latter increasingly located in
the city centre. After the 1980s–1990s
desertion of the city centre by busi-
ness, in the late-1990s and early-
2000s corporate giants from South
Africa and across the globe were
increasingly attracted to the Fore-
shore area (the northern part of the
city centre). This region has become
the ‘financial heart’ of the city, hous-
ing both international (e.g. Investec,
Ernst and Young and ABSA-
Barclays) and domestic financial
institutions.

From 2000 to 2004, a cumulative to-
tal of R12.5bn5 has been invested in
the central city, comprising both
domestic and international develop-
ments, investment purchases, up-
grades, renewals and new leases
(Norris, 2004). Since 2003, investment
has been further encouraged by the
designation of Cape Town’s CBD as
an Urban Development Zone (UDZ)
with tax incentives to encourage pri-
vate sector property construction and
building renovation. The success of
this property development is indicated
by the intense competition for com-
mercial and residential space in the
CBD. For example, retail rental costs
have increased by 350% over the past
six years, with office space undergoing
a similar explosion, and indeed by
2005 only 10% of office space in the
city was vacant, compared to 60% just
four years prior (Property Magazine,
May 2005). Alongside this demand
for commercial space, a large propor-
tion of the city has recently become
residential, with former office build-
ings in the southern part of the city
centre renovated into modern apart-
maments (e.g. Perspectives, Mutual
Heights, Mandela-Rhodes Place, The
Deck). The success of the city as a res-
idential space is indicated by the rock-
eting cost of residential property. For
example, prices for a one-bedroom
apartment in the CBD are comparable
to a three-bedroom suburban house
(e.g. R1 million6), and competition
for these properties (amongst both
domestic and international purchas-
ers) is intense. This is a new phenom-

5 R12.5 billion is approximately 0.87 billion
GBP and 1.7 billion USD at November
2006 exchange rates.
6 R1 million is approximately 72,520 GBP
and 140,135 USD at November 2006
exchange rates.

Over the past few years, Cape
Town has become a popular interna-
tional tourist destination, voted ‘best
foreign city in the world’ by the 2004
British Telegraph Travel Awards. In
addition, since opening in June 2003
the Cape Town International Conven-
tion Centre (CTICC), situated in the
heart of the city’s new business core,
has attracted significant business tour-
ism, most of which is international.

The CTICC is a joint project between
the City of Cape Town and a private
company (Pollack, 2006), and makes
a massive impact on the city’s global
attractiveness not only in its own
capacity as a meeting venue, but also
in the investment it injects into the
rest of the Cape Town economy. A fur-
ther strategy to ‘plug’ Cape Town into
global markets has been the drive for
an efficient ICT infrastructure. The
eastern region has been identified as
a future ‘e-city’, attracting ICT and re-
lated sectors, such as the film industry
(Dewar, 2004), though this is an area
in which Cape Town remains behind
more high-speed cities elsewhere in
the world.

Cape Town’s business and munic-
pal leaders clearly aspire global
competitiveness, with the shift to-
wards international investment along-
side service-producer and financial-
based firms competing in the global
economy, significant international
investment, and increased global con-
nections through tourism.8 The

7 Although areas near the city-centre have long
been residential (e.g. District Six, Bokaap, Orangezicht) the downtown area
itself has only recently adopted residential
uses. In contrast, Johannesburg and Dur-
ban city centres have had significant resi-
dential uses for some time.
8 Despite Cape Town’s growing share of
the global tourism (including business) market,

Viewpoint: C Lemanski
impact of this on Cape Town’s economy is considered.

Impact of global competitiveness on Cape Town’s economy

The national government’s 2006 ‘Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative’ (Asgi-SA) seeks to halve South Africa’s poverty and unemployment by 2014 by sustaining increased growth targets of 4.5% until 2009, and 6% after 2010 (SACN, 2006, p. 5-11). A large amount of this growth is expected to come from South Africa’s cities, which already constitute 62.5% of the national economy (SACN, 2006, p. 3-8). Cape Town’s economic growth has been approximately 3% per year since 2001 (SACN, 2006, 3-8, 3-9), and thus city leaders will face significant pressure to increase this in order to meet the demands of Asgi-SA. Whether the changing nature of Cape Town’s economy can produce and sustain this growth is yet to be seen, but the changing sectoral composition of Cape Town’s GVA (gross value added) strongly reflects the city’s growing global status, with significant growth in the financial, commercial and service sectors over the past ten years, alongside the stagnating importance of manufacturing. As Figure 1 shows, since 1996 when manufacturing superseded commerce, and was only slightly behind the service and financial sectors in terms of their contribution to Cape Town’s GVA, by 2004 the commercial, financial and services sectors had become far more crucial to Cape Town’s economy than manufacturing, with the financial sector contributing almost double that of manufacturing to Cape Town’s GVA.

Furthermore, as Figure 2 indicates, Cape Town’s contemporary economic growth is driven by the commercial, financial and service sectors (SACN, 2006, p. 3-9), demonstrating a strong resemblance to Global Cities elsewhere.

Although manufacturing remains a key element of the city economy (16% of GVA), both its growth rate and overall share of the city market have decreased significantly since 1960 when it formed just under a third, the largest share, of Cape Town’s economy (Dewar et al., 1990) and provided over a quarter of employment in the city (Borel-Salahdin, 2006, p. 36). As indicated earlier, although this manufacturing decline commenced in the mid-1980s and thus was not caused by the city’s global drive, but was a consequence of changing employment trends, its decline has been augmented by the opening up of Cape Town to global markets over the past decade. Indeed, since the mid-1990s, Cape Town (along with the cities of eThekwini and Buffalo City) lost more than 50,000 jobs in the clothing and textile industries as a consequence of trade liberalisation and competition from cheaper imports (SACN, 2006, p. 4-4).

Cape Town: a pro-poor or pro-growth environment?

Alongside Cape Town’s increasingly global status and its implications for a city economy based on growth rather than redistribution, local government strongly promote a pro-poor agenda. Although initial post-apartheid policies focused on the provision of basic services rather than economic efficiency (i.e. ‘Reconstruction and Development Programme’ 1994), this was later superseded by a focus on economic productivity and growth (i.e. ‘Growth Employment and Redistribution’ 1996). At the city level, local economic development (LED) strategies have been strongly promoted by national government, seeking to devolve economic responsibility and encourage pro-growth strategies that are both driven by and benefit local stakeholders (Rogerson, 2003, pp. 60–61), for example, Cape Town’s City Improvement District.

Despite the pro-growth emphasis of LEDs, seeking to increase a city’s productiveness within the global economy, many local governments are beginning to promote “distinctly South African” LED interventions that adopt a pro-poor focus (Rogerson, 2000, p. 398). For example, using local economic growth to create employment opportunities, alleviate poverty, redistribute resources and widen the skills and asset base of poor communities (Rogerson, 2000, 2003, 2004). Indeed, Cape Town was...
the first municipality to develop a pro-poor LED framework, with a strong emphasis on the role of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to provide job creation, skills development and infrastructural improvements (Parnell et al., 2005, pp. 53–55). Furthermore, pro-poor approaches remain a crucial component of other municipal policies, focusing on the provision of basic services and subsidised housing. However, these pro-poor strategies often conflict with the pro-growth agenda, for example, the creation of low-income ‘slums’ on the urban periphery (where land is affordable), far from economic activities, thus trapping residents into poverty and inhibiting their potential to contribute to the growth of the urban economy. In response, municipalities are seeking to promote ‘integrated human settlements’ that situate low-cost housing within the city limits as part of dense mixed-use developments (part of the ‘Breaking New Ground’ policy).

However, the financial costs of acquiring such land (and the economic loss from using well-situated public land for low-cost housing rather than more lucrative developments) have implications for the city’s pro-growth agenda. Furthermore, despite the official promotion of ‘integration’ strategies (e.g. Cape Town’s Integrated Development Plan, Spatial Development Framework, Breaking New Ground housing policy), attempts to integrate city residents in such a forced manner are likely to meet significant opposition from the wealthy.

Thus, the complexities of this dual challenge, to meet both pro-growth and pro-poor targets are problematic, as indicated by the South African State of Cities 2006 Report:

“The debate between pro-growth and pro-poor strategies remains unresolved, with some cities, such as Johannesburg, focusing more on pro-growth strategies to enhance their competitiveness in the global market” (SACN, 2006, p. 4-8).

In contrast to Johannesburg, Cape Town is promoting both pro-growth and pro-poor strategies, confirmed by its 2003 Local Area Economic Development Manual promoting “inclusive economic development that provides both growth and poverty reduction, based on the dynamic relationship of the two” (cited in Parnell et al., 2005, p. 55), by focusing on attracting economic investment while at the same time facilitating job creation and infrastructural development. In addition, Cape Town’s Integrated Development Plan (IDP), formulated with significant citizen participation to determine the future direction of the city, focuses on the need to “compete in the global economy and at the same time deal with the social and environmental pressures arising from a growing population” (CCT, 2004, p. 7).

However, the IDP also highlights Cape Town’s serious problem of inequality, “a legacy of the apartheid city as well as the result of a global economy that has created many benefits but has not spread these benefits evenly” (CCT, 2004, p. 7). Thus, this paper considers the widespread concern that global economic success for the city centre and for capital is not being shared with the rest of the city’s spaces and people, and is in fact augmenting existing socio-economic and spatial disparities, and inhibiting pro-poor strategies, by concentrating global development and investment in only a tiny segment of the metropolis.

**Spatial and social polarisation in Cape Town**

As highlighted earlier, a characteristic of the modern Global City is spatial polarisation, evident in America’s divided cities. As will be indicated, Cape Town is a divided city, with Robins (2000, 2005) describing the city in Mike Davis’ hyperbole style as “Fortress L.A. at the tip of Africa” with heightened polarisation between ghettos and gated communities. However, whether such polarisation is a consequence of an increasingly globalised outlook or simply a legacy of apartheid (or a combination of the two) is less certain. As indicated earlier, the drive towards Global City-ness encourages two types of fragmentation: spatial, for example, over-investment in one central area at the expense of the rest of the city; and social, for example, the increasing polarisation of the population between wealthy professionals and the urban poor; both of which would augment.
pre-existing apartheid legacies in South Africa. These two types of segregation are considered in contemporary Cape Town.

**Spatial polarisation**

The creation of the CTP coincided with the establishment of Cape Town as a single ‘unicity’ in December 2000, an amalgamation of the previous seven metropolitan local councils into a single structure and administration. One of the goals of this transformation was to redistribute taxes and resources throughout the entire metropolitan area (with the slogan ‘one city one tax base’) and thus prevent clusters of wealth and resources. Ironically, the CTP does exactly that, by concentrating the extra resources of central city residents directly into the central city area. Although entirely justifiable that residents’ top-up levies are channelled exclusively into their residential area (while their ‘normal’ tax remains part of the wider ‘one city’ redistribution system), the potential consequences for spatial polarisation and exclusivity are very real. In addition, channelling the extra revenue generated from investment and business activity in the city’s heart into establishing an upmarket and globally competitive core that occupies less than 1% of the metropolitan area and accommodates a tiny proportion of the population, rather than redistributing some of it to the city’s poverty-stricken townships on the city edge, rejects the very basis of the new metropolitan’s redistributive focus.

Although one of the CTP goals is to “contribute to the overall development of the City of Cape Town” (CTP, 2005), confirmed by Cape Town’s former Mayor Nomandla Mbeketo’s highly-politicised statement that “national and international investors look to our central city and its success as a benchmark – a standard which motivates the consideration of investments elsewhere in the metro-

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9 Blaauwberg Municipality, City of Cape Town, City of Tygerberg, Helderberg Municipality, Oostenberg Municipality, South Peninsula Municipality and the Cape Metropolitan Council.

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10 The apartheid racial classifications of African, coloured (mixed heritage), Indian (Asian descent) and white (European) are used. However, apartheid’s ‘African’ label is updated to ‘Black African’ in recognition that the other groups are also African (‘Black African’ is also the term adopted by the 2001 census), and ‘black’ (lower case) is used to describe all non-whites.

11 For example, the 1996 Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework (MSDF) sought to create an economic node in Philippi (on the south-eastern city edge) and link it with existing economic nodes in the southern and northern suburbs through the creation of an ‘activity corridor’.
and residential development in Cape Town’s northern and central-southern areas.

Despite this spatial concentration of resources, local and national government are seeking to re-address these imbalances, using spatial planning to overcome both apartheid and post-apartheid problems of spatial segregation (Watson, 2002). The failure of initial post-apartheid spatial strategies such as the 1997 ‘Urban Development Framework’ (UDF) and 1998 ‘National Spatial Development Perspective’ (NSDP) to challenge apartheid spatial trends has been recognised, and both strategies are being re-conceptualised for the contemporary era (SACN, 2006, p. 2-15, 2-28). Indeed, evidence from 2001 census data indicating that while South Africa’s cities have a high concentration of economic activity, they also host high numbers of people living below Minimum Living Levels (SACN, 2006, p. 2-15) prompted a re-evaluation of urban spatial planning to tackle both growth and poverty. The new spatial strategies are expected to focus on creating spatial efficiency and equity (e.g. densification, integration, compact city). However, the failure of Cape Town’s Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework (MSDF) to achieve these goals using mechanisms such as densification and the compact city ideal (Watson, 2002), highlights the challenges of the dual goals of promoting the “global role of cities” and meeting the needs of the urban poor (SACN, 2006, p. 5-4). Indeed, Cape Town’s MSDF ultimately failed because its integrative pro-poor planning ideals based on equity and social welfare were at odds with the post-1996 focus on economic growth and market competitiveness (Watson, 2002, p. 142).

As indicated earlier, Cape Town’s municipality has prioritised investment and development that enables it to compete in the global economy, while also driving pro-poor strategies. However, the consequences of this global drive have been increased spatial polarisation, as global and domestic investments and developments favour only a handful of areas in the city (i.e. the city centre, northern and southern suburbs), thus undermining their pro-poor stance by leaving the rest of the metropolis to deteriorate from insufficient public or private investment and development.

Social polarisation

Although the renewal of Cape Town’s CBD area has been praised as a huge success, this regeneration has pushed social problems beyond the inner-city boundaries (and thus outside the CTP’s mandate), rather than addressing these social issues as part of a holistic interpretation of upgrading the city centre. In fact, the previous ANC-controlled metropolitan council was highly critical of the CTP, viewing its transformation of the CBD as “racist and elitist” in its promotion of formal business and investment at the exclusion of small informal traders, alongside its regulatory policing style (Dewar, 2004). Furthermore, the CTP has been criticised by developmentalists for its conceptualisation of Cape Town’s city centre as a private and financial enterprise from which the inner-city poor have been excluded and victimised.

The CTP’s original CEO Michael Farr perceived the “antisocial behaviour of informal parking attendants, street children and vagrants … [as] unacceptable” (Business Day, 5 July 2001 – quoted in Hooper, 2004). Rather than seeking to integrate these elements into the new city centre, the CTP used physical force through its Community Police Officers to repeatedly arrest and ultimately remove homeless vagrants, informal parking attendants, sex workers, vendors, beggars, recyclers and street-children from its borders (Hooper, 2004). This is remarkably similar to Rudolph Giuliani’s “zero tolerance” approach to cleaning-up New York by removing beggars, drunks and vandals so as to clear the streets for ‘respectable’ citizens (Smith, 1999). Although many of Cape Town’s removals were implemented sensitively, with support from social workers and local NGOs (Dewar, 2004), the exclusion of these ‘undesirable elements’ indicates an intentional strategy to promote investment and tourism at all costs, with no consideration of the social impacts on the non-wealthy (Hooper, 2004). Furthermore, the poor and their problems have been exclusively relocated outside of the precious CBD-zone and into the city’s poorer areas, indicating the CTP desire to create an inner-city space that is the exclusive preserve of wealthy professionals, tourists and formal enterprises (Hooper, 2004). In addition, as rental prices for commercial spaces have soared, the CTP goal of achieving “the ‘right’ tenant mix” (Dewar, 2004, p. 101) has been achieved, effectively excluding those tenants involved in informal and/or small-scale activities from the city’s burgeoning economic activity. Thus, the drive for global competitiveness has negatively impacted both the poor and small businesses.

Although the new CTP CEO Andrew Boraine (the ANC-aligned former city manager replaced business-focused Michael Farr in 2004) is more aware of these social problems, the errors of the past have been made, creating a city space on the foundations of gentrification and exclusion. Whether Boraine’s emphasis on the importance of accessible public spaces, pedestrianised areas and developments that cater to all income groups, ages, classes and races will translate into tangible change in the city centre is yet to be seen. However, his transformation of the CTP board to include NGO representatives and black professionals (Garner, 2004), as well as his declared intention to consider social housing in the city centre (CTP, 2006), are both positive steps towards inclusivity.

The social polarisation experienced in contemporary Cape Town is not solely manifest in the exclusion of the poor from the city centre, but is also represented in much wider trends in the metropolitan region. Capetonians

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12 The ANC (African National Party) was the principal anti-apartheid movement in previous decades, and since the dawn of democracy in 1994 has been South Africa’s ruling party. However, it has only controlled the Cape Town council for one period (2002-2006), and the council is currently controlled by the Democratic Alliance (DA).

13 Though whether this will actually occur given the price of property in this region is debatable.
are divided at the extremes of employment, income and class (with implications for ethnic and physical segregation). Indeed, Cape Town’s household Gini co-efficient\(^{14}\) was 0.67 in 2005, and although lower than the national average of 0.71 (SACN, 2006, p. 3-45), it is significantly worse than some of the world’s most unequal societies (e.g. Bolivia 0.60, Brazil 0.58, Chile 0.57, Botswana 0.63: UNDP, 2006, pp. 335–338). Although much of this polarisation is a consequence of apartheid legacies, these have been exacerbated by the city’s increasing global success which has not been equally spread throughout the city (despite the pro-poor policies discussed earlier). Indeed, reminiscent of divided cities in the US and Latin America, Cape Town’s population is increasingly polarised between the middle-classes enclosed in heavily-protected developments for their places of work, leisure and residence and the urban poor crammed into informal and formal townships with inadequate services and rampant violent crime (Lemanski, 2006). As Robbins (2002) notes:

“Such processes are reproduced by massive unemployment and racialised poverty resulting from socio-spatial legacies of apartheid and Cape Town’s shift from a manufacturing to a tourist, IT and financial services economy.”

In other words, the structural changes in Cape Town’s employment configuration (as a consequence of both domestic and global competition from the mid-1980s onwards), leading to the dominance of industries that require small numbers of highly-skilled professionals rather than the traditional focus on industries requiring high numbers of un- and semi-skilled workers, has caused significant polarisation of the population between professionals employed in the lucrative new city, and those facing unemployment and poverty.

Recent research on Cape Town’s labour markets (Borel-Saladin, 2006) uses census 2001 data to indicate a growing professionalism rather than polarisation of the workforce. In other words, Borel-Saladin suggests that Cape Town has experienced a greater increase in the number of highly-skilled workers than in the number of unskilled workers, in both relative and absolute terms, thus indicating the workforce as becoming increasingly professional. Whilst accurate that the number of highly-skilled workers has increased, the number of unskilled workers has also increased, while the number of semi-skilled workers has decreased (see Figure 3), thus indicating polarisation in the workforce. Therefore, Borel-Saladin’s complementary argument, that the flipside of this ‘professionalism’ is that Cape Town’s population is not suffering from increased ‘polarisation’, is disputed. As Figure 3 indicates, employment for highly-skilled workers at one end of the employment spectrum, and unskilled workers on the other, have both grown rapidly in the past ten years (after a dip in highly-skilled workers between 1998 and 2002), while employment for skilled labourers has dropped drastically, indicating significant polarisation in Cape Town’s workforce.

Furthermore, while Borel-Saladin’s data address solely the workforce in Cape Town, which is in fact both professionalizing and polarising, there is also increased polarisation between the minority of employed professionals and the mass unemployed (ignored by Borel-Saladin’s analysis of the “workforce”), who are largely unemployable in the new highly-skilled professional Cape Town. Furthermore, Borel-Saladin’s analysis only addresses the period up until 2001, when Cape Town’s manufacturing output was still on a par with commerce and services, but in the interim five years, manufacturing has stagnated, while other sectors have rocketed (Figure 1). Since the mid-1980s Cape Town’s formal employment has decreased significantly, particularly in the manufacturing industry, predominantly affecting the Black African and Coloured communities (Jenkins and Wilkinson, 2002). Indeed, almost a quarter (23.4%) of Cape Town’s ‘economically active’ population were unemployed in 2004, an absolute increase of 0.68% since 2001 (SACN, 2006, p. 3-16). Although lower than national unemployment, which was 27.1% in 2004 (SACN, 2006, p. 3-16), it is still significant given the strength of Cape Town’s economy, indicating that unemployment remains a major challenge for the city.

Borel-Saladin’s (2006, p. 82-5) data indicate that Coloureds have been most negatively affected by Cape Town’s unemployment amongst skilled workers, with a loss of 30,000 manufacturing jobs in the Coloured community between 1980 and 2001, and long-term unemployment particularly affecting Coloured men. However, even those Coloured women who did regain employment outside of manufacturing are in significantly lower-skilled and lower-paid work than their White counterparts, while Black African employment continues to be in even lower-skilled and lower-paid occupations (Ibid.), thus indicating significant socioeconomic polarisation based on race.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of employment by sector in Cape Town, indicating the dominance of the fast growing commercial sector, followed by employment in financial, service-related and manufacturing jobs (although the latter two have declined). Although similar to Cape Town’s GVA by sector (Figure 1), it becomes evident that the financial sector contributes more to GVA than to employment, while the commercial sector dominates employment.

In addition, Cape Town’s popularity as a destination for domestic and international (predominantly African) migrants, receiving a net in-migration of 129,400 people between 2001 and 2006, 4.4% of its total population in 2006 (SACN, 2006, pp. 2-17, 2-18), has implications for the city’s employment structures. The majority of migrants are engaged in informal employment, in which 75% of workers earn less than R1000\(^{15}\) per month (SACN, 2006, p. 2-27), with Cape

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\(^{14}\) The Gini co-efficient is a measure of income inequality where 0 represents total equality (in which every household has the same income), and 1 represents total inequality (where all wealth is concentrated in one household).

\(^{15}\) R1000 is approximately 72.50 GBP and 140 USD at November 2006 exchange rates.
Town’s informal employment levels growing by 5.8% between 1996 and 2001, and by a further 6% between 2001 and 2004, while formal employment remained relatively constant over the same period (SACN, 2006, p. 3-18). The growth of the informal sector indicates further polarisation, between those functioning in the city’s legitimate economy, with employment protections and mechanisms for legal redress, and those stuck in the city’s ‘second’ economy, with no support structures or safety nets.

Although Cape Town’s population division mirrors trends identified in Global Cities, in Cape Town this fragmentation is amplified by the already significant social and spatial segregation evident in the city as a consequence of decades of colonialism and apartheid. Furthermore, Cape Town’s social fragmentation is not only class-based as in Global Cities, but also race-based and spatially-determined; with predominantly White areas of affluence centrally-located in Cape Town’s leafy suburbs hosting large homes, schools and shopping centres, many of which are barricaded by private security firms; in contrast with black townships hosting mass unemployment and poverty situated on the urban periphery (Robins, 2005, 11–12). Whilst not every Capetonian fits into this binary, it is the majority experience. Although this socio-spatial segregation and inequality is largely a consequence of apartheid legacies, Cape Town’s increasing global competitiveness has inhibited post-apartheid attempts to integrate the city by concentrating the spoils of globalisation amongst the people and places already experiencing affluence. The dominance of this dual city, with the wealthy enjoying access to international markets and resources while the predominantly black poor remain marginal to this economy, more than a decade after the ending of apartheid indicates the problems of aspirations for Global City status in South Africa, but also in cities of the South.

**Conclusion**

“Urban areas are the keys to a country’s success in the global marketplace … but cities can also be problematic: they have the capacity to exclude, to marginalise, to reinforce patterns of inequality, and to create insiders and outsiders” (SACN, 2006, p. 2-2).

As the discussion has indicated, Cape Town has become increasingly global in its outlook and interactions,
mirroring international trends with an expanse in service-provider firms, corporate headquarters and tourism, alongside the growing polarisation of its spaces and social groups, between those with access to international networks, opportunities and resources and those resigned to isolation and poverty. Indeed, despite the increasingly global status of Cape Town, with economic growth and infrastructural development, poverty and inequality remain dominant. The extent to which the drive for global competitiveness has caused this is hard to quantify, although evidence presented earlier indicates some causality. However, it is clear that Cape Town’s increasing global strength has not alleviated poverty or segregation in the city, and that the spoils of globalisation have not been equally shared. Indeed, 77.3% of South Africa’s residents living under the Minimum Living Level are located within 60km of areas that generate at least R1billion\(^\text{16}\) of GVA per annum (SACN, 2006, pp. 2-9, 2-11), thus indicating the failure of economic spoils to be equally distributed. Robins (2002, p. 684) aptly describes Global Cape Town as a place in which: “Investors and businesses continue to gravitate towards the well policed, historically white, middle spaces of the city. These parts of Cape Town have indeed been incorporated into a representation of Cape Town as a globally competitive, multicultural city driven by the tourism industry and the IT and financial service sectors.”

However, while he sees “two other sides” to globalising Cape Town, one of middle-class gated communities on the one hand, and urban ghettos of poverty on the other, in fact these segregated spaces are inextricably part of the global drive. Any city aiming for global competitiveness deepens existing polarisation and fragmentation.

Thus, given the significant poverty in cities of the South alongside evidence that the drive for global competitiveness has negative implications for the domestic population (particularly in cities of the South) in terms of socio-spatial inequality and fragmentation, then perhaps such cities should not be aspiring Global City status, but what other choice exists in the global milieu? While easy to suggest that cities (especially those in the South with dire poverty) should be directing their resources and energies to securing the basic needs of their residents, such as housing, education, health, employment and education, rather than striving to develop certain areas as mega-malls and global financial centres so as to secure the Global City tag; in fact, avoiding the global economy is not such an easy choice. As Jenkins and Wilkinson (2002, p. 33) stress, in the contemporary era “cities . . . have to compete globally to develop their local economies if they wish to maintain or improve their position”, and thus ignoring global demands appears an impossible choice for city leaders, and in fact would ultimately deny their residents even further as the absence of international investment would curtail domestic resources and thus limit services to the poor. Therefore, the question remains as to whether it is possible for a city to be both globally competitive and address domestic socio-economic redistribution? Evidence from Cape Town indicates that even when cities prioritise both, the former can inhibit, or at least dilute, the latter, as the benefits of global competitiveness favour the upper echelons of socio-economic society.

Although pro-growth global city and pro-poor domestic city agendas are not necessarily incompatible goals for city leaders in theory, for example, Cape Town’s municipal leaders promote both, evidence from the Cape Town case study raises concerns that in practice, success in the global marketplace has negative consequences for the urban poor, thus inhibiting the success of a pro-poor agenda. The inherent problems in trying to balance these two goals are summarised by urban theorist Jenny Robinson:

“Securing growth at the same time as expanding service delivery in politically contested and resource-poor environments represents a great challenge for local governments. Electoral or popular support may be dependent on developing effective services, and increasingly, ensuring that private firms meet the needs of the poor. On the other hand, long-term viability or national state approval may depend on promoting dynamic economic growth” (Robinson, 2006).

South Africa’s cities (alongside other cities in the South) suffer from the contrasting demands, agendas and pressures (from both internal and external groups) to simultaneously strengthen their economic status so as to compete in the global economic market, but also to provide social welfare for the majority of the population struggling to exist in everyday poverty. Although these rival agendas are no different to cities throughout the world, in Cape Town (and in cities of the South) the welfare needs of the population are often more significant and less likely to benefit from the spoils of global activity. Furthermore, in South Africa the legacies of apartheid ensure a particular tension between achieving capitalist macro-economic success and securing the post-apartheid goal of a just and equitable society (Lemon, 2004). Thus, the fashion in which city managers respond to this dilemma is crucial. However, as long as the two goals remain mutually incompatible in practice, and for as long as cities feel under domestic and international pressure to prioritise global economic advancement in order to move up the ‘hierarchy’ of global cities, the poor and their spaces will ultimately suffer.

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\(^{16}\) R1billion is approximately 72.5 million GBP and 140 million USD at November 2006 exchange rates.
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References


Persistent Polarisation Post-Apartheid? Progress towards Urban Integration in Cape Town

Ivan Turok

Summary. The paper examines the progress made since 1994 to reduce the deep social and spatial divisions in South African cities, focusing on the impact of current development trends in Cape Town. Basic public services are gradually being extended to the historically neglected townships. However, the character of economic and social development differs markedly across the city. Private-sector investment and jobs continue to be concentrated in the affluent north and west, while low-income subsidised housing is focused on the poorer south-east. Institutional practices and market forces are tending to reinforce spatial divisions, with costly consequences for the poor majority of the population and for the wider urban economy and society. The broad statements from policy-makers about the need for urban integration are not being translated into consistent action, apparently because of a lack of political will and institutional capacity. The new Unicity authority provides scope in principle for a more coherent approach, based in part on a strategic framework to manage land development in the interests of the whole city, and a more proactive approach towards building a stronger employment base in the south-east.

1. Introduction

The impact on cities of major national transfers of power has been a neglected object of study, despite profound political upheavals across several continents during the past decade. Among the obvious issues arising are the extent and nature of urban transformation and the sources of continuity and resistance to change. South Africa is a particularly interesting case because of the enormous shift in power that occurred during the 1990s. Its divided cities contributed to the demise of the previous regime by undermining its legitimacy and deepening its financial and managerial crisis. In this paper, a preliminary assessment is offered of the extent of urban change in the transition from Apartheid, focusing on one of the country’s largest metropolitan areas.

Greater Cape Town is a starkly polarised city. Affluent suburbs and prosperous economic centres offering rich opportunities of all kinds contrast with overcrowded, impoverished dormitory settlements on the periphery. This partly reflects the topography and en-
environment: stunning mountain and coastal settings juxtaposed with the wind-swept, flood-prone, sand plains of the Cape Flats. Wide income inequalities sort people across this space according to their ability to buy into different quality neighbourhoods and lifestyles through the housing market. Underlying this for many years was a system of racial ideology and planning that emphasised separate human, economic and spatial development. It inscribed deep divisions into the geography of the city through population controls, forced removal and separate, unequal governing institutions. Sufficient time has elapsed since the country’s first democratic elections in 1994 for a review of emerging urban development patterns.

The paper examines current investment trends across the city and considers their implications for the spatial challenges faced. Are development patterns and policies beginning to integrate the city, or are they reinforcing inherited divisions? The evidence suggests that, while some progress is being made to extend public services to the historically neglected townships, the scale and character of investment differs markedly across the city, implying broad continuity with the past rather than any transformation. The economic and social forces that emerged under apartheid did not suddenly expire with the advent of democracy. The legacy is embedded in conservative institutional and social practices that continue to have powerful effects, overriding many current policy aspirations. The new competitive economic and political environment for the city and the country also poses an additional set of challenges for urban integration.

The next section outlines the history and legacy of past policy in the city, followed by a review of contemporary policies. Section 4 examines current development patterns across the city. The fifth section seeks to explain these, focusing on investment in the relatively well-off areas. Section 6 considers the obstacles to development in the poorest south-east sector. The seventh section discusses the role of public investment and the final section offers conclusions and some policy ideas.

2. The Legacy of Segregation and Fragmentation

The three most important structural elements of cities are employment, housing and the transport connections between them. They determine to a significant extent how efficiently and equitably cities function. They are also critical resources for people, so access to them has a big effect on their living standards and is competitively sought after. They will be used as a loose framework to examine the changing structure of Cape Town. South African cities are unusual in the way these features were controlled by the state in order to promote white minority interests and to subordinate the black population (Dewar, 1995; Mabin and Smit, 1997; Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, 1998; Smith, 1992; Swilling et al., 1991; Tomlinson, 1994; Turok, 1994). This produced distorted settlement patterns characterised by social segregation and physical fragmentation. Separate racially based local authorities were designed to reflect and reinforce residential and economic separation. Black urbanisation was strictly regulated and peripheral townships were denied industrial, commercial and retail development. This limited their tax-base and jobs, and forced people to shop in white areas. Meanwhile, the white municipalities had smaller populations to serve and much larger concentrations of economic activity and wealth to tax. They had well-developed transport infrastructure, good-quality educational facilities, high standards of public services, good housing conditions and substantial employment, commercial and recreational facilities.

The outcome was extremely inequitable and inefficient. High private and public costs were imposed on mobility for the black population. Separate and peripheral development increased the costs of servicing residential areas. Laws preventing blacks from owning property or starting businesses of any
kind deprived them of independent means of generating income. The townships lacked essential services and their infrastructure was not maintained. Constraints on land availability and house-building caused severe overcrowding. This brought overloaded facilities close to collapse and damaged the environment. Under-resourced and unviable black local authorities could not cope with growing service demands during the 1980s and were discredited by mismanagement and malpractice. Communities responded to the deteriorating conditions with mass boycotts of rent and service charges, and large-scale invasions of surrounding land. This was part of a wider withdrawal of consent and mass protest, internally and externally, which precipitated a profound financial, managerial and political crisis, culminating in negotiations which led to a transition to democracy in the 1990s.

There is little doubt about the predicament facing the present government

South African settlements in both urban and rural areas are generally inefficient, fragmented, inconvenient and massively wasteful in terms of both publicly- and privately-controlled resources. For many they are hostile places in which to live, offering few economic, social, cultural, environmental or recreational opportunities. In large part this is the result of the interplay between historical spatial planning policies and practices and the implementation of the ideology of apartheid (Development and Planning Commission, 1999, p. 30).

Cape Town is typical of South African cities in various respects, including a monocentric structure for many years and a relatively strong and diversified economy. It has grown quickly over the past 150 years to a population of about 3 million through a combination of market- and policy-induced processes. Until the 1950s, the city had a reasonably efficient spatial form considering its unusual physical setting. Suburbs extended mainly along two radial rail and road transport routes to the south and north-east of an intensely developed central business district. Many people lived in mixed-race residential areas and the city enjoyed a relatively liberal reputation as a result (Bickford-Smith et al, 1999; Wilkinson, 2000).

In the post-war era, the city’s spatial structure was transformed by the new National Party government’s pursuit of ‘total apartheid’, resulting in the imposition of rigid residential segregation in the context of an expanding ‘Coloured’ and ‘African’ population

The implementation of the Group Areas legislation had a devastating impact, leading to the dislocation of well-established communities and the forced removal, by the end of the 1960s, of an estimated 150 000 people to new public housing estates or ‘townships’ built on the Cape Flats (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 197). These townships were also built to accommodate the African labour force required by the city’s growing economy and originating from in-migration from the Eastern Cape. They included Gugulethu and Nyanga (built for Africans in the 1950s and 1960s), followed by Mitchell’s Plain, Blue Downs and Delft (built for the expanding Coloured population in the 1970s and 1980s). They were built as dormitory suburbs with fairly rudimentary rental housing, infrastructure and facilities. A shortage of accommodation meant there were very high levels of sub-letting of rooms and erection of backyard shacks (Watson, 1994). This caused severe overcrowding and overloaded sewage systems, schools and other public facilities.

Africans without government permission to live in the city occupied informal settlements or ‘squatter camps’ that emerged elsewhere in the south-east sector, such as Crossroads. They lived a precarious existence confronted by constant intimidation and eviction from the city (Cole, 1987). Some of these violent scenes attracted international attention, which helped to pressurise the government in the early 1980s into conceding that these communities could stay in the city. During an infamous helicopter trip by the state presi-
dent, an underused army training area at a remote location some 20 miles from the city centre was identified for a new township to accommodate them. Less than two decades later, Khayelitsha now has a population of about 350,000.

The segregation of the city was reinforced by institutional fragmentation and the unequal tax-base of different bodies. In the 1980s, there were no less than 69 public authorities operating in the Cape Metropolitan Area (CMA). This made strategic planning impossible. Even the government’s official Guide Plans for different parts of the city said

The major factor that for many years made physical planning difficult was the fact that there was no organisational framework within which development could take place in an effective, orderly and co-ordinated manner (Department of Development Planning, 1988, p. 23).

In another frank statement, Cape Town City Council acknowledged that the lack of coherent planning often resulted in

haphazard *ad hoc* crisis management decisions in such vital areas as urbanisation, informal settlement and environment policy (Cape Town City Council, 1993, p. 2).

The designation of Khayelitsha was a prime example.

One of the penalties of economic imbalance and segregation has been the need to sustain a high degree of physical mobility. This imposed costs on individuals, businesses and the environment through travelling time, congestion and pollution

The Cape Town CBD, together with the northern and southern arms, houses some 37 per cent of the population but contains over 80 per cent of all jobs in the CMA … The result is a huge daily movement of people between home and job (Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC), 1996, p. 12).

Figure 1 illustrates a problem of ‘spatial mismatch’ that would be hard to find elsewhere in the world. Commuting distances are unusually long and normal social patterns are inverted, since the poor usually live closer to work.

Largely as a result of *apartheid* planning, the average journey (to work) by lower income groups is about 16km compared to 13km for higher income workers (CMC, 1998a, p. 49).

Low car ownership means that public transport has had to cope with this distortion

In the recent past, public transport provision has had a strong association with the racial separation of communities. Other objectives were secondary (CMC, 1999a, p. 11; see also Cameron and Maeder, 1995).

The implication in the current context is that the subsidies given to transport sustain the city’s polarisation and imbalances. This is costly to the public purse as the government spent a very substantial R470 million (roughly £47 million) in 2000 on bus and rail operating subsidies in the city to ensure that travel was affordable for low-paid workers forced to live abnormal distances from work. To indicate the scale of this, it is more than twice the amount spent subsidising new housing (roughly R200 million per annum), despite the backlog of some 220,000 households in the city needing homes.

These subsidies have escalated alarmingly over the past few years, and indications are that this trend will continue (CMC, 1999a, p. 112).

The subsidy amounted to R4500 per annum for each commuter from Khayelitsha. Yet many of the poor still have to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on transport.

These travel patterns and transport subsidies generate problems of their own. For example, there is intense competition for passengers and subsidies between minibus taxis and the national bus operator on the few very busy transport axes across the city. For 5 months during 2000, this developed into sporadic gunshot attacks on buses, which
Figure 1. Mismatch between places of work and residence in Cape Town.
Apartheid planning has left deep scars on the spatial structure of our cities, towns and rural areas, and the lives of millions of individuals and households. The spatial integration of our settlements is critical. It will enhance economic efficiency, facilitate the provision of affordable services, reduce the costs households incur through commuting, and enable social development (Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, 1998, p. 24).

The same aspiration has been a feature of spatial planning thinking in Cape Town for about a decade. Recognising the need for a radical change in perspective, an inclusive group of representatives from local and regional authorities, community organisations and consultants came together to prepare some new proposals in the early 1990s (Watson, 1998). They acknowledged the importance of restructuring the fragmented urban system to create a more equitable and sustainable future, and developed a broad citywide concept plan called the Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework (MSDF) (CMC, 1996). The MSDF embodies proposals which contrast sharply with past policies, including using well-located vacant land to house poorer people (instead of siting them on the periphery); linking neighbourhoods together through nodes and corridors (instead of separating them via buffer strips and freeways); and promoting mixed-use, higher-density developments of residential, employment, retail and recreational land uses.
Figure 2. Cape Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework.

(rather than low-density, monofunctional suburbs and townships) (Figure 2).

The plan has a strong spatial vision portrayed as ‘reintegrating the divided city’, which contributed to its appeal among the original stakeholders (Watson, 1998). They readily accepted its principles and proposals with limited debate or disagreement. It has since been endorsed in other policy documents, with the result that generally, most stakeholders now accept the vision, goals and principles of the MSDF (CMC, 1998a, p. 38).

Simpler versions and newsletters have also been produced to promote the basic ideas and to build wider support. A range of more detailed studies and consultation exercises involving particular elements of the plan are still in progress, which is partly why it remains a fairly loose framework and an indicative set of proposals. It does not have the authority of an approved statutory plan to regulate private investment, nor the resources or influence over other organisations actually to instigate development. This is partly because it lacks high-level political support and tends to be seen as a technocratic policy lacking immediate relevance. Nevertheless, it retains a special status as the only systematic and fairly widely discussed vision of what the city as a whole should become in the post-apartheid era (Wilkinson, 2000).

Two of the most important features of the MSDF are its proposals for a large new economic centre in the underdeveloped south-east sector of the city at Philippi and a major new activity corridor linking the south-east to the prosperous southern suburbs (the Wetton–Lansdowne–Philippi Corridor) (Figure 2). Their purpose is to rebalance the city and to knit areas together by improving
people’s access to jobs, housing, shopping and other opportunities. In 1996, the Lansdowne Corridor proposal received a boost when the National Department of Transport granted funds to assist with planning and implementation. Cape Town City Council established a dedicated team of eight officials to manage the process and to develop a wide range of proactive initiatives and projects to lever in further public and private investment and thereby accelerate the area’s all-round development (Tait et al., 1999). The relevance of these two features to prevailing investment patterns in the city is considered later.

Since the draft MSDF was published by the CMC in 1996, the six municipal authorities within its boundary have produced their own draft Municipal SDFs. They are based on similar principles, but differ in the detailed location of specific nodes and corridors. For example, Cape Town and Tygerberg both propose that a major new metropolitan node is established at the airport, rather than at Philippi. Cape Town also proposes that substantial intermediate nodes are created at Manenberg/Hanover Park and Wingfield. Even without formal status, Cape Town’s draft plan is intended to influence popular opinion and decision-making by highlighting some of the challenges facing the city in forthcoming terms. It also proposes a checklist of questions against which major development proposals should be assessed when being considered by politicians and officials, in order to raise awareness of key urban issues and to try and avoid ad hoc decisions. Concerns about equity, spatial efficiency, public transport access, mixed land uses and other aspects of urban integration feature prominently.

Overall, there is widespread agreement in principle about the need for urban integration, although the strength of commitment is less certain in practice. Implementation is also being pursued in different ways depending largely on professional views of the most feasible pathway to progress. Some planning officials are seeking statutory approval for their plans in order to try and force new development to conform more closely to their spatial visions. This is giving rise to some concerns about the economic understanding and popular credentials of planners to be so prescriptive. Others place greater emphasis on the need to persuade private and public developers to change their attitudes and practices by exposing the problems generated and alerting them to alternative forms of development that are possible. This raises questions about the power and efficacy of information and advocacy activities on their own. In addition, a range of practical initiatives have been taken to target public investment on specific areas and projects as a way of initiating the process of physical restructuring. This diversity of approaches allows scope for experimentation at least, but it also indicates the lack of agreement among public authorities about a consistent city transformation strategy. As we shall see, this creates scope for ambiguity and contradiction by decisions made by other departments and organisations which are unfamiliar with and perhaps unsympathetic to spatial planning.

4. Divergent Development Trends across the City

Comprehensive information on the changing patterns of employment, housing and transport in the city is not available. Occasional analyses have been undertaken of some of these elements (see, for example, CMC, 1998a, 1998b), but there is little on-going monitoring of trends. Instead, data and insights are drawn upon from several separate sources, including a substantial database of private-sector investment in major property projects (WESGRO, 2000); comprehensive information on low-income housing development (Cape Metropolitan Housing Task Team, 1999) and more qualitative information on recent trends in public investment.

Property development is typically a crucial indicator of urban change since it pinpoints locations where physical capital, employment and a range of other resources and opportunities are increasing. Figure 3 shows the spatial pattern of private-sector invest-
Figure 3. Location of economic development and low-income housing.
ment in major industrial, office, retail and leisure property projects that have been completed during the past two years or are in the pipeline (see Appendix for definitions). It also shows the size and location of all subsidised housing projects that are in the pipeline or have been completed since 1994.

The non-residential property data indicate several important features. First and foremost, there has been very strong investment in selected economic centres, mainly Tyger Valley and Milnerton in the northern suburbs, the Waterfront and CBD in central Cape Town and Claremont in the southern suburbs. There has also been some development in dispersed locations across the city, with the exception of the populous south-east sector, which seems to be largely by-passed by major private investment. The airport is anomalous within the south-east; it shows early signs of emerging as a growth point, although largely through warehousing and distribution rather than higher value-added activities at this stage. Another feature of Figure 3 is development leap-frogging over the south-east sector towards the town of Somerset West in Helderburg. Together, this provides clear evidence of what has been described in other South African cities as “new and powerful forces of fragmentation, represented by the suburbanisation of forms of economic activity” (Mabin, 1995, p. 194; see also, CMC, 1998a, 1998b; Todes, 1998; Watson, 2000; Donaldson and van der Merwe, 2000). Drawing on the detailed project data and interviews with key actors, four principal trends affecting the spatial economy can be discerned: decentralisation, deconcentration, northern drift and differentiation.

Decentralisation

Decentralisation involves a net shift in economic activity away from the CBD towards suburban centres. These have been in the higher-income areas of the city rather than in the poorer south-east sector. Decentralisation occurs through differential rates of business growth and decline in different places, as well as the physical relocation of firms. It is not a new process, rather a common accompaniment to urban growth because of constraints on space in central locations and increasing congestion. However, it appears to be accelerating, probably to the detriment of the CBD, through disproportionate new property investment in outlying nodes. Over the past 5 years, there has been nearly 5 times as much new office development in decentralised nodes as in the CBD (Rode, 2000, p. 59). In a survey of 250 CBD-based offices a decade ago, most expressed strong attachment to the area and only between 13 per cent and 25 per cent said they would consider relocating to the suburbs (Cape Town City Council, 1989). The current proportion of firms actively considering relocation is said by some major property owners to be much higher than this. They are concerned that, as leases come up for renewal, occupiers will decide to move.

Other indicators of decentralisation pressures are differential office rents and vacancies. Office rents in the CBD are currently 30 per cent below their 1982 peak in real terms and about 25 per cent lower than in the decentralised nodes of Tyger Valley and Claremont (Rode, 2000, p. 39). This indicates a slow shift in occupier demand away from the city centre. This is supported by the reported level of vacant office space in the CBD being more than double (at 8.6 per cent) the level in the decentralised nodes (at 3.2 per cent) (Rode, 2000, p. 61). Although decentralisation has been far less marked than in most other metropolitan areas of the country, it is possible that Cape Town could follow some aspects of the pattern elsewhere. In Johannesburg, there has been a dramatic business flight to the northern suburbs, a sharp fall in CBD property values and a rapid rise in vacancies. Prime office rentals in Cape Town CBD fell for the first time in four years in the first quarter of 2000, prompting an oversensational remark from a leading property market analyst.

The failing performance of this node highlights a growing concern that the Cape
Town CBD may be the next to fall ... Investors are becoming more sceptical about the Mother City’s CBD (Rode, 2000, pp. 4 and 11).

Decentralisation of retail activity started earlier in Cape Town and is further advanced than offices. It may also be more difficult to stem or reverse as decentralised shopping malls located close to freeways have come to dominate the spending patterns of car-owning households. There remains a substantial amount of retail floorspace for the moment in the CBD, mainly because lower-income customers reliant on public transport continue to shop there. Many of them do so because they work in or around the CBD and there is little choice in the townships. Yet, the major stores are not performing nearly as well as they used to, supported by the fact that there have been some important closures and not much investment in new or refurbished retail property in the CBD in recent years. This is in contrast to the many shopping malls and other outlets that have been built and refurbished elsewhere during the same period.

In principle, decentralisation may support the goal of urban integration and the MSDF if it relieves congestion in the city centre and helps to rebalance the structure of the city by shifting jobs and other activities towards the south-east sector. However, in its current form it is contrary since the south-east is being by-passed and local residents’ access to opportunities is being reduced, as the expanding suburban centres are less well served by the commuter rail and bus network than the CBD (CMC, 1998a).

**Deconcentration**

Deconcentration involves a net shift in economic activity away from established centres towards a more dispersed pattern of development. One of the manifestations is the re-use of detached houses on main roads in higher-income residential neighbourhoods for office uses, sometimes without planning approval. Many are occupied by professional service firms such as accountants, lawyers, consultants or IT suppliers. Some of them have grown from outsourcing by larger corporations and they benefit from the lower occupancy costs, a higher profile and better access to their suburban customers. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in the northern suburbs, where planning authorities and local residents are more permissive than in the older, more conservative southern suburbs. People in the latter have been concerned about the loss of amenity, increased traffic and growing intensification of land use.

A second example of deconcentration is the piecemeal growth of business parks and scattered office buildings on underutilised land outside the main economic centres. There are many examples of institutions that owned land for its direct use selling off surplus sites. They include parts of school playing-fields (for example, Rhodes and Camps Bay), race courses (such as Kenilworth), golf courses, sports clubs and land in various forms of public ownership, such as railway, military, hospital or airport authorities (for example, the large sites at Culemborg, Wingfield, Youngsfield, Westlake and Cape Town Airport). In principle, it is a positive feature for land-owners to be reviewing their property holdings and disposing of unnecessary assets. However, there are also dangers if the sole motive is opportunistic financial gain and the wider economic, social and environmental effects of development are not properly considered by the regulatory authorities. Deconcentration is generally inconsistent with the principle of urban integration and the MSDF since it tends to mean a more spatially fragmented pattern of lower-density, car-oriented development in the more affluent areas.

**Northern Drift**

Northern drift is a steady shift in the centre of economic gravity of the city northwards. Property development plays a key role in shifting private investment, jobs and resources towards the north. For example,
there have been 72 major projects in the northern suburbs during the past 2 years, compared with 35 in established central-city districts (including the V&A Waterfront, CBD and Pinelands/Epping/Goodwood), 24 in the southern suburbs (between Claremont/ Newlands and Muizenberg) and only 9 in the whole of the south-east sector, according to the WESGRO database. The average value of projects in the north has also been much higher than in the south-east, with several multi-billion Rand schemes completed or in the pipeline. Decentralisation and deconcentration have clearly benefited the north disproportionately and considerable growth momentum has been established. It is also apparent from the database and other sources that a disproportionate amount of middle- and high-income residential development in the past decade has been in the northern suburbs. An increasing amount of this has been built within exclusive gated communities surrounded by high walls and electrified fences offering enhanced security and shared amenities for residents.

Meanwhile, the south-east remains essentially a dormitory area with few signs of major private investment, even in the priority area of the Wetton–Lansdowne–Philippi Corridor. Economic activities are predominantly informal and dominated by small-scale, often home-based traders and producers of basic consumer goods and services, with low levels of investment in physical capital. Cape Town’s low-income population has been growing quickly in the south-east sector through in-migration and natural growth. The vast majority of subsidised formal housing has been built on low-cost peripheral land in places such as Philippi and Delft (Figure 3). The bulk of informal housing (backyard and free-standing shacks) is also in the south-east. The housing market is extremely weak or non-existent in large parts of the south-east because of the low disposable incomes, uncertainty over property rights, social instability and lending restrictions by the major financial institutions. An unusually steep house-price gradient in Cape Town and a general shortage of rented accommodation also make upward mobility difficult for households seeking to move to better-located neighbourhoods as their economic circumstances improve. Many of those who have invested in home-ownership and improvement are locked into areas with sparse facilities and poor access to opportunities. A recent study found that movement through the CMA housing market is still highly segmented by race. The Coloured, white and black populations appear to move in different areas for the most part … the black and Coloured populations are effectively unable to move up to a position of advantage in regard to housing and physical position … mobility was highest for the white population, for whom the market works effectively and who are able to move up to higher standards of housing as they move on (Cross and Bekker, 1999, p. 12).

Northern economic drift and the concentration of low-income housing in the south-east sector represent divergent development paths and are clearly contrary to the goals of the MSDF, since they reinforce the spatial inequities and imbalances in Cape Town, with the attendant private and public costs.

Differentiation

Differentiation is the growing tendency for economic centres to specialise in different market segments. This is most apparent in retailing and consumer services, where the major centres seem to focus more on different population groups, either deliberately or by default. This is partly a reflection of residential segregation, of course, but also property prices and the character of the environment. Claremont (Cavendish Square), Constantia, Tyger Valley and the Waterfront have particularly upmarket shopping malls, while Parow (Sanlam Centre), Bellville, Goodwood (N1 City) and Wynberg are tending more towards lower-income (and non-white) consumers with an emphasis on value for money. The exclusive character of up-
market centres is promoted by intensive management, visible security and surveillance, provision of entertainment facilities, car-based access arrangements and high rentals charged for premises. This has helped to encourage high-income customers away from older established centres and traditional high streets with open public spaces, many of which have become ‘Africanised’ and frequented by hawkers and informal traders selling crafts, foodstuffs and cheap clothing. Property prices have fallen here and different retail outlets providing lower-priced goods and services have taken over.

Similar tendencies have been at work among industrial areas. High-quality Montague Gardens and, to a lesser extent, Killarney Gardens in the north-west sector (note their use of the term ‘Gardens’) have been actively managed and successfully geared towards light industry and small or medium-sized firms. Land ownership by major financial institutions has ensured high design and management criteria, good physical and communications infrastructure, efficient access arrangements, modern premises and effective security. In contrast, the older and more centrally located industrial estates in Epping, Parow, Ndbeni, Athlone, Retreat and Elsies River have generally been neglected and are occupied by larger and apparently more marginal businesses. There is much vacant and poor-quality industrial property among these estates, as well as a run-down environment and an obvious security problem.

In the office sector, Century City, Tyger Valley, Claremont and the Waterfront have attracted some high-profile office occupiers from the CBD by emphasising quality, modern premises in a high-amenity, controlled environment. Century City is a striking example of a new exclusive style of development emerging in South African cities (Marks and Bezzoli, 2000). Its scale is unprecedented (a 250-hectare site and R3 billion plus development cost) and it is supposed ultimately to comprise nearly 1 million square metres of retail and office floorspace, 3700 high-income residential units, 2500 hotel rooms, a conference centre, theatre, theme park, multiplex cinema and other leisure and entertainment facilities. At such a scale, it should represent a serious threat to central Cape Town as an office location and to the shopping malls at the Waterfront, N1 City and Tyger Valley. Indeed, it is being marketed as a ‘city in itself’ because of its diverse amenities. It is surrounded by a high wall with four access-controlled entry points and high internal security. There will be no scope for low-income housing or for informal traders to sell their goods and services to better-off consumers and visitors. In fact, the site had been zoned for housing until 1996 and would have been well suited to low- and middle-income units given its location close to expanding employment centres in this part of the city. However, Blaauwberg Municipality granted the rezoning to more intense commercial development on the basis of its contribution to the local rates-base and jobs. Rivalry with the larger Cape Town and Tygerberg Municipalities may also have influenced the desire to create a prominent new activity node in this area.

Differentiation contradicts the objective of urban integration since its means further social segregation and spatial separation. The newer economic centres where most private investment is occurring tend to be less accessible to low-income groups, in terms of physical proximity, public transport access, pricing structures and their general aura reinforced by active place management and environmental controls. They risk becoming insulated enclaves that are used only by the affluent minority of the population.

5. Property Market Dynamism in Affluent Areas

These trends are typically portrayed by the property sector as the outcome of market forces, which are rational, objective and reflect individual preferences. Consequently, the presumption is that little can or should be done by public authorities. Property developers and investors claim to be responding to occupier demand; occupiers say they simply
reflect the locational preferences of customers; and high-income staff and consumers want to live in high-quality, low-density environments. Meanwhile, the developers of low-cost housing are forced into the southeast periphery because land is unaffordable elsewhere. So, the poor are being excluded from the prosperous city core and suburbs through the operation of the land market. The general implication is that income, social class and market forces have replaced race and state control in directing the pattern of urban development (see also Saff, 1994; Mabin, 1995; Todes, 1998).

There is certainly evidence that market forces are shaping development, as we show below, but this is an incomplete explanation of the process. It also does not mean that nothing can or should be done, since market forces are generating various wider costs and other adverse consequences which justify public-sector action.

The dynamics of major private development can be understood, first, by considering three forces affecting the demand for property. First, there is a strong locational pull of high-income, high-skilled households in the northern and southern suburbs. Their number has been rising as a result of Cape Town’s economic growth encouraging in-migration from other cities, together with new household formation. In addition, the incomes of the most-qualified sections of the population have been rising as a result of labour shortages created by shifts in the economic structure (for example, the growth in financial services, ICT industries, professional and managerial occupations) (CMC, 1998b). Figure 4 shows the uneven distribution of household incomes across the city. There is a close correspondence between high-income areas and the developing economic centres identified in Figure 3. Some of the reasons for this are straightforward. Such neighbourhoods attract retailing and consumer services because of the strength of effective demand and customers’ desire for convenience. These are relatively stable and predictable consumer markets for established investors. In addition, firms owned by and employing people living in these suburbs have located there in order to reduce the time and cost of commuting to the CBD, bearing in mind increasing road congestion.

Secondly, there are local environmental factors tending to push businesses out of older established centres. They include perceptions of deteriorating security, difficulties with parking, litter and graffiti. The changing social and physical character of places may also be important, associated with the removal of previous controls on population movement and residence, and a shift down-market of some high streets. A survey of 413 people (three-quarters of whom were local employees or business owners and managers) using the CBD in October 1999 found that more than two-thirds (72 per cent) felt that there was insufficient parking in the area (Cape Town Partnership, 2000). In addition, over half (53 per cent) felt that safety and security conditions were unacceptable; 40 per cent said that conditions regarding cleanliness were poor; and 34 per cent had negative views of informal traders. Race was a factor in these responses (apparent in the fact that whites were more negative about the situation than blacks), but it was by no means the only issue since feelings of apprehension were fairly common. It should be easier for public authorities to do something about these relatively straightforward ‘crime and grime’ issues than the income-driven pull factors.

Thirdly, there are differences in the quality and vintage of the building stock and infrastructure in different locations. Most high street and CBD buildings are older than those in the decentralised nodes, so less able to meet the requirements of modern ICT and work processes. In the increasingly competitive business environment, some firms have also sought to boost their corporate image and identity by occupying their own premises on a separate site, rather than leasing space in a large building downtown. Visibility and proximity are common desires of businesses that require face-to-face contact with their customers, such as professional and consumer services. In addition, the trans-
Figure 4. Median per capita income, 1996 Census.
Port requirements of many industrial and distribution firms have shifted from rail to road, requiring better access to the strategic road network rather than the central rail terminal. City-centre property-owners do not appear to have been very active in refurbishing or redeveloping obsolescent buildings and the local authority could have done more to upgrade downtown infrastructure, so the CBD has become less attractive as a business location over the past decade. Business centres elsewhere have benefited from more active management, modern design and better access arrangements.

This last point touches on the importance of the supply side of the property market. Property development cannot be understood as a passive reflection of business demand for accommodation—it has a dynamic of its own. Financial institutions and property companies play an active part in managing and guiding the development process, and they operate in a particular context of land-use regulation. They are driven by a variety of motives and assumptions, which go beyond the demands of occupiers and objective commercial calculations. Developers are often forced to anticipate future demand trends and to make subjective judgements about what kinds of project are possible and where development is feasible, involving complex assessments of risk and reward. They are inevitably affected by embedded beliefs, behaviour, perceptions and fashion.

There are three components influencing the supply of property. First, financial institutions perform a key function in mediating the response of developers to demand conditions by providing investment and development funds. Growth in savings and state restrictions on investment abroad meant that the major insurance companies and pension funds were inundated with funds during the 1980s and early 1990s. Property attracted strong sentiment and became a very important investment medium for many institutions, with up to 20–25 per cent of their portfolios. Some acknowledge that they were not very discerning about which projects were supported, on the grounds of the safety of bricks and mortar as an investment. Decentralised office development became fashionable and some institutions helped to set the trend among occupiers by relocating their own headquarters. By funding substantial decentralised development, they contributed to an oversupply of property and undermined the city centres, including their own buildings. This has become a problem in the past few years as they have been seeking to reduce their exposure to property (which has performed worse than other assets) and to invest more abroad, following the removal of previous controls (South African Property Investment Review, 1998). Unable to sell, some have had to write-off their vacant properties in Johannesburg CBD and are now trying to avoid the same fate in Cape Town by creating a City Improvement District to enhance local conditions. Another effect of their reduced investment in property is that they have become more cautious about which new projects are supported and even more conservative in their attitudes towards marginal and unproven locations, including of course the former coloured and black areas.

Secondly, land-owners and developers play a catalytic role in property development. Some land-owners actively seek to maximise the financial gains from selling or leasing property, while others are motivated by non-pecuniary considerations. Developers can influence occupier demand through their design concepts and marketing activities. Decentralised business parks are the current fad and promotional materials often play upon people’s fears about crime and personal safety in the CBD. According to planning officials, land speculation and opportunistic development have become more common in recent years. One reason is the greater financial pressure some land-owners are under, prompting them to sell land surplus to requirements. Uncertainty created by the hiatus in statutory land-use plans for the city also gives greater scope for speculative land trading and rezoning applications.

Commercial pressures to maximise the value of the land have militated against low-income housing on well-located sites, caus-
ing some disquiet that major land-owners are pursuing the highest-possible price irrespective of wider social and economic considerations. The tension has been most apparent when government agencies have been reluctant to sacrifice a lower price for a more strategic, socially beneficial use of their surplus land. Another factor limiting low-income housing in central locations has been opposition from neighbouring property-owners anxious about any adverse effects on their property values, security and neighbourhood character (Todes, 1998; Williams, 2000). They have used the country’s progressive new constitution to resist such development as infringing on their rights; a bizarre reversal of its intended effects.

Thirdly, local authorities have tended to go along with and even support recent trends, despite the stated objectives of their spatial plans. Historically, every small authority had a vested interest in raising its own tax-base by encouraging local development. The initial reform of local government created six relatively autonomous municipalities with a weak strategic (metropolitan) council (Turok, 1995). They were under stronger pressure to expand their tax-base since government grants were reduced and their obligations increased by incorporating townships with major spending needs. The roles of a new cohort of politicians inexperienced in local government and insecure officials anxious to demonstrate delivery have also been important in endorsing the simplest development options and proposals, according to several well-placed interviewees. With the National Party controlling four municipal councils, the metropolitan council and the province, and the ANC controlling the largest municipal council and central government, there has been considerable rivalry between different power centres. Resulting tensions have obstructed attempts to achieve policy coherence across the city and between different tiers of government. High unemployment has meant that the promise of extra jobs and rates has weighed heavily in decisions to endorse major new commercial projects. The potential for adverse displacement effects on economic activity and employment elsewhere in the city has barely featured in deliberations, let alone the environmental and social costs of continued spatial fragmentation and polarisation.

Public bodies have been so supportive of some flagship schemes that substantial indirect subsidies have been provided towards the cost of new roads and services. In more routine cases, they have found it difficult to resist the insatiable demand for additional infrastructure to relieve congestion and to facilitate growth. Prosperous areas act as magnets drawing-in the technical capacity and financial resources of public authorities to fuel the growth process. There is no approved city-wide framework to promote, restrict or regulate development on the basis of systematic and explicit criteria. Deals with developers to contribute towards infrastructure costs have been conducted piecemeal with few attempts to secure wider public benefits. A perception of increasing competition within and between cities has encouraged unquestioning support for private investment. The emerging discourses of globalisation, economic competitiveness and world cities have also relegated concerns about urban integration, equity and sustainability (see, for example, Bernstein, 1996; CMC, 1999b; Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, 2000). In the words of several officials interviewed: “the public sector has rolled over”. Cape Town City Planning Directorate’s candid summary of the situation is that there has been no proactive, positive plan or decision-making framework to guide the spatial development of Cape Town in such a way that promotes the interests of all the city’s people. In the absence of a suitable framework, decision-making has been largely reactive. On the one hand, decision makers have simply reacted to private sector developers, in desperate attempts to attract and retain investment, often neglecting the public interest in the process. On the other, public sector investment has been largely the product of com-
petitive political processes, often devoid of a framework of rational or equitable resource distribution (Cape Town City Council, 1999, pp. 8–9; see also Watson, 2000)

The net result is that there is considerable continuity with past development patterns and probably an acceleration in the northern suburbs. Market forces and institutional processes encourage a cumulative process of investment and development in well-off areas, so growth feeds upon itself. Investor and occupier perceptions remain positive; confidence is sustained; and a relaxed planning regime ensures that land is readily available. There is an on-going threat that the supply of property may outstrip demand, with the prospect of declining profits and some commercial failures. However, the main costs are borne elsewhere as the city’s spatial imbalances and inequities are entrenched and opportunities to start reorienting development trends are passed by. Consistent public policies and plans could influence several of these factors and improve upon the outcome.

6. Obstacles to Development in the South-east

In some ways, the obstacles to development in the south-east sector are the mirror image of the forces promoting growth in the prosperous areas, although there are dangers in oversimplifying and generalising across the whole of the south-east. Considering factors influencing the demand for property first, average household incomes are clearly low (Figure 4; see also CMC, 1998b, 1999b). They have also been declining recently as a result of falling manual employment in the city linked with manufacturing’s exposure to increasing international competition. Low incomes are offset to an extent by the area’s large and rising population, which means that total spending power in the south-east must be substantial. Apart from this, skills and qualifications are relatively poor, unemployment is high and the hazardous conditions of everyday life in many townships and informal settlements undermine social stability and environmental quality (CMC, 1999b). Industrial and office-based firms located elsewhere are reluctant to move or open branches in the south-east because of concerns about the safety of employees, the security of premises and vehicles in transit, and the longer journeys to work for senior staff. A plentiful supply of low-cost vacant land with reasonable access to the main freeways cannot offset the area’s poor image and reputation, its perceived risks and the extra costs of security measures, especially as the public police service is patently underfunded and inadequate. Similar obstacles exist in many townships elsewhere (Harrison et al., 1997).

The demand from local businesses for premises is limited at present because the local economic base is small and dominated by informal enterprises. This reflects the historical restrictions on black business, the inferior education and training system, and the difficulties people face in raising capital (see, for example, Preston-Whyte and Rogerson, 1991). Major retail chains harbour concerns about the low disposable incomes and operational difficulties arising from local protection rackets and crime. Since they already capture peoples’ spending in their established outlets elsewhere, they may have little incentive to open additional stores in the townships. Unless new developments are of a sufficient scale to offer a choice of outlets for consumer durables (furniture, clothing, electrical goods, etc.), there is a risk that residents will continue to do their comparison shopping in the existing centres. Achieving a critical mass for development to occur means influencing the herd-instinct behaviour of the major retailers and their financiers.

There are also crucial institutional issues affecting the supply of property. They make it more difficult to organise development and meet even the existing local demand, let alone to stimulate new sources of demand. One set of obstacles is the legacy of inadequate roads, drainage and other infrastructure in several places. This is being addressed to some extent, as discussed later. In addition, mainstream financial institutions
are inclined to look unfavourably upon investment proposals in the south-east because they are believed to have poor commercial prospects, given the perceived risks and additional management costs. Some admit they avoid the whole area on the grounds that development there requires specialised knowledge and skills. Such attitudes are reflected in a strong-felt belief within these communities that institutions are prejudiced and discriminate systematically against (red-line) their neighbourhoods for housing and business loans.¹⁶

Some existing and prospective landowners are deterred from developing by the risks of land invasion by squatters seeking housing, although local authorities have taken a stronger stance in preventing this recently. Some landowners have experienced difficulties collecting rent from local business tenants whose enterprises are barely viable. This reinforces the ‘culture of non-payment’ that also affects council rates, rents, service charges and home loans.¹⁷ Past experience of commercial development has clearly been mixed and all sorts of rumours circulate within the property industry about successful as well as failed ventures.¹⁸ They contribute to the climate of uncertainty and apprehension among investors and result in very little speculative development taking place. So businesses that might have considered locating in the area have no premises readily available to make it easy to move. In contrast, there is a lot of quality property readily available in the north and west.

There are also local political and cultural difficulties involved in organising development. Community suspicion of ‘outside’ organisations of any kind can frustrate progress. Objections to private developers are particularly common, especially among local traders who feel their livelihoods are threatened.¹⁹ Informal compensation payments or profit-sharing arrangements may be required to secure their support. The new political dispensation has encouraged more inclusive procedures for making decisions, which means that investors have to engage in lengthy consultation to get local approval. Internal power struggles within communities can make it difficult to secure general agreement. Meanwhile, local entrepreneurs are rarely sufficiently well organised or funded to take advantage themselves of the development opportunities that exist. The scarcity of resources breeds local rivalry and conflict, especially where gangsters and illegal activities are involved. Local politicians are often too burdened by the enormous day-to-day problems of their communities to champion strategic projects. Commercial development inevitably raises awkward dilemmas, so they may be less supportive than one might expect in more stable circumstances.

Organising development in the poorest areas—the informal or shack settlements—is often most difficult. Some of the problems were revealed in graphic detail in a recent commission of enquiry into conflict surrounding service delivery in two such areas, Crossroads and Philippi (Moosa, 1998). It showed how high unemployment and poverty generate intense competition for limited resources such as land, shelter and fuel. The pressures are intensified by the inflow of new rural migrants who possess even fewer resources and formal skills. They come to these particular areas because of social ties and the relatively low cost of living. Gatekeepers, known variously as traditional leaders, headmen, shacklords or warlords, take advantage of peoples’ insecurity and weak formal governance in these communities. They allocate sites and other resources in return for financial payments, loyalty and favours. Rivalry between them means an ongoing struggle for territory and power, which periodically breaks out into conflict and violence. This causes injury, trauma and social dislocation among innocent bystanders. The police are far too stretched to cope, leading to their demoralisation and periodic implication in crime. The situation is not new in many respects since conflict has been endemic to such areas for years. It was exacerbated and even instigated by the previous government’s policies of intimidation, forced removal, destruction of property and co-option of conservative leaders in order to
destabilise communities and destroy political opposition (Cole, 1987).

One of the new features of the situation is the emergence of democratic leaders and institutions committed to providing formal housing and public services. They represent a threat to the income and power of the traditional gatekeepers, who consequently exploit whatever grievances and tensions exist within the community to undermine their authority and to sabotage their development programmes (Moosa, 1998). Power struggles between community organisations, gatekeepers and political parties delay progress and add to the frustration of ordinary people. This creates a climate of confusion, mistrust and intolerance. Any inadequacies in consultation and accountability on the part of public authorities, elected politicians or other development organisations cause disproportionate suspicion and criticism. Criminal elements exploit the situation to commit acts of theft and violence against public officials, vehicles and property, so staff get apprehensive and demotivated, and delivery is delayed further.

On their own, these obstacles would not be decisive and could be overcome. However, together they create a vicious circle of crime, insecurity, poor housing, ill-health and stress within the community. This hampers progress, reinforces negative sentiment and makes it difficult to attract private investment and generate any development momentum. A range of separate projects have been mooted by private and community-based organisations for different parts of the south-east in recent years, but the number and scale of those that are genuinely imminent, under construction or completed is very small considering the area’s size and population. The most common forms of formal private-sector development in the more-established, slightly better-off parts of the area (such as Mitchell’s Plain) have been geared to local consumption—i.e. small and medium-sized retail outlets and centres (including supermarkets, convenience stores, household goods, hairdressers, bakeries, banks, petrol stations and motor repairs)—as well as some medium-income private housing on a modest scale. Although these have brought useful economic and social benefits, partly by stemming leakages of local expenditure, there does not appear to have been any increase in the rate of development since the mid 1990s. Furthermore, the real challenge is to strengthen the economic base of the south-east through activities that generate additional income and jobs, principally by producing goods and services for wider markets beyond the locality.

7. The Role of Public Investment in the South-east

Given the weakness of private investment in the south-east, it is not surprising that the public sector has been the main agent of development. Public investment is a pre-condition for economic development because of the area’s deficient basic conditions for production. Public spending has been influenced first and foremost by the historical inequalities in social infrastructure and services between the south-east and better-off parts of the city. The six municipalities created in 1996 had their boundaries drawn in such a way as to link specific townships with more-affluent areas in order to help redistribute resources and organisational capacity. There has been no internal or independent assessment of the overall progress achieved to date.

Housing has been the priority for many public and community organisations because of the serious shortage of accommodation in the city and the political pressure to deliver more homes. The only significant source of public funding has been the national housing scheme. It offers the poorest households a once-off capital subsidy of some R18 000 to help build or acquire a modest housing structure and basic electricity, water and sanitation services. Nationally, over 920 000 units were completed or under construction by the end of 1999. This gave many homeless and poorly housed families the chance to own a permanent structure protected, from the elements and with essential services on site—i.e. a major improvement in their security and quality of life. This scale of delivery has
undoubtedly been an achievement, although reservations have been expressed about the location, quality, restricted choices and sustainability of the housing developed (R. Tomlinson, 1999; M. Tomlinson, 2000). Similar concerns applied to low-income housing policy prior to 1994 (Dewar, 1995; Goodlad, 1996; Watson, 1994).

It is generally acknowledged that progress on housing delivery in Cape Town has been relatively slow. By May 1999, only 49 000 subsidies had been approved and 29 000 units completed, at a cost of approximately R500 million (Cape Metropolitan Housing Task Team, 1999). Almost half (49 per cent) of the approvals and three-quarters (74 per cent) of the completions were in the Integrated Serviced Land Project (ISLP) administered by the province and dating back in fact to 1991. The new local authorities have an important facilitative role, but most have made a slow start because of the disruption of administrative reorganisation, prevarication over policy details and institutional arrangements, and difficulties in identifying, consolidating and releasing suitable land.

The concentration of the new housing projects on peripheral sites in the south-east was discussed earlier. This is mainly because the national scheme requires each unit to be built on its own plot and the small subsidy size limits the price that can be paid for the land (R. Tomlinson, 1999; M. Tomlinson, 2000). In the absence of a stronger political will to subsidise land in better-located areas and to defuse opposition from local ratepayers, the simplest and cheapest policy has been to locate the new houses on the periphery. According to housing officials, one of the unintended consequences of the new housing programme has been ‘downward raiding’—i.e. some of the new occupants have sold them on to local headmen, warlords or other households for a fraction of their construction cost. The scale and reasons for this are not well understood, but officials suspect that people have moved back to their shacks because of either the poor location of the new houses, the unaffordability of their service charges or the opportunity of a cash windfall, all of which are bound to be important to people with low or no incomes.

The local authorities also have reservations about the sustainability of the scheme. They have to pay for much of the essential planning, management and maintenance costs of the new neighbourhoods, and for the service charges of people who cannot afford to pay or default. Yet, they receive no funding from the government for either obligation. This provides a considerable disincentive to large-scale participation in the scheme and helps to explain the delay in some cases. In addition, there has been some public opposition to the small size of the structures that can be afforded (typically 25–30 square metres), the unimaginative neighbourhood lay-outs being created and the lack of accompanying economic and social amenities. The ISLP was supposed to offer integrated provision of infrastructure, housing, community facilities and job opportunities in order to transform disadvantaged communities and create sustainable and habitable areas. This has not happened as yet, and the areas remain rather inhospitable living environments with large amounts of vacant land and no landscaping. Some officials and observers are concerned that the requirement that each unit has its own plot means that the density of the new neighbourhoods is too low to achieve the population thresholds necessary for viable commercial and social facilities within easy reach. Sprawling development on the urban periphery may also impose excessive operating costs on public authority services in the years to come (Watson, 2000).

Finally, there are concerns about the growing shortfall between the scale of housing need and provision in the city. The backlog is estimated at 220 000 households, which is increasing by 20 000–30 000 per annum through natural growth and 8000–10 000 per annum through in-migration from rural areas (Cape Metropolitan Housing Task Team, 1999). Meanwhile, the number of housing subsidies provided annually by the government to the whole of the Western Cape Province is due to be cut by 30 per cent over the
next two years from 20 000 per annum to 14 000 because it is said to be less deserving than some of the poorer provinces. Increasing urbanisation is strongly concentrated on the south-east area, which will put existing communities and facilities under even more pressure.

Infrastructure and services have been a second broad area of public-sector activity. Some progress has been made to reduce historical imbalances and to shift selected budgets towards the south-east. Investment has occurred in bulk infrastructure such as stormwater drainage, roads, water pipes and electricity pylons to provide essential facilities to households in neglected areas. Local authorities have had the resources and technical capacity to provide these relatively straightforward engineering-related functions, especially as most are intended to be self-funded through user charges rather than reliant on rates income. Nevertheless, there is a concern that if many people are unwilling or unable to pay for the services in the future, the financial burden of ongoing maintenance, replacement and new provision will eventually prove crippling and unsustainable. In addition, the infrastructure has been geared overwhelmingly towards household consumption rather than facilitating productive investment in employment-generating industrial and commercial development.21

There has also been progress in improving social infrastructure and services, such as schools, clinics, libraries, community centres and recreation facilities. Once again, it has been fairly simple to make one-off capital investments in previously disadvantaged areas. Re-orienting the much larger operating budgets has proved more difficult. Apart from concerns about sustainability, there has been some resistance from public employees facing redeployment and from more-affluent communities opposing reductions in their service levels. One of the curious effects is that some facilities have been built but are not properly functional, including several community centres and sports halls that remain closed. Another weakness has been that facilities tend to be planned and built inde-

pendently of each other, resulting in a dispersed spatial pattern rather than reinforcing specific nodes of activity and creating places with a critical mass of related amenities: “There has been little co-ordination and the elements of public investment … often fail to support each other” (Cape Town City Council, 1999, p. 9).

Several officials acknowledge that the political imperative for short-term delivery in the south-east (frequently in councillors’ very own wards) has overridden broader considerations such as appropriateness, durability and integration. Inconsistencies between different functional policies also arise from separate departments and tiers of government operating independently of each other. The contradiction between housing, transport and spatial policies was referred to earlier. In addition, it is clear from interviews that there is a considerable amount of ‘passing the buck’ between and within organisations for failure to deliver. Another weakness is that capital and operating budgets have not been linked effectively within a spatial framework. This is symptomatic of poorly integrated planning, implementation and financial procedures within public authorities. There has also been insufficient focus on the fundamental objectives of poverty reduction and economic development. Public investment has taken fairly traditional forms based on established patterns of service delivery in well-off areas. There has been insufficient adaptation to the different needs and circumstances of the south-east, except in selected areas such as health care (where diseases such as TB and AIDS demand new approaches), transport (for example, minibus taxi ranks) and market stalls for informal traders. Public bodies need to establish new ways of operating that are appropriate to addressing new kinds of problems … new priorities need new strategies and new strategies need new structures and mechanisms (Tait et al., 1999, p. 280).

One of the lessons beginning to emerge is that policies need to be based on a better
understanding of the reality and dynamics of poverty as it is actually experienced—i.e. what traps households in an impoverished state and what might enable them to improve their welfare. This is necessary to formulate more comprehensive long-term strategies and to identify the most cost-effective ways of helping people to increase their income, security and quality of life in the short term. It is also clear that changes are needed to decision-making processes in order to strengthen the voice of the poorest communities and to make poverty a stronger priority of national and local government policy.

8. Conclusions

There is a gulf between Cape Town’s poor townships and its affluent suburbs which appears to be widening in several respects. Institutional practices and market forces are tending to reinforce spatial divisions rather than to assist urban integration, and there has been little spontaneous movement of disadvantaged communities into well-located areas. Consequently, Cape Town remains one of the least-altered cities in the country. The consequences are costly to the majority of the population through enforced separation from economic and social opportunities. There are costs too for the wider urban economy and society arising from inefficient transport patterns, social instability associated with concentrated poverty and lost investment and jobs as a result of crime and insecurity. There is wide agreement in principle among policy-makers about the need for urban integration, but the practicalities have not been worked through consistently. Paper plans and policies have not been translated into sustained implementation of concrete programmes and projects. Without stronger commitment from the various levels of government, urban development paths are likely to continue to diverge because of the cumulative effects of established patterns and the conservatism of economic and political elites.

An opportunity for a new approach has been created with the reorganisation of local government and the formation of a single-tier authority for the city in December 2000. This arose from central government recognition that the two-tier structure of metropolitan government generally was not working well—especially in Johannesburg, which has experienced a financial and managerial crisis and local rate-payer revolts. In principle, the new Cape Town Unicity has scope to transcend institutional fragmentation, territorial rivalries and race-based politics by establishing a more coherent and integrated approach to the city’s development and management. It will still face difficult tensions arising from the divided geography of the city, between the demands of its main tax-base and formal economy on the one hand and the majority poor population on the other. Within the latter, the split between former Coloured and African areas is another difficulty. These deep divisions will require astute leadership with a strong, unified vision of the city to rise above competing claims by promoting common interests and offering something for everyone. It cannot be limited to a narrow agenda of increasing economic competitiveness, implying ‘business as usual’ in spatial terms and offering little by way of poverty relief. Nor can it be confined to fiscal redistribution to the south-east financed by higher property taxes in the well-off areas, since this would not generate sufficient resources or do so in a sustainable way, nor would it address the basic problems of economic and social segregation. It will need to incorporate a range of integrative devices—cultural, social, economic and spatial—including accelerated development in the areas that need it most.

Given space constraints, one can only highlight two among many elements of a strategy for urban integration that are important, but in danger of rejection or neglect. One involves closer involvement in the overall supply of land across the city in order to limit uncontrolled and opportunistic development and to exercise more influence over the location and character of new investment. That means monitoring the availability and take-up of land across the city; regulating the amount of additional land permitted for de-
development; prioritising realistic areas of need and aligning public investment in infrastructure accordingly. Public authorities should scrutinise major project proposals more closely in order to negotiate the maximum feasible social benefits. These might include obligations on developers to provide appropriate public amenities and access, social housing, community facilities, local labour recruitment and training, and cost recovery on public infrastructure. Such agreements need to be based on explicit principles to ensure consistent application and to avoid piecemeal decisions. They would need to be sensitive to the locational requirements and flexibility of different categories of investment. Extensive public consultation and debate around this kind of city-wide framework would help to give people a greater understanding of the city’s predicament and to build more political support than currently exists for physical transformation. Government policies towards housing and transport also need to be brought in line.

The second element is a more pro-active approach towards development in the south-east, focused on altering its dormitory status by building a stronger economic and employment base. This is another long-term project requiring greater public-sector pump-priming investment, coupled with hands-on project planning and management capacity through dedicated multidisciplinary teams. Attaching clear priority-area status to designated development zones within the south-east would signal stronger commitment from all levels of government and help to build greater confidence in the area’s future. Faster procedures for acquiring, allocating and servicing land would also assist to expedite the development process. Closer public–private sector collaboration on projects would help to raise additional resources and reduce the risks for isolated private investors. Community-based partnerships involving key stakeholders could assist with practical problem-solving and help to restore effective local governance. They could create forums for constructive dialogue with public authorities around community needs and opportunities, and strengthen local capacity to instigate and participate in development. Finally, the new Unicity authority could set a good example to others by locating selected functional departments in the south-east.\textsuperscript{22}

Notes
1. The paper draws on some 40 interviews with public officials, politicians, developers, financiers and researchers undertaken by the author during 2000, together with a wide range of secondary sources, government reports, unpublished data and previous literature.
2. The focus on spatial issues in this paper is justified partly on the grounds that space has important causal or generative effects of its own in exacerbating poverty and reinforcing wealth, especially in the South African context of extreme urban polarisation. Spatial separation is also of course the outcome of wider political, economic and social processes, some of which are discussed. The relative importance of space in aggravating poverty is a matter of some debate in South Africa, as is the role of spatial integration in reducing poverty and inequality. The argument here is that spatial issues are sufficiently important to warrant particular attention, although the significance of factors such as education, skills, community organisation and power in affecting income and wealth is not overlooked.
3. There is some debate about whether the Waterfront represents decentralisation. Property analysts tend to define it as such and it has been planned and developed in relative isolation from the CBD, although it is different from suburban growth centres since it is situated very close to the CBD. Consequently, it must contribute more to it than they do through business and consumer spending and positive environmental spillovers. This is contributing to a shift in the CBD’s centre of gravity towards the foreshore. The Waterfront is also playing a part in diversifying the CBD towards tourism (hotels, restaurants and visitor attractions) and cultural industries (film production, arts, crafts and entertainment), which could offset some of the effects of office and retail decentralisation.
4. An attempt by the author to compile a list soon yielded 19 firms that have relocated fairly recently. Firms that have moved out of the CBD include Vodacom, Santam, Board of Executors, Metropolitan Life, Southern
Life, Swiss Re, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deloitte, Coronation Asset Management, Engen Services, Persetal Q Data, Discovery Health, IBM, Microsoft, Unisys Africa, Nashua, Telkom, SAP Southern Africa and SIP Project Managers. Most are regional offices or local branches rather than headquaters.

5. The growth of private investment in Somerset West and the surrounding area is an obvious exception to northern drift. It is a relatively affluent and self-contained group of settlements within the region and benefits from excellent freeway access and an attractive sea-front. A range of developments have recently been completed or are in the pipeline, including a shopping mall and other retail projects, an hotel, several industrial and business parks, a retirement village and some major residential developments.

6. For example, recent research for Cape Town City Council suggests that average house prices are up to 100 times greater in the affluent areas of the city than in the formal townships (Mike Parker, personal communication). Moreover, the gap has widened over time: over the past 20 years, house prices in the affluent areas have more than doubled in real terms, but risen by only a few percentage points in the townships.

7. Of course, there are exceptions to the general picture of limited upward mobility for the black population. Some of the neighbourhoods where in-migration and racial mixing appear to be occurring are Rugby, Phoenix and Summer Green (in the Milnerton area); Woodstock, Salt River and Observatory (near the city centre); and Wynberg and Muizenberg (in the south). In many cases, this seems to be associated with much of the white population moving out.

8. To illustrate the commercial success of decentralised retail developments, a major regional shopping centre was built in the northern suburbs in 1985, extended by a third in 1992 and extensively refurbished in 1999. Its current market value is R800 million compared with its historic book value of R245 million (institutional owner, personal communication).

9. Thanks to Soraya Goga for helpful discussion of this point.

10. In Cape Town, the national headquarters of Old Mutual are in Pinelands; Sanlam, Metropolitan Life and Santam are in Bellville/Tyger Valley; and Fedsure Norwich Life is in Claremont.

11. For example, Old Mutual owns 8 major properties in Cape Town CBD, Wooltru 6, ABSA 4 and Metropolitan Life 3. Some have had to write-down the value of their buildings substantially because of the difficulty in attracting and retaining tenants, especially in the older parts of the CBD. One building was valued at R32 million immediately after it was refurbished in 1992, yet its value had fallen to only R19 million in 2000, even ignoring the effects of inflation, which has been significant. Another major new office block was completed in 1992 at a cost of R73 million, but its value was estimated at only R84 million at 2000 prices when the institution tried to sell it. This can be compared with the increase in value from R70 million to R158 million for a new office building funded by the same institution at a decentralised node at roughly the same time (institutional owner, personal communication).

12. CIDs are being set up across Cape Town to improve the competitiveness of established business districts by providing improved local management and marketing including security, street cleaning, parking, information and related services. They are funded by a top-up levy of some 10 per cent on local rates. The CBD CID has a rather narrow and defensive agenda—rather than a positive developmental one—in seeking to prevent further office decentralisation and to ring-fence council taxes within the city centre and limit redistribution to poorer parts of the city. It probably underestimates the forces driving decentralisation and the momentum generated by large-scale suburbanisation of population and economic activity.

13. In the case of Century City, public bodies seem to have paid for half the cost of new off- and on-ramps onto the N1 freeway to serve the site, amounting to R23 million. The CMC was also persuaded to spend R30 million acquiring land there for its future headquarters, apparently at a time when the developer was experiencing cash-flow difficulties. A public outcry at the prospect of the CMC moving out of the CBD caused the plans to be abandoned, although the land has not been resold. In the case of the Capricorn business park, public agencies appear to have paid the full cost of upgrading the main access road to freeway standard on the grounds that the local economy will benefit as well as the developers. In neither case does there seem to have been a condition attached for cost recovery if the developments prove commercially successful.

14. For example, a large survey of households in Khayelitsha in 1997 found that 55 per cent had an income of less than R800 per month, 27 per cent had an income of R801–1500
and only 3 per cent earned over R2500 (Urban-Econ, 1999).

15. The only area where this appears to have been achieved is Mitchell’s Plain, which has a population of about 300 000. It has a formal town centre and a shopping mall that provide a wide range of retail outlets serving local residents as well as people travelling in from Khayelitsha.

16. There may be some basis for institutions’ reluctance to invest in certain areas because of adverse experiences in the past. Across the country as a whole, the banks have 50 000 ‘non-performing’ home loans out of a total of 300 000 in the townships, according to the Banking Council of South Africa (Saturday Argus, 29 July 2000). A parliamentary committee recently investigated the issue of red-lining and measures to stem the practice were being discussed with the Banking Council at the time of writing.

17. For example, one institution purchased a sizeable, largely undeveloped site in Philippi East for R3.4 million in 1994, on the grounds that the area was ripe for commercial or industrial development. However, the estimated market value had fallen to R1 million by 2000 because of the area’s worsening image among external investors and occupiers. It was not helped by a decision taken by several small businesses occupying a few old buildings on the site to stop paying rent. The institution’s response to the fall in value was to shelve all plans for development (institutional owner, personal communication).

18. For example, the Shoprite chain says that its supermarket in Khayelitsha, which opened in 1995, has the highest turnover per unit of floorspace of any Shoprite centre in South Africa. In contrast, the Nyanga Junction retail centre cost R29 million to develop in the early 1990s, but was on the market for less than half that 6 years later (institutional owner, personal communication).

19. In fact, studies have shown that new formal retail centres can co-exist with informal traders because they serve different market needs. The former meet their weekly or monthly grocery needs, while the latter are used more for daily convenience shopping. Only people living very close to retail centres use them for all their shopping needs, which can damage informal traders within the vicinity, unless they acquire better business skills and become more competitive by changing their product and price structures and improving their customer service and marketing (Barnes, 1998).

20. There are two important exceptions to the peripheral location of low-income housing apparent in Figure 3 that offer wider lessons for urban integration; one in Milnerton (Marconi Beam) and one at Westlake in the south-west. In both cases, the developer agreed to provide houses for people who had previously lived in shacks on part of the site. They also trebled the value of the national housing subsidy by building larger units than normal. Both sites had been in public ownership and this was part of the deal negotiated when they were sold for commercial development. The public land-owners received a lower price for the land than they would have done without the obligation, but there were substantial broader gains in the quality and location of the housing. The developer also consulted neighbouring property-owners extensively over the detailed siting and contextual design of the new housing to limit opposition.

21. The Wetton–Lansdowne–Philippi Corridor Project set out to do things differently by developing the area in a planned and integrated manner. It benefited from official backing by the National Department of Transport as one of only seven national Spatial Development Initiatives. However, it lacked wider support from central or provincial government. Once the Transport Department’s funds tailed off, the local authority’s commitment waned and it came to be seen as the property of the planning department rather than a corporate effort (Tait et al., 1999). Progress has slowed, several key staff have left and it currently lacks the resources and political support to fulfil its potential.

22. At the time of writing, it is too soon to be sure about the prospects for a unified city vision emerging. It must be said that the outcome of the December 2000 elections was not auspicious in this respect. The new Democratic Alliance party won the election on the basis of a negative campaign and an appeal to the narrow interests of white and coloured voters. It gained most support in the historically white and coloured areas and limited support in the black areas. The new authority seems likely to move towards a decentralised system of decision-making and administration that will make it more difficult to promote urban integration and metropolitan-wide programmes. The former black areas are likely to be further marginalised in preference to popular initiatives in coloured areas and protection of white neighbourhoods through the maintenance of high service standards and exclusion of low-income housing. Planning policies are unlikely to interfere with the preferences of private-sector investors for established busi-
ness locations with predictable consumer hinterlands and accessible to private car users.

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**Appendix**

The WESGRO database was compiled during the first six months of 2000 with support from the municipal and metropolitan authorities in the Western Cape. Its purpose was to record major investment projects and proposals (defined as projects costing over R10 million) in order to monitor development patterns and to identify potential opportunities. The focus is on property-related investments, the coverage of which appears to be quite comprehensive. There are several sources for the basic data including local authorities (through their statutory function in regulating land development), property magazines, newspapers, site visits and contacts with developers. The database includes details of the physical size and character of each project and its approximate financial cost (in most cases).

The projects fall into five broad categories:

1. those that have been completed during the past two years or so;
2. those currently under construction;
3. projects that have been approved by the planning authorities, but have yet to start (i.e. in the pipeline);
4. those that have been submitted to the planning authorities, but not approved as yet; and
5. projects that have been mooted, but have not reached the stage of formal submission.

Within each category, the projects fall into one of several sectors: industrial, office, retail, leisure/entertainment and residential, or some combination of these. The vast majority of projects are financed by the private sector.

The analysis in this paper is based on the categories of data believed to be most reliable and comprehensive in coverage. The excluded categories are residential property (omitted on the grounds of incomplete data, especially for smaller developments), public-sector-funded projects (omitted because of partial coverage), projects that had not reached the stage of submission to the authorities or had been submitted but not approved as yet (omitted because they might never get built) and projects located outside Greater Cape Town.

The attraction of this core part of the database is that it provides a unique insight into investment patterns in the formal economy of the city. Investment in property typically constitutes between a third and a half of the value of total fixed capital investment in the economy, so it is clearly a major
economic component in its own right. Industrial, office, retail and leisure/entertainment property also accommodate the majority of formal employment, so spatial patterns of property investment indicate where jobs are being created. The focus on the private sector is justified partly by the fact that the total value of its investment in property is many times greater than that of public investment.

One of the drawbacks of the database is that its coverage of investment in the repair, maintenance and refurbishment of existing buildings is limited. Although the value of this is generally much less than the value of new buildings, the analysis of spatial patterns tends to exaggerate the importance of new business locations and understate reinvestment in established locations. Casual observation and interviews suggest that the amount of refurbishment activity in established locations such as the CBD has been limited in recent years because of falling rentals and a loss of confidence, as well as a generally passive approach on the part of the major property-owners.
Politics/matter: Governing Cape Town’s informal settlements

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Abstract
Through the lens of South Africa’s informal settlements, this paper explores the intersections between plans, practices and materiality. These three arenas are each presented as uniquely agentic, contributing to plural configurations. In doing so, this work questions a prevalent tendency to frame governance/government solely as relationships between state and non-state actors. By reintroducing the agency and power of matter and materiality, not as adjunct or background, but as a critical technology of government and/in place, this work contributes to a growing debate within the (emerging) urban socio-technical systems literature.

Keywords
Cape Town, informal settlements, material culture, poverty, socio-technical systems, urban governance

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You have come face to face with the hard reality of South African poverty: a dense forest of shacks, crowds of unemployed people milling on the streets, and attempts by some at small-scale commerce in makeshift shops. Men cluster in groups, throwing dice or playing cards. The place has the dull metal glow of aging zinc housing, the chaos of unpaved roads, the noise of a life lived in packed public areas, the smoke of smouldering braziers and the stench of sewage spilling into the streets.

(Harber, 2011: 2)

The city will have to provide universal access to essential services, even to the poorest citizens who do not have a regular wage income, through the redistribution of finances. Apart from universal access to services, this will also provide access to other opportunities, such as well-located, serviced land, amenities and jobs.

(City of Cape Town, 2012: 2)

Introduction
Anton Harber’s description of Diepsloot on the northern outskirts of Johannesburg speaks for many other informal settlements

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in urban South Africa. It alludes to the persisting precariousness and hardship faced by a very large number of poor Black and Coloured South Africans (and the immigrants with whom these precarious lives and livelihoods are shared) despite the formal end of apartheid in 1994. In contrast, the extract from the City of Cape Town’s five-year human settlements plan (2012–2017) captures a state pledge to the poor that most governments in the South (and in the neoliberal North) seem to have abandoned. Across the world, the direction of travel seems to be towards one of minimal state protections for a growing poor population, who are left to the vicissitudes of the market, civic mobilisation and NGOs.

South Africa is by no means insulated from these norms (McDonald, 2012). Yet the rhetoric of state obligations towards a nascent citizenry, who are still awaiting the rights which democracy and freedom promised them, remains strong. This is despite the fact that these rights – such as to housing, water or democratic representation – are daily traduced by new market inequalities and emergent power hierarchies, which lay over and reconfigure those of the past. This anomaly makes the politics of urban poverty management in South Africa – addressed here through the vignette of housing struggles in Cape Town – especially interesting. As we show, struggles for adequate housing are deeply conflicted. This is particularly so when explored through the interwoven themes of state programmes/policy, social practices and material agency. These struggles are refracted through an assemblage of rhetorical, political, material and operational dynamics which cannot be easily boxed as Keynesian, neoliberal, neo-patrimonial or any other similar political descriptor.

The South African case – like state efforts in post-dictatorship Latin American countries – is important in a comparative perspective. This is particularly true given the extensive official neglect of the urban poor in most other developing economies. In sub-Saharan African cities in particular, the poor have largely been left to happenstance, self-initiative and the help of third-party organisations (Satterthwaite and Mitlin, 2014). In African cities, efforts to provide housing have often been aimed at the middle classes, failing to reach the urban poor entirely (Croese et al., 2016). South Africa, in comparison to most developing countries, takes seriously its constitutional obligation to provide the urban poor with housing, as well as free or affordable water, electricity and sanitation on a private or shared basis. Since the fall of apartheid, the supply of basic services (and housing) has become a key measure of the new nation’s commitment to the poor. It has also become the grounds of dispute between public authorities seeking to deliver while constrained by the scale of need and available finance. There is, therefore, substantial room for insight to be drawn, in particular for middle income countries attempting redistributive and spatial policies amidst complex material and political constellations (Heller, 2012; Gilbert, 2004).

While almost four million houses have been built by the state, there remain millions waiting in backyard shacks, informal settlements, overcrowded accommodation and hijacked inner city buildings for the state to provide. That over 20 years after the fall of apartheid the poor continue to wait for the state to provide housing may occasion surprise or consternation. This waiting could prove without end (as is widely accepted in South Africa), yet this obduracy could simultaneously be seen as a powerful refusal by the poor to give up their right to rights (Mafukidze and Hoosen, 2009; Oldfield and Greyling, 2015). If the language of ‘waiting for the state’ rings an anachronistic note in a neoliberal age, a convincing case remains to be made to prove that markets and civil society can deal with the needs of some two billion people globally who are expected to
be living in slums by 2050 (UN-Habitat, 2008). The dynamic of state provisioning in South Africa could prove to be illuminating in this regard. The South African experience is symptomatic of a state-led model of poverty reduction, one that could be judged as key in addressing the large-scale grim slum futures that the urbanised world confronts (Baker, 2008; UN-Habitat, 2012), or as an expensive and cumbersome model that has outlived its use.

What we term ‘the RDP/BNG housing policy regime’ has been criticised across the country on many grounds: the unsustainable sums of public expenditure involved in building the settlements; the poor quality of materials used; the corruption of the contractors; the blandness and isolation of the settlements; the proliferation of backyard shacks for rental income or additional space (because the pitched roofs prevent upward building); the no-sale period of eight years that stops people from moving to jobs elsewhere or encourages the illegal exchange of titles; the long and uncertain period of waiting for housing; and the rigid eligibility criteria that still exclude swathes of the poor living precariously (Harrison et al., 2008; Khan and Thring, 2003; Ross, 2010; Turok and Borel-Saladin, 2015). There is no shortage of academic and public commentary on the short history of post-apartheid housing policy and its discontents (Cirolia et al., 2016; Harrison et al., 2007; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Van Donk et al., 2008). The contribution of this paper lies in its attempt to place the state housing response within its lived, practiced and material context. There exists analyses of the housing policies and the mobilisations of the poor and their advocates, by intermediaries and strongmen, and by political, business and civic organisations (see, for example, Harber, 2011; Sacks, 2014). But the analysis of state activity through the prism of these mobilisations – how it is accompanied, inflected, improvised, (in)formalised or displaced on the ground and by matter – remains relatively thin.

However, there is a growing body of work on South African low income settlements which specifically responds to the wider literature on informality, improvisation and materiality. This literature works to involve intricate governance and material arrangements alongside or in the gaps of state intervention. For example, McFarlane and Silver (2017) discuss social mobilisation in Cape Town around sanitation and the use of a particular material – human faeces – as an agentic actor in political struggles. Von Schnitzler (2016) discusses the techno-politics of and resistance to prepaid water meters in townships in Johannesburg. Ernstson (2013) dissects natural ecosystems as ‘material symbiotics’ which are playing out between an important nature reserve and a huge housing project on Cape Town’s flatlands. In a particularly useful contribution, Dierwechter (2004) studies how social life in a Cape Town township is shaped by its spatial layout and the geographies of informal trading; the former’s apartheid and post-apartheid placements affecting life chances, and the latter’s infrastructures between urban farms and food stalls playing their part in shaping entrepreneurial fortunes and the availability, price and consumption of fresh food for local residents. Dierwechter shows that township infrastructures, from the topography and aesthetic quality of the built environment to the roads and materials of trade, are not just the ground on which social life is conducted, but are key technologies of social organisation and experience: governing matter. The qualities of this matter and the politics of conduct underpinning them (i.e. planning rules, cartographic expertise, design decisions, controlling parties, social battles over provisions, hidden rules and rituals of access and allocation) are actively involved in the making of everyday life and social prospects.
To envisage infrastructures in this way, following the analysis in urban political ecology of metabolic systems as socially discriminant (Gandy, 2014; Heynen et al., 2006) and in ‘assemblage urbanism’ of trunk infrastructures as hybrids of human and non-human interdependence (De Boeck and Baloji, 2016; McFarlane, 2011; Scheba, 2014; Simone, 2014b) is to acknowledge that the technologies of government include much more than formally and informally organised social power (see Truelove, 2015, for a treatment of the politics of water in Delhi’s informal settlements along these lines). This is clear from a body of writing on urban infrastructures as political technologies, alluding not only to the terms of supply (the tariffs, conditions, providers and gatekeepers that govern the availability and distribution of water, electricity, sanitation and other public goods) but also to the agency of the infrastructures themselves (complete or incomplete, maintained or neglected) in moulding social practice and collective culture (Amin, 2014; Gandy, 2014; Larkin, 2013; Graham and McFarlane, 2014; Simone, 2014b; Truelove, 2015). Writings based on detailed case studies, Robert Neuwirth (2005), Abdoumaliq Simone (2014a), Ananya Roy (2011), Filip De Boeck and Sammy Baloji (2016), Colin McFarlane (2012), David Satterthwaite and Diana Mitlin (2014), James Holston (2008), Teresa Caldeira (2000) and Bryan McCann (2013), to name just a few of the protagonists, shows how networks of non-state actors, including technologies and infrastructures, are implicated in the making and maintenance of slums and poor urban neighbourhoods.

Some of these authors draw on an evolving body of work which might be termed ‘urban socio-technical systems’ (Amin and Thrift, 2016). While much of the older socio-technical systems work sits in management or transition studies, newer work, within which we find inspiration, builds on the seminal work of Graham and Marvin (2001). However, it adapts this work to speak with and from Southern contexts. Jaglin (2014), for example, discusses ‘heterogeneous dispositifs’, Simone (2008) speaks of the ‘politics of the possible’ and Coutard and Rutherford (2016) speak of the ‘post-networked city’. This work is no apology for the non-state governance of informality. Instead it is a reappraisal of possibility and propositionality, including public policy reforms refracted through, and perhaps aided by, things already in place. Its approach has much to add to the debate on state welfarism in South Africa, by identifying potential interlocutors and allies, the labour needed to embed and sustain policy interventions, and the social agency of mundane matter and organisation.

Accordingly, this paper begins with a discussion of state settlement policies for the poor in Cape Town. The institutional field is found to be less at loggerheads than in the past, with the authorities increasingly recognising the need for variegated approaches and collaboration with non-governmental actors. Regardless, the achievements of public policy are considered far from adequate, constrained by policy choices and inertia, resource limitations, the deep spatial and racial cuts of apartheid, rising housing demand due to persistent migration into the city, and market selections systematically discriminating against poor Black South Africans. The size of the gap between housing supply and demand and the obduracy of impediments in the way of the poor suggest that city-level policies, however reformed and joined up, will be unable to address the settlement needs of the poor in Cape Town.

That said, it is not as though existing settlements, old and new, are inert spaces, even if the expectation of state provisioning remains high. They are living communities with their own governance arrangements, which substitute for or mediate public
interventions (Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield, 2011; Jürgens et al, 2013; Pieterse, 2013; Sacks, 2014; Skuse and Cousins, 2007). These arrangements may not necessarily work for those most in need. The challenge of local level power dynamics, sketched out in the section on Practices, echoes the findings of ethnographies of informal settlements around the world which show how gangs, strongmen, elected and self-appointed leaders, businesses, religious and civic associations, and more, vie with each other for influence and control, often at the expense of the poor (see, for example, Björkman, 2015; Boo, 2012; Hansen, 2012; Lancione, 2014; McCann, 2013; McFarlane, 2013; Truelove, 2015). Similarly, sorts of ‘governance from below’ configurations in Cape Town’s settlements may well subvert municipal interventions and constrain community-oriented schemes. However, they cannot be ignored as they are the substrate through which policy reforms must pass.

Importantly, the material infrastructure of informal settlements is another substrate with considerable authority and influence over lives and livelihoods. This is brought to the fore in the section on Materials. Following studies of the social agency of mundane urban matter (see Amin, 2014), this section examines how Cape Town’s settlement infrastructures act as political agents, their political economy and materiality actively involved in shaping social wellbeing, expectation and opportunity. The forms of agency observed in the second part of the paper, from the fragile labours of charismatic individuals to the hidden convocations of trunk infrastructures, centre the traditional conceits of urban governance, and press for policy reflection on the ways in which social enthusiasm but also so-called dead matter can be made to work for the poor.

The final section of the paper discusses the prospects moving forward. Here we discuss first the propositions for the South African housing policy regime foregrounded through this study of programmes, practices and matter. This is most obviously of interest to those working on housing in developing cities. We conclude with a discussion on the implications of this framing for urban theory more generally.

Programmes

Du Noon, Nyanga, Marikana, Delft, Blikkiesdorp, Flamingo, and Lotus Park are the evocative names of some of Cape Town’s many poor neighbourhoods (Figure 1). Mixes of old apartheid townships, more recent subsidised-housing projects, serviced shack settlements, and the most flimsy structures of illegal occupation, they house the majority of the city’s historically disadvantaged Black and Coloured population. They are also arrival areas, providing accommodation for migrants arriving in the city from the Western Cape, other provinces and the rest of the continent. They represent the city’s continuing geography of housing and service shortage, social deprivation and exclusion, crowding and spatial segregation, existential uncertainty and danger, abjection mixed with enterprise, long-distance labour, and racial and class inequality. They are the sore and sustenance of the ‘beautiful city’, the measure of the capacity of the city – and South Africa in general – to deliver the fair and equal society (Bond, 2000; Newton, 2009). They are the spaces of explicit policy, planning and programme attention ranging from intentions to evict or reconstruct to intentions to upgrade or empower (Cirolia et al., 2016).

The housing policy regime of Cape Town must be explored within the context of South Africa’s national housing delivery programme (mentioned above). South Africa’s housing delivery programme is known colloquially as RDP or BNG housing after the Reconstruction and Development
Programme of 1994 and the Breaking New Ground human settlements policy of 2004. There are some notable differences between RDP and BNG housing. Most particularly, the size of the units (the latter being much larger) and concerns over the integration of subsidised housing with social and economic amenities. However, the similarities and inertia between the two policy agendas undermine the often rhetorical differences. For example, most informal settlements upgrading projects or integrated residential development projects practically depart very little from the conventional RDP delivery style (Cirolia et al., 2016; Huchzermeyer, 2011). It is sufficient to discuss the RDP/BNG policy regime as a continuation of an approach beginning in the early 1990s.

In some ways, the RDP/BNG approach appears similar to the ‘site and service’ delivery approach which was pushed by the World Bank in many developing countries in the 1970s. It involves the delivery of serviced plots in large projects. However, in South Africa the poor did not pay for these plots (Wilkinson, 1998). They were given free of charge to ‘the poorest of the poor’. In addition, and unlike the conventional ‘site and service’ approach, a housing unit was provided on the site, the specifications of which have increased gradually over time. The decision to provide a unit was a clear response to the local context and experience. On the one hand, the previous site and service projects of the early 1990s had largely been viewed as a failure, with few households successfully developing their sites (see Nuttall, 1997). On the other, the new (and very progressive) constitution secured the right to shelter, the interpretation of which negated the possibility of simply providing a site.

Figure 1. Cape Town townships, informal settlements and study sites.
The RDP/BNG regime is a huge machine which, once set in motion by grants and delivery targets, has a life of its own. Large-scale funding is deployed by the national government and allocated to the provinces for housing subsidies in the form of a ‘conditional grant’ (the amount of the subsidy and other qualifying criteria are set nationally). The province then sets to work implementing this national policy, dividing the pot of money between the many housing delivery programmes and the towns and cities within its jurisdiction. In the Western Cape (the province within which Cape Town is located), the vast majority of the housing budget goes to develop RDP/BNG housing. This is to say, it goes towards the development of serviced sites and housing units which are transferred, free of charge, to low income households. The majority of the provincial budget (around 70%) is allocated to the City of Cape Town, either directly or through provincial projects. In many ways, the delivery of housing in Cape Town has been the de facto planning policy, actively sprawling the city and pushing its urban edge across the Cape Flats, leaving the other departments (such as planning, education and health) to scramble after the new developments (Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016).

The unsustainability of this delivery system has not gone unnoticed by officials, politicians, activists and academics. There seems to be recognition that the regime may be an effective provider of housing but is producing cities which do not function, creating unbearable costs for the urban poor and the municipality alike. This is made clear in the county’s National Development Plan (2010), Integrated Urban Development Framework (2014), City Support Programme (a Treasury programme launched in the late 2000s), and a whole range of Western Cape and City of Cape Town reports and frameworks. There is a recognition that the regime is in crisis.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the City of Cape Town’s 2012–2017 Strategic Plan on Human Settlement. It is estimated that over 20% of households live in the city’s 450 ‘informal settlement pockets’. In a city of 3.8 million people, this number of ‘pockets’ (continuously inflated by new and illegal land occupations) and these proportions (which exclude the large number of illegal ‘backyard’ shacks put up for extra rent in state provided housing plots) pose a significant policy challenge. For the city, this is a challenge of numbers – of new build ‘sites’ and ‘top structures’, land preparation, settlement upgrading, installation of utilities and services, and maintenance and repair. It is also a challenge of territorial management and spatial integration. It is also a challenge of spatial integration for the city - efforts to tackle ‘apartheid spatial structure’ manifest in sprawl and associated environmental costs, and the lack of integration of informal settlements into the metropolitan area. For all the constitutional and political commitment to the casualties of apartheid, these challenges are not going to be overcome easily or quickly – a fact hinted at in the strategic plan’s acknowledgement of the value of a diversified, multi-actor, and connectivity-based approach to human settlement.

The shift from ‘government delivery’ to ‘governance arrangements’ is an important policy shift (Cirolia et al., 2016). This requires necessarily including the work of community groups and the private sector in the provision of housing and human settlements development. The City, in its strategic plan and elsewhere, explicitly recognises the value of a plural and collaborative approach to human settlement, sensitive to the often-disabling shadow cast by the state, the scale of the problem faced, and NGO criticism of state remoteness and procedural rigidity. The City is keener now than before on harnessing the initiative of NGOs, increasingly
considered as ‘development partners’ with detailed on-the-ground knowledge of settlement dynamics.

The status quo of housing delivery and city building is further troubled by the explicit move towards incrementalism. This shift can be seen in the push for public-sphere upgrades in informal settlements, the extension of services to ‘backyard shacks’ located on council property, and other city projects. This thinking, in line with policy practice in other countries committed to the poor, aims to ensure that the poor have access to land, trunk infrastructures and basic services, and allows residents to construct their own houses or participate in a fair and active rental market (Roy, 2005). A further and important shift (though somewhat at odds with the abovementioned interest in incrementalism) is the argument for densification and urban compaction, which is mentioned in the plan. Multi-storey BNG housing (such as in Joe Slovo’s N2 Gateway Project), Urban Development Zones (UDZs) and other new instruments and practices reflect this thinking.

Private sector and community involvement, incrementalism, and densification – while not uncommon policy objectives – are radical departures from conventional RDP and BNG housing. Thus the strategic plan envisions Cape Town as a city of multiple growth nodes serviced by an efficient and integrated transport system that will enable informal settlements to be connected to proximate nodes instead of only one, increasingly congested, city centre. The current institutional restructuring of the City of Cape Town (which has resulted in the Transportation Authority at the reigns of a new Transit Oriented Development Strategy) is a response to the dysfunction of low-density sprawling development, characteristic of RDP/BNG regime.

Despite this ambitious and controversial restructuring, there are many factors fixing the system in place and militating against the possibility of its overhaul or reconfiguration. The most important is the ‘target chasing’ performance, which forms part of the annual auditing practice. Both the national government and the Province set quantitative delivery targets which become the fixation of compliance-obsessed officials and ambitious politicians. These targets drive officials to deliver as quickly as possible (on the cheapest possible land), regardless of the long-term costs. The other powerful element is the incredible mistrust and hostility which has accrued between poor urban dwellers and the state. This tension results in residents, as well as their elected and non-elected representatives, hijacking or blocking projects until particular demands are met. These demands tend to follow the familiar, rejecting that which is seen as subpar (such as alternative infrastructure or building technologies). The implications of both pressures are that creativity and change are discouraged and even rejected and policy intentions remain ‘good practice’ rhetoric.

Despite the deep challenge of reconfiguring a path-dependent machine, two important programmes give life to the city aspirations and have, in many ways, become icons of a new way of doing settlement improvement in the city. Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU), led by a German-funded NGO, is one such initiative. Through sustained involvement in the settlements it selects, VPUU tackles social breakdown and deprivation though a programme of public works and community empowerment. In fact, it explicitly rejects any intervention into housing or engagement with housing departments, preferring ‘area-based’ public investment frameworks. Its ventures, whose outcomes are closely monitored by the organisation, are widely considered to be successful, imaginatively investing in public spaces as sites of security and social involvement.3 This could
be a multipurpose building in a central public space that doubles up as watchtower, meeting place, and educational and information centre (‘Active Boxes’). Or it could be redesigned public spaces around shared water taps where mothers, outreach workers and infants gather daily for water collection (Ngxiza, 2012; Watson, 2013). With its strong emphasis on community empowerment, VPUU initiatives are overseen by local committees drawing on representatives from different sections of the community, in pursuit of decisions that are deliberative and democratic and in the hands of a capable local leadership. According to their team, VPUU is as interested in the policy process as in the outcomes, and accepts that decisions may take a long time, lack in expert judgement, and sometimes get things wrong. It does not shirk from the slow and experimental nature of social learning, and indeed, remains wary of blanket and top-down policy interventions.

Another well-established NGO that focuses on community-led infrastructure improvement is the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), affiliated to the well-established global alliance Slum Dwellers International (SDI) (Bradlow, 2015; Ley, 2010). CORC focuses on ‘re-blocking’ shack neighbourhoods. It proposes a redesign plan to a settlement and only proceeds if the plan is approved by residents, who must also agree to cover 20% of the cost of the redevelopment through savings. The rebuilding of shacks is left to residents, while CORC often advises on design, materials and suppliers. Often CORC struggles to get its proposals approved because communities are divided, lack effective leadership, are wary of committing to a financial contribution and, most importantly, expect the state to deliver free housing. Many communities have rejected CORC’s strategies and efforts (in particular the mandatory savings schemes and time-consuming self-enumeration). As one resident stated with disgust ‘if we work with you all, we have been told [by our ward councillor] that we will move to the bottom of the [housing waiting] list’. However, when a re-blocking plan does proceed, as it has in a small settlement called Flamingo, the results can be transformative. Flamingo has all the orderliness of a serviced settlement. Its residents have spent their own money to purchase a high quality and fire resistant Inverted Box Rib material. They have supported the women who worked closely with CORC who have emerged as community leaders, and they possess both hope in the future and a strong sense of place. In one of the leader’s home, maps and images of the settlements ‘before’ and ‘after’ hang on all of the walls as testament to their success. These may be fragile achievements, for newness weathers, resources run out, social agency thins and leaders tire, yet the contrast with the many more settlements in Cape Town where the poor continue to live in dire conditions, waiting in vain for improvement, is unmistakable.

There are many actors involved in the formal politics and provisions of settlement development in Cape Town. The dominant state-led approach – focusing on new build, home ownership, and basic services for the poor – is being nudged in new directions by an approach advanced by NGOs and community activists privileging diversity of tenure, in-fill and in situ upgrading, and social mobilisation. It would appear – at least from the language of the City’s strategic plan and the growing number of meetings between policy practitioners – that consensus is emerging around the need for a plural approach towards Cape Town’s settlement challenges. A recognition of progressive trends in Cape Town’s policy regime
does not diminish the criticism of RDP and BNG housing generally or even of these ‘innovative projects’ in particular. Neither is it meant to underestimate the huge gap between policy rhetoric and institutionalisation of innovative and progressive practice. Criticism is valid for Blikkiesdorp, a faraway camp close to the airport, which like so many other ‘temporary resettlement’ areas has the feel of permanence – its desolation, deprivation and malfeasance crying out for organised initiative unblocked from restrictive state procedure. So, too, is it necessary to account for the city’s RDP housing estates in which state provisions have been uniform, rudimentary and poor quality, and for countless shack settlements such as Lotus Park likely to wait a long time for public services and housing from a municipality inundated with demand.

But the criticism which has been so central to South African urban scholarship also needs to acknowledge that the ‘slow and rigid procedures’ have secured free housing and services for a substantial number of poor Cape Town citizens, and are now accompanied by targeted interventions such as those in Du Noon where the planning authorities have returned to improve public spaces and services, with a keen eye on preserving informal practice. In turn, it is not as if the NGOs and social movements offer comprehensive coverage. The NGOs, for example, favour particular policy choices (e.g. re-blocking, local leadership, public spaces), their actions are restricted to particular places and by resource constraints, and their wider influence depends on a campaigning capacity that is not always strong. The pro-poor social movements are no different. If the Anti-Eviction Campaign played an important role in supporting the occupation of Symphony Way by 150 families facing eviction in the adjacent settlement of Delft – an occupation that produced a strong community governed by the residents – it was still unable to prevent the forced removal of the families some 18 months later to Blikkiesdorp or their disintegration as a collective in this large, impersonal and divided settlement. Similarly, for all the help provided by ANC-affiliated Ses’kona to the residents of another occupation – Marikana – to self-organise so as to avoid eviction, the route of direct democracy is fragile, troubled by the harsh circumstances and inexperience of the settlers, the serendipities of leadership, the difficulty of sustaining this form of agency, and the constant wait for activists and professionals who might be able to help. Community mobilisation clearly does not always produce tangible gains and cannot be romanticised.

These limitations may be tempered in a plural institutional field, and it is probably true that Cape Town offers many more pro-poor initiatives and actors than most developing country cities. Yet a large gap remains between the City’s ambitious plans to provide universal access to services and the situated efforts of NGOs and social movements (Cirolia et al., 2015). In part, this is a problem of mismatch between high public expectation and what the state can realistically deliver. The City and other actors confront a reality of continued mass migration into the city, prime locations being passed over to high-yield investors and residents, settlement residents enduring long and expensive journeys to access work and welfare, people waiting interminably for state housing or relocation into semi-serviced land, insalubrious and risky conditions in ever proliferating shack settlements and land occupations by the homeless, and a market economy biased against those without means. The City’s plans – and the South African institutional field in general – have some way to go in order to better manage migration into the city and mobility within it, protect inner city and prime locations for mixed use and mixed communities, rapidly
develop shack settlements and upgrade backyards, unblock and regulate a housing rental market to complement or replace the current commitment to free housing owned by the poor, facilitate NGOs to extend their reach, and embark on a model of economic growth based on social inclusion, income redistribution and universal welfare. Much of this sits uneasily with a neoliberal political economy pledged to interests that promise the highest economic returns.

**Practices**

Prospects in Cape Town’s settlements do not depend solely on the formal institutional environment – the amalgam of laws, rules and policies of the public authorities, NGOs and social movements. Like their equivalents elsewhere, the settlements, from illegal occupations and serviced or non-serviced shack areas, to the older townships and newer subsidised neighbourhoods, have their own rituals of governance. The settlements are not inert places waiting to be enlivened by external interventions. Instead, they have their own force fields made up of the material arrangements of habitat, the repetitions of daily life, the words and actions of figures of authority or force, the sedimentations of collective culture, and the jostle of organised interests. This force field is as much part of the structure of government as are the plans and projects of external actors – challenging, bypassing and modifying them as Harber shows for Diepsloot through his analysis of diverse vested interests, social groupings and strongmen.

Returning to Lotus Park, VPUU’s efforts in building an effective and inclusive local leadership, developing empowerment programmes, erecting a multi-purpose Active Box made of stacked shipping containers, and reclaiming public spaces are undoubtedly important and potentially transformative interventions. Yet, in the backstreets of crowded and dilapidated structures, where there is little public space, and grey water everywhere, these creative and colourful interventions seem distant. These efforts are blunted by the social force of shebeens plying alcohol, a prevailing culture of disenchantment and resignation, the criminal economy and its gatekeepers, vigilante justice and the public expectation that sooner or later the state will provide free housing. The local recycling depot – directly across from VPUU’s container – is run by a feared gangster, known in the community for a ruthless approach to his business. A local VPUU member explained that a vacant plot which looked like it could be a public space was, in fact, the site of a home which had been burnt down by the community after the son stole a cell phone. She went on to explain ‘I will not improve my shack now as it would be unfair to the others around me who must wait for the city to do it’. Beyond the VPUU efforts, these practices have huge effect on the daily life in the settlement.

In the areas of rudimentary formal support, such as the temporary relocation areas of minimal public investment (known as TRAs), this kind of social force is increasingly visible. This is so, for example, in bleak and remote Blikkiesdorp, its sea of state-built corrugated iron boxes and narrow passages hiding the rudimentary public services installed by the municipality. The conditions here are so challenging, it has inspired popular outcry and creative non-fiction (Steinberg, 2014). The social anomie, resentment and uncertainty over whether the promised move to ‘proper housing’ will ever materialise plays into the hands of gangs, religious groups and strongmen governing the balance between hope and despair, tempering the efforts of NGOs and social movements and crushing the efforts of families trying to build community. It is striking that in one section of Blikkiesdorp live many of the families that mobilised and occupied
Symphony Way to avoid eviction. Then, the small community was a tightly knit and effective group with strong leadership that resisted the authorities, publicised its cause, and secured the wellbeing and safety of its residents. However, in the vast stretches of matchbox structures and sandy lanes, the group and its influence have simply melted away or been systematically dismantled by the harsh material conditions.

The juxtaposition and messiness of formal and informal authority and practices are clearly evident in the more established settlements. In Du Noon, for example, 15 years after government subsidies went to upgrade the squatter settlement, the efforts of the municipality to improve trunk services, reclaim and upgrade public spaces, and encourage an effective structure of ward representation, jostle with other forces of influence. These include the practices of informal governance in the adjacent shack settlement spilling into Du Noon, the many NGOs working in the area in different ways (from encouraging savings schemes to facilitating schooling and childcare), the vibrant and variegated commercial sector vying for space and influence, and the owners of two-story buildings who provide 8 ft × 12 ft rental units but ignore building lines in an effort to maximise coverage and income (McGaffin et al., 2015; Wolff, 2010).

In the city’s older townships – once heavily policed and still bearing the mark of black marginalisation and segregating apartheid design – the pluralities are even more pronounced. Nyanga is one of Cape Town’s oldest townships (Bickford-Smith et al., 1999). Take Makondo Square, alone, with its 300 informal shacks built since the early 1990s on a wetland behind Nyanga township’s first military houses and a line of RDP housing. It lies within walking distance of backyard shacks, converted apartheid hostel blocks, and the township’s trunk roads and crossroads brimming with buses and taxis, street life, commerce and entertainment. Its uniformity, manifest in a lack of community, services and amenities, and shared hardships. The numbing wait for resettlement, a rote ward committee, and a precarious built environment, conceals many differentiations of force. There are the gangs and their rackets that force local youths to enrol despite their wishes, pushing back at safe-street campaigns. There are the churches and their pastors competing with each other for influence, fragmenting the neighbourhood into communities of belief and entertainment, mustering enthusiasms that stop just short of political mobilisation. There are festering tensions between the DA-branded projects which spring up to address community safety and the ANC-aligned South African Police Department, located in a painful irony on Great Dutch street. There are the acts of violence, spontaneous and organised, that caution against mobilising for change. There are the many lives led in networks of association that stretch beyond Makondo and Nyanga, making the Square more of a crossing than a bounded community. There are all kinds of ways in which individual households alter the landscape through their own initiative, including small acts of piracy to secure essential services such as water and electricity.

One consequence of this kind of plurality is that life hovers around the status quo. Powers old and new fight for interstitial space. Any impetus for change has to pass through many visible and hidden collectives that temper, mediate and challenge initiatives. Coalitions that require time, energy and resource are hard to find, often operating in fragile micro publics which exist only ephemerally. Much conspires to keep things as they are because of the fine balance of force between organised interests even when settlement life appears quiet and uneventful.
For example, in Makondo Square, a dense, mixed housing solution to accommodate diverse squatters and officially recognised residents makes sense, all the more so because the CORC expert who led the regeneration of Flamingo and other similar places is from the neighbourhood, and offered to work with the community on an SDI Development Action Plan that in all probability would be funded. But the proposed changes challenge the vested interests behind the status quo and require a momentum of grass-root organisation and determination that would be contested. The politics of the status quo favours inertia.

This kind of perpetually reconfigured statis is common in long-established townships and informal settlements, be they in Cape Town or beyond. Momentum for change often comes from dedicated individuals and organisations working silently and diplomatically. They work in the background, delicately working through embedded and territorialised interests. One example in Nyanga is a ‘theatre for change’ initiative, Poppiehuis, founded and led for many years by Professor Vava, its charismatic and dedicated playwright/director inspired by Augusto Boal’s (1998) principles of the ‘theatre of the oppressed’. Poppiehuis offers performances by local residents for the community at large. Staging immaculate plays on controversial local issues such as domestic violence or substance abuse, the theatre has provided a lifeline to Nyanga youths, many of whom still hide out in the cool backrooms of the community centre to avoid hot and busy public spaces. While much attention has been given to ‘service delivery’ and ‘infrastructure’, such efforts demonstrate the power of softer and less material intervention. Another example is a crèche – like many crèches in South African townships – run out of the cramped RDP home of a local resident. However, in contrast to many, this principal is determined to equip the many pre-school children she cares for with basic English skills so as to give them a surer start in life. The crèche exudes the vibrancy and optimism of its founder, who worked as a teacher and in film and photography and invested her own resources and sponsorships from diverse educational trusts to build this small but significant social enterprise. Elsewhere too, the presence of resolute, dedicated women turns out to be pivotal: Fatima finding the food, space and resources to give the Muslim children of Blikkiesdorp one warm meal a day in her Madrassa, keeping alive the solidarity that dissolved soon after her family’s move to Blikkiesdorp (Symphony Way Pavement Dwellers, 2011); Marlene and her two friends in Flamingo persuading the residents to sign up to the CORC-led refurbishment of the neighbourhood, securing their financial contributions and compliance with the agreed housing standards, and overseeing the success of the refurbishment and the upkeep of public spaces and infrastructures.

As these cases show, there is an under-acknowledged element of social organisation – individual leadership – that needs to be recognised in explaining change in the informal settlements. It seems that in the gap between people waiting for the state to provide, NGOs intervening with specific projects, and local organised interests exercising their power, the success of community welfare projects rests disproportionately on the daily practices of exceptional individuals operating out of fragile spaces that they have tirelessly curated. The kind of solidarity that the squatters of Symphony Way managed to forge and sustain to fight eviction is uncommon, deflected by local institutional spikes, a sense among the poor that they will eventually receive state housing, and the trials of individual survival. From time to time, social movements manage to mobilise communities, especially during new land occupations and over specific
grievances such as poor sanitation, but this is inconsistent. The fragility of grass-root mobilisation is not reducible to creeping neoliberal individualism in South Africa. Perhaps when the teenage children of successful families in Makondo Square speak of doing well for themselves first and then giving back to the community in an individual capacity, there is the tinge of a new consumerist culture of self-advancement (Posel, 2010). Alternatively, their stance might reflect the awkward truth that the politics of the social in the settlements veers towards the dedicated individual because it operates on a closed ground – closed by vested interests, official interventions, everyday struggle, and social expectation that the state will provide.

**Materials**

There is an important third element of governance in addition to the formal programmes and social activism we discuss above, increasingly acknowledged in South African writing as part of the institutional environment of informal settlements. These are the social allocations and cultural tracings of the material and aesthetic infrastructure. Amidst high expectations of post-apartheid reparation, infrastructures and matter tend to be understood as the objects and not agents of government. Echoing the work of McFarlane, Scheba (and others) and drawing on observations in Nyanga, Lotus Park, Blikkiesdorp, Flamingo, Du Noon and Marikana, we explore the possibility of material agency. From this perspective, it is clear that built aesthetic and material infrastructures are implicated and agentic in the governance of lives and livelihoods. To foreground this argument, we discuss the power of distance, aesthetics of place, landmarks, material flows, and the politics of infrastructure.

Most obviously, the cartography of settlement – fixed in many ways by the apartheid legacy of spatial confinement and distancing – lingers as a key determinant of social prospect. It is clear here that physical distance has its own power. The majority of informal settlements and townships are miles away from the city centre, in places offering few work opportunities and social services, with poor transport connections. The financial and temporal implications of being physically moved long distances every day (or whenever one can find work) falls heavily on the urban poor who spend larger proportions of their income and many hours a day moving back and forth from the periphery to the core of a sprawling urban fabric. The City’s plans to develop an integrated transport system and multi-nodal economy (as per the TOD plans discussed in the earlier section) may ease the spatial marginality by making transportation faster and cheaper. However, Bus Rapid Transit systems (unlike other more capital intensive investments) rely heavily on operational subsidies and therefore offer a fragile connectivity which could, through a pen stroke on a budget, be taken away.

Within settlements, the aesthetic of place has deeply agentic properties. The visual landscape of the houses, streets and public spaces produce a homogeneity and sameness which has reverberating effects on daily life and urban culture. The sameness of RDP housing in some resettlement areas and of tin shacks in places such as Lotus Park, or the blandness of streetscapes without vibrant commercial and public activity, is not unconnected to low morale and perpetual resentment, foregrounded by the perpetual micro-protests which are a daily occurrence in township life. In this uniformity, the inertia reinforced by the visual landscape envelops interventions trying to alter the dynamic of place, such as VPUU’s Active Boxes or its public space experiments in Lotus Park, or the airy and serene Madrassa in
Blikkiesdorp. This material sameness works to contain the innovation and excitement, be it from NGOs or community members.

Similarly, in new occupations, the particular aesthetic of places, pieced together from scratch, quickly gets enrolled in the making of the social order and its collective affects. If in its short duration Symphony Way became a model small community run in a democratic way, this was because of the shared feelings between the 150 protesting families, the support of activists and media engagement, and the style and strength of the leadership that emerged. But the topography – the barricade on a highway, the collectively built shacks, the spaces cleared for meetings and recreational activities, the unlocked doors, the walks into Delft to get water – also played its part in inculcating a sense of common cause and togetherness. In Marikana Informal Settlement, as the occupation unfolded in late 2014, its visual landscape – sand dunes with dispersed shacks, dangerous electricity cables lying on the ground, resident gatherings in open space, hastily assembled legal campaign meetings, the landowner’s house nearby, daily crossings of the busy highway to find water – was unmistakably part of the governance arrangements: an improvised stage and medium of hesitant but consultative deliberation.

In Cape Town’s informal settlements and townships, the landmarks – market stalls, bars, restaurants, shops, road intersections, open spaces, taxi ranks and more – are as much implicated in governance as they are in providing social and economic services. Maphindi’s Butchery in Nyanga, the crossing bridge over Lotus River in Lotus Park, and the parking lot in one of Du Noon’s primary school are landmarks which people can use to orient and place themselves and connect with other people. With so much of local life played out in the dense public sphere – only thinly separated from the private, landmarks effect the forms of social ordering.

Flows, the character and quantity of matter passing through a system, also form the arrangements of governance. From the MyCity bus stop in Du Noon to the taxi rank in Nyanga, people arrive in places and make their way through settlement networks. This flow is most heavy in the early morning and late in the evening, adding two hours to the conventional ‘rush hour’ as employers have little empathy for the distance. The material flows of services, electricity, sewage and the like, stop short of the ‘last mile’ (as transport experts call it), ending in communal taps or in other people’s homes. This last mile, is where fragile networks of extension and improvisation are built.

More straightforwardly, the force of ‘matter as government’ is evident in how trunk infrastructures – their services and technologies – meet basic needs as well as shape social expectations. In the big cities, including Cape Town, infrastructures are sensed as the material of power, profits, take-offs and uneven distribution and as the test bed of social progress in the new nation (McLennan, 2007). Thus, for example, in the RDP settlements residents know that state contractors cut corners in servicing the houses, sometimes even omitting to install services or provide title deeds. Backyarders and illegal settlers, without access to water and electricity, turn to quiet piracy, willing neighbours, informed advocates and legal loopholes to get what they can, often opposed by local resident groups and political organisations. NGOs such as CORC or VPUU, proposing infrastructural alternatives that require community input, battle with resident expectations that the state will provide, while cobbling through messy and contested processes of participation. Benign bureaucrats know that state provisioning will have to become both more
comprehensive and more partnership-based in order to meet the ever-mounting demand for basic services in the city. However, they also know that ‘supply-driven’ approaches are easier to manage. Though not expressed in these terms, there is a distinctive sense that infrastructures are political, their configurations decisive in the experience of urban citizenship and the evolution of the social contract between the city and urban dwellers.

Though the politics of infrastructure may be sensed primarily as a politics of uneven distribution, it has its other hidden dimensions, for example, the social enrolments of often visibly raw technologies (e.g. hanging cables, broken pipes, portable toilets in serried rank). In Marikana there is the threat of electricity cables lying on the sand dunes and of the busy highway that has to be crossed to obtain water. In some ways, these hardships have served to foster a sense of fragmented but shared purpose, the manifestation of which is the political amalgamation of two settlements (Marikana 1 and Marikana 2) into one cause. In Lotus Park, VPUU’s efforts to build public spaces and service points into community reinforcing political technology is confronted by shacks with little to no services, badly maintained communal water taps and impassable alleys on a daily basis. VPUU is clearly aware of the possibilities associated with an altered material culture, though equally aware of how many embedded settlement technologies reinforce apathy and individualism. The balance can alter though. In Du Noon and Nyanga, where the infrastructural landscape has become ever more variegated with time, ranging from conventional subsidised houses to improvisations made by a whole range of actors, municipal attempts to improve public spaces and facilities have stuck more firmly to the urban landscape.

In sum, the social force of cartographies, aesthetics, flows and infrastructures of Cape Town’s settlements is significant. Clearly, this force is not independent of the policy decisions and social mobilisations that have shaped them in the first place. But as the preceding discussion has shown, settlement materials possess a life of their own, shaping social prospects, affinities and orientations from close up, a capacity that has to be understood as a form of socio-technological governance. This dual character both opens the scope for social improvement through a politics of settlement aesthetics, layout and public provisioning, as well as restricts its reach to the extent that ingrained material orderings have their own say. There is a challenge of alignment between material culture and policy intervention posed by this dualism, requiring the agency of things to be made visible, made a matter of social interest, and subjected to resolute intervention.

Prospects

Here we propose prospects for Cape Town’s future, with implications for housing and informal settlement policies in developing cities. Second, we discuss the implications for urban theory, in particular the value of socio-technical studies of Southern cities.

In Cape Town – and South Africa in general – the mechanisms in place to address the needs of the poor are more robust than in most developing countries. The Constitution and supporting legal and policy frameworks commit to social equity, opportunity and empowerment: in short, undoing the apartheid legacy and meeting socio-economic needs. There is a high expectation for social justice among the historically disadvantaged non-white population and their allies. The knowledge and institutional base for critical analysis and policy reform and delivery is in place. There is ample associational life in the informal settlements as well as popular mobilisation for land, housing, work and welfare for the poor. There is an
evolving welfare state and a developed human settlement programme at state and municipal level. Undeniably, the national and local government is providing scaled resources to meet the needs of the urban poor. While these investments in housing and services remain small in comparison with that which is invested in wealthy areas (see McDonald’s, 2012, critique of inequality in Cape Town), they have undeniably resulted in a much smaller proportion of households living in inadequate conditions than in many African cities, many in the lowest-income quintiles owning urban land and housing, and the production of a huge amount of affordable housing stock which the market alone would have never provided, and livelihood opportunities (in the form of petty landlordism) for millions. For this, it is impossible to see this regime as purely neoliberal (Parnell and Robinson, 2012).

However, the paradox is clear. These efforts to meet the needs for housing have had material, social and political implications. As we have endeavoured to show, the ways in which progressive policies, grounded practices and materiality come together, create complex socio-technical configurations. They reflect many actor networks – human and non-human, organised and improvised, intentional and non-intentional – implicated in the governance of informal settlements and the lives of their residents, always distorting the policy blueprint. These configurations – or assemblies or dispositifs – leave many frustrated and marginalised. They reflect plural interests and designs that cannot be contained or satisfied within even the most collaborative and inclusive of city planning procedures. They often leave little room for meaningful manoeuvre, and where room does exist, it caters directly towards more individualised forms of improvising.

To acknowledge this is not to devalue the City’s human settlements programme, or any of the other national or provincial efforts to reverse the legacy of apartheid or meet basic needs. The authorities – in particular the benign bureaucrats who work day in and day out in informal areas – are well aware of the conflicts and contradictions at stake. So, too, are they aware of the limits of blanket policy actions, the value of plural, negotiated and situated interventions, and the difficulties of integrating remote places into city life. Rather, it is to consider the implications of practices and materials for the making of places and the inability of the state, no matter how strong, to control all aspects of urban life. How can we reframe these practices, not as aberrations of otherwise good plans and policies, but as fundamental to the realising of South Africa’s social contract? How can we crack open the engineering guidelines, the traffic flow equations, and the construction regulations to make space for the politics and power of the material infrastructure to emerge and support, despite the possible contradictions this might create?

In addressing these questions, there is a need to engage with operative pluralism. Public authorities need to consider the implications of settlements becoming heterogeneous entities like the old townships, developing multiple housing forms, mixes of ownership and rental occupancy, different kinds of commercial activity, variegated social and occupational structures, and diverse infrastructural assemblages. Such heterogeneity stands in the way of managing informal settlements and townships in top-down and singular ways, as interventions jostle with NGOs, social movements, local associations, political groups, influential individuals, organised interests and material assemblages. This pluralism is not intrinsically better at reaching those most in need, for its coverage can be patchy, inconsistent, against the interests of the underrepresented, and quickly appropriated by capitalism and
market forces (Pieterse and Simone, 2014). But it poses a legitimate question about how the state can be most effective – whether for example interventions focusing on the urban commons, such as investing in and maintaining public spaces, services and utilities, or ensuring access to affordable housing, welfare and basic income, might be more effective than focusing on providing free housing (Lemanski, 2010). These tensions, on the back of a declining fiscus and the pervasive expansion of the logic of capital within settlement, city, country and international circuits, remain critical challenges that have to be reckoned with.

Herein lies the rub. In the new South Africa, the state violence of apartheid has given way to the violence of a neoliberal democracy, with all its market misallocations and private appropriations. Stepping up and reforming state protections for the poor and for informal settlements (along with buttressing NGOs and social movements) can achieve only so much if markets and owners are given a free hand, congesting the transport infrastructure and escalating commuting costs, shedding labour, keeping wages down and maintaining a massive reserve army of labour, buying up and inflating the price of prime real estate, neglecting social and spatial need if unprofitable, and in general sharpening the divide between the haves and have-nots. For every effort made to improve the informal settlements and the lives of those living in them, the neoliberal political economy raises barriers for the latter in the form of monopoly and privatisation, rising costs, unemployment, poor and temporary work, long and costly commutes, rudimentary provisions and infrastructures, and terrible living conditions.

Recognising the agency of materiality, improvisation and citizens, thus, cannot be at the expense of rigorous effort to understand and dismantle a driving productive force in the making of inequality and subjectivity in South Africa, as underlined by leading South African urban scholars such as Patrick Bond, Marie Huchzermeyer, Edgar Pieterse and Sue Parnell. But, as we have tried to show, the political economy of state organisation for the poor or for capital fixes onto space and material life new configurations of governance that are difficult to separate into clear categories. The incorporation of materiality and social practice into the study of governance in South African townships and informal settlements brings light and life to these hybrid configurations of order.

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Notes
1. This is not to place South African housing policy on a perch. In fact, there is a live debate in South Africa on the viability of ownership-oriented state provisioning for the poor (Bond and Tait, 1997; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Parnell and Robinson, 2012).
2. Both Coloured and Black African are official ‘population groups’ as per the South African Census.
3. There have been some critiques of the VPUU approach, in particular, concerns around crime reporting, transparency, and the long and drawn out models for public engagement. These concerns are largely documented in the grey literature.
4. See the following article in the Mail&Guardian (http://mg.co.za/article/2010-06-07-its-like-a-concentration-camp).
5. The names of individuals have been changed to protect their identity.
6. This is not say that there is no room for policy reform. The evidence here suggests a number of possibilities: paying more attention to the aesthetics, public spaces and services of settlements, old and new; subsidising NGO or community-based initiatives rather than simply collaborating with them; placing less emphasis on new build and owner occupation and more on in situ upgrading, mixed housing forms, and a regulated rental market; embarking on a programme of land acquisition and refurbishment in the city’s inner areas; exploring legally legitimate ways of delivering services and amenities to land occupations by the homeless and poor; and buttressing community initiatives struggling against vested interests.

References

Ernstson H (2013) Re-translating nature in post-Apartheid Cape Town: The material semiotics


Africa is the world region with the highest rate of urbanisation (3.3% in 2010), the most extensive prevalence of slum living conditions (62%) (UN-Desa, 2012), and is arguably the least prepared in institutional and political terms to deal with the unfolding urban transition. This scenario translates into a material context marked by severe deficiencies in terms of what ordinary people can rely on as they make their lives and livelihoods in the city. Thus, much of urban Africa is «autoconstructed»; in other words, a product of the routine and sustained efforts of citizens to find land, construct abodes, access essential services, ply a multiplicity of strategies to access modest incomes and services, almost always embedded in a variety of social-cultural networks that demand incessant investment and care and always laced with uncertainty and risk (Simone, 2010). All in all, this profoundly tedious, exhausting and tough context takes an enormous toll on the capacity of people and households to build trajectories that can be said to go anywhere. Stasis, truncated futures, petty corruption and frustrated ambitions tower over the desires of most slum dwellers, who frequently are the urban majorities. Yet, at the same time, none of these framing conditions can be said to add up to the totality of urban life. On the contrary, despite all these pressures, people continue to fashion aspirational, proactive, culturally full, and forward-looking actions rooted in the biochemical desire for life, and certainly shaped by the sense of community, family and collective that all manner of social bonds produce. Amidst the intensity of layered social practices and economic agency, it is clear that scholars have a profoundly limited understanding of these phenomenologies, let alone any purchase on what it might mean for theories of urbanism and becoming (explored further in Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008; Pieterse, 2013; Pieterse and Simone, 2013).

At the same time it could be argued that we are equally ill informed about the minutiae of statecraft and routine functioning, especially at the interfaces with civil society (Evans, 1996; Jones, 2012). Much of the literature on African states and local governments falls into a trap of caricature. Readings of the state tend to be overburdened by structural analyses that continuously rediscover neoliberal governmentality in all facets of state thought (as reflected in laws, policies and regulations), practice and plans (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004; Parnell and Robinson, 2011). This also suggests that we have a limited purchase on the routine and extraordinary interactions between various, at times contradictory, component parts of the state and diverse categories of civil society and citizens. Thus, it could be argued that scholars have a profoundly limited understanding of these phenomenologies, let alone any purchase on what it might mean for theories of urbanism and becoming (explored further in Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008; Pieterse, 2013; Pieterse and Simone, 2013).
that in terms of our knowledge about the mutual imbrications between state and civil society, we are profoundly ill-equipped to understand or engage the African city, or its multiple futures (Meyers, 2010; Pieterse, 2010).

There are many reasons for this, not least the fact that African universities have been systematically denuded since the late 1970s under various waves of austerity and budgetary cutbacks applied to higher education institutions. These tendencies assumed extreme dimensions during the high point of structural adjustment reforms (1980s to mid-1990s) leaving a damaging legacy in terms of African scholarship, teaching and academic institution building (Mamdani, 2008). This context has had a harmful impact on the corpus of urban scholarship and the substantive content of curriculum that informs how urban practitioners — planners, architects, public service managers, engineers, designers, and so on — are trained (Watson and Odendaal, 2012).

Moreover, it also stultified the volume and sophistication of urban theorisation rooted in the complex conditions alluded to earlier and explored more fully elsewhere (Pieterse and Simone, 2013). Specifically, it has made it institutionally impossible to substantiate the idea that urban policies, whether national, regional or local, can truly be based on credible evidence that arises from a sustained corpus of critical urban scholarship.

It is against this backdrop that a number of processes coalesced at the University of Cape Town (Uct) in South Africa during 2005-2007 to give rise to the establishment of the African Centre for Cities (Acc). The establishment and growth of the Acc serves as the primary empirical and experiential reference point for this paper because I was recruited to be its founding director with an explicit mandate to create an applied university-based interdisciplinary centre that can respond to the ‘needs’ of the city: Cape Town specifically, and cities in the global South in general. Next I will recapitulate the intentions that informed the establishment of Acc in order to demonstrate the institutional decisions taken to address the university’s desire to engage the city. After this brief historical overview, the discussion will delve into the conceptual framework that underpins the diverse portfolio of projects manifesting diverse positionalities, partnerships and experiences in Acc. The concluding section will connect this experience with the broader concerns of this special issue of Territorio.

**Figuring out how to engage the city**

In early 2006 the former Vice-Chancellor of Uct, professor Njabulo Ndebele, requested a meeting with me. He had a deceptively simple question: «What should Uct do to engage more meaningfully with Cape Town as a city?». We had a wonderfully wide-ranging discussion in his tastefully appointed office and I left with a profound sense of purpose and excitement about where prof. Ndebele’s thinking was aiming and immediately found a coffee shop and wrote five pages of thoughts in response to his question. And so my journey started with a committed network of scholars at Uct who were keen to see an interdisciplinary focus on urban studies being revived at the university. In fact, in 2005 I was part of a national workshop that this network convened with support from the National Research Foundation, to explore the paucity of sustained interdisciplinary urban research in South Africa. At this forum of more than 30 scholars from across South Africa there was consensus that more urban research was needed but uncertainty about how to bring it forth.

During this period the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment (Ebe) at Uct had entered into an agreement with the Ove Arup Foundation that is linked to the global engineering firm, Ove Arup. In terms of this agreement Uct would initiate a new Masters degree in Urban Infrastructure Design and Management aimed at mid-career built environment professionals to give them a stronger grounding in social and environmental perspectives. This interaction produced an agreement that ideally, the new Masters programme should be embedded in a lively interdisciplinary research centre. The then Ebe Dean, prof. Cyril O’Connell, and prof. Vanessa Watson (of the planning department) then developed a proposal for a «Cities in Africa» initiative and started fund raising. In 2007, the university adopted this initiative as one its over-arching «Signature Themes» and invested seed funding towards its establishment. At more or less the same time, the university also applied for a South African Research Chair in Urban Policy, ostensibly to anchor all this work and lay the foundation for the institutionalisation and growth of the Signature Theme. In August 2007 I was awarded that Chair and started my current tenure as director of the Acc, supported by an active network of urban scholars from planning, architecture, geography, sociology, engineering and geomatics.
The scope and breadth of the organisations’ research since then has grown tremendously but more or less within the conceptual parameters developed at the outset (Parnell, Pieterse and Watson, 2009). In its early formulation, we posited five propositions as guideposts for how we would grow the research agenda and sensibility of Acc, firmly engaged with the challenges of ‘applied’ scholarship:

– the available stock of urban and planning theory is largely unsuited to help us understand and navigate the complex lived realities of cities in the global South (Watson, 2009);

– building an alternative planning praxis rooted in the South demands a progressive value base that is both socially and ecologically informed. The concept of universal socio-economic and environmental rights offers a profound moral base for planning, but its application in cities of the global South needs interrogation;

– relevant theory must be built on ‘empirical’ and analytical work about real-life experiments in city-building, whether in the form of official government programmes or the mundane ordinary practices associated with reproducing livelihoods and ‘lifeworlds’ in the city. The gravitational point of focus, particularly in the field of planning theory, has shifted too far to the process end during the past two decades, leaving the material basis of urban exclusion obscured and under-theorised;

– effective urban policies can only emerge out of the deliberate articulation of appropriate theory and real-life data about trends, practices and conflicts in the city. This implies an explicit and formalised system of storing, disseminating and analysing information and bringing theoretical and applied knowledges into academic purview;

– none of the previous propositions can be addressed in a traditional disciplinary fashion. Engaged theory and theoretically informed reflexive policy requires an interdisciplinary platform for knowledge generation and innovation. The core purpose of the Acc is learning how to become this platform at Uct (adapted from Parnell, Pieterse and Watson, 2009, pp. 235-236).

Key to the advancement of this standpoint was a belief in fostering active laboratories of knowledge co-production. This was premised on the assumption that academic knowledge was inadequate to understand, disentangle and ‘solve’ a variety of tough urban problems such as structural poverty, environmental vulnerability to flooding, sprawl, climate change impacts, and so on. In fact, mongrel knowledges were required that emerged through structured and choreographed processes of co-production sustained over a substantial length of time. The City Labs were collaborative research programmes which involved interaction between academic researchers from numerous disciplines and practitioners (from government and elsewhere) from a range of sectors, and generally included a series of seminars and culminated in a publication that included chapters/articles written both by academics and practitioners. We have now come to the end of the lifespan of some of these City Labs, which offers an occasion to reflect on the implications of our original framing propositions (Anderson et al., 2013; Brown-Luthango, 2013; Cartwright et al., 2012). Simultaneously, we have been establishing and anchoring a number of pan-African and global South knowledge networks on specific urban topics such as urban food security, the informal economy/sector, planning education and research, national urban policies and discourses, and cultural-spatial readings of emergent forms of what is termed cityness (Pieterse, 2013). Significantly these have all involved intense processes of interdisciplinary negotiation and co-production. In some cases, the co-production extended well beyond the academy to include social movements such as Slum/Shack Dwellers International (Sdi) and various informal worker movements enrolled in Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (Wiego).

These extensive, diverse and heterodox avenues of research, teaching, institution building and animating of publics offers a rich experiential context to reflect on the interfaces between the university and the city. It is beyond the scope of this paper to tease out all of this, but for now I want to turn to an emerging conceptual frame that allows us to consciously reflect on what this knowledge/institutional experiment means epistemically and in relation to the university/city interfaces.
Interdisciplinarity is difficult from every conceivable angle. In the traditional university environment, driven by institutional incentives that reinforce disciplinary specialisation and niche research, it is almost impossible. In contexts where the institutional rules attempt to foster it, it remains a challenge because scholars across disciplinary boundaries effectively speak different (conceptual) languages and often insist that their approach to a topic that sits in an interdisciplinary zone is the starting point for a cross-discipline dialogue and exchange; another recipe for frustration. Without skilful intermediation, at best one can get some form multidisciplinary exchange. We ran into exactly these problems during the establishment phase of Acc and after a few failed attempts to convene methodological discussions about interdisciplinary approaches in urban studies, we decided to prioritise issue-based interdisciplinarity. John Robinson provides a useful treatment of the differences between issue-driven and discipline-based interdisciplinarity. The latter, he argues «… is interested in the inter-relationships amongst disciplines, in the intellectual puzzles and questions that lurk at the margins of established knowledge, and that offer the intriguing possibility of creating new understandings, drawing from established bodies of disciplinary thought» (Robinson, 2008, p. 71). In other words, this form of interdisciplinarity is undertaken by scholars who are engaged with cutting-edge issues in their respective fields and reach across disciplinary boundaries to find inspiration and insights to gain a fuller account of an issue they are grappling with, either empirically and/or theoretically. These scholars would typically be deeply engaged with the disciplinary concerns of their fields because they are pushing the boundaries of their discipline. In contradistinction, issue-driven interdisciplinarity takes as its starting point issues that are burning in society, in «the non-academic world» (Robinson, 2008, p. 71). These may or may not
have surfaced in disciplinary or interdisciplinary journals but they preoccupy practitioners who are charged with addressing fundamental societal dilemmas or what some analysts refer to as wicked problems – complex, multi-dimensional issues that are characterised by high levels of uncertainty and embedded in mutating socio-cultural institutional dynamics (Roe, 1993; Brown, 2010). Examples from urban development would be: structural poverty, food insecurity, social violence, splintering of civil society organisations, urban sprawl, and so on.

Robinson explains that practitioners of issue-based interdisciplinarity «... familiar with the fact that the real world issues they are trying to address are not easily expressed in terms of disciplinary knowledge (life tends to present itself as a seamless whole) are often, but not necessarily, somewhat critical of disciplinarity itself, and are typically interested in creating forms of knowledge that are inherently useful, rather than in creating new disciplines. That is, their interest lies more in reaching across disciplines for a particular purpose than in filling the gaps between them» (Robinson, 2008, p. 72).

Following a similar logic, Acc embarked on a series of engagements with various public bodies in Cape Town to determine what they consider the most urgent problems that required sustained academic treatment, but in a dialogical approach that could ensure cross-pollination between scholars and practitioners. Thus, when the City Labs programme was initiated we addressed the following issues: climate change; urban flooding, especially in informal settlements; healthy cities, with a focus on the changing burden of disease amongst the urban poor in Khayelitsha; densification in the central city; urban ecology; and local state-civil society interfaces in a poor settlement in the Philippi area (Anderson et al., 2013; Brown-Luthango, 2013). Over time, in the context of growing our research footprint on Cape Town, the following additional research themes were addressed: urban food (in)security; alcohol control, poverty and development: ways of knowing urban ecology; human settlements policy; the green economy; the space economy in relation to achieving greater urban compaction and integration; climate change adaptation; and public culture.

This approach was consistent with a broader concern to reorient urban scholarship to the imperatives of practice. Essentially, the founding disposition of Acc focussed us on what one could call ‘the emergency’ condition associated with slum urbanism (Pieterse, 2013)6. The historical and political weight of systemic urban poverty and inequality, combined with unsustainable development patterns, requires of scholars to uncover tangible ways to understand and effectively intervene in the emergent dynamics of routine urban development processes and institutions (Robinson, 2006).

This pressing imperative to produce knowledge that can improve action, institutional interventions and developmental practice can be seen as one pole of a continuum of contemporary urbanism. At the other end of the continuum is philosophical reflection rooted in an exploration of identity, aesthetics and space (Pieterse, 2012).

This pole is a conceptual counterweight to the imperative to act, to intervene in order to ‘improve’ urban conditions. The philosophical mode takes seriously the longstanding critique of developmentalist discourses that the desire to ‘improve’, ‘develop’, ‘grow’, ‘enhance’, ‘empower’, ‘make sustainable’ and so on can be a fig leaf for the reproduction of unequal power relations, biopower and neoliberal governmentality (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994; Miraflah, 2004). This critique points to the importance of taking enough time, empirically and conceptually, to first understand what is going on, with the requisite scepticism of ‘official intentions’, before one pronounces on how anything can be ‘fixed’ or improved. This conceptual disposition seeks to destabilise the certainties of the ‘policy-fix’ genre of scholarship and is rather interested to foreground the oppressive dynamics of formal power. The hope is that such forms of scholarship and knowledge can then create the space for insurgent and grassroots alternatives to be recognised to contest official renderings of urban life and dynamics. Another vein of this scholarship is also simply interested in more fuller and richer accounts of everyday urbanism as a crucial epistemic task in its own right and in direct contradiction to the instrumentality of developmentalist discourses.

Thus, Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) see the obsession with developmentalism as a symptom of a broader epistemic failure of imagination: «there have been limits to the capacity of the epistemological imagination to pose questions about how we know what we know and what that knowledge is grounded upon; to draw on multiple models of time so as to avoid one-way causal models; to open a space for broader comparative undertakings; and to account for the multiplicity of the pathways and trajectories of change. Where empirical work and local studies are carried out, generally they are poorly informed theoretically. As fresh questions emerge and new dramas take shape, the social sciences manifest a surprising lack of openness toward the humanities. Historical and political scholarship is not combined with fundamental philosophical inquiry, and this has led to a dramatic ‘thinning’ of ‘the social’. The latter is still understood as a matter of order and contract rather than as the locus of experiment and artifice» (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004, p. 349).

Further, according to Mbembe and Nuttall, taking on the challenge of writing the social back into our understanding of African ‘life forms’ requires an examination of everyday practices and imaginaries as it unfolds at the nexus of multiple crossings that constitute urban spatiality.

For, like most cities in the world «the continent has been and still is a space of flows, of flux, of translocation, with multiple nexuses of entry and exit points. As evinced by numerous recent studies, the continent we have in mind exists only as a function of circulation and of circuits» (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004, p. 351). This implies a spatiality that is predominantly shaped by the imperative, desire and tyranny of incessant mobility and invention. In our approach we are less interested in pitting these epistemic concerns in opposition to developmentalist concerns with intervention, but rather regard them as a necessary and fundamental continuum of thought that can be mutually enriching and challenging. It is this articulation that best captures the epistemic desire and mode of experimentation that animates the ongoing knowledge practices of the Acc.

Practically, this means that the bulk of Acc’s research on and in Cape Town arises from the City Labs institutional model that ensures issue-driven interdisciplinarity. Since Uct academics and postgraduate students across various disciplinary departments are enrolled into the City Labs, we are able to bring those areas of expertise to bear on a variety of
wicked problems. However, from the outset we also hoped that the experience in these City Labs would motivate academics to speak back to their disciplines on the basis of the new insights that they have gained from the experience. Our expectation was indeed that such forms of scholarship would enlarge the border debates in their disciplines where discipline-based interdisciplinarity flourishes. Put differently, most of the Cape Town research arises from issue-based concerns but this is not pursued to the exclusion of academic-based interdisciplinarity. On the contrary our experience suggests that both forms are important and feed one another. The important thing is to keep the institution open to both forms of scholarship and to consciously surface the tensions, contradiction and novelty that stems from their articulation. In this regard, traditional academic forums such as seminars, conferences, workshops and so forth are actively promoted in Acc because it allows for this emergent interdisciplinary sensibility to be named, reflected upon, normalised and valorised.

On the other end of the spectrum, this sensibility has also enabled Acc to play an active role in providing policy advisory services to various public bodies that govern Cape Town, the Cape Town metropolitan government, the Western Cape Provincial Government, the Cape Town Partnership, the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership, amongst others. For example, one of the most contentious public policy issues in Cape Town is the perceived problem of in-migration from a neighbouring province, the Eastern Cape. These migrants are mostly black, poor and unemployed. Since a number of basic and social services are subsidised for the poor, these migrants are seen as a drain on the fiscus and an obstacle to addressing the lingering problems of poverty and unemployment in Cape Town. The truth of course is that urbanisation is by and large driven by internal population growth and if one subtracts the outflows from Cape Town, the migration flows are actually very modest and certainly manageable from a public policy perspective. In 2010, Acc was asked for advice on how best to develop an urbanisation strategy for Cape Town. We used this request to create an inter-departmental task team to explore more fundamental questions about the data that would be required to undertake more effective forecast modelling and projections about population growth, relative to differentiated demand and implications for a redistributive and sound fiscal policy. This may seem obvious but such a process was unprecedented, and helped to get policy officers to think outside of their departmental purview and to move towards an evidence-based approach to policy review and planning, whilst embedding a redistributive normative stance. Amidst an electoral change in 2012 this initiative got shelved, but in the past few months the City has come back to us to resuscitate it. The dialectic between issue-driven and discipline-based interdisciplinarity has been largely intuitive and experiential. An important imperative that arises from this articulation is communication. In other words, thinking about the importance of continuously fostering publics that can absorb the research and transform it as constituent elements of the city’s public sphere. The public sphere mediates competing discourses about specific urban problems and abstracted associations about the city. Shortly after Acc established its City Labs programme it became self-evident that issue-driven interdisciplinary work required conscious efforts to communicate the central findings of the process-driven enquiry. This is in part because issues need to be conceived of as problems in the public imaginary before they can become recognised problems worthy of public policy and/or academic research. Understanding how an issue is embedded in the public imaginary is a constituent aspect of the research process but equally important for thinking strategically about how best to communicate the research findings on an ongoing process. Upon reflection it is clear that we have not been that successful in this regard, in part due to a lack of finance, and due to a lack of skills to deploy a variety of communication platforms and avenues. However, since 2010 we have experimented with public exhibitions, creating web portals, launching popular publications such as CityScapes, and conducting public seminars (Tavengwa and Pieterse, 2013). From this experience it is clear that taking on the responsibility of working with popular mediums and engaging genres (e.g. reportage) to communicate ones research and practices is fundamental to engaging the tempestuous volatility of the city, a process that is equal measure exhilarating and frustrating.

Concluding reflections on engaging with and amongst urban practices

In this brief paper I have attempted to demonstrate how, in an African city – Cape Town – we have attempted to reflexively fashion a research practice over the past six years to engage with a variety of pressing urban problems. At the outset we did not have a clearly defined methodological standpoint but understood intuitively that we needed to combine academic knowledge with other forms of practice-based knowledge if the university was going to contribute to more effective urban governance and social justice. Institutionally, the challenge was to draw on the rich and expansive scholarly knowledge across the university, but at the same time expose academics to the pressing everyday problems that confront practitioners in local government and civil society organisations. The idea was to use a novel institutional setting – City Labs – to bring academics and practitioners into dialogue with an eye on fostering a shared understanding about various challenging questions that needed to be addressed. These questions did not stem from disciplinary debates within the academy but rather from the street, so to speak. Academics were then challenged to engage with these issues as they manifest in their totality and then reach back to their training to bring specific insights to the problem. At the same time, practitioners were expected to listen to the alternative ways in which academics understand and frame problems they were living, as a way of equipping them with new vantage points that could enrich their practice. Interestingly enough, across the six City Labs that Acc established since 2008, the experience and modes of interdisciplinary learning have been profoundly diverse and resistant to neat conclusions about how best our university can ‘intervene’ in a complex, often conflictual and contradictory urban context. However, the diversity of experience has given rise to a novel conceptual framing that allows us to continuously reflect on the necessary tension and dialectic between the imperatives of practice that are obsessed with finding the best ways to intervene versus the need for understanding that can only flow from careful theorisation of emergent complexity.
Notes

1. I want to thank my colleagues, Susan Parnell, Gordon Pirie and Warren Smit for their feedback on this article. I remain solely responsible for the content and argument. The research is made possible through the NRF South African Research Chair in Urban Policy and the Mistra Urban Futures programme.

2. «Autoconstruction» is a term deployed by James Holston (1991), building on the work of anthropologist, Geert Banck (1986), to capture the rich aesthetic sensibilities that go into the incessant process of building and adapting informal houses on the peripheries of Brazilian cities.

3. According to the university website, «Uct’s Signature Theme policy provides a framework for multi-disciplinary, inter-, and hopefully also trans-disciplinary research to be done on an inter-departmental and inter-faculty basis. Selected to drive research in a strategic manner, they are grounded in excellence and expected to deliver on the work of anthropologist, Geert Banck (1986), to capture the rich aesthetic sensibilities that go into the incessant process of building and adapting informal houses on the peripheries of Brazilian cities.»

4. This aspect is elaborated in Parnell and Pieterse, 2010.

5. More information on these research projects can be gleaned from the Acc website and responsible researchers: www.africacentreforcities.net.

6. According to the university website, «Uct’s Signature Theme policy provides a framework for multi-disciplinary, inter-, and hopefully also trans-disciplinary research to be done on an inter-departmental and inter-faculty basis. Selected to drive research in a strategic manner, they are grounded in excellence and expected to deliver on the work of anthropologist, Geert Banck (1986), to capture the rich aesthetic sensibilities that go into the incessant process of building and adapting informal houses on the peripheries of Brazilian cities.»

References


Brokering communities of knowledge and practice: Reflections on the African Centre for Cities’ CityLab programme

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A B S T R A C T

Calls for greater engagement between academia and society to address mounting societal problems persist. The African Centre for Cities, a University of Cape Town research entity, set up the CityLab programme to broker interdisciplinary engagement, both across academic disciplines and between academia and broader society, to engage with the issues pertinent to sustainable urban development in Cape Town. CityLabs were formed around specific themes and sought to share and co-produce knowledge. Reflections on the running of six distinct CityLabs within this innovative programme over the first 2 years corroborate views emerging in the literature around the outcomes of, and challenges to, interdisciplinary work. The creation of productive and engaged communities, emerging publications and the professional growth and development of researchers heading up the CityLabs stand testimony to the success of the programme. Challenges include issues around micro-politics, getting people to move out of their disciplinary and practice biases, the difficulties of writing and producing knowledge in interdisciplinary groups, and the fact that this type of work takes longer than standard research work. Reflections suggest that the personal biography of the research leader of each CityLab, the role of funders, the history of the discipline in question, and the actual space in which meetings are held are significant influencing factors in determining how interdisciplinary work plays out.

Introduction

In the past two decades there has been a ground-swell in the academic literature around the need for greater engagement between academia and society. This originated on the recognition that considerable expertise sits outside of universities, that universities should show a greater degree of response to societal problems, and that understanding and addressing these real-life complex problems requires meaningful application and effort from diverse disciplines and multiple knowledge bases (Evans & Marvin, 2006; Max-Neef, 2005; May & Perry, 2011; Rydin, 2006). This call is by no means new, but one that persists, suggesting a failure to meet this challenge (Robinson, 2008). While useful work has emerged, along with some, though limited, practical guidelines and growing understandings, there is a view that just as issues facing humankind mount, so should our efforts in these areas. Given the increasing importance of cities, it is no surprise that one particular stream of literature has focused on the role of universities and other stakeholders in knowledge-based urban development (Charles, 2006; Nolmark, 2009; Perry, 2008; Perry & May, 2010).

The growing literature on these types of projects that sit between the university and society presents two recurrent themes. The first is a litany, and now well-founded understanding, of the difficulties posed by the nature of this work (Evans & Marvin, 2006; May & Perry, 2011; Petts, Owens, & Bulkeley, 2008). The second is the ongoing debate around the variable terminology and use of compound adjectives with respective use of the term disciplinary e.g. inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary (Gandy, 2008; Ramadier, 2004; Robinson, 2008). This paper presents reflections on the first 2 years of a collaborative knowledge sharing and knowledge production programme run by the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town. The intention of this paper is to add a contribution to the growing literature that informs research and practice that takes place in and between academia and society; corroborating previous work, challenging old views, and adding new insights. This paper does not engage with the debate around terminology, but chooses rather to use Robinson’s (2008) terminology of ‘issue-based interdisciplinarity’ for that work emerging from among different academic disciplines, and ‘practice-based interdisciplinarity’ to refer to the engagements between academia and the larger world.

The African Centre for Cities (ACC), a University of Cape Town research entity, was established to serve as a platform for research on complex urban issues in the global South from an African perspective, which essentially involves researching the spectra of
elements that would serve to grow south-derived theory to advance sustainable urban development (Mather, 2007; Parnell, 2007; Parnell, Pieterse, & Watson, 2009). The urban population of Africa is large and growing, although rates of growth vary considerably (Potts, 2009). Urban population growth in Africa is often occurring without any underlying increase in the economic base or levels of formal employment, resulting in growing urban poverty (Freund, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2010b). The estimated African urban population of 413 million in 2010 is projected to increase by an additional 248 million people by 2025 (UN-Habitat, 2010a), which means that an improved understanding of Africa’s cities, and how to manage them, becomes imperative. Parnell (1997) suggests that the South African city provides a fascinating laboratory for urban studies where some of our peculiarities may in fact just be worst case scenarios of global social and economic inequities. While there will certainly be opportunities for comparison and contrast to similar work emerging from other African, South African and global cities, the authors acknowledge both the ordinariness and singularity of the city of Cape Town. The city of Cape Town, on the southwestern tip of South Africa, carries many of the hallmarks of a typical African city. Indeed McDonald (2012) goes beyond this and allows Cape Town the label of ‘world city’, but then notes that this label fails somewhat on closer scrutiny where national and local peculiarities single it out. Cape Town, which had an estimated population of between 3.6 and 3.8 million people in 2011 (Western Cape Provincial Treasury, 2011), is one of the most inequitable cities in the world (UN-Habitat, 2010a). About 40% of households are classified as poor; in other words, with insufficient income to access basic necessities such as food and shelter (City of Cape Town, 2011). In addition, as with other South African cities, Cape Town is characterised by an inefficient, fragmented spatial structure that preserves racial inequalities inherited from the apartheid period, and post-apartheid spatial changes are exacerbating this fragmentation and segregation (Lemanski, 2007; McDonald, 2012; Turok, 2001; Wilkinson, 2000). South Africa has experienced an enormous amount of institutional transformation since the advent of democracy and dismantling of apartheid in the 1990s. In the early 1990s there were 57 different local government bodies in Cape Town (Schmidt, 1998), but by 2000 these had been merged into one local government body, the City of Cape Town, with responsibility for a wide range of functions, most notably, urban planning, water supply, sanitation, stormwater drainage, electricity supply, refuse removal, libraries, clinics, parks, low-income housing and local economic development (OECD, 2008; Pieterse, 2002). At a sub-national scale is the Western Cape Provincial Government, established in the mid-1990s, which is responsible for, amongst other functions, regional planning, education, hospitals and regional economic development (OECD, 2008). Certain other local functions, such as most policing functions, remain the responsibility of national government. There are also a number of other bodies that play an important role in governing Cape Town, such as the Cape Town Partnership, which oversees the regeneration of central Cape Town (Pirie, 2007). Within the South African context, Cape Town is one of the more affluent cities, with a large intellectual and middle class population, and a particular local geography that makes the natural environment simultaneously one of global conservation significance and one that poses specific environmental risks (Myers, Mittermeyer, Fonseca, & Kent, 2000). Over and above these spatially-bounded national and local elements, sits the scientifically-confirmed aspect of global climate change (IPCC, 2007). How the impacts of this unprecedented environmental shift will play out among the majority of Africa’s population, living in Africa’s cities and towns, is unknown.

In 2008 the ACC set up a Cape Town-specific programme called the CityLab programme. The intention of the CityLab programme was to broker interdisciplinary engagement, both across academic disciplines and between the academy and broader society, towards new knowledge generation and knowledge sharing, and the creation of working partnerships to engage with the issues pertinent to the African urban situation as they manifested in Cape Town. When the ACC established the CityLab programme in 2008, in recognition of the need for collaboration between academic researchers and government bodies so as to be able to better understand and respond to urban challenges, formal memoranda of understanding were signed with the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Provincial Government. The City and Province provided funding for the CityLab programme, were represented on ACC’s Advisory Board and also participated in the processes for identifying the key themes for the CityLabs. In bringing together people from the University, those in local and provincial government, and practitioners, it was hoped that mutual relationships could be nourished and that knowledge gaps could inform research agendas and emerging knowledge in turn could inform policy and practice.

In proposing a research agenda for the ACC, Parnell et al. (2009) acknowledge any reform must be hinged on a rigorous understanding of urban systems and this in turn should inform sound and geographically appropriate (south-based) theory. The idea of using the City of Cape Town as a type of laboratory speaks to this bigger venture of generating sufficient knowledge through repeated endeavour, observation, measurement, monitoring, and engagement to inform a robust theory. In its most literal sense, and in keeping with the etymology of the word, the place of ‘lab’, the city as ‘laboratory’ is appropriate to this programme as the site of work.

This paper presents a reflection on the CityLab programme, positioned as it is in the greater ACC, and considers how each individual CityLab within the programme has emerged and grown, the challenges faced and its contribution to the broader collective project. In doing so we respond to the repeated call for more exposure of this type of work that looks to build in the somewhat messy spaces between disciplines and between the academy and broader society, and that through sharing, reflection and critique this work, deemed so important, can grow (Evans & Marvin, 2006; Petts et al., 2008; Robinson, 2008). The CityLab programme has certainly made a contribution in the co-production and dissemination of knowledge and in some instances has clearly facilitated shifts in practice and thinking. The measurement of impact remains elusive, indeed the literature warns of this (Petts et al., 2008), and specific monitoring protocols need to be devised in moving forward. We find resonance with a ground-swell in current conversations in the academic literature on the challenges posed by this type of work, specifically around the difficulties of getting participants to move into a common space of shared language and methods. The significance of the role of the individual in leading engagements is highlighted, and presents a new contribution with respect to some of the practical ‘doing’ aspects of this type of work. The debates around terminology and emerging caricatured forms of engagement presented in the literature do not match our experience which shows a far more complex and less bounded process. Common threads emerge between the different CityLabs, but the individual nature of these CityLabs warns against an oversimplification in reflecting on this type of work and we hope the diversity of our contribution to be one of practical use in advancing engagements in research and practice between the academy and society.

What is a CityLab?

Any city could generate multiple CityLabs. The foundation for each ACC CityLab was both generic and specific. In every instance the CityLab reflected either direct interest expressed by the Western Cape Provincial Government or City of Cape Town or a readily
apparent need. Each CityLab is headed by a researcher who drives the CityLab process and takes responsibility for the form of the CityLab and nature of the outputs. The presence of appropriately appointed people to take the lead in each case also served to forge the rationale and, as is discussed later, certainly impacted on the nature and output of each CityLab.

The aim of the CityLab programme is to stimulate interdisciplinary engagement between researchers and practitioners on the production and sharing of policy-relevant research on key issues facing Cape Town. In each instance the CityLab is mandated to produce a publication on the emerging outcomes from the CityLab. How each CityLab chooses to form their communities and work towards knowledge sharing and co-production, and the nature of the final publication, is left to the discretion of the CityLab leader and community. In its mission the ACC describes itself as a new generation knowledge institution and in this regard embraces the need for innovation in the process of ‘figuring out cities’ (http://africancentreforcities.net/). This sensibility is evident in the formation of the CityLab programme where a single dictated methodology would be inappropriate to the breadth of engagement required and an imaginative approach is encouraged. While the agenda for the CityLab programme was established in its broadest sense, what emerged was six very distinct individual CityLabs. The CityLab programme is ongoing and since these reflections, which speak only to the first 2 years of the programme (2009 and 2010), a number of new CityLabs have emerged. Fig. 1 positions the CityLab programme in relation to the broader ACC scales of engagement. Reflections on these CityLabs show much of the collective agenda has been met, but how each individual CityLab contributed to this varied considerably. The first six CityLabs, which form the basis of this reflection piece, spoke to the themes of climate change, ecology, and flooding, and to the geographic locations of the central city and Philippi. The details of each CityLab; the method followed, funding sources, the nature of the community formed, contribution to policy development, the disciplinary interest of the CityLab leader and the publication output, are presented in Table 1. Table 1 summarises the key characteristics of each CityLab for purposes of comparison, making evident the areas of commonality and divergence. The rationale for each CityLab is presented in the text below, and this in turn serves also to provide the focus of the ensuing engagement.

The geographically-defined Philippi CityLab was formed on the basis of the area as typical of the substantive challenges of integrated human settlement. Philippi has a concentration of dense informal settlements, considerable government investment in housing and facilities, remnant farm land, some industry, and large amounts of vacant developable land. Land use in the Philippi area is highly contested and the area presents a useful case study in which to explore multiple issues of relevance to urban Africa.

The Climate Change CityLab, or Think Tank as it became known, formed to manage and integrate research, and associated relationships, in the rapidly growing area of climate change related research in Cape Town. An initial review of this research community showed no need for an additional entity, but rather for a body...
| CityLab name, and yearestablished | Meeting format and venues, and focus Funding Number of meetings(average attendance) | Community: percentage attendance at meetings by different sectors Contribution to policy development Academic discipline of CityLab researcher Publication output |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Central City CityLab (2010)     | Seminar series: Open to public, held at University attended by a mix of academics, practitioners, and government officials. | Western Cape Provincial Government, City of Cape Town, Eskom, Vodacom. 12 (22) | Government (local and national) (11), academy (68), NGO and civil society (0), industry (18), other (4) | Commented on the City of Cape Town’s Draft Densification Strategy and contributed to the City Development Strategy process. | Artist and Human Geographer. Book publication. Towards and expanded understanding of the complex debates related to the densification of the Central City to a wider audience. This is being achieved by conducting new research, and through using the collected material from seminars. |
| Climate Change CityLab (2009)    | Think tank: By invitation, hosted alternately by the City of Cape Town and ACC. Plenary meetings as well as smaller working group meetings of various disciplines and sectors of society. | Western Cape Provincial Government, City of Cape Town, Eskom, Vodacom, Danida IDRC. 5 (40) | Government (local and national) (32), academy (31), NGO and civil society (21), industry (16), unknown (0) | Commissioned work directly relevant to local policy questions and sought to influence the formulation of bylaws, and interventions. Towards a common platform for people of different disciplines and backgrounds, working on climate change at the city-scale. The intention was that the resultant knowledge community would enable an enhanced understanding of local climate risks and adaptation options. | Economist. Book publication. Towards a common platform for people of different disciplines and backgrounds, working on climate change at the city-scale. The intention was that the resultant knowledge community would enable an enhanced understanding of local climate risks and adaptation options. |
| Healthy Cities CityLab (2009)    | Research project: Project meetings open only to predefined working group comprised of academics from different disciplines. Meetings held at the University. Future work will involve government officials. | Western Cape Provincial Government, City of Cape Town, Eskom, Vodacom, Programme for the Enhancement of Research Capacity (PERC). 5–10 | Government (local and national) (0), academy (100), NGO and civil society (0), industry (0), unknown (0) | Review of policy documentation but no active engagement with policy development. Urban planner. Book publication and academic journal articles. Towards a long term, phased, research project with initial interdisciplinary research on the relationship between the environment and human health. Future phases will involve work with policy makers and practitioners to create healthier urban environments. | Sociologist. Book publication. Towards exploring and debating the pre-conditions for sustainable and equitable local development in low-income areas in the city. |
| Urban Ecology CityLab (2010)     | Seminar series: Open to the public, held at University attended by a mix of academics. | Western Cape Provincial Government, City of Cape Town, Eskom, Vodacom. 5 (10) | Government (local and national) (3), academy (24), NGO and civil society (0), industry (20), unknown (0) | Review of policy documentation but no active engagement with policy development. Ecologist. Special issue. Towards understanding the ecological interactions of urban systems and the dependency of local communities on these systems. | City planner. City guide. Towards understanding the ecological interactions of urban systems and the dependency of local communities on these systems. |
| Philippi CityLab (2009)          | Seminar series: Open to public, held at University as well as in Philippi, attended by a mix of academics, practitioners, and government officials. | Western Cape Provincial Government, City of Cape Town, Eskom, Vodacom. 12 (18) | Government (local and national) (12), academy (49), NGO and civil society (19), industry (11), unknown (7) | Review of policy documentation but no active engagement with policy development. | Sociologist. Book publication. Towards exploring and debating the pre-conditions for sustainable and equitable local development in low-income areas in the city. |

Table 1: Profiles of five African Centre for Cities’ CityLabs, data for the years 2009a and 2010.
Reflections: Accomplishments and challenges

The intention of this paper is to present reflections on and insights from the CityLab experience in order to grow a literature on experiences of work in the realm of issue-based and discipline-based interdisciplinarity (Evans & Marvin, 2006). Here we acknowledge the importance of the ‘voice’ of the researcher and the role of reflexivity in this type of research (Etherington, 2004). Reflexivity, which refers to a critical reflection on the researcher’s journey and how his/her ideas, perceptions, questions and decisions have influenced the research process, provides a ‘sort of quality assurance check’ within research (Etherington, 2004). It is within this spirit that this paper gives reflections of the lead researcher of their journey in leading and shaping a process aimed at co-production and knowledge sharing. The reflections highlight
positive, affirming outcomes as well as some more negative or challenging ones, and these stand largely in support of similar findings presented elsewhere in the literature. While not every finding or reflection presented here is true of every CityLab, those highlighted here are common to most and were viewed as characteristic of our collective experience. In some instances single cases are noted where we feel they speak to a common issue raised elsewhere in the literature or potentially are a pertinent new contribution. These reflections are from the leaders of these CityLabs and must therefore be viewed in that light. The CityLab leaders are all university-based, academic researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds (Table 1). We are conscious that these reflections are limited in this regard, but hope that they may serve to inform future work in similar endeavours, or as a point of departure for building on or critiquing this type of work by other parties.

The most readily apparent success of the CityLab programme has been the creation of knowledge-sharing, and in some instances knowledge-generating, communities that really do manage to forge what Robinson (2008) calls the ‘margins’ or ‘borderlands’ between disciplines and between academia and society. The formation of these successful communities has been both richly rewarding and challenging. Every group or discipline has its own culture of practice (Bracken & Oughton, 2006) and the CityLabs all managed to forge these cultural divides, if to varying degrees. While success is evident in each CityLab, the form these communities took varied. All the CityLabs played significant ‘conduit’ roles in opening channels of communication between different academic disciplines, and government (in particular local government) and other societal groups. As May and Perry (2011) note, it is not sufficient to simply generate knowledge, for knowledge to have any value it needs to be actively communicated, or ‘brokered’, and the CityLab programme achieved this.

The Climate Change CityLab researcher was acutely conscious of the role of the CityLab in raising awareness of climate change among local government officials and politicians through communicating the latest findings coming out of university-led climate change research. This process saw an evident shift in how city officials view climate change, taking it from what was previously perceived as exclusively an environmental issue to one of diverse relevance. This sense of exposure and the airing or unpacking of disparate knowledge around a topic was also experienced by the Central City CityLab, and resulted in the generation of similar ‘new social learnings’ (May & Perry, 2011) among this community. The issue of urban densification, the focus of the Central City CityLab, is a thorny issue and much of the knowledge sharing and discussion was simply focused on ensuring that a broader community was exposed to the full range of issues, concerns and obstacles currently under debate. The Urban Ecology CityLab saw particularly strong engagements across the academia and society divide and these relationships played out in the joint publication of material emerging from the CityLab. The Healthy Cities and Urban Flooding CityLabs took a research-focus and this saw the formation of research groups from across different academic disciplines, drawing people together to work on society-relevant questions. In both cases these groups were comprised of people who had never worked together previously.

While the degree of engagement varied, indeed the Philippi CityLab struggled to see the formation of any knowledge community at the outset, each CityLab is committed to producing a publication recording knowledge shared or produced in the CityLab process. While the teams working towards these publications have generally been a smaller sub-set of each larger CityLab community, this process and ensuing publications will be further testimony to the successful formation of the interdisciplinary communities. The persistence and how the types of engagements will continue to grow among the CityLab communities into the future remain untested. A longer period is required to give definitive comment on this, but signs of successfully forged relationships, and revised thinking, are most certainly emerging.

The CityLab programme had an additional dimension with the increase in exposure between the University and government officials and practitioners. This exposure had unforeseen benefits. Repeated engagements gave all parties a far better working knowledge of what different groups do and how they operate, fostering more meaningful and efficient engagements. One result was the numerous round tables convened to attend to specific issues. These were facilitated by a clearer understanding of the capacity and focus of the ACC on the part of the City and Provincial governments. In the same vein CityLab researchers and other members of ACC staff have been approached to comment on policy documentation. Good personal relationships and trust developed through time allow quick access to data and information held by government officials and practitioners. Through the multiple CityLab engagements it is as if the larger umbrella institutions have been pulled closer together, indubitably serving the valuable role of bringing each other’s institutional context into clearer focus (May & Perry, 2011).

Much of the literature has clearly defined categories of engagement (Ramdier, 2004; Gandy, 2008). Reflections on our experiences of the types of communities that formed in the case of each CityLab and the emerging relationships that took forward the knowledge sharing and knowledge production, suggest our findings are more in keeping with Petts et al.’s (2008) continuum of interdisciplinary engagement. What emerged in the CityLab programme was a messy, but stimulating and positive, series of engagements. In reflecting on the CityLabs in relation to Max-Neef’s (2005) model with the hierarchies of the empirical, pragmatic, normative and purposive, the communities formed, connections made and engagements pursued among the six CityLabs superimposed on this would look like the work of a child with a gyroscope. Smaller and larger circles and ellipses pull together people between and across the hierarchies, and in turn inform higher level engagements from the CityLabs to the ACC and the University and beyond. Given the complexity of knowledge sharing (Petts et al., 2008), the urge to simplify engagements is apparent. May and Perry (2011) note the complexity of the city in itself directing engagements, each afforded different levels of significance. Our findings suggest that what emerges when trying to classify these relationships are caricatured views that do not capture the constructive ‘messiness’ that comes with the experience and in our view has been important to the success of the CityLab programme. The emerging round tables are a very concrete example of an unanticipated, tangible success out of the relatively unbounded interdisciplinary CityLab programme.

A positive impact which is given scant attention in the literature is that of the personal and professional growth of the people leading these issue-based and discipline-based interdisciplinary teams. Bracken and Oughton (2006) do note the learning experience of team members involved in disciplinary work, where exposure to other methods and dialects make for a more inclusive culture. They attribute this positive experience to mere team members; imagine the manifold learning of a single team leader, the one person present and active in every engagement. Every CityLab researcher is certain that through their role in leading a CityLab they have experienced considerable growth. First-hand experience in facilitating meetings, diplomatically guiding negotiations, driving joint research or publication, and exposure to the multiple approaches across sectors has been educational. And over and above this is the enormous breadth of content and knowledge presented to, and held by, the CityLab researcher. Bracken and Oughton (2006) assign the success of interdisciplinary work to, among other things, the degree of experience and effective management of the
team leader. The inadvertent training of the CityLab researchers in this regard is a significant contribution to the lives of these professionals, and in turn through gained experience, to ongoing interdisciplinary work.

A more palpable contribution of the CityLab programme will be the publications. These publications, which will take variable forms reflecting the type of work emerging from the different CityLabs, will present the breadth and diversity of work, practice and experience surfacing in these different thematic and geographic areas. These publications will inform future research and practice towards sustainable development in African cities. The writing and publication process, as part of the issue-based and discipline-based interdisciplinary endeavour, was one of the more challenging aspects of the CityLab work. The cultures of writing and publication are highly divergent and strongly entrenched both within and outside of academia (Bracken & Oughton, 2006). The Central City CityLab and Urban Ecology CityLab both faced challenges in working towards publication. There were tensions among the Central City CityLab community over authorship where content sat in the hands of practitioners who were keen to see the work published, but unable to commit the time to writing up their findings or views. The question of responsibility of authorship and ownership of work had to be negotiated. The Urban Ecology CityLab experienced a similar issue where all participants approached were very keen to see their work published but again practitioners found it difficult to find the time to write. Here the nature of the publication was problematic where the high currency value of peer-reviewed journal publications was a major incentive for academic contributors, while some of those in practice felt this was an unfamiliar and alien space in which to publish their work. Lack of access to journals from which to draw appropriate literature for cross-reference also served to exclude authors outside academia. Some authors addressed this by working in teams very successfully, and only in one case did it see an author withdraw their work.

A common challenge in many of the CityLabs was that of micro-politics and personality clashes, which can significantly hamper interdisciplinary work (Evans & Marvin, 2006; Petts et al. 2008). This was particularly evident among the CityLabs comprised of smaller groupings where questions arose for example around who gets invited and how monies are allocated, and this gave rise to considerable disagreement. The Climate Change CityLab experienced tensions over the weighting of interests among the selected community invited to attend sessions. Some participants felt there should be a greater activist presence, while others felt business was under represented, and these relative weightings had to be negotiated in light of the purpose of the CityLab. The exposure of these tensions proved productive in demonstrating the need for different parties to be bought on board and the absolute necessity for a cross issue-based and discipline-based engagement. This CityLab also experienced tensions over the allocation of budget where participating staff of the City of Cape Town were keen to see new work commissioned and academics favoured the publication of existing, but unpublished, material. Here the significant role of the source of funding in driving directions, outcomes and products is evident (May & Perry, 2011).

The challenge of getting people to move out of their discipline or practice comfort zone is well recorded (Robinson, 2008). The very broad nature of ecology, which is an examination of the relationship between living things and their environment, means ecologists often adopt a particular geographic or species-specific focus. In light of this, attendance at the Urban Ecology CityLab saw good cross academy and practice representation, but always within a sub-discipline. For example fresh water biologists from academia and local government would attend a session on fire ecology. This saw successful engagement across hierarchies of practice with significant issue-driven interdisciplinarity between the empirical, pragmatic and normative levels (Max-Neef, 2005), but little to no discipline-driven interdisciplinarity. This was useful knowledge sharing, but did not see the development of relationships for example among people working in the realm of social ecology and biology that might have been hoped for. These same relationships played out in the development of papers for a Special Feature publication emerging from the Urban Ecology CityLab. Some authors suggest the retreating back to the disciplinary-base is positive, ensuring robust science (Petts et al. 2008). Dorlington and Shaw (2002) note, however, that disciplines are called disciplines for a reason – they exert it, and attempts to break down boundaries proved extremely difficult. The turnover in participants between sessions was not total, and there was some cross-pollination at least and signs of the type of emerging creativity that might be expected with exposure to different views (Nissani, 1997). For example a plant biologist who works on the ecology of invasive alien plant species elected to write a paper on public perceptions of invasive alien plant species for the special feature publication, showing a shift if not in working relationships at least in mindset.

While knowledge sharing can highlight tensions within and between issue-based and discipline-based groups, these need not stand in the way of progress as parties can agree to differ in their views. The co-production of knowledge or setting views down in the writing process, however, can bring divergent views and approaches into sharper focus. The Healthy Cities CityLab and the Urban Flooding CityLab were particularly successful in breaking down the distinct discipline-based barriers. These two CityLabs, focused as they were on academic research projects, saw a discipline-driven engagement with all the common attendant problems. These communities saw long and protracted periods of negotiation in agreeing on terminology, research frameworks and methods. Ramadier (2004) acknowledges the weighty influence of methods grown over decades within disciplines and the value and trust placed in these methods by those who know their origins and strength. He goes as far as suggesting the need for new methods for interdisciplinary work given the high degree of distrust of the methods of different disciplines. Participants in the Healthy Cities CityLab were from a range of disciplines, none of which directly focused on urban health issues. Participants had contrasting methodological approaches and research paradigms and used very different terminology. This impeded progress as considerable time was spent negotiating agreed terms and methods, and saw the loss of one participant who was unable to compromise. The fact that these obstacles were finally overcome in the case of the Healthy Cities CityLab is a noted success. Settling on the single common theoretical framework of collaborative governance allowed the Urban Flooding CityLab to move past some of the methods and terminology stumbling points. But this solution was not immediately arrived at, and the process of exposing the tensions and wrestling with these, had to be followed before constructive solutions could be sought. Like Ramadier (2004) on methods, Robinson (2008) suggests new theoretical frameworks should be sought in pursuing interdisciplinary work given how often failure to reach consensus on a theoretical framing thwarts successful interdisciplinary work. The need for considerably more time in pursuing interdisciplinary research for this type of negotiation is noted by authors and all note this should be factored into time lines and associated budgets (Bracken & Oughton, 2006; Evans & Marvin, 2006; Petts et al., 2008). In the case of the Healthy Cities CityLab, on going successful engagement was ensured through consensus among the group that the preliminary stage of the project would take longer than anticipated, but that this period of finding common agreed ground was central to the success of the project. The Central City CityLab
researcher was of the view that the heavy bias towards practitio-
ners in that community where sessions were dominated by plan-
ners and architects meant that a certain technical terminology
dominated. While this was not an evident tension it is possible it
served to exclude some stakeholders from the community perpet-
uating a dominance of practitioners.

The Philippi CityLab experienced considerable tension around
where CityLabs were held and what focus and form these sessions
took. This tension manifested in a skewed attendance at the outset
with a reluctance on the part of practitioners to attend what they
saw as very academic sessions with little apparent relevance to
their work in Philippi. This raises points around the danger of priv-
ileging certain cultures, or forms of knowledge, over others as well
as issues around assumptions and trust (Petts et al., 2008). In the
case of the Philippi CityLab, careful attention to the nature of the
topics, forming an agreed focus and varying the place where meet-
ings were held all served to ameliorate these issues in the second
year. While tensions are described as arising between disciplines
or across the divide between academia and society, how these
manifest and are expressed is very personal. These tensions and
how they are successfully addressed supports the common view
that success is reliant on the development of mutual respect, trust
and reciprocity (Petts et al., 2008; Rydin, 2006).

Influencing factors

In reflecting on the successes and challenges of forging issue-based
and discipline-based interdisciplinarity in the CityLab programme it
became evident certain defining mechanisms influence outcomes.
The circumstances in which knowledge is produced will always serve
to shape it, and this section explores those circumstances most perti-
nent to the CityLab outcomes (Rose, 1997). The literature alludes to
some of these, but not in much depth, and generally there is little guid-
ance on the ‘how to’ of interdisciplinary work. The contribution of these
reflections on influencing factors stand in response to the call for the
exposure of this type of work, with a view to building a better working
environment for the Philippi CityLab. It was only with taking
mounting focus, question or framework on which to build work. What is evident
is the need for some single focus, question or framework on which to
build work and engagements. The Central City CityLab had no such
trouble in generating a community, but here some of the breadth
which might have been beneficial in maintaining the geographic fo-
cus was swamped by the densification focus, which gave rise to a
very particular, practice and planning driven engagement.

One of the factors commonly noted in the literature as a con-
straint to interdisciplinary work is that of funding, which com-
monly serves to restrict research to within disciplines and
academia (Bracken & Oughton, 2006; Petts et al., 2008). It must
be noted that the success of this work is firstly attributable to the
ACC, which conceptualised the programme, and in doing so se-
cured and allocated the funding. The beginning of gains for the ACC
was swamped by the densification focus, which gave rise to a
very particular, practice and planning driven engagement.
for research on flooding in Cape Town linked to the Urban Flooding CityLab. Most funding comes with specific output requirements and this most certainly informed outcomes and research direction in the Healthy Cities, Climate Change and Urban Flooding CityLabs. The funding from the City of Cape Town has forged a stronger and more direct engagement with key City officials, who were always invited to attend and participate in sessions.

The initially under-acknowledged influence of accessibility, with respect to both physical and cultural access, proved a most significant driver of attendance and formation of community. Just as authors note the need for time (Bracken & Oughton, 2006), so too is the role of, and need for, space noted (Pettet et al., 2008). After clear tension emerged in attempting to bring together practitioners and academics in the Philippi CityLab the role of place was evidently a driving factor. The Philippi CityLab researcher remedied this by holding meetings both at the University and in Philippi itself. This went a long way to improve attendance and community formation. The CityLab leader went one step further and hosted a successful seminar titled ‘What happens when the university meets community’ as a means of exposing and working through these tensions. The Urban Ecology CityLab approached a presenter for the seminar series who declined the invitation to present to the grounds that she did not feel comfortable speaking about her practical experience in an academic setting. On approaching her again, and suggesting the session take the form of a field trip to be lead by her, the practitioner was extremely enthusiastic. Indeed this was one of the most engaging and exciting Urban Ecology CityLab sessions. Acknowledging cultural and physical accessibility issues and embracing the very positive influence of working in different spaces was a constructive lesson.

All the literature, and indeed many of the reflections presented here, note the difficulty of interdisciplinary work. Interdisciplinary work can also be surprisingly lonely. As CityLab researchers we were frequently faced with novel challenges that required creative solutions. We found a natural community among ourselves in which to share problems, pose solutions, and test ideas. This community proved helpful in problem solving through shared experience and in providing invaluable support. We would recommend this as a starting point to any similar project.

Conclusions

The ACC CityLab programme has experienced many of the successes and challenges of interdisciplinary work noted in the literature. These reflect themes starting to reverberate in the literature, but present an empirical base of work emerging in the realm of Urban interdisciplinarity in the global south. While much of the literature is focused on the correct definition of terms used to describe interdisciplinary work, our experience shows that the true nature of these engagements is far messier than representations in much of the literature. Reflections on the CityLab programme show the importance of the experiential influences of people, place, funding and histories in driving the nature and success of interdisciplinary work. The ACC CityLab programme is ongoing. New CityLabs are being set up, for example, on urban violence and on urban culture. The existing CityLabs are growing, changing form, and taking new directions. We will reflect and act on our own insights as we move forward, seeking to improve our interdisciplinary engagements, and continue to contribute to the growth of what Max-Neef (2005) calls ‘an unfinished scientific programme’.

Acknowledgements

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References


Development Action Group (DAG) was initiated by a group of activists in response to the destruction of and forced removals from an informal settlement in Cape Town. This year marks DAG’s 30 years of activism.
The history is based on 30 years of active citizenry, capacity development of civil society organisations towards a more just and equitable city.
DAG has been instrumental in both policy and practice debates with regards to housing and human settlements - including incremental upgrading, self-build and medium-density medium density housing premised on communities at the heart of development.
Through demonstration and deepening practice, DAG has fostered innovative processes to unblock unfinished houses requiring intergovernmental coordination, self-build, contractor support, enterprise development and access to finance.

7,200 houses built
12,778 households assisted
R203,007,945 finance secured
DAG’s advocacy work has spearheaded critical discussions on land and housing, including debates on the sale of state land (1992) and ‘well-located affordable housing—a feasible option (1993)’.
Realising the critical need for housing finance for poorest of the poor, DAG gave birth to the Kuyasa Fund as a micro-finance arm. Established in 1999, the Kuyasa Fund continues to operate independently providing housing microfinance.
DAG's priority areas

VISION

To create sustainable human settlements through development processes that enable human rights, dignity and equity.

MISSION

To demonstrate how working in partnership with citizens and other groups who share a pro poor agenda can lead to creative and sustainable solutions that redress social, economic and spatial inequalities.

DIRECTORY

Chairpersons report

Directors report

01: Democratic Urban Governance
02: Housing and Human Settlements
03: Networking, Policy and Advocacy
04: Young Urban Professionals
05: Monitoring and Evaluation
06: Financials

33 31 29 27 20 19 10 08 04
DAG's priority areas

Good governance
Financial stability
Political and institutional legitimacy
Inclusive neighborhoods

Enabling environment for well-capacitated players

Private sector
Government contracts
Community

Outcomes

Medium term

Innovative models for urban development and human settlement in Cape Town and beyond

Large-scale, up-scalable

Outcomes

Vibrant neighborhoods
Transport interlinks
Affordable and efficient<div align="center">Access for all to all areas</div>

All areas are well served, with access to all economic classes can access all areas.

Socially cohesive
Articulate investment
Diverse housing stock

Outcomes

Medium term

Inclusive cape town

Inclusive interests in an equal participation of various stakeholders in cooperation

Outcomes

Long term

Vibrant neighborhoods
Transformed/Restructured Cape Town

Theory of Change
Thabo Mashologu (Chairperson)

Board of directors

Steve Kahanovitz
Director

Rugaya Edwards
Director

Querisha Nagdee
Director

Adi Kumar (Executive Director)

Thabo is the founder and Managing Director of Msingi Projects. With a Bachelor of Science Honours in Quantity Surveying & a Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Financial Analysis and Portfolio Management, both from the University of Cape Town. A registered professional construction manager with the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions with over 15 years related experience in the field.

Steve works in the Cape Town office of SA's public interest law group the Legal Resources Centre. Since the adoption of the Bill of Rights in a democratic SA he has been litigating in cases regarding socio-economic rights, particularly the access to housing through LRC's clients. A graduate of the University of Cape Town (BA); The University of the Witwaterstrand (LLB) and the London School of Economics (LLM)

Previously, Adi worked as the Deputy Director at Community Organisation Resource Centre. Over the last fifteen years, he has worked on post disaster, post conflict and informal settlement upgrading across the world. His practice focuses on intersectoral partnerships, strengthening community action and housing policy.

Rugaya has over years' experience in public practice. She is the managing director at Verryn & Co Inc, an accounting and auditing firm in the southern suburbs. She is a registered member with SAICA and IRBA.

Querisha is the local consultant for the Dreikonigsaktion, an Austrian donor organisation. She is responsible for South Africa and joint partnerships in Africa. She also works as an independent facilitator and consultant. She has a background in and expertise in social development, organisational development and the NGO sector.

Wilhemina is an international gender activist and trade unionist. She has a resilient education background, especially with Community Adult Education and currently works as an independent consultant to the labour movement.

Olivia heads up the Kuyasa Fund, a company providing housing microfinance loans for very poor households. She holds a B.Com honours degree as well as an MBA from Stellenbosch University. Prior to the establishment of the Kuyasa Fund in 1999 Olivia worked in several organisations focusing on end-user finance.

Tasleema has expertise in the field of Architectural Education and the Built Environment with special interest in Earth Architecture. She is currently lecturing at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Batembu is a consultant who has a range of expertise that include local government, economic development and youth development. He has been actively involved in various public participation processes and the training of ward committees and government officials.

Wilhemina Trout
Director

Batembu Lugulwana
Director

Tasleema Mohamed
Director

Olivia Henwood
Director

Board of directors
Chairpersons report

2016 marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of DAG. Driven by a deep sense of civil responsibility and rejection of apartheid injustices, a group of activists convened together to form an organisation through which they could make a difference to the lives of the urban poor. Initially, the focus of the group was on assisting marginalised communities, faced with the threat of forced removals, to access land and housing. Through the mid-1990’s, this work evolved within the context of a new democratic dispensation, when DAG was called upon to facilitate the participation of the urban poor in inclusive planning and development processes.

Today, 30 years later, DAG has established itself as one of the leading non profit organisations in the human settlements sector. Unfortunately, the high hopes that accompanied the advent of democracy have been replaced by a sense of national despondency. Over the last twenty years, rather than seeing the need for DAG and similar organisations diminish, we have seen an even greater demand for their existence. Public confidence in the post-apartheid State is at an all time low, whilst poverty, unemployment and inequality increase unabated. The demons of corruption, state capture and gross incompetence have morphed into slow economic growth, rating downgrades, widespread militant protests, and a divided ruling party that has abandoned its citizenry. All is not well.

The Non Profit sector has not been untouched. The battle for scarce resources has seen organisations pitted against each other in competition for funding. There have been notable casualties, such as the demise of the Institute of Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), a critical voice on democracy and governance. Competition has also diluted collaboration between organisations, and many opportunities to generate a critical mass have been lost.

Against this backdrop, we are called to critically examine the role of DAG over the next few years. It is clear that citizens are calling out for honest brokers, principled advocates and selfless, accountable leadership. It has become a national imperative, and we are seeing the re-awakening of civil society movements, this time in defence of our democracy. DAG, and others, must seize this moment to recapture the principles of collectivism, respect and collaboration, not only with like-minded entities, but also with those carrying divergent points of view. DAG’s ability to convene multiple (and diverse) stakeholder groupings, and facilitate negotiated development solutions will be a key feature of our work. This requires leadership that reflects these virtues.

In this regard, we were delighted to announce the appointment of Aditya (Adi) Kumar as the Executive Director of DAG. Adi is a well-respected activist and thought leader in the human settlements sector, whose expertise is highly sought after by civil society and government agencies alike. He adopts a collaborative, unifying approach to addressing the challenges of urban development, and is principled in maintaining the standards of the organisation.

In this regard, we were delighted to announce the appointment of Adi as Executive Director of DAG. Adi is well-respected in the sector, and has been instrumental in advocacy for the rights of the urban poor. His appointment will be a key feature of our work, and we are excited to see how he will continue to lead DAG forward.

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We also bade a sad farewell to Bob Hindle after 18 years of service to DAG. We are especially grateful to Bob for the selfless manner in which he stepped into the Acting ED role whilst we carried out the recruitment process. On behalf of the Board and Staff of DAG, we wish Bob well on his future endeavours.

2016 was a difficult year for DAG financially. Difficult decisions had to be taken to keep the organisation afloat. Through it all, the staff have remained loyal, engaged and committed to their work. We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the effort and commitment that these individuals have shown.

We would also like to thank our donors, who have recognised the value of DAG’s work, and continued to support us throughout difficult periods. 2017 promises to be a year filled with promise and excitement. We would also like to thank our donors, who have recognised the value of DAG’s work, and continued to support us throughout difficult periods. 2017 promises to be a year filled with promise and excitement.

Finally, in commemoration of our 30th anniversary, I would like to pay tribute to the Directors who have provided strategic direction to DAG over the last 30 years, giving voluntarily of their time and expertise to ensure that the organisation has remained relevant throughout.

The annual report, further details of our programmes and plans are included elsewhere in this document.

Thank you

Thabo Mashologu
DAG had a number of highlights in 2016 including Masimanyane eHP project, first civics coversation and socio-technical support to several community based organisations. “The platform you so willingly provided gave ordinary people like ourselves a voice and for this, we are eternally grateful to DAG”, said Davids, representative of GPMA.
Not all the team members that were with DAG are represented in this picture.
2016 was a year of upheaval and change for DAG as the organisation. This was spurred by the sudden resignation of the previous Executive Director and a long duration before the new Executive Director took up the challenge. However, during this period, the board stepped in and appointed Bob Hindle as Acting Director. Bob together with senior staff, commenced internal restructuring and rethinking of the organisation. This included a situation audit, action plan, and voluntary retrenchment process and space reallocation and letting of certain portions of DAG’s premises. Acting Director Bob Hindle stated that the turnaround was achieved only because of the dedication, skills and determination of DAG’s core of senior staff, together with the understanding and support provided by its funders. He further stated that much more work was needed to ensure a sustainable future for DAG. My appointment allowed for incremental take-up and involvement that lead to full responsibility at the beginning of September 2016 when the focus was not only on sustainability but also on the organisation’s strategy to better achieve our mandate in a changing political environment.

The political environment in the country continues to be fragile, requiring civil society to rethink and retool their tactics. An increasing rise in protests and failing confidence in democratic processes underlined the year. Internally, as DAG, we not only reflect on 2016 as 30 years for the organisation but 30 years of persisting inequality, evictions and landlessness. The question that the organisation grappled with – ‘Where is the action in DAG?’ ‘How do we demonstrate change that has meaningful impact on the poor?’

While we had many accomplishments and successes, they come with a pinch of salt. Firstly, it has become increasingly difficult to engage in proactive forms of activism, as the courts are replacing a responsive and democratic administration. Secondly, the changes in both the policy landscape with regards to planning regulations and fiscal instruments have increasingly diminished our ability to upscale the ‘tried and tested’. Thirdly, the financial situation and sustainability of the organisation continued to be precarious, with some promising signs emerging for 2017. Finally, 2016 is a tribute to Bob Hindle who selflessly gave many years as a committed board member and in 2016 as Acting Executive Director and saw the organisation through turbulent times. Some of the achievements in 2016 were:

1. Completing the Development Facilitator Internship programme involving 25 youth activists from Khayelitsha. This included an external evaluation of the programme and the launch of the Active Citizens programme involving leaders from 25 civil society organisations in Cape Town;
2. Concluding the unblocking of 2,173 homes (over the last three years) and associated subsidies amounting to R64 million. A comprehensive case study was completed and shared with partners across the sector. This process also paved the way for the Masimanyane project to unblock 120 homes;
3. Launching a collection of oral history tes of social activists by initiating a programme of recording and publishing through ethnographic studies, issue-based workshops and writing through ethnographic studies, issue-based workshops and writing through ethnographic studies;
4. Increasing the number of affordable housing opportunities by 220 homes;
5. Supporting eighteen different allied organisations through our programme of support and assistance in submissions to access land, tenure and housing rights.

DAG continues to rethink itself. We are shaping an organisation that is agile, housing rights, technical support and assistance in submissions to access land, tenure and housing rights. The financial situation and sustainability of the organisation continued to be precarious and that of its funders. While the financial situation and sustainability of the organisation continued to be precarious, 2016 was a year of upheaval and change for DAG as the organisation.
A core aspect of a well-functioning democracy lies in the ability to establish a level of democratic urban governance. DAG considers this, pivotal in seeking actions directed towards altering the status quo into measurable areas of impactful change. In 2016, the three main projects/programmes that was being implemented by DAG includes: Black River Corridor, Woodstock-Salt River and Active Citizen Training Programme.
The Black River Corridor project includes three inter-connected parcels of state owned land namely Athlone Power Station, Mowbray Golf Course, and the Two Rivers Urban Park (TRUP). The three land parcels are roughly 380 hectares in total, and are connected naturally by the Black River and artificially by the N2 highway. The project is focused on unlocking the land parcels to respond to the imperatives of ecology, human settlements and economic development.

From DAG's perspective, the corridor serves as a nexus for the urban transformation of Cape Town. The 380 hectares of 'well located' land is significant to address housing backlogs and spatial inequalities present in the city. It is easily accessible by public transport, and plays a significant role in connecting previously disadvantaged and segregated communities to social and economic opportunities. Moreover, the corridor possesses strong historical and ecological value which speaks to the idea that land has more than just an economic value.

In 2016, the City of Cape Town and Provincial Government initiated a public participation process for the redevelopment of the Two Rivers Urban Park (TRUP). A separate process was initiated for the River Club which forms part of TRUP, and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is planned for the Athlone Power Station. With regards to Mowbray Golf Course, the Deputy Mayor of Cape Town publicly announced that certain golf courses on the N2 and Voortrekker Road would be considered for redevelopment.

DAG's role has been to build a coalition of stakeholders that are interested in realising a more just and equitable development vision for the land parcels. In 2016, DAG worked alongside a wide range of civic organisations, urban sector professionals and local government officials through various fora, platforms and submissions to re-imagine the Black River Corridor. In doing so, DAG worked alongside a wide range of civic organisations, urban sector professionals and local government officials through various fora, platforms and submissions to re-imagine the Black River Corridor. DAG provided evidence based research, policy analysis, workshops, and EIA submissions.

As part of research in the corridor, DAG uncovered 23 other projects where local government approved developments received strong resistance from civic organisations. The civics contested the social, heritage or ecological value of land versus a pro-developmental agenda by local government. Moreover, the corridor possesses strong social and ecological opportunities. The civics contended the social, ecological or heritage value of land versus a pro-developmental agenda by local government.

In an effort to better understand civic struggles and build solidarity, DAG hosted the first Cape Town Civics Conversation in late 2016, which included over 25 civic associations from across the city. The central theme to the Civics Conversation was to advance a coalition of civic organisations to re-imagine the Black River Corridor, and to strengthen a coalition of stakeholders that are interested in realising a more just and equitable development vision for the land parcels.

One of the many civic organisations substantiates the presence of solidarity and commitment to the urban corridor and to the idea of working in a strategic manner by commenting that "we need a political coat...Don't just put out fires, put out the fires that are all around us, we need to move in on where is the common thread that affects us all." The central theme to the Civics Conversation was to advance a coalition of civic organisations to re-imagine the Black River Corridor, and to strengthen a coalition of stakeholders that are interested in realising a more just and equitable development vision for the land parcels.

The civics contested the social, heritage or ecological value of land versus a pro-developmental agenda by local government. Moreover, the corridor possesses strong social and ecological opportunities. The civics contended the social, ecological or heritage value of land versus a pro-developmental agenda by local government. Moreover, the corridor possesses strong social and ecological opportunities.
Inconsiderate of heritage, inconsiderate of the environment, inconsiderate of people’s opinions. It was a case of development at all costs. From the first ever civic conversation hosted by DAG, 320 hectares of land, 6 train stations, and 4km from city centre.
Woodstock-Salt River is experiencing significant transformation. Issues surfaced related to identifying crime hotspots, significant socio-cultural conflicts between various nationalities residing in Woodstock, very open and receptive faith based organisations, flourishing unregulated rental market and niche coffee shops catering to upper class families. Many families feel isolated with this rapid transformation, stating 'there is nothing for us in this neighborhood shops'. People who cannot afford stark increases in rent have to move to peripheral low income areas of the city, their former rented spaces are soon taken up by those who can, hence, many argue the existence of gentrification. This has been a more robust debate to unlock land for social and affordable housing in Woodstock and Salt River. This was shared in public forums where DAG hosted two seminars over the course of the year. The first results of DAG’s efforts has been to engage private developers. Second, local government to regulate private developers. The first results of land for social and affordable housing in Woodstock and Salt River. This was shared in public forums where DAG hosted two seminars over the course of the year. The first results of DAG’s efforts has been to engage private developers. Second, local government to regulate private developers. The first results of

Re-imagining Woodstock and Salt River
The only time I find myself in the main road is to visit my doctor; there is nothing there for us except coffee shops on every other corner and places we cannot afford to eat at, buy from, and enjoy,
Re-imagining Khayelitsha Project continued to be a DAG flagship in Metro South East where our influence is around deepening six outcome areas: Affordable housing; Land and tenure security; Livelihoods; Environmental sustainability; Strengthening of social capital; and Basic services and infrastructure.

In 2016, DAG acquired a piece of land from the Zanathemba Trust amounting to approximately 3,400 sqm in Khayelitsha. The land is strategically located within walking distance to a proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) station. DAG has identified the Zanathemba site as a flagship project. In 2016, DAG continued to engage and facilitate partnerships towards realising the outcomes mentioned above. The engagements took the form of one on one meetings with different decision makers and round table discussions with different community groupings. Despite several engagements, communities residing in informal settlements and backyarders continued to prioritise basic service, land tenure and housing.

DAG embarked on a tenure audit of 1,500 homes in Khayelitsha built in the last three years through our Khayelitsha ePHP process. The audit found that most households received their title deeds. Close to 30% of the households informally transacted on their homes, without any formal transfer of title deeds. Some households cited reasons for selling their homes ranging from funeral requirements, urgent need for cash etc. These transactions are a sad indicator of downgrading of BNG housing assets in the township markets.

These findings were shared with the Western Cape Provincial Department of Human Settlements for further considerations.

In 2016, DAG continued to prepare designs for the site and a business plan will be available in 2017.
Through one-on-one meetings with the City of Cape Town, the Khayelitsha Development Forum (KDF), Ward Manager, and the City of Cape Town’s Subcouncil 10 Manager, Ward Councillor, DAG started developing ideas for medium density affordable rental housing on Zanathemba site as a response to the housing crisis. Evidence from tenure and land audit, one-on-one meetings with the City of Cape Town’s Subcouncil 10 Manager, Ward Councillor, the Khayelitsha Development Forum (KDF), and the surrounding community led to the formation of DAG as a response to the housing crisis.
Historically DAG has played a pivotal role in providing support to community-based organisations to advance the struggle for land and housing rights. This has been done through leadership development programmes, peer to peer learning and socio-technical support. As a follow up to the Development Facilitator programme, DAG recruited 25 CSO leaders and activists from across Cape Town to participate in the Active Citizens Training Programme – this included leaders and activists from resident and civic associations, development forums, social movements and change agents. The programme used action learning and participatory approaches that aim to build alliances, capacity and confidence of community leaders, activists and change agents.

The Active citizens programme

In 2016 DAG provided socio-technical assistance to eighteen CSOs in an effort to effectively negotiate with the City of Cape Town officials in an appropriate manner to embolden CSOs to network and bond with fellow civic organisations.

Developing development proposals, DAG's involvement in assisting the Grand Parade Housing Association (GPMA) in partnership with Legal Resources on mega developments including (but not limited to) the Riverclub EIA; submissions to the City on the sale of Tafelberg School in Seapoint; Kapteinsklip and Mnandi Coastal Node mixed use development; evidence based research and Amandla Coastal Node mixed use development, to secure tenure rights and unlock well located land for affordable housing; and work on securing tenure rights and unlocking well located land for affordable housing.

In 2016 DAG provided socio-technical assistance to eighteen CSOs in an effort to effectively negotiate with the City of Cape Town officials in an appropriate manner to embolden CSOs to network and bond with fellow civic organisations.
We have tried many different approaches but couldn’t get through to make everyone aware of the value that high-density (housing options) can bring. Some rather opted for a wall around the plot of land even though advocating for integration (housing options) can increase the value of the land. "We have tried many different approaches but couldn’t get through to make everyone aware of the value that high-density (housing options) can bring. Some rather opted for a wall around the plot of land even though advocating for integration (housing options) can increase the value of the land."
DAG piloted the Development Facilitators programme for already active citizens/youth living in Khayelitsha. It was an 8 months full-time internship which commenced in August 2015 and ended in April 2016. The first phase of the internship which took place in 2015 included a range of formal and informal learning opportunities, experiences, and exposures. This involved 7 days of structured modules, 23 exposures, and events. This involved a range of formal and informal learning and knowledge-building opportunities, experiences, and exposures.

The second phase of the internship took place from February to April 2016. This consisted of one month of mentored/supervised placements in thirteen on-the-ground projects and initiatives. The placement organisations included Senecio, The Holy Order of Shemul Neter, The Caring Network, Ubulungisa Community Project, Baphumelele Waldorf Association. An external evaluation of the programme was completed and found that most of the participants gained significantly through the internship programme. For instance, an intern who received placement at ILRIG, was elected as the chairperson of Housing Assembly during the 2016 financial year. Many expressed that the 8 months changed their lives forever. The evaluation also shed light on areas of improvement including better planning, a more structured approach to monitoring the interns, and a more sustainable funding model. The DF programme and its learnings became the cornerstone of developing Active Citizens Programme that was launched in August 2016.
“Provided for hands-on experience to become facilitators, change agents and active citizens for their own and other CSOs” as explained by external evaluator for the DF programme.
Given the increasing demand for housing, DAG places a large emphasis on 'learning by doing'. Current area-based plans and policies with regards to housing and future city planning often lack in bottom-up strategies which allow residents to play the lead role in improving their own neighbourhoods. DAG’s involvement in this area is shown by two projects, namely Masimanyane and Parow Station Arcade.

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DAG’s approach has always been to assist people by providing tools that equip in developing their own strategies and managing future demands. DAG’s involvement in this area is shown by two projects, namely Masimanyane and Parow Station Arcade.

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Based in Phillipi, the Masimanyane project entails the unblocking of 117 homes through Enhanced People’s Housing Process (ePHP) in partnership with Western Cape Department of Human Settlements and affected communities. From 2012 to 2015, DAG implemented a similar project, where 2,173 homes were completed and handed over to the households. In 2016, DAG continued its collaborative approach in Masimanyane, through a well-established steering committee.

Masimanyane has been in the pipeline since 2013. In 2016, DAG had a much more collaborative approach through the PHP project of Masimanyane, involving the inclusion of collaborative stakeholders, including beneficiaries, Ward Councillor and South African National Civic Organisation. This enabled a reliable working relationship between DAG and other stakeholders involved in the unblocking of informal settlements.

The contract for unblocking was signed in 2016, and the project commenced in September. Whilst the project will only be completed in 2017, it demonstrates the strong need for both skills and finance for communities to build their own assets. As DAG, we continue to look for imparting the PHP skills for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) and the skills for the Backyarder Upgrading programme. 

Masimanyane ePHP project
I am proud of the ‘Masimanyane Project’ group from DAG, because they were not shaken. They kept faithful throughout and I'm very happy about how the process went smoothly and we received housing. Thank you, Mrs Qoba, who house stood incomplete for 14 years.
In October 2016, DAG was commissioned by the Greater Tygerberg Partnership (GTP) to conduct a socio-cultural study of the Parow Arcade Station Precinct. This included precinct level ethnographies, mapping of pedestrian movement routes and uncovering latent socio-cultural practices.

In 2016, DAG initiated and completed a series of various interviews with a diverse range of space users and city council officials, observation of activities in the space, over a hundred user surveys, 5 ethnographies and various digital mapping of movement routes.

The Parow Arcade Station Precinct, located on the Voortrekker road corridor, has 30,000 commuters moving through the space each day. It is earmarked for an upgrade by the City of Cape Town to improve the general aesthetic quality of the area and to accommodate commuter movement. DAG’s socio-cultural study provides an in-depth understanding of the people present in the space, the relevant activities and why people are attracted to the precinct. It will furthermore inform the upgrade of the precinct by identifying key issues which space users feel need to be addressed including problem buildings, crime, dirt, homelessness and gangsterism. The study continues to highlight the importance of understanding the on the ground lived experience along with statistics. It forms the basis of what future spatial development frameworks and neighbourhood plans need to consider.
Parow was once a vibrant place within which to live and do business. The streets were safe and one could be late out at night. Today the area has experienced significant decline and is plagued with high criminal activity. The area is in desperate need of an upliftment.

– Ward Councillor

1 community surveys
20 detailed ethnographies
5
Networking, policy & advocacy

In 2016, DAG played a strategic role in the sector, participating in a number of local and international platforms, events and seminars hosted by government and civil society. These events were pivotal in shaping policy development and fostering strong partnerships.

Internationally, DAG participated in the Habitat III New Urban Agenda event held in Quito. DAG presented at a side panel with the Lincoln Land Institute on land value capture. Nationally, DAG collaborated with several NGOs and non-governmental organizations to make submissions towards the Draft Human Settlements Position Paper and Negotiations of the Draft Human Settlements White Paper, as well as the Western Cape Provincial Human Settlements Support Plan (153PP). This included DAG’s involvement in several local platforms such as the DAF Focus 2016/17, DAG hosted a number of seminars and events during 2016, including a Roundtable on the Expropriation Amendment Bill and two seminars on the Inducement of Social Housing.

DAG also made several submissions toward the realignment of the National Department of Human Settlements (NDoHS), DAG continued to support the development of Habitat III position papers and negotiating documents. In 2016, DAG also made submissions toward the realignment of the National Department of Human Settlements (NDoHS), DAG continued to support the development of Habitat III position papers and negotiating documents. In 2016, DAG also made submissions toward the realignment of the National Department of Human Settlements (NDoHS), DAG continued to support the development of Habitat III position papers and negotiating documents. In 2016, DAG also made submissions toward the realignment of the National Department of Human Settlements (NDoHS), DAG continued to support the development of Habitat III position papers and negotiating documents.
Young urban professionals

DAG has a long history of providing internships to local and international students. In 2016, DAG hosted eight interns, including four young developer facilitator interns who participated in the DAG Active Citizens Training Programme. On a request basis, DAG works alongside academics in universities to facilitate service learning opportunities for local and international students. In 2016, DAG sought to develop a more streamlined and systemic approach to both the DAG Internship Programme and Service Learning Site Opportunities. In 2016, DAG facilitated service learning opportunities with eight CBOs for over 145 students from the UCT Social Infrastructure Programme – Global Citizenship Programme, UCT Urban Infrastructure Design and Management Mphil in Community Development and the International Students Abroad Programme (SIT). An evaluation of the Global Citizenship course undertaken by DAG indicated that the process of hosting the students as community educators helped to build their internal capacity by strengthening their confidence to articulate their issues to students from CPUT on Land Value Capture, SU on Land and Cities and North East University (USA) on gentrification.

In October, DAG formalised an agreement with Architecture Sans Frontiers – UK and University College of London to jointly host in June 2017 a Change by Design Workshop – Tools and Tactics for Community Led Development in Cape Town. Over two weeks, participants will work closely with community based organisations to design and develop interventions to realise DAG’s wider vision of vibrant, equitable, inclusive and sustainable communities. The change by design methodology is tested in Cape Town in collaboration with community based organisations, helping to codify how participatory design can support community capacity building, and how participation in design can enable community members to take control of their own futures.

In 2016, DAG regularly requested to act as a resource to students at the University of Cape Town for short courses on gentrification. In 2016, DAG hosted eight interns, including four young developer facilitator interns who participated in the DAG Active Citizens Training Programme. On a request basis, DAG works alongside academics in universities to facilitate service learning opportunities for local and international students. In 2016, DAG facilitated service learning opportunities with eight CBOs for over 145 students from the UCT Social Infrastructure Programme – Global Citizenship Programme, UCT Urban Infrastructure Design and Management Mphil in Community Development and the International Students Abroad Programme (SIT). An evaluation of the Global Citizenship course undertaken by DAG indicated that the process of hosting the students as community educators helped to build their internal capacity by strengthening their confidence to articulate their issues to students from CPUT on Land Value Capture, SU on Land and Cities and North East University (USA) on gentrification.

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During 2016 DAG continued its long standing history of being a learning organisation that regularly assesses its impact. SMART output and outcome indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of projects were developed during the annual planning process at the beginning of the year. Assessing progress and measuring impact were conducted on a quarterly basis. Internal learning platforms were created through quarterly “Reflection on my Practice” (ROMP) sessions for all staff. Stakeholder members attended various platforms exposing them to learning opportunities both locally and internationally. A consultant was appointed during the latter part of 2016 to conduct an external evaluation to:

- Assess whether the strategies and programmes outlined in Vision 2020 are effective;
- Identify potential changes and adjustments to the strategy;
- Inform the positioning of DAG in the sector it operates in;
- Assess whether the strategies and programmes outlined in Vision 2020 are effective;
- Identify potential changes and adjustments to the strategy;
- Inform the positioning of DAG in the sector it operates in;

The evaluation also included explicating and reviewing the organisation’s implicit theory of change, which informed both the evaluation strategic outcomes and sustainability. The report will be completed in early 2017.

The relevance of Vision 2020, as well as DAG’s effectiveness, efficiency, and the positioning of DAG in the sector it operates in, were the focus areas covered during the evaluation. The evaluation also included explicating and reviewing the organisation’s implicit theory of change, which informed both the evaluation strategic outcomes and sustainability. The report will be completed in early 2017.

A process for the refinement of DAG’s ME&L framework was set in motion towards the end of 2016 to improve the M&E reporting system and to align it with the overall theory of change.
WHAT

Room

Community Development

Community Involvement

Ongoing Issue of Education in the Country.

Community Education: Easy and Accessible to All.

Education is a basic human right.

Community

Advocates for Access to Education for All.

It is important to make it available to all.

Help us make a difference.

Only 5% of the population has access to education.

We Need to Work Together.

Community Efforts are key to success.

It is important to work together.

To Make Your Vision a Reality.

It takes a team to make a difference.

Community Efforts are key to success.
DAG concluded the year with a deficit of R5,486,376. This loss was largely expected as the organisation took a conscious decision to use reserves accumulated from previous years (R4,830,858) for the purpose of assisting in difficult financial times, which was mostly required due to inadequate fundraising to secure additional funding contracts. After the Executive and Finance Directors left the organisation in February & August 2016 respectively and a new Executive Director appointed in August 2016, the focus on acquiring funding and generating own income has been, and continues to be given top priority. The late start of the Masimanyane housing contract with Government also hampered the organisation’s ability to generate its own funds effectively.

### Going Forward

DAG management team has prepared a detailed sustainability plan and aggressive action plan to secure funding and build back reserves.

### Funds Received & Allocatied: 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant Funding</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing, facilitation &amp; development services unit</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consulting Income</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rental, Interest, Dividends, sundries</td>
<td>2.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAG Reserves</td>
<td>61.66%</td>
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**Funding Income for the year amounted to R2,847,661, contributed by Brot für die Welt, Misereor and Open Society Foundation. A special word of thanks is extended to Brot für die Welt for their long-standing and continued support, and acknowledging Misereor and Open Society Foundation for renewing their support as well.**

**Expeditrue**

Total expenditure amounted to R8,998,506.

**Balance Sheet**

As at 31 December 2016

### Total Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>5 964 833</td>
<td>5 964 833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>3 490 000</td>
<td>3 490 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>6 290 583</td>
<td>6 290 583</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts Receivable</td>
<td>1 822 179</td>
<td>2 806 815</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash and bank equivalents</td>
<td>795 543</td>
<td>4 204 990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-Current Assets**

As at 31 December 2016

**Income**

Total Income amounted to R3,412,130.

**Expeditrue**

To guarantee its own funds effectively, the focus on acquiring funding and generating own income has been rekindled in February 2016 by the Executive and Finance Directors of the organisation. After due consideration, the organisation decided to pursue additional funding contracts to secure sustainable funding for the housing and development service unit. The loss from the previous year’s fundraising (R4,830,858) was more than offset by the revenue earned from the Masimanyane housing contract (R4,380,583).

DAG concludes the year with a deficit of R5,486,376.
### Detailed Income Statement

for the year ended 31 December 2016

**Figures in Rand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Expenses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative and management fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
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<td>Auditors remuneration</td>
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<td>Bank charges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>44 472</td>
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<td>Furniture &amp; Equipment</td>
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<td>28 672</td>
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<td>Computer expenses</td>
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<td>140 639</td>
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<td>Consultants fees</td>
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<td>Depreciation, amortisation and impairments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee costs</td>
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<td>6 223 342</td>
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<td>Entertainment &amp; gifts</td>
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<td>Facilitate and support</td>
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<td>Material Printing</td>
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<td>Municipal expenses</td>
<td>84 884</td>
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<td>Loss on disposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing and Stationery</td>
<td>27 573</td>
<td>30 371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>32 281</td>
<td>36 609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs and maintenance</td>
<td>211 447</td>
<td>211 219</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>13 409</td>
<td>54 399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>155 758</td>
<td>195 099</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminars and venue</td>
<td>41 737</td>
<td>254 503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone and fax</td>
<td>60 157</td>
<td>67 284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>60 157</td>
<td>67 284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel - Road</td>
<td>4 679</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel - International</td>
<td>113 946</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel - Domestic and Subsistence</td>
<td>79 083</td>
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<tr>
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<td>60 157</td>
<td>67 284</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone and fax</td>
<td>60 157</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel - Domestic and Subsistence</td>
<td>79 083</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone and fax</td>
<td>60 157</td>
<td>67 284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>8 898 506</td>
<td>9 560 952</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Revenue**                                   |        |        |
| Rental Income                                 | 7 775 550|
| Sundry Income                                 | 50 708 |
| Gains on disposal                             | 13 891 |
| Interest received                             | 277 842|
| Dividends received                            | 9 389  |
| Consulting Income                             | 1 329 370|
| Grants                                        | 298 004 |
| Brot fur die Welt                             | 2 059 605|
| Open Society Foundation                       | 385 000 |
| Open Society Foundation                       | 385 000 |
| Museum                                        | 41 723  |
| Brot fur die Welt                             | 2 059 605|
| Open Society Foundation                       | 385 000 |
| Open Society Foundation                       | 385 000 |
| **Total Income**                              | 3 412 130|

| **Surplus for the year**                      | (5 486 376) |
| **Total Expenses**                            | (1 785 402) |

**Surplus for the year (5 486 376)**

**Total Expenses (1 785 402)**

31 December 2016
DAG is a non profit organisation registered with the Department of Social Development, registration number 0069-194 NPO and a non profit organisation not for gain incorporated under Section 21, registration number 1993/006859/08. DAG has section 18(A) status as a tax exempt organisation allowing for the tax deductibility of donations made by South African taxpayers. We are grateful to and wish to thank the following funding partners for their support during the 2016 financial year.
The Scalability of the Shack/Slum Dwellers International Methodology: Context and Constraint in Cape Town

Richard Tomlinson*

Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) was created by the Indian Alliance and South African partners. SDI has affiliates in 33 countries and is probably the world’s largest network of community peer-to-peer knowledge exchange in the area of slum/informal settlement upgrading. Common to the Indian Alliance’s ‘Federation Model’ and the SDI methodology are a commitment to community organization and community-led upgrading that is undertaken in partnership with local government. In a context where it is projected that there will be two billion slum dwellers by 2030, the ambition is to enable tens of millions of households to obtain upgraded housing and services. This article questions the scalability and universality of the SDI methodology in Cape Town, where the SDI Secretariat is located.

Key words: Scalability, informal settlement upgrading, Indian Alliance, South African Alliance, SDI methodology, Cape Town

1 Introduction

The purpose of this article is to consider whether the application of the Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) methodology or ‘rituals’1 to informal settlement upgrading in Cape Town informs the replicability and scalability of the methodology. The SDI Secretariat is located in Cape Town and provides

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1. Reference to the SDI methodology on the SDI website has now changed to ‘rituals’, but the interpretation of this word can be misleading. I have retained reference to methodology. http://sasdialliance.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/SASDI_Alliance-Diagramme.jpg (accessed 27 July 2015)
administrative and financial support to a network of community-based organization (CBOs) affiliates in 33 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The South African affiliate is referred to as the South African Alliance. A review based on the South African Alliance and the application of the SDI methodology in Cape Town does not allow generalization, but it does allow contextual questions regarding the replicability of the SDI methodology that is based on ‘... tools – mobilization and savings, exchanges, enumerations, mapping, and community-led implementation – [that] are a shared set of rituals that all federations affiliated to ... SDI ... practice’ (CORC et al., 2014, emphasis added).

The context for the article is that the SDI was formed in 1996 by the Indian Alliance together with South African partners who were the forerunners of the South African Alliance. The Indian Alliance ‘Federation Model’\(^2\) (Model) and the SDI methodology are the same and are intended to position ‘the urban poor ... at the center of strategies for urban development’.\(^3\) The relevance of the question regarding replicability and scalability arises from the projection that there will be two billion slum dwellers by 2030 (UN-HABITAT, 2003: xxv) and the ambition of the Indian Alliance and the SDI is to provide a methodology for the community-led upgrading of tens of millions of shack dwellers. This adds significance to the concern whether the context of the Indian Alliance and application of the Model correctly shapes the intended role of the South African Alliance and the application of the SDI methodology. Do the Indian and South African Alliances share a methodology or principles concerning the relationships between governments and organized urban poor communities?\(^4\) The answer to this question informs the wider application of the SDI methodology.

The article suggests that the complexity of South Africa’s housing policy and implementation processes limits the ability of the City of Cape Town (City) to work with the South African Alliance to scale up informal settlement upgrading. It is further suggested that characteristics of the Model and the Indian Alliance differ markedly from the context within which the South African Alliance seeks to employ the SDI methodology in Cape Town and that, while adhering to shared principles, local adaptation is both constrained and necessary.

The article has three parts. The first part introduces the Indian and South African Alliances, which enables me to describe my research methodology and then to present the Model and the SDI methodology. The second part presents South Africa’s housing policy and processes, the tensions created by these processes for the City’s working with the South African Alliance, data relevant to housing needs in Cape Town and the City’s housing policy. This part also includes the reblocking precedent (see below), which is an example of the South African Alliance’s role in housing delivery and policy advocacy in Cape Town. The third part identifies contextual differences between circumstances in Mumbai and Cape Town and the Indian and South African Alliances that are relevant to the application of the SDI

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2. See the core activities as set out at http://www.sparcindia.org/Federation-model.php.
4. This sentence was amended to include Bradlow’s comment and wording.
methodology in Cape Town. The conclusion is that the SDI methodology represents
a constraint and should be reconsidered in the context of a changed role for the
South African Alliance based on ‘militant dialogue’ (interviewee 17) and policy
advocacy.

However, before proceeding, the word ‘scalability’ requires attention. Miraftab
(2003: 230, emphasis in original) has written that

a great deal of confusion surrounds the term scaling up. The term lends
itself to an unfortunate interpretation implying a quantitative purpose for
these [community] strategies. Scaling up is not a question of size or
magnitude of delivery but of a qualitative change in how agencies see their
roles, responsibilities, power, objectives, and procedures and of how well
prepared they are for changes (intraorganizational and interorganizational)
in their power structures ... Such qualitative change is necessary for there
to be any possibility of scaling up, that is, increasing the impact of
participatory processes.

Miraftab refers to scaling up as both changing roles and power relationships
and as ‘increasing the impact’: in other words, scaling up qualitatively is necessary
in order to scale up quantitatively. Qualitative changes in the roles and relationships
between community organizations and government are central to the Model and the
SDI methodology. As a result, the word ‘scale’ in this article refers to quantitative
increases in the number of housing and services relative to the need for housing and
services.

2 The Alliance, research methodology and the SDI methodology

2.1 Indian and South African Alliances

The Indian Alliance 5 was formed in 1984 and comprises:

- Mahila Milan (Women Together), a ‘decentralised network of credit and
  savings groups’ that increases financial assets, creates financial capacity and
  builds trust. Mahila Milan moves women into the public sphere where they
can ‘put pressure on government to secure changes they need in order to
advance their livelihoods and establish their place in the city’ (Mitlin and
Patel, 2004: 239);
- NSDF (National Slums Dwellers Federation), ‘a national organization of
  community groups and leaders who live in slums/informal settlements across
  India’, which has about 750,000 members, and seeks to articulate and give
effect to the ‘solutions’ they identify (SPARC, n.d.); and

5. See http://www.sparcindia.org. The SPARC website provides information for the NSDF and Mahila
Milan. The text shown as quotes, but not cited, comes from this website.
• SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres), a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works ‘on housing and infrastructure issues for the urban poor’ and is guided by Mahila Milan and the NSDF and the commitment to community-led processes. SPARC has a non-profit construction and financial arm, Samudaya Nirman Sahayak.

When the SDI was formed, Jockin Arputham, president of the NSDF, became the president of SDI, and Sheela Patel, founding director of SPARC, became the chair of the board of SDI. SDI has become ‘probably the world’s biggest and most effective network for south-south exchange among poor people, inspired by the cooperative models and peaceful forms of protest that Jockin pioneered in Mumbai’ (Perry, 2014).

The members of the South African Alliance are:6

• FEDUP (Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor) assists communities to start savings schemes, develop their own knowledge and capacities, build houses and acquire land;
• ISN (Informal Settlement Network) engages leadership in informal settlements with a view to mobilizing community-led development planning, with the ideal that communities acquire the knowledge and scale needed to influence citywide and national policy agendas;
• CORC (Community Organisation Resource Centre) is a NGO that provides the services of development professionals for shack dwellers who are mobilized around land evictions, upgrading housing and basic services, and women’s savings collectives;
• uTshani Fund (‘grassroots fund’) was established in 1995 by the South African Homeless Peoples Federation and ‘is a revolving fund providing low-cost housing finance directly to the savings groups affiliated to the FEDUP’ (uTshani Fund, 2010: 2). (FEDUP was formed in 2006 following a split in the Federation.)

iKhayalami (‘my home’) was, but is no longer, a member of the South African Alliance. iKhayalami, together with the ISN and the community of the Joe Slovo informal settlement, and the City, formulated what was to become known as the reblocking precedent. Reblocking is explained by iKhayalami (n.d.: 3) as:

a design and implementation process that is driven by the community and involves the reconfiguration of a settlement layout into one that is more rationalized allowing for the creation of demarcated pathways or roads, public and semi public spaces all of which opens access for emergency vehicles, the provision of infrastructure and basic services which were not previously taken into account. Shacks get dismantled and upgraded … in-situ.

6. With a view to clarity and simplicity of presentation, the text in the four bullet points mixes paraphrasing and copying from http://sasdialliance.org.za/ from the relevant ‘Partners’ Web pages.
The Joe Slovo reblocking precedent is described on YouTube, but reblocking is more clearly described in the case of Mtshini Wam and Flamingo Crescent. Reblocking is now undertaken by the ISN and CORC in partnership with the City.

2.2 Research methodology

The methodology and research follow from teaching, as follows. In 2007/2008, at Columbia University, I taught a course on the policy and governance aspects of slum upgrading, which included classes on India and South Africa and Dharavi and Johannesburg. In 2010, at the University of Melbourne, I started a course on ‘Cities Without Slums’ and slum upgrading in Mumbai and the role of the Indian Alliance were central. Sheela Patel twice contributed to the course. In 2012, a colleague and I took students to Mumbai where, with the assistance of SPARC and the NSDF, they researched and sought to recommend planning and design features of slum upgrading in Dharavi. In 2013 I took students to Cape Town where, with the assistance of CORC and ISN, they worked with communities on upgrading in two informal settlements, Mtshini Wam and Shukushukuma, and on one potential housing project, Ruo Emoh. Finally, we had a number of discussions with City officials and consultants in Cape Town. The 2012 and 2013 travelling studios shaped the 2014 comparative research on which this article is based.

In the case of the 2014 research undertaken in Cape Town for this article, I set out to answer questions surrounding the scalability of the Model and the SDI methodology in the City. This was based on extensive review of government and NGO documents and websites and related policy statements, academic publications, field trips and 23 semi-structured interviews and other ad hoc interviews. Ethnographic discussions occurred during field trips. In the case of field trips, CORC and iKhayalami arranged site visits to instances of reblocking, including the Joe Slovo reblocking precedent and other projects in Sheffield Road, Khayelitsha and Kuku Town. The research was informed by workshops and discussion at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand.

2.3 The Federation Model and the SDI methodology

The Model and methodology are grounded in community organization. The community questions the right of government to determine its future. The community seldom chooses to engage in confrontation. ‘The main strategy is a constructive dialogue with government towards community-driven development …’

10. The expression, ‘Cities Without Slums’ derives from the Cities Alliance website, which is titled ‘Cities Alliance: Cities Without Slums’, http://www.citiesalliance.org/about-cities-alliance (accessed 14 December 2015). The Cities Alliance was created by the World Bank and UN-HABITAT and the Cities Alliance proposed Millennium Development Goal 7 Target 11: ‘By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.’
(CORC, 2012). While projects matter, the future capacity and confidence of an organized urban poor to engage in the development process is the desired outcome.

The Model and methodology have five core activities.11

Community organization and capacity is based on savings groups and enumeration, surveys and mapping. Women’s savings groups are organized by FEDUP with a view to increasing financial assets, creating financial capacity and building trust. Savings are viewed as a ‘ritual’ that is central to the SDI methodology. ‘FEDUP has since 1992 organised more than 24,517 savers in 401 active women-led savings groups across 45 towns.’12

Enumeration, surveys and mapping are undertaken by residents of informal settlements together with ISN and, in recent years, the Global Positioning System (GPS) has been employed by trained members of the community to map the settlement and to undertake a census and a survey of the settlement. There is a clear political intent to these tasks (Appadurai, 2012). Aside from the fact that the tasks enhance community organization, communities own credible data that enables them to negotiate development alternatives with government.

Precedent setting such as reblocking emerges from community-led knowledge generation processes and challenge existing programmes, either ‘tweaking aspects of them or changing some elements fundamentally’. Precedents are used to convince communities, officials and others who might be involved – ‘change needs evidence’.13 Once precedents work in one locality, they provide the basis for horizontal knowledge exchange visits and can scale in the same location, through exchange visits in other locations, and also provide the basis for policy advocacy.

Knowledge exchange refers to a community group visiting a precedent and speaking to community members who were involved in setting the precedent. The logic is that exchanges between peers provide a greater learning opportunity than being spoken to/at, by NGOs, officials and technical experts.

Partnerships are essential as governments shoulder responsibility for ensuring that residents have access to housing and services, both of which are decidedly on the government’s political agenda. What the CBOs within the South African Alliance seek to provide is the capacity, when in partnership with local government, to manage the scaling up of shack upgrading. This capacity can be compromised when, as in Cape Town, there are a number of low-density projects in dispersed locations.

Policy advocacy is made possible once the scaling up of a precedent proves successful. Policy advocacy takes many forms, for example, demonstrating the

11. My presentation of the methodology is based on many sources, including the SPARC, SDI and SA Alliance websites, academic publications and innumerable discussions. Where there is potential for inadvertently duplicating bits of text or repeating points from conversations, I acknowledge the Federation Model website, http://www.sparcindia.org/Federation-model.php, the SDI Alliance website and videos http://sasdialliance.org.za/, the SPARC ‘Housing Projects’ website, http://www.sparcindia.org/housing.aspx, the SDI methodology website http://www.sdinet.org/method-inclusive-cities/ (accessed 13 May 2014), and conversations with Sheela Patel.


13. The two quotes are from discussions with Sheela Patel conducted in 2013.
reblocking precedent to the City and gaining approval for a precedent that is now included in the City’s housing policy despite its not conforming to planning and building regulations,14 and demonstrating the precedent to other communities, governments and visitors from other countries.

3 Housing policy and complexity: South Africa and Cape Town

Cape Town’s policy for, and the provision of housing for low-income residents and informal settlement upgrading, are delimited by South Africa’s housing policy, processes and the funding made available for housing and municipal services. The description of Cape Town’s policy necessarily begins with the constraints imposed by South Africa’s housing policy and processes.

3.1 South Africa’s housing policy and processes

Housing is included in the Bill of Rights in South Africa’s constitution (South Africa, 1996).

(1) has the right to have access to adequate housing.
(2) The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right.

The South African government is required to deliver housing at scale, taking fiscal constraints into account. In 1994 it was determined that every qualifying household earning less than 3,500 South African Rand (R) per month (about 1,000 US dollars ($) in 1994) is entitled to a free house. Between 1994 and 2010 the government delivered over three million free houses to qualifying low-income households (Shisaka, 2011: 18).

Scale was achieved by providing a housing subsidy and the delivery of ‘RDP’15 housing, first by private developers and then by local governments, with the housing in both instances being criticised for poor quality and for being located on the urban fringe where land is cheap (Charlton and Kihato, 2006). There are other housing programmes, but compared to the number of RDP houses, the number of other houses delivered has been negligible.

Despite delivery at scale, the ‘housing backlog’ increased from 1.5 million households to over 2.1 million households (South African Cities Network, 2011: 70) and the number of informal settlements rose from 300 to 2,628 in 2010 (Financial and Fiscal Commission, 2012: 19). There is no prospect of government overcoming the increasing backlog.

14. For example, for incremental housing the minimum building lines included in Cape Town’s (2012a:41) Zoning Scheme Regulations preclude the densities in informal settlement upgrades and reblocking.
15. RDP refers to the Reconstruction and Development Programme that initially funded the housing subsidy and also to the type of housing, namely rows of free-standing small houses.
The current human settlement budget allocation is R17 billion and it will increase to R19 billion on 1 April 2015. The backlog is estimated as 2.3 million houses. New households are forming at a rate of over 300,000 per annum and mostly live in shacks or backyards rental accommodation. The DHS is delivering, at best, some 120,000 new houses each year. The cost of seeking to address the present backlog with the present cost of delivery will be of the order of R370 billion and will take approximately 15 years. The backlog will never be eliminated.\(^\text{16}\)

This stark conclusion would be even more pronounced had the level of household income of R3,500 per month (about $290 in May 2015) increased with the rate of inflation. The failure to increase this level has given rise to a policy for ‘gap housing’, which affects about 600,000 households (DHS, 2012: 192). It is expected that banks will provide mortgages to households with a secure monthly income in excess of R15,000 (about $1,233 in June 2015). Through various means government seeks to enable gap households to enter the formal land and housing markets and policy seeks to enable access to households earning between R3,500 and R15,000 per month.

Housing policy has evolved since its launch in 1994. Most relevant are Breaking New Ground: A comprehensive plan for the development of sustainable human settlements (BNG) (2004) and the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (2009). Not included here is the Enhanced Peoples Housing Process (2009), which has had little take up and appears to be irrelevant to the South African Alliance insofar as, in CORC’s 2013/2014 Annual Report, 1,556 PHP units are listed, 736 units have been completed and none are located in Cape Town.

Nominally, South Africa’s housing policy now seeks to build sustainable human settlements; it has shifted from RDP housing to better located and better built BNG housing and onwards to informal settlement upgrading; and focuses not so much on the building of houses as on housing processes (DHS, 2009: 7). However, BNG housing, effectively RDP housing renamed (Cape Town, 2014a: 70), remains the predominant form of housing delivery, noting that a location closer to jobs, services and transport services is listed by the City as its foremost challenge (Cape Town, 2014a: 6). The UISP is viewed by the City (Cape Town, 2014a: 17, 35) as a ‘site and service’ programme that provides ‘(i) basic services (water, standpipes and toilet facilities), (ii) permanent services, and (iii) houses to existing informal settlement areas, wherever possible (including in situ upgrades)’, but does not include formal tenure. ‘[W]hile the UISP does provide a rationale for in situ upgrading, it does not represent a deviation from the basic nature of a housing policy that has single-minded focus on the physical house itself’ (Bradlow, 2013: 80).

### 3.2 Complexity and the role of the South African Alliance

Their rigidities and complexities are defining features of South Africa’s housing policies. For example, in the case of informal settlement upgrading, the housing is
required to meet three sets of building standards: South African Bureau of Standards, the requirements of the National Home Builders Registration Council and local government regulations (Interviewee 12). Not commenting on the prescriptive character and complexity of national policies and the National Housing Code, focusing on local governments, Tomlinson (2011) presents the housing process in relation to planning, procurement, project management and housing allocation (‘beneficiary management’).

In the case of planning, all local government is required to prepare an Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is a detailed five-year policy, programme, project and budget plan for a city. In regard to housing, Cape Town’s IDP is based on, inter alia, an Integrated Human Settlements Five-Year Strategic Plan, a Spatial Development Framework, an Integrated Transport Plan and the City’s Budget. Nominally, the IDP will have been formulated through a process of active public participation, but the need to comply with the relevant policies and regulations limits the potential for participation. Indeed, the South African government warns that ‘the participatory processes must not become an obstacle to development … It is important for municipalities to find ways of structuring participation which enhance, rather than impede, the delivery process’ (South Africa, 1998, s. 1.3). The IDP contains a five-year housing project pipeline and budget, listing projects under construction and projects planned.

In the case of procurement, the City is required to adhere to the Local Government: Municipal Financial Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) and the Preferential Procurement Framework Act (No. 5 of 2000). The City is obliged to follow a Supply Chain Management system that creates rules for tender specification, evaluation and adjudication.

In the case of project management, this includes ‘project preparation, managing and enforcing contracts, setting timelines for delivery, and carrying out inspection processes and linking them to payment systems’ and the accountability of project managers (Tomlinson, 2011: 422). Project management that includes communities in the delivery processes creates risks for City officials and, despite patronising comments in government documents about officials needing to change their ‘mindset’, the politically-derived context for officials remains that of delivery at scale – ‘quantitative delivery targets and performance measurement’ (Ley, 2009: 30–1).

The complexity and regulations within which cities operate inevitably lead to tensions with NGOs and CBOs. For example, the effect is to position, say, CORC or the ISN as contractors bidding for projects in competition with other CBOs and NGOs and the private sector. Whereas the South African Alliance views its client as the community concerned, the fundamental contradiction is that, in the case of projects funded by the City, the City decidedly considers itself the client (Interviewee 1), which is as required by the Municipal Financial Management Act.

The complexity underlies complaints that the South African Alliance does not know how the system works and the constraints within which officials operate (Interviewees 1, 3, 16, 19). The fundamental rift here is the pressure on politicians and officials on meeting project deadlines and housing targets (Interviewees 1, 12) and their view that the involvement of South African Alliance will slow progress; and the South African Alliance view that while this may be true for some projects,
scale can, over time, be achieved through increasing the number of community-led projects.

The South African Alliance view is the correct view. The existing housing policies and the national housing budget will never resolve the housing backlog. Further, the housing subsidy circumscribes the housing targets and imagination of cities. Opportunities for low-income housing are viewed through the lens of the number of subsidies available and not in terms of the potential for savings groups and incremental upgrading of shacks. From the point of view of the Indian and South African Alliances, the ‘gamble [is] that ... governments can be persuaded that the poor are the best drivers of shared solutions to the problems of poverty’ (Appadurai, 2001: 41). Even were the City to be persuaded, the processes and regulations governing the uses of housing subsidies circumscribe what cities believe they can do.

3.3 Empirical backdrop to housing policy in Cape Town

It is an unfortunate feature of South Africa’s past and present that one has to provide race-based data for Cape Town. The reason for this is that, while the economics of South Africa are better understood in terms of class, the politics of South Africa are better understood in terms of race (Seekings and Nattrass, 2008). Further, in Cape Town, the majority of Whites and Coloureds\(^\text{17}\) vote for the Democratic Alliance and the majority of Black Africans vote for the African National Congress (Millstein, 2010; Kersting, 2009), which informs subsequent discussion regarding housing policy.

Table 1 provides a comparison between South Africa as a whole and Cape Town, and reveals sharp racial differences that shape the politics of Cape Town, the only metropolitan area that has elected an opposition party and, as will be seen, where politics has also shaped housing policy and budgets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>Cape Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian/Asian</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1 provides a comparison between South Africa as a whole and Cape Town, and reveals sharp racial differences that shape the politics of Cape Town, the only metropolitan area that has elected an opposition party and, as will be seen, where politics has also shaped housing policy and budgets.

\(^{17}\) The term ‘Coloured’ is in common usage in South Africa and is used in the 2011 census and in assessments of economic and social circumstances.
The proportion of Cape Town’s population that is Black African is less than a half that for South Africa and, in Cape Town, is less than the Coloured population; The proportion of Cape Town’s population that is Coloured is close to five times that for the nation; and The proportion of Cape Town’s population that is White is almost double that for the nation.

The reasons for these differences are that ‘At the time of colonial settlement in Cape Town in the seventeenth century ... Bantu-language-speaking “African” people had not migrated into the Western Cape’ (Muyeba and Seekings, 2010: 4). Since the turn of the 20th century there have, in one form or another, been restrictions on the migration of Black Africans to the City, and Cape Town was part of a Coloured Labour Preference Area with job reservation for Coloureds. ‘Only if coloured labour was not available could a permit be obtained to employ African workers. ... [Further] facilities for skill acquisition for African labour were deliberately not provided in the region’ (Maree, 1989: 129). The prevention of migration of Black Africans to the City and job reservation helps to explain the Tables and the links between migration, race, location in informal settlements and poverty. Most notably, the breakdown of apartheid controls during the mid-1980s and the rapid migration of Black Africans to the Cape explain why informal settlements are almost exclusively occupied by Black Africans.

Referring to Table 2, in 2011 Cape Town’s metropolitan population was 3.74 million, comprising 1.07 million households. The 29.3% increase in population between the 2001 and 2011 censuses is exceeded by the increase in the number of households, 37.5%, due to declining household size. The actual increase during the ten-year period of 847,782 persons is projected to halve over the 20-year period to 2031 (Cape Town, 2014a: 14), reflecting the context of slow population growth and a national population that is over 60% urban.

Table 2: Population and household number and change, 2001, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>2,892,243</td>
<td>3,740,025</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>777,389</td>
<td>1,068,572</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household size</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Cape Town – 2011 Census – Cape Town, December 2012: 1.18

Referring to Table 3, in 2011 about 13.5% of Cape Town’s population, or about half a million people, lived in 223 informal settlements (Cape Town, 2013: 93) and another 7% lived in shacks in the back and front yards of formal housing.
Notably, while the number of people living in informal settlements is increasing, the proportion of the City’s population living in informal settlements is declining. Also worth noting is that the majority of residents in informal settlements have access to municipal services; with the caveat that claims regarding services installed will exceed services maintained and functional (Social Justice Coalition, 2014).

### Table 3: Proportion of households living in dwelling types in Cape Town, 2001, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dwelling types (%)</th>
<th>% occupied by Black Africans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal dwelling in 2011 – 837,533</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal dwelling in backyard of formal housing in 2011 – 74,958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal dwelling not in backyard (informal settlement) in 2011 – 143,823</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other in 2011 – 12,261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Between 2001 and 2011 the increase in the number of shack dwellers was largely made up of the Black African population. During the same period the increase in shack dwellers divided equally between informal settlements and shacks in the backyards of invariably better located formal dwellings. In regard to ‘backyarders’, ‘most’ backyarders are family, ‘many’ are not poor and ‘41 500 backyard structures are currently attached to City rental stock, and 34 000 to privately owned houses’ (Cape Town, 2012: 38). ‘Backyard dwellings lack the mass visibility and collective force of an informal settlement, being instead merged into existing residential areas’ (Lemanski, 2009: 473).

The proportion of households living in informal settlements is not a measure of poverty. In a country that so emphasises the workings of, and access to, the urban land market, the reason why so many households live in informal settlements is because they cannot enter the market for formal housing. Close to half the City’s households, 47%, live on less than R3,200 per month (about $300 in 2011). This included 69% of the Black African population and 41% of the Coloured population. It is apparent that poverty considerably exceeds the lack of formal housing.

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19. R3,200 is the closest census measure to R3,500.
3.4 Housing policy in Cape Town

The key objective [of Cape Town’s (2014a: iv) Integrated Human Settlements Five-Year Strategic Plan] is a people-centred and partnership-based service delivery process, which will address the essential issues of safety and security, tenure restoration and protection, meaningful stakeholder relations and the effective provision and maintenance of basic services.

Annexure 5 of the Plan lists 12 housing programmes, including BNG housing, assistance for gap households, the sale to tenants of rental housing, services for the UISP, PHP housing and social housing. Additional upgrading programmes listed in the Plan and 2013/14 IDP Review (Cape Town, 2014b) are the upgrading of dilapidated public rental housing and the delivery of water and sanitation services to backyard shacks and to informal settlements.

There is not a singular focus on new housing; the deliverables are more differentiated, reportedly with a view to serving the Coloured constituency (Interviewee 22). For example, in a context where 44% of Black African households and 9% of Coloured households lack formal housing (Cape Town, 2012b: 11), Cape Town’s mayor explains that ‘Where once there was a heavy focus on the provision of free [RDP/BNG] homes, there has in the past few years been an ever-increasing focus on the need for Gap Housing’ (De Lille, 2012). The City’s ‘target group are people with an income above the subsidy eligibility but who cannot access credit’ (Ley, 2009: 133). Further, backyard shacks ‘continue to take precedent over the shack settlements’ (Interviewee 3). There is reason to persist with the view that expenditure is shaped by the constituency served.

As regards the City’s reblocking policy, ‘The prioritisation of the reblocking initiative forms part of a partnership cooperation agreement with the Office of the Mayor, the Informal Settlements Network and the Community Organisation Resource Centre’ (Cape Town, 2014a: 72). The City’s Housing Strategy pipeline includes 2,814 reblocking units (Cape Town, 2014a: 31), but the number indicates that reblocking will not occur at scale and that the partnership will have little impact.

4 Context and constraint

4.1 ‘Increasing majority’

The Model and the SDI methodology aim to enhance community organization and capacity, set precedents, promote knowledge exchange, form partnerships with government, engage in policy advocacy and promote scaling up. The underlying premise is that ‘There can be no inclusive or equitable development planning and investment, nor effective city governance if the increasing majority of the residents of informal settlements remain unaccounted for’ (Bradlow, 2014: 12).

This premise does not hold in Cape Town as there is no ‘increasing majority’. Whereas in Mumbai more than a half of the City’s population of 12.9 million
persons ‘live in some 2,000 densely populated slum settlements’ (Sarkar et al., 2006: 8); in Cape Town about 13.5% of the population live in informal settlements and another 7% in backyard shacks. The potential role of an alliance and a methodology that is based on community-led upgrading of informal settlements is constrained when the proportion of the population living in informal settlements is limited, when it is decreasing as a proportion of the total population and when those in informal settlements are disinclined to organize and form saving groups due to being entitled to a free house (Ley, 2009).

There is a disconnect between the number and proportion of households living in informal settlements and the role anticipated for the South African Alliance in implementing the SDI methodology. The disconnection arises from:

- The scale and proportion of residents in slums and informal settlements (already mentioned);
- The capacity and influence of the Indian and South African Alliances; and
- Housing policies and the motivation for community organization.

4.2 NGO and CBO scale, capacity and influence

The NSDF, SPARC and Mahila Milan were formed in Mumbai and have their origins in community organization in the absence of housing rights, in more dire housing circumstances and in the midst of displacement of slum dwellers. This forms the backdrop for the formulation of the Model. The situation now is that it is the NSDF that chooses not to engage in conflict and that seeks to work in partnership with government. Scale is also evident in SPARC, which has been described as a ‘giant NGO’ with a capacity that far exceeds other NGOs in Mumbai (Sharma and Bhide, 2005). Adding to the significance of scale is that the NSDF and SPARC have ‘elite connections’ (Appadurai, 2001: 28) within government and with donors.

The South African Alliance has no comparable scale and capacity and influence in Cape Town, due to the relatively small proportion of households living in informal settlements and due to there being three other NGOs that fulfil the role of CORC (Interviewees 1, 22). CORC is viewed as, and arguably acts as, one among a number of consultant NGOs competing for upgrading and other projects. While CORC has a partnership with the City for reblocking, there is little possibility of partnering with the City to address informal settlement upgrading at scale. This is despite the City’s commitment ‘To promote and ensure meaningful partnerships with business and community-based stakeholders’ (Cape Town, 2014a: iv). The language of partnerships is in fashion. Partnership or not, when the relationship involves the ISN and CORC having a contract with the City, the City views ISN and CORC as consultants that report to the City (Interviewee 1).

20. Greater Mumbai is a part of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region that in 2011 had a population of 20.9 million persons.
Nonetheless, the SDI is not without influence. The former Director General of what was then the Department of Housing, and who at the time of writing is head of the Cities Alliance, has long supported the Indian and South African Alliances, and the SDI is on the board of the Cities Alliance. Further, Lindiwe Sisulu, the Minister of the Department of Housing between 2004 and 2009, and now returning to the post as Minister of the renamed Department of Human Settlements, maintains a close relationship with the Indian Alliance and SDI. At the October 2014 Department of Human Settlements ‘Indaba & Exhibition’ Jockin Arputham and Rose Molokoane, national co-ordinator of FEDUP, were invited speakers. The Indian Alliance and SDI may have influence at the national level, but the same cannot be assumed for Cape Town.

4.3 Housing policy and the motivation to organize

Just as scale, capacity and influence differ markedly, so too do the origins of housing policy. Housing is not a right included in India’s constitution. The process of slum redevelopment in Mumbai arises from high land values and is driven by the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority’s delegated Slum Rehabilitation Authority that, with property developers, prepared the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme and the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (KRVIA and SPARC, 2010). The motivating force for this redevelopment for developers is profits and, for slum dwellers, the prospect of a 21m² free dwelling. Through obtaining the right to develop the land and through obtaining Transferable Development Rights, property developers obtain a sufficient profit to be able to provide free housing for all qualifying households (on the electoral roll in 2000) and to displace the rest (Anand and Rademacher, 2011); and it is within this policy context that communities have organized.

An important feature of the redevelopment process in Mumbai is that ‘one or two slums alone rarely form associations and if they did, government authorities would not take them seriously. Federating slum communities is a more effective way for slums to have a platform to voice out their needs and engage in negotiations with both the [Slum Rehabilitation Authority] and private developers’ (Ardhanari, n.d.: 9). Communities have a good reason for organizing to protect their slum and, if they agree to development, to negotiate the form taken by development.

One comment on this article was that the ISN also negotiates collectively, just like the NSDF. However, the point being made is that few communities in South Africa perceive the need to organize due to government’s free housing and the location of informal settlements not attracting the attention of, and the need to be defended against, property developers.

Housing policy has much the same effect on the formation of savings groups. Jockin Arputham and the Indian Alliance view the formation of savings groups ‘as the key to the local and global success of the federation model’ (Appadurai, 2001: 33, emphasis added). The need for savings groups is an article of faith within the Indian and South African Alliance. While in South Africa free housing has proved slow in coming and shack dwellers are well advised not to expect a free house, the...
expectations created by a right to a free house and a sense of entitlement counter both the perceived need for savings groups and for community organization for housing (Lemanski, 2008; Ley, 2009). The upshot of these observations is that there is good reason for community organization and savings in Mumbai and less reason for community organization and savings in Cape Town.

5 Conclusion: a common methodology or shared principles?

This article began with the question of the relevance of the SDI methodology to the Cape Town context, understanding that if its relevance is questioned then the replicability of the SDI methodology can be questioned. In addition to funding projects, the greater goal of the SDI methodology is one of an organized urban poor able to advance their interests citywide. The extent of this ambition exceeds the influence of the South African Alliance and the relevance of the SDI methodology. This led to my assessing some of the contextual features of the methodology that may be inapplicable in Cape Town. The most dramatic example of this difference concerns the centrality of women’s saving groups to the SDI methodology. The SDI methodology is asserted without regard to the ‘evidence’, for surely organizing 24,517 savers throughout South Africa since 1992 is indicative of the inability of the South African Alliance to scale up. The use of the word ‘ritual’ to refer to savings reinforces the sense of questioning that which should not be questioned if one wants to remain in the congregation.

In comments received on this article it was held that the ‘problem is not scale in numbers, but scale as in the capacity to translate these numbers into coherent political action whether it be collaborative and confrontational – and there is a need for both’ (Interviewee 17). This takes us back to Miraftab’s (2003: 230) interpretation of scaling up as ‘a qualitative change in how agencies see their roles, responsibilities, power, objectives, and procedures …’ and a quantitative change in impact. Without the ability of the South African Alliance to contribute to scaling up quantitatively, its prospective role appears to consist more of championing changing policies and power relationships embedded in existing housing policy and processes; in effect, scaling up qualitatively without prescribing all features of the SDI methodology.

It is apparent that the notion of a set of rituals shared by all SDI affiliates does not hold. It was observed to me that the SDI methodology and rituals ‘actively constrain’ the South Africa Alliance (Interviewee 17). ‘[P]ragmatic adaptation’ to local circumstances is necessary. This wording arises from a discussion some years ago with Sheela Patel where she endorsed adaptation ‘as long as one does not lose the plot’. I understood this as a commitment to the principle that the urban poor, women in particular, acquire the organizational strength, capacity and confidence to operate in the public sphere. This, surely, is a principle that all SDI affiliates hold dear.
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The aim of the Khayalethu Initiative is to advance models for participatory informal settlement upgrading through knowledge sharing, collaboration and experimentation. Isandla Institute’s role in the Khayalethu Initiative is to inspire and inform communities of practice through research and the facilitation of engagement between practitioners in the field of informal settlement upgrading. One of these engagements takes the shape of a Cape Town-based Community of Practice. This document distils the knowledge emerging from the local community of practice engagements, and offers lessons from both theory and practice.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Those living in informal settlements are often amongst the most vulnerable and tend to live in unacceptable conditions. They face daily risks of evictions, relocation, food insecurity, unhealthy living conditions and are subject to nature’s elements. Past initiatives such as the large scale implementation of housing developments has failed to appropriately address these conditions. Therefore, there has been a shift towards a more incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading, in order to tackle both the inequality and inaccessibility of South African cities.

This practice brief examines the manifestations of incrementalism as well as the potential and limitations of incremental informal settlement upgrading. The practice brief offers a reflection on the realities of implementing an incremental, co-productive and progressive approach with regards to informal settlement upgrading across South Africa, and concludes with lessons learnt from the Cape Town-based community of practice.

Isandla Institute acknowledges the contributions made by representatives from Community Organisation Resource Centre, Habitat for Humanity South Africa, Development Action Group and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading during the local Community of Practice meeting held on 1 March 2017. Special thanks to Heinrich Wolff, Gita Goven and Rudolf Perold for their valuable input during the meeting.
INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, there has been a gradual shift in interventions, policies and perceptions with regards to informal settlement upgrading in South Africa, with incrementalism being put at the forefront of addressing the poor urban conditions found in informal settlements.

In essence, rather than the mass production of a development product, an incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading is often based on process and form whereby urban development is gradual and context-specific towards eventual urban sustainability. Incrementalism presupposes collaborative planning and design in order to avoid relocation, foster adaptability/flexibility, enable tenure security, and endorse environmental responsive design (Dovey 2014). As such, incrementalism is meant to be an approach towards addressing both spatial and socio-economic disparities throughout South African cities.

However, the case for incrementalism in South Africa for the most part has failed to produce the desired outcomes. At a country and city-wide scale, policy interventions have fallen short at appropriately informing practice. Therefore, it is evident that there is a need for innovative and possibly experimental methods of intervention to discover workable alternatives for both the residents and their municipalities. Hence, it is important to note that even though the concept of incrementalism is one that is progressive and could potentially improve the living conditions of the urban poor, it is not fool-proof model.

Neo-liberal capitalism and the conditions of a disorganised/weak state tend to undermine the principles and intentions of an incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading. With that being said, even though informal settlement upgrading in South Africa poses a significant challenge for urban professionals and policy makers, it plays a vital role in offering better access to liveable neighbourhoods as well as socio-economic opportunities to the urban poor.

Therefore, the purpose of this practice brief is to explore the concept of incrementalism and how incremental approaches to informal settlement upgrading inform practice and implementation in a South African context. The next section will define the concept of incrementalism with regards to informal settlement upgrading and present ways in which it manifests itself within informal settlements. Section 3 will tackle the implications and risks around an incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading for practice, planning, design, implementation, management and capacity. Given that incremental development of informal settlements is being advocated by current policy in place, this section will focus on both current upgrading strategies and realities in South Africa. This practice brief also addresses some of the challenges faced by urban practitioners and concludes with a distillation of lessons drawn from literature as well as the local community of practice meeting held on 1 March 2017.

1 The local community of practice consists of Cape Town based organisations involved in upgrading informal settlements. These include, along with Isandla Institute: Community Organisations Resource centre, Development Action Group, Habitat for Humanity South Africa, People’s Environmental Planning and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading.
**National Development Plan (2011)**

The National Development Plan (NDP) highlights the housing crisis as an urgent concern, and acknowledges that the current housing trajectory for housing provision needs to change if overall objectives of human settlement transformation are going to be met. The NDP views informal settlement upgrading as an entry point into the incremental housing delivery process and promotes in-situ upgrading and upgrading that causes the least amount of disruption to existing communities.

The NDP notes that upgrading informal settlements on suitably located land is a key infrastructure investment priority for South Africa. The NDP further advocates incremental tenure rights, yet acknowledges that the institutional capabilities of the state to develop appropriate regulations and management strategies for securing tenure incrementally have not yet been developed.

Noting the ambivalence towards informal settlements across governments, the NDP calls for the development of appropriate mechanisms, standards and instruments (including funding), as well as dedicated capacity at local level.

**Breaking New Ground and National Housing Code (2004)**

The Breaking New Ground (BNG) strategy aims to facilitate the provision of sustainable human settlements, by providing a broader package that goes beyond the delivery of uniform housing products towards responsive delivery that is multi-dimensional and addresses needs of the urban poor. The policy is also meant to enhance the role of local government in housing delivery and acknowledges the need as well as importance of appropriate forms urban development, in order to rectify apartheid structures through in-situ upgrading via the guiding framework of the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (Chapter 13 of the National Housing Code 2004). This is meant to achieve three broad interrelated objectives: incremental tenure security, health and safety, and the empowerment of communities through participatory planning and processes.

**Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme (2009)**

The UISP is the primary policy instrument administered by the National Department of Human Settlements (DHS). The policy is meant to cater for the special requirements of informal settlements across South African cities and is in alignment with the UN Millennium Goals and other declarations under the UN Habitat Programme. The UISP is carried out on the premise of in-situ upgrading.

To further unpack this basic framework of in-situ upgrading the South African government has adopted a phased approach in line with international best practice. Interventions are required to support each of these processes. (For greater detail refer to the National Housing Code.)

- **PHASE 1:** This phase involves surveying the community to determine housing and infrastructural needs through a process of consultation and meaningful engagement, in order to determine the geo-technical and physical suitability for upgrading.

- **PHASE 2:** This phase is focused on the acquisition of land (if necessary) and geo-technical investigations. This phase is often when interim engineering services are provided.

- **PHASE 3:** This phase is focused on detailed planning and project management. This phase includes securing tenure/occupational rights, the provision of permanent basic services and bulk infrastructure and providing relocation assistance if need be.

- **PHASE 4:** Known as the housing consolidation phase, where the actual construction of top structures occur. This phase is implemented with regards to the relevant housing subsidy program. This takes form in a variety of ways where housing is delivered via mutual aid, local contractors or community self-aid.

Implementation of upgrading projects is often best done through a partnership approach. For this purpose, funding is meant to be provided to source external capacity to help with project initiation, planning and management. This requires the support of different government departments.
The over-emphasis on urban form tends to overlook social, political and economic realities.

**DEFINING INCREMENTALISM**

The focus on incremental development offers a direct critique of modern-day planning and design practices, which have been primarily focused on the built form and the aesthetic of an end product. This has often resulted in inflexible and highly centralised urban development projects, done through master planning (Kingat 2013).

This approach to development often fails to grapple with the complexity and dynamics that define formal/informal settlements and cities. The over-emphasis on urban form tends to overlook social, political and economic realities. Therefore, in order to successfully plan, design and develop urban environments, realities need to be engaged with.

The concept of incrementalism can be broadly defined as the gradual building of a city, where urbanisation is not perceived as a final product, but as a continuous process rooted in citizen experience and engagement. This approach to urban development recognises the interconnectedness of place, experience and engagement. As such, it challenges conventional city plans and processes, which are often shaped and controlled by mega projects. Hence, incrementalism in its essence can be defined as gradualism (Kingat 2013).

With respect to informal settlement upgrading, incrementalism may be best described as a participatory approach underpinning state intervention that enables residents to build within their means, adding and improving their dwellings and environment step by step (Blau 2012: 254). As such, incrementalism recognises the capacities, knowledge and resources that communities have and are able to contribute in shaping their own environments (Mitlin 2007). Put differently, communities are recognised as active agents in their own development. Incrementalism also provides the opportunity to create meaningful partnerships, where contributions of each stakeholder are acknowledged and valued.

While the recognition of community agency is critical, there is a risk that this may be over-stated by the state. The assumption that poor urban communities are able to initiate and sustain the development of their own settlement, with very little to no state support and intervention, shows a belief in a false notion of resilience. In reality, this will only serve to reinforce challenges and exclusion, faced by the residents of informal settlements.

The gradual process of transforming an informal settlement into a functional neighbourhood implies that the approach is multi-faceted, involving different spheres of government, sector departments and other stakeholders. A number of key elements along this path have been identified, namely: tenure security; neighbourhood planning and design; the provision of infrastructure and services; public facilities and social amenities; and, housing consolidation (see,
amongst others, the Western Cape Informal Settlement Support Plan, adopted by the provincial government in 2017). These elements are further discussed below. While the focus of informal settlement upgrading is often on spatial and physical interventions, it is equally important to address socio-economic exclusion through community empowerment and support for local livelihood strategies.

In sum, then, an incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading is always outcome-oriented (i.e. keeping in mind the type of neighbourhood local residents aspire to live in) and allows for broader participation, co-production (whereby residents can shape the development of their neighbourhoods and unlock opportunities that tend to get lost in large-scale, product driven urban projects (Housing Development Agency 2015), appropriate financing mechanisms, strategic state investment and adaptability.

**TENURE SECURITY**

Tenure security is vital to the process of upgrading informal settlements, because giving residents the ability to perform land-related transactions creates an environment where the fear or eviction and loss of rights no longer exists (Urban LandMark 2013).

The provision of tenure security to the urban poor in South Africa has been dominated by the individual title model implemented through large-scale titling programmes. However, recently alternative models of tenure security are being employed, focusing on incremental progression, by providing a context-specific as well as a realistic progression towards tenure security. Figure 1 illustrates an incremental approach, which prioritises increased/progression towards tenure security rather than a specific land tenure arrangement, moving from greater administrative recognition towards legal recognition. Unlike tradition large-scale titling programmes, incrementally securing tenure provides several routes to obtaining greater security (Urban LandMark 2013).

![Diagram illustrating progression of tenure security](Source: Isandla Institute 2017 adapted from Urban LandMark 2013)
Incrementalism and Informal settlement Upgrading

Neighbourhood Planning and Design

Informal settlements are exceptionally vulnerable to health risks, violence and various socio-economic challenges. Neighbourhood planning and design plays a significant part in remedying these issues. Built form interventions have the opportunity to transform informal settlements into liveable neighbourhoods using appropriate urban design frameworks that place emphasis on quality and sustainability.

Incremental neighbourhood planning and design focuses on the construction and the reconfiguration of the built form over time in order to meet the needs of urban communities. An appropriate urban design framework provides the opportunity to engage in participatory, incremental and city-wide upgrading. The UN Habitat Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme launched in 2008 has made a few broad recommendations to achieve sustainable and incremental upgrading, which are to be taken into account in any urban design framework.

These include:

1. More emphasis and recognition needs to be placed on the provision of multi-dimensional public spaces in order to foster socio-economic development, the provision of utilities and waste management, mobility and infrastructure;
2. Engage with context and equitable development;
3. Recognise, preserve and support existing mixed land use;
4. Recognise, preserve and support social networks and diversity; and,
5. Promote sustainability and climate resilient designs (UN Habitat 2014).

These points reinforce the notion that incremental informal settlement upgrading is a process towards neighbourhood development, whereby informal settlements are transformed gradually into functional neighbourhoods or suburbs. This is worth emphasising, because there is a risk that informal settlement upgrading becomes reduced to mere ‘sites-and-services’, which is a contradiction to the notion of incrementalism.

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2 For a more detailed discussion on alternative ways to advance tenure security, please refer to Isandla Institute (2017) Securing Tenure in Informal Settlements. This practice brief draws from research as well as presentations and discussions at a community of practice meeting held in Cape Town on 26 April 2016.
Infrastructure and Services

The incremental nature of infrastructure services and extension has become a significant focus in informal settlement upgrading and service provision. An incremental approach to the provision of infrastructure allows for poorer and more vulnerable communities to be a part of constructing and reconfiguring conventional urban systems (Silver 2014).

Infrastructure provision is dominated by two approaches: complete redevelopment and in-situ upgrading. Complete redevelopment often involves the relocation of residents and tends to fracture fragile social networks and livelihood opportunities, whereas in-situ upgrading is embedded in the fundamentals of incrementalism and is currently advocated as the preferred practice (Ziblim 2013). Incremental development of infrastructure services in informal settlements, such as that depicted in Figure 2, allows for a reduction in upfront costs for both the state as well as community members and stimulates further urban development, innovation and improvements (Masum 2014). It is also important to note that infrastructure and services plans need to account for future upgrading in order to continue meeting the needs of the community. Again, incrementalism does not imply an ad hoc, project-driven approach. Rather, it is very important that all spheres and relevant departments of government have a coordinated strategy, which is implemented at local level for the progressive and innovative infrastructural and basic services solutions to meet the needs to communities in informal settlements (Urban LandMark 2008).

Figure 2: Example of incremental development of infrastructure and basic services (Source: modified from Kingat 2013)
Public Facilities and Social Amenities

The development of integrated public facilities and social amenities is important, because it enhances the well-being of residents by creating safe spaces and fostering community cohesion.

An incremental and minimalistic approach to the development of public facilities allows for the evolution and improvement of an urban structure that residents can respond to, with regards to appropriating space (Mammon and Ewing 2005). This allows for the creation of dynamic spatial networks and sustainable community neighbourhoods that encourage socio-economic activity.

The incremental development of public/social facilities recognises collective need, allows for flexibility and change, reduces cost, and aids in managing dense spaces creatively, whilst maximising limited resources (d’Cruz, Patel and Mazvimavi 2014).

Broad ways of implementing incremental development of public facilities and social amenities within informal settlements include:

1. Consolidating lost space within a settlement/community to create useful physical spaces;
2. Realigning internal spaces and pathways to develop safe zones for socialising; and,
3. Designing spaces around collective community needs (d’Cruz, Patel and Mazvimavi 2014).

Designing spaces around collective community needs.
Housing Consolidation

The concept of incremental housing delivery is at the centre of South African housing policy. Formal incremental housing delivery tends to manifest itself typically in two formats, namely ‘site and service’ and ‘core housing/starter homes’ programmes (Mathabela 1999).

The principle underpinning incremental housing delivery is that it increases the responsibility of households to partake in aspects of housing delivery, in accordance to their capacity (Dewar 1993). As such, the concept of housing delivery is rooted in the broader notion of ‘self-help’, which assumes that residents of informal settlements are willing and able to gradually expand their initial basic dwellings into adequate homes over time (Mathabela 1999). However, it is important to note that insecurities of tenure undermine the willingness of residents to invest in improving their homes and their urban environment, in fear of possible eviction and/or demolition (Wakely and Riley 2011).

Figure 3 is a representation of the Elemental incremental housing model, which has proven to be fairly successful in Chile in terms of upgrading schemes. This housing model advocates for certain design conditions that allow residents to effectively improve their dwellings over time.

These broad design conditions include:

1. Housing model should be able to achieve appropriate densities within settlements without further encouraging overcrowding, to make the development of starter/core homes more affordable;

2. The provision of physical space is incredibly important and should promote the improvement and expansion of a household over time. It is also important to note that creating collective space (clusters of families/households with restricted access) between private and public space helps strengthen social networks; and,

3. 50% of the units’ volume should be left for self-build. The initial building must have a supportive framework where the building should be secure enough for households, to expand over time (Arch Daily 2008).

Figure 3: Elemental starter housing model (Source: Stott 2013)
THE EMERGENCE OF INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT IN DU NOON, CAPE TOWN

Du Noon is a post-apartheid settlement located in Milnerton, Cape Town near industrial, agricultural, residential and manufacturing employment opportunities. Du Noon was a part of the Provincial Government’s housing roll-out programme in 1996. The programme rolled out several typical ‘RDP’ housing (38m² house in the centre of a 115m² plot) in the area. However, decades later this area is still characterised as predominately informal with conditions of inadequate shelter and basic services, unemployment, high levels of criminal activity and an evident vulnerability to fires.

The intensity of economic opportunity in the area has led to a mushrooming of informal densification. This has also led to the innovative and incremental construction of rental accommodation predominately on existing ‘RDP’ plots, in order to meet needs of the ‘gap market’ as well as provide low-income housing alternatives. The financing and construction of rental accommodation has been done incrementally and within means and capacity of the ‘owners’. Completed flats are rented out in order to finance the construction of new flats. Shacks are also constructed on the residential plots of subsidised housing to accommodate for backywarder market.

Du Noon is formally zoned as ‘Informal Residential’ and this has allowed for the development of rentable housing, which has mixed functions. Most of these homes provide additional space to rent out and for economic functions such as spaza shops, shebeens, day-care centres, and so forth.

Du Noon is an example of the emergence of incrementalism in the most organic way and provides some valuable insights on how communities shape their urban environments in order to meet their immediate needs, but also promote growth beyond survival through incremental development.

However, it is important to acknowledge that rapid urbanisation of the area and the mushrooming of densities has posed difficulties for the City of Cape Town, with regards to the management of existing and emerging urban challenges.

The challenges characterised are exacerbated by the high density levels and failure of the state to address these challenges head on and appropriately, which in turn continues a cycle of systemic poverty.

(Wolff 2014)
INCERTANTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

It has been established that incremental development through in-situ upgrading and community participation is at the forefront of the current South African policy, with regards to informal settlements. The policy is meant to ensure that conditions in informal settlements improve and that socio-economic development is evident.

The state’s role in informal settlement upgrading goes beyond the provision of infrastructure; it is also one of support, ensuring communities are improving their living conditions gradually on a continuous basis. This suggests that the role of the state shifts from a primary provider of housing towards an enabler of sustainable human settlements.

In fact, this is not the first time that South Africa has employed an incremental/self-help model to address urban poverty across the country. In the 1990s, the Independent Development Trust (IDT) introduced the first standardised national site and services programme, in line with the National Housing policy at the time. The pilot was launched in 1991 and was meant to grant access to approximately 100,000 people to serviced sites. However, despite good intentions the project was considered a failure (see text box). The failure of the IDT programme can be predominately attributed to the project’s lack of meaningful consideration of the challenges faced by the urban poor and the absence of an appropriate planning and design model (Western Cape Department of Human Settlements 2013).

Independent Development Trust (IDT): Failures and Constraints

1. The IDT model operated on a standardised delivery process and layout that did not accommodate for meaningful and active community participation;
2. IDT sites were poorly located, resulting in the perpetuation of spatial and social segregation;
3. Little consideration was given to financial constraints and technical capacity of residents; and,
4. Slow and often non-existent development on IDT sites.

(The Western Cape Department of Human Settlements 2013)
In light of the IDT and the RDP models failing to appropriately address the housing crisis and broader socio-economic issues, the Department of Human Settlements (previously known as the Department of Housing) developed the Breaking New Ground (BNG) policy in 2004, which contains the Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme (UISP) and enhanced Peoples Housing Process (ePHP). The policy introduced the distinct focus on incremental in-situ upgrading, which is evident in the current National Housing Code (see box on policy provisions). However, to date the philosophy behind incremental development as embodied in policy has struggled to translate into implementation. The programmes developed tend to not be utilised at all or appropriately by municipalities when intervening in informal settlements (Western Cape Department of Human Settlements 2013).

In-situ upgrading in South Africa for the most part has been characterised by notable inconsistencies and tensions (Ziblim 2013). Amongst others, the nature of informal settlement upgrading has come to mean that when upgrading projects are eventually completed, often there is very little scope for communities to build on what has been delivered (Swilling et al. 2013). According to Swilling et al. (2013) upgrading projects can often take up ± 9 years to complete and formal housing support much longer. It is estimated that informal settlement residents in the Western Cape can wait up to approximately 32 years, before receiving some sort of formal housing. This inconsistency is embodied by the discrepancies between progressive policy and a technocratic local government (Huchzermeyer 2006).

Local government has also been pressured to a certain extent to engage in market-based approaches to governance and development in their tasks and mandates by private sector investment and the desire to create world-class South African cities. To attract foreign investment and prospects. This has led to governance structures, policy and practices being shaped/influenced by neo-liberalism, which has resulted in stumbling blocks with regards to strategic planning functions of municipalities (predominately metropolitan municipalities). This in turn has led to ad hoc, reactive crisis management based decision-making (Massey 2013) with regards to informal settlements. This has perpetuated a tick-box approach and top-down mind-set of government officials towards upgrading, creating a myriad of issues.
Some of these key challenges include:

1. Municipal officials are still being tasked with preventing the proliferation of new shacks within existing and new informal settlements. This perpetuates the mind-set of eradication and to a large extent allows top-down strategies to dominate the upgrading processes;

2. Community participation in upgrading processes tend to be nominal/weak. Poor communication with community members, the lack of transparency, ineffective governance and management, and political infighting has led to a deep-seeded mistrust of the South African government;

3. Housing delivery in South Africa is highly politicised;

4. There is a lack of access to suitable land amidst financial constraints combined to the policy bias of providing freehold title, which tends to be expensive as well as time consuming;

5. There are both community and municipal capacity challenges that hinder timely delivery, mainly with regards to human and financial resources;

6. Rules and regulations governing funding and the approval of proposed upgrading projects tend to be complex with boundaries between the functions of the spheres of government often being blurred (Ziblim 2013:);

7. The inflexible capital subsidy aimed at individual households fails to include those who do not meet the subsidy criteria, nor does it address scale and housing demands appropriately;

8. The consolidation phase of the upgrading process requires different funding/financial mechanisms, regulations, community micro-financing and saving schemes, as well as state engagement. This phase tends to take place at a household level, which has led to a lack of support from relevant stakeholders to ensure that neighbourhoods can develop incrementally; and,

9. The current housing subsidy is not sustainable in the long-term, and there is no medium to long-term plan for upgrading that appropriately links funding mechanisms to long-term planning for informal settlements (Bolnick 2010: 7-9).
HARRY GWALA, GAUTENG

Harry Gwala informal settlement is located in Ekurhuleni. It is adjacent to Wettville and consists of approximately 800 households and has been occupied over a decade. Harry Gwala is well-located in terms of accessibility to schools, public transport, industrial job opportunities and urban agriculture (Protea South).

Harry Gwala is characterised by a lack of refuse removal and street lighting, inadequate pit latrines, and has only 6 communal taps servicing the entire settlement. Therefore, on October 2008 an application was made to the High Court for the installation of basic services as well as upgrading. This application was based on the residents’ constitutional rights, chapters 12 and 13 of the Housing Code, and statutory rights set out in the Water Services Act.

The High Court approved the installation of 7 additional taps and refuse collection. However, the issue of lighting and sanitation has not been resolved as of yet because the municipality has argued that it requires both Eskom’s approval and formal township approval. The municipality further claimed that the feasibility for upgrading Harry Gwala in-situ would result in money not spent well. Ekurhuleni drew up a purely financial interpretation of sustainability and argued that it would be unsustainable to provide basic services to Harry Gwala. The Municipality used section 152-1b of the Constitution to justify not providing basic services to Harry Gwala. This exposes the municipality’s view and mind-set with regards to basic service provision and the upgrading of informal settlements.

This sheds light on the question what weight relevant housing policy has in creating sustainable human settlements and influencing the urban sector appropriately. This case study is also evidence of a silo approach to addressing challenges experienced by the urban poor and contradictions of local government interventions. Ekurhuleni Metropolitan municipality is an example in this case of how municipal officers are often not willing to engage meaningfully with communities to meet needs and avoid litigation, that housing policy is very much subjected to interpretation, and there is a lack of will from officials to take on equitable and appropriate forms of upgrading.

(Huchzermeier 2008)

The Harry Gwala case study illustrates the urgent need for a reskilling of officials/implementing agencies in the urban development sector as well as re-structuring funding mechanisms. In light of this, there is a call for practice to include multi-stakeholder engagement to form an integral part of design and upgrading processes. It is also important that all these processes are community-led and implemented through a co-production process.
KEY OUTCOMES OF INCREMENTALISM IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADE

Despite the failure of the IDT programme, the resurgence of incrementalism combined with the appropriate planning tools, services and expertise has the potential of transforming informal settlements into vibrant and safe urban communities (Beattie, Mayer and Yildirim 2010).

However, this shift towards incremental development of informal settlements has its own set of implications for the urban fabric and systems of South African cities. If principles of incremental development are appropriately employed in the upgrading process and there is effective and sufficient state support, where necessary, the premise of in-situ upgrading could potentially lead to a number of critical outcomes, such as:

1. The enabling of partnerships to achieve local and context-specific solutions;
2. The revision of development standards, towards standards that are flexible, realistic and effective in achieving sustainable human settlements and urban integration;
3. Workable alternatives that suit the urban landscape to implement deliverables at scale;
4. Effective spatial arrangements of informal settlements, for improved surveillance, safety and access;
5. The development of appropriate financial tools and models that allow households and the state to effectively drive development process in alignment with their financial capacity; and,

It is important to note that benefits cannot simply be assumed, but are contingent on appropriate programmatic and project design for a given context.
ZWELISHA, DURBAN

In-situ upgrading of informal settlements through community participation is widely accepted as international best practice in improving the lives of millions for informal settlement residents. The case study of the recently upgraded settlement Zwelisha, Durban explores the process and impact of community participation during in-situ informal settlement upgrading, which has resulted in successful outcomes with regards to tenure security and the improvement of living conditions.

Zwelisha is located approximately 35km north of Durban and falls under eThekwini. The settlement was selected against certain criteria such as location, the size of the settlement, and the stage of upgrade process.

PARTICIPATION WAS CHARACTERISED BY THREE CATEGORIES/TIERS:

1. Non-resident/built environment professionals with responsibility to provide technical support.
2. Community development committee (CDC) (approximately 10 members).
3. Ordinary residents of Zwelisha.

The three tiers participated at different capacity levels and various models of partnerships were adopted and utilised. All stakeholders worked on different elements of the upgrading process, yet not in isolation of each other. This level of engagement led to housing delivery, increased political power and improvements with regards to tenure security.

The upgrading project was launched and led by the CDC with the support of eThekwini municipality.

The Approach

The CDC was very active throughout the upgrading process. It led the residents through the housing subsidy process and compiled a list of eligible residents. Once the residents of Zwelisha were well informed about the process, construction of housing units and installation of infrastructure and basic services commenced on the site. The construction occurred through a phased approach. The finalisation of the Zwelisha upgrade was done in 2009.

Even after the finalisation of the upgrading project the CDC continues to be involved in community development, albeit in a different capacity, which has played a major role in the sustainability of the project.

(Patel 2013)
LESSONS LEARNT AND PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESSFUL INCREMENTAL UPGRADING

An incremental approach to (in-situ) upgrading has various advantages over the conventional approach of greenfield housing development and as such it has been endorsed in many ways as the most appropriate way to upgrade informal settlements, despite its limitations.

In-situ upgrading is a complex undertaking, however it has the promise of positive results if context is taken into consideration and certain preconditions are met appropriately (Ehebrecht 2014). The following section touches on some key lessons (drawn primarily from the Local Community of Practice meeting, 1 March 2017) and prerequisites that could form the basis for formulating new strategies and approaches to in-situ upgrading.

Key Lessons

1. **Human settlement policy supports and encourages incremental development of informal settlements, yet development and design standards do not reflect this notion.** In fact, development standards tend to be inflexible and as such are a major stumbling block to implementing upgrading strategies at municipal level;

2. **Incrementalism presupposes in-situ upgrading, in as much as possible.** Traditional upgrading approaches have resulted to large extent led to a number of relocations. This is both undesirable and unsustainable from a social, environmental and financial point of view;

3. **Incrementalism enables not only a phased approach to informal settlement upgrading, but also a multi-disciplinary, inter-sectoral, inter-governmental and multi-stakeholder approach to address informal settlements holistically.** Housing and infrastructure are often prioritised and are delivered in isolation of other important built environment, spatial and socio-economic interventions such as socio-economic development, health care, crime prevention, food security, and education;

4. **Incremental development enables residents to enact solutions they already have;**

5. **The notion of incrementalism, self-build and community agency is often misinterpreted.** This leads to a mind-set that urban poor communities have the full capacity to develop their own homes and neighbourhoods with very little state support;

6. **An incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading gives attention to human development.** It goes beyond physical improvement of a household or neighbourhood.

7. **Incrementalism implies choosing process over product,** making it time- and resource-intensive.
Potential Prerequisites

Throughout this practice brief a number of potential prerequisites for an incremental approach to in-situ upgrading of informal settlements have been identified. These relate to physical interventions, socio-economic development, participation, capacity building, the protection of both social and livelihood networks, and managing, maintaining and financing interventions (Ehebrecht 2014).

- It is also vital that stakeholders have a good and true understanding of the context of the community and specific needs. This is where it is important to have an extensive survey of relevant qualitative and quantitative information (Ehebrecht 2014).

- Land ownership and land availability is another significant aspect to take into consideration. This influences strategies with regards to engineering services, security of tenure, types of housing interventions, and cost.

- Infrastructure and basic services are crucial to improving the standard of living conditions within informal settlements. Therefore, it often important to have the installation of proper drainage systems, sanitation facilities and access to drinkable water made available to residents as soon as possible.

- Political will is a critical, yet often overlooked, aspect to the success of an incremental project; however this requires a mind-set change among municipal leaders and officials, reflected in a willingness to adopt the progressive intent of human settlement policy and see the incremental development of a settlement through.

The above is contingent on effective community participation. Participation and engagement also need to consider limitations and recognise different levels of decision-making and different roles of stakeholders. This is crucial to the effectiveness and long-term success of any upgrading.
### Figure 4: Diagram illustrating a participatory and incremental upgrading framework
(Source: Swilling et al 2013)
CONCLUSION

Despite national policy propagating an incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading, in practice this has not been widely pursued.

On the one hand, instead of in situ upgrading (after all, this is what incrementalism suggests), eradication of informal settlements, ‘greenfields’ housing projects and/or relocation have taken prominence in human settlements practices. On the other hand, where informal settlement upgrading has been pursued it very often does not move significantly beyond a ‘site-and-service’ approach. In such instances, there is little to suggest that the settlement will gradually transform into a fully functional neighbourhood.

A different mindset brings with it different possibilities: incremental tenure will not only provide people with a sense of recognition and peace of mind; it will also allow them to invest in their shelter and community, free of the fear of eviction or demolition. Similarly, there are many advantages to incremental service provision, public infrastructure, settlement design and housing consolidation.

Not only does incrementalism apply to physical improvements, it also refers to a fundamentally different process. As echoed throughout the practice brief, incrementalism in upgrading is closely linked to community-centred strategies for upgrading.

In conclusion, the re-emergence of incrementalism provides the prospect of developing flexible, context-specific and co-produced design models for upgrading that are affordable, equitable and adaptable to the dynamic nature of settlements, towns and cities. Now is the time to make it real in practice.
Informal settlement upgrading and safety: experiences from Cape Town, South Africa

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Abstract Informal settlement dwellers are disproportionately affected by ill health, violence and many other socio-economic challenges. These are largely connected to the unhealthy and unsafe physical conditions within which they live. Interventions in the built form through the provision of physical infrastructure have been proposed as a strategy to improve economic, social and health outcomes for informal settlement dwellers and are also suggested as tools to address violence and insecurity, which have reached unprecedented levels in many cities of the South. Whereas there is a clear case for improving the living conditions of people in slums, there is still much debate and uncertainty about what exactly constitutes upgrading, the most appropriate methods and approaches to upgrading, and what the objectives and desired outcomes of upgrading interventions ought to be. This paper tries to shed light on the complexity of upgrading interventions through a comparison of three upgrading projects, each utilising a particular method and approach, and their impact on the perception of safety of their beneficiaries. The research findings show that physical improvements and a full package of basic services are absolutely crucial to improve the living conditions, reduce vulnerabilities and improve the safety of informal settlement dwellers. But these need to be supported by social and economic programmes in order to bring about tangible improvements in people’s life circumstances. Research across the three sites, however, suggests that in a context marked by high unemployment, poor education and limited opportunities to break the cycle of poverty, the long-term impact and sustainability of upgrading interventions is limited in the absence of targeted programmes.

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aimed at addressing the structural factors which drive and sustain high levels of violence and crime.

**Keywords** Informal settlements · Housing · Upgrading · Violence · Reblocking · Safety

## 1 Introduction

Growing informality has become a prominent feature in many of South Africa’s major urban centres. Improving the living conditions of informal settlement dwellers is a pressing concern for international agencies like the World Bank, United Nations (UN) Habitat and national governments alike. In South Africa this concern was expressed in the goal to “eradicate” informal settlements by 2014. Furthermore, increasing levels of violence and violent crime have been linked to fast-paced urbanisation and informality in developing regions (Muggah 2012). The UN Habitat’s 2007 Global Report on Human Settlements entitled “Enhancing Urban Safety and Security” argues that “crime and violence are typically more severe in urban areas and are compounded by their rapid growth” (2007, 6). This report proposes interventions in the built form through the provision of physical infrastructure as a strategy to improve economic, social and health outcomes for informal settlement dwellers, and as a tool to address growing violence and insecurity, which have reached unprecedented levels in many cities of the South. However, it is argued that upgrading in itself will not have a significant impact in terms of improving the lives of informal dwellers and might in some instances have a negative effect on their livelihoods post upgrading. For instance, case studies from upgrading projects in Latin America, India and Africa seem to suggest that different methods and approaches to upgrading have a bearing on the long-term sustainability of these interventions (Abbott 2002a; Baker 2006; Sheuya 2008; Koster and Nuijten 2012). In terms of violence and insecurity, it is argued that in order for upgrading projects to bring about tangible improvements in the living conditions of the beneficiaries of these projects, upgrading needs to be done in a holistic, integrated and participatory manner (UN Habitat 2007; Bauer 2010). Abbott (2002a, b, 2004) calls for a process of “settlement transformation” in which physical interventions are supported by social and economic programmes to reduce the vulnerability of informal settlement dwellers and improve their quality of life.

The main concern of this paper is to consider whether and how the process of upgrading impact the quality of life of residents of informal settlements after the upgrading project, with a particular focus on the nature and extent of violence and insecurity. This will be done by analysing three upgrading projects, located in different neighbourhoods in the city of Cape Town, each using a specific approach to improving the infrastructure and services for residents living in these neighbourhoods. The first settlement, located in Mitchell’s Plain, was upgraded into formal housing using the Enhanced People’s Housing Process (EPHP), a process where the beneficiaries actively contribute to the decision-making and construction of the houses. The second, located in Philippi, underwent a reblocking process, a spatial reconfiguration in order for services and infrastructure to be installed. In the third one, Monwabisi Park, located in Khayelitsha, a set of social projects and the improvement of public spaces have been implemented as part of the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) programme. The paper analyses this case studies with a focus on three main questions:
Informal settlement upgrading and safety: experiences from…

1. How has the upgrading project impacted on residents’ perception of their life circumstances post upgrading?
2. How has the upgrading project affected residents’ perceptions of safety?
3. How have the perceptions of the nature and extent of violence changed since the settlement was upgraded?

The main argument of this paper is that physical improvements and a full package of basic services are absolutely crucial to improve the living conditions, reduce vulnerabilities and improve the safety of informal settlement dwellers, but these need to be supported by social and economic programmes in order to bring about the settlement transformation which Abbott (2002a, b, 2004) refers to. Research across the three sites suggests that in a context of high unemployment, poor education and limited opportunities to break the cycle of poverty, the impact and sustainability of upgrading interventions alone are limited without targeted longer-term state-driven programmes to address the underlying root causes of violence and crime.

2 Informality and violence

Urban violence is a serious development concern, especially in cities in the South where rapid urbanisation, coupled with high rates of poverty and inequality result in very bad living conditions for the majority of residents. Increasing levels of violence and violent crime have been linked to these conditions in urban areas (Bourguignon 1999 cited in Kessides 2005; Muggah 2012). It is argued that “when a large population group in cities is afflicted by malnutrition, impoverishment, social exclusion and discrimination, ill health and poor conditions, as well as restricted access to land and basic infrastructure, increasing levels of criminal violence, lack of safety and general fear in the use of public space are often observed” (Bauer 2010; 4).

Africa is perceived as one of the most violent continents, closely followed by Latin America and the Caribbean. South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world according to a research report released in 2009. It was ranked fourth out of 60 countries in terms of reported rates of burglary, murder and robberies (Kessides 2005). It has a death rate of 157.8 per 100,000 population, which is considerably higher than the average rate of 139.5 per 100,000 population for the African continent, and nearly double the global average of 86.9 per 100,000 population (Seedat et al. 2009). Interpersonal violence accounts for close to half of the injuries resulting in death in South Africa, which is four and a half times the global proportion (ibid). Seedat et al. (2009) highlight poverty and inequality as the most prominent factors accounting for South Africa’s considerable challenge of violent injury. Bad living environments in the form of a growing number of informal settlements represent one of the most visible manifestations of poverty and inequality in South Africa.

At the same time, South Africa has one of the largest subsidised housing programmes in the world. Since 1994 the country has delivered more than 3.8 million housing opportunities.1 Despite these efforts, the housing backlog continues to grow; the latest Census figures put South Africa’s housing backlog at 1.9 million units (Statistics South Africa 2011). South Africa’s housing programme has been plagued by a number of challenges. The quality of the houses provided has often been of a very low standard, resulting in more

1 www.dhs.gov.za.
resources having to be spent to rehabilitate bad houses.\(^2\) Many of the new low-cost housing settlements are located on the periphery of the city, far removed from social services and economic opportunities, which means that they have not significantly improved the quality of life of housing beneficiaries. It has become clear that the current model of one-plot–one-house is financially and environmentally unsustainable and hugely inefficient. It is also clear that the traditional subsidy–linked housing programme is unable to tackle the challenge of growing informal settlements in South Africa. The South African government’s response to informal settlements has hitherto ranged from denial to an eradication obsession to some kind of realisation that there is a need to put a specific policy instrument in place to deal with informal settlements. This has resulted in the establishment of the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) the objective of which is to support the National Department of Human Settlements to implement the Upgrading of Informal Settlement Programme (UISP).\(^3\) However, according to Misselhorn (2008), the requisite shift in mind set from viewing informal settlements as dirty, chaotic and a blight on the urban landscape to a recognition of the important role which they perform as part of the urban environment has not yet occurred. The next section of the paper will provide a brief overview of the debate around informal settlements in South Africa.

### 3 Informal settlements and their role in the urban context

Drawing on Parnell and Hart’s (1999) history of self-help housing in South Africa Marx (2003) argues that informal settlements have been a part of the South African urban context for a long time, dating back to colonial times and that they “have neither emerged by accident nor as an ‘anomalous’ form of urban development” (2003; 299). He argues that their history and reason for being have to be viewed in relation to wider urban and structural processes of poverty, inequality and inefficient land markets and argues for an approach that focusses on providing support to informal settlements rather than one aimed at “improving” them (ibid). In a similar vein, others have argued that informal settlements are part of the urban fabric and they have a particular history, form and function (Huchzermeyer 2006; Smit 2006a, b; Misselhorn 2008). They often represent the first point of arrival and encounter with the city for rural migrants (Misselhorn 2008). Informal settlement residents locate themselves in particular areas for very specific reasons; some of these include access to services, employment opportunities and/or proximity to family and other social networks (Misselhorn 2008).

Informal settlements are complex in terms of their make-up and the particular set of social relationships which operate within them; they are not homogenous (Smit 2006a, b; Misselhorn 2008). Whereas they are often perceived as disorderly, chaotic, unsafe and illegal (in many cases), their internal layout and organisation are well-conceived, functional and supportive of a diversity of informal processes, rules and values. These “informal” arrangements support a multiplicity of livelihood strategies and enable residents to survive and live under extremely precarious conditions with very little support from the state or other sectors of society (Smit 2006a, b; Nuijten et al. 2012; Massey 2013). Our research has shown that life in informal settlements follows a particular logic and order which might not be apparent to outsiders, but makes perfect sense to those who occupy

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\(^3\) [http://www.upgradingsupport.org/content/page/about.](http://www.upgradingsupport.org/content/page/about.)
them. Misselhorn argues that this “limited understanding of the actual dynamics within informal settlements, the complex social and survival networks that characterise them and of the significant technical and social challenges in effecting housing and infrastructural development for them” result in inappropriate interventions (2008, 4).

Whilst acknowledging the significant role that informal settlements play in the urban context, it is also important not to lose sight of the very insecure, unsafe and unhealthy living conditions which many informal settlement residents are exposed to on a daily basis. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), living in slums is a major cause of ill health, with health defined as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” (Sheuya 2008, 298). Informal settlement dwellers are also more vulnerable to violence and violent crime as argued by the UN Habitat “excluded from the city’s opportunities, physically, politically and economically marginalised, slum dwellers are particularly vulnerable to crime and violence” (2007, 1). According to a World Bank (2010) report the relationship between violence and the condition of the built environment, especially as it pertains to informal areas, is expressed in two ways. Firstly, lack of physical infrastructure like bad lighting and inadequate sanitation, for example, provide opportunities for violence and crime. Women living in slums are particularly vulnerable to rape and other physical assaults whilst using communal toilet facilities. Secondly, on a psycho-social level, the marginalisation and exclusion experienced by informal settlement dwellers often manifest in interpersonal violence (ibid).

Improving the living conditions of informal settlement dwellers is a pressing concern for international agencies like the World Bank, UN Habitat, the WHO and national governments alike. Interventions in the built form through the provision of physical infrastructure have been proposed as a strategy to improve economic, social and health outcomes for informal settlement dwellers. Abbott (2002a, b) argues that the objective of upgrading projects should be to reduce the vulnerability and risk for informal settlement dwellers. Whereas there is a clear case for improving the living conditions for people in slums, there is still much debate and uncertainty about what exactly constitutes upgrading, which are the most appropriate methods and approaches to upgrading and what the objectives and desired outcomes of upgrading interventions ought to be. Scholars point to a lack of common vision amongst public officials in particular, about how upgrading interventions should impact on the quality of life of informal settlement dwellers (Abbott 2004; Graham 2006; Huchzeremeier 2006; Smit 2006a, b; Nuitjen et al. 2012).

The case studies presented below will attempt to shed light on some of these very complex questions. They represent different contexts and different approaches to upgrading, which means that care has to be taken in comparison and generalisation. However, they do provide very interesting and important insights into what is still a fairly unexplored area of research in South Africa, i.e. the intersection between violence, safety and different types and/or methods of upgrading interventions in informal areas of the city.

4 Research methods

This research used a qualitative research design. In the three settlements, in-depth interviews, group interviews, focus group discussions and community crime mapping were conducted with the residents (see summary of research tools in Table 1). Convenience sample was used, and participants were selected on the basis of their accessibility and willingness to participate in the research. It must be noted that due to this, the sample included mostly unemployed people who were at home during this time of the day. In each
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>Freedom Park, Mitchell’s Plain</th>
<th>Sheffield Road, Philippi</th>
<th>Monwabisi Park, Khayelitsha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upgrading description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Upgrading methodology</strong> Provision of formal housing (ePHP)</td>
<td>Reblocking</td>
<td>Upgrading of public space and provision of social services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Government-led process with active community involvement. Includes formal housing, provision of services and tenure</td>
<td>Reconfiguration of the site to provide streets, public space and basic services. Residents also got materials to improve their shelters. Residents participate in the planning</td>
<td>Set of projects including improvement of public spaces, provision of basic services (electricity so far), tenure certificates and social services. Does not include housing. A community committee participates in discussions of priorities and follows up on implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carried out by</strong></td>
<td>Government of the City of Cape Town</td>
<td>CORC, ISN, iKhayalami, and local government</td>
<td>VPUU, local government and other NGO’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total beneficiaries</strong></td>
<td>493 Households</td>
<td>140 Households</td>
<td>Varies according to project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research tools</strong></td>
<td><strong>In-depth interviews</strong> 100 Residents (incl. 81 Interviews with residents) 1 Group interview with members of the neighbourhood watch 2 Members of SAPS 3 Social and community development workers 5 Government officials 1 NGO’s</td>
<td>62 Residents 3 Members of SAPS 1 Group interview with community development and social workers</td>
<td>60 Residents (living nearby improved public spaces) 14 Residents directly participating in different projects 7 VPUU staff members 3 Members of SAPS 4 Partner NGO’s 2 Officials from the City of Cape Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus group discussions</strong></td>
<td>1 Group of 10 women between 18 and 30 years old 1 Group of 12 women above 30 years old</td>
<td>1 Group of 8 women 18 years old and above 1 Group of 19 men 18 years and older</td>
<td>1 Group of 6 women 18 years and older 1 Group of 9 men 18 years and older 1 group of 11 members of soccer teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community crime mapping</strong></td>
<td>18 Residents</td>
<td>24 Residents</td>
<td>11 Residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research carried out</strong></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
settlement we worked closely with either the residents committee or another community-based organisation (CBO) who assisted us in gaining access to research participants. As far as possible, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Afrikaans (Freedom Park) and isiXhosa (Sheffield Road and Monwabisi Park); the local languages spoken in the three case study sites.

Community crime mapping was done after the interviews and focus group discussions. It therefore provided a way to triangulate some of the interviews and focus groups data. For this process, it was important to have participants who lived in the settlements before and after it was upgraded. Two enlarged satellite images of the settlements, one from before the upgrading interventions and a second of the upgraded settlement, were provided to the participants and they were asked to indicate the places, times and frequency of incidences of violence and crime.

In addition, other stakeholders were interviewed in order to garner a diversity of voices and perspectives, and to locate the settlements within a broader context. These stakeholders included: members of the South African Police Services (SAPS), social workers and community development workers, officials in the Western Cape Provincial Department of Human Settlements and the Informal Settlement Upgrading Department of the City of Cape Town, and staff members of the VPUU and other partner organizations. Also, due to the variety of projects being implemented in Monwabisi Park, additional interviews were carried out with residents directly participating in specific projects such as the Neighbourhood Watch, Early Childhood Development and the Safe Node Area Committee. An additional focus group with members of the soccer teams was also held for this purpose.

Primary data sources were supplemented with secondary sources like the archives of organisations like the Development Action Group (DAG) (support NGO to the Freedom Park community), the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) (NGO involved in the reblocking process in Sheffield Road) and the VPUU (implementing the upgrading process in Monwabisi Park).

The results from each of the sites were then analysed and compared in relation to the three questions established.

5 Presenting the cases

A summary of the methodologies is included in Table 1 above and the location of research sites is included in Fig. 1. A more detailed description of the settlements and the findings is included in the following sections.

5.1 Freedom Park

5.1.1 Background and history

Freedom Park is located in Mitchell’s Plain, the second biggest township in Cape Town. According to the 2011 Census, Mitchell’s Plain is part of one of the poorest districts in Cape Town with an unemployment rate of 33.3 and 39% of the population living in informal dwellings. Mitchell’s Plain also experiences high levels of violent crime and is third highest on the list of police districts with regards to the number of reported cases of rape (Gie 2009).

Freedom Park was established in 1998 when a group of backyard dwellers occupied a parcel of vacant land which had been zoned for a school that was never built. The residents
of Freedom Park lived without basic services like water, electricity and sanitation until 2001 when the municipality provided rudimentary services. At the time, four hundred and forty people resided in Freedom Park. A livelihoods analysis conducted by the Development Action Group (DAG) in 2005 revealed crime, drug abuse, alcoholism, domestic violence and community conflict as well as high levels of food insecurity (DAG 2009). Gang violence was a big issue of concern; gang shoot-outs were a regular occurrence as Freedom Park is located in the middle of the territories of two rival gangs fighting for drug turf (DAG 2005; p. 14). Women also faced a constant threat of rape and molestation related to inadequate public lighting in the settlement.

The Freedom Park upgrading was a rollover upgrading which meant that families were not relocated but moved to the boundary of the site, whilst infrastructure was installed. The Freedom Park community was very involved in the upgrading process and participated in the design and layout of the settlement and the layout plan had to go through several iterations before it finally met the approval of the community (Smit 2006a, b; Mah and Rivers 2013). In addition they were also centrally involved in the conceptualisation and choice of house design options. The community identified key priorities for the upgrading with the improvement of safety and security notably first on the list. The construction of formal houses by the government of the City of Cape Town (CoCT) started in 2007 and was completed in 2009. A total of 493 houses were built in Freedom Park; 289 of these were occupied by households residing in Freedom Park and a further 204 houses were provided to families from the City of Cape Town’s housing waiting list (DAG 2009).

5.1.2 Research demographic profile

The majority of residents who participated in the research were female. Of the 81 respondents, 64 were female, 16 were male and one person did not answer this question. This community faces a number of challenges, with unemployment being a major one.

Fig. 1 Location of the settlements in the City of Cape Town
Only five of the 81 residents who were interviewed were employed, whereas 72 were unemployed, four did not answer. The unemployed have very limited options in terms of earning a living; with the overwhelming majority of respondents dependent on social grants provided by the State (see Fig. 2).

5.1.3 Research findings

a. Life circumstances after upgrading

Respondents had mixed feelings about the impact of the upgrading project on the general quality of their lives. Some felt that the provision of infrastructure and services has made their lives somewhat easier and has given them dignity. This is captured in the quotes below.

We have running water, electricity, flush toilets, dignity has been restored, we can invite people over now, we have walls; we live in houses and not hokkies\(^4\) anymore.

Life was hard in the shacks, we had to get wood to make fire especially in winter, there would be leaking and flooding.

Others felt that the upgrading intervention had not significantly improved their lives; they feel poorer because they now have to pay for services, which they had not expected. This is particularly difficult given high rates of unemployment and a lack of alternative livelihood strategies. An unintended consequence of the project is that there appears to have been a breakdown in community cohesion and neighbourliness following the upgrading project. Some participants relate this to the receipt of the house which they feel is contributing to individualism and a lack of concern for one another’s well-being.

I am struggling and feel poorer, if you don’t have money, no job, you will have to make the best of the situation, but it’s frustrating.

People stood with each other, community changed and friendships fell; community, friendliness has changed for worse; we lived together like a family, now there’s no unity.

b. Perceptions of safety after upgrading

\(^4\) Informal structures made of zinc and wood.
In terms of respondents' perception of safety the majority of respondents did not feel safe after upgrading (see Fig. 3).

The majority of respondents felt safe in their homes as the house provides refuge from gang violence outside. Respondents felt quite vulnerable in the settlement, and this constrained their mobility and interaction outside the home.

You feel protected with your family in the house; can lock doors properly, create physical and psychological safety; solid structures, bullets can’t go through the walls; no gangster can come into my house, but the physical infrastructure of the house does not make me feel safe, the place is very dangerous, you must be in your house always.

In cases where people do not feel safe in their house, it is related to the physical quality of the house:

The house is going to collapse anytime, because of the poor building; because they built the houses so cheap; scared the house is going to fall in, leaks and damp

c. Nature and extent of violence after upgrading

Although this community did experience violence and crime whilst living informally, there was a general perception that things had deteriorated since the completion of the upgrading project, with many expressing concern over an increase in gang-related shooting. Types of violence and crime reported to be rife in the settlement include domestic violence and child abuse, whilst there seems to be a decrease in rape and mob justice. The proliferation in the number of informal alcohol and drug outlets since upgrading is reported to have had a substantial impact on the worsening of violence and crime, particularly incidence of fighting in and around these establishments (Fig. 4).

5.2 Sheffield Road, Philippi

5.2.1 Background and history

Philippi is located close to Cape Town International airport, the Philippi industrial area and the Philippi Horticultural Area. Sheffield Road is an informal settlement situated in the central part of Philippi’s area for residential sites near the N2 freeway on a narrow strip of land set aside by the City of Cape Town (CoCT) for the widening of the road called Sheffield Road (CORC 2011; CUFF 2013). The settlement was formed in 1993, when a
person erected a shack for an informal business (CORC 2009, 2011). By November 2009 the settlement had 167 families with a total population of 542 people living illegally on the strip of land (CORC 2011; SA SDI Alliance 2013).

The general living conditions in the settlement were poor, especially the shelters and water drainage facilities (CORC 2009). Although the settlement is illegal, as it is situated on state land, the municipal government, CoCT, supplied sanitation services (Ibid). However, in 2009 it was established that with regard to basic services, Sheffield Road had only 15 toilets, and only 7 out of the 15 were functional, and this problem was attributed to vandalism and/or poor drainage (Ibid). This meant that every functional toilet had to be shared by 72 people, and even if all 15 toilets were functional, 33 people would still have to share one toilet. In addition to the sanitation problem, 504 people were serviced by only 3 water taps, meaning that 168 people shared one tap.

The settlement had a history of disasters such as shack fires, flooding and evictions, and there was an urgent need for electricity, water taps and toilets (Ibid). Hence, in 2009 there was an agreement that the CoCT would partner with the Cape Town branch of the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) to identify pilot projects for an incremental approach to upgrading. Sheffield Road was chosen as the first pilot project because its size made the implementation relatively easier (CORC 2009, 2011).

The reblocking⁵ of the settlement started in November 2010 and was completed in February 2012 (CORC 2009; South African Slum Dwellers International (SA SDI)

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⁵ ‘Re-blocking’, or ‘Blocking-out’, is defined as the reconfiguration and repositioning of shelters in very dense informal settlements according to a spatial framework drafted by the community. The aim is to use the spaces in informal settlements better in order to create space for provision of better services by local government. Moreover, re-blocking groups households according to clusters which are identified by the community, and, subsequent to implementation, courtyards are created in order “to ensure a safer
Partners that were involved in the project were CORC, ISN, Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP), whilst the CoCT was also involved in the installation of engineering infrastructure and in clarifying land management issues (CORC 2011, 2014). Another partner in the project was a technical support NGO called iKhayalami, which specialises “in low cost housing solutions …” (CORC 2011). Given that reblocking is regarded as an incremental approach to upgrading of human settlements, before the process started, upgrading of Sheffield Road was planned not to focus only on provision of basic services, but to extend to improved shelters, although they would still be informal shelters (CORC 2009). During the reconfiguration of the site, the existing shacks are demolished and replaced with better located and better quality shelters that are more fire resistant, though still informal (SA SDI Alliance 2013). So residents were supplied with fire-resistant materials to rebuild their structures.

5.2.2 Research demographic profile

The majority of residents who participated in the research were female. Of the 59 respondents, 34 were female, and 25 were male. Only 22 of the 59 residents who were interviewed were employed full time, whereas 37 were unemployed. The number of unemployed included those who were employed on a contract basis, but considered themselves to be unemployed. The unemployed have a variety of precarious options in terms of earning a living; with the majority of respondents dependent on social grants provided by the State (See Fig. 5).

5.2.3 Research findings

a. Life circumstances after upgrading

A significant majority of those residents who participated in the research feel that their individual and/or families’ circumstances became better after the settlement was reblocked, whilst nearly a quarter of the residents, feel that there has not been a difference. Only 5 feel that circumstances became worse, whilst 3 of the respondents said they have “mixed feelings”.

Among the people who said their circumstances became better after reblocking, most of them mentioned improvement in the quality of shelters, due to the new, strong metal sheets, which also improve the safety of residents generally. The new materials also improved protection from cold and wet weather conditions and shack fires, as the new ones are stronger. Some of the interviewees also mentioned that the shelters look neat and are bigger and the improved shelter sizes have created space for more privacy. They also welcomed the creation of more space within the settlement, including the improved cleanliness of the environment, hence better protection from health hazards.

Others mentioned increased solidarity in looking after each other’s shelters and the idea that people know each other better after reblocking. So besides improvements in the physical infrastructure, including improvements in the layout of the settlement, this group also mentioned increased safety and enhanced community cohesion, as residents came to know each other better after reblocking, and also became more inclined to look after each other’s shelters.
Other interviewees mentioned improved sanitation and provision of water, as toilets and water taps had been added. The following quote from one of the residents’ interviews captures the way people of Sheffield Road see an improvement in the quality of their lives after reblocking.

“Before re-blocking, the shacks were built with wood, and were congested. The toilets and water taps were not enough. There was also a lot of crime, because if you went to work you would find your shack broken into. What has changed is that since there are spaces that have been created within the settlement after re-blocking, people can see criminals. Relations with local councillors also improved after re-blocking.

Re-blocking has also restored people’s dignity … Re-blocking has also changed people’s behaviour, because now people no longer make the drains situated next to the water taps dirty … because people who do that are fined R200 … I used to be embarrassed about the settlement … but now that is no longer the case anymore.”

Interviewees who said their circumstances became worse after reblocking mentioned smaller plots and smaller shelter sizes; leaking roofs and flooding; lack of electricity, including abuse by illegal electricity providers. These respondents expressed a desire to be relocated so that they can build houses, whilst one of them mentioned general disappointment about the end product of the whole reblocking process. The problem of electricity supply and the desire to be relocated emanate from the fact that since residents of Sheffield Road illegally occupied the land, there was no formal issuing of security of tenure by the City of Cape Town (CoCT) even though it supplied basic services and agreed to reblocking of the settlement. Residents are therefore not allowed to build houses on the land because it is still officially reserved for road expansion, whilst the small size of the land would not allow building of houses for all families (CORC 2009).

b. Perceptions of safety after upgrading

The majority of respondents felt that the settlement is safer after reblocking, compared to before (See Fig. 6).

The overwhelming majority who said they feel safe in the neighbourhood mentioned that the community is cooperating well. Others highlighted the fact that the creation of spaces has left criminals with no places to ambush potential victims. Others mentioned that

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6 27 March 2015 telephone conversation with a member of Sheffield Road Residents Committee, Mr Akhona Tshete.
the community deals with criminals accordingly. The addition of toilets closer to the shelters has also improved safety and security of residents.

Most of those who said they do not feel safe mentioned fear of being mugged, whilst others mentioned lack of street lighting and lack of safety for children due to the settlement’s closeness to a road. Those who did not feel safe in their shelters said the shelters are less safe than brick houses. Other concerns included fear of criminals; shebeens\(^7\) that do not close and drunken people who misbehave and fight among themselves; flooding and faulty sewage pipes.

c. Nature and extent of violence after upgrading

Although most of the interviewees felt that the settlement was not safe and it experienced some level of violence and violent crime before reblocking, there was a general perception that things had improved, especially the reduction in housebreaking, muggings and theft. Most respondents, 25 in total, felt there was neither violence nor violent crime after reblocking.

Figure 7 below tells a slightly different story with regards to violence and violent crime though. It can be observed that no public violence was reported in Sheffield Road before the upgrading, including a significant drop in stabbings as well as a drop in mob justice and a decrease in muggings and murders after reblocking. However, armed robberies increased, and there were also new categories of violence and or violent crime reported, with child abuse and domestic violence cases reported. This is based on the crime-mapping exercise conducted with some of the residents. So whereas residents observed a significant drop in violence and crime in the settlement, the nature of violence and violent crime seemed to have changed after reblocking.

5.3 Monwabisi Park, Khayelitsha

5.3.1 Background and history

Monwabisi Park is an informal settlement located in the boundary of the former township of Khayelitsha and the Wolfgat Nature Reserve. It started with 1000 dwellings in 1996 when people started arriving to the city from the Eastern Cape. By 2013 it had grown to 6318 dwellings with 17,808 people, representing one-tenth of the informal dwellings in Khayelitsha and 3 % of those in the entire city of Cape Town.

The population of Monwabisi Park is predominantly Black African (99 % in 2011) with 91 % speaking isiXhosa as their first language; 52 % are males and 48 % are females (Frith 2012). Unemployment rates are significantly higher than the city average (24 %) but decreased from 51 % in 2001 to 38 % in 2011. One-fifth of the households in Monwabisi Park reported no income, and 84 % are below the poverty line (R3, 200 (approx. 189 EUR) per month in the City of Cape Town).

Dwellings in the settlement are one-storey structures made of a wooden frame and corrugated shingles, with tires filled with sand as foundation. Windows and doors often have metallic protections (burglar bars). Electricity was provided in 2014 to every house, whilst water and sanitation is supplied through shared facilities. In 2009 the ratio was 1 tap per every 42 households (the minimum is 1 per every 25 families) and people had to walk 5 to 10 min to reach them (SUN Development 2009). By 2013, only 13 % of the dwellings had individual taps (VPUU 2014). The ratio of toilets was 1 per every 23 dwellings in 2009.

\(^7\) Illegal alcohol outlet.
(the minimum is 1 per every 5 families), but toilets are often locked or not working. Only 27% of people said they use them and almost 60% use the bushes instead (SUN Development 2009).

There are only a few streets since sites are irregular and houses are built very close together, making around 54% of the settlement inaccessible for emergency vehicles (Jiusto 2008). Flooding is a risk since many of the dwellings are settled below ground level. In 2009 around 58% reported drainage problems (SUN Development 2009) and in 2013 50% of the respondents had experienced flooding during the previous year (VPUU 2014). About 3.5% of the structures include churches, crèches and small businesses like take away foods, spaza shops and shebeens (VPUU 2014). Also community centre and bed and breakfast was built by the Shaster Foundation in 2005 (WPI 2007) and VPUU constructed a multi-purpose building (Container Facility), two kick-about fields and 7 gathering places along the public taps (Emithonjeni).

Monwabisi Park has long been considered one of the areas with more concentrated crime in the city (Poswa and Levy 2006). The vulnerability to crime and violence—actual and perceived—is linked to the living conditions and high poverty and inequality in the area. It is in this very specific context that the VPUU programme is being implemented.
The aim of the programme is to prevent violence through a set of interventions (OECD 2010) in a determined geographical area denominated Safe Node Area. The interventions to achieve this strategy include physical upgrading but also other interventions to support human development or the implementation process. So far, the organisation has built in the area a set of small public spaces (Emithonjeni) and several sport fields and a community facility. In addition, several programmes such as a Neighbourhood Watch, Early Childhood Development and a Social Development Fund support sports and cultural activities. In the long term, the almost 40 projects planned for the area include the provision of all basic services, a local economic development strategy as well as other social services.

To implement these interventions, VPUU follows a methodology with five steps: profiling, planning, implementation, operation and maintenance and monitoring and evaluation. This process includes the local government (in this case CoCT) and the community (represented by a local committee—the SNAC), with VPUU as intermediary. Other project partners (local organisations) participate in specific interventions; for example, Sikhula Sonke for ECD and Mosaic Clinic for gender-based violence.

5.3.2 Research demographic profile

From the 60 respondents, 31 were women and 29 were men. Similar to the other cases, only 9 of the people interviewed were employed. Others rely mainly on piece work, other members of the house or self-employment (see Fig. 8).

5.3.3 Research findings

a. Life circumstances after upgrading

The majority of those interviewed perceived that the settlement is better after the upgrading, but there are still many things that must be improved, such as toilets, streets, houses and the employment situation:

- We living okay we have electricity, water close to us. But having only one person working for a family like this. We struggle a lot. We need jobs.
- We can have electricity but having to go to the bush to help ourselves, it hurts and we feel that our right is taken away, a right to safety and dignity.

Projects are seen as positive, but issues regarding transparency and communication with VPUU, as well as a mismatch between some of the expectations and the actual scope of the programme have affected the implementation process and the perception of the projects (e.g. the Neighbourhood Watch).

- VPUU still has a lot of work to do. Putting electricity we are grateful but what about the rest
- VPUU change a lot of thing especially electric but we need road now and houses

b. Perceptions of safety after upgrading

Thirty-five out of the 60 respondents said that in terms of safety, the settlement is better than before. Still, 26 said they did not feel safe in Monwabisi Park and a similar number said that they do not feel safe at home (see Fig. 9).
This could be related to the little or no change in the conditions that make people feel vulnerable to the main crimes suffered (robbery and housebreaking), as one of the respondents mentioned:

We are still in the same informal settlement with leaky shacks and toilets are far and fear hence we use the forest to relieve ourselves

The interviewees participating in specific projects also considered those projects in particular had a positive impact. The main intervention impacting safety is electricity, but other projects such as parks and playgrounds, ECD and sports are perceived to help keep young people and children safer. Residents also perceived a decrease in crime against children (rape and murder) and rape. Safety of children could be linked to the existence of Emithonjenis and to the ECD activities, which provide controlled environments for children’s development. The police also mentioned a decrease in mob justice and an improved relationship with the community (who seem more willing to report crime).

The park is near the house so we can see our children when they are playing than to play in the bush. Because they were in the risk of rape

c. Nature and extent of violence after upgrading

The conditions for crime and violence in Monwabisi Park are similar before and after the interventions. Robbery and housebreaking were and are the main concerns and the
conditions that make people feel vulnerable have not changed. Robbery still occurs in empty fields, on paths on the way to work, or by the bushes, which have to be used because of the lack of toilets. Houses are still temporary structures subject to housebreaking and this means that a great portion of the population feels unsafe even at home. The lack of streets combined with hidden corners and paths between the houses allow criminals to hide whilst impeding police access to the area (Fig. 10).

It should also be mentioned that shebeens are an increasing concern as they are linked to substance abuse and other forms of violence and crime such as fights, rape and gang activity. Copper-cable stealing is also frequent after electrification. And, whilst the community considers patrolling an effective response to crime, it is still closely linked to mob justice.

A challenge for VPUU is that the projects have not met the expectations of the community, since priorities are different: toilets, housing, streets and employment. This becomes especially important since community engagement is expected for the long-term sustainability of the projects.

6 Discussion of research findings

First and foremost it must be stressed that the broader socio-spatial context within which these settlements are located are very diverse and the upgrading interventions in each settlement are also quite different. The first settlement is located in a predominantly black Coloured township whilst the other two are located in predominantly black African townships of Philippi and Khayelitsha. Even Philippi and Khayelitsha have different contexts and face different challenges. What is interesting is that although experiences and perceptions of violence, crime and safety vary across the three settlements, there are also important similarities. In Freedom Park, where residents experienced a full upgrading package which included basic services, tenure security and formal housing, the majority of
respondents expressed dissatisfaction regarding the improvement in quality of life. Here there is great disappointment that the perceived improvement in life which was envisaged to come with a formal house did not materialise. In the other two settlements, residents expressed a greater level of satisfaction with improvement in their quality of life after upgrading. What is very striking though across the three sites, even in Freedom Park, is the impact of the provision of basic services like water, electricity and sanitation. The provision of basic services has a significant impact, both in terms of a physical improvement in people’s living conditions as well as the psychological aspects related to feelings of dignity and recognition. This is evident in Monwabisi Park, for example, where the lack of adequate sanitation is causing much distress, despite the investment in the provision of social infrastructure services.

Interesting also, is the fact that in Sheffield Road, the spatial reconfiguration of the dwellings has improved community cohesion and neighbourliness which have contributed to a reduction in violence and crime and increased feelings of safety, although lack of formal electricity supply is also causing much distress and feelings of not being safe. In Freedom Park, quite the opposite happened where respondents felt that the provision of formal houses have contributed to a loss of community cohesion and solidarity amongst residents. This has also had a negative impact on violence and crime in the settlement as informal measures of social control which existed before upgrading and which played a significant role in terms of regulating crime and violence, have all but disappeared. In Monwabisi Park the VPUU methodology is based on a very holistic approach which integrates physical/situational crime prevention, social crime prevention and institutional crime prevention. Although the community and the VPUU came to an agreement about the short-term, medium-term and longer-term interventions for the site, there is frustration amongst the respondents that some of the improvements which they had hoped for have not yet materialised, although the importance of the social crime prevention interventions like the ECD and youth programmes are acknowledged.

A challenge for VPUU is that the projects have not met the expectations of the community, since priorities are different: toilets, housing, streets and employment. In this instance, VPUU and the progress that can be made in the settlement are hampered by the fact that some of the projects are dependent on the city government for implementation. This in some instances has affected community participation, creating despondency and the feeling of failed delivery (even if housing and employment are not part of the interventions). Community participation has also been affected by miscommunication. In the case of the Neighbourhood Watch, some participants felt they were not getting what was expected (a stipend or reward) and some others perceived little feedback was given on their activities. Overall, the community perceived there is little information about the processes outside the community and the way local employment opportunities were allocated. This raises important questions about the role of intermediaries within an upgrading project and difficulty of negotiating and managing multi-partnership interventions.

With regards to perceptions of safety, the research findings from the 3 sites are also quite interesting and point to the multidimensional nature of safety or perceptions of safe spaces. In Freedom Park, the home is perceived as a place of safety, but only insofar as it provides refuge from gang-related violence within the settlement. In Sheffield Road, safety or lack thereof was more linked to concerns over environmental hazards like fire and flooding, rather than violence or crime. In Monwabisi Park, although respondents generally feel safer in the settlement due mainly to the provision of electricity and the improvement of social facilities like the ECD and sports programmes, there is a perception that the broader conditions which contribute to feelings of vulnerability have not been sufficiently
addressed by the upgrading process. These include the lack of sanitation, streets and pathways in between dwellings to improve accessibility for police and other service vehicles. Another persistent factor contributing to vulnerability is high unemployment which fuels robbery and housebreaking, both of which are still unacceptably prevalent in the settlement. In terms of overall feelings of safety though, respondents from Sheffield Road and Monwabisi Park reported greater levels of satisfaction related to safety after upgrading than did those from Freedom Park. This is surprising because Freedom Park has undergone the full upgrading process, i.e. provision of services, tenure security and a formal house. In Monwabisi Park, where tenure certificates have been provided to all the residents, the VPUU states that this administrative recognition has brought about a significant improvement in perceptions of safety amongst residents.

In terms of the nature and extent of violence after upgrading, in Freedom Park much concern was expressed about a perceived increase in violence, particularly gang-related violence, after upgrading. Other types of violence and crime reported include domestic violence, rape, child neglect, fighting in close proximity to shebeens and house-breaking. This increase in violence and crime was strongly linked to a proliferation in the number of shebeens (informal alcohol outlets) and drug dens. This in turn was blamed on high unemployment and the struggle to cover new expenses like paying for electricity and water which came with the formalisation process. Another contributing factor was the loss of community cohesion and informal social control which occurred subsequent to the upgrading process.

In the Sheffield Road settlement, there seems to be a general perception that the levels of violence and crime have reduced, although different types of violence and crime are reported after upgrading, e.g. domestic violence and child abuse. The improvement in violence and crime were ascribed to the physical improvements which have occurred, i.e. provision of open pathways and spaces between dwellings. This, as well as toilets closer to the dwellings, has limited opportunities for criminals to ambush residents and improved the safety of women and children outside the home. The new cluster arrangement of dwellings has improved neighbourliness and informal surveillance. Respondents also reported that they have a level of control over and measures to deal with potential acts of violence and crime.

In Monwabisi Park although a reduction in violence and crime was reported, due mainly to the provision of electricity and social infrastructure, there was a feeling that the upgrading process has not as yet addressed the conditions which contribute to residents’ risk and vulnerability. The lack of toilets means that residents are forced to use the nearby bushes, which put women and children in particular at risk. The physical layout and density of the site makes residents vulnerable to robbery and also hampers patrols by the police. As in the Freedom Park case, increasing concern over shebeens was expressed by both residents and the police as these are seen to add to fighting, rape and gang activity. High unemployment and a need to secure some form of livelihood are contributing factors.

7 Conclusions

The findings of this research support the arguments made in the literature about the important role that informal settlements play in the urban context. They provide a housing solution to poor urban residents and the intricate social networks which exist within informal settlements support a range of livelihood strategies. Often informal governance
structures exist within the settlement; these serve to regulate unacceptable practises which contribute to violence and crime as observed in all three cases. In some instances upgrading interventions might have unintentional consequences, for example, the loss of community cohesion and making people, who are already living precariously, feel poorer as is the case in Freedom Park. Upgrading programmes should take due cognisance of social networks and community cohesion within settlements and should find ways to support and enhance these. Given this, the research supports an in situ upgrading approach that focus on improving the safety, health and well-being of residents, where they are located, through the provision of a comprehensive package of services and infrastructure. Care has to be taken to ensure that upgrading interventions do not disrupt the social support networks and informal measures of social control which perform a vital function in informal settlements.

Another point raised in the literature and confirmed by this research is that a one-size-fits-all approach to informal settlement upgrading is not advisable. This is because the context is markedly different across informal areas and certain upgrading approaches, e.g. reblocking might be more appropriate in certain contexts than others. This confirms the need for a thorough analysis and understanding of the socio-economic and governance context within informal settlements prior to implementing an upgrading intervention and designing interventions accordingly. Community participation and active involvement in the upgrading project is essential, but as the Freedom Park and Monwabisi Park cases show, very difficult to maintain throughout and after completion of the project, especially when the outcomes do not live up to residents’ expectations.

A full package of basic services including electricity, water, sufficient and well-maintained sanitation facilities as well as improvements in the physical layout of sites, pathways and public spaces go a long way towards enhancing the general health and well-being of informal settlement dwellers. They also improve perceptions of safety and reduce opportunities for violence and crime. Physical improvements in the built environment are of absolute importance. However, without accompanying social and economic programmes, they will not bring about the “settlement transformation” which Abbott refers to. Even then, the impacts of interventions like upgrading will be minimal and unsustainable in the long run without broader structural change. This is because violence is multifaceted in its manifestations and the factors which drive and sustain it. The research suggests that certain factors can be addressed through an upgrading intervention, whereas structural dimensions need longer-term, targeted, multi-agency programmes to address the root factors which cause and sustain violence and crime.

Upgrading and the provision of shelter should be a component of a much wider strategy to eradicate poverty and inequality by addressing structural conditions like unemployment and a lack of appropriate skill development programmes which contribute to substance abuse as well as interpersonal and community-based violence. It should also be considered that urban upgrading, when accompanied by strategies for economic and social development, become much more complex programmes, which need a long-term scope for their implementation and to observe the results and impacts.

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Informal settlement upgrading and safety: experiences from…


