

We die together

The emergence and evolution of the Homeless People's Alliance

Walter Fieuw

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The Human Settlements Group works to reduce poverty and improve health and housing conditions in the urban centres of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It seeks to combine this with promoting good governance and more ecologically sustainable patterns of urban development and rural-urban linkages.

Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI)

SDI is a network of community-based organisations of the urban poor in 33 countries and hundreds of cities and towns across Africa, Asia and Latin America. In each country where SDI has a presence, affiliate organisations come together at the community, city and national level to form federations of the urban poor.

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This working paper situates the growth and development trajectories of the South African Homeless People's Federation and the South African Alliance, associated with SDI, in the context of the liberation struggle in the 1980s, the negotiations of potentially transformative housing and urban policies in the 1990s, and the challenges of sustaining partnerships with government agencies in the 2000s. South Africa continues to grapple with the complex and reinforcing patterns of urban segregation. The growth of informal settlements has exceeded government efforts to deliver better services, provide adequate housing and mitigate against disasters and vulnerability. A radically new approach is required.

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Summary

“The South African Homeless People’s Federation calls itself uMfelandaWonye – ‘We die together’. It’s because if you are poor, no matter how good you talk English, no matter how good you can walk, but at the end of day, you are poor. And then if you are alone at a certain corner, you will never come up with the ideas of fighting poverty. But now with the Federation, it is said: For us to try and challenge this problem of poverty, homelessness and landlessness, it’s for us to come together and form a family and then when we are a family, every problem that comes we will challenge it together... So this is why we said we should call ourselves uMfelandaWonye waBantu BaseMjondolo – the Federation of the homeless people who are staying in the shacks around our country in South Africa.” (Rose Molokoane, interview 13 May 2004, cited in Khan and Pieterse 2004)

The origins of *uMfelandaWonye WaBantu BaseMjondolo* known in English as the South African Homeless People’s Federation (SAHPPF) and later re-named the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP), is located in a particular moment in the struggle of civic actors against the racially segregated apartheid state. Readings in South African urban historiography have pointed to the use of urban policies and planning instruments to maintain and advance the control of the apartheid state over the urban sphere. Cities were carefully planned to ensure ‘apartness’ (e.g. Maylam 1995; Robinson 1997; Mabin and Smit 1997). The apartheid state maintained its draconian enforcement of urban apartness through the ‘organisation of urban space into racially segregated living areas’ by deploying ‘spatial technologies of power which emerged in the arena of state intervention in the city’ (Robinson 1996:1).

The growth and expansion of informal settlements are recurring phenomena in post-apartheid cities. South Africa is an urbanised country, with 62 per cent of the total population living in urban areas. Since 1990, when the population share living in urban areas was 52 per cent, cities have experienced a rapid in-migration of rural populations. This rapid urbanisation has been largely driven by the relaxing of apartheid-era influx controls during the late 1980s, which were previously used to restrict the access of non-whites to cities reserved for whites, resulting in the growth of informal settlements in inner-city and peripheral areas (Maylam 1995).

Considering the myriad of repressive urban laws and the barricading of cities, it has been argued that the invasions of private and public land could be seen as ‘undermining the apartheid patterning of the city’ (Robinson 1997:378). In the midst of competing rationalities, the post-apartheid city has emerged as an arena of political contestation and citizenship claims. Mbembe (2004) argues:

“Through a combination of brute force, dispossession and expropriation, and the imposition of negative laws and sanction ... [t]he right of blacks to live in the city was constantly under threat, if not denied in full. This is why most social struggle of the post-apartheid era can be read as attempts to reconquer the right to be urban.” (2004:391)

Ever since, South African post-apartheid urban and housing policies have underscored the necessity of progressively integrating the poor as a means of restructuring spatially fragmented cities, guided by the values of social and political change. The subject of transformation in democratic South Africa is the historically constructed, uneven development of ‘islands of spatial affluence’ in a ‘sea of geographic misery’ (Williams 2000). Integrating the poor can therefore be seen as integrating ‘non-white’ social groups within former ‘white’ cities, premised on notions of equity and social change (Adebayo 2010:2-4).

This working paper discusses the histories and evolutions, practices and strategies of the SAHPF, and impacts on progressive urban agendas as experienced by the SAHPF/FEDUP, which is also a founding member of a global network of the urban poor, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI).¹ The SAHPF's contribution to land and tenure rights has been internationally recognised, signified by the bestowal in 1997 of the prestigious UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award to the Federation² and its seasoned anti-apartheid activist chairperson Rose Molokoane in 2005.³ This paper attempts to unpack a history of two decades, and provides a view (insofar in a limited way) on the national impact of this post-apartheid social movement and its alliance partners.

The paper also follows the initiative of a parallel network, called the Informal Settlement Network (ISN), with a broader focus on informal settlement upgrading. It tracks the ISN's agenda of advancing the 'right to the city' in post-apartheid South African cities, with a focus on informal settlements, and considers the prevailing logics of a housing and urban strategy that has not been able to come to grips with the prevailing crises in South Africa's cities.

¹ Shack/Slum Dwellers International is an international network of national and city-level federations of the urban poor in 33 countries and hundreds of cities and towns in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The network was formed in 1996 after international exchanges between the emerging social movement of the SAHPF and the Indian Alliance – which consists of women's savings cooperatives, called *Mahila Milan*, the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and with the support of nongovernmental organisation the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) – agreed an international advocacy agenda relating to informal settlement conditions and eviction threats. See Patel (2001) and Satterthwaite (2001).

² http://ww2.unhabitat.org/whd/2006/Previous_Winners.asp#1997 [accessed 20 August 2014].

³ UN-Habitat. The 2005 Scroll of Honour Award Winners. Available online: http://ww2.unhabitat.org/whd/2006/Previous_Winners.asp [accessed 28 June 2014].

I

Situating the emergence of the South African Homeless Peoples' Federation (SAHPPF)

Civic struggle and the beleaguered apartheid state

The 1980s was a decade marked by open conflict between the white-minority apartheid regime and a sustained mobilisation of the black majority. Liberation movements such as the United Democratic Front (UDF), founded in 1983 with the slogan 'UDF Unites, Apartheid Divides', were at the forefront of making urban space ungovernable through protests, strikes, rent and service charge boycotts, and other forms of direct and confrontational politics, and worked closely with the underground structures of the exiled African National Congress (ANC) (Seekings 2001). These community initiatives popularised the struggle anthem of 'one city, one tax base', a call to restructure the iniquitous, local, radicalized, governance and planning system (Swilling 1991).

Major spatial reconstruction and racial segregation were achieved through the introduction of a number of repressive policies, of which the 1913 Black Land Act (which prohibited Africans from owning or renting land outside designated reserve areas, which comprised 7.6 per cent of land for more than 80 per cent of the population) was arguably the first step to institutionalised apartness and minority rule. This was followed by a number of successive land controls, and culminated in the 1950 Group Areas Act, which designated areas for the exclusive use of a particular racial group and resulted in major relocations (COGTA 2009).

In 1986, the beleaguered apartheid state called a State of Emergency, which saw tens of thousands of opponents detained. Movements such as the UDF, which played a role in forging a sense of unity and coherence in community-based organisations, significantly enhanced and escalated the opposition against apartheid, by that time led by members of the exiled ANC diaspora, Congress of South African

Trade Unions (COSATU), South African Communist Party (SACP) and smaller anti-apartheid groupings under the banner of Black Consciousness (Seekings 2001). Church- and faith-based groups also played a significant role in promoting the ideals of a free and fair society, and took advantage of the slightly more lenient conditions, such as allowing general gatherings, permitted by the State because of recognised religious freedoms.

At the same time in the mid-1980s, progressive urban-sector professionals founded the Urban Sector Network (USN), which consisted of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) such as Development Action Group in Cape Town, PlanAct in Johannesburg and the Built Environment Support Group in Durban (Harrison *et al.* 2008). The USN supported the struggles of the marginalised urban society, including people living in informal settlements, backyards and overcrowded hostels.

An emerging post-apartheid social movement

On the morning of 20 March 1991, in the rural town of Broederstroom, a group of about 150 people, of whom 100 were community activists based in South African townships, gathered under the theme of 'A People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter'. Professionals from the USN were invited, on the condition that for each professional attending, five community leaders were to join. Hence, 'professionals and government officials represented a fraction of the delegation and were only allowed to observe and record proceedings' (People's Dialogue 1996:2). The five-day conference was supported by Catholic Welfare and Development, a Cape Town church-based organisation, funded by Misereor, a German Catholic grant-making agency.

The conference theme was borrowed from a similar gathering organised in South Korea in 1989, which in turn was associated with an Asia-based network called the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR). Issue-based networks and advocacy groups, such as the ACHR, actively supported international links between poor people's movements in Asia, and provided a platform for South African activists to be exposed to grassroots capacity in these networks. A particular partnership was emerging with the more established Indian Alliance of housing rights social movements, which comprised the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), a women's cooperative set up by pavement dwellers in Bombay called *Mahila Milan*, with support from Indian NGO the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC). The Indian Alliance had a particular impact on the formation of a broad civil society agenda in the transitional period of the early 1990s.

At the end of the 'People's Dialogue' conference, the delegation was split on the concluding resolution of whether an alternative social movement was necessary, given the forward momentum of the ANC and other civic networks, such as the UDF, in negotiating the post-apartheid agenda. Half of the group opted for a people's movement premised on self-reliance, whereas the other half opted to support the political transition and the vanguard ANC party. Through a process of democratic voting, the Broederstroom conference resolved, by a slight margin, to continue the process of building a social movement through horizontal and peer-to-peer learning, which intensified in the period 1991-94.

Mobilising communities in the post-apartheid era

Following the Broederstroom conference, the People's Dialogue became a registered NGO, facilitating horizontal learning exchanges between informal settlement residents. The partnership with the Indian Alliance was strengthened, and exchanges to India were organised to visit many low-income communities in three Indian States, hosted by the National Slum Dwellers Federation, *Mahila Milan* and SPARC. One of the South African participants noted that SPARC's support was on the demand side, facilitating rather than leading developmental agendas (Bolnick 1993:91).

The organising modality of community-based savings, which the Indians had practised since the late 1970s as a way of building grassroots capacity and engagement with the State, also made an impact on the South African community leaders. Such early engagements between the emerging network of South African activists and the Indian Alliance created a platform of 'deep democracy', which spurred other initiatives in African and Asian countries, and the early beginnings of the SDI (Patel *et al.* 2001; Satterthwaite 2001; Appadurai 2001).

Following the resolution of the Broederstroom conference and support from People's Dialogue, the hundred-odd community leaders initiated a sustained mobilisation of local savings schemes between 1992 and 1995. From a base of 12 savings schemes in October 1992, the network grew to 259 savings groups in November 1995 (Bolnick 1996). In 1993, these savings schemes united to form the new social movement *uMfelandaWonye WaBantu BaseMjondolo* or the South African Homeless People's Federation (SAHPF). Khan and Pieterse (2004) have further observed that the SAHPF advanced a 'people-controlled development [that] is about fostering self-replicable and self-reliant social development practices' (2004:10). A common development approach united the savings schemes and shared the

following characteristics (Bolnick 1996, cited in UN-Habitat 2006):

- All member organisations were rooted in shack settlements, backyard shacks or hostels.
- All organisations were involved in savings and credit, managed at grassroots level by the members themselves.
- Although men were not excluded, the vast majority of federation members were women.
- All organisations were involved in struggles for security of land tenure and affordable housing.
- Self-reliance and autonomy were hallmarks of federation groups. Power and decision making were highly decentralised, with individual organisations responsible for their own development activity and direction.

Writing on the early SAHPF experience of organising communities, Khan and Pieterse (2004:8) observed:

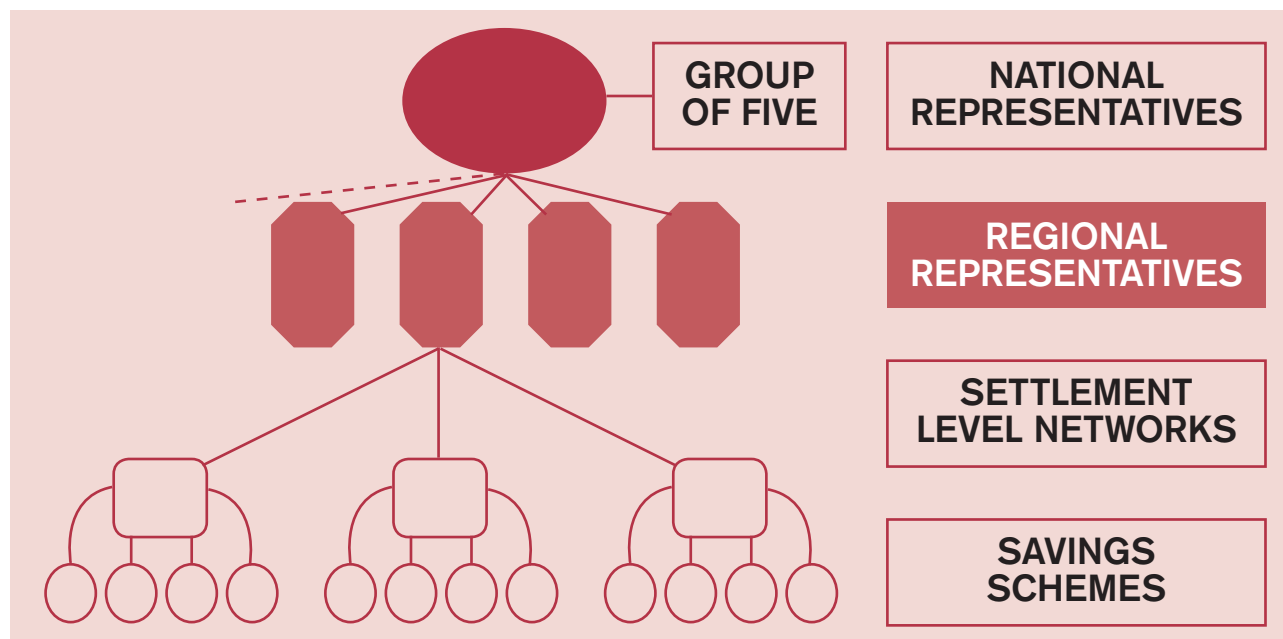
“This translated into growing its membership; devising bottom-up systems to empower homeless poor women to take charge of their own lives; developing the capacity to demonstrate forcefully that a people’s housing process was (is) best equipped to deliver affordable shelter at scale; and demonstrating that the poor are indeed the most capable of articulating their needs and satisfying them, with minimal external intervention and only appropriate support.”

By 1994, when South Africa had its first democratic elections and the ANC was voted into power, the SAHPF was an important player in the urban sector, uniting communities around the common struggle against homelessness, landlessness and poverty. Rose Molokoane, at that time one of five national coordinators of the SAHPF, remarked:

“I was one of the members of the community of Oukasie, a township near Brits [North West Province]. We struggled during the Apartheid regime, as our settlement had been threatened with eviction. Because we were organized as a community, we won. In the workshop I was nervous because I thought that this was a political gathering and a platform to discuss politics ... Why the federations? That is how we can address the basic issues of homelessness, landlessness and poverty. How can we confront them if we are not organized? How do we confront these challenges? There are tools that we use in order to be able to face these uncomfortable issues.” (SA SDI Alliance 2011:2)

For the SAHPF ‘it was imperative to start thinking about an autonomous organisation of the poor, one that would seek ways to work together with a democratically elected government to find solutions to poverty and deprivation’ (Khan and Pieterse 2004:11). By defining structures and processes to facilitate the growth and empowerment of communities, the capacity of the Federation was strengthened (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Structure of the SAHPF (UN-Habitat 2006:11)



Negotiations on a future housing and urban strategy were building towards the 1992 National Housing Forum, a policy negotiation forum comprising business, government, political and community interests (Nell and Rust 1993).

The need for the creation of more effective coordinating structures in the SAHPF was in part to better respond to such negotiation forums, which were commonplace in the period of the Government of National Unity (1990-94), an interim government composed of the old guard of the National Party and the newly unbanned ANC.

An ambitious urban intervention was necessary to start the process of reconstructing South Africa's highly fragmented and inefficient cities. The housing crisis was a confounding reality, with a backlog of at least 1.5 million units for black African families, recognising a projected urban growth rate of 4.3 per cent from 1990 to 2010 (Nell and Rust 1993).

2

The formation of urban and housing policy in post-apartheid South Africa

More than a century of underdevelopment and racial segregation in South Africa's urban townships warranted a gripping developmental urban agenda, which was largely framed around urban and housing strategies. Through a myriad of repressive legislative reforms, 'black Africans' had been actively excluded from political, administrative and land rights. The incoming government administration was also forced to contend with multiple interests in the rolling out of new policy reforms and delivery programmes (Huchzermeyer 2004; Khan 2010; Cross 2010). This was perhaps most directly experienced in discussions on the future housing policy framework.

The ideals of urban spatial restructuring and 'compacting' and 'integrating' the spatially segregated city have been an important part of post-apartheid urban spatial policy. These proposals were actively promoted by the Urban Sector Network (USN) and dedicated urban policy think tanks in universities, such as the Urban Problems Research Unit of the University

of Cape Town (Harrison *et al.* 2008: 53-56). The Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) White Paper, with which the ANC government heralded its election campaign in 1994, called for the 'need to break down the apartheid geography through land reform, more compact cities, [and] decent public transport' (1994:83).

The White Paper promoted 'densification and unification of the urban fabric' (1994:86), housing close to work opportunities, redressing imbalances, and 'access to employment and urban resources' (1994:86) (cited in Todes 2006:55). The preamble to the White Paper stated, 'all South Africans have a right to secure a place in which to live in peace and dignity. Housing is a human right. One of the RDP's first priorities is to provide for the homeless'. The task ahead was large. The estimated housing backlog of 1.5 million housing units, was aimed mostly at those living in informal settlements, plus 72,000 serviced sites requiring upgrading and

approximately 450,000 people living in overcrowded hostels (Nell and Rust 1993).

Although these progressive spatial development ideals had significant backing, the State opted for more conservative housing policies that considered scale and delivery to be the most important factors in addressing the 'problem' of urban informal settlements. The Urban Foundation (UF), a privately-funded think tank founded in 1977 after the 1976 Soweto Uprising, proposed a national housing strategy in 1990 called *Housing for all: Proposals for a National Housing Policy*. The UF's work was characterised by its neoliberal, market-enabling approach to complex urban issues, which were popularly promoted by bilateral agencies such as the World Bank in the 1970s. Although there was broad-based acceptance that the incoming housing policy framework would have a transformative impact guided by a rights-based framework, the implementation metrics were still disputed.

Huchzermeyer (2001) has argued that the subsequent housing policy prioritised a market-enabling, once-off capital grant to beneficiaries meeting certain criteria, which provided for a standardised serviced plot with freehold tenure and a core housing structure, in a formalised township layout. Such an approach has had a detrimental effect on the building of more sustainable and integrated human settlements. Huchzermeyer posits that the UF's paradigm to housing can be summarised as follows: 1) informal settlement upgrading is simply another form of housing delivery; 2) the roles of community organisations are dismissed; 3) support for individual land ownership is based on market assumptions; and 4) the stakes of the private sector should be increased (Huchzermeyer 2001, 2003).

This has resulted in a legacy of state control over the provision of housing and urban services, and has failed to take into account the complexity of human movement, settlement patterns and more pressing needs, such as incremental upgrading of existing and newly emerging informal settlements. Such considerations were simply trumped by the emerging 'consensus' on the capital-linked individual housing subsidy (Huchzermeyer 2003, 2006).

In 1994 the new democratic government proposed its first White Paper on a new Housing Policy for post-apartheid South Africa. The purpose of the paper, as described in the preamble, was to achieve the 'establishment of viable, socially and economically integrated communities, situated in areas allowing convenient access to economic opportunities as well as health, educational and social amenities'. The progressive realisation of the right to housing was inscribed in Section 26 of the Bill of Rights in the 1996 Constitution. While maintaining the policy aim, which echoed the progressive elements proposed by the USN and universities, the new range of policies that followed have been explicitly market enabling and neoliberal. Added to this, the roll-out of housing delivery has produced unintended consequences of socio-economic, spatial and racial fragmentation and urban sprawl, and generally failed to create low-income housing markets, which has undermined the ideal of houses contributing to asset-driven poverty alleviation (e.g. Charlton and Kihato 2006; Cross 2010; Khan 2010).

3

The South African Homeless People's Alliance (SAHPF)

The uTshani Fund agreement

People's Dialogue and the SAHPF were critical of this housing paradigm, and argued that the government had designed a:

"capital subsidy system in order to allow the state to provide financial support as widely as possible, but set up rules which directly and simultaneously undermines the creation of an enabling environment. The result is that the overwhelming majority of subsidies are delivered to the private sector for families without tenure or without access to credit." (People's Dialogue 1993 cited in Khan 2010:43)

Despite the lack of 'an enabling environment', the SAHPF engaged with the first minister of the Department of Housing (DoH) and SACP member Joe Slovo. At a national meeting with the SAHPF, Slovo remarked, 'Look here, show us the way and we will support you. We will rely on your creativity and energy. You have our hearts with you' (SA SDI Alliance 2008:9). The SAHPF's challenge was therefore to combine all practices and capacity-building programmes into a model that could be replicated and legislated by government.

This was the primary reason for the establishment of the *uTshani Fund* (isiZulu for 'grassroots fund'). The Federation and People's Dialogue established the uTshani Fund 'in recognition of the fact that whilst the homeless poor possess energy, initiative, skill and experience, they lack the material resources to transform their situation. Access to affordable credit is, therefore, of paramount importance' (UN-Habitat 2006:12).

The Federation was confident in its socio-technical proposal to advance poor people's power over decision making when it approached government with a proposed programme to facilitate a new housing paradigm. In 1995-96, partnership agreements with the State led to a grant of R10 million (approximately US\$2.7 million) to the uTshani Fund by the DoH. A subsequent agreement with the National Housing Board established the Fund as a conduit for housing subsidies. This arrangement was called the 'uTshani Agreement' (Ley 2009:261).

Through this agreement, the Provincial Housing Board – at that time responsible as the 'developer' of housing projects – paid the eligible beneficiary's capital subsidy into the uTshani Fund, allowing the Federation to oversee implementation. This was a radical departure from mainstream housing delivery supply, in which private construction firms maximised the profitability of the capital housing subsidy, while maintaining minimal standards (Khan and Pieterse 2004; UN-Habitat 2006).

The South African Alliance (SAHPP, People's Dialogue, the uTshani Fund)'s modalities of delivering pro-poor housing had an immediate impact on government policy. Sustained pressure on the government resulted in the People's Housing Partnership Trust (Huchzermeyer 2001; Khan 2010), which formalised self-help and incremental people-centred housing construction.

The drafting of the resultant People's Housing Process (PHP) policy in 1998 created an alternative structuring of the capital subsidy to allow for its greater use, because a lot of professional fees could potentially be directed into actual construction costs. This potentially progressive policy reform opened the door for the 'Alliance to become a key political actor in development policy debates about effective poverty reduction in urban areas' (Khan and Pieterse 2004:1).

At the same time as the Federation was scaling up housing delivery, it also became a founding member, with the Indian alliance, of the SDI. The federation launched an extensive mobilisation and supported the formation of new groups between 1996 and 2000 in African countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Uganda, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SDI grew from the initial seven founding countries to 15 affiliates in 2008 (Mitlin 2008b).

Redistributing resources: the uTshani Fund in full operation

The uTshani Fund was formally registered as a Section 21 (not-for-profit) company in 1996. Although the Fund's primary 'client' was the SAHPP, the uTshani Agreement inscribed broad-based support for other grassroots actors in the field of PHP housing developments. In order to comply with government regulations, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between FEDUP and the uTshani Fund, in effect appointing the Fund as the support organisation and account administrator for all government-financed housing projects.

Even before the creation of the new PHP subsidy programme in 1998, the Federation built the capacity of local groups through Building and Information Training (BIT) facilities, which were called Housing Support Centres (HSCs) in the PHP policy. The main purpose of BITs was 'simply nodal points of community activity

which evolved out of a symphony of people-centred initiatives, all aimed to maximise the possibilities for affordable shelter" (People's Dialogue 1993:5).

As the mobilisation process deepened, however, the BITs moved beyond 'nodal points of community activity' and evolved into centres where communities 'train one another in the management of savings and loans, in ways in which to conduct meetings, plan development, determine affordability, train and mobilise others, produce building materials and build houses' (People's Dialogue 1996:7). In the period 1996-2000, the Federation constructed more than 7,000 houses in the informal settlements of South African cities and the uTshani Fund administered more than R60 million (US\$16.5 million) in loans and subsidies (See Table 2). Baumann and Mitlin's (2003) study on the number of houses established in the first decade is particularly insightful.

Table 2 also shows that the rate of recovery of community housing investments from state subsidy funds was very low at 22 per cent. The uTshani Fund pre-financed short-term 'bridging loans' to beneficiaries while the housing subsidy was being secured. This move was aimed at building on the momentum the SAHPP has generated. At each stage of completion (laying foundations, erecting walls, roofing and finishing), the uTshani Fund would claim back the subsidy quantum⁵ from the provincial government. However, 'what was meant to be a short-term bridging loan has become a long term debt' (Baumann and Bolnick 2001:104). Other commentators (Marais *et al.* 2008; Khan 2010) have called attention to the State's control in the implementation of the PHP, which at the height of the programme's unit delivery, did not constitute much more than 3 per cent of the total housing programme.

The uTshani Fund was under serious financial constraints by 2000. The relationship with the national and provincial governments were under strain because housing construction had stalled. This required an intervention, and the situation 'led to a reconsideration of the financial packages currently being offered by the Fund and, more fundamentally, of the strategies that the Fund [followed]' (Baumann and Bolnick 2001:104). Many of the 7000 self-built houses completed were in well-located informal settlements, but not all of these informal settlements were legally declared as 'townships', a legal term denoting appropriate land use controls and planning approvals.

Table 2: South African Homeless People's Federation construction and subsidies for the period 1995-2000 (Baumann and Mitlin 2003)

PROVINCE	HOUSES BUILT BY FEDUP GROUPS⁴	LOANS (BRIDGE AND TOP-UP) (RAND)	SUBSIDIES RECOVERED	SUBSIDY FUNDS RECEIVED AS A % OF LOAN
Eastern Cape	848	4,987,514	1,741,979	35%
Free State	306	2,073,147	695,800	34%
Gauteng	1025	9,579,187	Nil	0%
KwaZulu-Natal	2085	18,575,408	1,049,750	6%
Mpumalanga	60	582,084	Nil	0%
North West	290	1,555,433	602,700	39%
Western Cape	2674	18,628,139	8,217,861	44%
TOTAL	7261	55,980,912	12,308,090	22%

At this time, building regulations in the low-income market were poorly defined. After 2000, however, provincial governments had extensive checklists for approved housing projects. The uTshani Fund was not able to comply with many of these standards, which included individual tenure/land titles, architectural and structural certificates and so forth. For this reason, the Fund was unable to claim back the 'pre-financed' subsidies from provincial governments and was forced to slow down operations. Despite the financial constraints, the SAHPF was able to demonstrate to the government a compelling argument: low-income households, organised into neighbourhood associations, were able to build larger and better-quality houses with the same capital subsidy compared to the private sector housing contracts.

Shifting regulatory environment and the restructuring of the SAHPF

To a large extent, the working relationship between the State and the Federation had a contradictory effect on the dynamics of the social movement. Seen from a 'developmental' perspective, the SAHPF secured significant influence over government decision making through both the uTshani Agreement and the promulgation of PHP. Yet, equally, it can

be argued that the State co-opted the Federation's core methodologies, and this 'tension overshadowed the movement's growth, organisational identity, developmental impact and political practice' (Khan and Pieterse 2004:2)

In the period 2000-05, the uTshani Fund was financially crippled, because its model was premised on the repayment of pre-financed loan capital from provincial housing departments. In many ways, the assumption that provincial housing departments would repay these loans was not in keeping with the original uTshani Agreement. Housing delivery slowed down rapidly, and the uTshani Fund only constructed 300 houses between 2004 and 2007 (Mitlin 2008b:20). This caused considerable tension in the Federation, and in 2006 a Western Cape Province faction split away from the SAHPF. This followed more than four years of increased tensions at the senior levels of the Federation (Ley 2009:10).

In the breakaway process, the faction legally registered the national social movement's name as a not-for-profit company. The majority of the ex-SAHPF groups gathered and joined with another network of women-led savings schemes called the Poor People's Movement (PPM). PPM and the ex-SAHPF group became known as a new movement called the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP). Considering the close connection between the People's Dialogue NGO and the growth of the SAHPF, a decision was taken to shut down People's Dialogue operations and

⁴ These figures only related to houses completed by FEDUP groups. uTshani Fund also administered subsidies on account of other grassroots actors in People's Housing Process (PHP) housing project. These figures exclude all houses built by other actors that the uTshani Fund administered subsidies for.

⁵ The housing subsidy quantum is total cost allocated budget parameters in which housing developers need to construct the house within Norms and Standards. These quantum and norms and standards are announced every year and is highly influenced by the construction industry. The amendments can also allow for new innovations, such as alternative design measures to improve thermal performance and material sustainability.

programmes. The Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), a new organisation established in 2002 by People's Dialogue employees with the purpose of promoting horizontal learning and providing research support, took over the support function for FEDUP from People's Dialogue.

The year 2006 was one of great introspection. SDI was gaining greater recognition as federations of informal settlement dwellers in African countries secured similar policy impacts in their own countries (SDI 2006). From an initial base in seven countries, the global SDI network extended to new African countries. An internal report stated, 'this expansion has both been in terms of breadth and depth. Where SDI has presence, the aim has been to build networks of the urban poor that have linkages with local and national governments and that seek to address the issues of urbanization and poverty on city-wide scale' (SDI 2006:1).

In many ways, SDI has emerged as a social movement characterised by what Appadurai (2001) calls 'globalization from below'. Multinational partnerships with key actors in the urban sector emerged, such as New Partnership for Development in Africa (NEPAD), Africities, United Cities and Local Governments – Africa, African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, Cities Alliance, UN-Habitat, and the World Bank (SDI 2006). South African Federation leaders played a central role in forming these alliances.

Despite setbacks, the newly formed FEDUP was determined to renew its partnership with the DoH, which was facing challenges of its own. In 2004, the DoH issued a document called *Breaking New Ground (BNG): A Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements*. This document introduced new policy directives, because the first 10 years of housing delivery had produced many unintended consequences (Charlton and Kihato 2006; Cross 2010). Among other things, the BNG called for new funding mechanisms for capacity building and organisational development when 'adopting an area-wide or community, as opposed to individual approach', and for the formation of 'locally-constructed social compacts' between the government and NGOs and CBOs (DoH 2004).

Since its inception in 1998, the PHP programme has been narrowly equated with "sweat equity", individualism and cost reduction rather than collective beneficiary planning, decision-making, and more productive housing delivery' (Khan and Pieterse 2004). Through the BNG, PHP was redesigned to allow for greater social control over the funding instruments, and the programme was renamed enhanced People's Housing Process (ePHP). BNG also introduced a new concept to the South African housing experience: in-situ upgrading of informal settlements, which was legislated in the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme

(UISP), Part 3 of the National Housing Code (2007). Despite the BNG, however, in practice there was very little investment in informal settlement upgrading in the years immediately following this policy.

The immediate impact of the BNG comprehensive plan was devastating for informal settlement residents, notwithstanding progressive and potentially transformative policies contained therein. In a paradoxical turn of events, the incoming housing minister crafted a slum eradication programme motivated by Cities Alliance's global campaign of 'Cities without Slums', which led to the eviction of thousands of slum dwellers to peripheral 'Temporary Relocation Areas'. Jones (2009) has argued that progressive elements of international agendas for slum upgrading, such as the 'Cities Without Slums' campaign, have been overshadowed by neoliberal urban development and transfers risks and responsibilities to organised and active citizenry, while promoting the involvement of the private sector as a means of scaling up interventions.

When the analysis of such global agendas' impact on African countries' response is measured, it has been found that evictions and relocations have been the operating logic of governments favouring urban competitiveness and neoliberal development agendas (Huchzermeyer 2012). A series of case law studies on such illegal eviction cases in South Africa has brought into the spotlight the lack of meaningful engagement between governments promoting the upgrading of informal settlements and slum dweller communities (Cross 2010).

Pithouse (2009) has argued that BNG presents 'progressive policy without progressive politics'. 'Moreover, at all levels of government, and in all parts of the country, there has been a failure to implement the substantive content of BNG that recommends and makes financial provision for participatory and collective *in-situ* upgrades', Pithouse writes (2009:1), adding that 'municipalities have routinely acted towards the poor in ways that are unlawful, and in strict legal terms [referencing Section 21 of the Prevention of Illegal Eviction Act], criminal'.

Revisiting government relationships: the signing of the Pledge

After months of negotiations, FEDUP called a joint conference with the DoH to discuss the future of ePHP. FEDUP was one of the biggest contributors of community-driven PHP housing developments in South Africa (SA SDI Alliance 2008). This meeting was held in Cape Town between the 19 and 21 May 2006. The 2006 Pledge Agreement/Memorandum of

Understanding (hereafter 'the Pledge') signed between FEDUP, the DoH and SDI guided the new relationship between the FEDUP/uTshani Fund alliance and the DoH.

The Pledge's operational dynamics were driven by a National Joint Working Group, responsible for oversight of the Pledge and strategy, and nine provincial Joint Working Groups, which were responsible for practical and project-level activities (SDI 2006). These Joint Working Groups were not exclusively retained for FEDUP/uTshani Fund projects, and all actors in ePHP housing developments could make use of this new institutional space.

Six provinces signed the Pledge: Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal, North West, Limpopo and Free State. Each of these provinces pledged to ring-fence 1000 subsidies for FEDUP groups, tallying more than R220 million (more than US\$30 million). The agreement stipulated that provinces would pay top structure subsidies (roughly 70 per cent of the subsidy quantum) upfront and provide serviced greenfield plots (the remaining 30 per cent of the subsidy quantum). Many provinces, however, were uncomfortable with the terms of paying subsidies upfront.

The uTshani Fund's new strategy, drawing on the devastating lessons learnt in the period preceding 2000 (Baumann and Mitlin 2003), continued to pre-finance loans to FEDUP groups, retrospectively claiming subsidies back into the revolving fund, but on the condition that contractual agreements were in place between the uTshani Fund, the participating provincial government departments of housing/human settlements and beneficiary groups. Such agreements often allocated peripheral site-and-serviced greenfield sites in the contracts on which Federation members were free to construct their own houses, with support from HSCs.

At the same time, a daunting realisation pressed national coordinators: 'for every Federation member with tenure security, there were another 20 without land' (FEDUP 2010:5). At this point, 'the men in the Federation

decided to contact community organisations of the urban poor, to form the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and to use Federation capacities and [practices] to start to upgrade these settlements as well' (ibid). A series of dialogues were organised in 2008/09, starting in Johannesburg and Durban. The political commitment from FEDUP towards a broader-based urban agenda, including the overlapping issues of lack of tenure and increased eviction threats. By 2010-11 the ISN had grown and some of the following milestones were achieved:

- A steering committee, comprising five slum dwellers and two support professionals.
- In just a little over a year, the ISN networked more than 500 informal settlements in Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni (East Rand mining belt), Kimberley, eThekweni (Durban), Cape Town, and Nelson Mandela Bay Metro municipalities.
- The ISN launched a city-wide informal settlement-profiling initiative, which led to the compilation of profiling reports endorsed by the metropolitan councils of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, eThekweni, and Cape Town.
- Signs of emerging partnerships between the ISN/ CORC and the local governments of Cape Town and Stellenbosch emerged with the prospect of city-wide strategies for the upgrading of informal settlements (CORC 2012a).

4

Scaling up in-situ slum upgrading

In-situ upgrading as a growing government priority

The growth of informal settlements over the past two decades has by far exceeded government efforts to deliver better services, provide adequate housing and mitigate against disasters and vulnerability. Despite the government's efforts to deliver more than 2.8 million housing units since 1994, the housing backlog has remained at 15%-17% of the urban population (2.1 million units outstanding). Today there are more than 2700 informal settlements, a number which continues to grow between 5 per cent and 7 per cent across different regions (NUSP 2010). This is a stark increase from 300 informal settlements in 1994. Urban vulnerability has increased, juxtaposed with worsening human development indices, service delivery constraints, insecure tenure, and safety and security concerns (Misselhorn 2008).

Amid the pressures of delivering to the growing backlog of housing units, there is a growing recognition from the government that the implementation of newly introduced informal settlement upgrading instruments is happening too slowly. To this effect, President Jacob Zuma signed a performance agreement with the minister of human settlements in 2010 contained in Outcome 8 ('Sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life') of Cabinet⁶. One of the four outputs of

Outcome 8 was the in-situ upgrading of 400,000 well-located households by 2014, and a capacity-building programme was promulgated called the National Upgrading Support Programme. The upgrading agenda also seemingly straddled unpredictable political cycles when it was inscribed into Chapter 8 of the National Development Plan 2030, where the National Planning Commission identified informal settlement upgrading as a core focus area of government policy. At the same time, the Plan acknowledges:

"[There] is an ambivalence across government towards how to address the upgrading of informal settlements, and the mechanisms for the in situ upgrade of informal settlements have yet to be fully developed. The institutional capabilities to manage processes such as incremental tenure, infrastructure and shelter upgrade and the development of appropriate regulations, in a participatory and empowering way, have yet to be developed." (The Presidency 2012:271)

It can be argued that alternative organising rationales, practices and methodologies are emerging and changing the way that informal settlement upgrading is conceptualised. Marrying bottom-up and participatory practices with top-down policy making and resource flows is not unique to South Africa. The most recent 2014 UN-Habitat State of African Cities observes that in southern African cities:

⁶ In 2010, President Zuma's cabinet approved an "outcomes approach" to its election campaign and the government's Medium Term Strategic Framework (2009 – 2014). Available online: <http://www.gov.za/issues/outcomes/index.html> (accessed 24 August 2014)

“Grassroots and civil society organizations are also active, promoting community-led development strategies and advocating on behalf of marginal communities. In this respect, governance challenges revolve around integrating bottom-up and top-down priorities of development at city and local scales. The challenges also require governance to embrace more inclusive and supportive approaches towards informal sector activities rather than focusing purely on their regulation.” (UN-Habitat 2014: 241)

Experiences of the Informal Settlement Network (ISN)

The ISN has responded to the urban and land crises in South Africa by mobilising communities around internal capabilities and capacities, and around specific settlement issues relating to the incremental upgrading, tenure regularisation and land. Building solidarity and unity among the urban poor, the ISN aims to create a change process by connecting what Tarrow (1996, cited in Bradlow 2013) calls ‘political opportunity structures’ to partnership formations with the government. The ISN networks about 600 settlements in the five major cities – Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni (East Rand mining belt), eThekweni (Durban), Nelson Mandela Bay Metro (Port Elizabeth) and Cape Town – and smaller local governments, such as Stellenbosch and Midvaal.

Drawing on Sydney Tarrow’s (1996) seminal work on social movements, Bradlow (2013) has argued that the ISN’s partnerships with governments ‘provide a more formal institutional basis for channeling this sort of civic capacity’ (2013:112). Building capacities at the local level is therefore aimed at building a city-wide process. This is best illustrated in the words of Patrick Magebhula, a community leader from Piesang River (eThekweni) and national chairperson of the ISN, who wrote in an opinion piece in the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper on the dislocation of informal planning practices and regulated city planning instruments that:

“We recommitted ourselves to a broad agenda of working with local communities in planning their own development. This involves communities collecting information about themselves by means of household surveys, planning their settlement using this information, and networking at city level so that the poor are central to city planning.” (Magebhula 2011)

Bradlow’s (2013) analysis of the partnership between community groups aligned to the ISN and the City of

Cape Town and Stellenbosch Municipality suggests that a ‘quiet conflict’ exists in the formation of pro-poor and inclusive partnerships. Bradlow argues, ‘the ISN had a more open architecture than the membership-based FEDUP savings schemes, and included community leadership from informal settlements that came together at city level’ (2013:57). The intention of a reciprocal relationship between the ISN and FEDUP is premised on the collaboration, agencies and practices that the two national social movements share, in common with many other SDI country federations. It is worth citing an internal concept note to illustrate the working relationship:

“[The] ISN networks and links communities around specific needs and issues, especially land and access to basic services. When the need arises for information gathering and savings mobilization, FEDUP moves in to establish women’s savings collectives, forge links with formal institutions and to leverage development finance. [The] ISN plays the lead political role, which is oriented towards a people-centered engagement with a democratically-elected government. (SA SDI Alliance 2010:6)

Co-production of development solutions

The ISN and FEDUP have in common a shared value system and practices that build community capacity and generate knowledge. These practices are widely employed by all country federations in the SDI network. These have also been documented and analysed, and hence this chapter will not delve into detail or the organisational dynamics and properties (see e.g. *Environment & Urbanization* 2012; UN-Habitat 2006). It is worth reflecting on a few informal settlement upgrading case studies to illustrate the dynamics in communities aligned to FEDUP and the ISN.

As the above quotation remarks, the ISN plays a key political role in forming partnerships with local governments. Once this space has been opened, FEDUP organises the community into savings schemes, which promote transparency and trust. Savings schemes also provide a critical mass of social capital, which becomes invaluable when communities are ready to engage with the State on progressive urban agendas.

BOX 1: LANGRUG INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

Langrug is an informal settlement on the outskirts of the town Franschhoek in Stellenbosch Municipality. The settlement was established in 1992 when seasonal labourers working on surrounding wine farms and construction sites settled on the land. For years, the settlement was neglected in terms of service delivery, even though it was rapidly growing. In November 2010, the local authority was forced to upgrade the settlement after a farmer sued the municipality. Raw sewage and greywater could not be contained and contaminated the farmer's irrigation dam. A court order meant that the municipality was forced to construct a road hierarchy with stormwater channels.

Like many secondary cities in South Africa, Stellenbosch faces a severe urban crisis: the demand for better services and housing by far outstrips the municipality's ability to supply them. Stellenbosch Municipality has a housing backlog of about 19,700 households, and more than 20,000 families live in informal settlements and backyard shacks. The municipality receives merely 300 capital housing subsidies a year from the Western Cape Provincial Government. This means that families could wait up to 130 years to receive a subsidised house. For this reason, core municipal functions were restructured to address the crisis, and the Informal Settlement Management Department was established (CORG 2012a).

The ISN engaged with Langrug informal settlement and built leadership capacity. At the same time, officials from Stellenbosch visited upgrading projects in Uganda via SDI learning exchanges. This led to the creation of a formal partnership with the municipality,

and an MoU was signed in November 2012. At the MoU signing event, Executive Mayor Conrad Sidego said: 'The benefits of this partnership are far-reaching and should be viewed as a paradigm shift in municipal governance' (cited in Fieuw 2013).

The community conducted a self-census, also known as an enumeration, to collect socio-economic and demographic data on the settlement. Spatial mapping accompanied the enumeration, which was codified in geographic information system (GIS) databases. The community analysed the data, and drafted detailed action plans around greywater management, water and sanitation, safety and security, and education and health action teams. These broad action streams were informed by 'block committees', which were formed when the settlement was spatially divided into blocks to better manage enumeration activities.

The enumeration highlighted the need to upgrade existing WaSH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene) infrastructure, as the ratio of people to toilets was 49:1. Only 83 of a total of 91 toilets were functional. This was for many reasons, such as lack of maintenance, vandalism and clogging up. Moreover, of the 57 water taps in the settlement, only 45 were functional. This translated into 72 people per water point. In partnership with universities, including the Worcester Polytechnic Institute and University of Cape Town, the community also initiated many projects, such as more than 500m of greywater channels, upgrading water and sanitation services, and internal relocation of families in hazardous areas. In 2012, the community was awarded the prestigious South African Planning Institute (SAPI) award in the community category.

Knowledge generation by means of self-census, also called enumeration, is often tied to spatial data the community collects. This is often in the form of hand-drawn maps of where services are located, dangerous areas, informal pathways, and other important features. CORC assists the ISN in codifying this 'informal knowledge' into cadastral maps and geographic information system (GIS) databases. These 'socio-spatial data' become very important in engaging with the government on the co-production of services.

In his analysis of the partnerships between the ISN and the City of Cape Town and Stellenbosch Municipality, Bradlow draws on Michael Lipsky's work on 'street-level bureaucrats', arguing that when 'taken together the individual decisions of these [street-level] workers become, or add up to, agency policy' (Lipsky 2010

cited in Bradlow 2013:121). Collective agency does not necessarily translate into effective partnerships between the State and civil society. Since 2009, informal settlements have been centres of community dissatisfaction. Protest action and other forms of direct action have escalated and often become violent, and communities have resorted to making urban spaces ungovernable (GGLN 2011). Local governments in many provinces have clamped down on such protest action, and informal settlement eradication has become a common response (Huchzermeyer 2012). As a network, communities aligned with the ISN have also experienced increased threats of evictions and displacements (see Text Box 2 for a case study on Marlboro South).

BOX 2: MARLBORO SOUTH

Marlboro South is an inner city informal settlement in an industrial area, located 3 kilometres from the opulent Johannesburg suburb of Sandton, and right next door to one of the oldest townships in South Africa, Alexandra. In Marlboro South, 53 disused factories are home to a community of more than 5,000 people. People moved from the overcrowded Alexandra to occupy these factories in the late 1980s, when business owners left the factories vacant. People constructed shacks inside the shells of the factories. This area is characterised by very poor living conditions, unsound structural quality and an absence of even the most basic services, such as water and sanitation.

Since 2005, the community has been threatened with eviction and displacement. After sustained protest action, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) and the High Court signed a moratorium on future evictions until alternative accommodation was provided. However, the moratorium was not adhered to, as pressures from property rate payers associations increased. It appeared to the community that more evictions were forthcoming. During this time, a community-based organisation, the Marlboro Warehouse Crisis Committee (MWCC), was formed in response to increased threats. The MWCC represented the community in dealing with the City of Johannesburg Metro Police and Housing departments.

In 2011, the ISN made contact with the community and the MWCC. An enumeration of the 53 factories was launched. The community organised the area into zones. In 2012, the community, represented by the MWCC, partnered with the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Design and Architecture to

conduct a community architecture studio in Marlboro South. The course, titled Housing and the Informal City, paired 50 architecture students with community counterparts to plan a spatial development framework and propose incremental development of the area to the City of Johannesburg.

In August 2012, the JMPD began a new wave of evictions. Some of the 'bad buildings', such as Chico's Ice Cream Factory, were demolished. This factory was home to 109 families, some 282 people (CORC 2012b). The recommendations and community cohesion created in the architecture studio, in which feasible and inclusive options for the renewal of the area was proposed, were disregarded outright. Patel (2012), writing in the *Daily Maverick* newspaper, argued that the evictions in Marlboro South were a reminder of the 'shortfalls of housing policy'. Following the evictions, the ISN organised about 5000 people from more than 100 informal settlements in a protest march through the streets of inner-city Johannesburg to hand over a memorandum of demands to the Gauteng Province premier.

Lawyers for Human Rights, a South African human rights and litigation organisation, litigated against the court case, which was escalated to the Constitutional Court. The court ruled in favour of the community, and forced the City council to pick up all the legal costs and ensure the resettlement of the community (see CORC 2012b for a full account). Yet, as Patel (2012) has argued, 'whatever the [legal] result, a court victory will not necessarily have a positive effect on the living conditions of the informally-housed community in Marlboro as a whole'.

Huchzermeyer (2012), drawing on Lefebvre's (1967) original propositions, has argued that the promotion of informal settlement upgrading, as opposed to the dominant forms of evictions, relocations to peripheral areas and displacements, will advance the poor's 'right to the city' in three ways: firstly, the right to spatial centrality and long-term habitation of the city; secondly, the right to access to central decision making; and thirdly, the right to the creative remaking of public spaces. Communities linked to FEDUP and the ISN are actively promoting rights to accessing the city along the lines of what Huchzermeyer proposes.

5

Progressive urban agendas: does the post-apartheid city exist?

The political agency of FEDUP and the ISN has been aimed at transforming the highly inefficient and fragmented post-apartheid urban fabric, which, in many ways, are being reinforced by new dynamics shaping cities. Communities are striving for the right to the city, such as land, basic services and *de jure* security of tenure. As cities strive for global and regional competitiveness, however, communities are increasingly dislocated. Freund (2010) has questioned whether the notion of the 'post-apartheid city' even exists, considering the dominant market forces that continue to shape urban development trajectories in South Africa's new democratic dispensation. These trajectories in many ways obscure the ideals of urban restructuring and integration.

Moving beyond the conception of 'the government' as the focal point of provision of goods and services, public participation, budgeting and joint planning have put the spotlight on 'good governance'. Devas (2001) has argued that decentralisation has focused attention on city governments but, at the same time, the growth of civil society means that urban governance is not limited to city governments. The production of new governance spaces, where communities have an active influence over the design and implementation of goods and services, has transformative potential (Cornwall 2002). Bradlow (2013) argues that the 'quiet conflict' between

social organising properties of the ISN that affect the institutional organisation of the city government has produced new spaces in four ways:

"(a) 'learning' between institutions, (b) using an expansive understanding of conflict as the basis for 'co-producing' material outcomes, (c) reimagining the conception and relevance of [common spaces] to these planning interventions, and (d) articulating the pluralistic values through which new norms, and, potentially, policies and laws, can change to acknowledge the claims of citizenship that grassroots movements are making in practice." (2013:129)

Peer-to-peer horizontal exchanges are central to building networks and platforms of the urban poor. This is also the primary learning space, and communities that have generated learning on a certain aspect become 'learning centres'. Networking these learning spaces has a long-term impact on communities' ability to access central decision-making processes of city governments. Fieuw and Mwau (forthcoming) argue for a conception of upgrading to understand communities' agencies as social practices of 'commoning urban space'. The

'urban commons', both as a theoretical instrument but also as a practical governance arrangement, sheds light on the intersections of the horizontal (e.g. community organisation and capacity development) and the vertical (e.g. systems and structures of state-centric delivery).

The re-blocking of Mtshini Wam informal settlement in Cape Town demonstrates the co-production value of communities taking the lead on the spatial design of their settlements, in many ways acting as 'critical planning agents', a term De Souza (2006) uses to describe social movement strategies. De Souza (2006) argues that communities as 'critical planning agents' are 'offering proposals and [conceiving] concrete alternatives - and, to some extent, [realising] them despite the state apparatus and (at the end of the day, and not only when they face a particularly conservative government) against the state' (2006:329). This is perhaps best illustrated in the comments of Nokhwezi Klaas (2013), a community leader from Mtshini Wam informal settlement (see Text Box 3), who expressed her agency through the re-blocking process when she remarked:

"I think we can change the city, because when they [government officials are] having a meeting, they have to contact the community. The purpose of the meeting is that the community needs to decide on the kinds of services people want. We can only challenge the City if we do it ourselves without only depending on them." (Klaas 2013, cited in Fieuw and Mwau forthcoming)

The re-blocking programme of the ISN – understood as the re-organisation of shacks according to a new community-designed layout framework that maximised the use of space, to allow for the provision of services in very dense settlements, and to create safe community courtyards – although at first illegal according to many City of Cape Town procedures, demonstrated alternative mechanisms for in-situ upgrading. This compelled the City of Cape Town to draft a policy response to such a new practice, which the council adopted in November 2012. Since that time, the re-blocking programme has been adopted as an upgrading strategy of the City council, and budgets and departmental coordination to allow for the delivery of a full suite of services have been secured.

De Souza (2006:329) has observed that of social movements acting as 'critical planning agents' are often times able to interject government priorities. Of such actions, De Souza writes that proposals offered are done

"... in a spatially complex and comprehensive way, not only demonstrating knowledge and interest in relation to plans and reports prepared by the (local) state, but also developing actions which can be interpreted as an alternative approach to land use, housing, traffic, environmental protection, and so on." (De Souza 2006:329)

In this sense, the ISN's creation of progressive urban agendas in the cases of the City of Cape Town and Stellenbosch Municipality should be noted. The partnerships with these local governments have spurred interest from other cities and towns, too, notably Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan (Port Elizabeth). Officials and community leaders learn together in peer-to-peer exchanges. Bradlow (2013) has observed that the links between community leaders and city officials 'produce spaces for inter- and intra-institutional learning that allow them to be more adaptive to the challenges of upgrading in situ, a conceptual first principle for upgrading to affirm citizenship through rights to land, housing, and the city' (2013:110).

BOX 3: RE-BLOCKING OF MTSHINI WAM

Mtshini Wam (in isiXhosa, “my machine gun”, a popular anti-apartheid struggle song) is a densely populated informal settlement, in Milnerton, Cape Town, located on what used to be a vacant plot of land in between formal state-subsidised houses. Backyard dwellers from the formal houses invaded this parcel of land following years of paying overpriced changes for access to basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity.

The settlement was subject to major geographical challenges. The narrow pathways between shacks were prone to flooding, especially in the rainy season. This made it more difficult to move around, and the spread of water-borne illnesses was a daily reality. Moreover, informal residents had informal arrangements with formal house owners around the sharing of electricity and water. The cross-cutting power lines between the formal houses and shacks were a safety concern, as children played freely in the settlement.

‘Re-blocking’ is an incremental in-situ re-arrangement of shacks in accordance with a community-designed framework to open up safer and more dignified public spaces (called ‘courtyards’) and that made preparations for the installation of infrastructure. Through this initiative, 45 short-term (six-month) employment opportunities have been created through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The EPWP initiative helped participating households to bolster their household savings, and acted as an incentive to conduct a self-census, to establish community project committees, and to design its future settlement layout. The project team of the community led the re-design of this settlement, as community members worked with an aerial photograph and cardboard pieces cut to scale when reorganising the settlement.

A learning exchange to another settlement in Cape Town that had completed re-blocking, located on Sheffield Road, was especially instructive. CORC supported the technical planning, and iKhayalami, a not-for-profit organisation specialising in low-cost housing and alternative technologies, supported the

implementation and erection of the new shacks. The community contributed 20 per cent of the project cost, which totalled R160,000 (US\$2,000). The City of Cape Town’s contribution to the project was the preparation of the sites (compacting and levelling) and increasing the number of water taps and toilets in the settlement.

The in-situ re-blocking of Mtshini Wam is making an impact on the imagination of what informal settlement upgrading could look like. The settlement has become a ‘learning centre’ for the ISN. Delegates and dignitaries who have visited the settlement include those from the National Department of Human Settlements (notably Zoe Kota-Fredericks, the deputy minister), the Isandla Institute’s National Dialogue on Informal Settlement Upgrading (attended by the National Upgrading Support Programme), Mayor of Cape Town Patricia de Lille, and federations from other African and Asian countries in an international exchange organised by SDI.

Most importantly, community project teams directly managed technical interventions, and there is therefore considerable community buy-in and cohesion. The community has demonstrated that given sufficient institutional support from community networks, NGOs and universities, metropolitan government officials, and institutional enabling factors (such as the use of the EPWP), upgrading not only improves communities’ living conditions, but also builds critical ‘social capital’ for a transformed and more active citizenry.

The sustainability of the project is two-part. Firstly, the *social infrastructure* in the form of strong and transparent savings schemes and a development committee tasked with sustaining long-term engagement with the City of Cape Town. Secondly, the rearrangement of shacks, through the re-blocking process and delivery of *public infrastructure*, opens up new possibilities for development previously unthinkable because of such high densities.

6

Conclusion: We die together

South Africa continues to grapple with the complex and reinforcing patterns of urban segregation, and in many ways the ambitious housing programme has contributed to entrenching the highly inefficient spatial form of apartheid-created spatial dormitories. Government has introduced new programmatic focus areas which aims to respond to the recognition of a number of unintended consequences of the housing programme in the first decade (1994-2004), but the application of new informal settlement-upgrading programmes has been lacking.

A political commitment, both in the medium and long term, seems to indicate a new opportunity to advance the poor's 'right to the city' through in-situ and incremental upgrading of informal settlements. It is also observed that a radically new approach is required, because state-driven upgrading has translated into a slum clearance programme, decimating poor people's livelihoods and survival opportunities.

The South African Alliance has emerged as a post-apartheid social movement with humble origins and lofty ideals. A history of two decades has shaped numerous pro-poor and more inclusive and participatory modalities of communities' organisation around land, housing and services.

This working paper situates the growth and development trajectories of the South African Alliance, associated with SDI, in the context of the liberation struggle in the 1980s, the negotiations of potentially transformative housing and urban policies in the 1990s, and the challenges of sustaining partnerships with government agencies in the 2000s. In many ways, the work of the SAHPF/FEDUP arguably demonstrates one of the strongest alternative developmental thrusts in post-apartheid housing practice and policies.

Central to these policy innovations opening a space for organised communities – in this case, federated savings groups with regional and national committees – has been the creation of the uTshani Fund, which secured significant political capital at two major junctures: first in 1996, when the uTshani Agreement was signed; and secondly by the MoU, also referred to as the Pledge, in 2006.

Notwithstanding the successes noted, the federation model faced significant pressures and challenges in the highly regulated environment of post-apartheid developmental statecraft (Khan 2010). Responding to the burgeoning urban crisis demanded a new strategy, which led to the creation of the ISN. As a parallel but separate movement to that of the FEDUP, the ISN has been able to mobilise communities in South Africa's major cities, and has demonstrated alternative approaches of co-producing in-situ and incremental upgrading strategies. Advancing the poor's 'right to the city' by means of securing tenure through incremental upgrading in well-located areas has been a stated goal of the ISN.

At the same time, an onslaught of anti-urban and anti-poor repressive policies have sought to evict, relocate and displace the urban poor, rather than securing tenure and incremental development. The 'right to the city' in the South African context will require more fundamental policy reform. Upgrading informal settlements has the potential to transform urban spaces and the build capacity of slum dweller communities through participatory programmes.

This working paper has argued that, although a political commitment towards a new approach to delivering sustainable human settlements has existed since 2006, the implementation of new funding mechanisms, planning apparatus and capacity development programmes has been slow and has not yet built significant capacity in civil-society groups to collaborate on a meaningful scale in upgrading initiatives, which by their very nature require a new approach to participation and co-production.

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Acronyms

ANC – African National Congress
ACHR – Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
BNG – Breaking New Ground
BIT – Building and Information Training
CORC – Community Organisation Resource Centre
DoH – Department of Housing
ePHP – Enhanced People's Housing Process
EPWP – Expanded Public Works Programme
FEDUP – Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor
HSC – Housing Support Centres
ISN – Informal Settlement Network
JMPD – Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department
NEPAD – New Partnership for Development in Africa
NGO – Nongovernmental Organisation
NSDF – National Slum Dwellers Federation
MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
MWCC – Marlboro Warehouse Crisis Committee
PHP – People's Housing Process
PPM – Poor People's Movement
RDP – Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAHPF – South African Homeless People's Federation
SPARC – Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres
UDF – United Democratic Front
UF – Urban Foundation
UISP – Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme
USN – Urban Sector Network
WaSH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

This working paper situates the growth and development trajectories of the South African Homeless People's Federation and the South African Alliance, associated with SDI, in the context of the liberation struggle in the 1980s, the negotiations of potentially transformative housing and urban policies in the 1990s, and the challenges of sustaining partnerships with government agencies in the 2000s. The ideals of urban spatial restructuring and 'compacting' and 'integrating' the spatially segregated city have been an important part of post-apartheid urban spatial policy. South Africa continues to grapple with the complex and reinforcing patterns of urban segregation. The growth of informal settlements has exceeded government efforts to deliver better services, provide adequate housing and mitigate against disasters and vulnerability. A radically new approach is required, because state-driven upgrading has translated into a slum clearance programme, decimating poor people's livelihoods and survival opportunities.

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