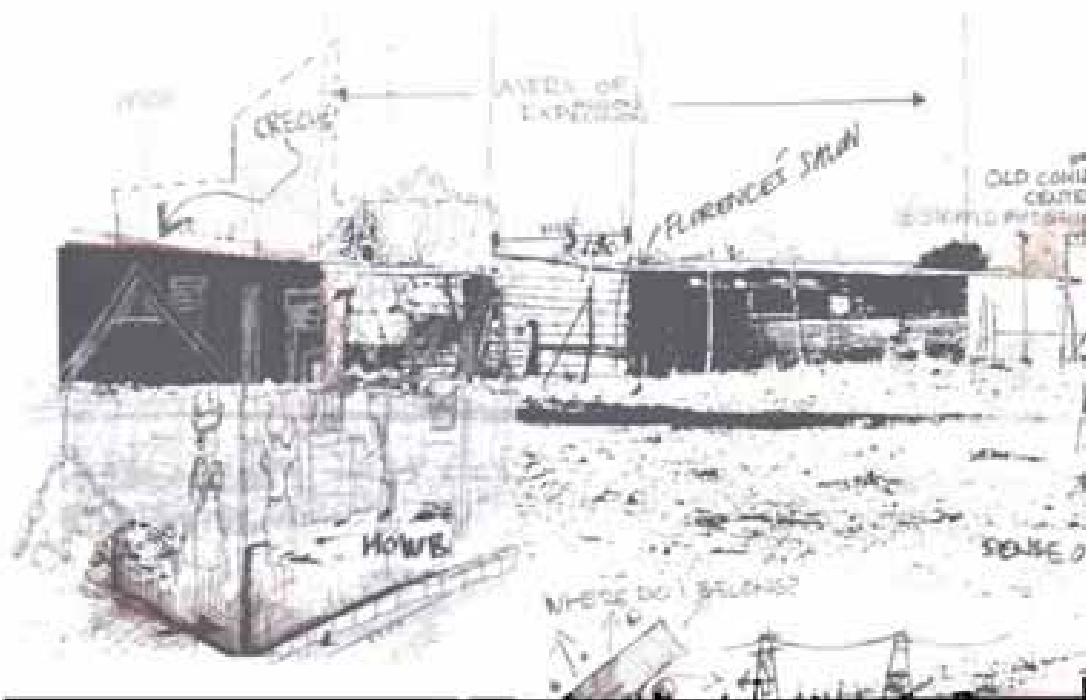




Change By Design at Slovo Park



Slovo Park



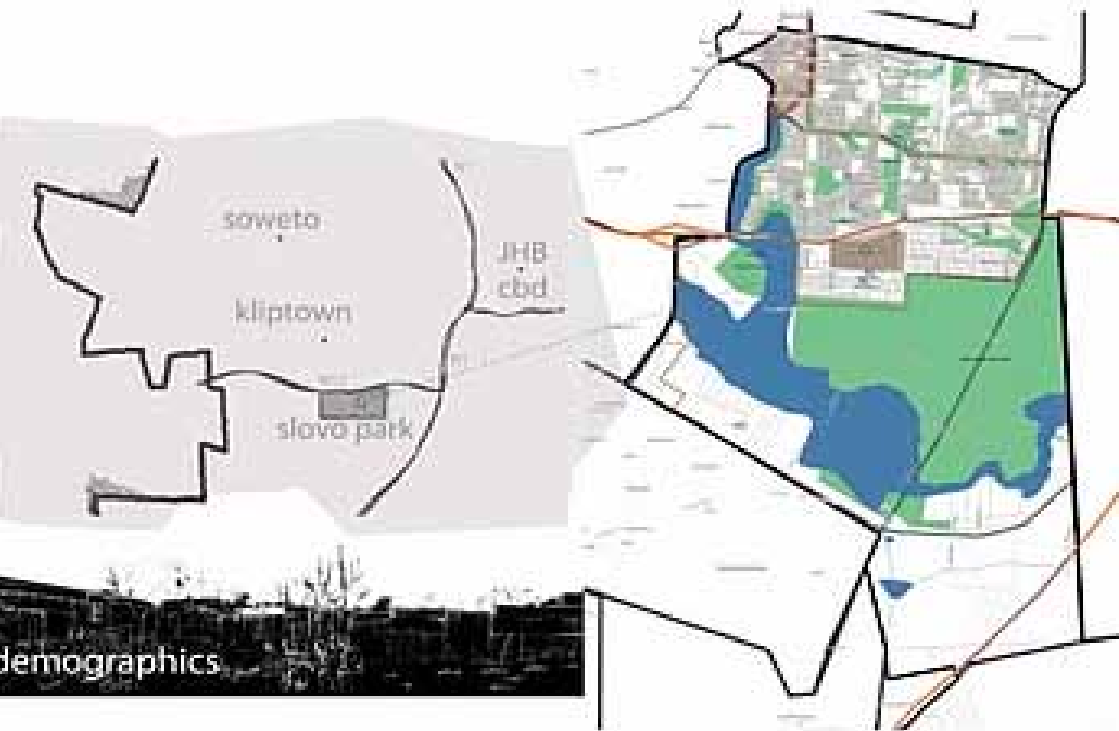




Introduction

Service delivery protests are making daily headlines in South Africa. More people are living in urban areas than ever before. Gauteng is especially hard hit with an inflow of 300,000 urban poor in the last five years. New city dwellers usually set up shelter in informal settlements, where free water, sanitation and electricity are not a given. Many municipalities have not been able to deliver, and the poor fall through the gaps of the formal system.

The residents of Slovo Park in Soweto, Johannesburg, know all about this. Two years ago they decided to fight for their rights. Bullets flew, and their community hall was ripped apart. Today they rebuild their community as active participants in partnership with the city. This is the story of a capacitated community that has chosen to design for change.



Violence sparks mobilization

The service delivery protests at Slovo Park happened in 2009. They were a violent punctuation mark in a rambling and unfruitful dialogue with the city authorities. In a moment of profound symbolism during those brutal days, the residents stripped the zinc sheeting off the community hall that the council had built about three years earlier, in order to use as shields to protect themselves from the rubber bullets that the police were firing at them.

Shortly after these service protests, the leadership of Slovo Park made contact with the Informal Settlement Network and began to revise their strategy. Three years of waiting, talking, negotiating, fighting, had produced nothing: no toilets, no running water, no electricity. It was time to take action. The engagement with the Informal Settlement Network had alerted the leadership to the benefits of organising people to deliver these services themselves, and then to engage the government around its failure to meet its constitutional obligations and the councillor around his failure to fulfil his election promises.

Hell in a crack





ing mud shack



Residents take action

First the leaders compiled a skills audit in the community and in the process identifying all the people who had knowledge and experience in plumbing and drainage. In a general meeting the leadership then encouraged the community to organize themselves into street clusters, and prepare to work with the committee to find their own solutions.

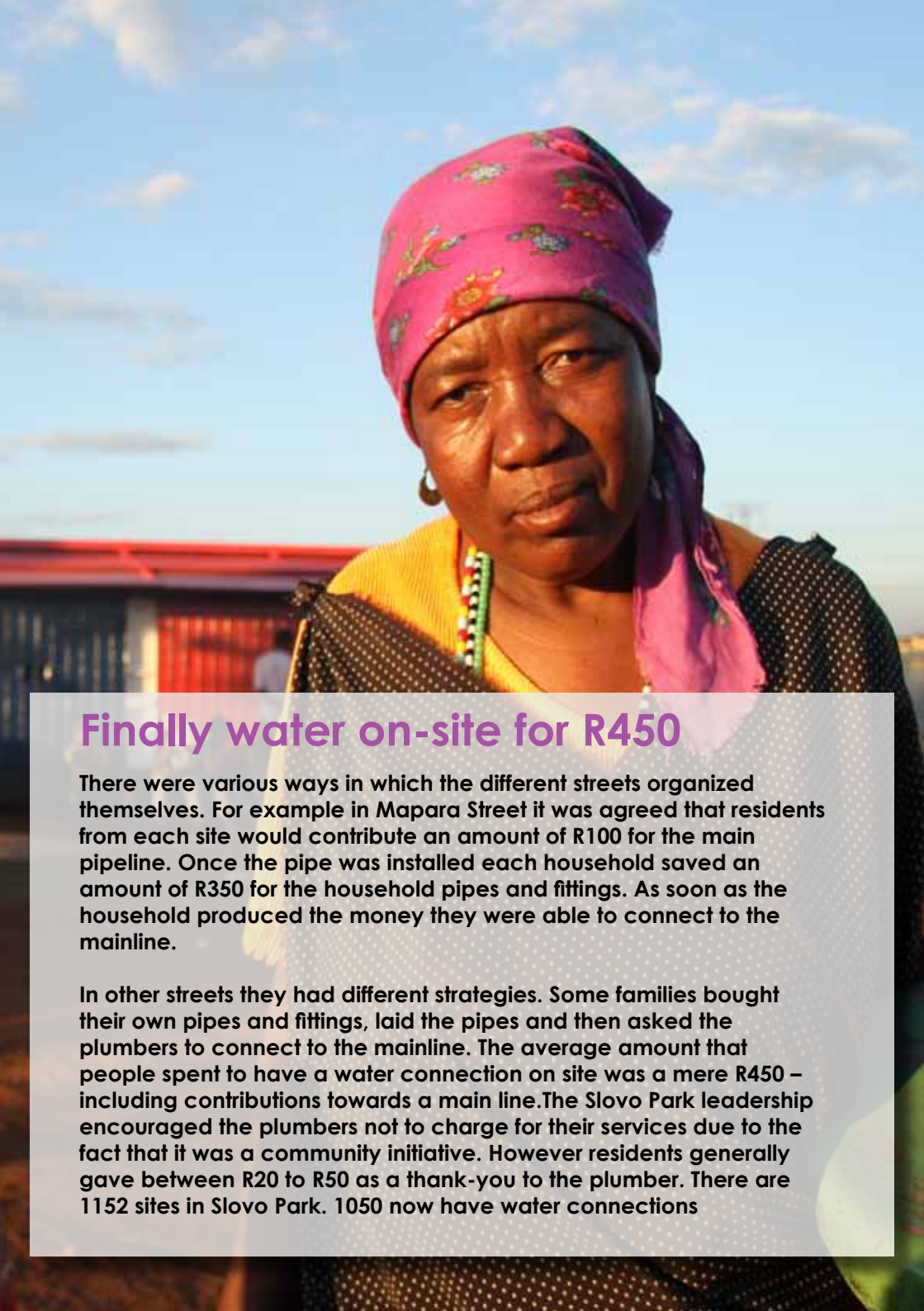
It was agreed that the community as a whole would work together to install a main pipeline from existing water standpipes to every street in the settlement. Individual families would then be able to make household connections to the main line.

The only condition that was prescribed was that there had to be a stopper between the mainline and the individual pipe. The leaders also encouraged people to use the volunteer plumbers to avoid leakages.









Finally water on-site for R450

There were various ways in which the different streets organized themselves. For example in Mapara Street it was agreed that residents from each site would contribute an amount of R100 for the main pipeline. Once the pipe was installed each household saved an amount of R350 for the household pipes and fittings. As soon as the household produced the money they were able to connect to the mainline.

In other streets they had different strategies. Some families bought their own pipes and fittings, laid the pipes and then asked the plumbers to connect to the mainline. The average amount that people spent to have a water connection on site was a mere R450 – including contributions towards a main line. The Slovo Park leadership encouraged the plumbers not to charge for their services due to the fact that it was a community initiative. However residents generally gave between R20 to R50 as a thank-you to the plumber. There are 1152 sites in Slovo Park. 1050 now have water connections

Positive feedback on upgrading

Two weeks after the community had completed most of the installation, City officials from Urban Management arrived on site. In a sorry demonstration of the woeful relationship between city officials and the citizens they are meant to serve, two women who were carrying pipes got such a shock that they dropped their load and ran away. They were convinced they were going to get into trouble for having installed the water connections without formal approval.

But the officials had come for another reason entirely. They had come to check on a rumour that the people of Slovo Park were building their own community hall.

As a result of their encounter with the frightened women, they asked the leadership about the standpipes. The leaders showed them around the settlement. The officials were amazed at what they saw. Given the new emphasis in Government on in-situ upgrading, they responded positively to this community initiative and agreed to arrange to get the pressure from the mains adjusted.









Community renovates hall

The visitors proceeded to see the community hall - the self-built replacement for the one the State had provided, and the community had torn down to protect themselves from the State's rubber bullets.

Through a connection made between Informal Settlement Network President, Patrick Magebhula, and the University of Pretoria, six architecture students had been working with the community for several weeks on the design and upgrading of the community hall.

Initially the idea was for the students to assist with the blocking-out of Slovo Park. However Slovo Park had been laid out into plots and roads in the nineties - by the residents themselves.

So instead the students met with community members and Informal Settlement Network leaders and agreed to help them analyse the data they had collected by means of a community driven household survey. As a result a decision was taken to rebuild the community hall, with the students providing technical support

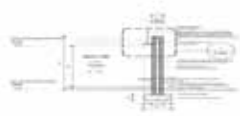


Architecture students come to help

The students came with no resources other than their enthusiasm, their training and an 8-week time frame. This really helped to make things happen. The community shared their ideas about the design of the hall. It had lost all its cladding, the slab had crumbled and the area in front of the hall was being used as a dumping ground.

The architects took note of the community's ideas and went to the drawing board. They came back a few days later to show the community their drawings and their models. The community suggested numerous changes, which the students then incorporated. This process took two weeks.





Detail 1 | R. Section One - Foundation



Detail 2 | R. Section - Parking of Sheds



Detail 3 | S. Area Shed Detail - Wood Plating



Detail 4 | R. Section - Detail Foundation A.B.



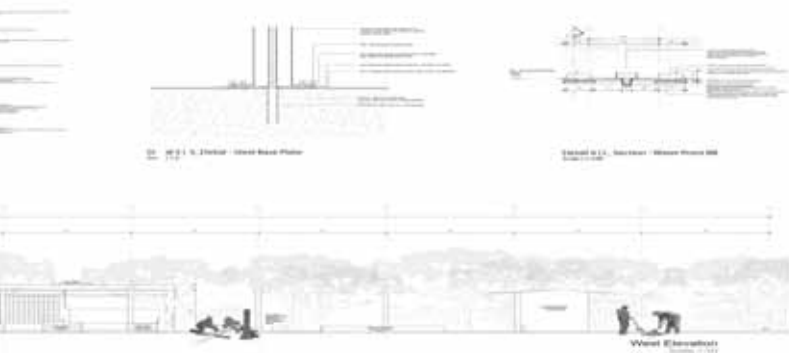
More than just houses

Slovo Park in collaboration with FEDUP invited the University of Pretoria Architecture Department, as a research institute, to investigate and suggest possible ways forward, through participation between community and the students. The research quickly gained momentum in its desire to understand the problems faced by South Africa's Urban Poor.

The process culminated in a joint project towards a built goal with not only a physical product but many intangible outcomes that extended beyond simply 'another community project'. Slovo Park represents a community which is committed in participating in the change and growth of their home. As students we could aid them in their dreams of becoming a more formalised and united community.

The principles we subscribe to as future leaders in the development of housing in South Africa maintain that:

- We cannot simply just provide housing
- We must develop communities through participation within the design and building process
- We must integrate and train ourselves with the people who the building will serve
- We must ultimately maintain the longevity of the building itself through sustainable principles



GENERAL INFORMATION	
PROJECT NAME	...
CLIENT	...
ARCHITECT	...
DATE	...
SCALE	...
PROJECT LOCATION	...
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	...
DESIGNER	...
DATE OF PUBLICATION	...



Community leader Mohau Melani

Leadership drives the process

In the meantime the leadership began to recruit people to work on the project. They revisited their skills audit. Bricklayers, tilers, plumbers and welders were asked to come on board to help upgrade the hall. Community members without skills were also encouraged to volunteer. Community leaders also started collecting contributions of R5 per household to go towards food for the volunteer workers.

Construction started in October 2010 and the upgrade was completed on the 19th of November. The upgrade included completion of the hall; use of old dilapidated post boxes as serving containers and benches; paving of the entire area in front of the hall; the planting of 20 trees and the installation of 4 taps to water the trees with grey water.

A community member was appointed as the project manager. His job was to coordinate everyone on site - including the students who became part of the labour force for the full six weeks. The energy and camaraderie on site was palpable



Shack dwellers source skills

But it was by no means all plain sailing. It was a struggle to secure materials. But eventually material came from various sources. Through the efforts of the students, private companies supplied the paving. The students also managed to get trucks with ready-mix to dump left over concrete on site and then they got tiles donated.

As the momentum for donations grew, the community got involved as well. One resident managed to get ten massive gum-poles donated by his employer. Another resident organized leftover tar from Road Works. Yet another resident used the steel rims of two car wheels for drains. Some residents loaned their generators and others offered the use of their bakkies and cars.

All the artisans brought their tools on site – spades, paint brushes, picks, saws, welding equipment, tiling equipment ... Finally the community organized the cladding for the walls of the hall by going to the nearby river to cut bamboo.



Stakeholders

The Slovo Park upgrading is the result of a successful partnership between a capacitated community, the South African SDI alliance and the University of Pretoria, Department of Architecture.

The community was mobilized by the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP).

ISN is an alliance of informal settlement dwellers, active in all of the country's major metropolitan municipalities. Their task is to mobilize and network communities around issues related to urban exclusion, such as no tenure, insufficient basic services, and the threat of evictions. ISN uses this networking mechanism to engage the State. At the same time, they closely cooperate with FEDUP's women savers who become the instruments for managing the in-situ upgrading process from within the community.



For the past 20 years FEDUP has empowered hundreds of communities to start savings schemes, capacitate themselves, negotiate with government, build houses and acquire land.

Through their alignment with FEDUP, the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) and the technical support NGO iKhayalami have access to the worldwide network Slum Dwellers International (SDI). At Slovo Park, the NGOs have assisted the community with planning, mapping and building – iKhayalami is specialized on low cost housing solutions with a focus on green technologies.

CORC facilitates partnerships and exchanges to enable communities to learn from one another, so they can broker deals with formal institutions, especially the State. Through pilot projects, CORC provides case studies for policy change at national and international level



Slovo Park - a model to go to scale

On Saturday the 20th November the hall was officially opened. Two officials, one from Johannesburg Municipality and the other from Ekurhuleni attended the function as well as senior lecturers from the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria.

The students mentioned that they would like to continue working with the Slovo Park community. However the distance between Pretoria and Slovo Park is too far for them to maintain long-term relationships, It was suggested that a link should be established between Pretoria University and Wits and that ultimately Wits Architecture Department should be brought on board. The Pretoria University has since asked whether they could assist the Informal Settlement Network in Tshwane.

And what about the City and the community? If the upgrading process is to go to scale, if other services and amenities are to be provided and if Slovo Park is to be replicated throughout Johannesburg then this partnership has to become central. It takes a lot more work and more courage to design for change than it does to fight for it.











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