

matter to be dealt with by the future government. Many of the people who were pushing during these talks for strong and relatively autonomous local governments eventually found themselves running the new democratically elected government. Not surprisingly, when it came to establishing a new local government system, they were no longer so keen on the strong decentralized system that they once called for from outside the corridors of power. This has become an important source of conflict between Polish communities and the new state.

It is a tremendous strength that the number of people involved in negotiating the new system of government is not limited to a handful of leaders at the national level. Local-level negotiations ensure that ordinary residents of communities are also involved in the transition process. However, the two levels of negotiation are going to have to be carefully co-ordinated so that the national level process does not undermine the local processes, and the local processes are not sabotaged by nationally protected special interests. This will, of course, also mean that the local negotiation process must not undermine the national negotiation process.

### Notes

- 1 All three authors work for Planact, a non-profit urban development consultancy that works for the civic associations and trade unions. Much of the information and ideas presented in this chapter were obtained or collectively generated by Planact staff, its consultants, and civic activists engaged in grassroots organizing around these issues. The various reports by Andrew Nash of Kenwalt that Planact commissioned were particularly useful. The opinions expressed here, however, are those of the authors and not necessarily of Planact, its consultants, or its clients.
- 2 East Rand Regional Services Council.
- 3 Central Witwatersrand Regional Services Council.
- 4 West Rand Regional Services Council.

## 13 The housing crisis

Paul Hendler<sup>1</sup>

The reshaping of the South African polity and society in the 1990s is being refracted through the cities, where violent conflicts occurred during the 1980s. Social struggles have placed the questions of housing cost and location firmly on the agenda of change, alongside the national political and constitutional questions. The goal of this chapter is to assist in clarifying theories and deriving policy guidelines for altering material and social conditions of residents in South Africa's deprived townships.

Since the mid-1980s, there have been attempts to negotiate urban policies in some African townships. The major impetus for these initiatives emerged from the impasse between the state and the anti-apartheid community and youth organizations.<sup>2</sup> But prospects for local settlements promoting transition to more democratic and improved working-class living conditions depend on how major actors perceive the housing crisis, and not only on their political practices. Negotiators representing residents (i.e. 'the grassroots') need to understand mechanisms underlying the housing crisis so that they can frame demands which would alter the material and political conditions of township life.

This chapter aims to achieve its objective through exploring the interpretations of the housing question held by reputable urban scholars as well as major South African urban policy decision makers. Underlying assumptions about people and society form the basis for a wider rationale for comprehending causal relationships between contingent events in the housing field. Understanding 'homelessness', the enormous degree of overcrowding, as well as the

patent inability of the majority to afford even the cheapest private market houses, is a matter of contention between antagonistic social actors. Each position's 'theoretical claims' can be tested against knowledge of empirical phenomena.<sup>3</sup> A rigorous comprehension of objective processes is one precondition for the development of sound negotiation and development strategies. Through analysing the advances and limitations of each standpoint, the chapter tries to articulate questions useful for progressive policy formulation during the 1990s.

## Shelter: its shortage and cost

Regardless of their political conflicts, all major urban protagonists have agreed that there is an enormous shortage of affordable housing for the black — in particular the African — working classes. The old Department of Community Development's reports,<sup>4</sup> as well as the papers from the second Carnegie conference,<sup>5</sup> both pointed to the critical housing situation during the early 1980s. Historical figures gleaned from the Venter Commission of Inquiry (1980), the National Building Research Institute (NBRI) (1980),<sup>6</sup> the Department of Community Development (1981),<sup>7</sup> the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) (1981),<sup>8</sup> the state's Department of Co-operation and Development (1984), and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR)<sup>9</sup> demonstrate that the housing shortage has been growing steadily. More recent NBRI research<sup>10</sup> has confirmed this trend.

Newspaper and other organizational and individual reports attest, independently of the state, to the critical accommodation shortage during the 1970s and the 1980s which resulted in illegal land occupations and the construction of squatter housing — the best known example of which was perhaps Crossroads near Cape Town.<sup>11</sup> By 1987, according to the UF, the Winterveld settlement (outside Pretoria) had approximately 600 000 informal settlers, while the urban periphery surrounding Durban had become the major growth point of informal settlements reaching a total of 1.7 million settlers.<sup>12</sup> During the 1980s, most African township residents were unable, at least in the view of potential lenders, to afford paying off loans over an extended period.<sup>13</sup> The frequent refusal by communities to pay monthly rental charges was a manifestation of their meagre financial

resources.<sup>14</sup> Spontaneous defaulting on rent — characteristic, for example, of Soweto during the late 1970s — was overtaken by more organized political boycotts of payments to the BLAs during the 1980s.

Partly because of the inability of African workers to afford the cost of providing shelter, most township houses were built by the state during the 1950s and 1960s, but this did not satisfy the long-term need for shelter. This unsatisfied need — exacerbated by government reluctance to maintain relatively low rents — has fuelled the flames of revolt and thus turned the housing question into a conflict about costs and shortages. The turmoil and changing organization and administration of the townships during the 1980s and 1990s form the social background to this brief analysis of the housing debate.

## Apartheid views

Between 1922 and the late 1970s urban and housing policies were justified on the assumption that Africans were the whites' wards, to be helped to develop in their own areas, and that the residential rights of Africans in white-designated areas depended on their ministering to white people's labour and other needs.<sup>15</sup> The positivist ideologies of state officials also assumed that township urban forms reflected the particular national consciousness and less developed needs of 'the natives'.

The reasoning was that Africans had themselves to blame for their endemic housing crisis because they had been expanding too rapidly without acquiring the resources to satisfy their most pressing needs; at the same time the state as trustee was perceived to have made enormous strides towards bringing the problem under control, if not solving it.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, these views extended sometimes to parastatal technocrats charged with housing tasks. During the 1950s the NBRI — set up to research technical solutions for the housing crisis — accepted the state's ethnic categorization of African people as given.<sup>17</sup> During the 1940s and 1950s conservative liberals in the SAIRR expressed similar views, reflecting the growing impact of an idealist anthropology at the universities 'that was pliable to the needs of administrators'.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1980s and 1990s, as the NP moved further and further away from its traditional white support base, such views came to be

seen as increasingly obsolete by upper echelon government officials. While the 'common sense' criticism of African population growth remains,<sup>19</sup> the apartheid interpretation of the housing question has become increasingly restricted to the CP and other right-wing elements. However the semi-autonomous BLAs have continued to rely on seconded white officials who are not used to accommodating residents' demands,<sup>20</sup> and have seen little need to negotiate with representative township groups. For instance during 1987 paternalistic white officials in the eastern Witwatersrand township of Tembisa were able to undermine emerging negotiations between the local councillors and community groups.<sup>21</sup> After the 1986 abolition of the Development Boards (which had 'run' the townships since the early 1970s) many conservative officials found a home in the provincial administrations' 'community services' sections, which during 1990 assumed municipal managerial roles in lieu of the increasing number of defunct local state apparatuses. While the liberalization induced by the NP's (post 2 February 1990) reform strategy has probably brought about a change of mind in some officials — there were during 1990 several significant local negotiation processes under way — the paternalistic views of local bureaucrats could, nevertheless, still critically affect the outcome of future bargaining processes.

Thus in addition to explaining very little, segregationist/apartheid views are an anachronism in an era during which negotiated incremental solutions to township housing problems are likely to be the order of the day.

## Liberal and neo-classical views

In the 1950s, but more particularly during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the government's liberal opponents developed an alternative to the dominant racist interpretation. This was based on neo-classical economic theories, i.e. that the 'natural' relationship of individual consumers to individual suppliers and producers should not be tampered with by the state, and that individuals operating as 'homo economicus' would ultimately 'better themselves' and achieve parity through private markets and *laissez-faire* economic activity. The policy proposals emanating from this constituency emphasize the role of the housing market and technical and financial instruments in resolving accommodation problems.

This perspective stimulated important housing and urbanization debates by the more radically minded SAIRR liberals during the 1950s as well as during the heyday of apartheid. Since the 1970s these assumptions motivated the UF, which was established as a pressure group for big business, lobbying for a change in the direction of government practices.<sup>22</sup> By the mid-1980s, thinking in NP and senior civil service circles to a large extent reflected the liberal paradigm.<sup>23</sup> (The significant exception was the retention of racial land use planning.) The liberal point of departure also underlies the thinking of some constituencies in the African National Congress (ANC)<sup>24</sup> and the United Democratic Front (UDF).

Spontaneous migration by African peasants from rural to urban South African society<sup>25</sup> and migration as 'the push-pull mechanism'<sup>26</sup> emerged as the point of departure for the liberal urban studies corpus. Migration was accorded a determining role in the genesis of the housing crisis. But the implication was that in the long run, 'temporary' anomalies could iron themselves out through *laissez-faire* market processes. The UF — arguably at the forefront of liberal policy 'think tanks' during the 1980s and 1990s — has also based its policy positions on the assumption that a rapidly urbanizing society is a 'natural', spontaneous phenomenon, which requires creative management rather than control or resistance.<sup>27</sup>

A second major focus of liberal urban scholars was the South African state's interventionist policies and practices: 'temporary sojournership',<sup>28</sup> Group Areas Act population removals,<sup>29</sup> the prohibition of dwelling construction for Africans, and African home-ownership in South Africa's white-designated areas<sup>30</sup> during the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s, were seen to have brought about an acute housing shortage. The UF has also argued that notwithstanding the lifting of many of these constraints by 1990, shortages and relatively high costs have persisted due to the absence of clearly defined goals, objectives, and roles in current government housing plans.<sup>31</sup>

Migration, however, is hardly the spontaneous and 'natural' process which Maasdorp<sup>32</sup> and the UF<sup>33</sup> have implied, but since the turn of the century has been a response to social measures aimed at creating (and reproducing) a wage labour force in southern Africa — often through a violent process of land dispossession.<sup>34</sup> The conscious restriction of Africans to a relatively minute proportion of the land led to overcrowding and depleted the carrying capacity of the land reserved for African occupation, which increasingly became little more than labour reservoirs for industry located in the 'white'

areas.<sup>35</sup> Thus the liberal paradigm's theoretical assumptions occlude a politicized perception of housing, the supply of which perforce is interwoven with social relationships of subordination/domination. Attributing the housing shortage to the relative absence of a private market — due to government policy — is equally limiting because notwithstanding its stated aim of restricting the number of houses for Africans, the NP government built the vast housing estates which constitute today's townships. Rather than being the villain of the piece, the NP regime appears to have played a contradictory role in the provision of shelter in the townships, a point acknowledged by Welsh,<sup>36</sup> himself a liberal scholar. Blaming the central authorities also does not adequately explain why, during the present 'individual-owner' policy (which commenced during the late 1970s), the shortage has persisted despite the lifting of restrictions on home-ownership and private provision of shelter. The importance accorded to the state stands in marked contrast to the omission to examine the way economic processes played a role in excluding people from accommodation. As with migration theories, social relations of power, embedded in the market, receive scant attention from within the liberal paradigm.

For instance, Dewar<sup>37</sup> and the UF<sup>38</sup> have addressed the access to fiscal resources issue, but not the question of why township dwellers did not have the money to house themselves. The type of approach adopted by Dewar, as well as by the UF, to low-income housing leaves serious political and economic issues unexplored.<sup>39</sup> The only power relationship considered worthy of central analysis is the oppressive role of the apartheid state. The logical progression from liberal and neo-classical assumptions is to overemphasize the removal of one form of political (i.e. apartheid) obstacles to the provision of affordable, adequate housing, but to underplay other political and economic power relations which also stand between township people and shelter. In a word, the housing crisis historically has been rooted in the land question, and remains to this day a political issue and one therefore which may not be resolvable solely through the removal of state intervention and the application of technical and financial stimulants to the housing market.

Negotiation demands which focus on removing apartheid regulations to the exclusion of examining specific social and economic processes which hinder the urban poor's access to and ability to afford residential shelter, are unlikely to lead to an improvement in residents' housing and living conditions. In this respect many of the assumptions underly-

ing the UF positions on urbanization and regional development could be criticized for ignoring the 'hidden power' imbalances between (mainly African) working-class consumers and capitalist suppliers in the African housing field. Nevertheless, UF thinking has not simply been the outcome of logical deduction from underlying premises, but has also been shaped through its practice of reforming society, a mission prompted originally by the 1976 Soweto student protests and ensuing turmoil. Currently the UF has specific proposals for:

- public sector subsidization of land and 'first-time' housing;
- the urban poor's access to the private sector home loans finance market;
- public sector financing and cross subsidization for bulk infrastructure;
- land investment trusts to control speculation in land prices and to specify the type of improvements undertaken; and
- resolving conflicts over land (through proposed metropolitan land planning agencies) and consumer grievances (through a proposed housing industry ombudsman, licensed private sector agents acting for consumers, and an affordable legal aid system).<sup>40</sup>

Given the 'establishment' nature of the UF, it could be argued that the above mentioned proposals represent a necessary step towards securing an 'urban coalition'<sup>41</sup> on terms dictated by South Africa's ruling élites. Nevertheless, it might also be possible for residents and community groups to engage with the UF and develop the progressive content of these proposals, and thereby 'begin to make the exercise of grassroots community control over housing development a reality'.<sup>42</sup>

Clearly, the politics of community involvement and grassroots control requires an understanding of the complex power relationships and processes at work in the creation of the built environment and the reproduction of social life in the cities. Class relations and conflict — a glaring omission in the approaches adopted in the writings of Dewar,<sup>43</sup> Maasdorp,<sup>44</sup> Maasdorp and Humphreys,<sup>45</sup> Maasdorp and Pillay,<sup>46</sup> Morris,<sup>47</sup> and the UF<sup>48</sup> — remain an important component of such an understanding, and form the central concepts in a set of radical analyses of the African housing question in South Africa.

## Neo-Marxist perspectives

Neo-Marxist theorists who perceived class conflict as the major process shaping township life, criticized both state as well as liberal

policies, arguing that the social geography of the townships was a direct outcome of the conflicts waged over the distribution of the costs of reproducing labour power (i.e. reproduction being the replenishment of the physical capacity to work, and the control of the political/ideological processes which legitimate capitalist relations). This argument ironically also gave an analytical centrality to the state, and reflected the work of Castells.<sup>49</sup> Policy positions emanating from the neo-Marxist assumptions focused on popular, multi-class urban social movements and their resistance against the state, mainly around the issue of housing. It was argued that increasing state intervention in 'everyday life' (for instance as supplier of housing and subsidizer of transportation, i.e. the collective means of consumption) and the ensuing politicization of consumption issues, created a structural link with underlying capitalist production relations, on which urban movements might have a transformative impact. The implication was that a transition to a socialist society was the only guaranteed long-term solution to the housing crisis.

The milieu which produced these interventions contrasted sharply with the 1960s and the post 2 February 1990 dispensation. With the mass strikes in Durban during 1973, industrial conflict forcibly made its appearance in the 1970s, and dogged the ruling classes as the decade wore on. After 16 June 1976, the period was characterized by political conflicts in all the major African townships and, as far as the housing question was concerned, boycotts of rent increases. Due to the inability of many workers to afford even the basic rental payments, the housing issue had by the mid-1980s become increasingly charged with class conflict. This conflict reached its zenith with the burning of community councillors' houses and with the military occupation of the townships. In short, the period was characterized by new levels of resistance, as well as severe state repression.

The radical authors did not ground an explanation of urbanization and the African housing shortage on the ill-defined assumptions of 'the population explosion' and 'push-pull' migration, but analysed rather: the state's contradictory role in the reproduction of the relations of production;<sup>50</sup> the link between Group Areas legislation, influx control policies, and the history of capitalist development in South Africa;<sup>51</sup> the reproductive (and non-reproductive) aspects of urban planning undertaken by the administration boards;<sup>52</sup> and political conflict around the collective means of consumption.<sup>53</sup> As McCarthy<sup>54</sup> has argued, the urgent political crisis of the mid-1980s prompted radical analysts to focus on reproduction issues and the

politics of collective consumption: in the radical paradigm, reproduction thus became the primary analytical category for making sense of the South Africa of the 1970s and the 1980s. The radical focus on the state differed, however, from the liberal critique in that government intervention was perceived not as an interference in 'natural' market processes, but as the wielding of ruling class power over the dominated classes of an essentially capitalist society.

With their focus on power relations, the radical concepts are useful tools for community groups that are engaging the state and local authorities in the 1990s. During the 1980s, however, policy guidelines emanating from the radical orientation were that housing should not be seen as an issue in itself which justified concrete development proposals, but as a means to be used to achieve the national political goals of anti-apartheid political movements. Indeed, in the absence of bargaining with the authorities (which has occurred with increasing frequency during 1990) there was no practical need for local organizations to frame substantive policy proposals for dealing with the problem. The apartheid state was seen as being responsible for the inadequate provision of shelter in South Africa,<sup>55</sup> and it was assumed that a new, non-racial, and democratic state would soon remedy the problem.

The state's actions, however, become too independent of economic costs and benefits in such accounts.<sup>56</sup> For instance, Wilkinson<sup>57</sup> addressed primarily the question of social reproduction and conflicts over the distribution of the costs of reproducing labour power, yet ignored the obvious, i.e. that the housing sector's capital accumulating imperatives were also reasons for changing housing policy.<sup>58</sup> Common to Ratcliffe,<sup>59</sup> Wilkinson,<sup>60</sup> Bloch,<sup>61</sup> and also to McCarthy and Swilling<sup>62</sup> was an absence of the potential effect on state policy and township politics of costs and profits in the housing, transport, and associated industries (i.e. the effect of capital accumulating activities on the shaping of the built environment). The same point can be made concerning the demands of trade unionists and community organizers during the 1980s. However, as housing policies during the 1980s came increasingly to reflect material conditions, the question arose of whether reproduction (i.e. in its political/ideological forms), or economic factors played the determining role in shaping urban processes.<sup>63</sup> Thus while class perspectives have made several advances in equipping urban movements with guidelines for understanding the complexities of the housing question, a fuller understanding of the townships' social geography requires an investigation of the cost and other factors involved in the production of the built environment.<sup>64</sup>

One key actor with an interest in the housing question is financial capital. This class interest has sought to expand itself through the creation of credit, and one of the principal means for doing this has been through home loan finance for low-cost dwelling units.<sup>65</sup> Large financial houses have become conspicuous by their presence in previously trouble-torn townships such as Alexandra, or in their vociferous support for an easing of traditional controls over their lending practices. As the liberalization of apartheid society has proceeded apace during 1990, it has become clear that the urban ghettos — once the stamping ground of the conservative Development Board officials — are becoming new sites for the investment of finance capital in South Africa. While the financiers remain adamant that theirs is the African community's path to a better future, at times they appear to be aiding and abetting a process through which the privileged few gain access to modern housing, while the unemployed, the homeless, and the aged are pressurized to relocate to site-and-service schemes on the urban periphery.

Thus for community negotiators (including squatter leaders) the question of democratic community control over the terms of finance and development in concrete projects, as well as over general processes of social reproduction and economic accumulation, are of crucial importance. The issue at stake is, however, not merely whether or not issues of production cost (and economic accumulation) or of immediate reproduction of the workforce have predominated in the decisions leading to the construction of particular townships, but rather understanding the complex interweaving of material and political factors. How the material becomes political and the political shapes the material, in the hands of individuals, political movements, and social classes, requires much more substantial research into urban questions and struggles in South Africa, as Mabin<sup>66</sup> has argued.

The nature of future local, incremental settlements to housing disputes, and their impact on everyday life in the townships, will depend to a large extent on how far the political actors are motivated to address these terms of the housing debate: class and social power, and the interweaving of economic accumulation and social reproduction. The relevance of urban studies to these urban political negotiation processes arises from the fact that a sensitivity to the complexities and nuances involved in the formation of class consciousness and the consolidation of urban political power is important for the development of democratic participation by working-class people in the running of their cities. Scholarly investigation can

contribute to the development of an understanding which would serve to facilitate this process of democratization and empowerment.

## Radical democratic views

A necessary (albeit not sufficient) condition for thorough-going social emancipation is active participation by literally hundreds of thousands of residents in urban development and housing processes. Despite their important contribution to the corpus of urban studies, radical South African theories are unable to theorize an empowered (albeit dominated) citizenry impacting on the politics of the built environment. Based on a neo-Marxist structuralism<sup>67</sup> which assumes that individuals are mere functionaries of society's structural network,<sup>68</sup> the radical analyses stress 'structural' class interests but remain silent about the concrete interests of, for instance, ethnic and language groups, women, the aged, and gays. Yet it is precisely the specific interests of strata within the working class, who are discriminated against, that are likely to provide the impetus for the mass participation necessary for real empowerment. These interests need to be translated into local demands (for instance, the provision of apartment accommodation for single parent mothers), instead of local agendas becoming merely ways of resisting accumulation/reproduction processes, still less as part of a national campaign for 'the transfer of power to the people'.

Since 2 February 1990, with the lifting of the proscriptions on the ANC, PAC, SACP, and other political organizations, there has been a surge of grassroots activity in townships as residents mobilized initially behind the ANC, but latterly increasingly independently in civic associations to improve their material lot. Concomitant with the emergence of grassroots power has been the outbreak of violence among residents in the African townships and informal settlements of the PWV region. The existing radical theories cannot provide a full understanding of these seemingly ethnic or cultural conflicts, precisely because of a reductionist emphasis on the logic of capital and class structures. Yet understanding the reasons for the mayhem is important to unite different township-based interest groups behind a progressive development strategy.

Concepts useful for interpreting current events have nevertheless been articulated abroad. Within left-wing urban sociology there has

emerged a critique of structuralism by, among others, Castells<sup>69</sup> who has developed beyond the confines of 'social structure determinism'. In a shift from earlier positions, and reflecting more recent developments in western Marxist theory, Castells<sup>70</sup> maintained that:

- Cities do not simply reflect the logic of capital accumulation, but also the way conflicting historical actors assigned different meanings to the role and function of cities and citizens.
- There is a causal equivalence between the role of class, the state, gender relationships, and ethnic, national, and citizen movements.
- Urban protest-developed demands focused on state-provided goods and services as well as mobilization against local and central state authority<sup>71</sup> and the defence of cultural identity, organized around a specific territory.
- Grassroots mobilization resulting in urban social movements was necessary for city transformation.

In the post-structuralist vision, housing and urban political struggles have come to be seen as concerning the organization of experience and the production of personality systems and cultural values through gender and sexual relationships. Castells proposed that a combination of feminist and psychoanalytical theories could provide useful guidelines for studying the development of urban cultural identity.<sup>72</sup>

Castells's revised ideas may be useful for understanding the mechanisms underlying the 1984–6 popular resistance to the BLAs in South Africa, as well as the emergence of conservative ethnic-based vigilante groups (i.e. the 'witdoeke' of Crossroads, the Inkatha warlords in Natal, and the African vigilante forces which have wreaked havoc in the African townships of the PWV region during 1990). Popular township resistance and counter-revolutionary responses are clearly not reducible to conflicts over the reproduction of labour power and the distribution of the collective means of consumption; still less can they simply be read off from 'the logic of accumulation'.

Castells also developed his ideas on urban social movements and their production of 'new social effects'. He found that the movements were linked to three particular types of 'operators' who made it possible for them to have an impact on society: the media, technically competent professionals, and political parties. But he found that while being linked to these, urban social movements should remain autonomous in order to be able to change urban meaning. Any movement that was not autonomous became, according to Castells,<sup>73</sup> an appendage of the interests of these operators.

The above-mentioned redefinition of urban social movements may be useful for comprehending the new political practices which have begun to emerge in some of South Africa's largest African townships. In the PWV region, the impasse between the authorities and their township-based opponents has in recent years led to several negotiations over rent boycotts and illegal land occupation.<sup>74</sup> The emergence of large community organizations in the African townships has occurred because of the efforts of activists linked to the UDF and (to a lesser extent) the black consciousness-supporting National Forum Committee. More recently professional operators have also played critically important roles in enabling the negotiations to take place. But the danger exists that the practices of these operators could substitute for the much needed grassroots organization required by the fledgling urban social movements if they are to wring material concessions from the authorities. Yet while greater autonomy for these community groupings is required if they are to develop into grassroots-based urban social movements,<sup>75</sup> it would be a contradiction in terms to attempt to build community organizations which have no links with traditional political and other technical and media operators in South Africa.

Since 2 February 1990 — which marked the 'opening up' of political processes in South Africa — there has emerged a swell of grassroots-based civic associations in the PWV region as well as elsewhere in the country. It is at the grassroots of the cities that local community leadership is starkly confronted with questions about residents' material conditions as well as their power to control their lives. Besides the ANC, the NP government, the trade union movement, big business and other interest groupings, these local organizations have the potential to grow in strength and thereby could exert an influence over the country's future political culture and socio-economic development well beyond the confines of their particular built environments.

## Conclusion

During the 1990s, changing political processes have placed the termination of apartheid racism firmly on the agenda of social change. Even the NP government — once at the vanguard of racial social engineering — has distanced itself from 'separate development' ide-

logy and practice. The colour bar in sexual relationships fell away in recent years; currently the hospitals are being desegregated; the Group Areas Act will be abolished during 1991; and it is expected that within a couple of years the four-tier educational system will cease to exist. The sweeping away of residential, educational, and health segregation clearly offers potential for the release of enormous wells of creative energy by ordinary people living in the townships. From a liberal perspective, the removal of state controls will allow the full force of the market to direct the production and distribution of commodities — including housing — to satisfy popular needs, an assumption which underlies the argument for privatizing the use of society's resources. In the African areas, a private (albeit limited) housing market has been operating for the past decade.<sup>76</sup>

The problems experienced by Eastern Bloc economies in recent years, as well as the dramatic restructuring of those economies and societies during 1989 and 1990, indicate that for the users of goods and services, the market as a 'feedback mechanism' may in some ways be more equitable than centrally planned state control (of the socialist or apartheid variety), 'and more efficient than a system in which we all vote on the exact needs of our supermarket shopping basket in some popular forum'.<sup>77</sup> Yet while the housing market's mechanisms might have progressive possibilities as an index of social needs, the impact is always limited by the existing distribution of wealth and income. The liberal view that market-based social relationships are natural and equal (and hence just) often ignores the enormous inequalities of wealth in a country like South Africa, and tends to obscure the power imbalances between producers and consumers in the African housing market. If negotiated settlements to housing conflicts are going to lead to an improvement in the physical well-being of African working-class residents, the functioning of the private housing market needs to be channelled in such a way that it is not only the wealthy and the powerful who benefit: there is a real possibility that current high prices of land and housing will pressurize poorer residents to relocate to cheaper but disadvantaged regions on the urban periphery.

Clearly the market should be shaped to the advantage of working-class residents. Housing should cease merely to serve the narrow interests of the state and employers in the reproduction of workforces, and of developers in the pursuit of capital. The production of housing for maximum profit, the creation of home loan credit as a means solely for accumulating money-capital, and a fixation with pri-

vate tenure and individual home-ownership as the *sine qua non* of development, are likely to pose serious threats to community attempts to rescue residents from further impoverishment and degradation. Understanding profit motives of developers and their capital accumulating imperatives could place community activists in a relatively strong position to wring certain concessions from them. A similar knowledge of the role of financial capital in the built environment could form the base for campaigns aimed at building societies and banks.

Social conflict around housing is increasingly being channelled through bargaining/negotiation processes, which require new forms of organization. Apartheid has produced passive township communities, many of whom have been denied the skills and confidence needed to challenge the apartheid urban system. This passivity is strengthened by a reliance on charismatic leadership figures who offer them deliverance by way of millenarian campaigns for unachievable demands whose failure strengthens a culture of powerlessness. Collective bargaining over housing is the antithesis of passivity, for it relies on residents winning gains through their collective efforts.<sup>78</sup> In order for local urban social movements to become more fully organized, they require greater autonomy from the national opposition movements and parties, as well as from a dogmatic fixation on past anti-apartheid strategies. Already this process is occurring in the Transvaal where a strongly organized, independent civic movement is emerging. Current ANC policy has also taken cognizance of this reality through stressing the need for independent community organizations. Through winning concessions from the authorities, financial institutions, and developers, the local associations could build grassroots organization as a basis from which to make further demands.

A more fundamental question concerns the structures through which residents can empower themselves and at the same time improve their material living conditions. While they lack the necessary resources, community organizations might have to be satisfied with joint ventures negotiated with developers and financiers. But in the longer term, the models of community-controlled development corporations, land trusts, and funds (which have been developed in other parts of the world), need to be examined for their application in the South African urban context.

Local negotiations have led to the crystallization of both establishment as well as progressive policy positions. The establishment parties



generally tend to represent or be supported by the state and big business groupings, while the progressive sector includes the traditional anti-apartheid political groupings, the African labour movements, the emergent civic-based urban social movements (including representative squatter organizations), and a host of support agencies and organizations. In essence the establishment position rests on the assumption that private tenure should predominate as a means of holding and controlling residential shelter, and that technocratic 'experts' provided by the market should control the implementation of projects. By contrast the emerging progressive position is characterized by a willingness to explore seriously collective forms of tenure tailored to the urban poor's needs, and a principled and practical commitment to community participation at decisive stages of design and project implementation.

The challenge facing negotiation practitioners on both sides of the table is, at one level, the articulation of political and material demands (and concessions) in ways which do not fundamentally conflict with their respective interests. Thus there is unlikely to be a cast-iron distinction between establishment and progressive policy positions: it is conceivable that an establishment body might adopt aspects of a progressive position, and vice versa, despite the different underlying interests. The recently released UF position on housing (referred to earlier) is a case in point. The UF perceives land market regulation through investment trusts and individual title which can accommodate communal ownership, as a way to secure maximum private developer/contractor involvement in economic accumulation in the housing field. Yet simultaneously this position represents an ideological concession from the hegemonic 'individual tenure' position, which could be used to open up opportunities for community-based development corporations to secure housing on the basis of communal tenure. Community control over land could ensure relatively stable land and housing prices which would be more affordable for the majority of their constituency at future junctures.

Yet the question of popular participation in the design and implementation of housing projects appears to hold very little room for manoeuvre for establishment bodies. For some in the ruling classes and the state it is imperative to implement, as far as possible, a settlement between élites about the nature of the polity as well as the economy: the exercise of personal freedom is in any event meant to be experienced through 'the market' rather than through widescale involvement in the conscious building of political, economic, social, and cultural processes of everyday life.

Civic associations and community groups are arguably at a crucial stage of development where their organizational capacity needs to be significantly enhanced if they are to create the structures through which actual mass popular participation can be channelled. For example, paid, full-time community organizers, as well as ongoing education and training, are writ large as challenges for township organizations schooled in anti-apartheid protest action. Thus for the dominated classes, particularly the poorer strata of the working classes who objectively have only their own collective power to rely on, forging the necessary grassroots organization is an enormous challenge.

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