GLOBALISATION, MARGINALISATION & NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

A joint project between the Centre for Civil Society and the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal

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The Homeless People's Alliance: Purposive Creation and Ambiguated Realities

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2004

A case study for the UKZN project entitled: Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements in post-Apartheid South Africa

This study was commissioned as part of a broader research project entitled *Globalisation, Marginalisation & New Social Movements in post-Apartheid South Africa*, a joint project between the Centre for Civil Society and the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. The project was funded primarily by the Ford Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies whose support is gratefully acknowledged. For more information, visit: http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/ and click on 'social movements' under 'research'.

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> The state…is the coldest of all monsters…(it) lies in languages of good and evil; and whatever it says, it lies – and whatever it has, it has stolen…only there, where the state ceases, does the man who is not superfluous begin…(Nietzche, 1969 cited in Rose and Miller 1992:173)

> Nowadays the ambition to 'change the world' meets with cynicism – because of the questionable record of several development decades, doubts over social engineering and rationalist planning as exercises in authoritarianism, and over modernism and the utopian belief in the perfectability of society. Yet all this does not alter the necessity to 'change the world', nor does it alter the fact that development is about changing the world, with all the pitfalls that it involves, including the legacy of social engineering and Enlightenment confidence tricks (Nederveen Pieterse 2000:187).

> The South African Homeless People's Federation calls itself uMfelanda Wonye – 'we die together'. It's because if you are poor, no matter how good you talk English, no matter how good you can walk, but at the end of day, you are poor. And then if you are alone at a certain corner, you will be [sic] never come up with the ideas of fighting poverty. But now with the Federation, it is said: For us to try and challenge this problem of poverty, homelessness and landlessness, it's for us to come together and form a family and then when we are a family, every problem that comes we will challenge it together. If somebody wants to kill us, he will kill us together. So it means forming ourselves into a family with a common understanding of what we want to achieve at the end of the day. So this is why we said we should call ourselves uMfelanda Wonye waBantu wesemijondolo – the Federation of the homeless people who are staying in the shacks around our country in South Africa. (Interview, Molokane 13.05.04).

Introduction

The slums and shantytowns of our world – the shadow cities – are the 'fully franchised solution to the problem of warehousing the twenty-first century's surplus humanity' (Davis 2004: 13). In our popular imagination and imageries of development, the slums are 'social wastelands', bearing testimony to the failure of 'development' – a project designed and engineered by a malignant, malevolent and monstrous state. It is only 'beyond the state' – in the 'free market' and 'civil society' – that true 'human flourishing'[1] can begin. Criticising the excesses, inefficiencies, and injustices of the state is what unites market fundamentalists and post/anti-developmentalists. In both

[1] Human flourishing refers to the full development of a human being's innate intellectual, physical and spiritual potential/s in the context of wider communities (Friedmann 2000:46).

cases, there is little room for 'forward politics' because what remains of 'development' is only the 'destructive power of social engineering' (Nederveen Pieterse 2000:186).

But the slum dwellers of the world rudely interject elegant contemporary development studies debates, pointing out an alternative possibility rooted in a poetics of a political imagination that inhabits a realm located midway between purposive creation and determined resistance to injustice and exclusion. These residents participate in social movements that are akin to what Arturo Escobar (1992:396) defines as follows:

> Today's social movements are seen as playing a central role in producing the world in which we live, its social structures and practices, its meanings and cultural orientations, its possibilities for change. Social movements emerged out of the crisis of modernity; they oriented themselves towards the constitution of new orders, and embody a new understanding of politics and social life itself. They result in the formation of novel collective identities which foster social and cultural forms of relating and solidarity as a response to the crises of meanings and economies that the world faces today.

These socio-cultural forms of relating and solidarity are distinctive because the *state* is not the starting point for their existence and relevance. Instead, and provocatively, these social movements mobilise on the premise that the state is unlikely to create opportunities for them and their members to access and exercise substantive citizenship. What follows is a determined series of social and political practices in the realm of 'mutual-help' and 'social solidarity' that implicitly set the terms for the state to engage with them when it is interested and/or ready to do so. However, those terms of engagement are then largely defined by the priorities and ways of relating that arise from the cultural politics of the movement, which is sutured by the imperatives of everyday life, survival and solidarity.

This cultural-political practice plays out in the interstices of a profoundly 'disjunctive' (global) democratisation project; i.e. systematic violation of human rights and institutionalised exclusion in elected constitutional-liberal regimes (see Holston 2002; Kabeer 2002 for a full discussion). The focus of our study, the Homeless People's Alliance (HPA) – comprising the Homeless People's Federation (a network of community based organisations), People's Dialogue (a nongovernmental organisation) and uThsani Fund (a community managed revolving loan fund) - can be counted amongst those social movements signalling alternative realities and possibilities. What is particularly fascinating about this movement – 'based on trust, saving systems and lateral learning' (Development Works 2003:28) - and its partners across the world, is that, despite its grassroots preoccupation and rejection of the official development horizon and outputs, it ends up exercising a most profound influence over the state and its urban development ambitions and programmes. Thus, in South Africa, by the late 1990s, the state adopted the substantial components of the community mobilisation methodologies of the HPA – the People's Housing Process (PHP) – and mainstreamed it into government policy. This move opened the door for the HPA to become a key political actor in development policy debates about effective poverty reduction in urban areas. This shift introduced a new challenge; being equally effective at engaging the state and maintaining the core grassroots values and identity of the movement. This tension overshadowed the movement's growth, organisational identity, developmental impact and political practice.

In this study, we trace the origins, growth trajectory, ideological framework, organisational praxis and developmental impact of the Alliance. In our view, the sophisticated ideological framework of the HPA, and its unique engagement with the state, is of particular significance and therefore constitutes the main focus of the case study. However, to fully understand the dynamic adaptability of this movement, we also hone in on a key episode in the life of the movement – a major restructuring exercise in 2001/2 precipitated by a series of crises detailed later on (in Section 3). In adopting this approach, we explore the unique attributes of the HPA vis-à-vis other social movements being studied in this project, teasing out broader conceptual and political implications for understanding the unfolding dynamics between the state and civil society in democratic South Africa.

Given the unique character and political ideology of the movement, considerable space is devoted to the ideology and identity of the movement (see Section 2). However, this only makes sense if it is located in the over-arching political transition from apartheid to political democracy – our starting point in Section 1. Across these two sections, the unique approach of the HPA to the state is explored, best characterised as a politics of ‘bargaining at the top, pressure from below’. The state is not seen as a body to be ‘taken over’ and ‘turned into an instrument of drastic social change’ (Farhi 2003: 37). The manner of the state’s insertion into social, economic and cultural life – through its policies, programmes and institutional infrastructure – and the way it ‘inhibits’ transformative / empowering / capability-generative potentials/capacities as opposed to its spirited promotion of superficial or procedural democratic engagement, comprises the focal point of struggle. Patience is the key organising frame of politics, wherein a central place is awarded to accommodation, compromise, negotiation and long term pressure, rather than confrontation of threats of political reprisal (Appadurai 2002:29; *Environment and Urbanisation Brief* 2001: 4). This ‘politics of patience’ is not about climbing or scaling the emancipatory peaks of the development imaginaries of mainstream development thinkers. Politics, in this frame, is ‘not an event that happens once, a spectacular outburst of energy that overcomes the dark forces of oppression and lifts liberation into a superior state of perpetual triumph’. Instead, it is the ‘very act of climbing, daily, tenaciously and incessantly’ (Farhi 2003:39), in pursuit of constructing empowering pro-poor democratic arenas, spaces and futures.

As we demonstrate below, the materiality of this project encompasses a politics of dignity, a politics of poverty eradication, a politics of citizenship and self-affirmation, and a politics of human rights anchored in deep democracy[2] and the associated nurturing and embedding of a specific ‘cultural capacity’, i.e. ‘capacity to aspire’. Theirs is a project about ‘optimising the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution’ (Appadurai 2004: 05) through *reclaiming the democratic right and power to choose* their own path of development daily denied them by material poverty; the routine violation of their fundamental human rights; and the whittling away of their capacity to change their situation through political and economic exclusion (People’s Dialogue 2000). Optimising the terms of trade, in the face of fierce opposition, requires

[2] Defined as people directing their own development initiatives and organisations through ‘active internal debate’ and a ‘commitment to transparency and inclusion’; the poor engaging key actors in the state and local administrations; and individuals and communities who ‘achieve solidarity and are empowered through horizontal connections’ to other individuals and groups (Wilson & Lowery, forthcoming:4)

mastery of a complex political calculus of rejection and resistance, on the one hand, and compliance and co-operation, on the other. This project is about challenging inherited ideologies, doctrines and norms through metaphor, ritual, rhetoric, organisation and public performance. But purposive creation in an age of disjunctive democratisation, the dominance of neoliberal supply-side citizenship and community development, the deficiencies of planning praxis, and local governance dynamics are not without their own pitfalls, as elaborated in the final section of the report.

Narrating and analysing the genesis, rise, restructuring and consolidation of the HPA from a civil association to a civil/political movement; i.e. from concentrating solely on community mobilisation to gradually combining community work with political engagement with state actors at different scales (Millstein et al 2003), is no small undertaking. The internal and external relational dynamics are dense and complex, entailing multi-pronged strategies of localisation – a place based localised strategy for the defence of livelihoods – and a shifting political strategy linking identity, territory and culture at different scales spanning the globe (adapted from Escobar 2001:163). Of central concern in this paper is an elaboration and elucidation of the confluence of forces that enabled this social movement to eschew emergent (post-apartheid) official discourses about 'appropriate' community development processes in the shelter sector, and, more interestingly, the (selective) appropriation of elements of the HPA's approach into official praxis. The study goes further and delves into the emerging, *contradictory* consequences of the HPA's seeming 'victory' in the hegemonic elevation of their ideology and praxis.

At the outset we need to register a methodological note that the HPA is too large, complex, established and dispersed a movement to study in its full richness within the confines of this project (and certainly within 15 000 words). Fortunately, there are earlier very rich studies to supplement the abbreviated findings presented herein (for example BRCS 2001, 2002, 2003; Marx 2003; Baumann and Mitlin 2002; Napier 2003). These studies have also assisted us to cut down on the number of participant observations and interviews, permitting us to hone in more finely on the central questions of this study and use interviews and ethnographic encounters more judiciously. It is for this reason that we have confined interviews to key strategic activists and practitioners. This report is also part of an ongoing dialogue with the HPA, and reflects and draws on a number of their materials, based on mutual agreement, to ensure that the exercise in recounting and documenting remains as close as possible to their own self-descriptions, but verified through intensive interviews and critical commentary (secondary literature).

1. Locating the HPA in the Transition

Historically, the aims of the anti-apartheid movement was toppling the repressive regime, seizing the official levers of power and remoulding the state into a democratic developmental apparatus. The state in this perspective – like elsewhere – was accorded an active, leading and creative role in redressing development imbalances impelled by the needs and priorities of an assertive and (recently) enfranchised citizenry (see Fung and Wright 2001; Monteiro 2003). In the march towards this utopia, the mobilisation strategies, opposition discourses, political culture and elite (re)alignments gave cause for some concern related to the emergence, nurturing and consolidation of a pro-poor post-apartheid development dispensation.

The 'strongest asset' of the anti-apartheid movement was its ability to weld together a diversity of concerns and issues around working conditions, rent, environmental degradation, urban services, people's education and so forth into a 'united front against the regime' (Greenstein 2003:29). But the range of issues of concern to civil society organisations, communities and activists clearly went beyond the seizure of state power. The elevation of the need for unity in the struggle against the regime and the resulting relegation/subordination of local concerns and interests to the background until the larger question of political transition was settled - (un)wittingly spawned a dangerous political legacy and culture, as this 'united front' drastically restricted the space for dissenting interests and values. The centralist discourse and organisational culture of the ANC – which 'reviled internal dissent' (Greenstein 2003:30) - combined with the suspension of community-based and constituency-specific concerns; the disciplinary, subordinating and inherently status quo maintenance impulses and tendencies of pre-and post-apartheid corporatism (see Habib 1998; Jenkins 2002) and elite pacting (Marais 1998; Bond 2000); and the harvesting of the brightest minds of civil society by the ANC to power the negotiating forums, cast long shadows over the likely emergence of a pro-poor post-apartheid order. The outcomes of these dynamics of *realpolitik* included the demobilisation of grassroots structures (Pieterse 2003), and an intellectual hollowing-out of civil society organisations that could potentially articulate and champion an alternative development agenda to challenge the compromise-ridden one being forged in national negotiations[3].

If the mobilisation strategies, opposition discourses, political culture and elite (re)alignments diminished hopes of the new dispensation being a pro-poor one, the dynamics of political power at local level added further grist to the anti-poor mill. At ground level, petty bourgeois elements were (and still are) often in control of the party machinery, development forums and civic bodies. This local political elite was/is under 'no pressure to extend their socio-political reach to their poorest neighbours' (residents of informal settlements, backyard shacks and hostel dwellers), and are dissuaded from active participation in local politics (Everatt 1999:27). So, while the ANC committed (commits) itself to delivery to the poor, local reality remains/ed one of 'shutting out the poor' (Ibid:25), compounded by the fact that the ANC did (and still does) not have a 'public language to deal with the[se] intense local power struggles' (Jensen 2001:107, 118). This accounts in part for why the HPA's organisation of the poorest was initially viewed by both the ANC and civics as a 'threat'. Tensions were skilfully defused by the HPA through working on a settlement-by-settlement basis, assuaging fears and building trust through underscoring the Alliance's non-political orientation (see Box 1).

The alienation and marginalisation of the most vulnerable segments of society – the poorest of the poor - from township and political life and development processes through default, design and structural configurations - is reinforced and deepened by the activities of other civil society organisations who at the time purported to service the needs of the poor. The numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the urban development sector did, within the confines of (late) apartheid politics (and the immediate liberalisation period – early 1990s), access government funded programmes to address the shelter needs of low income communities. But most of

[3] Khan (2003) provides a discussion of the shelter policy negotiation process and its content in the National Housing Forum which excluded from the negotiation process the civil society organisations representing the poor and marginalised, and ignored the needs of the poorest sectors of society.

them worked through male-dominated local civics and failed to 'represent equally' those living in townships. The poorest households, women and squatters, were (once again) under-represented and effectively excluded from these development interventions. Secondly, most NGOs and civics focussed on ensuring either improved housing provision or that capital markets better served low income communities. None of the NGOs at the time focused on strengthening the political capacity of the urban poor to define, articulate and champion their own needs and projects (Bolnick and Mitlin 1999).

Box 1:

Relationship with the ANC and Civics: How working relationships were established

'In the beginning they were not sure if we are not starting another political organisation. They started to doubt us...but observed that this movement is not going to be one of the political…because we have organized people in the community saying that we are going to talk about the developments. It's very sensitive. It is critical for you as an ANC member to stand up in a meeting of the ANC and say that: "I am one of your members. I am coming as one of your members. When you are there, you are there to negotiate". That is all. That we are a movement. You explain how we are working as a movement. That is all. You must always keep that you are a movement…. It was not easy, especially for the civic bodies…as they identify themselves as the ones who deliver for the communities. So it's why they always doubted us. Now, it's not a problem, in the sense that, as we were explaining ourselves, telling them…"We are the individual members who join the movement in the communities who belong to the civic bodies…work according to…guidelines [and]…bound by the constitution of the civic organization in the communities". This has been negotiated at every level. We started at the localities. And at the beginning, some of us started from the provincial body. Then we used the provincial body to influence the local' (Interview, Matolengwe 26.04.04).

2. Ideology of the HPA and its identity

The HPA is founded on a most critical reading and analysis of South Africa's political economy and the practices of the liberation movement. With respect to the latter, the key ideologues of the HPA – most notably those in People's Dialogue – were 'explicitly uncomfortable with the politics of the liberation movement' (even in the early years of the struggle) and 'contemporary anti-communist ideas of "open society"'. The ideologues were not convinced that the creation of an 'open society' – enshrining autonomy and citizen equality - was a 'necessary and sufficient guarantee' for the realisation of the rights of the poor.

Also, People's Dialogue was one of the first organisations to be deeply sceptical of the state's capacity to make interventions that would ensure meaningful resource flows into poor communities. At the same time, it recognised that many politicians and officials in Government had a genuine interest in addressing the needs of its largest constituencies – the urban poor. However, without a common voice and collective action emanating from the poor themselves, it was certain that the state would mediate national resource struggles in ways that continued to benefit other social classes (*uTshani Buyakhuluma* nd, cited by Tweedie 2003: 05).

The new dispensation provided cold comfort to these ideologues. The early 1990s is characterised as one of high expectations and 'generous promises from politicians'. During this period of political liberalisation, the ANC and the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) made explicit commitments to urban development as a vehicle to mobilise the urban poor. Envisaged, though, was a 'top-down "delivery"

process' wherein the 'triumphant liberation movement would solve all the problems of the dispossessed'. To the ANC, the poor, argue the ideologues, were '*objects* of "development"' (Baumann and Bolnick 2003:109, original emphasis).

In a document titled, *Housing and the Urban Poor* (no author), posted on the website of People's Dialogue, the following is recorded about the South African conjuncture, the political complexion of new regime and the poverty-ameliorative potential of its policies, programmes and strategies:

> The new South African Government continues to pride itself on its unfailing efforts to reverse poverty (that it often constructs as strictly an apartheid derivative) and to guarantee the social and economic rights of all citizens in the country.
>
> The reality does not quite coincide with this kind of imagery, but the full extent of the current problems facing the poor in South Africa is often underplayed or ignored. This is reinforced by an obstinate refusal to let go of consoling illusions. Throughout the world people who fight for justice and human rights like to uphold South Africa as a shining example. Given the irrefutable ugliness of the old regime, it is predictable, although horribly naïve, to believe that those who have supplanted them are without blemish, or at best that the blemishes are only skin deep; that the ANC Government's strategies of reconstruction and development is generally on course, that social and economic rights are being upheld and that poverty is on the retreat (Anon (a) nd:01).

This deep scepticism of government hinges on sociological and historical beliefs and experiences that the 'state and the market act in ways that are universally against the interests of the poor' (Ibid:03). The installation of a popular democratic government that understood the 'needs and problems of the urban poor were not going to be a priority for the new government' charged the founders of the HPA (Baumann and Bolnick 2001:106).

If the civics and NGOs were ill-suited to the task of prioritising and championing the needs of the poor(est), the ideologues also realised the futility of directly confronting a state that commands unprecedented levels of support and legitimacy (at home and abroad), even though it wields an apparatus of power 'designed to be regulatory and not developmental', and governs a society that remains 'deeply authoritarian and controlled by a very aggressive and organised private sector'. Pragmatic rather than confrontational engagement, reckoned the ideologues, would yield more fruitful outcomes for the urban poor (see Box 4). Put differently, directly challenging a state struggling to consolidate a new democracy and extend its hegemony under difficult material conditions required pragmatic engagement directed at securing working relationships with formal market institutions and the state. Whilst recognising the anti-poor orientation of key development programmes and interventions, pragmatic engagement is not about frontally challenging and assaulting policy, but maximising access to legal entitlements, i.e. the housing subsidy in this case.

For the HPA, enhancing and maximising access to legal entitlements rotates around the construction of new pro-poor relational fields of politics, a prerequisite being that the poor have a 'truly self-organised presence in the political sphere' (People's Dialogue

2000:42). Because the most effective solutions to the problems of poverty have their origins in the practices of poor communities – what poor people already do – the challenge is to improve them and scale them up, but driven by the poor themselves. Accordingly, the achievement of lasting poverty reduction demands an organised, confident and determined poor, rooted in strong local organisations that are able to carry a local development agenda, and linked together to successfully engage the state.

Summarily, the HPA's strategy is one of initiating a 'grassroots-driven, non-hierarchical process to reclaim the latent collective power of poor households and their communities, and use this to identify options and strategies to address their self-identified priority needs' (Baumann and Bolnick 2001:106). This process strives to simultaneously create self-knowledge about the needs and capacities of communities; craft appropriate and effective strategies for maximising the impact of state and other resources, to address needs through drawing on the collective knowledge and capacities to leverage additional resources; and create a 'self conscious movement of the poor, aware of its needs, socio-political situation and with collective capacities' (Ibid). Through this process – creating spaces for the poor to identify, understand, articulate, leverage resources and mobilise – they become 'creative agents', '*subjects* of their own progress', versus *objects* to be acted upon (Ibid:109).

Mobilisation ideology in practice

Building the capacities of the urban poor constituted the main thrust of the HPA's work in the first three years of its existence (1991-1994). The priority was for the Federation to become a 'rallying point for the urban poor, an institution in which the poor and homeless people could find a safe passage to decent and affordable shelter' (People's Dialogue 1996). This translated into growing its membership; devising bottom-up systems to empower homeless poor women to take charge of their own lives; developing the capacity to demonstrate forcefully that a people's housing process was (is) best equipped to deliver affordable shelter at scale; and demonstrating that the poor are indeed the most capable of articulating their needs and satisfying them, with minimal external intervention and only appropriate support.

In contrast to mainstream claim-making practices, the strategy of the HPA in their engagement with the state is underpinned by the belief that if official programmes are to benefit the poor they 'need to be redesigned and redeveloped by the poor' so that they 'work for them', followed by negotiation with the state to obtain support for the implementation of their 'solution'. The solutions championed aim to strengthen long term capacity and capability-building through asset-building; developing a knowledge of community priorities and needs and how best to meet them; accumulating and mobilising resources to test the efficacy and sustainability of the solution; and then engaging the state to support the solution engineered by the poor, without strangling the 'life out of their organisations' (People's Dialogue 1996:21; People's Dialogue 2000). This form of engagement is undergirded by three distinct but linked change processes:

(i) Organisation for empowerment: The first change process focuses on creating organisational capability within poor settlements and linkages between community and peers, through federating, networking and exchanges, and savings and loan activities (discussed below). These stratagems are crucial to nurturing and sustaining the participation of the poor in 'demanding change, both within their communities as well

as from the broader environment'. Strengthening democratic organisation has numerous long term implications but is in the main the 'most powerful legacy of any developmental intervention' as it secures sustainability (People's Dialogue 2000:22).

(ii) Community-based problem solving: The emphasis here is to build skills and mobilise and accumulate resources within and beyond communities to solve problems. The mobilisation strategies include enumeration, community planning and house design, supported by exchange visits between settlements and internationally. Via these mobilisation strategies, the poor are capacitated to reflect collectively on both deconstructing problems and identifying solutions. To this end, the HPA often provides grant funding to pilot activities whereby the poor:

> . . . attempt to solve a problem, innovate decision-making and resource-allocating processes, test their solutions, and even fail and try again, if necessary. Even *mistakes and failures* are viewed by the Alliance [HPA] as *sound investments* in the evolution of sustainable change processes. . . (People's Dialogue 2000:24, emphasis added).

(iii) Learning to negotiate: This process refers to the development of communities' abilities to negotiate with external actors, with whom dialogue and negotiation is vital to scale up their solution. The dialogue, negotiation and engagement with the state occurs on terms dictated by poor communities and their organisations. The key thrust is to lead by example whereby communities pioneer and develop their own solution and demonstrate its viability practically – precedent setting – and then engage the state in an effort to transform official programmes. Significant here is not pitting the solution proposed by poor against the state programme or lobbying directly for policy change. Rather, the approach is to seek 'shifts' in the *institutional arrangements* which determine the way policy translates into action. The 'attendant shifts in the institutional framework, if they are of some magnitude, will be bound to have a direct impact on policy' (People's Dialogue 1996:21). Thus, one of the key ideologues of the HPA, Joel Bolnick (Co-ordinator of the Urban Resources Centre and Shack Dwellers International), captured the spirit of this form of engagement most eloquently: 'Don't confront authority head on. Instead of storming the citadel, infiltrate it. . . Play judo with the state – use its own weight to roll it over' (Interview 07.04.04).

Consequently, the modalities of the state engagement and dialogue are extremely sophisticated. It involves straddling diverse spatial scales and territorial-administrative jurisdictions; criss-crossing the political and official divide; deal making with both progressive and conservative political parties; and playing off one level of government against another, amongst others. This strategic practice arises from multi-scalar organisation building interventions whose roots are anchored in communities. 'Federating' of community based organisations at city, provincial and national scales follow. Once federations are active, engagement with government officials commences around the interests, needs and priorities of the poor, and the solutions devised by them. Significant in HPA's multi-scalar strategic practice are the contributions of the international donor community. The flexibility of donor funding facilitates innovation – mining new development approaches, community building and precedent setting – which is needed to ensure effective utilisation of government funds (Development Works 2003). Donor funding also creates the multinational language and legitimacy for HPA interventions.

Distinguishing features of HPA's mobilisation ideology and practice
People-controlled development that is sustainable, cost effective, and harnesses the capacities already present in poor communities, are the distinguishing features of the HPA's ideology and practice. People-controlled development is about fostering self-replicable and self-reliant social development practices. The HPA holds that supportive mechanisms for people-driven development need to be flexible and informal to encourage experiential learning, localised problem solving and bottom-up formulation of development procedures. This premise has led to the elaboration of processes closely modelled on those developed generically by the poor themselves. The approach is distinct from conventional practice, which, at best, attempts to make formal and institutionalised development processes more accessible to the poor. Finally, the HPA holds that collective 'grassroots' leadership and ownership of the development process, initiatives and opportunities is the primary way to democratise development and promote social transformation.

This approach to development – termed in the literature as *Asset-Based Community Development* (ABCD) – takes as its starting point the existing strengths and assets of communities, particularly those residing in community-based associations and other social networks (Mathie and Cunningham nd). As a strategy, it is shaped by a distinctive set of principles, and these in turn, inform field-based methods and practices. Eschewing blue-prints, these methods include detailed micro-investigations to identify hidden and unrecognised assets; asset mapping (wherein the full range of assets which the community can draw upon are comprehensively recorded and documented); community mobilisation; and a progressive 'scaling up' of activity, as linkages to outside external institutions are called upon to invest in community-driven development initiatives. The scaling up - in the case of the HPA – is organised around a politics of patience whose core purpose is to reclaim the right and power to choose an empowering development path with a view to rendering it hegemonic. This ideology of social mobilisation and organisation around the exigencies of urban poverty is in itself highly instructive, for it offers a distinctively different perspective compared to the approach of civics in the ambit of the Congress Movement. However, as with all political philosophies, real life conditions lead to compromise and reinvention. In the following sections we recount the operational challenges of the HPA.

3. Walking the talk: From ideology to mobilisation

Planting the seeds
This movement is a product of purposive political intervention in response to a direct challenge by residents of informal settlements to the South African Catholic Bishop's Conference to assist them (Marx 1992). Unlike its Indian counterpart, the HPA did not emerge gradually over a number of years from the convergence of autonomous grassroots and professional NGO processes. Although the Federation built on traditions of mobilisation and consciousness originating in South Africa's poor communities in the apartheid era, middle class activists, who identified and formed partnerships with grassroots counterparts, forged the HPA through conscious intervention (BRCS 2002:54).

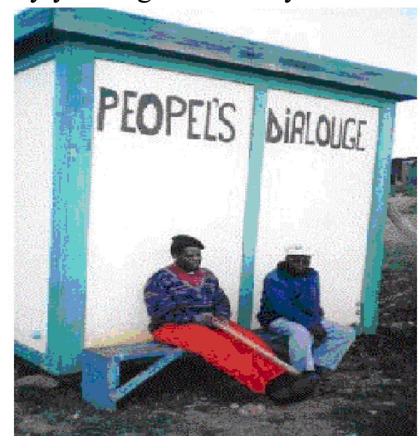
A key actor in the formation of the HPA was Joel Bolnick. Heavily influenced by the Argentine Jesuit priest Jorge Anzorena (incidentally, a second cousin of Che Guevara),

whose work in housing contributed to the formation of the grassroots-based Asian Coalition for Housing Rights; three key informants guided the thinking around the establishment of the HPA:

- *Create a space* where poor people can learn from each other and make their own changes;
- Let the poor learn from each other through *dialogue* among themselves about what does and does not work;
- Trust the process – whatever emerges from the *dialogue* conducted in that *space* belongs to the participants and is therefore the only possible outcome (adapted from Wilson and Lowery, forthcoming).

Upon his return to SA in 1989, Bolnick was requested by Peter Templeton of the South African Catholic Development Agency (SACDA) to organise a housing conference for slum and shack dweller organisations along the lines advocated by Father Anzorena. In March 1991, 150 poor men and women – regardless of political persuasion – from shacks, backyards and hostels – gathered in Broederstroom to 'strengthen their positions as poor, homeless and landless people, by sharing their experiences' (People's Dialogue 1996:04).

During the deliberations, the majority of the South African participants argued that with political liberation and the seizure of state power, the democratic government would deliver social and economic rights to the poor. Efforts to organise autonomous institutions of the urban poor were perceived as reactionary and counter-productive. A significant minority was less convinced of political liberation spelling social and economic emancipation, i.e. a democratic society would not guarantee a better life for the poor; it would simply open space for the poor to contest power and resources within broader society. For this minority, it was imperative to start thinking about an autonomous organisation of the poor, one that would seek ways to work together with a democratically elected government to find solutions to poverty and deprivation. This viewpoint recognised that democratic rights are often given best effect though conscious organisation and action based on the needs of a specific group (People's Dialogue 2000). As the division split the room, one of the slum dwellers from India arose and shouted slogans of affirmation for both sides and then delivered a powerful oration urging all not to commit the same mistake they had forty years ago when they decided to wait for the newly independent democratic government to meet their needs. The minority position won the day, and with that the seeds of the South African Homeless People's Federation were planted. Following Father Anzorena's advice, Joel created a space for dialogue, let go of outcome, and the poor decided (Wilson and Lowery, forthcoming).



Growing the seedlings

After the 1991 meeting, the NGO People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter was established, with Bolnick serving as Director. Dialogue had very humble beginnings, and despite its powerful reach and impact, it still today remains a small NGO, with a staff-to-CBO ratio of approximately 1:5 000 (BRCS 2002:4,12).

Dialogue supports and facilitates the efforts of poor people rather than delivering professional solutions through interfacing between formal institutions and the poor; assists in designing and developing strategies that members learn and practice; and works with external agencies to create space for people's organisations. The communities themselves assume responsibility for organising and networking.

People's Dialogue uses various methods to support its work:

- Collective planning exercises, such as enumeration, barefoot collective town planning, and house design using full-scale cloth mock-ups;
- Exchange visits between settlements and internationally;
- Promoting women leaders;
- Initiation of collective savings schemes (Tweedie 2003).

To fully appreciate how the HPA was grown over time, we explore what each of these practices entail.

Community mobilisation through collective planning

Community mobilisation commences with the identification of settlements for training. This entails a settlement count; screening of the settlement context to assess the 'viability of the settlement to respond favourably to a Federation process and awareness building among informal settlement residents' (Development Works 2003:08). The next step is about establishing linkages with the local leadership to access the settlement. Members of the Federation initiate contact with the settlement leadership and introduce them to the history and culture of the Federation.

The next set of activities 'ignites' the Federation process in a particular settlement. It comprises various **rituals** of the Federation: enumeration and mapping; surveying; house modelling; and savings schemes establishment (see Ibid: 8-10 for a full discussion of rituals). These **rituals** can be grouped into one major event or dispersed over a longer period.

Through these tactile activities, the HPA helps communities assess their needs holistically; understand how external interventions can benefit them; and set their own development priorities. It is only after this that professionals become involved. This accords with the Alliance's broad development approach, i.e. because the poor are much more committed to the solution than any outsider, the decisions need to come from the poor themselves.

Exchanges

Exchanges (local, regional and international) are another instrument for community mobilisation, and have proven to be a useful and multi-dimensional development tool. As an 'isolation-buster, confidence-booster, option-expander and network-builder', exchanges represent a collective commitment of organisations of the poor to communicate with each other, examine their problems, set priorities and explore solutions, and use others as allies. The large networks generated by exchanges become channels for the direct transfer of ideas, strategies, and options. The sharing of ideas

puts in place building blocks to nurture a movement of the urban poor (*Environment and Urbanisation* 2001:4) whose leverage is of seminal import in their negotiation for external resources, as it prevents authorities playing one community off against another. The solutions worked out locally also become the 'building blocks for scaling up with global applicability' (Anon nd:02).

Although most community exchanges are local, an international dimension has developed over time. The visits, designed and organised by the poor in their own communities and public spaces, transmit signals to local politicians that the poor possess cosmopolitan global linkages, which increases their prestige in local political negotiations. Also, when leaders meet in another's locality, they can raise difficult questions about social exclusion and inequitable power relations because they are outsiders. Such questions would not normally be raised by local leaders for fear of political reprisal. Furthermore, activist leaders struggling for recognition and space in their own localities may attract state and media attention in other countries; visiting as members of an international delegation/federation sharpens their image. Media reports and images relayed back home create additional pressure on decision makers. But as foreign delegates, they also assist local leaders in their struggles with politicians as the latter may feel less threatened by visitors than by their own activists, and sometimes open up to new ideas because they come from the outside. Lastly, meetings between leaders from slum settlements around the globe permit them to make long term strategic plans for funding and capacity building (Appadurai 2002).

Engendered leadership development

Another integral, identity shaping, aspect of the movement's praxis is its substantive focus on housing and its material realisation for the urban poor, especially women. From the inception of People's Dialogue, the focus was on housing, a priority need, especially for women, living in informal settlements. A core objective since then has been to ensure that all activities initiated by People's Dialogue include women through which they become equal and active participants in development processes and initiatives (Bolnick and Mitlin 1999) (see Box 2). Through saving collectives, for example, poor women are able to secure recognition in their settlements, and are empowered to play key leadership roles. These collectives manage community processes in co-operation with the traditional male leadership in order to strengthen their joint capacity to engage the outside environment. In this way, over time, women in communities are able to manage all the assets owned and controlled by the community. Eventually, women become empowered to renegotiate their relationships with other, more traditional leaders. Women are put at the 'forefront in community dealings with outsiders', a role conventionally 'reserved' for men (People's Dialogue 2000:32). When the Federation leadership wants to share ideas, the HPA ensures majority women representation. In fact, 'male Federation leaders promote this concept vigorously, and often demand it within settlements' (Ibid.). Processes are developed to ensure that, in the timing of meetings and venues, women's practical needs are prioritised. Very importantly, 'new leadership opportunities are provided to **collectives** rather than **individuals**. In many low-income

> Box 2:
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> **Women and the HPA**
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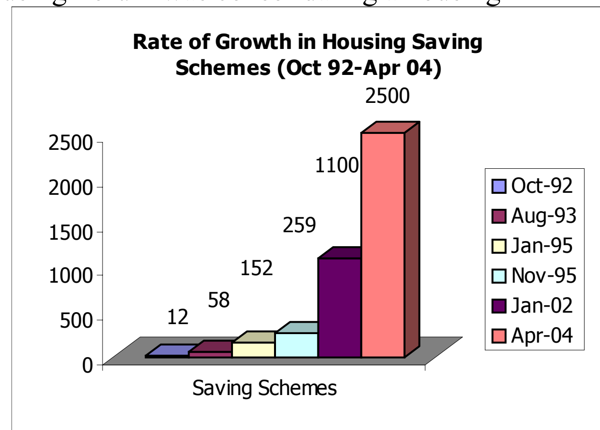
> 'Women are the ones who are responsible for the lives of the family. They are the ones who do voluntary work. They have a strong spirit. They stand for what they want to achieve. For men: I don't want to say that they are position mongers. They are the people who don't add any value sometimes. For women you know you have some people who add some value. We always put our trust in them… [Women] stand for what they are doing. And they make it a point that they want to achieve something' (Interview, Matolengwe, 26.04.04).

communities a collective approach appeals more to women than men' (Ibid:32, original emphasis).

Savings and financing

Another critical focus is around financing for the purposes of fostering and deepening the autonomy and independence of community organisations. The need for community-controlled systems of housing finance is based on the realisation that formal financial systems are inaccessible and ill-suited to the financial needs of the poor. Hence, in 1992 – when the National Housing Forum was consolidating a housing policy based on capital subsidies to be released via private sector contractors – People's Dialogue began mobilising the homeless poor into Savings and Loan Schemes for Housing. The first housing saving schemes were established in October 1992. Eighteen months later, there were over 50 saving schemes in informal settlements, and at the end of 1995 there were more than 250 (People's Dialogue 1996:05) (see Graph)[4].



The members of savings schemes are women who save small amounts of money on a regular basis. Over the past six years, these poor women have saved over R100 000 per month. The amount of money available for loans is thus 'staggering' (Maisel 2003:3). Savings are banked locally and used to provide small-scale loans to members for emergencies and income-generation activities. All matters related to financial management are determined locally and are undertaken by treasurers, book keepers and collectors drawn from the membership. Procedures for loan application and approval are informal and flexible, and are mediated by need – not rules (Bolnick and Mitlin 1999).

The significance of the HPA approach is that savings, housing development, community empowerment, poverty alleviation and self-reliance are integrally linked. Firstly, savings as a group effort, rather than as individual resource mobilisation, makes the savings collective a mechanism for collective mobilisation and identity (re)formation. Secondly, savings bring communities together and mobilises members to be self-reliant. Financial self-reliance improves the chances of sustaining and expanding development initiatives when outside funds dry up, and the likelihood that wealthier groups can hijack programmes is substantially reduced. Thirdly, savings promote high levels of participation and mutual interaction, giving members a

SMALL CHANGE: Residents of Piesang's River, Inanda, set up a savings club after being disappointed by banks

[4] Source: People's Dialogue 1996; BRCS 2002; Interview, Molokane 13.05.04

material stake in their group and in its planning and decision-making activities. Fourthly, savings encourage regular interaction and create strong social bonds between members, with the result that the schemes are reliable social support systems, especially important to women who are traditionally responsible for improving and maintaining the home and providing basic services. Fifthly, savings provide practical education in household and community finance. Knowledge of financial systems and skills are essential for communities to challenge professional development agencies. Lastly, savings furnish the loan capital for income generation loans and deposits for accessing housing loans. When invested, housing finance contributes directly to improved shelter conditions and reduces amounts spent on home repair which usually consumes a significant portion of the household budget. The resulting savings can then be deployed to support other pressing livelihood needs (food, health, education) and/or further housing consolidation (i.e. constructing rooms for rental to supplement household incomes). Loans for income generation both directly reduce income poverty and bolster livelihood and coping strategies (Anzorena et al 1998; Bolnick and Mitlin 1999; Millstein et al 2003; Anon (b) nd).

Transition into the SAHPF

The methods of People's Dialogue were remarkably effective, and quite quickly People's Dialogue had a following which became a 'mass movement at a specific moment' (Tweedie 2003:02). In 1993, when all other community leaders preferred to remain part of a loose network under the People's Dialogue umbrella, a few influential leaders began calling for the formation of a separate people's movement. In 1994 – just prior to the first democratic election – more than 200 community groups that over time had built connections with each other joined together into a national organisation, the South African Homeless People's Federation.

The Federation formalises the network of autonomous community-based organisations (1 100 savings schemes) (January 2002)[5] comprising 100 000 members, 85% of whom are women, in receipt of monthly incomes of less than R1 000. It has a flat leadership structure, with a Core Group of nine national leaders, and teams based in regional federation centres that fulfil key learning and administrative roles. The Federation also maintains regionally pooled saving funds financed by contributions from local collectives (BRCS 2002:12).

Unlike other civil society organisations, each group retains its unique identity and decision-making structure; i.e. each has its own informal constitution and systems of convocation and election (Anon nd:11)[6]. Uniting the Federation, however, is a common development approach: all member organisations are based in shack settlements, backyard shacks or hostels; all organisations are involved in savings collectives with credit managed at the

> Box 3:
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> **Developmental impacts of the Federation and 'federating'**
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> The Federation affords members the vital infrastructure to 'scale' individual housing confidence, knowledge and skills into broader networks, thereby generating the necessary confidence and resources (material and intangible) to undertake housing development (BRCS 2003:55). Through federating, the poor increase their chances of negotiating more supportive policies, especially from levels of government above the municipality and international agencies, and also increases their ability to resist anti-poor programmes (Anzorena et al 1998). Additionally, the possibility of co-option and destabilisation by government promises or self-interested leaders is significantly reduced through federating (Patel and Mitlin 2001).

[5] Rose Molokane estimated the number of savings groups in April 2004 to be in the region of 2 500, with over 800 000 people having directly and indirectly benefited from it (Interview 13.05.04).
[6] This is a contrast to the unitary model that SANCO adopted at its founding (see Mayekiso 1996).

grassroots level by the members themselves; men are not excluded, but the vast majority of members are women; and all organisations are involved in struggles to attain security of land tenure and affordable housing (Bolnick and Mitlin 1999) (see Box 3 for developmental impacts of Federation/'federating').

What is distinctive about the Federation is that it represents a different organisational model from other civil society organisations, most notably the civics, which imbues it with potentially different capacities to mobilise, exert political influence and advance the political inclusion of the urban poor. Firstly, whereas civics mobilised around local socio-economic demands to form a front against apartheid, the Federation strives for the realisation of socio-economic rights within the political context of the new post-apartheid democratic state. Secondly, while the civics grew out of domestic experiences of oppression and exploitation under apartheid, the Federation – through exchange programmes and affiliation to the Slum Dwellers International – can also draw on local and international development discourses and practices. Thirdly, because the Federation is a loosely connected network of autonomous local groups, they operate with a high degree of political autonomy, while the autonomy of civics is potentially constrained due to their close political affiliations with the ANC through SANCO. Fourthly, there are distinct differences in organisational practice. Decision making processes of the community-based organisations within the Federation are based on equal participation of all members. Civics, on the other hand, are hierarchically organised, with elected representative committees wielding extensive powers over decision making and programme/project implementation (Millstein et al 2003).

International links

The Federation is an affiliate of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a global network of poor people's organisations from eleven countries of the South. The network comprises Federations of community organisations that are linked to NGOs and groupings of professionals who support Federation initiatives. Although SDI affiliates work primarily with women, it is the broad category of the urban poor that comprises the Federation's membership. The stated objective of SDI federations is for members to assume 'ownership of problems and the identification of local solutions that are participatory and inclusive and by doing so they automatically create new nodal points of governance, in which organized communities of the urban poor assume their rightful place as development actors' (Slum Dwellers International 2002, cited in Robins, forthcoming:12).What differentiates the SDI from other transnational citizen networks, is that the locus of power lies and is kept in communities themselves, rather than in intermediary NGOs at national and international levels. This is partly because the SDI and its counterparts were not set up to influence global policy-making or lobby international financial institutions (though these roles are increasing). Rather, their aim is to promote practical

solidarity, mutual support, and the exchange of information about strategies and concrete alternatives among their members (Edwards 2001).

Financing arm: The uTshani Fund

From 1991, members of the Federation demonstrated incredible energy, initiative and skill, but lacked sufficient material resources to meaningfully transform their living and shelter conditions. In 1993, the HPA decided to establish its own finance scheme. After an 'unhurried period of capacity-development' – including a major conference on Housing Finance in June 1994 (attended by the first post-apartheid Minister of Housing) – uTshani began operations in January 1995 (People's Dialogue 1996:09).

Initially housed as a financial institution within Dialogue, the Fund is the asset builder and asset manager of the Federation. It is a 'community-managed revolving loan fund' capitalised by foreign donors and government grants. The main reason for its establishment centred on obtaining, consolidating and delivering finance on a collective basis to the saving schemes affiliated to the Federation (see Baumann and Bolnick 2001 for a full discussion of the objectives of the Fund).

The Fund is the primary partner of the Federation in their land, infrastructure, housing and economic development activities, and shares joint responsibility with Dialogue to partner the Federation in its savings activities. Its priorities include leveraging resources for development; promoting development for the most marginalised and vulnerable members within the Federation; facilitating integrated development, poverty eradication, innovation and best practice; and achieving results at as large a scale as possible (Development Works 2003).

People's Housing Process (PHP)

The uTshani Fund specialises in extending revolving housing loans and bridging finance for the housing subsidy system. It serves as a conduit for subsidy transfers from the government to the Federation, extending finance directly to savings collectives (BRCS 2003). Federation members leverage a combination of the housing subsidy, a small top-up loan, and their own savings, to address their shelter needs.

In most localities, the Federation model of housing delivery outperforms developer-built subsidised housing in size, cost (per square metre) and quality. At present, the Federation is building 42- to 48-square-metre cement block houses for about R10 100 (Anon, (a); (b) nd) compared to the RDP house of 30 square metres at a considerably greater cost. This translates into increased housing equity value for the same subsidy input. This result arises for several reasons. Federation members provide unskilled labour free of charge for construction and overall management, including financial management. Materials are bought collectively, securing discounts from wholesale building suppliers. Materials from shacks are re-used, such as window and doorframes. Skilled labour is provided at low cost, as members negotiate with local artisans, or find skilled family members or friends to assist. The Federation self-builders pay more attention to quality than commercial contractors. Federation membership, organised around savings schemes,

HPA house

Formal RDP house

makes it possible to leverage the subsidy, savings, and a loan (if needed) into a flexible, locally controlled financing package. Finally, exchange programmes ensure that problems are dealt with as they arise, and that improvements in housing delivery techniques are achieved continuously, employing skills and ideas from other Federation groups (BRCS 2003).

Case studies of the qualitative outcomes of the PHP delivery approach clearly show, firstly, it maximised beneficiary participation, choice and control, resulting in larger and better quality houses than state facilitated, private sector driven projects. Secondly, the PHP delivery generated greater beneficiary commitment and 'ownership', witnessed in the minimal degree of resale of subsidised housing. Thirdly, case studies revealed higher levels of diversity of housing outcomes than the developer route. Fourthly, there was significant empowerment, both in collective and individual terms. Skills development and employment creation (largely self-employment through dwelling construction) were common. Numerous beneficiaries, especially women, acquired important management skills which dramatically raised their status and profile in the community. Generally, social capital in the community – bonds of trust, reciprocity and interdependence – were strengthened. Fifthly, the most innovative examples of PHP delivery (rapid production of biggest houses) involved a 'stokvel' construction approach, reliant on mutual self-help in construction. This approach did not always involve beneficiary labour, but an incremental building process wherein collective resources were devoted to the production of a few houses at a time, which ultimately produced the best results. Sixthly, in a significant number of cases, beneficiary savings – almost always collective – complemented by outside financial support – be it by way of some variant of bridging finance and/or end user loans – contributed to substantially improved housing outcomes. Finally, in case studies involving a high degree of beneficiary self-organisation, the burden of the housing process for the local state was considerably reduced, i.e. municipalities entering into partnerships with communities did not find it necessary to establish new departments or employ outside consultants and contractors. All they needed to do was to provide the land and co-ordinators to oversee the project (BRCS 2003: 7-8).

Vicissitudes of mainstreaming

The benefits of the PHP were recognised by the government quite early in the implementation of the supply-side, state-facilitated and private sector driven housing programme. Exposure of HPA's model to government through the hosting of an HPA convened conference (shortly after the 1994 elections); the acknowledgement of its sustainability (in contrast to the mainstream official programme) at the Habitat II Conference (1996) by the influential United Nation's Commission for Human Settlements (UNCHS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and the limited impact of the HPA's lobbying on government policy making led to the UNCHS, UNDP and the United States Agency for International Development lending support for the promotion of a housing approach based on self-help construction through housing support centres. The globally funded approach was one of providing direct support to the SA government via the formation of a People's Housing Partnership Trust based within the Department of Housing. The purpose of the Trust was the 'institutional capacitation and empowerment at the provincial and local spheres of government and among NGOs to support the people's process' (Huchzermeyer 2001:322). In May 1998, the People's Housing Process (henceforth referred to as the official PHP (OPHP)) was introduced by the Ministry of Housing as a means of

accessing that portion of the capital subsidy allocated to the top structure, and considerable emphasis was placed by government on community/beneficiary contribution to the process of house construction (sweat equity). Combined then, the OPHP approach is mainly about people building their own houses utilising subsidised materials, with government extending the necessary infrastructure (Ibid:323). For the HPA and many progressive development practitioners, the adoption of PHP by the state is trumpeted as an important victory for those committed to people-centred development (Wilson and Lowery, forthcoming:10).

Box 4:

Key problems of the HPA with the OPHP

From the Alliance's perspective, the state has adopted the PHP in a partial and selective manner. The emphasis of government policy and subsidised housing implementation has been on the delivery of products, while the HPA's approach to people-led development is concerned first and foremost with process and building capacity or social capital. The government focuses narrowly on outputs, with production strictly controlled by the state. The emphasis on outputs restricts claim making through 'projects', wherein the poor become bound to development solutions that are defined and designed by others. The 'project'/'projectised' model has a short-term logic of investment, accounting, reporting and assessment. 'Slow learning and cumulative change' are not easily reconciled with the 'temporal logic of projects' (Appadurai 2002:30; also see *Environment and Urbanisation Brief 2001).* It is for this reason that the OPHP becomes narrowly equated with 'sweat equity', individualism and cost reduction rather than collective beneficiary planning, decision-making, and more productive housing delivery. (Development Works 2003; BRCS 2003)

Government's appropriation of the HPA model – with not inconsiderable adaptation – has over the years become a significant pillar of the official housing programme. As one component of the national housing programme, the OPHP facilitates incremental housing by scaling up participatory processes and relying on self-help processes, communities' resources, and empowerment. To strengthen community initiatives, the programme liaises with grassroots groupings located in the shanties and slums. It sets up housing support centres to stimulate and assist self-help community efforts by passing on information; identifying and channelling subsidies; providing technical advice; and developing co-operative arrangements to purchase building/construction material (Miraftab 2003). From the very beginning, though, serious concerns were registered about the efficacy and viability of the OPHP approach within a broader policy framework that remains stubbornly wedded to neoliberal macro-economic precepts, modernist planning orientations and the technocratic projections of the state (Rust 2002) (see Box 4).

The People's Housing Process is presently being re-emphasised by the Department of Housing as a 'way of helping the public housing programme' (Rust 2002:14) cope with the departure of the private sector from the low-income housing sector. The rediscovery of the PHP recognises that, with regard to the poorest households, it is extremely difficult to combine the quantitative objective of mass private sector delivery with the requirement of a minimum house size of reasonable quality, conforming to set national standards and delivered at a reasonable pace. The enthusiastic embrace of the PHP is viewed by the state as a delivery mode that reduces costs, enhances quality of output, leverages beneficiary resources, speeds up land release, and prevents alienation of housing benefit (resale of new houses).

In pursuit of these objectives, the local state is increasingly tightening its control over the PHP by dominating all or most roles and choices, such as choice of the Support Organisation, house design and building material suppliers, leaving only sweat equity to beneficiaries. OPHP delivery regimes presently violate (at worst) and/or are clearly at odds with almost every aspect of national PHP policy by eliminating beneficiary choice of the Support Organisation (guaranteed by the regulations contained in the

Housing Code) and confining beneficiary choice to unpaid labour (sweat equity) (see Box 5).

Formidable obstacles to mainstreaming the PHP will need to be overcome, which even the state recognised (as far back as 1997), and which still remain valid today:

> Efforts in supporting people's initiatives have achieved considerable levels of success to date. However, the following constraints continue to impair support being successfully introduced: inability of the existing subsidy scheme procedures to disburse subsidies to beneficiaries in a simple and accountable manner; lack of appropriate capacity (understanding, recognition, skills and confidence) at both provincial and local government levels; resistance by vested interest groups to supporting people's housing processes; insufficient support for skills acquisition and building of organisational capacity within community-based groups; a general and widespread absence of trust and confidence by stakeholders in the ability of people to meet their housing needs (RSA Department of Housing 1997:6).

Box 5:

State violation of PHP policy

In Gauteng, all non-state forms of PHP are effectively forbidden. In Cape Town, only the City may be a PHP developer and Support Organisation. House designs are standardised; norms and standards are decreed, building materials must be sourced via the Support Organisation (most often a private sector company). Beneficiaries organised in their own Support Organisation are forbidden from participating in the PHP unless they formally renounce the latter. In Mpumalanga, the Housing MEC unilaterally appoints Support Organisations for PHP groups even if the latter are organised and already have competent Support Organisations, as in the case of the HPA. Limpopo has decreed that it will be the Support Organisation in all instances and all building materials must be sourced through the province. KwaZulu-Natal has decreed that all PHP must be via competitive tender and that only approved 'Implementation Agents' may be Support Organisations (BRCS 2003: 51-53).

The obstacles confronting the state in mainstreaming the PHP and the differences between the HPA and the state's approach is one set of problems. The most daunting – impacting directly on beneficiaries – revolves around the fundamentally contradictory motivational frameworks that pertain to what citizens want from the housing programme and state priorities. The state, on the one hand, prioritises loss avoidance, and control over the highly standardised and inflexible capital subsidy instrument, which to date has undermined indigenous and evolutionary processes of home building as pursued by communities and households (Rust 2002:14). The state views subsidised housing as a communal 'capital' asset that outlives immediate housing beneficiaries. This leads government to prioritise short- and long-term risk minimisation (financial control, norms and standards) over qualitative housing outcomes (larger homes) and/or the social aspects of PHP (empowerment, social capital and skills formation). The local state, in applying the subsidy resource, also prioritises speed and quantity over the PHP focus on sustainability and quality. Finally, the local state tends to prefer to work with individual beneficiaries versus community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations (see Box 6). Beneficiaries, on the other hand, prioritise choice and flexibility in subsidy deployment, because this allows them to produce better homes as immediately useful items to themselves. They prioritise quality over quantity in the application of the subsidy resource, and prefer to work through CBOs and NGOs to protect their interests (BRCS 2003: i)

Box 6:
Socio-institutional capacity building and state investment biases

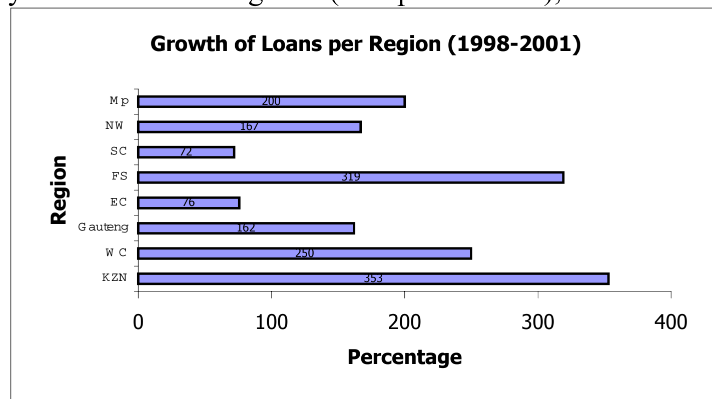
Not only is the state actively marginalising civil society formations with a proven track record in shelter provision through the PHP route, it has eschewed investing in institutions and capabilities championing the shelter needs of the most vulnerable. This is in contrast to the considerable investment of the state in strengthening institutions of delivery for the not-so poor (those accessing social housing opportunities, for example) (Napier 2003)

How the state will negotiate the seemingly irreconcilable differences in these motivational frameworks remains to be seen. Mainstreaming the PHP and scaling it up invites pessimistic scenarios, especially because both the official and HPA PHP delivery route has to date played an insignificant role, quantitatively speaking, in government's housing delivery efforts. Less than 3per cent of subsidised houses built between 1994 and 2003 can be called PHP products (BRCS 2003:2). Even as the People's Housing Process is on the verge of being mainstreamed, 'the requisite policy, implementation, and institutional infrastructure remain weak, contradictory, underdeveloped, and systematically biased against it' (BRCS 2002: 7).

4. Tensions, contradictions and challenges

The vicissitudes of mainstreaming are not simply confined to the subversion/corruption of a people engineered housing process. Far more damaging to the ideology, identity and praxis of the HPA was the state not honouring its commitment in the 'partnership'/arrangement forged with the former to support the people-driven housing delivery strategy. The resulting tensions, challenges and contradictions generated are products of a complex web of relationships between the strategies of Federation mobilisation, Federation leadership, People's Dialogue and the uTshani Fund, on the one hand; and the failure of the state to deliver on its housing obligations, on the other hand. Problematic internal relational dynamics and the state not fulfilling citizen's constitutionally enshrined rights to the housing subsidy precipitated major crises for the HPA, which it attempted to address through a restructuring exercise in 2001/2002.

The HPA's strategy for accessing and managing subsidy funds evolved through three stages. In the 1995-96 phase, the HPA used uTshani Fund loans in selected communities to pilot its shelter approach[7] with a view to attracting government support, both through housing subsidies and equity injections. This strategy was possible because the Fund's equity was derived from grants (European donors), and it was authorised to extend bridging finance to members before subsidies were secured. From 1997-2000, the HPA used the *uTshani Agreement* [8] with the national Department of Housing that permitted it to access subsidies directly from government. The Fund could either provide bridging loans before accessing subsidies and then claim the money back



[7] Using funds from European donors, lending for housing construction through group-based finance was started in April 1995 and over 700 housing loans were distributed (Bolnick and Mitlin 1999:227).
[8] In 1995, the National Housing Board approved an agreement with the Fund – *uTshani Agreement* – that recognised the latter as a legitimate conduit for subsidies to Federation members (Anon (b) nd).

from government, or disburse subsidies up-front to members for housing construction.

The Alliance's success in the construction of large, high-quality houses with uTshani loans, coupled to the rapidity of loan release – indeed the people's process moves considerably faster than the delivery of state funds (Baumann and Mitlin 2002) – encouraged explosive growth in membership. New groups expected to benefit from the Fund and numerous Federation leaders, began to encourage this entitlement (the loan), rather than daily savings, as an avenue to build the movement. The deposit to access the loan (5%/R500) came to be viewed as a way of purchasing the loan, and members who would otherwise save more than this in the savings collectives quickly accumulated R500 to access the R15 000 loan at a repayment rate of R120 per month (see Graph from BRCS, 2001 for growth of loans per region during 1998-2001). While the cost of building materials increased due to inflation, the subsidy amount remained static. The loans were therefore insufficient for the HPA to construct houses that earlier members had built. Although the ritualised processes of mobilisation continued, it was difficult for the HPA to shift members' consciousness from the dream of large homes (in line with changing material resource constraints), fuelling a tendency for members to 'overbuild' – laying out large foundations for houses that could not be consolidated with the available finances. This produced 'unfinished homes', placing pressure on the Fund to release further finance to protect the HPA's reputation and un-interrupted access to subsidies, thereby pushing members further into debt (taking loans to finish homes and progressively undermining their already limited ability to repay loans) and increasing overall 'systemic risk'[9].

It is against this backdrop that members' and leaders' attention came to focus almost entirely on mobilisation through housing opportunities and loans. Time spent on daily savings and loan repayments were de-emphasised as a criterion for obtaining loans. Additionally, there was an incentive to promise large homes, contributing to the tendency to recruit better-off members who could top up their loan funds and subsidies with non-Federation savings[10]. In a nutshell, the HPA and its members – through the financial-institutional innovation of uTshani - became 'over-focussed on the 'golden egg' of housing delivery, to the detriment of the underlying social mobilisation, via daily savings, that constitutes the proverbial 'goose'. Bricks and mortar, housing delivery, 'went from a method of organisation to its object; from means to end' (BRCS 2001:54-56).

The centralised nature of the Fund's financial management and decision-making produced another series of dilemmas. Risks associated with uTshani's bridging loan

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[9] The number of homes delivered through the PHP route is this not unsurprisingly contested. BRCS (2003) reports that 12 000 homes were delivered using the subsidy, member's savings, bridging loans and other resources. In the interview with Molokane (13.05.04), she estimated that 14 000 homes were delivered. In a proposal to the City of Cape Town motivating a partnership between the City and the HPA around enumeration, it is stated that between 1995 and 2000, the Federation constructed over 15 000 houses in all nine provinces (People's Dialogue and Homeless People's Federation 2004).

[10] The HPA has constantly strived to maintain equity considerations at the forefront of the housing finance programme. Whilst acknowledging that loans have been offered to slightly better-off households, it has required (albeit with moderate success) that half of all loans be small and affordable to those with lower incomes. Most housing loans are extended to women, but whether female headed households have benefited is difficult to assess, because data recording occurs at savings scheme level. The bias towards larger loans suggests that recipient households may be in receipt of dual incomes (Bolnick and Mitlin 1999:245).

strategy were transferred to People's Dialogue and the Federation leadership, with local leaders shielded from having to make difficult decisions around resource allocation. Although some Federation leaders and members were aware of financial sustainability problems, they tended to see their role as expanding membership to access more subsidies and capital, compromising further the Fund's viability.

The sustainability of the Fund was, however, most severely compromised by the slow release of state subsidies. Not all provinces accepted the uTshani arrangement and PHP approach, and even where adopted, there was no guarantee that provincial officials would approve HPA subsidy applications. Even when approved, subsidy release was more often than not delayed. A combination of bureaucratic inertia, differing provincial policies and local government reluctance/inability to engage with community development processes meant that subsidies owed to the HPA were not delivered. At the base of the problem, was, and still is, the HPA believes, the capital subsidy system that is 'simply not designed to seek out, identify, and take advantage of functional grassroots channels through which state housing resources can flow to produce adequate shelter for those who don't have it' (Baumann and Bolnick 2001:108). For the HPA, the subsidy system – which is supposedly an entitlement under law, based on the Constitution – is as good as 'not there in practice' for the majority of Federation members, which accounts for the Fund's present crisis. On a more sinister level, if a household builds its own house – through a diversity of non-official funding sources rather than waiting for a subsidy – it is classified as housed, and therefore ineligible for further assistance. In other words, the initiative of the poor effectively disqualifies them from the subsidy (Rust 2002:14) (see Box 7 for the experience of the HPA in this respect).

Box 7:

Subsidy: There or not there?

'What is happening is that we are putting in proposals for the loans made and houses completed and people [are] living in these houses for up to eight years. And government is saying: "How can we pay for houses that have been built already?"…We cannot be carrying the Department of Housing anymore….And what they are walking into are 100 square meter houses, face brick, the minimum is 56 square meters. And people have done a lot of improvements once they moved there. Some of them have even sold their houses already and they are still trying to get the subsidy for it. It is going to be a mammoth task…For instance on the East Rand: we have given 400 loans. And we have put in a new proposal for new consolidation subsidies, and the councillors – because you need the councillor's support for the proposals – say: "We can't give you subsidies because the last houses you built you haven't completed". So we did the audit and we said: "Of the 400, 31 are incomplete – which is 7% - and these are the reasons: the supplier ran away with the money, the house is too big, the member overcapitalised on basic things and she cannot put the roof on, small things, so and it is not things that cannot be dealt with"…So we say: "These are not problems we cannot deal with. But the other 93% we would like that subsidy. It is not that you will not get benefit, because you can add it to your numbers as houses built'" (Interview, van Rensberg 29.04.04)

Without the housing subsidy, the HPA remarks, it would 'never have considered uTshani Fund lending on the size and scale it has actually undertaken: sustainable, large, long term loans to the poorest of the poor for complete housing is wishful thinking and certainly not the business of the Alliance' (BRCS 2001:76). With the subsidy 'not there' in practice, the Fund is in an increasingly tenuous situation as the *de facto* creditor to a large group of the poorest South Africans, who could not be expected to repay large housing loans and who did not believe that this was what they had agreed to do. The state on the other hand, not the Federation (notwithstanding declining loan repayments), is the Fund's largest debtor. To date, R54m is owed by the government in subsidy money to HPA (Interview, van Rensberg 29.04.04).

People's Dialogue attempted on numerous occasions to force on the Federation a restructuring of the Fund by limiting the loans to R6 000, but Federation leaders, under the pressure of members, found this unacceptable and refused to implement the policy. It was argued by members that limiting access to the R10 000 would '"kill the Federation" – compelling support for the view that mobilisation around uTshani Fund resources had replaced mobilisation around better allocation of state resources' (BRCS 2001:56). By late 2000, the overall rate of repayment to the Fund was so low that the HPA leadership was left with little choice but to suspend lending and embark on a process of re-evaluation and restructuring. Thus, from 2001 onwards, the HPA suspended bridging loans, and has shifted its focus to accessing subsidies up-front. The Fund presently concentrates on helping the Federation to identify land and acquire development rights; securing subsidies to retire bridging loans and/or fund new projects; managing, co-managing and supporting projects; and providing support around income generation (BRCS 2002:22)[11].

The current situation has been shaped by a long-running tendency to transform the Fund from a communal resource of the Federation into an 'avatar of the subsidy entitlement itself' (Baumann and Bolnick 2001:112). The expectation that the Fund would deliver an entitlement is incompatible with a financial system based on a revolving fund model. The experience has demonstrated that in a situation of rapid membership expansion, weak savings records, low repayment rates, and the non-delivery of subsidies, funds simply do not revolve sufficiently to meet ongoing expectations of the membership. This, in turn, impacts negatively on the capacity for collective action around deepening access to subsidies, wherein the latter is seen as a means to an end, i.e. an 'entry point for mobilisation, rather than organisational goals in themselves' (People's Dialogue 2000:25).

Tensions beyond uTshani

The tensions and contradictions were not only limited to the Fund and housing delivery. Until 2002, leadership emerged in the Federation through self-selection, based on a degree of active involvement, but with no strict lines of accountability to communities. In this context, the national leadership contributed towards highly centralised decision-making structures, running contrary to the non-hierarchical and decentralised political structure within and between the Federations[12]. The creation and maintenance of a static national, and particularly regional Federation leadership, rooted in key savings schemes – through and to which significant proportions of HPA resources were channelled – appeared to have 'structurally' encouraged patterns of 'undesirable behaviour' (patronage, mobilisation through promises of loans, corruption and bribery), and discouraged more 'appropriate conduct' (discipline, implementation of systems, tough resource allocation decisions, clampdown on poor repayment problems) (BRCS 2001). Another complication was that a number of leadership figures are ANC Women League veterans, deeply involved in local, regional and national ANC networks. Whereas the HPA believes in critical engagement with government (a strategy of co-operation and conflict), and refers to its non-party

[11] The Fund has a current portfolio of approximately R65m, the bulk of which is accounted by its loan book, which has financed nearly 9 500 houses (BRCS 2003:13).

[12] Particularly evident in the Western Cape, where the leadership resisted relinquishing control over 'junior'/younger Federations. This spawned the consolidation of local hierarchies, power cliques and patronage networks, with certain individuals acting as gatekeepers and powerbrokers.

political stance as 'politics without parties' (Appadurai 2002:28) – a movement[13], many of the ANC-aligned Federation leaders were less inclined to criticise the ANC government and leadership. Instead, numerous Federation leaders were prepared to allow Federation networks to be used as ANC political resources (Robins, forthcoming). Adding to these dilemmas was the tension created by stipends that both the national and regional leaders received, due to the full-time nature of their work.

As part of the restructuring, sweeping leadership changes were executed. Regional, local and neighbourhood organisations elected representatives to attend a national meeting in 2002. The leadership group of the Federation 'voluntarily stepped down and an interim national leadership group oversaw the meeting'. The interim national leadership group 'proposed a representative form of leadership from Federations throughout the country'. Existing regional leaders stepped down and new ones were elected by the regional networks, rather than being appointed by the national core leadership group. The regionally elected leaders would henceforth serve in a voluntary capacity, with no stipend, and would be accountable to those who elected them. The elected leaders, 'in conjunction with People's Dialogue', would identify staff needs, and a competitive process would be utilised to select and hire employees under public contracts. The employees included mainly existing Federation leaders because of their experience and accumulated knowledge and skills. Rather than being political leaders, they would become employees 'fully accountable to the Federation (instead of the People's Dialogue)'. The delegates at the national meeting overwhelmingly approved the restructuring proposals to make elected leaders fully accountable to the membership, and to refocus on the core strengths and rituals of the HPA (Wilson and Lowery, forthcoming:11-12).

People's Dialogue was also restructured as attention and activity of the HPA increasingly shifted away from housing delivery – as a principal means of combating poverty and marginalisation (not unrelated to the financial predicament of uTshani) – towards land tenure, the provision of basic services and the people-centred management of built environments. This shift required/s building the capacity of Dialogue to forge deeper political connections for brokering deals; higher levels of professionalisation to improve engagement with the state around policy and institutional arrangements; and clearer divisions of roles, functions and responsibilities. To this end, the Fund is now an independent organisation in charge of its own financial management. People's Dialogue retains its core functions of building bridges between the Federation and national government, dealing with community organisation issues within the project preparation cycle of the Fund, and lending support to Federation activities related to lobbying, mobilising and learning through exchanges. The HPA also initiated an agency, under the umbrella of Dialogue, called the Urban Resource Centre, to sharpen its focus on the development of a culture of learning, participation and transparency (Wilson and Lowery, forthcoming). The Centre is responsible for scaling up internal processes of research and documentation in the HPA; engages with external role-players to continue raising issues pertaining to landlessness and homelessness; and harnesses resources to build a social movement of the poor. A recent initiative in this regard is the establishment and nurturing of Coalitions of the Urban Poor in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Nelson Mandela and Durban. The Coalition

[13] A non-threatening position which facilitates the forging of partnerships with an array of actors to improve the livelihoods of the poor.

initiative is broadly in line with the Federation's objective of securing a truly self-organised political presence of the poor, bringing together several hundred different community-based initiatives of the poor. 'Autonomy within federating' is not however without its problems (see Box 8)

Box 8:

The Coalition: 'Autonomy within federating'

'What is interesting about this on the level of the SDI, there is complete disgust about this process from the Indians because the Indians have a monolithic approach. They are saying there must be one Federation only. There must be one single structure. And what we are creating the space for is for multiple levels that come together under an umbrella called the Coalition. We are not asking Poor People's Movement, SANCO or even LPM [Landless People's Movement] groups to join the Federation. We are saying: "You retain your autonomy, but you come together under this umbrella. And you share experiences under this umbrella. What the Fed offers you is savings, exchange programmes, international links, enumeration, and instruments to engage the state. What do you offer?" Quite frankly, no one else is offering anything' (Interview Bolnick, 07.04.04).

5. Conceptual intimations

Staking out new terrains of struggle

The contemporary South African social formation is characterised as 'hovering between pacted democracy and state corporatism' (Jenkins 2004:114). Political and social practices developed during the transition phase and subsequent state action, indicates a strong tendency to subordinate the interests of organised civil society – usually through the definition of specific institutional mechanisms for their participation – with the objective to execute/implement 'authoritative decisions' (Ibid) to both redress the inherited social and economic imbalances, and compete in the global market place. For a social movement - whose main aim is *reclaiming the democratic right and power of the urban poor to choose* – engaging the state and other social forces through established institutional mechanisms and channels is unlikely to yield the desired outcomes, especially because of their status-quo maintenance orientation deriving from their underwriting a liberal *tradition of democracy*; i.e. the rule of law, individual liberty and human rights (Mouffe 2000).

For a movement committed to a politics of deep democracy and nurturing a 'capacity to aspire', multi-stakeholder negotiations through corporatist forums 'mask abuses of power and more structural, enduring inequity' (Edmunds and Wollenburg 2001:232). Consensual decision-making anchored in spaces of participation initiated by powerful groups 'restricts the possibility of "thinking outside the box", reinforcing hegemonic perspectives and status-quo reinforcing solutions' (Cornwall 2002:05).

The HPA experience demonstrates that the attainment of an alternative activist development approach calls forth a very different form of politics, aimed at transforming the institutional architecture and tilting the balance of power in favour of the poor. This type of politics embraces dissensus, disagreement and contestation or viewing democratic politics as an 'agonistic confrontation' amongst adversaries. In such a confrontation, the Left/Right configuration plays a crucial role wherein reigning hegemonies and power relations are questioned and contested. Here, the illusion that a rational consensus can be achieved between freedom and equality, for example, is eliminated. There is a realisation that pluralist democratic politics is pragmatic, precarious and necessarily unstable; and continuously in search of provisional compromises.

Accordingly, a pluralist democracy – in the mind of HPA – is one that allows the expression of dissent and conflicting interests and values. Because antagonism cannot be eliminated, the task is to 'domesticate it to a condition of agonism' – a 'relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyses both sides than a permanent provocation' (Foucault 1982, cited in Gordon 1991: 5) – wherein 'passion is mobilised constructively towards the promotion of democratic decisions which are partly consensual, but which also respectfully accepts unresolvable disagreements' (Hiller 2002:35).

Clearly, this perspective is acutely understood by the HPA. Central to their project is a radical deconstruction of the 'frame of existing politics' – technical practices, forms of knowledge and institutions (Barry 2000) – which 'domesticate[s] hostility' in the pursuit of the creation of 'unity in a context of conflict and diversity' (Mouffe 1999). What is, however, not lost to the HPA (and other social movements) is the regulative and performance implications and consequences of the technical stratagems as informed by the frame of existing politics. And it is here where the HPA strategies and tactics constitute a direct challenge to the 'frame of existing politics'.

The HPA realised that particular ways of thinking about society and social change are engraved in the organisation and occupation of participatory spaces, and that every space has etched into it the traces of its 'generative past'. In this context, the HPA chose not to 'insert' the urban poor into a pre-defined space, but sought to develop their capacities/capabilities to negotiate with the powerful. The enhancement of people's capabilities to claim their entitlements and their right to shape the contours of the shelter production regime (its organisation, functioning and output) – apart from being broadly in line with the ABCD versus the supply-driven, technocratic deficit models of development – witnessed the HPA initiate and create new spaces for citizens to act '*without* (both outside, and in the absence of) [the state]) and *on* it'. These chosen spaces constitute 'sites of radical possibility', where those who are excluded find a place and a voice to defend their interests and champion their own development path. This is a site constituted by participants themselves, rather than one created for the participation of others.

These spaces normally emerge organically out of sets of common concerns or identifications; come into being as a result of popular mobilisation (such as around identity or issue-based concerns); or may consist of spaces wherein people of similar minds join together in common pursuits (the ideologues of the HPA). The site constructed is a relatively durable institutionalised space from which citizens/communities practice self-provisioning of credit to satisfy needs; participate in networks that go beyond the boundaries of the nation-state; and engage in governance by influencing public policy through advocacy and modelling alternatives. As such, they also constitute and contain sites wherein citizens and their intermediary organisations 'assume some of the functions of government' (Cornwall 2002:20, 21, 17). Although these sites are relatively autonomous from the state, the HPA's sites are also connected to government, both directly and indirectly, in different aspects of shelter provision.

The distinctiveness of the space created by HPA is multi-fold. Firstly, the HPA eschewed the dominant anti-apartheid mobilisation strategies, which, while purporting

to be pro-poor, effectively excluded the most vulnerable. The development approach and organisational model of the HPA differs quite radically from both the civics and NGOs, thereby imbuing it with different capabilities and capacities to mobilise, exert political influence and advance the political inclusion of the poor. Secondly, the HPA seized the opportunity presented by the transition – the interregnum between the dying old order and the emerging pacted compromise – to elaborate and instrumentalise a political project and associated mobilisation strategy that eschewed governmental and mainstream civil society discourses (frame of existing politics) about 'appropriate' community development processes, particularly in the shelter sector. Thirdly, the mode of engagement with the state – not confrontational but pragmatic and organised around workable *alternatives* – enabled the HPA to influence official shelter policy and to effect significant changes in the implementation thereof. Fourthly, exchanges within and between countries for the purposes of diffusing innovative pro-poor housing solutions promotes democratisation of development policy, both globally and locally, but the locus of power to articulate and champion innovation lies and is kept in poor communities themselves, rather than in intermediary NGOs at national and international levels.

Discursive currents in the mainstream development model

Despite considerable strides registered by the HPA in optimising the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution, the HPA is still to negotiate a series of problems related, in part, to the deficiencies of planning praxis; the hegemony of present-day supply-side citizenship and community development; the narrowing of development and participatory horizons by shifts/changes in party-society relationships; and the increasing marginalisation of the most vulnerable in the transformation project.

With respect to the first, notwithstanding the commitment of critical planning theory and practice to the more expansive democratic tradition[14], the 'operation of power' within dominant existing consensus making processes and multicultural planning paradigms remains problematic and/or not recognised (Watson 2003: 403). This is related to Habermasian assumptions regarding the achievement of consensus and the possibility of suppressing power[15]. How the contexts of planning are structured by various forms of power, conceptual domination of planning experts, institutionalised economic criteria and organised political interests, is not particularly well addressed in contemporary critical planning theory and practices (Mantysalo 2003: 31). The extent to which our existing development planning frameworks are grounded in, and/or influenced by, this paradigm is debatable, but what is notable is how 'community' comes to be defined and constructed in our planning frameworks, especially given the continuing leitmotif of the transformation project that hinges on non-conflictual narratives of society and societal change (Khan 2003). What is involved in creating 'proper' communities through planning praxis (and HPA mobilisation and change processes) is not just a technical and managerial task, it is also 'moral and political

[14] Associated with participation, equality and majority rule (see Mouffe 1999; 2000).

[15] Habermas's critical theory commences from a situation where we already have a shared world view and a shared yardstick of rationality. Secondly, although Habermas defines the process of lifeworld production, he does 'little…to assess how these processes work, how worldviews, allegiances, identities are elaborated, routinised, established, or altered'. Thirdly, how 'communicative and strategic actions intertwine to produce and reproduce forms of social and societally institutionalised behaviour' is not actually analysed (Mantysalo 2003:16, 20, 25).

task'; i.e. a citizen is a person who exercises their rights through established channels in a prescribed and lawful way, and on the basis of a pre-defined political-economic programme (Watson 2003: 397).

Nowhere is this more clearly reflected than in 'neoliberal' and 'Third Way', 'supply-side citizenship' (de Beus and Koelble 2002)[16] approaches. Supply-side citizenship denotes and elevates personal autonomy, self-reliance, social initiative on the basis of ability to pay, equality of opportunity, volunteerism, workfarism, no rights without responsibility, procedural justice, and so on[17]. Supply-side citizenship further represents a curious admixture of operating frameworks for community development. It emphasises the market rationale of private initiative and enterprise; the activist rationale of mutuality and trust; the welfare industry rationale of a state safety net for those who 'cannot help themselves'; and, where necessary, bureaucratic regulations and charity for the 'deserving poor'. Those seduced by the Third Way see in supply-side citizenship the possibility of the reinvention of the 'social' – declared dead by Thatcherism and the New Right (Rose 1996; 1999) – as (highly stylised versions of) community-building, trust, mutuality and collaboration re-emerge in public policy. For this group, the market emphasis on enterprise, self-determination and innovation means that the shackles of passive welfarism and elitist professionalism can be discarded and replaced with the concept of 'dynamic self-determining communities'. There are those who invoke the 'fused discourses' for strategic purposes, i.e. demonstrating a commitment to innovative projects, and thereby winning influential friends and accessing pots of gold from donor agencies. Then there are those who perceive the new discourses of community development as 'Trojan horses' – to shepherd and discipline society and community organisations to the dictates of the market and socially exclusionary development paths/trajectories (Kenny 2002).

Optimising the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution is further complicated by the struggles within the ruling party, as it battles to (re)define its ideological commitment to internal democracy as a political value and cultural practice. The nature of the list formulation process, an integral component of the proportional electoral system, reinforces a hierarchical culture in the organisation along with an upward-looking sense of accountability, as opposed to the reverse. Suspicion of opposition ('you are with us or against us'), and the determination of the organisation's leadership to keep crucial national debates about the economy, political reform and developmental issues outside the political domain (Pieterse, in press), present added obstacles. The democratic-accountability deficit; suspicion of opposition; and insulation of debate from the public domain, collectively (negatively) impact on policy and the implementation thereof – the state's PHP being a case in point.

The deficiencies of contemporary planning praxis obsessed with consensus; the limitations of supply-side citizenship and community development; the narrowing of the development and participatory horizons by shifts/changes in party-society relationship; and the marginalisation of the poorest in the transformation project, have

[16] Shift of emphasis from the state to the individual to assume responsibility for his or her life chances and development.

[17] The ANC government has embraced the Third Way principles with an emphasis on individual responsibility, self-reliance and personal autonomy (for an elaboration, see de Beus and Koelble 2002:191-2).

led the HPA to question and reject the developmental value of mainstream development planning instruments and settlement policy frameworks. Integrated development planning (IDPs) and the post-apartheid housing programme are questioned and rejected on the grounds that the type of 'claim-making' entailed does not constitute a sustainable community development approach; i.e. they are unlikely to achieve lasting empowerment and mobilisation (Development Works, 2003:29) of the poor, especially the very poor.

The alternative proposed by the HPA is the grounding of community development in an activist frame, with its emphasis on solidarity, mutuality, political mobilisation and advocacy, undergirded by a strong commitment to furthering the politics of equality; giving voice to the disadvantaged and vulnerable; and deepening democracy. But to what extent does this challenge not also constitute the imposition of a frame of politics that reproduces liberal or authoritarian 'rationalities of rule', wherein the core HPA **rituals** regularise the conduct of the social and economic life of the urban poor through the 'creation of locales, entities and persons able to operate a regulated autonomy'? (Rose and Miller 1992:173).

The HPA's alternative to the mainstream model: Ambiguated realities

The core 'rituals' of the HPA – echoing those of the state – include enumeration and mapping[18], surveying and house modelling, as well as exchanges for lateral learning. Savings is the main instrument that the Federation uses for mobilisation. It is variously described as the 'cement that binds people together', the 'goose that lays the golden egg', and 'the means that creates space for the poor to identify, understand and articulate their own priorities'. Savings are fundamental to the Federation's strategy, as social movement, of mobilising the urban poor through their own resources, experience and capacities, in order to transform relations between their members and state institutions. For the President of the Indian National Slum Dweller's Federation – he employed savings as a principle tool for mobilisation in India and a central strategy for entry and relationship-building in SA, Cambodia and Thailand – daily savings is seen as the bedrock of every other activity of the Federation. When the President and others in the HPA speak of savings, they see it as a 'moral discipline' (in his words, it is like 'breathing'), which builds a certain kind of political fortitude and spiritual discipline (cited in Appadurai 2004:11-12). In another vein, savings could also be potentially viewed as a criterion for localised (HPA-based) citizenship.

The combination of self-enumeration, self-regulation and the notion of savings as 'spirit' or 'moral' discipline – the foundations of a potentially exclusionary citizenship[19] – could arguably be seen as a form of 'autogovernmentality'. Whilst those in the HPA would prefer to see it as a method to fashion and dictate their own social and political legibility – rather than having one imposed on them by the state – an exercise in counter-governmentality – the combination is potentially 'insidious in its

[18] This type of inscription – making people write things down and count them – is itself, argue Rose and Miller (1992:187), a kind of government of them, inciting individuals to construe their lives according to such norms. Through these mechanisms, authorities can register and act on those distant from them in the pursuit of various objectives without encroaching on their 'freedom' and 'autonomy'. These mechanisms assume considerable importance in modern modes of government. This is not to deny the practical utility of such techniques, but rather to point to their ambiguity if deployed un-reflexively.

[19] The possibility of unintentional selection in the recruitment of Federation membership is an area to be investigated by the HPA (Huchzermeyer 2001:315).

capillary reach' (Appadurai 2002:36). If governmentality is accepted to mean the complex array of techniques – programmes, procedures, strategies and tactics – employed by non-state agencies and state institutions to shape the conduct of individuals and populations; if governmentality extends from political government right through to forms of self-regulation – namely 'technologies of self'[20], if governmentality (in its present guise) centres around social responsibilisation – a matter of personal provision and self-empowerment (Lemke 2001), then some questions need to be asked about the nature and content of the HPA's contestation of the 'existing frame of politics'.

Neoliberalism is linked to a 'wider range of political subjects than is typical of orthodox liberalism' (Jessop 2002:455). It also tends to 'promote "community" (or a plurality of self-organising communities) as a flanking, compensatory mechanism for the inadequacies of the market mechanism' (Ibid). The invocation of 'community' as a means of fostering civic responsibility is an essential tenet of the Third Way (Flint 2003: 615). Although many disastrous consequences can flow from this type of social engineering, others point to examples of communities that are able to take advantage of new opportunities provided for citizens to claim and retain the rights and entitlements of state and global citizenship threatened by pervasive market forces. It is against this backdrop, it is argued, that civil society can play an important role – 'humanising capitalism' (Edwards 1999, cited in Mathie and Cunningham, nd:09), through nurturing social and economic assets existing in the poorest communities and then advocating for a range of interventions to ameliorate poverty. In this instance, ABCD is said to occupy the 'middle ground where the logic of competition meets, and mixes with, the logic of co-operation', 'activating the social capital required for community driven initiatives, for collaborative partnerships with external institutions, and for claiming the rights and entitlements of citizenship' (Ibid). Through this humanisation of capitalism, civil society can supposedly generate 'the less tangible assets that enable people to bargain, negotiate and advance their interests' (Ibid), ultimately leading to self-belief, self-esteem and self-actualisation. Thus, when one reads about the impact of the Alliance's programmes on the psychological fabric of its members, i.e. *I can, I care; We can, We care* (Wilson and Lowery forthcoming:8), coupled to the statements about the humanisation of capitalism, the question arises as to whether it is not perhaps an endorsement, even if unintentional, of a neoliberal rationality, i.e. the congruence achieved between a 'responsible and moral individual and economic rational actor' (Lemke 2001:201).

In short, there is perhaps an idealisation of self-help/ABCD by the HPA that allows the state to shift responsibility for adequate shelter onto the poor communities themselves.

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[20] Within liberal regimes, subjects are constituted as active agents seeking autonomy and assuming responsibility for their life outcomes. Rationalised as agents of power, governmental objectives are to be secured not through direct intervention, but through 'realignment' of subjects' identities and by implicating self-regulation within governmental aims. Processes of liberal government therefore entail the 'conduct of conduct', focused on technologies of the self as governance attempts to shape subjects' conduct around a moral discourse of 'responsible behaviour'. These technologies represent governance at a distance, rather than a reduction in government. While subjects are constituted as active and autonomous agents, this freedom is regulated through implicating subjects in deeper and wider relations of power (see Flint 2003:612-614). It is beyond the scope of this research report to fully explore the significance of this for our understanding of the HPA's identity and role. Suffice to observe that the savings collectives of the HPA can be read as communities that are responsible for their own self-regulation and well-being.

The Alliance's non-confrontational 'politics of patience' blunts, and arguably discourages[21], (potential) resistance and opposition, and the technologies of self-governance or remaking of self, serves as the legitimating psycho-social handmaiden – the technology assists, facilitates, supports and enables the state's unilateral downsizing of its shelter policy. This is indeed not such a far-fetched idea, especially given the enthusiastic (re-)embrace of the People's Housing Process (PHP) in the recent re-jigging of the national shelter programme (Khan 2004).

The motivations for a 'renewed' people-centred housing strategy arise primarily from contradictions in the dominant developer driven framework of state housing delivery since 1994. Private sector withdrawal from the subsidised housing sector leaves government with little option but to turn to beneficiaries as the main source of delivery. In the new revamped policy, the PHP is a housing route that does not require a cash contribution, which is (un)wittingly pushing provincial and municipal housing authorities to opt for the PHP route. In the state's imagination, the PHP is coming to be seen as no more than sweat equity applied to a state-driven housing delivery drive, whose subsidy programme increasingly shows signs of upward redistribution, i.e. for the poor there is to be serviced sites and PHP, while others who can pay the R2 479 contribution and more – as a condition to access the housing subsidy – will access better quality housing in possibly less peripheral/more central locations.[22] On the other hand, the renewed emphasis by the state on the PHP is partly to arrest the selling and abandonment of RDP homes by beneficiaries, by requiring them to invest sweat equity in the hope that this will generate a sense of ownership and 'responsible' asset management.

Although there are very profound and fundamental differences between the state's PHP programme and those of the HPA, the mechanics of the self-help housing appropriation by the state – given the earlier comments on autogovermentality – are still to be coherently thought through by the HPA. Indeed, the very essence of liberal government, governance and governmentality is about drawing on the processes, modes of regulation, values and expectations that are located in civil society. In other words, liberal government models its interventions on the forms of regulation, expectations and values that are already in operation in civil society. It is through this sly and subtle colonisation of civil society that state ambitions achieve a quiet but effective hegemony. This move of the state involves a three-layered folding process: the unfolding of the formally political sphere into civil society (linkages, partnerships

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[21] The political practices of the HPA which emphasises negotiation, compromise and accommodation are being questioned by some members:

> 'The poor got amazing patience. Sometimes I don't have patience and I think it is rubbing off on them. But I don't know where the people get this patience from. I don't know where. . . Sometimes I sit in a meeting and I look at these people, and I think: "They are twice my age and they still have no house and they still come to save". And I am thinking: "Are you people really relying on me to pull this one off?" When your metro is not interested in meeting, neither with me nor you; and sometimes you find that militant group that wants to march, and I am saying, "Listen guys: I am not going to stop you. If you want to go and march, go and march". I can't. Because that is not the Federation's style to have public demonstrations. Because they are always told that they are an exclusive group, they don't do such things; they don't invade land, they don't toyi-toyi, they don't evict people. You know they [HPA] got invasion on their land. On their own land! And they don't want to [evict] the people, because it is not their value. They don't invade land, they don't evict, they don't toyi-toyi. They are slowly becoming very militant…They are talking to others' (Interview, 29.04.04).

[22] It needs to be pointed out that the housing policy is being incrementally refined.

and networking); an enfolding of the regulations of civil society into the political domain (entrepreneurialism, self-provisioning of credit, consumerism); and, a refolding of the real or ideal values and conduct of civil society onto the political (supply-side citizenship, deregulation, workfarism) (Dean 2002:45).

The line of argument raises a difficult question: What is the complicity of the HPA in the content and operationalisation of the state's PHP in light of the unfolding, enfolding and refolding processes just described? Put differently, what the HPA should focus some energy on is exploring the 'optical frame' of the state when it crafted its PHP policy, which was partly fashioned and moulded on the HPA approach. This, in our view, is a critically urgent need in the HPA's ongoing struggle to optimise the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution, and its engagement with the PHP, now and in the future.

In conclusion

This research report commenced from an understanding of social movements as essentially a social-cultural practice rooted in everyday struggles for survival and 'space', in urban areas increasingly marked by the limited reach of the state. Inside these spaces, in many cities of the developing world, poor citizens are mobilising themselves in creative ways to claim, define, map, regulate and populate territories in terms of a grassroots imaginary and practice of social solidarity. In South Africa, the HPA has been at the forefront of these dynamic processes. We have sketched the impressive genesis of this social movement, its emergent identity, adaptiveness in a context of dramatic political change, and, most importantly, its marked reflexivity. At the heart of the paper is an episode that deals with a crisis of legitimacy and effectiveness that the movement faced in the early part of the current decade. Through examining its tumultuous efforts to understand and respond to this crisis, we aimed to provide an insight into the durability of the movement's core identity, the calibre of its leadership, the significance of its global linkages, and its vision for empowerment of its members – the urban poor, left behind by the terms of the compacted transition process. The crisis, for us at least, also raised important conceptual questions about the veracity of the movement's ideology – mutual-help and social solidarity – for it was vulnerable to being hijacked by the state to legitimate its own efforts to renew and refurbish its failing housing policy, but, as we demonstrated, with dubious consequences. It is in this unresolved moment that our snapshot freezes time and leaves it to the reader to form a perspective on the significance of the HPA for furthering a politics of redistribution and democratisation.

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