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Disposable People
at the Peri-Urban Fringe

At the end of a road that meanders through dismal mealie fields,
fire-blackened veld, and winter smog lies South Africa's newest
settlement [at Bredell], our own little piece of Zimbabwe.

PATRICK BULGER

I n late June 2001 thousands of landless squatters seized a barren piece of vacant land at Elandsfontein farm close to a suburb called Bredell, outside of Kempton Park on the eastern outskirts of Johannesburg.[1] The homeless squatters who came to this forlorn place near the Johannesburg International Airport were indeed the poorest of the poor and surely the most vulnerable citizens of the new South Africa: single mothers with young dependent children; the old, the infirm, and the sick; newcomers to the city; the casually employed; and the chronically jobless. Within days these expectant homesteaders, who numbered around 10,000 persons, had carefully marked out individual plots and erected close to 1,200 shacks on this expansive swath of open land, towered over by rusty pylons and squeezed between a chicken farm, some ragged mealie patches, and a petrol pipeline. Lured by the hope for a better life, they tried to make the dry, dusty place seem a little like home, hanging curtains and rolling out worn rugs to cover the rocky red soil.[2]

Without proper sanitation, clean water supply, or any other of the social amenities required for a decent life, this inauspicious stretch of land seemed an unlikely setting for such a bitter standoff, pitting the desperately poor against

state housing authorities, who were determined to prevent an informal settlement from taking root on the site. For the homeless squatters, the occupation of Elandsfontein farm represented a better option than the overcrowded squalor of the dismal backyard shacks in nearby Tembisa from whence they had escaped. For municipal authorities, in contrast, the unauthorized land seizure symbolized a lawless disregard for proper administrative procedures in the fledgling new democracy. After weeks of legal wrangling, the municipal officials won a court order, allowing them to dismantle the shantytown and forcibly remove the squatters. As nearly a thousand heavily armed riot police stood by, more than two hundred employees of Wozani Security Company, whose notorious reputation had earned them the nickname *Rooi Gevaar* (Red Danger) or the Red Ants, embarked on the task of demolishing the squatter encampment. As distraught middle-aged women stripped naked as a way of demonstrating their anger at the evictions, the Red Ants, clad in their distinctive red overalls, used crowbars and axes to indiscriminately smash and bash the flimsy shacks, "bringing roofs down on the possessions inside," and destroying the "pitiful belongings of the desperately poor squatters."[3]

Seen in the broad context of pent-up frustration with the slow pace of housing delivery in postapartheid South Africa, the land invasion at Bredell and the subsequent, forcible removal of the homeless squatters who sought to make a life for themselves there were not particularly unusual events. After all, since the birth of the new South Africa in April 1994, tens of thousands of newcomers have poured into the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region, crowding into existing informal settlements or creating entirely new ones, swallowing up available tracts of empty land, and putting an almost unbearable strain on already over-burdened municipal resources. According to reliable estimates, by the late 1990s the numbers of new arrivals to the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region exceeded twenty thousand per month, and these numbers have not abated. Between 1996 and 2004 the eight largest cities in South Africa experienced a population growth rate of 4.4 percent per year—more than twice the national average. During the same time period, the population of the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region jumped 25 percent, while the number of individual households expanded by one third.[4] By 2005 the number of new households was growing at an average annual rate of 6.7 percent. If these trends continue (and there is no reason to expect that they will not), the number of households in greater Johannesburg will double in the next twelve years.[5]

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1. Patrick Bulger, "Battlelines Are Drawn in the Bredell Dust," *Sunday Independent,* July 7, 2001.
2. For this and the following paragraphs, see Rachel Swarns, "South Africa Confronts Landless Poor and Court Sends Them Packing," *New York Times,* July 12, 2001; Evidence wa ka Ngobeni, Bongani Mjola, and Khadija Magardie, "'Save Us from Hell on Earth,'" *Mail & Guardian,* July 13–19, 2001; Phomello Molwedi and Rapule Tabane, "Desperate People Flock to Buy Land for R25," *The Star,* July 3, 2001; and Patrick Bulger, "Battlelines Are Drawn."

3. Anele ka Nene and Mariette le Roux, "Squatters 'Willing to Die' for R25 Plots," *South African Press Agency (SAPA),* July 6, 2001; and *BBC News,* "Police Evict SA Squatters," July 12, 2001.
4. Editorial, "Housing Dilemma," *Business Day,* July 12, 2004.
5. Interview with Graeme Gotz, specialist in policy and strategy, Corporate Planning Unit, Office of City Manager, City of Johannesburg, May 26, 2006.

As in other cities around the country, municipal authorities in Johannesburg have been unable to keep pace with the accelerated demand for decent and affordable housing. According to World Bank figures for the period 1996 to 2001, the number of informal shacks in the Johannesburg municipality expanded an astonishing 42 percent to almost a quarter million, despite the fact that the number of formal dwellings increased by over 220,000 units.[6] According to the 2004 State of the Cities Report, an estimated 22.5 percent of households—close to one quarter of the population of Johannesburg—were without formal shelter.[7] In a report issued in late 2006 housing experts estimated that the municipal backlog (as indicated by the waiting list for subsidized units in greater Johannesburg) had crept steadily upward to somewhere between 250,000 to 300,000 units. While the elapsed time between filing an application for subsidized housing and actual occupation was estimated at seven years in 2000, available evidence for 2006 suggested that the wait on the subsidized housing list for the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region had inched closer to ten years.[8]

Unlike the earlier waves of work seekers who were lured to the burgeoning Johannesburg conurbation in response to rapid industrialization, recent arrivals have limited prospects for finding regular work in the formal sector. The influx of newcomers to the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region has continued despite accelerating deindustrialization, high rates of urban unemployment (estimated at close to 40 percent of the economically active population), and falling real wages for unskilled workers (Beall, Crankshaw, and Parnell 2002, 29–44). As elsewhere in the world, this kind of perverse urbanism—where urban population growth has accelerated without a corresponding expansion of wage-paid employment—has contributed to all sorts of problems related to environmental degradation, unchecked horizontal spread of informal settlement patterns, and unhealthy living conditions of unprecedented severity in slums and shantytowns (Davis 2006).

With the country's housing backlog estimated at close to three million dwellings in 2005, newcomers to the cities—as well as those squeezed out of existing places of residence—have little choice but to rent backyard shacks in the established townships, to squeeze into already overcrowded informal

6. "Housing Dilemma," *Business Day;* and Peter Honey, "Spread of Squatter Shacks Reflects Policy Failure," *Financial Mail,* March 5, 2004.

7. Kecia Rust, Andreas Bertoli, and David Gardner, "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy, Opinion Piece 1: Housing Pressures, Residential Opportunities, and Asset Investment Choices," report prepared for City of Johannesburg Corporate Planning Unit, June 23, 2005, pp. 33, 39 (henceforth, referred to as "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy").

8. Interview with Kecia Rust, consultant in housing finance and development policy, June 1, 2006; "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy," pp. 11–12; and Trafalgar Properties, *The Trafalgar Inner City Report 2006* (unpublished pamphlet, pp. 5–12, 20–26).
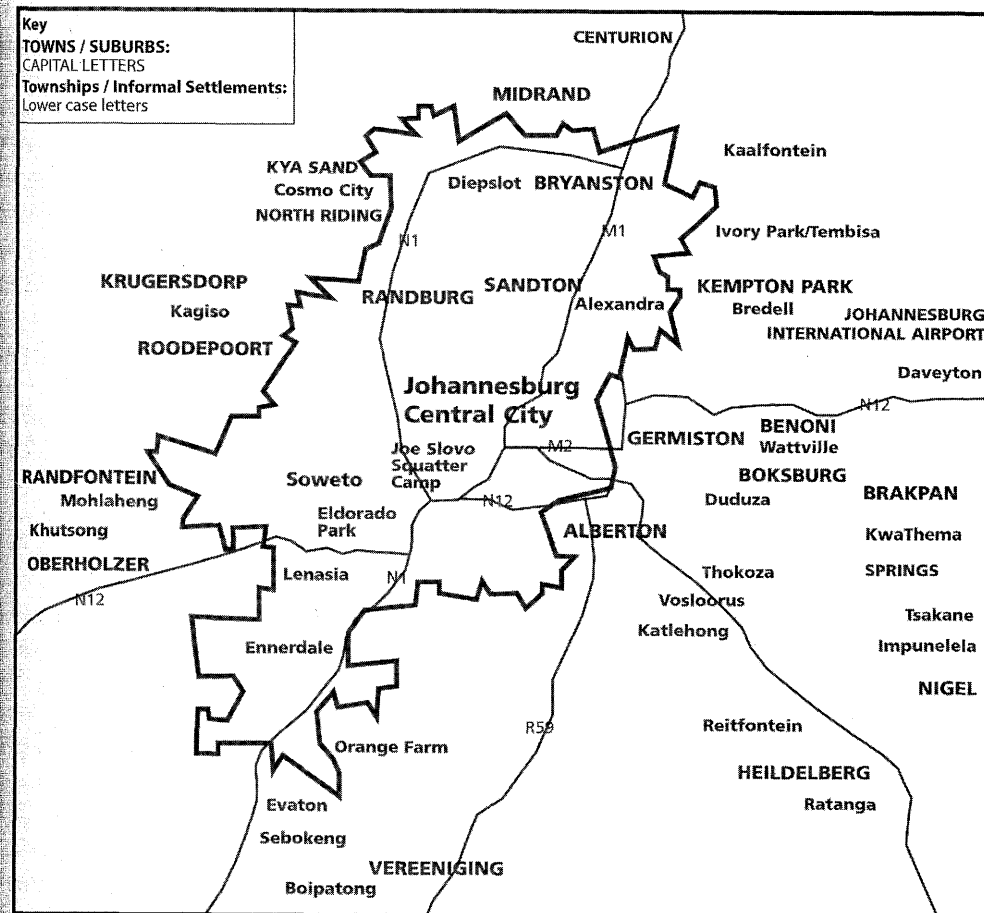
Figure 4. Settled Townships and Informal Settlements in the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Region. By Stephanie McClintick

settlements, or to unlawfully occupy vacant land and erect makeshift shelters with whatever materials are available.[9] While state housing officials have pledged to provide land and suitable shelter for the urbanizing poor, they have also drawn a clear line: they vowed to meet unauthorized and illegal occupations of land with prosecutions and evictions.[10]

9. See Mungo Sottot and Tangeni Amupadhi, "A Human Flood Is Drowning Gauteng," *Mail & Guardian,* May 10–16, 1997; and South African Cities Network, "Govt Shift on Shack Dwellers," *Mail & Guardian,* July 13–19, 2004.

10. Rachel Swarns, "South Africa Confronts Landless Poor."

The social origins of bitter contestation over access housing on the peri-urban fringe of the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region can be traced to the convergence of rising expectations of impoverished, landless squatters who literally have nowhere else to go, on the one hand, and the failure of market-led policies, based on the principle of willing buyer, willing seller, to provide sufficient land for the landless and adequate homes for the homeless, on the other. State housing and land policies, particularly after the late 1990s, have not catered to the truly destitute (Bond 2000, 122–155; Huchzermeyer 2003b). With the end of apartheid, the new ANC-dominated government pledged to redistribute 30 percent of white-owned land to landless black people in a time frame of five years. But more than a decade later, the government has managed to transfer only about 2 or 3 percent of the land into black hands. Market-led policies have failed to deliver sufficient land for housing into the hands of the millions of truly desperate people from whose ranks the Bredell squatters were drawn. Because they were unable to meet the qualifications that would make them eligible for access to formal housing, the poorest of the poor have been left to fend for themselves in seeking rudimentary shelter wherever they could find it.[11] Yet despite notable achievements in the field of housing delivery, the availability of affordable residential accommodation for the poor has failed to keep up with the accelerating demand for affordable accommodation. Postapartheid housing authorities have pointed with pride to their accomplishments: the construction of around 1.6 million formal dwellings in authorized residential sites over the decade beginning in 1995—a 10 percent increase in the country's formal housing stock. Nevertheless, the official backlog has continued to expand.[12] Between 1996 and 2004 the numbers of informal settlements in South Africa's largest cities grew by about 30 percent. Whereas there were an estimated forty-seven informal settlements in Gauteng Province in 1990, the number skyrocketed to around two hundred by 2006. In 2004 somewhere between seven and eight million impoverished people—mostly but not exclusively South African citizens—lived in "unsatisfactory dwellings"—many with the legal status of squatters, that is, as unauthorized occupants of the land on which they had constructed rudimentary shelter.[13] The lack of affordable

and decent housing has come to symbolize in a highly visible way not only the enduring legacy of apartheid rule but also the failure of the democratically elected government to respond to the material needs of its poorest citizens (Guillaume and Houssay-Holzschuch 2002). Newcomers have flocked to the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region not only from the impoverished rural hinterlands but also from across the African continent. Along with malnourished and unhealthy bodies, irregular housing (overcrowded backyard shacks in existing townships, illegal occupation of unused buildings, and makeshift shelter of any kind) is perhaps the most visible expression of urban poverty. Municipal authorities have tried to upgrade authorized settlements and to contain the spread of unlawful occupation of land. Despite these efforts, unlawful squatter encampments have mushroomed in the peri-urban fringe (Huchzermeyer 2004, 1–4, 83–104).

City officials have acknowledged a catalog of problems that have plagued the supply of affordable residential dwellings. Housing delivery programs have lacked the social and economic development components required to address historical disparities in access to decent residential accommodation. Land prices in more desirable locations near the main transport nodes and employment cores are invariably higher than large tracts of land situated on the metropolitan periphery. Private investment in residential dwellings has remained stagnant in the historically marginalized townships and new low-income settlements. Even where housing delivery has occurred, the provision of social services and physical infrastructure has lagged behind community requirements.[14]

The combination of resource constraints, lack of capacity, and unwillingness to interfere in the free play of market forces has limited the capability of state housing authorities to deliver affordable shelter for the poor. Almost from the start, the entire system of housing delivery became entangled in numerous problems, including cumbersome bureaucratic approval processes, the creation of such stringent criteria for household eligibility that countless numbers of the poorest of the poor failed to qualify for subsidies, and agonizingly long waiting lists (Dewar 1999, 368–375).[15] At the same time, allegations of unauthorized expenditure and outright fraud, financial irregularities involving builders and contractors, shoddy construction, and unwarranted queue jumping have undermined public confidence in the fairness, propriety, and equity in housing delivery.[16] No longer willing to wait patiently for

11. Editorial, "Nobody Wins," *Mail & Guardian,* July 8–13, 2001; *Pretoria News,* "Fears of a Mugabe-Style Land Grab Stalk SA's Farmlands," January 14, 2004; Zakes Hlatshwayo, "Land Invasions Are Inevitable if the State's Hands Are Tied," *Mail & Guardian,* June 15–21, 2002; and Richard Tomlinson, "Subsidies Benefit Only a Few," *Mail & Guardian,* September 22–28, 2001.

12. "Housing Dilemma," *Business Day.*

13. According to the South African Human Rights Commission, close to eleven hundred informal settlements blossomed around the country in 2001 alone. For quotation, see *SAPA,* "Failure to Spend 'Contributes to Housing Backlog,'" April 22, 2003; Jan Hennop, "South African Township Riot Highlights Housing Problem," *Agence France-Presse,* July 7, 2004; and South African Cities Network, "Govt Shift on Shack Dwellers"; interview with Graeme Gotz.

14. "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy," pp. 28–29.

15. Rapule Tabane and Fikile-Ntsikelelo Moya, "R43m Spent on Ghost Houses," *The Star,* December 11, 2002; and Yolanda Mufweba, "Gauteng Housing Department Explains Expenses," *Saturday Star,* January 16, 2004.

16. "Gauteng Declares War against Corruption in Housing," "R400 Gauteng Housing Scam," and "Shambles in Jo'burg Housing: JHD Demoted," *Housing in Southern Africa* (June 2003): 1, 2, 4.

state housing officials to fulfill their promise of delivering adequate shelter to those in need, homeless squatters in Johannesburg and elsewhere have seized whatever opportunities arise to occupy land without official authorization (Huchzermeyer 2003b).[17]

Privileged Insiders and Excluded Outsiders: The Social Roots of the Housing Crisis

> The invaders came to the wasteland [Bredell] by the hundreds two weeks ago, dragging splintering planks, rusting metal sheets, and wilting squares of cardboard....Here, in the ragged stretch of land owned by government agencies and a private farmer, the poor believed they were finally tasting the fruits of black liberation.
>
> RACHEL SWARNS

> Steve: have you got a nice big bedroom? All we want is a piece of ground the size of your kitchen. How many can sleep in your garage? We don't want land that belongs to others, there is enough land in this country for everyone. Please tell us, Steve, how long must we wait?
>
> PLACARDS HELD BY BREDELL SQUATTERS AND ADDRESSED TO MINISTER OF SAFETY AND SECURITY STEVE TSHWETE

At first glance the July 2001 land invasion at Bredell seemed an unlikely catalyst for such a bitter standoff that pitted homeless squatters—who vowed to die rather than leave—against municipal authorities equally adamant about driving the unwanted intruders off Elandsfontein farm and restoring the place to its rightful owners. After all, homeless squatters in small numbers had continuously occupied state-owned land at Bredell since 1995.[18] Over the years, the Ekurhuleni metropolitan council on the East Rand engaged in an ongoing battle with the squatters, paying a private company named ACME Training to evict them and tear down their makeshift dwellings, at a cost of somewhere between R360 and R485 for each shack demolished.[19]

What distinguished the Bredell case from similar actions at other times and other places was that this particular land occupation coincided with heightened

17. Nawaal Deane, "Removals Spark Legal Battle," *Mail and Guardian,* July 7–13, 2001; Evidence wa ka Ngobeni and Nawaal Deane, "Bredell Squatters Challenge Evictions," *Mail & Guardian,* July 21–27, 2001; and Ngwako Modjadji and Nawaal Deane, "In Search of the 'Promised Land,'" *Mail & Guardian,* July 1–6, 2001.

18. Rachel Swarns, "South Africa Confronts Landless Poor"; the placards are cited in Evidence wa ka Ngobeni, Bongani Mjola, and Khadija Magardie, "'Save Us from Hell on Earth.'".

19. Evidence wa ka Ngobeni, "E. Rand Council Moves Illegal?" *Mail & Guardian,* July 14–20, 2001.

anxiety over the unsettled state of affairs in neighboring Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe had cavalierly sponsored widespread seizures of white-owned farms despite worldwide condemnation. Regardless of the political motivations that lay behind those expropriations, the sheer scale and scope of the seizures of white-owned farms in Zimbabwe raised the profile of the land question in South Africa and the region. Municipal authorities in urban South Africa reacted to these unfolding events with grave concern, fearing that unauthorized land occupations could trigger a chain reaction of lawlessness that would disrupt political stability and undermine international investor confidence (Greenberg 2004a, 6–7).

The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)—a South African opposition political party that openly expressed admiration for the orchestrated land invasions in Zimbabwe—aided and abetted the squatters at Bredell, setting up registration booths at Elandsfontein farm and luring homeless squatters with the promise of plots on which to erect their own shacks in exchange for a R25 "donation." African National Congress (ANC) officials responded viscerally to the involvement of the PAC, accusing that group's leaders of seeking to capitalize on growing land hunger in urban South Africa by encouraging the landless to seize white-owned farms as part of the "unfinished business of liberation."[20] There was some truth to the claim, put forward by the journalist Patrick Bulger, that the PAC had successfully "stolen the march on the ANC government, whose progress in 'settling' the land issue has been conspicuous by its failure." In its eagerness to offer the impression that it would not allow land invasions of the sort that brought ruin to Zimbabwe, the ANC leadership "turned quickly to derision and slander [of its political opponents] and to the courts and the police bully boys of yesteryear to impose its will."[21] In seeking legal justification to authorize the forcible removal of the unwanted squatters, the owners of Elandsfontein farm argued before the Pretoria High Court that the land occupation posed serious and immediate safety risks to the squatters since the property was crisscrossed by electricity pylons, railway tracks, and an underground oil pipe. They also contended that the squatters faced the risk of contracting diseases like cholera and dysentery, and the cold weather posed a fire hazard due to the possibility of runaway shack fires.[22]

20. Mariette le Roux, "Invaders Taking What Belongs to Them—PAC," *SAPA,* July 5, 2001; *SAPA,* "Land Is the Unfinished Revolution, Says PAC," August 14, 2001 (quotation comes from this source); Anele ka Nene and Mariette le Roux, "'Land Owners' Threaten Violence if Evicted," *SAPA,* July 14, 2001; and Andrew Donaldson, "Still No Sign of Missing Bredell Land Money," *Sunday Times,* August 5, 2001.

21. Patrick Bulger, "Battlelines Are Drawn." See also Rapule Tabane, "PAC Members 'Selling' Land to Homeless," *The Star,* July 2, 2001.

22. The owners of the land were the Ekurhuleni municipality, Transnet, and a private company called Groengras Eiendomme—along with servitude holder Escom. There were unsubstantiated

The bitter and tragic standoff at Bredell highlighted the scope and depth of land hunger that had simmered largely unnoticed since the end of apartheid. As an ominous gesture of possible futures, the squatter occupation of Elandsfontein farm inspired a spate of similar illegal land invasions by homeless squatters, in places as far apart as Rietvlei and Olifantsfontein outside Pretoria and at numerous sites around Cape Town.[23] In the weeks following the upsurge of land invasions, state officials worried aloud about the negative impact of these illegal actions, fearing that international investors would tar them with the same brush as the worldwide condemnation of the land invasions in Zimbabwe. South African Reserve Bank governor Tito Mboweni went so far as to cite the Bredell land invasion as one of several factors that contributed to the depreciation of the rand (as it plunged to record lows against the U.S. dollar). Municipal authorities insisted that they would not tolerate illegal land occupations, vowing to use the courts to prosecute squatter leaders and pledging a willingness to resort to physical force if necessary to dislodge unauthorized land invaders.[24]

While the property owners inundated the courts and the popular media with pious platitudes about lawless land invaders, the unmitigated catastrophe that resulted from forcible evictions of homeless squatters faded from view. Most shack-dwellers ejected from their impermanent home at Bredell were scattered to the four winds, and their fate is unknown. Yet it is possible from journalist accounts to trace the harrowing journey of fifty-four homeless families evicted from Bredell. This seemingly aimless odyssey of these poor people represents in microcosm the hapless plight of countless numbers of unwanted squatters who have become invisible vagabonds in the land of their birth. Following their expulsion from Bredell, these itinerant families (who had been informed by Bavumile Vilakazi, the mayor of the Ekurhuleni metropolitan council, to "go back where they came from") found refuge for six months at several churches in Tembisa on the East Rand. But after their continued presence exhausted the patience of parishioners, they were once again forced to move on. Following

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rumors that the Ekurhuleni metropolitan council had agreed three months before the crisis erupted to sell the property to a Dutch company with plans to establish a game lodge on the disputed land. Baldwin Ndaba, "Tshwete Is a Drunkard, PAC Tells Squatters," *The Star,* July 11, 2001; Allan Seccombe, "State Urges Court to Evict Squatters," *Reuters,* July 9, 2001; and *SAPA,* "Judge Halts State Bid to Evict R25 Squatters," *The Star,* July 6, 2001.

23. *The Star,* "Police Muscle In to Stop Second Land Grab," July 9, 2001; Nashira Davids, "Builders Chased Away as Homeless Despair," *Sunday Times,* October 14, 2001; Tom Hood, "Land Invaders Win Court Battle," *Sunday Times,* September 30, 2001; and Murray Williams, "Bredell Struggle Inspires Cape Squatters," *Cape Argus,* July 14, 2001.

24. Ed Stoddard, "Tempers Flare as Police Arrest Land Invaders," *Sunday Independent,* July 5, 2001; Estelle Randall, "Mboweni Says Bredell a Factor in Falling Rand," *Sunday Independent,* September 28, 2001; and *Cape Argus,* "PAC Man Blamed for the Rand's Latest Woes," August 22, 2001.

an agreement reached between the South African Council of Churches and the provincial housing authorities, the squatters were transported to land set aside in Palm Ridge near Alberton. Yet local residents objected to the unwanted influx of so many newcomers, so police moved them first to the Elden Park police station before finding them shelter at the Elden Park fire station, where they stayed for several days. Eventually they were transported to another site in Palm Ridge called Phase 4, where they were unceremoniously dumped without water, sanitation facilities, or proper building materials.[25]

Although the tragic saga of the Bredell squatters received worldwide media attention, the predicament of dozens of other squatter encampments scattered across the urban landscape remained in the shadows, outside the purview of public discussion or debate. Land invasions have dramatized the failures of the state administration to deliver on its pledge to provide decent shelter for the poor. They signal that the challenge of homelessness on the metropolitan edge cannot be solved simply by building brick houses for those who can afford to pay for rates and services, but by concentrating on providing land and services for the most marginalized citizens—the new immigrants to the cities and those spilling out of overcrowded townships. In the face of increasing land hunger among the urban poor, municipal authorities have appealed for patience while at the same time pursuing what amount to "strong-arm tactics against those who illegally invade land" (Ramutsindela 2002).[26]

This new wave of unchecked urbanization that began in the early 1990s has posed new challenges for the Johannesburg municipality. City officials have grappled with constructing a coherent urbanization strategy within existing budgetary and administrative constraints. But most new residents who have flocked to Johannesburg live in wretched conditions. They rarely have access to clean water, sewage facilities, or refuse removal (Greenberg 2004b, 31–33). Squatters exist in a permanent state of legal and social insecurity because, as a general rule, they usually build shacks on the land they inhabit without official authorization and are hence under the constant threat of eviction. This insecurity of tenure has greatly diminished any incentive for shack dwellers to invest in improvements, and it has only exacerbated social stress associated with fear of eviction (Guillaume and Houssay-Holzschuch 2002).[27]

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25. Baldwin Ndaba and Gudrun Heckl, "Ray of Hope after Day of Tears at Bredell," *The Star,* July 12, 2001; *SAPA,* "Churches to Accommodate Evicted Squatters," July 12, 2001; Chimaimba Banda, "Land for Bredell Squatters Remains Elusive," *The Star,* December 2, 2001; and Rapule Tabane, "Bredell Invaders Still Waiting for Their Land," *The Star,* December 19, 2001.

26. Marianne Merten and Evidence wa ka Ngobeni, "Poor People Are Not Stupid," *Mail & Guardian,* July 1–6, 2001.

27. Mungo Sottot and Tangeni Amupadhi, "A Human Flood"; Bongani Majola, "Wits Offers Postgraduate Program in Housing," *Mail & Guardian,* July 27–August 3, 2001; and South African Cities Network, "Govt Shift on Shack Dwellers."

In each of the three components of urban growth (namely, job creation, housing policy, and provision of basic services), the short-term costs have been disproportionately borne by the poorest of the poor. The groundwork of post-apartheid housing policy was negotiated during the period of political transition from 1990 to 1994. After a lengthy process of consultation, municipal authorities settled on a housing delivery policy that in the end has amounted to little more than a market-driven, developer-led approach to the provision of shelter. In formulating their housing delivery policies after the end of apartheid, city officials borrowed heavily from what were regarded as international best practices. Amid great fanfare the housing department under ANC and Communist Party stalwart Joe Slovo promoted a program of mass housing delivery that initially promised the construction of one million houses a year. The driving force behind this mass housing initiative was the active engagement of private banks and construction companies, where municipal authorities used the developmentalist rhetoric of building public-private partnerships and mobilizing mortgage bonding financing from private lenders (Bond 2000, 35–67; Desai and van Heusden 2002). For those low-income nuclear families who qualified, municipal authorities offered a once-only R16,000 subsidy, a sum that covered the costs of installing the basic infrastructure required to deliver water, sanitation, and electricity to households. The amount of financial assistance was calculated on the basis of the number of household members served. Yet in the terms of stringent eligibility requirements, persons living in backyard shacks in the townships were not able to obtain a housing subsidy to improve their dwellings. HIV- and AIDS-infected adults and children who were separated from their families were similarly ineligible for a housing subsidy (Huchzermeyer 2003).[28] Financing for new houses or improvements to existing structures was largely skewed toward those with higher incomes because they had the capacity to gain access to bank credit (Bond 2000, 136, 145, 146; Porteous and Naicker 2003).

Municipal housing policies and programs have proven incapable of dealing with the vast backlog of promised shelter or responding to new demands for affordable accommodation. In circumstances where municipalities have provided housing stock, building practices have typically taken the form of the construction of mass, monofunctional, site-and-service schemes that are "undertaken on disconnected parcels of land and characterized by a low-density, undifferentiated blanket of freestanding housing shells" (Khan and Ambert 2003, xxv; McDonald 1998).[29] Despite the official promise of integrated cities

28. Richard Tomlinson, "Subsidies Benefit Only a Few"; and interview with Kecia Rust.
29. "Site-and-service" schemes refer to subsidized housing programs where the municipality assembles the land and provides basic infrastructure (roads, sewerage, electricity, water) but relies

and compact cities, municipalities have largely built these subsidized housing projects at the metropolitan edge, thereby reinforcing existing spatial patterns inherited from apartheid town-planning initiatives and creating new locational imbalances. The resulting socioeconomic hardships—for instance, long-distance commutes to places of work—for those who are forced to live there has added to the burden of living in informal settlements (Royston 2003, 234).

For the most part, housing authorities have looked on mushrooming, self-built squatter encampments as illegal, disorderly, and unwanted "blots on the landscape." Housing intervention has been directed at removing this "scourge of informal settlements" and at preventing the outbreak of unauthorized land invasions. Critics have charged these policies are actually counterproductive, simply replacing one set of harmful dynamics with another.[30] Despite official condemnation and the persistent threat of forced removal, squatter collectives have little choice but to seek makeshift shelter wherever they can find it (Khan 2003; Huchzermeyer 2003b, 2004). Housing experts have increasingly voiced concerns that this kind of technocratic intervention paradigm—with its narrow fixation on externally defined, market-driven, and product-oriented solutions to the eradication of informal dwellings—has failed to take into account local needs. The mandate to deliver quantities of standardized housing units has pushed aside concerns with existing community organization, local initiative, collective ideas for improvements, and fragile livelihoods that depend on informally established land-use patterns and interhousehold ties (Huchzermeyer 2004, 3, 5–7, 234–236).

While most informal settlements and low-income housing projects are concentrated south of the central city, almost all new jobs have been created in the urbanizing north, especially along the M1 highway between Johannesburg and Pretoria (Tomlinson et al. 2003, 14). The predicament in Johannesburg is complicated by a shortage of suitable land for human habitation, stubborn resistance by mostly middle-class homeowners to poor black settlements encroaching on their suburban neighborhoods, and a municipal development strategy that for all intents and purposes would like to "wish away informal settlements."[31] State housing officials have targeted informal settlements for

on self-help for dwelling construction. Housing consists of detached, single-family units laid out in long rows on individual plots. Building materials include brick exteriors and some wooden framing (Huchzermeyer 2004, 27, 30, 50, 55).

30. Quotations from "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy," pp. 11–12, 27–28, 45–46; and interview with Kecia Rust.

31. Peter Honey, "Spread of Squatter Shacks." It should be noted that there are disputes regarding definitions of housing backlogs and numbers of unsatisfactory dwellings. See "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy," pp. 11–12, 28–29.

eradication, earmarking some for upgrading while condemning others to demolition alongside the relocation of their squatter residents to other sites. Critics have questioned the practical wisdom of this approach, arguing that formalization or upgrading of existing informal settlements invariably means reducing the overall number of shack dwellings to make room for roadways, sewerage pipes, and power lines (Huchzermeyer 2003b, 2004, 3, 5–7, 145–178). It also requires the relocation of residents to planned site-and-service schemes such as Vlakfontein, southwest of the city, or the sprawling informal settlement at Diepsloot to the north. These sites have become so overcrowded with new-comers that their flimsy infrastructure has been stretched to the limit, and they are located far from jobs and employment opportunities, schools, and other amenities that drew the squatters to the city in the first place. Aside from dis-rupting the lives of desperate people, the interventionist practice of shuffling homeless squatters from one temporary transit camp to another has failed to diminish their number, but has merely raised the prospect of continued land invasions and reinforced the shadowy practice of shack farming, whereby un-scrupulous land owners take advantage of the plight of the homeless poor by inviting them onto their land in exchange for a fee.[32]

Unauthorized Land Seizures: Low-Intensity War on the Peri-Urban Edge

> Tumbledown shacks fashioned from corrugated iron and cardboard jostle for space with stagnant pools of sewage [at Modderklip]. Dogs forage on heaps of rubbish and the singsong lilt of Portuguese travels along the shantytown's dusty alleys. At first glance, this sprawling slum could be in any city in Portuguese-speaking Africa. Yet this corner of South Africa and the shantytown, filled with migrants from neighbouring Mozambique, has sprung up on what were once the lush maize fields of a white-owned farm.
>
> David Blair

During the early to late 1990s the number of land invasions escalated dra-matically both in anticipation of the end of apartheid and in the immediate aftermath of the transition to parliamentary democracy.[33] In June 1994, two months after the historical April 1994 liberation elections, municipal authori-ties, civic organizations, and representatives of squatter communities agreed

32. Peter Honey, "Spread of Squatter Shacks"; personal observation, shack farming near Kya Sand industrial area, north of Randburg, 4 June 2006.

33. David Blair, "Shanty Town Battle Sparks Land Grab Fears for S African Farmers," *Daily Telegraph* (London), December 15, 2004.

to a moratorium on land invasions and evictions. According to the agreement, squatters settled before June 1994 would not face eviction proceedings. But all land invasions after this period would be considered illegal and hence subject to forcible removal. Municipal authorities used this agreement to carry out a number of evictions of unwanted squatter encampments from such places as Moffat Park (south of Johannesburg), the Far East Bank of Alexandra, Park-town in the older northern suburbs, Eldorado Park (near Soweto), Langlaagte (on the western fringe of the city center), Thokoza Unit F (East Rand), Tembisa (near Kempton Park), Kaserne and Liefde en Vrede (both southeast of the cen-tral business district), and Nietgedacht (near the Lion Park in the far north). These forcible removals—sometimes conducted with the kind of indifferent brutality that characterized the darkest days of apartheid—highlighted the growing housing crisis for the swelling ranks of homeless squatters who were ceaselessly on the move in search of suitable places to find shelter.[34]

In numerous locations earmarked for upgrading and economic revitaliza-tion, the technocratic application of land-use planning has meant that infor-mal settlements and makeshift squatter encampments have been cleared to allow for the more rational, efficient, and productive use of the vacated space (Greenberg 2004a, 11). While examples could be multiplied many times over, a few cases should suffice to illustrate the persistent use of forcible removals of unauthorized squatter settlements to meet municipal policy objectives.[35]

At Kliptown (Soweto) the construction of the mammoth heritage project and tourist attraction—named Walter Sisulu Square to mark the historic sign-ing of the Freedom Charter in 1955—required the eviction of hundreds of squatter households in ramshackle shanties close to the site.[36] At Eikenhof in-formal settlement (otherwise known as the Jacksonville squatter camp), south

34. *SAPA*, "Police Monitor Land Invasion at Nietgedacht," October 26, 1996; Thuli Nhlapo, "Squatters Freeze While Mayor Eats Salmon," *Mail & Guardian*, March 1–8, 2001; and Glenda Daniels, "Government Officials Pass the Buck on Forced Removals," *Mail & Guardian*, Febru-ary 16–22, 2001.

35. There are numerous cases of forcible removal of squatters from unauthorized shack settlements on the peri-urban fringe. I mention several here. For the poignant example of the destruction of the Harry Gwala informal settlement near Wattville on the East Rand, see Lee Rondganger, "Commotion as Red Ants Evict Squatters," *The Star*, May 31, 2006. Angry squatters barricaded Beyers Naude Drive after law enforcement agencies demolished shacks at Zandspruit near Honeydew, west of Johannesburg; see Poloko Tau, "Many Homeless as Cops Destroy Illegal Shacks," *The Star*, September 26, 2006. In a graphic display of brute force, the Red Ants forcibly removed forty thousand squatters and razed their shacks at the Angelo and Dunuza informal settlements in Germiston. As the Red Ants moved in to demolish the shack settlement built on a mine dump on the Main Reef Road, they were greeted with a barrage of rocks and stones. See Lee Rondganger, "Homes Torn Down in Blitz on Mine Dump," *The Star*, June 2, 2005; and *SAPA*, "Squatters Move Out Overnight," June 2, 2005.

36. A. Milazi, "Makeover in Kliptown," *Financial Mail*, November 28, 2003, p. 35.

of Johannesburg, municipal authorities called on the Red Ants to carry out the forcible removal of three hundred families in order to make way for a cemetery. The families were then relocated to Vlakfontein, where the promised access to water and sanitation failed to meet their expectations. The municipal decision to demolish the site triggered internal strife, as residents were divided about the relocation, one group voluntarily moving to Vlakfontein and the other vowing to remain.[37] The squatter invasion of Modderklip farm next to Daveyton township outside Benoni eventually blossomed into the largest land grab in South Africa's postapartheid history. The six-year battle to remove the estimated forty thousand squatters highlighted the legal complexity of land and housing rights in the new South Africa, pitting private landowners, municipal authorities, and the landless in a triangular conflict over property rights and land for housing.[38]

The eviction of close to two thousand families from Mandelaville informal settlement in Diepkloof (Soweto) in January 2002 exemplifies the official practice of displacing settled squatter communities to make way for anticipated commercial development. Following five years of failed negotiations the City of Johannesburg obtained a court order authorizing local authorities to demolish the Mandelaville shack settlement and transport the squatters to overcrowded, violence-prone Durban Deep hostel near Roodeport. The first squatters at Mandelaville erected illegal shacks on the site in 1976, and many of the original inhabitants had remained in the intervening 26 years. Over time Mandelaville expanded into a sprawling squatter encampment of fifteen thousand residents crammed into a dense warren of ramshackle, one-room huts where movement was restricted to narrow dirt pathways. City officials complained that the squalid conditions, chronic joblessness, and lack of social amenities made the place a breeding ground for disease and lawlessness. In lengthy discussions with housing authorities, squatters refused offers to relocate to Silverton at a place called Snake Park, to Orange Farm, to Devland, and, finally, to Durban Deep. With the breakdown of negotiations, city officials turned to Wozani Security Company to carry out the demolition of the shack settlement and to forcibly remove residents and their meager possessions.[39]

After police arrested and handcuffed squatter leader Daniel Rabbie, the resistance to the forced removal dissipated. The efforts of angry residents to protect their homes were no match for the infamous Red Ants, who seemed

to take a sort of perverse delight in destroying tin shelters, scattering possessions, and harassing impoverished shack dwellers. As local Diepkloof residents cheered their departure, disconsolate squatters boarded trucks bound for Durban Deep hostel, a deserted mine compound that had once housed mine workers in overcrowded barracks. Although city officials assured them that the move was in their best interests, what the relocated squatters discovered at Durban Deep was far worse than what they had been promised. Upon arrival, the newcomers were met with hostility from residents from the nearby Sol Plaatje informal settlement, who had appealed without success to local authorities for permission to occupy the buildings allocated to the Mandelaville squatters. Months later, life for the former Mandelaville residents had changed very little. In a scathing report that focused on the callous disregard of the municipal authorities in handling the matter, the South African Human Rights Commission declared that the new arrivals were living under appalling and subhuman conditions at Durban Deep, in violation of their fundamental human rights. The mine compound was in a derelict state, with filthy walls and caved-in ceilings and without electricity, doors, bathrooms, or proper toilets. Four or five families shared a single-compound dwelling, partitioned into a kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms. Men, women, and children took turns using outdoor toilet facilities. Mandelaville had lacked running water and sanitation, was overcrowded, and had no street lights, but at least residents could get transport to work, children could go to school, and residents were close to shops and health clinics.[40] With the site finally cleared of unwanted squatters and fenced to prevent their return, the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) formally announced that the "prime property" in Diepkloof Zone 3 was available for commercial development. Proclaiming its intention to upgrade the area through commercial enterprise, the JPC promised to bring "retail and business facilities closer to the community."[41]

Sites of Impossibility: Land Hunger and Squatting on the Metropolitan Fringe

The right to decent shelter is inextricably tied to access to land. For the shelterless poor, the unauthorized occupation of vacant or under-utilized

37. *Sunday Times,* "Up, Up, and Away," January 26, 2003; *SAPA,* "Eikenhof Squatter Camp Relocation Voluntary," January 26, 2003; and *SAPA,* "Two Comrades Arrested," January 26, 2003.

38. *Sowetan,* "40,000 Squatters Take Over Farm," July 20, 2001; and David Blair, "Shanty Town Battle Sparks Land Grab Fears."

39. For this and the following paragraphs, see Baldwin Ndaba, "Tension in Mandelaville as Eviction Starts," *The Star,* January 7, 2002; and *The Star,* "A Community Uprooted," January 7, 2002.

40. Baldwin Ndaba, "Residents Cheer Squatters' Eviction," *The Star,* January 8, 2002; Thabang Mokopanele, "Squatter Families Going to Durban Deep Hotel," *Business Day,* January 8, 2002; "Khumalo Street Gets Down to Business," *Mail & Guardian,* January 19–25, 2002; and Thabo Mohlala, "Down in the Dumps," *Mail & Guardian,* March 30–April 5, 2002.

41. Nick Wilson, "Opportunity for Developers in Soweto," *Business Day,* November 19, 2003; and on-site visit with Trevor Ngwane, community activist and resident of Pimville, Soweto, June 8, 2006.

land—what municipal authorities have referred to as illegal land invasions—has come to symbolize a clever tactical maneuver in an ongoing and wider struggle over the right to decent and affordable accommodation. Homeless squatters who have occupied land on the peri-urban fringe without official permission have revealed through their collective actions an awareness of the necessity of cooperation and collaboration. For Michel de Certeau (1984, xiv–xv), urban dwellers who are compelled by necessity to occupy indeterminate, unauthorized, or illegitimate space must rely on various clandestine tactics, that is, spatial practices that involve taking advantage of gaps, fissures, or voids in the structure of authority in order to seize propitious moments in time. Along with such inventive actions as the occupation of abandoned buildings in the inner city, unauthorized squatting on the metropolitan fringe epitomizes these makeshift tactics that de Certeau has celebrated, or that James Scott (1985, xvii–xviii, 331–333) has called "weapons of the weak" and Asef Bayat (1997a, 53–72; 1997b) has termed the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary." Unauthorized seizures of under-utilized or vacant land have become the dominant method of redistributing property through the self-activity of landless squatters. Although these collective actions indicate active agency and deliberate choice, one must avoid the temptation to overly romanticize land seizures, since they frequently involve competition, contention, and intimidation in combination with cooperation, reciprocity, and coordination (Simone 2004a, 2004b, 12–13, 95–96, 205–206).

The proliferation of informal squatter settlements on the urban fringe has brought about the horizontal extension of the metropolitan boundaries of Johannesburg. A quick glimpse at the scale and scope of land invasions that have mushroomed along both sides of the Golden Highway (R553) that runs south from Soweto to the Vaal triangle represents perhaps an exaggerated version of the general trend. Beginning in the early 1990s, at least a dozen or more separate squatter settlements sprang up along this so-called highway of zinc in anticipation of the postapartheid dispensation. At an average of every five kilometers from Eldorado Park (abutting Soweto) to Sebokeng approximately 50 kilometers south, shantytowns sprawled haphazardly along both sides of the R553 freeway. Nearly three-quarters of a million impoverished people have taken up temporary residence in makeshift shacks that are constructed of corrugated iron, sheet metal, scrap wood, and plastic sheeting. Two squatter encampments—Freedom Park and St. Martin's Trust—ramble down a hillside, opposite Eldorado Park. Mjazana was erected just across the main road. Thembelihle and Protea South cropped up to the west, near Lenasia. Residents draw their water from taps in the yards of homes located in nearby townships. About eight kilometers farther south, squatters had poured into Vlakfontein and Grasmere, abutting the Ennerdale railway station. Weiler's Farm spread out

across the highway. A small shantytown called Eikenhof came next. The sprawling shack settlement of Orange Farm, housing perhaps 10 percent of the total population of Johannesburg, and its smaller northern appendage called Sweetwaters (along with the Kwamajazana squatter settlement) were located across the Golden Highway. Drieziek 4, Evaton North, and Ithobvallen Ntshanyane (next to the Sebokeng hostel and Zone 16) followed next along the highway, around five kilometers south. Inkatha refugees who fled from KwaMadala hostel settled at John Duoy, a grim place set back off the highway on the right. Immediately after the historic April 1994 elections that brought the ANC to power, four new squatter settlements sprang into existence. Long-hidden homelessness in the older, established townships—rather than rural-to-urban drift—underlay the explosion of shantytowns. Recent arrivals reported that they were no longer willing to live with parents or older relatives, or to pay high rents for backyard shacks. What had begun as a trickle in the late 1980s turned into a flood, as accelerating numbers of newcomers pushed out of the overcrowded townships of the Vaal (Evaton, Sebokeng, Boipatong, Sharpeville) and from Soweto to the north, expunged from the plots and recession-mired white-owned farms in the surrounding countryside, driven from violence-plagued townships and informal settlements on the East and West Rand, and, arriving from Mozambique and Zimbabwe, poured into the mushrooming shantytowns.[42]

The chronic shortage of affordable housing for the poor is the root cause for the proliferation of self-built, informal squatter settlements that encircle the peri-urban fringe of the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region. The social origins of two informal settlements located southwest of the Johannesburg central city—Orange Farm and Thembelihle—are fairly typical of the general patterns of precarious living on the urban margins. Looking at these in some detail, then, can assist us in understanding the historically specific dynamics that distinguish these kinds of self-built housing from officially sanctioned site-and-service schemes, backyard shacks, and shantytowns located inside existing townships (Beall, Crankshaw, and Parnell 2002, 131–132).[43]

From its modest origins in 1990 Orange Farm has exploded into a sprawling informal settlement of almost Brazilian proportions. Confronted with the massive and growing demand for shelter, the Transvaal Provincial Administration began to construct various site-and-service schemes in the early 1990s in order to regulate the mounting influx of homeless squatters. With central Johannesburg forty-five kilometers to the north and Vereeiging twenty-nine kilometers to the south, this virtually treeless, barren expanse of land was from

42. Drew Forrest, "The Highway of Zinc," *Mail & Guardian*, September 22–30, 1995; and Peter Honey, "Spread of Squatter Shacks."

43. On-site visits to Orange Farm (June 14, 2003), Thembelihle (June 8, 2003), and Weiler's Farm (June 14, 2003).
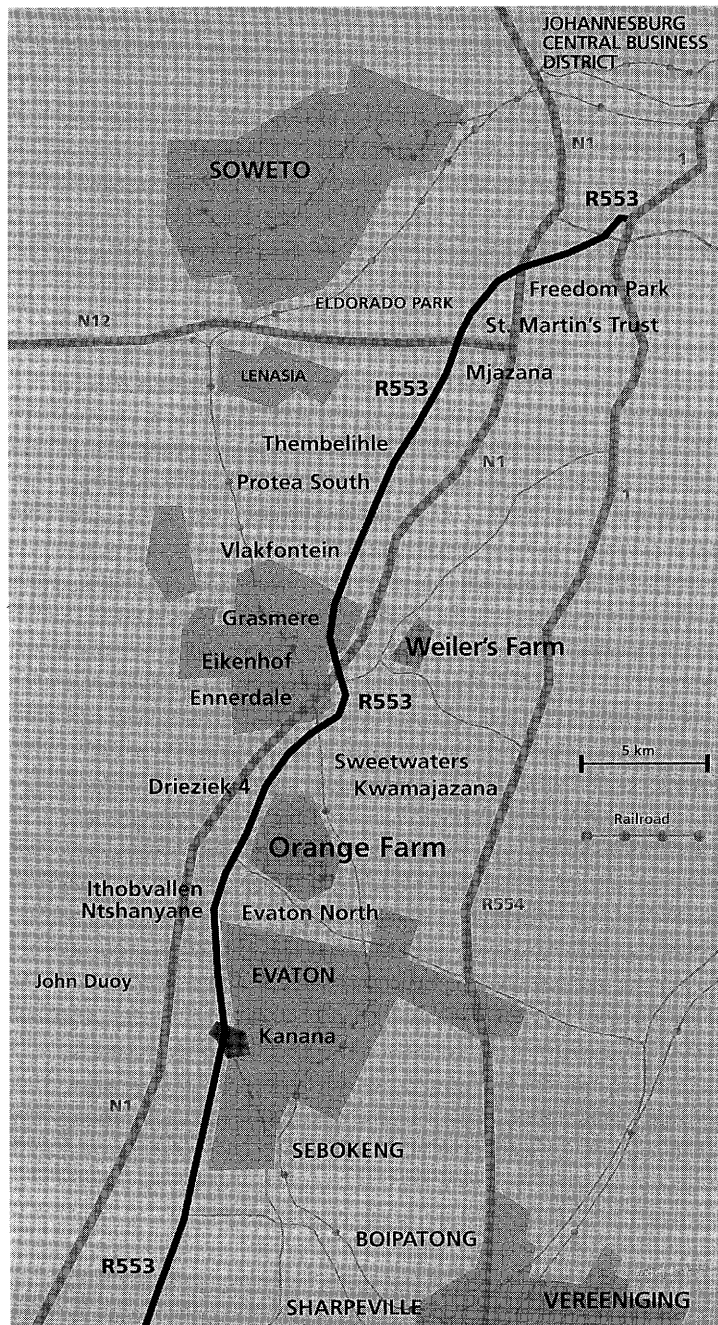
**Informal Settlements
North to South**
Freedom Park
St. Martin's Trust
Mjazana
Thembelihle
Protea South
Vlakfontein
Grasmere
Weiler's Farm
Eikenhof
Ennerdale
Sweetwaters
Kwamajazana
Drieziek 4
Orange Farm
Evaton North
Ithobvallen Ntshanyane
John Duoy
Kanana

Source:
Drew Forrest, "The Highway of Zinc," *Mail & Guardian*, 30 September 1995; and Peter Honey, "Spread of Squatter Shacks Reflects Policy Failure," *Financial Mail*, 5 March 2004; On site visit with Trevor Ngwane, community activist and resident of Pimville, Soweto, 8 June 2006.

Figure 5. Informal Settlements in 2006 along the Highway of Zinc (R553).
By Stephanie McClintick

the outset a dismal place with few social amenities. By 1995 the population of Orange Farm had skyrocketed to around 250,000 residents, where the number of individually serviced sites had expanded to thirty thousand units that were spread over seven separate extensions. The intensified pressure of so many new residents pouring into the area caused the established system of site allocation to collapse. To get a place on the waiting list for serviced sites, would-be homesteaders were required to pay a fee of R64. But because of *tjotjo* (bribery), people were allowed to jump ahead in the line. Just as ominously, self-appointed street committees had begun charging fees for access to laid-out sites in their zones of control. The fierce competition for land triggered ethnic animosities, as homeless squatters from Mozambique (called *Mashangaan*) were targeted for abuse. At nearby Drieziek 4, chaos reigned supreme. Widespread abuse of the waiting lists led the municipal authorities to suspend the allocation of serviced sites, thereby triggering unauthorized encroachment of land for shelter. Despite the great distances to places of work and the virtual absence of basic infrastructure and social services, Orange Farm—along with nearby Evaton to the south—has become one of the fastest-growing residential areas in South Africa, with an annual growth rate of 4 percent and a population in 2004 of around 400,000 people crammed into 102,000 housing units.[44]

Thembelihle (or "good hope" in Zulu) is an informal settlement that sprang up on vacant land next to Lenasia, an older, settled township set aside for urban residents of Indian origin and located about thirty kilometers southwest of the Johannesburg city center. The origins of Thembelihle can be traced to 1983, when a few entrepreneurs started to use the site (left vacant because it rested on unstable dolomite rock that is prone to sinkholes) as an open-air marketplace to sell home-brewed beer to domestic servants, gardeners, and casual laborers who worked in Lenasia. The first permanent residents arrived in 1986, and they quickly organized themselves into a civic organization with the proclaimed objective of regulating the use of the available space. The civic association laid out a grid-like street plan with relatively large, green plots, and several wide avenues. Newcomers poured into the area, squatting on whatever vacant land they could find. The squatter camp grew from an estimated six thousand residents in 1990 to nearly thirty thousand in 2004. The majority of squatters came from nearby Soweto where they had been living in overcrowded (and rack-rented) backyard shacks and single rooms. The fifty-eight hundred shacks in the sprawling settlement did not have access to water or to electricity, even though the Lenasia power lines pass directly above (Guillaume and Houssay-Holzschuch 2002, 90–91; and du Plessis and Wilson 2005, 86–91).

44. Drew Forrest, "Highway of Zinc"; and SoundRock Property, "Orange Farm Gets Upmarket Shopping Complex," *EPROP, Commercial Property Marketplace*, April 18, 2005.

Since 1995, local officials have sought to upgrade portions of the informal settlement at Thembelihle, introducing public toilets, garbage containers, and regular caravans for police and health services that have been located at the entrance. Residents have consolidated close to 20 percent of the shacks into permanent dwellings. Yet while some residents moved toward establishing permanent residence at the site, other squatter households—with a tenuous grip on security of tenure—were confronted with the real threat of forcible removal. From the start, apartheid-era municipal officials had regarded the land as unfit for human habitation and had vowed to evict the unauthorized squatters. With the transition to parliamentary democracy, the new local authorities resuscitated these earlier plans to relocate the unwanted land invaders by using the carrot of financial subsidies and land title in the relocated site and the stick of the threat of forced removal. As in the case of other municipal efforts to relocate illegal squatters, some households were lured away from Thembelihle with promises that they would acquire alternative housing sites, with title deeds, and be provided with bulk services and rudimentary infrastructures. Ironically, just as Thembelihle squatters abandoned their plots, impoverished residents from the nearby informal settlement of Vlakfontein invaded the vacated land. Yet a group of long-term residents of Thembelihle adamantly refused to move, claiming that the municipal plan to relocate them was politically motivated and linked to racial discrimination because middle-class Indian residents from Lenasia did not want to associate with impoverished black people, and arguing that the proposed subsidies were insufficient to build a proper house in another location (Guillaume and Houssay-Holzschuch 2002, 90–91).[45]

In June 2002 protesters from Thembelihle disrupted the Kliptown ceremonies marking the forth-seventh anniversary of the signing of the Freedom Charter. The lofty ideals of this historic document adopted in 1955 at the height of popular protests against the apartheid regime remained a mirage for the Thembelihle squatters. The irony was evident: while the five thousand dignitaries who attended the formal proceedings were celebrating the freedoms enshrined in the charter, including the right to decent housing, the protesters were demanding a reprieve from their forced relocation from Thembelilhe to new plots laid out at Vlakfontein.[46] The simmering tension reached a crisis point early the next month when residents of Thembelihle barricaded the squatter settlement to protest their forced removal to Vlakfontein, an area they claimed was without proper water and sanitation. A small splinter group went on a rampage in nearby Lenasia, petrol-bombing a school building, setting

45. Personal observation from on-site visit, June 8, 2006.
46. Rapule Tabane, "And There Shall Be Housing for All," *The Star,* July 26, 2002.

fire to several shops, looting businesses, ransacking a butcher shop, smashing cars, and attacking bystanders. The Thembelihle protesters acted on the belief that local Indian business owners were behind their relocation, but municipal authorities countered with the rationale that the sedimentary rock on which the squatter encampment had been erected made the area unfit for human habitation.[47]

Self-Built Dwellings and Vernacular Architecture: Symbolic Expressions of the Longing for Home

Whatever else shack settlements lack—and that's a great deal—they are not without creative planning and design talent.
ALAN LIPMAN (2006, 136)

In cities everywhere land-use policies typically emphasize the protection and regulation of the central business district and the urban core of upscale residential zones, affluent leisure sites, and commercial districts. The administrative support that property law provides for city users tends to progressively diminish as urban residents move toward the ex-urban periphery. The panoply of codes, bylaws, and regulations governing land use constitute the juridical-legal framework within which disputes are adjudicated. Operating outside the protective framework of the law, residents of unauthorized squatter settlements are vulnerable in the extreme. With no legal claim to remain where they are, squatters are subject to unilateral municipal actions designed to uproot them from their temporary abodes. To adjust to this precariousness, residents of unauthorized settlements tend to forego making long-term investments in improving their living arrangements beyond the most rudimentary shelter, or in developing social ties in their immediate surroundings. Instead, they seek out opportunities that enable them to spread their affiliations and connections across the city. This spatial strategy lays particular stress on movement rather than permanence, since it involves breadth of connections rather than depth of social relationships (Simone 2001a; 2001b; 2004a; 2004b, 206).

For the most part, land invaders have been astute trespassers. In the typical case, squatter leaders have been well-informed, careful planners who have been aware of their legal rights (however tenuous these may be) and of the reluctance of some municipal officials and local councils to confront them or to evict them (especially in the cold winter months) without the availability of alternative shelter. Those who have masterminded squatter invasions typically

47. Baldwin Ndaba, "Rioters Petrol Bomb School," *The Star,* July 18, 2002; Baldwin Ndaba and Thuli Nhlapo, "Children Flee Bombs and Riots in Terror," *The Star,* July 18, 2002; and Caiphus Kgosana, "Bail Keeps 'Human Dumping Zone' Seven in Jail," *The Star,* July 22, 2002.

follow a well-rehearsed scenario: often striking in the early morning hours, groups of men armed with bags of chalk and a flag assemble on an empty field. They quickly mark out plots with chalk, leaving open space for streets and pathways. In a matter of hours, they can lay out the grid of an enormous informal settlement. They then raise the flag (often the national colors), name the squatter camp after a prominent leader, and quickly bring in as many women and children as possible. Taken together, the steady accretion of land invasions that began slowly in the late 1980s and gathered momentum by the mid-1990s fundamentally transformed the spatial landscape of the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region. Whereas the old apartheid laws allowed state officials to erase squatter settlements with bulldozers, postapartheid legislation has empowered local magistrates to preside over applications for evictions and to investigate whether suitable land exists to which squatters can be transferred.[48]

The vast informal settlements that have proliferated since the end of apartheid share a number of characteristics that distinguish their built form from the older settled townships like Soweto, Lenasia, Eldorado Park, and Westbury (on the southwest); Katlehong, Voslorous, and Thokoza (southeast); Wattville (Benoni); KwaThema (Brakpan/Springs); Duduza (Boksburg); Daveyton (Far East Rand), Alexandra and Tembisa (northeast). In the typical case, informal settlements consist of jumbled rows of self-built shacks cobbled together from discarded wood, salvaged cardboard, corrugated iron, and whatever other detritus of urban living can be commandeered from the surrounding landscape. The makeshift shelters are small enclosures of no more than two or three rooms with barely enough space to accommodate those who crowd into them. The flimsy materials provide only a modicum of protection from the elements. Shacks are generally poorly equipped and sparsely furnished with conventional household amenities. Basic infrastructure such as electricity, running water, indoor plumbing, and paved roads is virtually nonexistent, or available only to a privileged few households. Because all available land is quickly occupied, there is no room for open spaces, parks, or sports facilities of any kind (Huchzermeyer 2004, 206–214).[49]

Although informal settlements may appear to be formless assemblages of makeshift shacks distributed haphazardly over featureless landscapes, the layouts of these rudimentary encampments typically conform to deliberate patterns that reflect a collective desire for convenience, security, and orderliness. Rows of shacks are positioned in relation to pathways linking residents to *spaza* shops (i.e., informal businesses operated from a home or shack), communal

48. Mungo Sottot and Tangeni Amupadhi, "A Human Flood."
49. Information based on numerous on-site visits to various squatter settlements from 2001 to 2005.

water outlets, exits and entrances to the settlements, and community assembly points of one sort or another. The physical and social arrangements of the squatter settlements are typically not fortuitous: they are negotiated communally, endorsed by informal peer pressure, and often backed by agreed-upon codes of conduct. While individual shelters are often crowded together in clusters, their placement generally avoids intrusion on neighbors. Residents design the internal organization of their shack dwellings along rationalized lines to optimize the efficient use of limited space. Typically, the interior spaces of shacks are at once private and public: a location for social relations, for reception, and for representation. Residents use this social space to enhance their sociocultural standing, to offer outsiders an ideal representation of household members, and to outwardly display the cultural values of those who live there. This interior serves both a useful function as living space and a sociocultural function as exhibitionary space: "the home ideal of many informal dwellers is the common representation of a modern, Western, middle-class interior." The interior serves as a platform for the display of material possessions: a television and other electrical appliances, crockery in a glassed case, second-hand furniture, and walls decorated with photographs of children and relatives. Shack dwellers place a premium on maintaining an immaculate appearance in the interior spaces and immediate exterior. Along with all the other visible signs of attentive housekeeping, residents regularly sweep the earthen forecourts, maintain "serried rows of neat washing lines," and cultivate flower gardens (Guillaume and Houssay-Holzschuch 2002, 89; Lipman 2006, 133–136).

The spatial organization of shack interiors mirrors the public space of informal settlements. For instance, shack dwellers frequently use their residences as launching pads for conducting informal businesses, for storing goods for sale, or for neighborhood meeting places. In the typical case, informal settlements lack the provision of basic infrastructure: water services (with the exception of standpipe), electricity, sewers, paved roads, and sidewalks. Municipal services such as schools, clinics, police, and emergency facilities are virtually nonexistent. Residents seek to meet their immediate survival needs either by providing informal services, such as crèches, *spaza* shops, and haircare. To a limited extent, municipal authorities have legally recognized the existence of some informal settlements and have sought to regularize their existence by providing upgraded services like communal taps and toilets, paved main roads, electricity, and fire and emergency services. Ironically, the uneven pattern of upgrading and improvements has put into motion the early signs of social differentiation, thereby engendering resentment, rivalry, and conflict (Guillaume and Houssay-Holzschuch 2002, 88–91).

As a general rule, municipal authorities and housing officials have looked upon informal settlements as aberrant and anarchic living arrangements that

deviate from the stated goal of formal housing with its standardized rules, bureaucratic procedures, and legible measurements. Yet there is mounting empirical evidence that suggests that these places are actually rational arrangements that are largely responsive to the immediate needs of their residents, often in the face of unresponsive policies (Huchzermeyer 2004, 179–226).[50] Since the material qualities of housing—its cost in time and money, its structural durability, its legality, and its physical design—are of fundamental concern to the inhabitants of informal squatter settlements, it should come as no surprise that this arena is one place where shack dwellers have advanced creative solutions to what appear to be intractable problems (Appadurai 2002, 36–37). Informal settlements often evolve in ways that are self-rationalizing, that is, the people who live there construct the socioeconomic networks that make their lives functional and create the kinds of social organizations that enable them to adapt to the demands of city living (Simone 2001a, 2004c).[51] Residents have used all sorts of inventive approaches to compensate for the woeful lack of amenities and basic infrastructure. For example, some shack dwellers have tapped into existing power lines and underground pipes to divert electricity and water to their places of residence. Others have erected solar panels on the roofs of their shacks and use storage batteries in order to provide sufficient electricity to power such modern conveniences as CD players, TVs, and VCRs.[52]

Languishing in the Limbo of the Outcasts: Squatter Vulnerability and the Shape of Disadvantage

> South Africa's housing policy, however well-intentioned and whatever the success in unit delivery, has been a qualitative and economic disaster. The decision to build freestanding dwellings in peri-urban areas has not only perpetuated apartheid geography; it has resulted in massive wastage because billions of rands have been pumped into housing that has no [marketable] value.
> Itumeleng Mahabane, Communications and Investor Relations Consultant

The overwhelming majority of squatter households that have settled on the metropolitan fringe have occupied land without official permission to do so.[53]

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50. Interview with Kecia Rust; and "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy," pp. 45–46.

51. "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy," pp. 45–46.

52. Drew Forrest, "Highway of Zinc"; and personal observation at Orange Farm, May 28, 2003.

53. Itumeleng Mahabane, "Housing Policy Increases Barriers in War on Poverty," *Sunday Times*, October 19, 2006.

The availability of unused land, the indeterminacy of land titles, and the often ambiguous and contradictory response of municipal authorities to land occupations have provided the wedge through which squatters have pried open space for themselves on the urban fringe. The modes of slum settlement have varied across a wide spectrum, ranging from carefully orchestrated land invasions of vacant land to diversified kinds of rental arrangements that take place under conditions of insecurity of tenure.[54] As a general rule, land invasions have come about as a result of the collective, coordinated actions of homeless squatters acting more or less on their own initiative, sometimes without much forethought or long-range planning. Unlike organized political movements that rely on a great deal of ideological solidarity, these squatter collaborations are typically fluid, provisional, and tenuous, where the immediate aim of gaining access to shelter provides the ties that bind the collective enterprise together. Without formal land titles or security of tenure, squatters are vulnerable in the extreme, oftentimes pressured into dependent relationships with self-styled leaders whose interests are far from communitarian (Huchzermeyer 2003b; Greenberg 2004b, 30–33).

The ugly flip side of squatter ingenuity, collaboration, and cooperation is the emergence of opportunists, con men, and tricksters who have taken advantage of the desperate plight of homeless people in order to fleece them. In the absence of an effective housing program that provides accommodation for those in need, an embryonic land mafia—such as that which rules squatter settlements in Brazilian cities—has come into existence in the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region. These shadowy groups have access to networks that can coordinate the placement of up to five thousand people—along with requisite building materials—onto a piece of land in a fortnight. Usually the self-styled organizers of these unauthorized land occupations charge an average of R80 a month per site: R50 rental, R20 protection fees, and R10 for a legal defense fund in the event the municipal authorities try to forcibly remove people. These land mafia groups typically acquire legitimacy through the resources they control and by forming themselves into some sort of residents' association. In many areas local councilors have begun to ally themselves with these land mafia in order to win the political allegiance and support of the residents.[55]

Squatter ecology revolves around the supply of land for shelter (Davis 2006, 121–137). It is not unusual for homeless squatters to be duped into paying money to people claiming to be housing agents with official permission to

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54. Interview with Sarah Charlton, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, June 1, 2006; and "Review of Johannesburg's City Strategy," pp. 45–46.

55. Victor Khupiso, "Homeless Being Duped," *Sunday Times*, April 21, 2002.

settle squatters on particular plots of vacant land. Despite warnings from municipal authorities, countless numbers of gullible people in such spatially dispersed sites as Ivory Park (Midrand), the Barcelona settlement outside of Daveyton, and Bredell near Kempton Park have been conned into paying money to phony land brokers who claimed to have official permission to settle squatters on the land but in the end absconded with huge sums.[56] In addition to these land scams, vulnerable squatters have also suffered at the hands of rank-renting landlords. Just like the draconian rental agreements that sometimes characterize the backyard shacks that have proliferated in the established townships of Alexandra, Soweto, and Katlehong, self-styled landlords in places like the Joe Slovo squatter camp (located outside Crosby on the West Rand on private land owned by Transnet) have rented out shacks to newcomers for up to R200 to R300 per month.[57] One local power broker—known as Majapere ("he who eats dead horses")—has ruled over the informal settlement as if it were his personal fiefdom. Majapere has managed to acquire somewhere between fifteen and twenty shacks whose occupants provide him with a steady income. He also owns a *spaza* shop (where household necessities are for sale at inflated prices) and the main shebeen that has monopolized the sale of alcohol. Rack-renting landlords such as Majapere have no interest in improving living conditions, since upgrading would threaten to undermine their power and take away their multiple sources of income.[58]

Homeless squatters have also fallen victim to the shadowy practice known as shack farming. This particular kind of land occupation, in which white landowners rent out subdivisions on their properties to thousands of shack dwellers, has surreptitiously taken root at various locations around the metropolitan fringe. Saddled with rising debt or declining prices for farm products, hard-pressed white farmers have sometimes turned to shack farming as a last-ditch way of squeezing income out of unprofitable or under-utilized land. While municipal authorities have condemned this practice, they have been unable to eradicate it altogether. Shack farming has taken hold at various sites northwest of North Riding and in the vicinity of Kya Sand. In Region 5, near Roodepoort, city officials confirmed that at least seven landowners had subdivided their plots into small sections, renting out the estimated ten thousand makeshift hovels to shack dwellers for about R250 a month, but without the provision of any services. It was estimated that some landowners were able to

56. Victor Khupiso, "Homeless Being Duped."

57. Interview with Bronwen Jones, executive director, Children of Fire Trust, May 27, 2006. Transnet is a freight transport company.

58. This information is derived from personal observation from on-site visits and interviews with residents of the informal settlement who wished to remain anonymous, conducted in the summer of 2006.
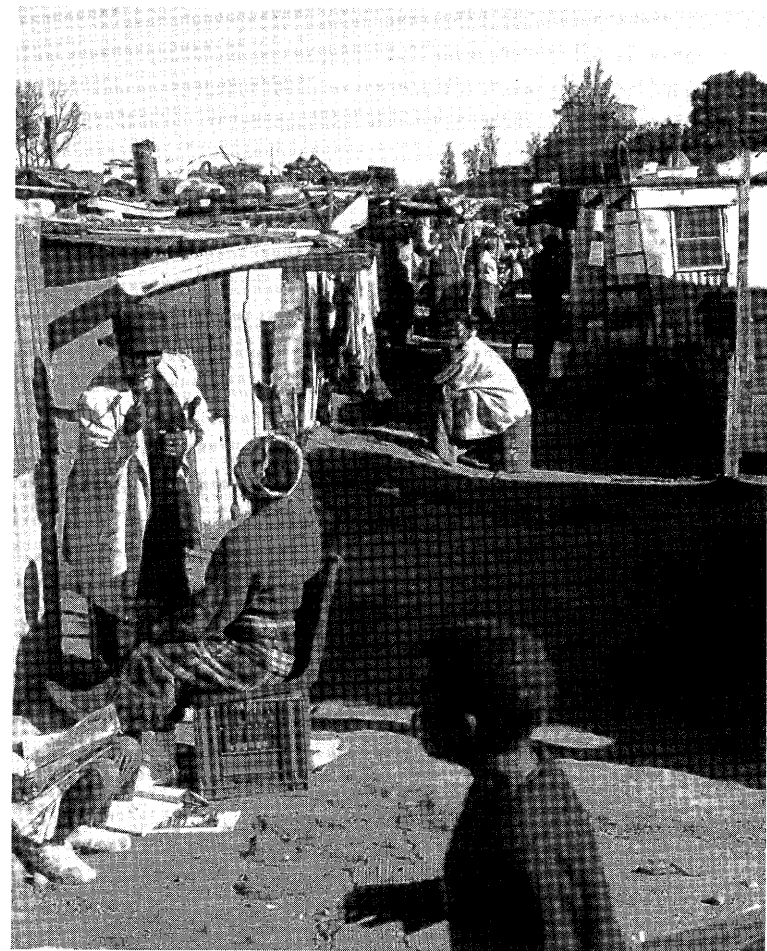
Figure 6. Joe Slovo Camp. Photograph by Martin J. Murray

make around R100,000 a month with this rack-renting practice. Municipal authorities worried that without running water, refuse collection, electricity, proper sanitation, or toilet facilities these shack farms were environmental disasters waiting to happen. Municipal authorities were powerless to evict the squatters, since this "booming business" that was "spreading like wildfire" flourished on privately owned farmland. They also worried that if the offending landowners were legally forced to evict the squatters on their properties, they would in all likelihood be unable to pay the costs of removal and would consequently simply abandon their farms to foreclosure. Once this kind of

land use took hold, it became difficult to prevent its spread. Neighboring landowners, unable to sell their properties because of illegal squatter camps on their doorsteps, have followed a similar route, also turning to shack farming as a way of recovering their losses due to dwindling income and declining value of their properties.[59]

In many ways the bitter struggles over access to suitable housing in Alexandra have come to epitomize the plight of homeless people elsewhere. Since the end of apartheid, an estimated twenty thousand squatters have established makeshift accommodation in unused factories, abandoned warehouses, and derelict buildings on the outer fringes of Alexandra. Disgruntled property owners have angrily described these squatter occupations as carefully planned invasions of a once-thriving industrial strip on the northeastern edge of suburban Johannesburg. By the mid-1990s squatters had occupied vacant properties in Wynberg (west of Alexandra), Kew and Linbro Park (to the south and west), and Marlboro (to the north). By 2000, squatters occupied at least fifty-five abandoned and derelict buildings in these declining industrial areas. In Marlboro alone, the epicenter of the self-housing movement, squatters seized more than sixty buildings—almost half of all properties in the area. During the apartheid years, factory owners in Marlboro had taken advantage of strict enforcement of urban residential segregation to tap into the vast catchment area of nearby Alexandra for their steady supply of cheap labor. The squalid, rat-infested shelters that the squatters have constructed inside buildings are often no more than cardboard and Masonite boxes, with poor or nonexistent ventilation, inadequate sanitation, and no electricity.[60]

These ongoing disputes between disgruntled factory owners and homeless squatters in Alexandra has revealed deep fissures in the postapartheid era where the lack of decent and affordable housing for the legions of jobless poor is a visible marker of pariah status in the new South Africa. Simmering tensions over access to adequate accommodation in Alexandra came to a head in mid-2000 after angry residents accused local housing officials with rampant corruption in the allocation of new housing units, including an estimated eighty houses and sixty flats at a development called Tsutsumani Village and two hundred houses in the Far East Bank. Those families who had waited patiently for new housing discovered to their dismay that corrupt officials had allocated houses to numerous people who did not qualify, including

59. Quotations from Anna Cox, "Smallholders Raking It In as 'Shack Farmers,'" *The Star*, August 12, 2001; interview with Graeme Gotz; interview with Sarah Charlton; and personal observation from on-site visit, June 4, 2006.

60. Phomello Molwedi and Themba wa Sepotokele, "Victory for Joburg's Homeless," *The Star*, May 30, 2001. This information is also derived from personal observation from numerous on-site visits in 1999, 2001, and 2003.

local councilors and nonresidents, while many other units remained vacant. As the scandal unfolded, victims of housing bribery scams came forward to allege that they secretly paid bribes to expedite their applications for access to housing. One such victim was Nelson Silawu, a fifty-eight-year-old man living with his mother and father, his four children, and his wife in one room in Alexandra. Alleging that he paid a bribe of R6000 to jump the waiting-list queue, he acquired documents with keys and moved into his new house—only to be evicted six weeks later when the details of the scam came to light.[61]

In November 2000, a number of community organizations, including the Alexandra Civic Association, the East Bank Civic Association, the Concerned Alexandra Residents Association, and the Alexandra Homeless Youth and Families, joined forces to stage a protest march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. Frustrated with what they regarded as official foot-dragging, angry residents seized about four hundred houses that had remained empty for almost a year at Tsutsumani Village and the Far East Bank over the next several weeks.[62] The failure of Johannesburg municipal authorities to reach a negotiated settlement with the homeless squatters culminated in police raids in early January 2001, resulting in the arrests of over a hundred squatters and evictions of those alleged to have illegally occupied houses.[63] Housing officials hired Wozani Security to guard empty houses in the Far East Bank as homeless squatters were forced to fend for themselves on the open veldt.[64]

Moving in the Shadows: The Ordinariness of Everyday Exclusion

> You either plan with the poor or the poor will plan for you.
>
> GAUTENG DEVELOPMENT EXPERT

The geographical limits of the city are defined by its cartographic invisibility.[65] However detailed and accurate they pretend to be, maps of the city fail to reproduce the integral wholeness of the sprawling metropolis. Countless numbers of city dwellers inhabit those blank spaces on maps that are devoid of place-names or site identifications of any kind. Just as with other cities, the

61. Anna Cox, "Alex Plans March over Housing Issue," *The Star*, November 22, 2000.
62. This land invasion followed in the wake of a previous seizure that had occurred three months earlier. See Anna Cox, "No House, No Vote, Say Alex Invaders," *The Star*, November 29, 2000.
63. *SAPA*, "Rampaging Mob Damages 50 Houses in Alex," December 14, 2000; *SAPA*, "Cops Swoop on 'Illegals' in Alexandra Houses," January 11, 2001; and Sheena Adams, "Children Detained with 39 Alex Squatters," *The Star*, January 11, 2001.
64. Anna Cox, "Alex Activists behind Bars," *The Star*, February 22, 2001.
65. Development expert quoted in Peter Honey, "Spread of Squatter Shacks."

urban landscape of Johannesburg is liberally littered with its unacknowledged nobodies and nowheres. The failure of the cartographic representation of the cityscape to register the presence of marginalized people who inhabit unacknowledged places effectively renders them unknown and hence unknowable, expunging them from history and memory (Pinder 1996, 405–427).

Postapartheid housing policies of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council have revolved around the dual strategy of replacing existing informal settlements with regulated site-and-service schemes, on the one hand, and preventing unlawful infringement or illegal occupation of land, on the other. Fearing that the gathering momentum of land invasions might begin to resemble what happened in Zimbabwe, municipal authorities moved quickly and decisively to halt unlawful seizures. Following the "No Land, No Vote" campaign launched by the Landless People's Movement that accompanied the April 2004 national elections, municipal authorities in Johannesburg reiterated their uncompromising stance to counter unauthorized squatter occupations with force if necessary. The postapartheid legal regime that governs secure access to land in urban and peri-urban areas has laid particular stress on procedural guidelines for evictions rather than adopting strategies that seek negotiation or provide alternative options (Huchzermeyer 2004, 227–236). The Prevention of Illegal Evictions and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act (1998) served as the principal legal framework for regulating the eviction process. For the most part, homeless squatters who are forcibly removed from illegal encampments have not acquired improved circumstances. Municipal authorities have narrowly interpreted the constitutional right to "legally secure tenure or comparable redress" for all citizens to mean that squatters forcibly removed from a particular site can be relocated to an alternative location with similar insecure circumstances (quotation from Greenberg 2004a, 11–16).

In an effort to slow the increase in informal settlements that mushroomed on the outskirts of the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region, municipal authorities took decisive steps in 2004 to strengthen the legal framework governing unlawful occupation of land. Provincial authorities sought to implement a strict land invasion policy that would grant law enforcement agencies the power to evict squatters within 48 hours of their illegal occupation. Under this proposed land-use regime, state authorities expected municipalities to strictly enforce the removal of illegal squatters. This proposed modification to existing legislation represented a serious setback for land activists who relied on protracted court proceedings to delay the eviction of illegal squatters until all legal remedies had been exhausted. In addition, provincial authorities sought to tighten the grip over unlawful infringement of property rights by making it a criminal offense to organize land invasions and by considering it a criminal act to collect funds to cover the legal costs of combating evictions.

Previous laws contained no reference to individuals or groups who organized illegal land invasions or who collected fees for legal purposes to fight court evictions. Provincial authorities also vowed to crack down on the practice of shack farming.[66]

Under apartheid, the demand for land and for housing was subsumed under the broader national struggle for equal political rights and for popular democracy. Popular movements did not target the housing question per se, but looked upon insecurity of tenure and propertylessness as a visible expression of the racism of the white minority regime and symbolic of the denial of equal citizenship rights in an undivided South Africa. The persistence of insecurity of tenure in the postapartheid era, coupled with the slow pace of redistribution of legal ownership, has exposed the limits of the formal achievements of political democracy and formal deracialization. The landless movement has rearticulated longstanding grievances—access to basic services, freedom of movement and freedom to remain in one place, security of tenure, and popular participation in local governance—that relate directly to the land question. The landless movement has exposed one dimension of the failure of municipal authorities in Johannesburg and elsewhere to address persistent poverty, joblessness, and inequality in the new South Africa.[67]

The intense demand for adequate housing has gone hand in hand with ongoing contestation over access to land, ranging from marginal, almost invisible encroachments on miniscule slices of land to large-scale land seizures involving thousands of squatter homesteaders. Many, if not most, of the informal settlements that have come into existence around the main conurbations can trace their origins to unlawful land invasions that in time acquired authorization and legal status. By making visible the demands of impoverished constituencies that have been ignored and marginalized within the postapartheid discourse of world-class cities, the Landless People's Movement has challenged the dominant construct of citizenship rights and has thereby opened up new terrain for political contestation. The repressive response of municipal authorities to unauthorized land seizures has effectively redefined the political landscape after the end of apartheid and the transition to parliamentary democracy. As a liberation movement, the ANC welcomed mass mobilizations from below as part of the strategy of making the townships ungovernable. Yet as the ruling party in government, the ANC has vowed to strictly enforce the distinction between legitimate forms of protest and illegitimate acts of defiance outside the law.

66. Sphiwe Mboyane, "Gauteng to Get Tough on Land Invasion," *Business Day,* June 10, 2004; and Hopewell Radebe, "Law Set to Stop Land Invaders in their Tracks," *Business Day,* September 3, 2003.

67. See Kwanele Sosibo, "One Toilet for Five Families," *Mail & Guardian,* March 17–23, 2006.

By employing apartheid-era legislation along with the threat of physical force, municipal authorities have effectively criminalized resistance to land and housing policies, thereby converting the hard-fought liberal-democratic rights that guarantee public protest, gathering, and association into illegal acts. The blunt response of municipal authorities to illegal occupation of land seems to suggest that they consider these acts of defiance as a threat to political stability and social order (Greenberg 2004a, 11–16).

With the end of white minority rule, the elimination of the legal barriers to the geographical mobility of work seekers has resulted in new kinds of movements that are considerably more complex than the once-dominant prototype of rural-to-urban migration (Kihato and Landau 2005). One highly significant but often overlooked consequence of the collapse of the migrant labor system that prevailed under apartheid has been the loosening of the ties that once bound urban (and peri-urban) households with rural homesteads. Under apartheid the constant flow of cash remittances from urban wage earners to rural homesteads not only enabled large-scale employers to maintain downward pressure on wages but also allowed municipal authorities to keep a tight reign on the provision of formal housing, thereby denying nonwhites the possibility of home ownership in the urban areas. For all intents and purposes, the breakdown of the structural link between urban wage earners and rural families has exposed those without regular employment to new pressures of movement (Greenberg 2004b, 30–33).

Freedom of movement—a significant victory in the popular struggle against apartheid—has assumed quite different substantive meanings for citizens of the new South Africa who are distributed unequally across the class spectrum. For the propertyless and jobless, the freedom to choose where to go has been reduced to perpetual movement, or the necessity of moving from here to there. This situation has arisen because the structural imbalance between job seekers and job creation after apartheid does not provide the necessary stability to allow freedom of movement to be a choice among varying options. Intraurban (both between but principally within cities) migration has assumed greater urgency in the lives of those excluded from regular employment in the formal economy. Available empirical research has suggested that a typical migratory pattern consists of movement from a rural area or small town to an established township like Alexandra, Soweto, Thokoza, Tembisa, Daveyton, or Katlehong, where newcomers share accommodation with relatives, occupying either rooms or backyard shacks. But overcrowded conditions, high rentals, interpersonal conflicts with landlords, or changing circumstances have often driven people to seek alternative accommodation. Faced with limited options, newcomers feel the considerable gravitational pull of informal squatter settlements on the outskirts of cities, in large

measure because rental costs are either very low or nonexistent (Greenberg 2004b, 30–33; Bond 2000, 122–151).

The stories of jobless work seekers scattered around the urban landscape reveal most starkly the constant pressure to constantly change residential locations because of the economic necessity to respond to whatever new opportunities arise for making ends meet. The structural impediments that deny access to steady employment in the formal sector have created a mobile class of rootless work seekers who oscillate between the necessity to move from place to place and the longing to settle in one place in order to create a stable life. Under these straitened circumstances, the instrumental role of social networks, associational ties, and multiple households has assumed considerable importance. One significant element in the art of getting by depends on success in the fashioning and maintenance of such relationships as family (i.e., blood) and kinship ties, "home-boy" connections, religious affiliations, ethnic bonds, and business linkages. Households are often multinodal, with members moving between three and four different residences: the mother with children in one part of the city; the father renting a room close to work; and other children located with relatives in the rural areas (Greenberg 2004b, 31–33).[68] Therefore, individuals may maintain attachments to several households located in different sites around the greater Johannesburg metropolitan region. Immediate and extended family, and even friends and acquaintances, often provide temporary shelter for mobile people who are constantly in search of a stable foothold near key points in the urban landscape (Simone 2001a, 2004a). Under these circumstances, the relocation policies of municipal authorities have only served to further destabilize and disrupt the fragile survival strategies of the poor, both by eliminating places that people have created to settle temporarily and by keeping them constantly on the move. In the absence of alternative residence with long-term stability and security of tenure, or of long-term employment and work opportunities, municipal policies that uproot those who have illegally occupied places of shelter merely reproduce the underlying structural imbalances (Greenberg 2004b, 31–33).

These circling, floating masses of jobless people, constantly seeking ways to survive amid the wealth of the richest city on the African continent, have become the new outsiders, the new pariahs, the new urban outcasts in Johannesburg and other South African cities. Because of their permanent condition as nomadic beings, inhabitants of unauthorized squatter settlements are always already bodies out of place. Squatters are figures of perpetual motion, elusive and ghostlike, both illegal and excluded. Faced with intensified global competition, large- and medium-scale employers in the formal economy have

68. Ian Fife, "Riches to Be Had," *Financial Mail*, July 2, 2004.

increasingly turned to subcontracting, outsourcing, and other temporary labor arrangements to lower their costs of doing business. The vast surplus army of labor provides a readily available pool of casual workers that can be hired or fired at will. Labor laws may offer some protection to permanent workers, but for temporary, part-time, nonunionized workers, legal protection provided by labor legislation is as ephemeral as ownership of fixed property. Countless sites that ring the outskirts of Johannesburg have become the gathering places for the mobile, rootless poor who are invariably "squeezed between the rural and urban economies that are equally incapable of meeting their [immediate] needs" for decent shelter, income-generating work, and realistic opportunities for a stable life. The urban-rural interface around Johannesburg proper—commonly referred to as peri-urban—has been transformed from that fuzzy in-between place where city meets the countryside and instead has become a compact, densely settled combat zone that pits impoverished households seeking stable shelter against municipal authorities who have vowed to prevent illegal squatting. Neoliberal strategies for economic growth cannot possibly absorb this reserve army of labor, and new modes of urban governance cannot regulate or control it. Continually shifting and moving people from one place to another within this in-between zone, in the vain hope that they might fade away or somehow disappear in the process, has proven to be a pipe dream (Greenberg 2004b, 31–33).

5

The Spatial Dynamics of Real Estate Capitalism

Doctors, we are told, bury their mistakes; planners, by the same token, embalm theirs.
Robert Moses (1970, 793)

L ike other aspiring world-class cities, Johannesburg after apartheid has been subjected to a steady stream of regeneration efforts designed to breathe new life into dead spaces of the urban landscape. Borrowing from planning motifs in vogue in North America and Europe, city builders in Johannesburg have unveiled a series of ambitious projects that aim to revive decaying, blighted, and abandoned parts of the cityscape, thereby reinvigorating or reinventing the civic and public life of the city. These regeneration efforts are integrally tied to what Sharon Zukin (1995, 23–24) has called the "symbolic economy" of cities. In her view, the symbolic economy features two parallel production systems that are crucial to the material life of the city: first, the production of the built environment, "with its synergy of capital investment and cultural meanings"; and, second, the production of symbols, which provides "both a currency of commercial exchange and a language of social identity." These much-publicized efforts to reshape the urban landscape are designed to enhance the city's competitive edge on a "global catwalk" (Degan 2003, 867–868), by parading constructed (and aesthetically pleasing) images of different parts of the cityscape that advertise these refurbished places as attractive to capital investments, business locations, and leisure and entertainment activities. By providing facelifts to the physical environment, boosterist city builders engage in a kind of "imagineering" sleight of hand, trading on romance and nostalgia to construct historicist simulacra of what once was (Degan 2003; King 1996; Rutheiser 1986, 1999).

Looking to cities like Glasgow, Turin, Amsterdam, Belfast, and Barcelona that have successfully engineered the transition from industrial city to postindustrial metropolis, the champions of downtown renewal in Johannesburg