CONTENTION AND CLASS: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PUBLIC SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

While progressive coalitions continue to oppose neoliberal restructuring around the world, organizing on the left remains fragmented and the underlying unity of diverse working class struggles undertheorized. Overcoming these theoretical and practical obstacles is an urgent task in the face of both renewed attempts by states and capital to ensure stability and deepen market penetration into the remaining untouched corners of working-class life, and threats to unity generated within the left by narrow understandings of class and identity.

Post-apartheid South Africa is no exception to this ongoing neoliberal restructuring of contemporary capitalism nor to the fragmentation of working-class struggle. In opposition to the maintenance of a neoliberal macroeconomic trajectory following apartheid South Africans have almost continuously organized in their workplaces and communities to realize the better life for all promised to them after 1994. While community protest has intensified over the last decade—with a parallel upturn in labour organizing—it has taken on a less focused and fragmented form relative to earlier mobilizations. Moreover, despite the deep solidarities and alliances formed between unions and communities in the struggle against apartheid, organizing around production and reproduction has remained relatively distinct since its end. There remain, however, concerted efforts to draw together and articulate protests around access to the basic necessities of life with labour and student movements with the explicit goal of uniting the working class to struggle against capitalism.

Based on extensive fieldwork conducted between 2015 and 2019, this dissertation analyzes one instance of this organizing work through a case study of the Housing Assembly, an organization struggling around housing and related services in Cape Town. It asks what role understandings of capitalism and class and their relationship to social relations of oppression play in organizing the working class today. My research explores how the Housing Assembly uses a strategic learning process of organizing to raise critical consciousness and build genuine solidarities and grassroots organization to engage and contest the state and capital around access to housing and water. This learning process starts from the daily lived experience of the working class to build a concrete critique of the political economy of housing and services restructuring which conceives of these struggles around social reproduction as class struggles within a capitalist totality rather than as discrete, bounded, or local. The production and utilization of knowledge by the Housing Assembly plays a key role in this organizing process, linking the subjective experience of everyday working-class life with the relational construction of political, economic and social relations which lie beyond it.

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List of Acronyms

AbM	Abahlali baseMjondolo
ANC	African National Congress
APF	Anti-Privatization Forum
BNG	Breaking New Ground
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CoCT	City of Cape Town
COSATU	Council of South African Trade Unions
DA	Democratic Alliance
DHS	Department of Human Settlements
FBS	Free Basic Services
FBW	Free Basic Water
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILRIG	International Labour Research and Information Group
GEAR	The plan for Growth, Employment and Redistribution
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MSP	Municipal Services Project
NDP	National Development Plan
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHBRC	National Homebuilders Registration Council
NHF	National Housing Forum
NSM	New Social Movement

NU	Ndifuna Ukwazi
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
OSM	Old Social Movement
PIE	Prevention of Illegal Evictions from Unlawful Occupation of Land (Act)
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Plan
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAFTU	South African Federation of Trade Unions
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers Union
SANCO	South African National Civic Organization
SJC	Social Justice Coalition
SMU	Social Movement Unionism
SRT	Social Reproduction Theory
TRA	Temporary Relocation Area
UDF	United Democratic Front
UISP	Upgrading Informal Settlements Programme
WMD	Water Management Device

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Introduction

The reality of extreme poverty and inequality is a crushing and demoralizing feature of everyday working-class life in contemporary South Africa. Some 25 years after the fall of apartheid the country remains the most unequal in the world, with a Gini coefficient—a measure of income inequality—of 0.63 in 2015. Wealth inequality is even greater: according to the World Bank (Sulla and Zikhali 2018), the top 10% of South African households hold 71% of national wealth while the bottom 60% hold only 7%. While the World Bank observes that the poverty rate is lower today than it was in 1994 (18.8% compared to 33.8%), it has recently been on the rise, increasing by 2.4% from 2011 to 2015. Moreover, 76% of South Africans face an imminent threat of falling below the USD 1.9 poverty rate.

Despite the promises of democracy and economic growth, post-apartheid South Africa has been characterized by deindustrialization, capital flight, wage repression, financialization, fiscal austerity, public sector restructuring and growing household debt (Ashman, Levenson, Ngwane 2017; Bagree 2019; Padayachee 2018). Opportunities for work and a decent life, especially for young South Africans, are scant and deteriorating as the better life for all promised by the African National Congress (ANC) seems increasingly out of reach. In the third quarter of 2019, the narrow unemployment rate reached 29.1%, the highest number since 2003, and the expanded rate was 38.5% representing a year over year increase of 1.2% (StatsSA 2019). Land, from which black South Africans were all but wholly dispossessed in the early twentieth century, remains inequitably distributed, and is largely in the hands of (white) capital and farmers.

Critical scholars and those organizing on the South African left generally agree that this deteriorating state of affairs can be attributed to the ANC's intensification of the neoliberal[1] economic trajectory that it inherited from the apartheid era (Marais 2012). The national liberation movement's progressive policy program was jettisoned shortly after the democratic dispensation began. Neoliberal restructuring has included the usual package of trade liberalization, financial deregulation, flexibilization of labour, public sector restructuring and fiscal austerity. While South Africans quickly drew on the strength of struggles against apartheid to voice their opposition to the ANC's turn, they were largely unsuccessful in prompting a substantive reorientation of the state. As a result, the promises of a better life in the new South Africa made by the ANC remain unfulfilled—if not broken—in the eyes of the majority.

Yet despite the legacy of the racialized dispossession of apartheid and the crush of over 25 years of neoliberalism, the comrades who I have organized alongside since 2012 find reason to be hopeful. Recent changes in the formal political landscape, progressive upheaval in the unions, the growth of a new worker’s movement amongst the precariously employed and the promise of ongoing organizing in communities across the country amidst widespread protest around access to the basic necessities of life including housing, water and other public services, are for my comrades all reasons to be cautiously optimistic.

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[1] A note on the choice of using the term 'neoliberalism,' as opposed to a discussion of neo-welfarism or post-neoliberalism (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012; Harris and Scully 2015) given the recent expansion of social spending in the South (at least in middle income countries), is required. First, in terms of policy, rejecting ideal typical constructions of both terms, or ends of the spectrum, and focusing on the qualitative nature of social spending and the relational construction of the state (Clarke 1992; Gramsci 1971; Miliband 1969; Poulantzas 1978) yields a more nuanced perspective that I would argue occupies a middle ground. Given the modalities through which social spending is distributed and disbursed in South Africa both to individuals and to society at large, and the definitional and political choices that must inevitably be made, I argue that a well-constructed conceptualization of neoliberalism as a process is more accurate and appropriate, both analytically and strategically, in representing and accounting for the unhappy marriage of rather classic neoliberalism alongside considerable and expanding social expenditure in the country today (Katz 2015; Prasad 2012). Jamie Peck, Nik Theodore and Neil Brenner (2012, 269) reflect such an understanding when they conceive of neoliberalization as a "variegated form of regulatory restructuring" which "prioritizes market-oriented or market-disciplinary responses to regulatory problems; strives to intensify commodification;" and often mobilizes speculative financial instruments, among others, to open up new arenas for capital accumulation. While it does so systemically—in terms of its basic (capitalist) operational logic—neoliberalization produces differentiation and heterogenous "forms of articulation and institutionalization… Thus, rather than seeing some pure, prototypical form of neoliberalization across divergent contexts, … variegation—systemic geoinstitutional differentiation—…is one of its essential features." In other words: "neoliberalization represents *a historically specific, unevenly developed, hybrid, patterned tendency of market-disciplinary regulatory restructuring*." Moreover, and importantly for an inquiry into social movements, this restructuring is not automotive but rather is driven by a political project and is a "political response to the democratic gains that has been previously achieved by subordinated classes and which had become, in a new context and from capital's perspective, barriers to accumulation" (Panitch and Gindin in Castorina 2014, 73).

This project analyzes the dynamics of South African social movements that engage with and contest the state and capital around the restructuring of housing and related public services—water first among them. This task is accomplished through a case study of the Housing Assembly and its struggles for housing and water in and around Cape Town, the second largest city in South Africa, the ‘Mother City,’ and home to its parliament. Embarking on fieldwork in 2015, I set out to examine processes of identity, organization and coalition formation between and within organizations, movements, capital and the state. I also sought to explore the strengths, limitations and impacts of these organizing efforts especially as they pertain to unity on the left and the perceived lack thereof post-apartheid.

My research into these dynamics was guided by a series of questions: What role do class and other social relations, including race, gender and ethnicity, play in social movement organizing in the context of the neoliberal restructuring of public services in Cape Town? How are collective identities and organizations, particularly class and class-based organizations (working class social movements), articulated in this materially uneven and ideologically charged context/field of struggle? What do these struggles tell us about the relationship between oppositional forces in ‘civil society’—organized social movements in particular—and the state and capital? What are the outcomes, actual and potential, of social movements on service restructuring?

Along the way, as my understandings and analysis of these struggles progressed, my attention shifted towards the processes of learning within movements, focusing on strategic organizing. The relations and forces at play in South Africa—a context profoundly shaped by a long history of both racialized dispossession and capital accumulation and insertion in global political and economic circuits—mean that struggles often play out in complex and contradictory ways and appear to produce similarly confounding results. How do movements or movement organizers in the struggle for housing and related services understand and strategize in this context? For example, while housing and water activists and organizers in the Housing Assembly fiercely contest the problematic and insufficient provision of housing and water by the state and capital, they also vigorously defend meagre reforms which improve their daily lives and therefore provide a material basis to allow them to struggle for more. In the absence of more substantive transformation and/or their careful contextualisation within the broader social relations of capitalism, however, such reforms can also variously function to divide and undermine working class struggles from within and/or simultaneously work to disproportionately or relatively benefit or empower the state and capital. This dissertation aims to explore and understand these tactical and strategic choices of the Housing Assembly within the broader political, economic and social terrain and in relation to the organization's explicit goal of building broad working-class solidarity and power. Divergent understandings of politics and struggle on the South African left, especially as they pertain to class and identity, exploitation and oppression, the state and capital, autonomy and independence, engagement and contestation and power, are at the centre of these debates around tactics and strategy.

Wrestling with these complex dynamics became a key component of my attempts to understand these social movement struggles within the totality of capitalist social relations, rather than as a set of more discrete, bounded, or isolated processes as they are so often understood in the bulk of the social movement literature. In the course of trying to understand the dynamics of these organizing processes, an additional theoretical question arose: How does engagement with and contestation of other civil society actors and the state and capital,[2] and the content of these processes, impact the ability of social movements to build organization and both theorize and practice alternatives within and beyond the dominant or prevailing social relations of capitalism? The remainder of this introductory chapter lays out the research process I took to explore these questions, locates me as a researcher in the project, describes the methodology I used and situates my research within both the political terrain and the literature on social movement research.

Academic and Activist Research in the Housing Assembly

This dissertation has emerged from more than seven years of academic, activist and organizing work. The first time I went to South Africa was in 2012, when I spent nearly six months in Cape Town conducting research for my master's thesis as an intern with the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG). ILRIG is a South Africa non-governmental organization founded in the 1980s during the struggle against apartheid that continues to provide popular education programs, produce relevant publications and conduct research for and with labour and social movements in South and Southern Africa. In 2012 I was housed at the organization on behalf of the Municipal Services Project, a research project that explores alternatives to the privatization and commercialization of public services. At ILRIG I worked on a project that brought together municipal worker leaders from the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) and activists and organizers from the Housing Assembly in a planned alliance that aimed to engage and contest local government around service delivery. This experience quickly transformed my understanding of the country which, despite the critical preparation I had conducted under the tutelage of my then supervisor David McDonald, still remained heavily influenced by the hagiographic, overly simplistic and uncritically celebratory mainstream account of both the fall of apartheid and the history of the 'Rainbow Nation' since 1994. My resulting MA thesis found that, much like similar efforts over the course of the previous decade, several factors frustrated working-class coalition building in that case: the heterogeneity of partners, a complex socio-cultural context, parallel processes of democratization and marketization, and the hegemony of the ruling national party in government. Although I managed to complete a master's degree which took me much beyond my earlier view of South Africa, I was left with the impression that my grasp of the concrete dynamics in the country and associated theoretical understandings fell far short. More positively, the research network I developed over the course of that fieldwork had strong linkages with many civil society organizations, with the trade union movement and with critical academics across South Africa, contacts which have been immensely important in attempts to push my understanding further in my doctoral research. I have returned to South Africa seven more times in the seven years since, spending more than two and half years in the country as a researcher, activist, student, educator and organizer affiliated with the MSP, ILRIG, the Council of Canadians Blue Planet Project and the University of Cape Town, working alongside activists and organizers in the Housing Assembly throughout.

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[2] In keeping with the relational conception of the state outlined in Footnote 1 above, I follow Gramsci in rejecting liberal notions of civil society and political society (the formal state apparatus), as separate entities. Rather, Gramsci's notion of the integral state refers to both political society and the dialectical unity of civil and political society, in which the latter sets the terms over the assertion and maintenance of hegemony (Thomas 2009). Hegemony not being understood here as consent as the binary opposite of coercion but as the dialectical integration of the two (Hart 2014).

The Housing Assembly

The Housing Assembly is composed of organizations primarily from communities across Cape Town and the surrounding area that are engaged in struggles for housing and related public services in and around the Cape Town Metropolitan Area and is part of the broader national and global movement engaged in similar struggles for housing and public services.[3] The Housing Assembly was officially founded in 2012 by a group of activists and organizers who had been involved for a number of years in popular education programs run by ILRIG. The experience gained by many of these founders in earlier waves of struggle and protest were vital, especially one veteran housing activist, organizer and intellectual and former member of the Western Cape Anti Eviction Campaign. The Housing Assembly has strong connections to the local, regional and national social movements and organizations that have been at the centre of organizing and mobilizing in earlier waves of struggle both during and after apartheid. The Housing Assembly's local affiliates, many of them reconstitutions of earlier and now-defunct groups, include or have included the Gugulethu Backyard Dwellers, Tafelsig Residents Unite, Delft Integrated Network, Overcome Heights Integrated Development Settlement, Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) Western Cape, Blikkiesdorp Concerned Residents, Makhaza Community Forum, Newfield's Village

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[3] I follow the Housing Assembly in defining it as a working-class social movement organization (McCathy and Zald 1977) or community (Stoecker 1995): "Organization is not just the vehicle that brings struggle forward but rather it is the process itself. Social movement – a society in movement… the community as a social movement… [the] social movement as the community itself" (Organizer March 2018). While definitions in the mainstream literature and debates around them are useful, class struggle social movement definitions are more appropriate here. Nilsen and Cox (2013, 73) define social movements from below "as collective projects developed and pursued by subaltern groups, organising a range of locally-generated skilled activities around a rationality that seeks to either challenge the constraints that a dominant structure of needs and capacities imposes upon the development of new needs and capacities, or to defend aspects of an existing, negotiated structure which accommodate their specific needs and capacities."

Anti-Eviction Campaign, Siqalo Informal Settlement, Zille-Raine Heights Informal Settlement, Informal Settlements In Struggle, Tafelsig Community Forum, Women For Development, Makhaza Youth Forum, Bishop Lavis Action Committee, Women for Change, Beacon Valley Against Pre-paid Water Meters and the Witzenberg Activist Group.

The Housing Assembly also has strong links with other struggles which have helped it develop alliances and coalitions with other civil society organizations and trade unions including SAMWU, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and its United Front, the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU), the Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSSAWU), the General Industrial Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA), the Casual Workers Advice Office (CWAO) and the Simunye Workers Forum (SWF) among others. Beginning in 2017, the organization was joined in its campaign for 'Decent Housing For All' by community based organizations from the provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal including members of AbM Durban, Ubunye bamaHostela (Durban), AbM Freedom Park (Pretoria) and Thembelile Crisis Committee (Johannesburg). It has also developed direct and indirect relationships of solidarity with international groups and movements, including the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Brazil), the Amandla Centre of Zimbabwe, NOMADESC (Colombia), HDK (Peoples' Democratic Congress, Turkey), Madhesh Foundation (Nepal), the United Steelworkers Union (Canada), the Belgian socialist solidarity organization FOS, and The Blue Planet Project (Canada).

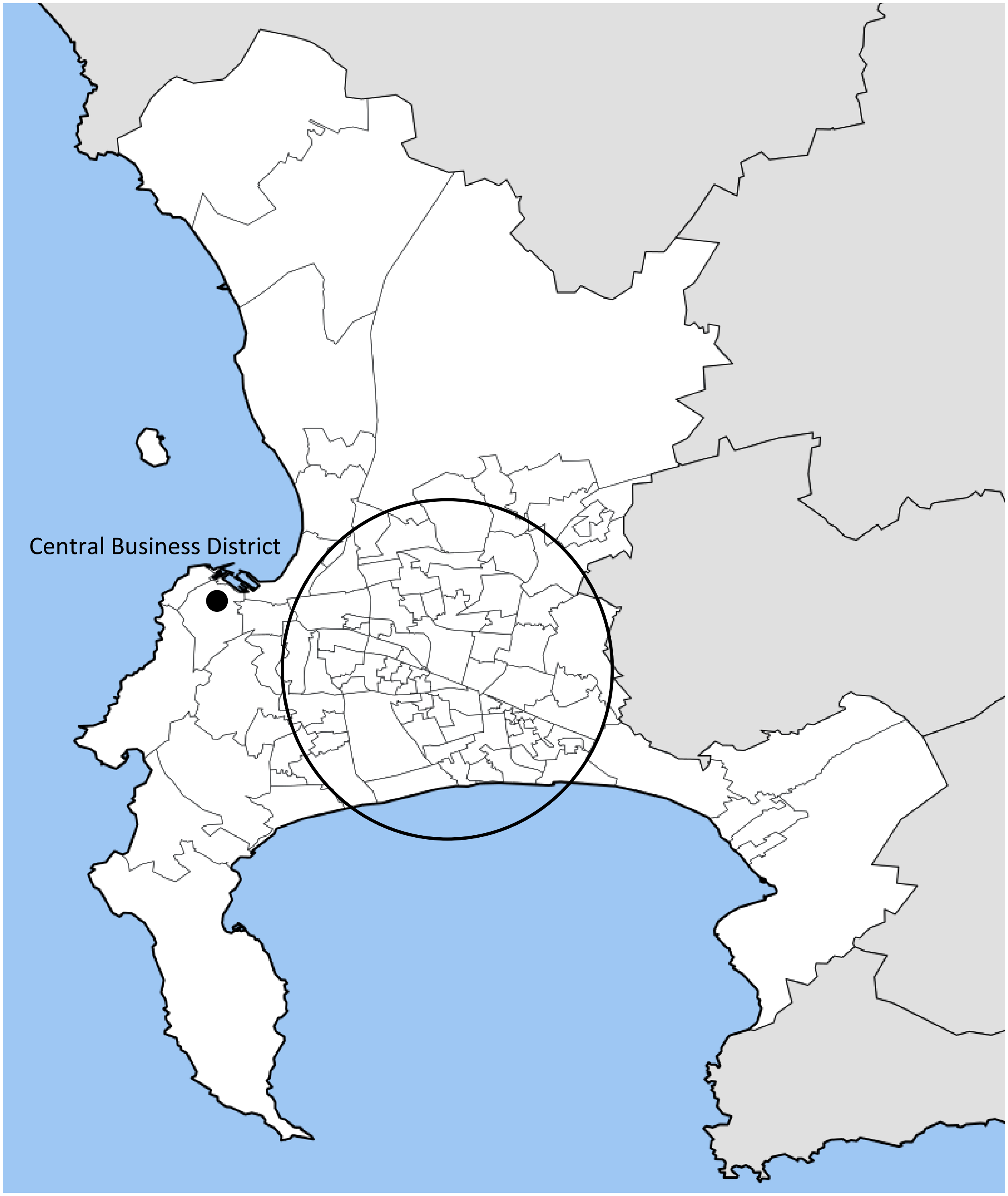
Central Business District

Image 0.1 *Map of Cape Town (the 'townships' of the Cape Flats are roughly circled).*

The Housing Assembly's work includes popular education, research, writing and propaganda production and both local and more generalized campaigns and actions around housing and service delivery at a variety of scales—from the local, street, community, township and district level, to the provincial, national and international. The Housing Assembly geographically divides its work into six districts. Five in Cape Town, Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain, Southern Suburbs, Wider Athlone and Northern Suburbs, cover the city's 'townships', and one in the Witzenberg Municipality 120 kilometers North East of the city centre in the wine lands of the Western Cape.

Since 2017 these activities have included a now annual independent Political School which brings housing and public services activists and organizers from around South Africa together with worker and student leaders to discuss, debate and organize their national campaign for 'Decent Housing for All' premised on organizing work in communities across the country. More recently, the Housing Assembly has played an important role in the Cape Town Water Crisis Coalition, formed to contest the City of Cape Town's thoroughly neoliberal response to its 2017-2018 water crisis—a long running and ongoing affair for its working class residents—and held its second and third annual Political Schools in March 2018 and July 2019 respectively. Through this work the Housing Assembly seeks to challenge, both materially and ideologically the conditions of everyday life for the working class under neoliberal capitalism and to engage in the process of building alternatives to the housing and service delivery status quo.

Objectivity and the Role of (Academic) Theory

My experience of organizing alongside comrades in the Housing Assembly over the last seven years has given me the opportunity to deepen my understanding of South African political economy, social movement politics and, perhaps most importantly and most vividly, the perspectives of working-class people engaged in everyday struggles for housing and water, struggles at the very core of realizing a better life for all in the 'new' South Africa. When I started my doctoral fieldwork, I was already deeply embedded in the movement that is my case study, a closeness that would only increase over the course of the research.

Mainstream, positivist social scientists may protest both this proximity and orientation arguing that it is impossible to produce objective, rigorous academic work when the researcher is active in the social movement that they are studying (George and Bennett 2005). As two renowned scholar-activists put it:

> Scholarship and activism are often seen as separate domains—even as antithetical to each other. Activism is understood as moral action, defined by commitment; scholarship is assumed to be an analytic endeavour, defined by rigour. In most assessments, the two are assumed to be mutually exclusive: an activist optic is often assumed to distort 'objective' scholarship, while a scholarly approach is assumed to obscure the compelling clarity essential for activism. In this framework, the two are seen to be distinct forms of engagement (Newbury and Reyntjens 2010, 36).

This dominant framework is a powerful force compounded by the pressure on young scholars to fit their work into a particular paradigm or theoretical school whatever the field in question. Further still, these pressures are brought to bear within the competitive nature of the academy, publication requirements and scholarship and grant application processes, which are only intensifying with the ongoing neoliberalization of the university (Giroux 2014; OUCC 2019; Peake and Mullings 2016).

In keeping with these trends, the tendency in the mainstream social movement scholarship is to rely on abstracted, second hand accounts for research or uncritical acceptance of elite informant testimony, and then fit these into dominant theoretical frameworks. As Croteau, Hoynes and Ryan (in Choudry 2015, 42) contend, "[t]he result is an artificial divide between the practice of social change and the study of such efforts… Theorists without significant connections to social movements can end up constructing elegant abstractions with little real insight or utility." This pressure often means that "theoretical approaches become ways of knowing in which ideas and concepts are prioritized over the material practices by which these ideas are produced" (Choudry 2015, 55). These pressures make it difficult, particularly for students and junior scholars, to conduct research that addresses the issues social movements are grappling with on a day to day basis in a way that is both relevant and useful to organizing and finds some acceptance in the academy.

Fortunately, there is an increasingly large body of social science literature that explores research methodologies which dispense with the need for or attempts to maintain 'objectivity' through maintaining distance between researcher and the researched (Burawoy 2009; Hale 2008; Hart 2016; Smith 2012; Smith 2005). The methodological approach taken here draws especially on historical materialist contributions to this scholarship within the tradition of the critique of political economy. This alternative literature is especially rich when it comes to the study of social movements outside mainstream social movement theory and attempts to conduct activist research and/or produce what has been termed movement relevant theory (Bevington and Dixon 2005; Choudry 2015; Croteau, Hoynes and Ryan 2005; Dixon 2014). For Charles Hale (2006, 97), activist research is

> a method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process, from conception of the research topic to data collection to verification and dissemination of the results.

In the interests of conducting such research, Aziz Choudry (2015) suggests that we should try to look at the significance of what movements produce, how academic work articulates with these movement theories and practices and what the outcomes of contention with dominant relations are. To acknowledge the pitfalls of academic theory and submit it to critique is not to disparage it nor theory more generally. Quite the opposite, it is to embrace theory but to recognize that it is also developed outside academia and to engage with that theory no less rigorously. Indeed, without theory to provide vision and perspective it is often the case that problems, like those sought to be addressed by social movements, remain in the realm of the particular or personal responsibility. For example, in my own research, like Choudry (2015, 23; see also Austin 2010; Sears 2014) a critique of political economy is essential to the task of

> mapping power… to uncover, explain, explore, and analyze the ways in which capitalist relations—through global and local institutions, corporations, financial instruments, processes, and policies—shape our lives and those of others with whom we share this planet. In turn, such knowledge can try to identify weaknesses, contradictions, conjunctures, or pressure points that organizers and movements can exploit.

At the same time, movement relevant research is not about uncritical adulation of movements relative to pre-existing theoretical understandings—often held by well-positioned academics—a topic of much debate and concern in South Africa over the years, to which we will return in what follows (see Bohmke 2010, 2012; Bryant 2008; Dawson and Sinwell 2012; Desai 2006; Matthews 2012; Mdlalose 2014; Kotze 2015; Pointer 2004; Sinwell 2010; Steyn 2016; Walsh 2008, 2015). Nor is it about 'chuminess.' Rather, the aspiration is to be critical-sympathetic (Dawson and Sinwell 2012). As Choudry (2015, 60) argues, "closeness to a movement or cause and analytical distance need not be mutually exclusive." Although such a task is not an easy or straightforward one, it may prove to be particularly fruitful. As Hale (2006, 98) argues

> [w]hen we position ourselves in such spaces, we are also inevitably drawn into the compromised conditions of the political process. The resulting contradictions make the research more difficult to carry out, but they also generate insight that otherwise would be impossible to achieve. This insight, in turn, provides an often-unacknowledged basis for analytical understanding and theoretical innovation.

To develop such understanding and accomplish such theoretical innovation speaks to a need for a reflexive social science rather than a positivist one and to the prevailing divide between the academy and the outside world, particularly when it comes to relating to social movements. In these efforts there is no substitute for direct engagement, though it might 'hurt' the researcher a bit. As sociologist Michael Burawoy (2009, xiv) argues in relation to research more generally,

> [a]nalytical theory enables us to see and thus comprehend the world, but that does not imply automatic confirmation. To the contrary, the world has an obduracy of its own, continually challenging the causal claims and predictions we make as social scientists on the basis of our theories. That is how we develop science, not by being right but by being wrong and obsessing about it.

This also requires a bit of honesty, with ourselves and with others (although it also comes with risks: see the discussion of the problematic relationship between intellectuals and movements in South Africa in Chapter Three). As Burawoy (2009, 13) goes on to say

> Those who would have us strip ourselves of theory before we went to the field are deceiving themselves. In their supposed purity they become the unconscious victims of the bias they seek to avoid. Far better to become conscious of our theoretical baggage, turning it to our advantage rather than letting it drag us down in the marshlands of empiricism.

Becoming conscious of our own theoretical baggage requires that we dispense with *some* of the aforementioned artificial barriers erected between the academy and movements, theory and action and research and practice. Following Allman (2010, 152), I start from the point that

> our action in and on the material world is the mediation or link between our consciousness and objective reality. Our consciousness develops from our active engagement with other people, nature and the objects or processes we produce. In other words, it develops from the sensuous experience of reality from within the social relations in which we exist.

In this sense thought, action and the social relations we are implicated in are inseparable; the notion of praxis as articulated in the tradition of historical materialism (Allman 2007; see Chapter One). Taking this approach helps us to overcome the divide between theory and practice by locating learning/education, knowledge production and theorizing in the everyday practices of movements and the political and social relations they are implicated in. This perspective allows us to focus on the pedagogical significance of movement activist practice and theorizing (Choudry 2015, 80). Last but not least, this sort of commitment to theory "makes it possible for us to extend from the micro to the macro, to identify forces at work in confining and reproducing micro social process" (Burawoy 2009, 14) many of which are at the root of the very relations of exploitation and oppression that movements, and those of us who identify as critical activist-scholars seek to both better understand and fight against.

Methodology: The Extended Case Method, Critical Ethnography and Social Movement Research

This dissertation draws on the extensive literature on critical ethnography (Hart 2016) and the extended case method (Burawoy 2009) in an attempt to add to existing empirical knowledge of social movement organizing in Cape Town, while engaging with theoretical understandings of social movements through theory reconstruction. Burawoy's (2009) extended case method proposes generalizing findings to theory and reconstructing and extending theoretical understandings rather than generalizing on the basis of the supposed representativeness of a case (see also George and Bennett 2005; Yin 2009). The extended case method is especially relevant to this project due to the complexity of contentious politics and the need to understand cases in their entirety and in relation to the totality of social relations. As de Vaus (2001, 235) argues, "to isolate behaviour from this broader context and to strip it of the meaning given to it by actors is to invite misunderstanding, and thus threaten the internal validity of the study." Indeed, single case studies allow for both the broad and holistic contextualisation of the case and the "intimacy of analysis" (Tarrow 2010, 243) essential for a rigorous and fruitful critical analysis and reconstruction of social theory.

With this goal in mind, the critical, ethnographic approach employed in this project sought, as far as possible, to study "others in their space and time…writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation" (Burawoy 2009, xi, 23). A key motivation in taking this approach was my desire to move beyond the bounded realities and detached observation typical of traditional ethnographies—and much other social science research— "and essentialized conceptions of space, place and culture,… [which] end up leaving these conceptions—and the forms of power through which they operate—largely intact" (Hart 2006, 994). These more traditional accounts often either privilege global discourses—impact theories of globalization—or some regressive defense of localism.

The debate around the privileging of particular places or sites of struggle and certain actors and forces over others figures heavily in later chapters. If, however,

> spatiality is conceived of in terms of space–time and formed through social relations and interactions at all scales, then place can be seen as neither a bounded enclosure nor the site of meaning-making, but rather as a subset of the interactions which constitute [social] space, a local articulation within a wider whole (Massey in Hart 2006, 994-995).

This conception of space is central to Gillian Hart's (2006, 996; emphasis in original) project of critical ethnography and relational comparison: "Instead of comparing pre-existing objects, events, places, or identities, the focus is on *how* they are constituted in relation to one another through power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life." Hart's articulation of critical ethnography draws heavily upon a particular reading of Marxist dialectics in which the focus is on processes, rather than things, and their ongoing, internally related and contradictory (co-)constitution: the principle being that elements, things and structures do not exist prior to the processes and relations that create, sustain, or undermine them. As Hart (2016, 8-9) argues, "[o]ngoing change/transformation is inherent and holds out political possibilities" including in (dialectical) research as a process in which "relations between researcher and researched are not those of an outsider looking in on the researched as object, but between two active subjects, each of whom internalizes something from the other by virtue of the processes that connect them." More generally, as Derek Sayer (1987: 126) puts it, "there is no Archimedean point from which knowledge can be produced."

Data Collection and Analysis

In keeping with these guiding principles, participant observation, interviews and focus groups constituted the primary methods of data collection for this dissertation. As Russo and Linkin (in Selwyn 2014, 103) note “[o]ne way of putting working-class people at the centre [of research] is to make working-class voices a primary source for the study of working-class life.” Data was collected over 18 months spent in South Africa between April 2015 and June 2019. Case study research with the Housing Assembly also included document and literature analysis of organizational and other materials. I also drew on my master’s research, also with the Housing Assembly, when pertinent. Given my pre-existing connection with the organization, my research concentrated on the core activists and organizers of its Executive, Steering and Co-ordinating Committee—which has undergone several transformations over the years—as they engaged in organization building, alliance formation, strategic planning, political education, knowledge production and, as an organization, engaged in protest, occupation and direct action. In this work I spent a significant amount of time in the six ‘Districts’ of the organization, sub-cases in a sense (George and Bennett 2005), engaging in workshops, meetings and other organizing activities including door-to-door canvassing, leafleteering, organizing research projects and participating in speak-outs, direct actions and engagements with the state and capital among other interlocutors, as well as more traditional research methods of conducting interviews and focus/discussion groups.

The data collection process for this dissertation was guided by the aforementioned critical ethnographic approach, which is preferred over thin multi-case studies heavily reliant on document analysis and/or the statements of social movement leadership, as it facilitates the explication of everyday, rank-and-file understandings and activities of organizing that inform movement dynamics, praxis and identities (Lichterman 1998; Mathers and Novelli 2007; Van der Linden 2002). Participant observation was employed continuously throughout the research and forms the comprehensive foundation upon which other methods were employed to refine the inquiry. Practically, participant observation played an important role in identifying interview and focus group participants but also provided the experience on which the context of the case was developed, including detailed information about participants' everyday lives, their understandings of organizing, the actions they took and the meanings they attach to these experiences more generally. Through the constant engagement of theory with data drawn from the case, participant observation was critical in identifying issues and themes which are important in their own right and which could then be expanded upon or clarified in interviews and focus groups. This process of engaging theory with the "world one studies" is also vital to the interrogation of theory at the heart of the extended case method (Burawoy 2009, 46-47). It is also essential to be able to explore the material and discursive processes of social movement organizing which are necessarily situated in context and that bear the content of the social relations which inform their collective articulation (Barker 2009).

Building upon and going beyond what was a constant process of participant observation, formal and informal, open-ended, semi-structured interviews were also an important component of data collection. Interviews were conducted with a variety of members of the Housing Assembly and its community, labour and other civil society affiliates and a number of elite informants associated with the South African left. I conducted a handful of interviews with government and business officials and representatives when opportunities arose and appeared relevant or useful. These interviews provided a method by which to potentially overcome elite and documentary accounts of social movements, which in many cases are highly skewed and in South Africa have, in the past, frequently consisted of depictions that paint the working class and poor as either moving towards revolutionary socialism on the one hand or as enlightened, autonomous communities on the other. Interviews also serve to explicate everyday understandings around which solidarities are built in the Housing Assembly in relation to the broader political economy of capitalist development in Cape Town, in South Africa and beyond.

Focus/discussion groups—they were often held informally or convened in an ad hoc manner—also played an important role, complementing these methods to analyse the articulation of individual and collective understandings in a somewhat more formal, interactive and guided group setting. While I believe participant observation to be preferable to focus groups because of the contrived nature of the latter and the researcher effects (Monahan and Fisher 2010) inherent in them, I decided to hold focus groups since there was a risk that particular questions or discussions important for my analysis did not always come up in the everyday organizing of the Housing Assembly, or at least not when I was present. Focus/discussion groups were therefore, on the one hand, focused and targeted interventions meant to draw out specific information or gaps in knowledge that I had identified over the course of the fieldwork through other methods, participant observation in particular. On the other, they were used amongst particular social groups within the Housing Assembly, women, youth and queer members, to improve my understandings of how different ‘constituencies’ (to use the Housing Assembly’s term) and social groups relate to and perceive one other, drawing important insights into the relational construction of subjectivities and dynamics within the organization.

Data analysis was guided by the theoretical propositions laid out in the historical materialist framework introduced above and described in greater detail in Chapter 1. This approach served to structure and guide the development of a narrative case analysis that explores the process of social movement organizing in the Housing Assembly (Yin 2009). While a deductive approach led the research, that is the theoretical framework and set of hypothesis around the relational, material and discursive construction of working class social movements was interrogated by the data derived from the case, the rich variety of data collected through the ethnographic methods employed also informed the analysis. These were particularly important in generating the aforementioned transformations in understanding and inquiry. That is, inductive methods were also used to chart a middle path in data analysis offering another opportunity to 'challenge' theory (Miles and Huberman 1994). As Yin (2009) details, the iterative nature of explanation building is such that theory and data are brought together in a continuous and ongoing process of revision which guides the ongoing process of research as much as it yields data. This approach is consistent with the extended case method and the goal of theory reconstruction, informed by critical ethnography and relational comparison which guides this research.

Limitations and Other Considerations

I recognize the limitations and weaknesses to this approach and the aforementioned researcher effects associated with it. These include the risk that participants may have 'performed' in my presence or that interviewees may have told me the story they think that I wanted to hear or that they may misremember events, undermining the validity of this research (Scheyvens et al. 2003). My own theoretical, political and social positionality may also have impacted the collection and interpretation of data. I sought to overcome these obstacles through a number of strategies. In addition to the benefit of having spread more than two years of data collection over seven years, with field visits of various lengths, I also endeavoured to be honest about my own theoretical and political baggage (Burawoy 2009), diversified the selection of interviewees and triangulated interview data with other sources (Johnson 2002). Integrating interviews and focus groups in a comprehensive ethnographic approach also helped to address these limitations, filling in the gaps and silences as “ethnographies reflect tacit knowledge, the largely unarticulated contextual understanding… the experiences – from which we produce our second (or third) hand accounts of ‘what [happened or] is happening’” (Altheide and Johnson in Brewer 2000, 43).

Positionality also importantly impacts the research process, including the researcher’s access to and ability to conduct valid research as with researcher effects and to utilize written knowledge. Several obstacles emerged in relation to access to knowledge in South Africa despite the fact that scholarly work is readily available both internationally and in South Africa via university libraries. These included human and physical problems of access to social movement organizational documentation and legal material; problems of access to obscure reports; linguistic obstacles—especially in particular areas of Cape Town where English is not spoken fluently, and isiXhosa or Afrikaans predominate; and my social location as a white, male, English-speaking, Northern researcher. These obstacles were addressed as much as possible via my research network and a genuine vigilance in self-reflexivity throughout the research and writing process and my aforementioned orientation and approach to the project.

There are also a series of limitations more broadly as they pertain to the research itself. Firstly, the scope of this research is largely confined to members of the Housing Assembly and residents of their communities. Secondly, it does not capture non-working-class populations in significant numbers and includes a disproportionate number of coloured South Africans because of the population’s large presence in the Western Cape and in Cape Town. Thirdly, interviews were predominately conducted in homes and communities and results could be different if these took place in workplaces or other formal institutional environments. Fourthly, while data collection included a rural town and the surrounding municipality, this research focuses on the urban and its relevance for rural areas may be limited. Finally, this project is restricted to a seven-year period in the present decade although it spans a not insignificant period of time and integrates some data from the past. Although I would contest their automatic characterization as limitations (see the methodological critique above), these factors may limit the applicability of this research to understandings of class, capitalism and social movements more broadly. Future work could be conducted to expand the analytical relevance (Alexander et al. 2013). Despite these limitations and openings, I hope that this project sheds light on the relevance of class relations and dynamics as they pertain to social movements in South Africa and contributes to theoretical understandings of contentious politics more generally.

Outline of the dissertation

The substantive portion of this dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter One enters into debates around the relevance of class and capitalism for social movement struggles, engaging the primary theoretical question of this enquiry. Chapter Two contextualizes the project offering a critique of the political economy of public services in South Africa and their relational construction through the transition from apartheid to today. Chapter Three details struggles between the state and social movements post-apartheid and provides South African examples of the theoretical and practical cul-de-sacs detailed in Chapter One, as well as reviewing recent developments which frame current organizing in the country. With this theoretical, contextual and practical framing, Chapters Four and Five present a multi-levelled case analysis detailing the Housing Assembly's organizing process in struggles around housing and related public services with a particular focus on organizational strategy and tactics, internal and external dynamics and social movement knowledge production. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the relational construction of social movements and of public service delivery in South Africa and attempts to offer a reading of the central research question in light of both the case study and the political and economic context of the current conjuncture.

Chapter One: Towards a Marxist Theory of Social Movements

In the context of the shifting nature of production and consumption under neoliberal globalization, it has become fashionable to argue that unions—the classic 'old social movement' organization and historically preferred agent of social transformation on the left—have been displaced by popular struggles in the form of the 'new social movements.' With this shift the locus of contention has supposedly moved away from the realm of production and towards the realm of consumption and from a focus on class politics to a focus on narrow identity politics (See Choudry 2015; Haider 2018; Hardt and Negri 2004, 2017; Harvey 2003; Iyer et al. 2018; Fraser 1997, 2003 for various analyses and critique).[4] In the social movement literature, this shift has coincided with a focus on the individual, identity and micro level analysis in both cultural and structural-rational approaches to movements, and away from political economy and material determinations of social change, in particular, capitalism (Barker et al. 2013; Burawoy 2017; della Porta 2015). This is perhaps most evident in the almost complete absence of the term class, let alone its rigorous analytical application, from studies of social movements over the last three decades (Hetland and Goodwin 2013). Building on scholarship that seeks to push forward Marxist understandings of social movements, by contrast, this dissertation seeks to argue for the importance of capitalism and class for understanding the dynamics of social movements by providing an empirically grounded case study of the Housing Assembly in struggles around access to public services in Cape Town, South Africa.

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[4] This is not a dismissal of 'identity politics as such. See Kelley 1997; Taylor 2017; and below.

In this chapter, I enquire into the relationship between the de- and re-composition of the working class under neoliberal capitalism and the enduring salience of class as a model of understanding that can contribute to overcoming the fragmentation of the working class today. Two deeply intertwined arguments emerge from this inquiry. First, in an effort to reconceptualize and/or renew our understanding of the working class, and of working-class struggle, a Marxist theory of social movements must take seriously the working class as it actually exists and the process of organizing it. In the process, I argue that how class and its relationship with social relations of oppression such as gender and race are understood matter as much for theoretical conceptions of working-class social movements as for more practical processes of movement building. Second, the translation and production of knowledge by organic, movement intellectuals and the molecular, catalytic work done by organizers in working class homes, workplaces and communities—in other words, their praxis—are at the core of a dynamic process of becoming at the heart of class formation and social movement organizing. These processes are explored in Chapters Four and Five which examine the work that Housing Assembly organizers do on a daily basis. More specifically, drawing on class formation scholarship, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and currents from the radical adult education literature, I conceive of class as a constantly unfolding process, rather than as a static, formal, abstract category, which takes place within and beyond the sphere of production (the formal economy) inclusive of social relations across the length and breadth of society. In doing so I highlight the contingent and dialectical nature of organizing and social change and the operation of working-class agency at its heart.

The first part of the chapter reviews the social movement and labour literature in general and as it pertains to the disappearance of class from the study of social movements. The second section of the chapter briefly establishes a critique of the limited conceptions of class identified above which have come to dominate in popular politics on the left. The third section draws on SRT to develop an alternative understanding of class which sees struggles beyond the workplace around social reproduction (and their gendered and racialized dimensions) as class struggles and proposes a class struggle theory of social movements. In the fourth section, I elaborate a theory of praxis as it relates to this recovered historical materialist understanding of social movements, focusing on the learning processes involved in raising class consciousness, producing knowledge and community organizing.

(mis)Understanding Class

In the past few decades, privatization, liberalization and de-regulation have increasingly exposed society to the vagaries of the market. As livelihoods have become increasingly precarious, trade unions, the classic ‘old’ social movement organizations, have found themselves in a weak bargaining position, unable to stem the onslaught of neoliberalism (Silver 2003). An increasingly diverse plethora of ‘new’ movements has emerged in this same era, shifting “the terrain of political organization away from traditional political parties and labour organizing into what was bound to be in aggregate a less focused political dynamic of social action across the whole spectrum of civil society” (Harvey 2003, 168). With the expansion of struggles focusing on what appear to be non-class forms of identity such as gender, race, sexual orientation and the environment, among others, many analysts have rejected the analytical tools associated with the supposed ‘class fanaticism’ of Marxism in favour of a post-class analysis centered on identity, discourse and autonomy (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Melucci 1989; Touraine 1981; see Wood 1986, 1995 for a critique).

This move away from class was made largely in response to the somewhat legitimate perception that the Marxism of the day, dominated as it was by structuralism associated with Althusser in particular, was not up to the task of understanding the emergence of new movements in the North in the post-1968 era.[5] This trend was only compounded by the ensuing decline of actually existing 'socialism' and its fall two decades later (Wood 1986, 1995). This shift towards 'radical pluralism' (Carroll and Ratner 1994) has had a profound impact on scholarly and activist writing and thinking about social movements in the period since. A chasm opened up between 'new' and 'old' movements such that "old social movements (OSMs) are considered to advance working-class-based, social democratic or socialist political projects, while new social movements (NSMs) are considered to advance non-class-based or cross-class-based political projects oriented toward identify formation or autonomy" (Holst 2011, 119). A brief review of the social movement literature helps situate this turn and the development of this dichotomy.

Social Movement Theory: New and Old Social Movements

Until the early 1970s theories of collective action tended to portray mobilization as the result of disorientation, individual deprivation or societal breakdown, positing that protest outside of formal channels was irrational (Le Bon 1960). The socialist and labour movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the other hand, were considered to be the typical class-based social movements operating within and on the boundaries of formal politics and industrial relations (Spronk and Terhorst 2012). With the emergence of so-called post-industrial societies in the North after the two decades of boom that followed WWII and of movements post-1968—

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[5] This is not to say there were not structuralist predilections amongst other variants of Marxism. For a critique of Althusserian structuralism see Thompson (1978b). For a contemporary and non-structuralist reading of Althusser see Haider (2017).

the global dimensions of which are marginalized in the literature (Ali 2018)—Marxist approaches emanating from Europe and collective behaviour approaches to social movements emanating from North America gave way to new theoretical approaches that are generally divided into North American 'structural' and European 'new social movement' schools.

Structural approaches that emerged in this era refocused attention towards protest as a rational act in response to grievances, with a given set of available resources and in a particular social and political context. Within this school, the Olsonian resource mobilization (RM) approach examined "the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements" (McCarty and Zald 1977, 1212). The political process approach (PPA) on the other hand placed primary emphasis on the external political and institutional environment (see Tilly 1978; Piven and Cloward 1977; Tarrow 1989; McAdam 1982). Building on the work of Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, which highlighted the importance of repertoires of contention and political opportunity structure, Doug McAdam (1982, 40) established a more inclusive PPA model in his study of the civil rights movement in the United States, which incorporated elements of the RM approach in addition to elaborating "organizational readiness," "insurgent consciousness" and the "structure of political opportunities."

Across the Atlantic, social constructivist approaches arose in Europe originally via Alain Touraine's materialist critique of structuralist variants of Marxism that seemed to be inadequate tools to address movements outside the working class, narrowly defined as it was (Barker et al. 2013). These 'new social movement' (NSM) approaches attributed less importance to industrial class conflict than previously dominant structuralist Marxist accounts (della Porta and Diani

2006). Instead of viewing movements as homogenous entities, NSM theory also examined the differentiation between and within movements, the broad formation of collective identities in post-industrial contexts (see Touraine 1981; Melucci 1989, 1996) and the way individuals and collectives "perceive and interpret material and socio-political conditions" (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009, 30). This focus on identity would partially inspire framing theory in North America (Snow et al. 2004) which critiqued and advanced the PPA by identifying the ways movements convinced individuals of the importance and just nature of their causes and campaigns (Tarrow 2011).

Despite their utility and the enormous amount of scholarship they produced, the critical literature identifies a number of shortcomings in these approaches. In the case of the PPA, links between structure and agency appear under-theorized, as are the processes whereby opportunities, constraints and incentives are perceived and interpreted. Social constructivist approaches on the other hand, many of those in the NSM tradition, have led to fragmented accounts of a plurality of movements in their disproportionate focus on specificity and lack of attention to context (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009). By the end of the 1980s a variety of scholars began to attempt productive syntheses of these variants (Klandermans et al. 1988); these efforts have since continued. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) brought together a framework that emphasized the interactive rather than independent effect of political opportunities and constraints, forms of organization, mobilization and framing processes on movement emergence and development. This development was followed by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's (2001) Dynamics of Contention (DOC) approach which, based on the PPA, delved deeper to focus on a series of micro-processes or mechanisms which they then applied to a series of paired comparisons (Tarrow 2010). While the shift in the focus of the PPA towards action sparked a lively debate, the work was criticized for its overly abstract level of inquiry and vague theorization of key concepts (Tarrow 2011).

While the DOC and other works since have made progress towards the integration of a variety of perspectives (Della Porta and Diani 2006; Snow et al. 2004; Tarrow 2011; McAdam and Tarrow eds. 2011), social movement theory remains oriented largely toward academic questions around specific movements or aspects of movements and lacks a systemic examination of processes and interconnections within and between elements and the context in which they take place (Krinsky 2013). Aziz Choudry (2015) argues that the arbitrary focus of these debates—new versus old, cultural versus economic categories, and so on—increases the divide between movements and the academy, activists and researchers. In doing so Choudry contends that most academic studies of social movements privileges abstract accounts of how movements work, regulates activists and aims to categorize and classify movements rather than looking at the significance of what movements produce and what impact social movements have on dominant relations. Indeed, despite the central role of capitalism in many of the early, foundational studies of social movements (for example McAdam 1982; Piven and Cloward 1977; Skocpol 1979; Tilly 1978) it has virtually disappeared from social movement studies in the past 30 years. Gabe Hetland and Jeff Goodwin (2013) have dubbed this absence "The Strange Disappearance of Capitalism from Social Movements Studies." Choudry (2015, 51) similarly identifies this curious phenomenon, noting that

> NSM theorists often overlook crucial issues of class and the continuation of capitalist relations. Indeed, they tend toward a 'post-class' analysis, ignore the importance of political engagements with the state, and adopt a micropolitical focus on resistance that adopts a decentered concept of power being everywhere. This approach underestimates or even ignores the continuing power of states and capital.

The appearance of this gap in the literature also coincided with the ‘cultural turn’ and the rise of narrow identity politics more generally, which asserts that identity and its relatively independent or autonomous formation—at least in post-industrial societies, a context from which these ideas have since been exported—is the key element in social movement mobilization, and an increasing influence of autonomist and post-Marxist thought in social movement scholarship (Bayart 1991, 1993; Escobar 2002; Hardt and Negri 2000; Holloway 2010; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Melucci 1989, 1996; Touraine 1981).

Both this ‘absence’ and ‘turn’ are especially troubling in light of the contestation of neoliberal restructuring, particularly in the global South—including in South Africa—where struggles have retained an overtly material and frequently anti-capitalist if not socialist basis (Dawson 2010). As Spronk and Terhorst (2012) detail, the application of social movement theory and NSM theory in particular developed in post-industrial, western, liberal, capitalist democracies is highly problematic in the South where analytical concepts fit awkwardly, if at all. For example, while social movement struggles for public services are often grouped into the NSM category since they are frequently articulated through non-class identities, they are inherently material in the claims they make in the realm of reproduction and are analogous to working class demands. Based on a review across Africa, Habib and Opoku-Mensah (2009) argue that although the so-called NSMs on the continent make a heterogeneous set of claims and utilize diverse repertoires of contention, distributional issues remain at the forefront of their campaigns. Even African movements that foreground identity—gay, environmental, women’s and refugee movements, for example—have by no means marginalized distributional claims (Dirsuweit 2006). What is more, with global inequality rising these assertions increasingly apply to movements in the North as well (Hetland and Goodwin 2013; della Porta 2015). Indeed, with the dual transition of marketization and (liberal) democratization, social movement mobilization has become a central, if not the dominant, form of engagement between civil society and the state and a vital conduit through which to claim substantive socio-economic rights (Thompson and Tapscott 2010). These types of mobilizations are widespread despite attempts to improve governance by creating invited spaces for citizen participation, and other attempts to institutionalize and contain political engagement (Abrahamsen 2000; Heller 2013; Miraftab 2006; Williams 2006).

Moreover, despite the proliferation of narrow issue-based organizing some of the most successful working class organizing in this period have been alliances and coalitions built between and among these movements (Choudry 2015). Dubbed Social Movement Unionism (SMU) in the labour literature, these alliances challenge the separation of ‘new’ and ‘old’ social movements and have enjoyed some historical and contemporary success uniting demands in the realms of production and reproduction (Spronk and Terhorst 2012). This phenomenon, which is present in a number of countries across the global South and North, especially around public services, problematizes this working class divide despite the shifting terrain of mobilization.

In attempting to overcome the binary of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements debate SMU scholarship has paid close attention to the concrete conditions and experiences of movements and coalitions and has continued to engage with the central issues of capitalism and class. Although it had much earlier precursors in theory and practice—the class struggle unionism that developed in the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the United States in the 1930s for example (McAlevey 2014, 2016)—SMU emerged as a concept in the 1980s from the observation of new forms of mainly private sector unionism in a number of newly industrializing countries. In Brazil, South Africa, South Korea and the Philippines, this form of unionism "linked workers' demands for rights at work to communities' demands for expanded services and rights" (Seidman 2011, 96, 1994; see also Lambert and Webster 1988; Waterman and Lambert 1988; Munck 1988). Many authors initially emphasized the importance of broad political, economic and organizational factors for the emergence of SMU (for example, Seidman's 1994 analysis of South Africa and Brazil). Through a selective reading of this political economy, SMU has since been exported to a variety of contexts as both an explanatory or analytical tool and prescriptive program to understand and challenge neoliberal restructuring (Fairbrother and Webster 2008; Moody 1997; Waterman 2001). While macro political and economic dimensions are salient factors, recent advances in the literature have argued that SMU is equally contingent on local sociopolitical factors and processes, responding to the precarity of workers' everyday survival (Barchiesi 2011; Von Holdt 2002, 2003).

Cognizant of this complexity, Tattersall (2008), draws on this labour scholarship and the PPA in social movement theory to identify a number of criteria that indicate when successful working-class coalitions (a key element in SMU) will emerge which speaks to both context and agency. An important and related advancement in the SMU debates also draws on and makes connections with social movement theory to argue that unions are a type of social movement (Fairbrother 2008); all social movements have a movement dimension and an institutional dimension, the latter is often dominant within unions (Von Holdt 2002); and that "social movements are best understood as multi-organizational phenomena rather than as unitary movements" (Krinsky 2008, 25). As Von Holdt (2002) argues, changes in goals, solidarities, organization and resources over cycles of social movement contention, in the context of a shifting social, political and economic terrain, impact the dominance of the movement or institutional dimension within social movements and their ability and willingness to engage in coalitions and more contentious forms of politics.

Public sector unions representing workers employed in public service provision are exemplary of these dynamics as they have been a preferred target of neoliberal restructuring. The common experience of public sector workers as both producers and users of services and the objectively deteriorating material conditions of the working class in general are often invoked as key factors which explain the development of solidarity among worker's organizations and communities (Barchiesi 2007). As Tattersall (2005) argues, however, these structural factors are not sufficient, and unions and communities must exercise agency to form coalitions and movements. In the case of union participation in coalitions, leadership change, internal crisis, capacity for mobilization and other processes of renewal have played an important role in various instances (Cook 1996; Novelli 2004; Spronk 2009; Voss and Sherman 2000). Empirical work has demonstrated that coalitions between unions and CBOs have been successful in improving public service delivery by creating procedural mechanisms to enhance meaningful public participation, particularly in Latin America (Spronk and Terhorst 2012). In the context of the spread of markets and neoliberal development, struggles for expanded citizenship, socioeconomic rights and access to public services

> involve diverse constituencies, including the most marginalized members of society (the "poors"), middle-class professionals (NGOs) and public sector workers; the site of organizing tends to be a territory, neighbourhood, or the city rather than the workplace; and they are fighting contemporary forms of capitalist enclosure, particularly evident when infrastructure such as public hospitals and water and electricity networks built over decades are transferred to the private, profit-seeking sector for next to nothing (Spronk and Terhorst 2012, 136).

In other words, as employment has become increasingly flexible, livelihoods more precarious and the power of labour diminished by processes of neoliberal restructuring, identities in the realm of production have fragmented. Simultaneously, however, the presence of shared or common experiences, characteristics and identities in the realm of consumption or reproduction has intensified across the working class in some respects. With this transformation the incentive has resurfaced, or the necessity has arisen—if indeed it was ever absent—for unions and popular movements to pursue coalitions and new forms of organizing to revitalize both the power of labour in relation to capital and to advance broader community struggles (Wainwright 2012).

While some instances of labour-community alliances in the public sector have seen success the experience of coalitions across sectors within the public sphere has been diverse, as in the case of South Africa where, despite the presence of many factors deemed necessary for coalitions, they have been fleeting (McKinley 2016; Pillay 2013; Spronk and Terhorst 2012; Ruiters 2014; Wainwright 2012). Cases of successful alliances highlight considerations at a variety of scales, and in situated manifestations, mediated by particular political, sociocultural and economic factors and social relations including race, class, gender, ethnicity and the historical legacies of each (Barchiesi 2011; Spronk and Terhorst 2012; Von Holdt 2002, 2003). Thus, explanations of how working class or popular social movements and coalitions develop and/or are undermined frequently prioritize the material impacts of marketization and democratization on the one hand, and the operation of subjective, often immaterial factors on the other. These pressures and factors are dialectically related rather than counter posed, however, and in isolation only partially explain the experiences and dynamics of movement formation. This is the case whether priority is given to one or the other, as is often the case, or the relative poles are integrated in a fashion that fails to adequately address the historical and material processes through which they are relationally constructed.

The assertion of the importance of identity, autonomism and the local in movements are, for example, often counter posed to the inexorable forces of neoliberal globalization (for a critique see Hart 2006). While capital is able to penetrate states to a far greater degree in the South and constrain the ability for marginalized groupings to make and realize claims on the state (Thompson and Tapscott 2010), impact models of globalization that ignore agency and the contested, relational nature of the state (Ross 2008) are far more disabling than they are helpful (Hart 2001, 2006). Somewhat ironically, these understandings are dangerously close to those made by proponents of market triumphalism and deflect attention away from an understanding of capitalist development "*not* as unfolding teleology or immanent process, but in terms of the multiple, non-linear interconnected *trajectories* that are constitutive of what has come, euphemistically, to be termed 'globalization'" (Hart 2001, 655). As Hart argues, such models help to naturalize processes of neoliberal restructuring and give weight to the notion that local or identity-based defensive struggles in the realm of reproduction are the preferred locus and form of movement organization and that autonomy is paramount. Paradoxically, these models can also contribute to the opposite strategic argument: given that the forces of globalization and of capital are so dominant and pervasive, the economic must be the primary terrain of struggle and it is only the most organized and well-resourced of movements operating on this terrain—parties and trade unions for example—that have any possibility of successfully contesting dominant relations, even if only in a limited, defensive fashion. With this strategic rationale for organizational leadership, the diversity of working-class experiences and struggles are occluded, their independence and particularity sacrificed in the interests of (an imposed) unity and subsumed within or reduced to a narrow, abstract notion of the worker and of class. Perhaps as a result, social movement theory and scholarship on the global justice or anti-globalization movements has not been found to be particularly useful for social movements as scholars continue to prioritize one or the other of these poles, asking questions of purely academic merit while addressing political issues around power, wealth and the state only tangentially (Barker et al. 2013; Choudry 2015) shifting emphasis away from the production of globalization towards its impact (Hart 2006; Burawoy 2001).

The reasons for this avoidance of a systemic analysis of capitalism and the relevance of class are manifold—some of which are mentioned above—from the characteristics of contemporary social struggle itself, to the constraints of the academy and the north Atlantic origins and focus of the discipline. While it is important, Choudry (2015, 54-55) argues, to highlight the unreflexive or uncritical application of "Western" theories in the South and to be mindful of the way that theory "travels" (Said 1982), these arguments are also relevant for struggles beyond the North:

> The possible limitations interpretive frameworks may have when applied with little regard for geo-historical specificities of the context being analyzed—does not mean we must simply and crudely reject knowledge or theory on the grounds that it has been generated in the "West." Instead, we should recognize the need to build knowledge about social movements and the world they exist in through dialogue with other people, other perspectives.

Indeed, the relevance and demand for the collective production of inclusive analyses of material struggles and their relation to capital accumulation and restructuring is necessary not just to address lacunae in academic work but also for the advancement in practice of struggles against oppression, dispossession and exploitation everywhere. For example, studies of the rise and fall of social movements, their cycles and waves, frequently fail to elaborate the broader social relations in which such struggles are situated and instead focus on the role that co-optation plays in movement decline. But as Rebecca Schein (2014) argues in relation to the affinity between neoliberalism and second wave feminism and the decline of the latter, co-optation, while germane to narrow academic analysis, provides a particularly disabling and individualizing lens through which to view the ebb and flow of movements. "Hegemony," Schein (2014, 172) argues, "provides a more productive and politically enabling framework" which draws our attention to the relational and provisional nature of success and failure and the material and ideological basis of struggle, emphasizing its collective and contested nature and long-term horizon

Whither Class Today?

The global working class has thus long faced accusations that it has failed to overthrow capitalism due to its inability to present a serious challenge to the intensification of exploitation and oppression in the neoliberal era. Today it is derided as irrelevant and its historical position as privileged agent of social transformation widely rejected. As Tithi Bhattacharya (2017, 68) writes, "[o]ther candidates—women, racial/ethnic minorities, new social movements, an amorphous but insurgent 'people,' or community, to name a few—are all thrown up as possible alternatives to this presumed moribund or reformist or masculinist and economistic category, the working class." The privileging of 'the local,' the 'community' and identities and struggles 'beyond class' in a vague notion of 'the people' or 'the poor' at one end of the spectrum, and of the formal worker, worker organizations and political parties at the other, however, are indicative of understandings of social struggle that either dispense with class entirely or hang onto it in an exceeding narrow way, whether in theory or practice. David McNally (2015, 143) sums up the problematic nature of these distinctions very well, arguing that

> where class fanaticism refuses the rich narratives and struggles essential to genuine anti-racism, socialist-feminism and queer liberation, to take three examples, and in so doing posits class in the form of abstract universality, the politics of personal identity commit a parallel reification of the particular, refusing to acknowledge its internal relations with all the partial totalities that compose the social whole.

Both fail to take class seriously, or at least they do not take the experience of the working class as it actually exists seriously, and as result profoundly misunderstand it. As Bhattacharya (2017, 68 emphasis in original) notes:

> What many of these condemnations have in common is a shared misunderstanding of exactly what the working class really is. Instead of the complex understanding of class historically proposed by Marxist theory, which discloses a vision of insurgent working-class power capable of transcending sectional categories, today's critics rely on a narrow vision of a "working class" in which a worker is simply a person who has a specific kind of *job*.

Although both the aforementioned perspectives directly address the working-class experience—the wage relation, oppressions of various kinds, many of the diverse experiences of life under capitalism—they do so partially. Rather than being experienced partially however, as Himani Bannerji (2005, 144) argues, people's "sense of being in the world, textured through myriad social relations and cultural forms, is lived or felt or perceived as being all together and all at once."

While theory does not instrumentally dictate practice, "theory and action always inform each other, whether it's obvious or not" (Sears and Cairns 2015, 22). Theory that reifies these hived off, common sense understandings of experience contributes to reproducing the fragmentation of working-class communities engendered by the ongoing material and ideological assault of neoliberal capitalism and struggles against it (Choudry 2015). As Bannerji puts it (in Coburn 2012, 9):

> Theory cannot do less, if it does not want to engage in a misleading fragmentation of actual experience. The problem is at once conceptual and political: conceptual since it reifies as separate objective "fragments" what are unified social experiences and political since this fragmentation is then reproduced in strong distinctions between communities and movements, that then have difficulty accomplishing unified political action.

These very types of theory have proliferated in the recent period, one dominated by neoliberal globalization, in which there has been a shift in the locus of mobilization from the realm of production to the realm of consumption and reproduction. While there exist measured analyses that draw attention to the relative nature of this shift and the necessity of uniting struggles in the realms of production and reproduction (Harvey 2003), as we have explored above there are also those that have popularized the idea that OSMs, like unions, and their associated analytical tools have lost their revolutionary potential and, though they range widely, that the future of counter-hegemonic struggles lies in social movements in the realm of consumption and reproduction (Buechler 2000; Hardt and Negri 2000; Holloway 2010; Neocosmos 2009).

‘Class fanaticism’ need not be replaced with ‘class rejectionism,’ however, for there are understandings of class and capitalism within the Marxist tradition that do not fall prey to the problems of ‘structuralist Marxism’ or economism, or culturalist reductionism which are particularly relevant for understanding struggles in the face of what appears to be a renewed era of austerity. Ironically, much was written in the historical materialist tradition—and/or in productive conversation with it—concurrent with the rise of NSM theory, that analyzed the vibrant and complex interactions of gender, race and class in strikes and working class struggles at the time in both Europe (Thompson 1978a, 1991; Williams 1983, 1989; Wood 1986; and the aforementioned early writing on SMU) as well as being abundant in the South, evidenced in the “Third World” Marxisms and socialist feminisms so integral to anti-colonial and national liberation movements and in struggles in the post-colonies (Ahmad 1992; Bannerji 1995; Davis 1983; Mohanty 1986; Rodney 1972, 2018).

Susan Spronk (2013) identifies British Marxist historian E.P. Thompson (1991)[6] as providing us with one of the most salient critiques of the structuralist or economistic Marxism that NSM theory was in some ways a response to, particularly his theorization of class as both a “process and relation.” Thompson (1978, 149) insisted that

> classes do not exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class, and then start to struggle. On the contrary, people find themselves in a society structured in determined

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[6] While many scholars have noted that Thompson’s approach is without question open to the integral inclusion of social relations of oppression like gender and race in processes of class-formation and in a non-additive fashion, in his writing on the English working class he manifestly failed to attend to the “multidimensionality of social being” representative of these constitutive relations (Camfield 2004, 437; 2014; see also Webber 2015).

> ways (crucially, but not exclusively, in productive relations), they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes, they come to know this discovery as class-consciousness. Class and class-consciousness are always the last, not the first, stage in the real historical process.

Raymond Williams (1989, 249) concurs, contending that

> Of course almost all labour struggles begin as particularist. People recognize some condition and problem they have in common and make the effort to work together to change or solve it. But then this is nothing special in the working class... [but] The unique and extraordinary character of working-class self-organization has been that it has tried to connect particular struggles to a general struggle in one quite special way. It has set out, as a movement, to make real what is at first sight the extraordinary claim that the defence and advancement of certain particular interests, properly brought together, are in fact in the general interest.

As Williams observed in the context of Thatcherite England, just because they often emerged outside of the workplace and organized labour failed to take up struggles around race, women's rights, poverty, housing and public services, peace, the industrial contamination of the environment, and so on, this did not mean that these struggles were somehow beyond class. Indeed, he argued that

> What is then quite absurd is to dismiss or underplay these movements as 'middle class issues.' It is a consequence of the social order itself that these issues are qualified and refracted in these ways. It is similarly absurd to push the issues away as not relevant to the central interests of the working class. In all real senses they belong to these central interests. It is workers who are most exposed to dangerous industrial processes and environmental damage. It is working class women who have most need of new women's rights (Williams 1983, 255).

In other words, it is working class people who have the most to gain from such struggles. Again, this is not to privilege class, but to point out, as Williams does that "there is not one of these issues which, followed through, fails to lead us into the central systems of the industrial-capitalist mode of production and… into its system of classes" (in Bhattacharya 2017, 88).

More recently, building on these and other currents in Marxist, feminist and anti-racist theory and practice, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) has sought to recover and renew our understanding of the working class and of capitalism, offering a theory and potentially informing a practice of class politics which is less "indifferent to the diverse forms of experiences in capitalist society" (McNally 2015, 139). Seeking not merely to understand the world but also to change it, like Mohanty, Rodney, Thompson, Williams and others, SRT takes the diverse immediate needs and struggles of working-class experience as its point of departure in working towards a theory and practice of inclusive and expansive social transformation.

Social Reproduction Theory

Perhaps SRT's most important offering is its point of departure: the production of the commodity labour power. Beginning not from the perspective of capital but from labour, and specifically from the experience of the working class as it actually exists, in all its diversity, is critical to overcoming its internal divisions in the current conjuncture when material and ideological impacts of neoliberal capitalism continue to fracture the working class along many lines, be they worker-community, gender, race or ethnicity. SRT's approach helps to rectify the capitalocentric vision of capitalism that dominates both narrow understandings of class and those that deny the utility of the category altogether.

Production and Reproduction

Marx's (1976) conception of production in the *Grundrisse* (also alluded to in *Capital* and elsewhere, see Anderson 2010; Lebowitz 2003; Sayre 2008) as constituting both production and the reproduction of labour, gestured at this unity of relations and struggles, but he left the latter more or less untheorized as his primary focus was on capital (Ferguson 2016). While many have drawn attention to the relation between production and reproduction, aa Tithi Bhattacharya (2015, 2017) argues, the most common way it has been referred to is through spatial metaphor: the sphere or space(s) of production on the one hand and the sphere or space(s) of reproduction on the other, maintaining their distinction. While this metaphor roughly corresponds to the formal appearance of society—the workplace on the one hand and the home/community on the other—the role of larger institutions like schools, hospitals and pensions in the reproduction of labour power have long complicated this neat distinction giving some indication as to their underlying unity. It follows then, that if "the spatial separation between production and reproduction is a historical form of appearance then the labour that is dispensed in both spheres must also be theorized integratedly" (Bhattacharya 2015, n.p.).

This expanded conception of production, in which production and social reproduction form a dialectical unity, has been picked up, developed and extended by SRT and by a closely related strand of Marxist feminist thought known as Social Reproduction Feminism in Canada. For the latter, social reproduction includes "all those… processes involved in maintaining and producing people... and their labour power on a daily and generational basis" (Bezanson and Luxton 2006, 3). Or, as Marxist-feminist Nancy Fraser (2014, 61) observes, social reproduction refers to

> the forms of provisioning, caregiving and interaction that produce and maintain social bonds. Variously called 'care', 'affective labour' or 'subjectivation', this activity forms capitalism's human subjects, sustaining them as embodied natural beings, while also constituting them as social beings, forming their *habitus* and the socio-ethical substance, or *Sittlichkeit*, in which they move. Central here is the work of socializing the young, building communities, producing and reproducing the shared meanings, affective dispositions and horizons of value that underpin social cooperation. In capitalist societies much, though not all, of this activity goes on outside the market, in households, neighbourhoods and a host of public institutions, including schools and childcare centres; and much of it, though not all, does not take the form of wage labour.

Given the unique characteristics of the commodity labour power, the manifold processes involved in its production and its centrality to capitalism, "it is not enough to add the process of social reproduction of labour to the economic analysis: it is necessary to define the particular relationship that links production and reproduction" (Picchio cited in Luxton 2006, 36).

Integrating production and social reproduction, SRT conceives of class struggle as unfolding within the broader social totality of capitalism through which all variety of social relations are integrated (Ferguson 2016). The separation of workers from the means of production within capitalism necessitates wage labour which constitutes workers' primary means of reproduction. It follows then that the commodities purchased with the money provided by wages are not merely articles of consumption they are also, in combination with public goods on which working families can draw, the means of production of the commodity labour power.

Michael Lebowitz (2003) posits that the production of the commodity labour power constitutes a 'missing circuit of wage labour.' Though not present, yet alluded to, in Marx's work the production of labour power takes place outside of the formal circuit of production but remains essential to it. In this circuit, the worker undertakes "*a process of self-transformation*" (Bhattacharya 2017, 81 emphasis in original) not for the purposes of capital but for their own self development, which goes far beyond simple biological reproduction to also encompass social needs and wants, cultural and intellectual desires among them. At the same time capital pushes in the opposite direction, exerting downward pressure on wages to capture more surplus value from gains in productivity among other strategies for example. This is a contradictory process at yet another level, however, as capital simultaneously requires workers to consume and satisfy their needs through the purchase of more and new commodities in the market to realize value. In other words, the goal of "the worker's own need of development" (Marx 1975, 74) is frustrated by the reality that capitalism

> exists for the valorization of capital and not the social development of labour. Thus the worker, due to the very nature of the process, is always-already reproduced as *lacking* in what she needs, and hence built into the fabric of wage labor as a form is the struggle for higher wages: class struggle (Bhattacharya 2017, 82; emphasis in original)

Informed by this analysis, it is evident that struggles by workers in the workplace for higher wages are an important site or component of class struggle, but that they do not constitute its entirety. Beginning from the perspective of labour and its reproduction, the key argument made by SRT in this regard is that although wages form the primary basis of reproducing workers under capitalism, the reproduction of labour power and struggles over it are much more expansive and include contests over the provision for workers' needs across society. As aforementioned, this includes access to water, sanitation, housing, public transportation, childcare, education, healthcare, pensions and a host of other public services integral to these processes. Moreover, the 'needs' of workers are not natural or constant but are themselves relative and determined socially, in other words the standard of necessity at which workers are reproduced is also "enforced by class struggle" (Lebowitz cited in Bhattacharya 2017, 79). This is not only the case when it comes to the level of wages and the commodities those wages can buy in the market but also the level of social wage the worker can rely on and the amount and schedule of time outside the workplace that exists to 'enjoy' those goods available to the worker.

The common understanding that social reproduction appears to take place beyond capital or free from its influence is thus questionable, according to SRT, upon closer examination. The power of 'capital in general' transmitted through the state, institutions like schools and hospitals, the market and through social relations more broadly, conditions the production of the commodity of labour power and is central to the extraction of surplus labour at the point of production and its realization (Bhattacharya 2017). Thus, while the production of labour power has historically been confined to the family and the community, for the most part outside the capital-labour relation, these functions of reproduction or leisure are not entirely beyond the reach and influence of capitalist social relations and capital itself. Rather they are impacted by capital *indirectly* through the state and other institutions and social relations more generally that reflect the balance of class forces in society. It would appear that this is increasingly so in the context of the intensification of market penetration into spaces of life previously beyond its reach and as individual and collective consumption is increasingly commodified under neoliberal capitalism.

Exploitation and Oppression

What is more, there is no abstract capitalism in the sense that political economy and narrowly economistic understandings of class often err in suggesting. Rather, there is only concrete capitalism which "critically depends upon the messy, complex, set of lived relations carried out by differently gendered, sexualized, racialized human beings" (McNally and Ferguson 2015, n.p.). As Bhattacharya (2015, 26) argues in more detail

> The process of accumulation, thus, in actuality cannot be indifferent to social categories of race, sexuality or gender, but seeks to organize and shape those categories that in turn act upon the determinate form of surplus labor extraction. The wage labor relation suffuses the spaces of non-waged everyday life.

SRT thus offers critical insight into perceptions of difference within the working class and of struggles that, as aforementioned, many have identified as 'beyond class' in various respects, often associated with the New Social Movements and struggles to end particular forms of oppression (although, as we have also seen, there are many who have long argued that these struggles are intimately intertwined with capitalism and class). Indeed, a host of oppressive social relations "are integral to and determinant of—in the sense that they really and actively *facilitate*—actual processes of capital dispossession and accumulation" (McNally and Ferguson 2015, n.p.). This means that struggles against racism, sexism, colonialism and for public services, among others, are all *potentially* struggles against capitalism. This includes struggles by differentially produced sections of the working class to secure access to or a greater share of the means of social reproduction. Thus “[i]nsofar as the internal relation of all oppressions with each other and with the capitalist totality is politically highlighted, such struggles can advance a class (as opposed to sectoral) consciousness, an awareness of the unity of the diverse relations that produce capitalism and society” (Ferguson 2016, 57). This is not to privilege class but rather to insist that “so long as certain oppressive forms of relations facilitate (rather than hinder) the task of bringing labor-power to capital’s doorstep, there will be powerful forces (be they the institutions and practices of state, civil society or capital) sustaining racism, sexism and other oppressions—and discouraging alternative forms of human relations” (McNally and Ferguson 2015, n.p.).

If the ‘realm of freedom’ of the worker, the ‘space’ outside the point of production, must still conform, even if only partially, to the “temporal and objective necessities of other social relations” (Bhattacharya 2016, n.p.), specifically those of capitalism, then the struggle over this realm represents a struggle against capital in general, as opposed to those in the workplace which target specific or many capitals. To reiterate, this is not to privilege struggles around social reproduction (often accused of, problematically privileging issue, identity or place) over those at the point of production (frequently defined as narrowly economic or material). It seeks, rather, to situate all struggles for human emancipation within the larger totality of capitalist social relations of production and reproduction which “are actually a concatenation of existing social relations, shaped by past history, present institutions, and state forms” (Bhattacharya 2017, 87). Relations, struggles and practices of everyday life which are organized according to gender, race and sexuality among other social relations. Developing this integrative analysis is not just a descriptive or analytical exercise. Rather, as Meg Luxton (2006, 36-37), argues “it allows for an explanation of the structures, relationships, and dynamics that produce those activities" and provides some tools for contesting them.

Class Formation, Consciousness, Learning and Knowledge Production

At the center of this task of unmasking capitalist social relations of production and reproduction—of the capitalist totality in other words—and the formation of consciousness about the class nature of experience is a learning process of organizing and the production of knowledge in and by social movements. More specifically, it is in and through organising in the course of concrete struggles—like those discussed in this dissertation—to disrupt, contest and overturn these social relations that this potential can be realized. As Aziz Choudry (2015) argues, the knowledge that is both produced in these struggles and used as an organizing tool through which relations of exploitation and oppression under capitalism are laid bare within particular, historically-given contexts, cultural, national and otherwise, and mediated by a host of social relations, including those of gender, race and orientation, is a key component of this process.

Although Thompson and Williams, like SRT, prioritizes the lived experiences of working-class people as they go about their daily lives both within and *outside* of the relations of production, they do so without constructing class as a purely subjective phenomenon as those who reject class entirely are wont to do.[7] Rather, they treat "the process of class formation as a *historical* process shaped by the 'logic' of material determinations" (Wood 1995, 81 emphasis in original). It is through the lived experience of this historical process that people experience exploitation, organize and struggle against it, and come to 'behave in class ways'; it is in this sense that Thompson used the phrase 'class struggle without class,' that is the latter (class) is the culmination of the former (class struggle) (Thompson 1978a).

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[7] Nor as those who hold to a narrowly economistic notion of class are wont to accuse those in the Thompsonian tradition of doing so. See Wood (1989) and Thompson (1978a).

It is important to emphasize the interplay of structure and agency in Thompson's work, rather than the dominance of one or the other. As Spronk (2013, 78; see also Wood 1995) elaborates:

> in other words, class struggle does not always occur in a conscious way; much depends on the capacity of political agents and the forms of collective action taken by workers' [read: working class] movements. Furthermore, the construction of class identities is always an uneven process, replete with internal contradictions. In any given national context, the working class is divided into factions that display a host of views and attitudes. In short, while the division of society into social classes is a constant feature of capitalist society, class consciousness is something that emerges from time to time and unevenly when workers decide to act collectively to resist exploitation and domination by employers or the state.

Paula Allman's work is useful here to theorize the centrality of individual and collective working-class experience and agency that is at the center of the conception of capitalism, class and class formation adopted here—drawing on SRT, Thompson and others—and of the efforts of social movements to exercise it. Like SRT (see Ferguson 2008) Allman (2010, 39), understands capitalist social relations to be

> the structured relations of human beings into which they enter routinely in order to produce their material existence. Forms of organization and physical structures, as well as the legal system that gives legitimacy to the structure, are created in order to 'cement' this structuring of human relations, but the real or material substance of the structure is the daily sensuous activity of human beings.

If we accept, as Allman (2007, 33-34) argues, that "Marx's theory of consciousness was actually a theory of praxis, i.e., a theory of the inseparable unity of thought and practice rather than a sequential theory of praxis" and "if the sensuous practice of daily life is social, it is this practice, in both its individual and social expressions, that is the subject and object of the formation of critical or revolutionary consciousness, a consciousness that seeks a dialectical understanding of contradictions" (Allman cited in Carpenter, Ritchie and Mojab 2012, 7). In this conceptualization Allman (2007, 79 emphasis in original) defines praxis as "[a] concept that grasps the internal relation between consciousness and sensuous human experience as a unity of opposites that reciprocally shape and determine one another."

Allman (2007, 34) identifies two different forms of praxis that emerge from engaging thus with social relations under capitalism and which are intimately related to these forms of consciousness: uncritical or reproductive praxis and critical or revolutionary praxis. The former refers to the reproduction of capitalist social relations, which may ensue due to the operation of ideological or material factors in the course of social movement organizing which leave the underlying social relations of capitalism unquestioned and/or untouched. According to Allman, (2007, 79) "[w]hen people unquestioningly enter into and continue to reproduce the already existing socio-economic relations they are engaged in uncritical/reproductive praxis."

While learning through experience in social movements and the knowledge produced in the process, are too often disregarded in the social movement literature (Barker et al. 2013; DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge 2010), as Choudry (2015, 13) argues

> not all learning, evaluation, and analysis embedded in various forms of organising are rigorous or adequate. Indeed, critical analysis of learning in 'progressive' movements necessitates looking critically at their claims in relation to actual practices and, for example, the ways these are experienced by racialized people, Indigenous Peoples, and women.

That said, though processes of learning by experience are important, "the development of deep vision also requires access to things others have learned, in the past, or elsewhere, or from a different positioning in society" (Sears cited in Choudry 2015, 10): political education. In this sense, without space for critical reflection, experiences of exploitation and oppression can be understood as personal or localized problems. Struggles informed by such understandings can and often do result in defensive responses and/or adaptation remaining partially or wholly trapped in the reproductive praxis detailed by Allman above. Let me be clear: this is not to condemn such struggles, but rather to ask, as Choudry (2015, 34, 66) does, how do social movements move from consciousness to action; “from learning to only adapt, to learning that supports resistance”; “from voicing dissent ‘against’ to action and organization that would take us ‘beyond’ those limits”?

Allman’s revolutionary praxis, on the other hand, is instructive. It refers to a mode of praxis in which “people critically question and then seek to transform both themselves and the extant socio-economic relations or even the social relations of a given context, i.e. to engage in *self and social transformation*” (Allman 2007, 79). In other words, a critical or revolutionary praxis is able to “see beyond the current appearance of global capital, and critically question the essence of the mode/relations of production and its associated forms of consciousness” (Carpenter, Ritchie and Mojab 2012, 9). Essential to overcoming reproductive praxis then is the process of moving from “forms of consciousness that are shaped in various ways by class situations without yet finding expression in a self-aware and active class identity” to “the active awareness of class identity” (Wood 1995, 98–99). Individual and collective experience are the fundamental basis and starting point of this praxis in which critical, political education plays a key role in the organizing process. As Allman (2010, 128) argues

> it is through and within the struggles for reform—whether these pertain to issues emanating from the shop floor, the community, the environment or any other site where the ramifications of capitalism are experienced—that critical/revolutionary praxis develops. These struggles are some of the most important sites in which critical education can and must take place. Moreover, if this critical education takes place within changed relations, people will be transforming not only their consciousness but their subjectivity and sensibility as well.

This is not, however, a simple and straightforward process. Williams (1989, 249) emphasizes the contradictory character of the processes of conscientization and the provisional emergence of class consciousness and class formation when he remarks that “this moment comes not once and for all but many times; is lost and is found again; has to be affirmed and developed, continually, if it is to stay real." Alf Nilsen (2012, 619; see also Novelli 2012; Taylor 2016) refers to these shifts as

> learning processes that unfold as subaltern groups engage with and contest the hegemonic projects of dominant groups and the institutional complexes and discursive formations in which this hegemony is entrenched. Local rationalities are never *either* entirely autonomous of *or* totally encapsulated by dominant ideologies but tend to be expressive of what Gramsci (1998, 333) called a 'contradictory consciousness.'

These learning processes—uneven and contingent, tension-ridden and at times contradictory, individual and social, provisional and ongoing—are at the heart of social movement organizing which engages with the daily experience of working-class households and communities in an effort to facilitate critical reflection, self-organization and action. SRT concurs, as "situating labor—sensuous, practical activity in both its alienated and nonalienated forms—as the starting point of social theory (instead of structures and functions), foregrounds the experiential and human agency" (Ferguson 2008, 50). This approach is not taken because experience "is a repository of truth… [but because] experience is key to constructing – and understanding – consciousness, since it is through experience that individuals interpret or make sense of, the world" (Bannerji paraphrased in Ferguson 2008, 47). In other words, rendering consciousness critical is at the core of organizing processes which seek to overcome both the ideological and material effects of neoliberal capitalism and its powerful ability to fragment working class struggle.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that recovering class for social movement analysis and organising is a requisite for pushing forward our understandings of the 'new' working class in an era where precarity is increasingly the norm. A class struggle theory of social movements is also helpful in moving beyond the historical and theoretical pitfalls of NSM theory and its rejection of class. It is likewise an antidote to the structural variants of Marxism that, in addition to detractors from other intellectual traditions, a host of Marxist scholars engaged in the theory and practice of social struggle around the world have long critiqued if not rejected. Drawing in particular on SRT, I have laid out an alternative understanding of class which sees struggles beyond the workplace around social reproduction and inclusive of those against oppression as class struggles.

I have also argued that the production of knowledge in and by social movements must play a key role in this process and the formation of consciousness about the class nature of experience. As Ellen Wood argues "[c]lass formations emerge and develop 'as men and women *live* their productive relations and *experience* their determinate situations, within "the *ensemble* of the social relations," with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways'" (Wood 1995, 80 emphasis in original). It is important to emphasize that Wood's argument is not meant to be read as a mechanistic conflation of the notion of a class-in-itself with a class-for-itself—that class consciousness or its emergence is in some way a guaranteed outcome in other words—but rather that within the diverse, uneven and unendingly mediated social relations of capitalism this inherent potential exists. It is through organising processes in the course of concrete struggles to resist, transform and upend these social relations—like those explored in this dissertation—that this knowledge is produced and used as a tool through which relations of exploitation and oppression under capitalism are laid bare within particular, historically-given contexts, cultural, national and otherwise.

This understanding of social movement organizing as a learning process of struggle informed by a critical, non-reductionist understanding of class and capitalist social relations within and beyond the realm of production, is a potential theoretical basis for moving beyond the disabling narratives informed by post-class analysis and/or narrowly economistic class analysis. It also has the potential to inform important political work in the present including efforts to spark critical consciousness and the aspiration of many social movements to articulate and enact a revolutionary praxis in the context of what for many working-class communities continues to be a demoralizing and disabling intensification of neoliberal restructuring. We now turn to an exploration of this context in South Africa in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: A Critique of the Political Economy of Housing and Public Services Restructuring in South Africa

South Africa is no exception to the ongoing neoliberal restructuring of contemporary capitalism. After apartheid was brought down in 1994 expectations of the possibilities for a 'better life for all' promised by the ANC were high. The Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) (RSA 1995) and the new Constitution (RSA 1996), both adopted shortly after the election of the ANC in 1994, appeared to provide a progressive framework and policy program for building a more equitable society. Labour unions and community organizations were mandated a large role in these processes via participatory governance mechanisms with the intention of finding appropriate solutions and increasing democratic participation, transparency and accountability.

Shortly thereafter, however, the neoliberal nature of the ANC's post-apartheid policy trajectory was made explicitly clear with the adoption of the plan for Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1996. Along with the standard neoliberal policy package focused on labour market flexibility and export-oriented growth, trade liberalization, financial deregulation, regressive taxation, monetarism, austerity and public sector restructuring via privatization and corporatization, GEAR also prescribed "fiscal restraint in key social spending areas such as health care and housing… and a shift to full(er) cost recovery and user fees for a wide range of formerly subsidized services" (McDonald 2008, 78). Described as self-imposed structural adjustment (Bond 2014), GEAR and subsequent legislation restructured the economy along market lines, undermining the more progressive goals of the national liberation struggle which called for the large-scale redistribution of wealth. These national level reforms would have enormous implications for the roll out of housing and public services to the South African majority in the years that followed.

This chapter provides a critique of the political economy of housing and related services in post-apartheid South Africa. Like many countries of the South, the process of neoliberal restructuring in the country has been accompanied by a dual process of democratization, producing contradictory dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Yet perhaps nowhere have these contradictory dynamics been as stark as in South Africa where the transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy established formal political equality at the same time as neoliberal economic restructuring constrained the ability of governments to respond to long-standing demands for substantive, economic equality via the redistribution of wealth. Access to public services like housing and water are a prime mechanism through which these dynamics of inclusion and exclusion under neoliberal capitalism are experienced. As Bakker (2010) and Oldfield and Greyling (2015) observe, access to water and housing are more than just an instrument to alleviate poverty, they are "material emblems of citizenship" and necessary for ensuring dignity for all.

This chapter argues that despite the impressive number of new houses that have been built and the considerable expansion of related services such as water and sanitation in the post-apartheid period, the South African state's heavy reliance on the market in policy and program design and implementation has undermined possibilities for meaningful transformation. Worse still, the state's failed attempts to balance the imperatives of competitiveness and accumulation with efforts to address the deep and wide-ranging inequalities of apartheid in these sectors have served to divide and fragment working class communities and undermine struggles for substantive change. However, unlike other sectors affected by neoliberal restructuring such as manufacturing, the physical infrastructure and production and consumption of housing and public services is universally embedded in social space and in the everyday material experience of working-class life (Ruiters 2007, 2016). Housing and related services are therefore highly contested spaces in which shared understandings can emerge, collective consciousness can be raised and movements to struggle for these urgent social transformations can be organized.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first three sections explore the phases of housing and related services policy and delivery in the post-apartheid era. In the first decade (1994-2004) the ANC adopted a private sector driven plan to implement its massive state housing program and a similarly market oriented approach to extend public services like water which embraced full cost recovery. In the second decade (2004-2014) the state took an 'interventionist turn' that was intended to address the shortcomings of the pervious era. This included a series of policy reviews and reforms (DHS 2004; DHS 2009; NPC 2012) to address the small size, poor quality, and peripheral location of state-built houses. Despite these interventions the housing program has been plagued by slow delivery, escalating costs, widespread corruption, and beneficiary outrage as the housing backlog continues to grow and more and more South African's have had to seek shelter in informal dwellings. Furthermore, the continuation of cost-recovery has undermined the provision of basic services to the poorest South Africans at no cost. In the third decade (2014-) these failures led to the 2014 announcement that the state would abandon its promise to provide housing altogether and end construction in 2019. The final section charts recent trends in the marketization of affordable housing provision and the maintenance of fiscal austerity which have intensified in the more than two decades that have passed since these shifts first began, despite the scale of state expenditure on housing reform, ‘free’ basic services and the expansion of social grants (cash transfers) (Bond 2014; Ferguson 2015; James 2015; Marais 2012).

The First Ten Years: One Million Houses, 1994-2004

In the run up to the 1994 election, the ANC promised to build one million houses in the first five years of its mandate (ANC 1994, 22). Housing had long been a central priority for the party. In 1955 the ANC’s Freedom Charter said: “There shall be houses, security and comfort… all people shall have the right… to be decently housed” (ANC 1955, 2). The RDP—basically the ANC’s 1994 election manifesto—said: “as a minimum all housing must provide protection from the weather, a durable structure that must last for several generations, reasonable living space and privacy. A house must include sanitary facilities, storm-water drainage, a household energy supply…, and convenient access to clean water” (ANC 1994a, 22). In sections 26 and 27 of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution (RSA 1996, 11) states: “Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing… and water.”

The RDP and the right to housing and related services guaranteed by the Constitution aimed to bring to an end ‘apartheid spatial patterns and planning’ (DHS 2004) that were established during the colonial and apartheid eras. Legislation like the 1913 Natives Land Act and the 1950 Group Areas Act had ensured that access to, ownership of and control over land was concentrated in the hands of white settlers. This system of racialized spatial inequality was especially acute in urban areas. In South Africa’s growing cities, Black South Africans found themselves ‘warehoused’ in settlements located far from essential services, business centres, workplaces and amenities with long and/or heavily restricted commutes. After 1994, housing and related services provision was to play an important role in overcoming this the racial segregation by providing opportunities for housing, access to services and employment. Yet, the ANC government took care to frame these steps as incremental and reasonable, promising the "progressive realization" of the right to housing and services and emphasizing that steps to achieve these rights would be taken "within its available resources" (RSA 1996, 11) in its legislative and planning documents.

The origins of the ANC's fiscal restraint and incrementalism can be found in the negotiated transition to democracy (Bond 2014). The multi-stakeholder National Housing Forum (NHF) convened between 1992 and 1994 was the key institution around which housing policy was negotiated during the transition. Two major debates characterized discussions at the forum (Bond 2000, 2014; Charlton and Kihato 2006; Huchzermeyer 2001; Magoro and Brynard 2010; Tomlinson 1998, 1999, 2006). First, there was a debate as to whether houses should be delivered by the public or the private sector and, second, whether the standard house should be a complete house or a starter house, i.e. a progressive or incremental structure (Tissington 2011). A bloc organized around the Urban Foundation—a pro-business housing and development think tank set up by capital and the liberal wing of the National Party in the 1970s—was by far the most well-resourced of those at the table and dominated negotiations. Ultimately successful, the Urban Foundation argued for private delivery of starter houses modelled on the pre-existing subsidy-based housing programs which delivered sites and services in the townships in late apartheid (Bond 2014; Huchzermeyer 2001). The Urban Foundation's position was also strengthened by its ideological affinity with and close ties to the World Bank which was actively attempting to influence policy in this period. The Bank's key policy document at the time was the report *Enabling Markets to Work* (World Bank 1993a) which argued that "the lack of affordable and adequate housing for the urban poor was the result of supply-side distortions brought about by poor policy choices on the part of governments" (Soederberg 2016, 5). The report advised governments to turn to managing housing, while more fully embracing the private sector and the market in delivery rather than providing housing directly through providing public housing or subsidies. As Soederberg argues, the 1993 manifesto served to "normalise the economic growth paradigm at the heart of the neoliberal development project" (Soederberg 2016, 6), which has continued to be a key tenet of housing policy in South Africa to this day.

The 1994 Housing White Paper, outlined a PPP approach to housing delivery in which the state would set the framework and provide a once-off capital subsidy of up to R12 500 (raised to R15 000 soon after) to be distributed to recipients in the form of a housing option—most commonly a house or serviced site—delivered by and through the private sector (Huchzermeyer and Karam 2014; Tomlinson 1999). As Tissington (2011, 6) details drawing on Charlton and Kihato (2006):

> The aim of the new dispensation was to deliver housing opportunities and options to as many previously dispossessed South Africans as quickly as possible. The dilemma highlighted at the NHF has been between 'targeting as many as possible with some form of basic housing provision versus targeting a lucky few with a complete housing package – the 'breadth versus depth' debate.'

This urgency and the ultimate victory of the 'breadth' option in the context of a limited budget emerged from the ANC's 1994 election promise to build one million homes in the first five years of its mandate. Ironically, "[w]hile discarding most tenets of the RDP and instead conceding to a negotiated housing policy modelled to a large extent on the late apartheid sites-and-services framework with the addition of a minimal 'top-structure' or house, over time the term 'RDP house' came to be adopted for fully subsidised houses" (Huchzermeyer 2014, 340). In light of the possibilities inherent in the RDP this minimal option appeared all the more egregious a betrayal of the freedom struggle when

> contrasted with what was actually required: below-market rate loans of approximately R25,000-30,000 for full-fledged dwelling units, with payment levels set at no more than

> 20 per cent of income. Moreover, in the name of sustainability, transparency and efficiency—i.e., not interfering in market determinations of interest rates and hence avoiding financial market distortions—the distribution of the subsidy was to be through a once-off capital subsidy (rather than a larger, low-interest loan through blending of public and private funds, as advocated by the *RDP*, or than an affordable rental programme, as past apartheid governments had provided to low-income white, coloured and Indian residents) (Bond 2014, 106).

As Bond (2014, 96) also argues, these policy choices ensured the continuation of individual homeownership and "the nuclear family model of black petit-bourgeoisification which characterised late-apartheid policy."

Post-apartheid restructuring of services like water followed a similarly market-oriented path. The ANC officially indicated its openness to private sector participation in water for the first time in its 1994 White Paper on Water Services Policy (ANC 1994b; McDonald and Ruiters 2005) which explicitly reflected many of the elements of the international consensus at the time that promoted privatization as the best way to improve water services (World Bank 1993b). This embrace was firmly established and reemphasized in a series of policies and legislation which liberalized water governance over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s (McDonald and Ruiters 2005; RSA 1997a, 2003;). While there were some attempts at outright water privatization in the period immediately following apartheid "[t]he most popular institutional form of commercialization… has been corporatization, where water services are ringfenced into stand-alone 'business units' owned and operated by the (local) state but run on market principles" (McDonald and Ruiters 2005, 17-18).[8] At the centre of corporatization is the principle of full cost recovery "according to which prices should reflect the full cost of infrastructure and maintenance, and consumers should pay for what they use" (Bakker 2010, 36). Corporatization and full cost recovery have also included the widespread outsourcing of various service-related functions including the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, pipe laying and meter installation, as well as operations like water testing, meter reading and disconnections.

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[8] See McDonald (2016) on debates around different forms of corporatization and its relationship to privatization.

The Best in the World?

According to the official state narrative, the first ten years of housing construction post-1994, the RDP housing scheme, were good years. In 2006 then Human Settlements Minister Lindiwe Sisulu[9] reflected on the many international awards South Africa had won for the production of RDP houses: "we bask in the glory of these international awards that show we are among the best" (Sisulu 2006).[10] On a purely numbers basis, no other country had done as well as South Africa except China in the rapid delivery of 'free houses.' While initially delivery was painfully slow, it picked up in 1996 and within seven years the ANC quickly achieved its goal of building one million houses (two years longer than initially promised). In keeping with the incremental approach, this number included some serviced sites, a number which has since increased as a proportion of 'houses' or, more recently, 'housing opportunities' delivered. [11]

Already by 2003, however, a state (DHS 2004) review of the first 10 years of housing delivery found that the government had made many mistakes and had focused too much on the quantity of new houses and not enough on their quality. Complaints had in fact emerged almost immediately related to the size, quality and location of RDP houses (Zack and Charlton 2003; Tomlinson 1999). While recipient dissatisfaction can partly be explained by the disconnect between their legitimate expectations, formed by the RDP among other documents, and the starter houses they received (Tomlinson 2011, 2015), attributing the widespread dissatisfaction to these expectations is disingenuous.

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[9] Sisulu served in this post from 2004-2008, 2014-2018 and at the time of writing is again responsible the minister responsible for housing, heading up the newly created Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation and has been an important if controversial and at times inflammatory voice within debates around housing.

[10] In 2005 South Africa "received an award from the International Association for Housing Science in recognition for outstanding contributions and achievement towards improving and solving world's housing problems (SA Government Online [nd]). South Africa's housing programmes and projects have received numerous UN Habitat Scroll of Honour Awards: in 2003 Minister Sankie D. Mthembi-Mahanyele, in 2009 the Alexandra Renewal Project and in 2010 Johannesburg Social Housing or JOSHCO (UN-Habitat, 2013)" (Charlton et al. 2014, 76).

[11] The exact number of houses constructed by the state since 1994 and, more recently, what constitutes a house remain subjects of much debate (see Tissington 2011, 2013). While official statistics indicate that the state constructed close to 3.3 million homes between 1994-1995 and the end of 2018, Department of Human Settlements (DHS) officials and news releases frequently quote much larger figures adding to the uncertainty. For example, in November 2018, then Minister of Human Settlements Nomaindiya Mfeketo quoted the figure of 4.7 million homes later clarifying that this referred to the total number of houses and housing opportunities (serviced sites, state rental units etc.) (DHS 2017b).

The story is not complete without consideration of the failure of the massive PPP housing delivery process in which the state provided the largely unregulated private sector with a range of incentives, tax breaks and subsidies to build state-funded houses and, in the beginning, even identify beneficiaries. However, as aforementioned, the housing subsidy was only about half of what was necessary to build a complete house and, as it was not indexed to inflation until the mid 2000s, quickly shrank in real terms. Despite the billions of Rands spent to de-risk low income lending markets, only a very small proportion of subsidies were linked to credit (i.e. a bond or mortgage) and, combined with the dearth of savings in the broader socioeconomic context, the beneficiary contributions specified in the Housing White Paper, to 'top up' the subsidy never materialized (Tomlinson 1997, 1999). Cost pressures also continued to mount from the introduction of new norms and standards and administrative and regulatory requirements in the late 1990s amidst growing political pressure to improve the poor quality of top structures (the house itself). The result was a shift from the notion of a starter house set out in the Housing White Paper, "to a minimum 30m^2 unit of defined specification" (Tissington 2011, 61). According to Charlton and Kihato (2006, 267) this

> policy adjustment, driven by a political need to deliver acceptable houses, was not rooted in a deeper understanding of the consequences of the service levels/location/top-structure trade-off on beneficiaries. Rather, it was a reactive move related to the historic rejection of the notion of incrementalism—the gradual consolidation of a starter house over time by the end-user—and may again, in fact, have further contributed to the spatial marginalisation of the poor.

Large construction companies that initially partnered with the state became increasingly less interested in building houses for the poor given the narrow and narrowing margins, despite their best efforts to squeeze out a profit (Bond 2000; Lizarralde and Massyn 2008).[12] Unfortunately, the smaller and/or newly established companies, many of them Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) initiatives, which took over from the large firms did not have the necessary experience and, operating on ever thinning margins, cut corners even more than their predecessors, used precarious, unskilled labour, cheap materials, continued to build on the cheapest peripheral land readily available from apartheid housing schemes and did the job as quickly as possible (Magoro and Brynard 2010). The capacities of overburdened local governments still finding their feet amidst the transition only made matters worse; problems in procurement and delivery remained (Magoro and Brynard 2010).[13] As large metro municipalities progressively took on housing functions over the course of the 2000s, the financial and political risks were merely transferred to a different level of government while the lines of responsibility and authority for housing functions were further muddied (Tomlinson 2011).

In addition to housing, responsibility for the provision of related services such as water were also progressively downloaded to municipalities (Bond and Dugard 2008a, 2008b; McDonald and Pape 2002; McDonald and Ruiters 2005; McDonald and Smith 2004; Smith

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[12] Meanwhile, the private property market in South Africa was booming, a trend that has since continued: in 2016 it was valued at 5.8 trillion Rand, about CDN$ 580 billion, nearly one billion Rand larger than it was five years previously (PSCC 2015, 2018). Gated housing developments, new golf course estates and secure condominium complexes have emerged as the driving force in real estate over the last 15 years and are the primary source of growth in the residential property market estimated at R3.9 trillion, nearly 70 percent of the overall market (2016). Formal house prices grew by an average of 20 percent annually between 2000 and 2007 and, after a marked decline in 2008-2009 owing to the Great Recession, recovered to nearly 10 percent annual growth by 2015. Prices have, however, since seen a steady decline due to weak domestic economic conditions, although supply continues to grow at above average rates (FNB Property Barometer 2019). The total market share of the three to four million state houses built since 1994 (a much-debated number to which we will return below), however, is only about three percent of the overall total. In other words, most housing construction in South Africa is and has been for the rich and the upper middle class and has been enormously profitable for large firms.

[13] After 1994 the process of amalgamating the enormous number of apartheid local authorities into more manageable municipalities began and was only completed at the end of the transition period in the year 2000.

2004). In addition to inadequate financial transfers to cover the costs, the national government also established limits on municipal revenue generation and redistribution, constraining the options available to fund service extension and delivery (McDonald 2008). This included legislation prohibiting deficit budgeting, ceilings on property rate and tariff increases—effectively limiting the level of cross subsidization possible within municipalities and capping overall municipal spending growth to keep it in line with national inflation targeting.[14] The ANC government encouraged private sector financing and delivery of services to fill the gap. In 1998, it established the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit (MIIU), a not-for-profit company mandated to provide grant funding and technical assistance to guide the preparation and negotiation of concession contracts and other forms of PPPs at the local level. As McDonald and Ruiters (2005) note, previous commitments to equity, the provision of lifeline access and the reference to the public sector as 'preferred provider' of services were all eventually trumped by the 2000 Municipal Systems Act that required municipalities to explicitly consider external (read private) service delivery options.

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[14] Limits on public expenditure have not stopped local governments from making massive investments in business and commercial centres and wealthy suburbs in an effort to make the city more competitive and attractive to global capital and elites. See McDonald 2008 for more on the local government transition (1994-2000) in South Africa and Cape Town.

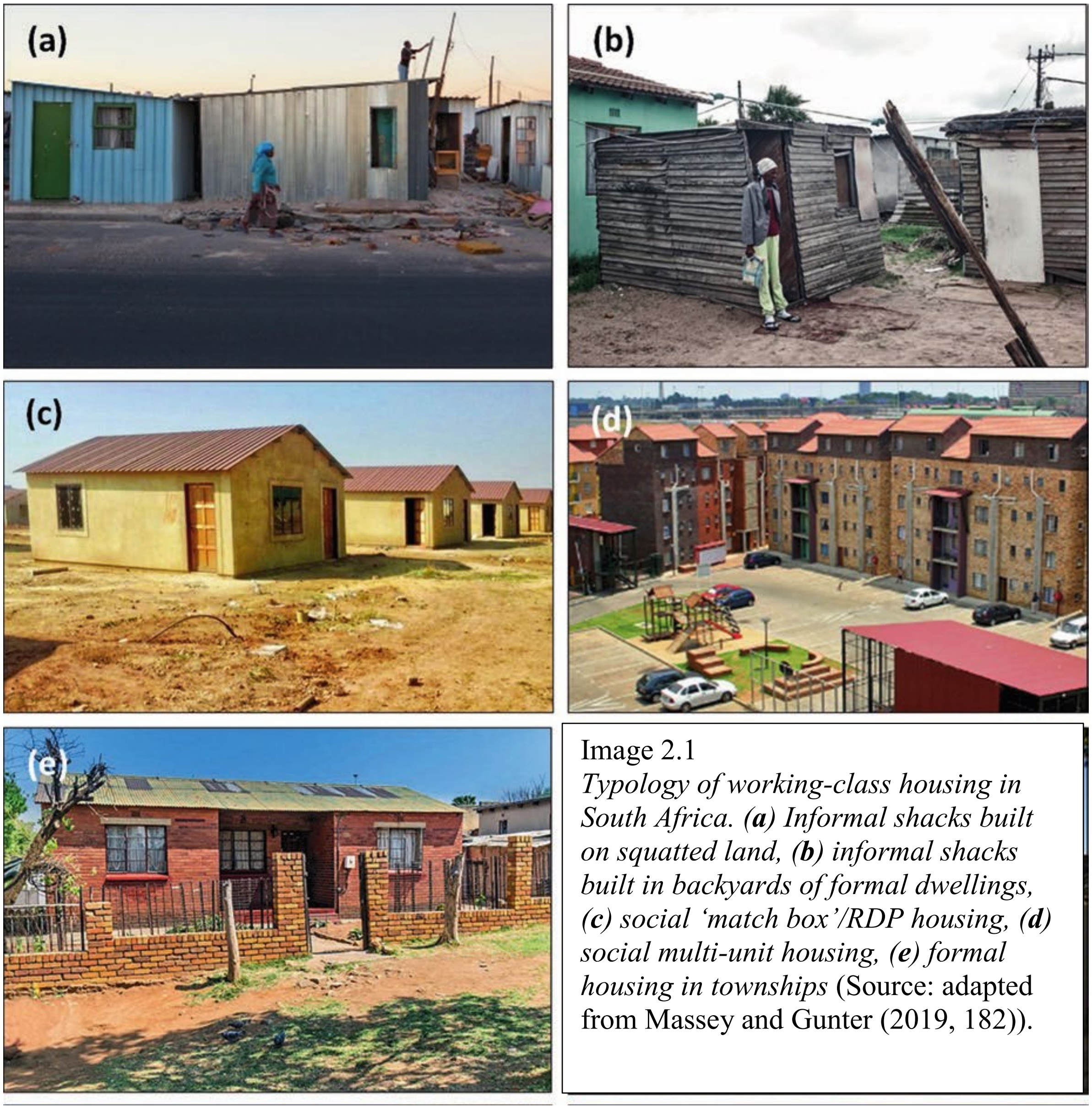


Image 2.1
*Typology of working-class housing in South Africa. (**a**) Informal shacks built on squatted land, (**b**) informal shacks built in backyards of formal dwellings, (**c**) social 'match box'/RDP housing, (**d**) social multi-unit housing, (**e**) formal housing in townships* (Source: adapted from Massey and Gunter (2019, 182)).

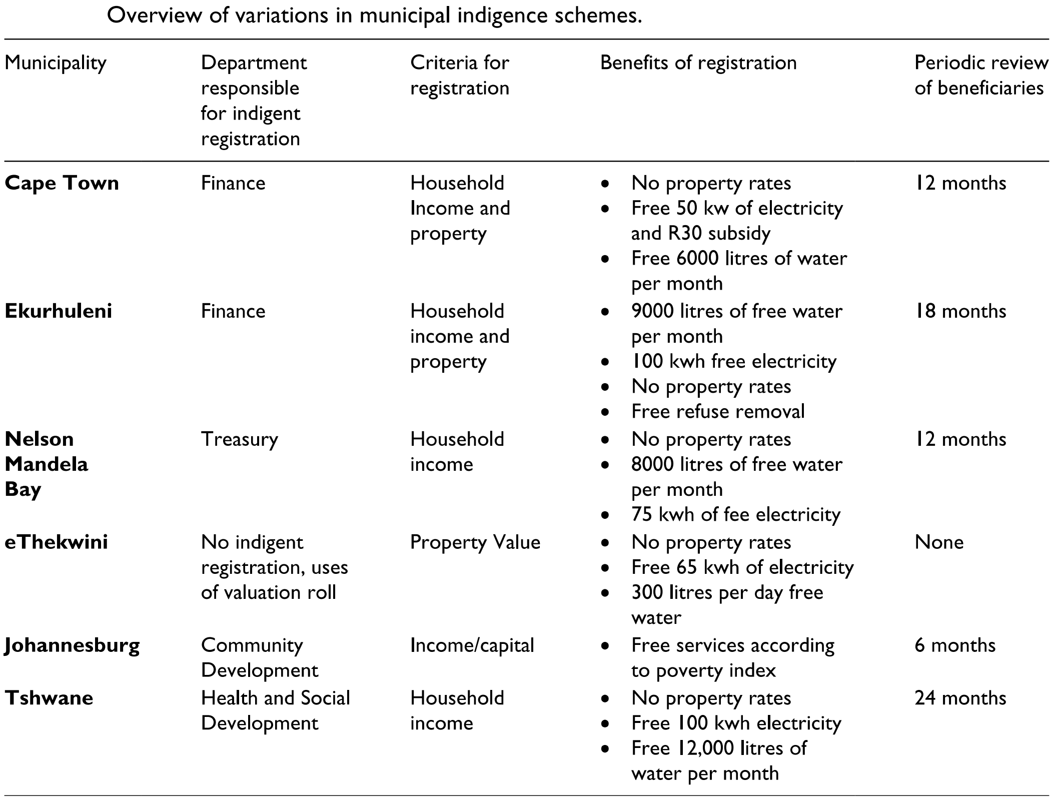
The Second Decade: Breaking New Ground, 2004-2014

To address the shortcomings of the period immediately following apartheid, and although the shift had already begun in the years prior, a new phase of state-built housing was announced in 2004: "Breaking New Ground [BNG]: a comprehensive plan for the development of integrated sustainable human settlements over the next five years" (DHS 2004, 1). New BNG houses were to be a minimum of 40 square meters (between 6 and $20m^2$ larger than previously), have two bedrooms, a separate bathroom, toilet, shower and sink, and a combined living area and kitchen.

These were significant improvements in quality relative to RDP houses but BNG was about more than just bigger and better houses. The plan entailed “a fundamental shift away from simply delivering RDP housing units to the delivery of ‘sustainable human settlements’” (Tomlinson 2011, 420) conceived as “well-managed entities in which economic growth and social development are in balance with the carrying capacity of the natural systems on which they depend for their existence and result in sustainable development, wealth creation, poverty alleviation and equity” (DHS 2004, 17).

BNG acknowledged the stubborn persistence of apartheid spatial patterns and even their exacerbation by housing policy, calling for better located, integrated and denser housing developments. It renewed support for several initiatives that had emerged in the course of housing policy evolution in the late 1990s including non-profit rental housing and community self-help housing projects, the latter related to an increased emphasis on beneficiary participation (from 2002, a contribution of R 2479 or sweat equity was required on the part of those receiving a subsidized house) (Shisaka 2011). BNG also acknowledged the failure of housing provision to keep up with demand and the growing housing backlog. Indeed, despite the scale of post-apartheid housing delivery (much-debated), the state has been unable to keep up with demand. When BNG was released, official estimates put the housing backlog at 2.1 million households up from 1.5 million in 1994 (Tissington 2011), a number above which it has since remained. The current estimate of 2.2 million households only includes the number of people registered to the national housing waiting list, while analysts estimate the backlog to be anywhere from 2.1 to 2.7 million (Tomlinson 2015) or even higher. In 2017, for example, an NGO researcher in Cape Town (personal communication, 2017) looked at the provincial backlog statistics which when combined totaled some 3.7 million households. In acknowledging this growing backlog the state turned its attention to informal settlements as a persistent feature of the post-apartheid urban landscape and launched the Upgrading Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) which included funding for re-blocking initiatives and the provision of other building materials to improve informal dwellings and to support the extension of basic services (see Lier et al. 2019).

The turn in housing policy towards a broader focus on better quality housing and slum upgrading must be understood in the context of the state's turn to what Gillian Hart (2014, 97) calls an "anxious interventionism—one that combines substantially larger transfers of resources from national to local government with escalating efforts to bring unruly local governments under control, and with programmes of municipal indigence designed to manage poverty" (see also Marais 2012). In addition to housing reform this interventionist turn included the expansion of eligibility for social grants—the unconditional but means tested Old Age Pension, Disability, Child Support, Foster Child and Care Dependency grants (Marais 2012; see Chapter Five)—and the provision of Free Basic Services (FBS). FBS took into consideration problematic aspects of the coercive full cost recovery approach to service provision adopted in the 1990s. More specifically, it became obvious that service disconnections did not effectively ensure the settling of municipal accounts and, in the case of water, gave rise to serious public health crises including a Cholera epidemic which killed some 265 people in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in 2000-2001 (Ruiters 2016). FBS, funded by the national government through an equitable share grant to municipalities, began in 2001 with an allocation of a minimum of 6000 kilolitres (kl) of water per household, per month (DWAF 2007; Loftus 2006). FBS continue to provide varying levels (see Figure 2.1 below) of water, electricity, property rates exemptions and, in some cases, refuse removal to households classified as 'indigent' (DPLG 2005).



Overview of variations in municipal indigence schemes.

Municipality	Department responsible for indigent registration	Criteria for registration	Benefits of registration	Periodic review of beneficiaries
Cape Town	Finance	Household Income and property	• No property rates • Free 50 kw of electricity and R30 subsidy • Free 6000 litres of water per month	12 months
Ekurhuleni	Finance	Household income and property	• 9000 litres of free water per month • 100 kwh free electricity • No property rates • Free refuse removal	18 months
Nelson Mandela Bay	Treasury	Household income	• No property rates • 8000 litres of free water per month • 75 kwh of fee electricity	12 months
eThekwini	No indigent registration, uses of valuation roll	Property Value	• No property rates • Free 65 kwh of electricity • 300 litres per day free water	None
Johannesburg	Community Development	Income/capital	• Free services according to poverty index	6 months
Tshwane	Health and Social Development	Household income	• No property rates • Free 100 kwh electricity • Free 12,000 litres of water per month	24 months

Table 2.1 *Overview of variations in municipal indigence schemes.*
Note: Cape Town provides indigent households a grant for an additional 4500 litres of water per month (Source: Ruiters 2016, 5).

The Contradictions of the Interventionist Turn

As critics point out, however, in practice this interventionist turn was less of a departure from the status quo than initially thought (Charlton and Kihato 2006). In 2009, a review of BNG (DHS 2009), concluded that state housing had continued to disproportionately focus on the number of houses built, much to the detriment of other aspects of human settlements, including construction quality, service levels, location and public participation. Moreover, despite the guidelines for larger and improved top-structures a 2011 report by the CEO of the National Homebuilders Registration Council (NHBRC) (Mashinini 2011) indicated that 2.7 million of the 3 million state houses then built (or 90%) were at 'high risk,' a further 1.6 million needed serious repairs and 610 000 needed to be demolished and rebuilt. The Housing Assembly calls this 'the RDP scandal and disaster'; "a scandal for the government, a disaster for the working class" (Housing

Assembly 2014, 3). The total cost of repairs, demolition and rebuilding was then estimated at R64.4 billion. As the Housing Assembly was quick to point out, if those state houses in need of demolition or serious repair were added to the backlog statistics in 2017, the backlog could have reasonably been estimated to be as high as 5.8 million. The NHBRC also reported that of the roughly three million 'housing opportunities' then delivered only 1.5 million had a title deed registered to the owner. Already observed in the late 1990s (Bond and Tait 1997, 2000), this backlog in issuing title deeds may have been exacerbated by BNG which had removed the requirement for a title deed to be registered before the release of a subsidy in an effort to cut red tape. Also noted and related to title deeds and the poor quality of the top structure was the enduring lack of low-income finance with less than 4% of all post-apartheid housing subsidies link to credit at the time (Shisaka 2011).

All the while, the number of informal settlements grew exponentially between 1994 and 2010 from 300 to 2700, such that by 2010 somewhere in excess of 2 million households lived in informal settlements (Sexwale 2010). These and other South Africans waiting for housing that make up the enormous and growing backlog have been able, if they meet the income, citizenship, age and marital/family requirements[15] and have not accessed state housing in the past, to apply to be placed on the waiting list for housing (see Chapter Four). While they wait, a large number of people have resorted to self-provisioning in both informal settlements (slums) and informal dwellings that share a property with an existing house (colloquially known as backyard shacks) (Lemanski 2009). Though officially informal dwellings in settlements and backyards—where the majority of the increase has occurred in recent years—have decreased as a percentage of total dwellings from 17% to 11% between 2002 and 2014 (SSA 2016, 2) they increased to 13.6% in

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[15] Not earn more than R3500, approximately CDN$35), a month.

2017 (SSA 2017, 29) and have not declined.[16] As in the case of housing delivery, informal dwelling figures remain subject to contestation around the state's creative and confusing definition of what constitutes informality and its growth (see Huchzermeyer 2010).[17]

The Housing Assembly argues that the ANC government has deliberately underestimated the size of the housing crisis and has failed to address both the crisis itself or its underlying causes. Tomlinson (2011, 420) attributes these housing delivery failures to the onerous nature of BNG which required "'complex demand driven processes' to be carried out and therefore a much more sophisticated institutional response on the part of local government, than was previously the case." For their part, local authorities found it difficult to adapt successfully to their new role given lack of capacity to take on the increasingly complex responsibilities. These deficiencies contributed to many of the new or newly emphasized programmes suffering from low uptake, if not outright failure. Over the course of the second decade, the pace of housing delivery continued to slow as it suffered from many of the same problems it had previously, including those around procurement, project management and allocation, contributing to the growth of informal dwellings and settlements.

In the early 2000s, the ANC government adopted a policy of 'slum eradication,' which represents a particularly egregious and contradictory case of state housing failure and policy response to the problem of growing informality. Although the start of this 'war on shacks' preceded Minster of Housing Lindiwe Sisulu's mandate, it became official policy in the 2004 when the Minister announced on behalf of South Africa that "in line with our commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals we join the rest of the developing world and reiterate our commitment to progressively eradicate slums in the ten-year period ending in 2014" (Sisulu 2005). This was perhaps too literal an interpretation of the slogan "Cities Without Slums" attached to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7, Target 11 which aimed to achieve "a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers" by 2020 (UN 2000, 6). Sisulu (2004, 2005) came to personify the increasingly regressive shift taken by the department over the course of the 2000s around informal settlements, supporting a series of legislative efforts at the national and provincial levels: the KwaZulu Natal Elimination and Prevention of Re-emergence of Slums Bill (2006) and various attempts to amend the 1998 Prevention of Illegal Evictions from Unlawful Occupation of Land (PIE) Act in the interests of achieving "shack free cities by 2014." These bills variously sought to control, eliminate and prevent the re-emergence of slums by directly criminalizing the invasion or occupation of land.

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[16] This may be partially due to the state increasingly actively upgrade informal dwellings after 2009/10 rather than solely eradicating them as previously (Huchzermeyer 2014).

[17] This statistical creativity, while not unique to South Africa, is widespread. For example, though it is widely accepted as the most unequal country in the world, South Africa's 2010 Millennium Development Goal Country Report stressed that the "key source for these measures, in its attempts to improve the data, has been subjected to many significant changes from 1995 to 2006" leading to the conclusion that it was not possible to "automatically infer from the data that inequality has worsened" (StatsSA 2010, 28).

At the same time that the goal of slum eradication was adopted the BNG policy along with the 2004 Housing Code and other domestic legislation and policy and international best practice (UN-Habitat 2003) contradicted the government's interpretation of MDG 7, protected 'squatters' from eviction and/or advocated more progressive measures to address slum formation. Furthermore, Section 26(3) of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution (RSA 1996, 11) explicitly protects informal settlement residents from eviction: "[n]o one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances. No legislation may permit arbitrary evictions." The PIE Act (RSA 1998, 6) clarified these provisions: in the case of people squatting for less than six months "a court may grant an order for eviction if it is of the opinion that it is just and equitable to do so." In cases longer than six months, PIE requires that land be made available by "the state or another land owner [in the case of farm workers living on farms for example] for the relocation of the… occupier." In a 2001 Constitutional Court case, Government of the Republic of South Africa v. Grootboom (2001), 900 people from an informal settlement who were to be evicted to make way for a housing project took the government to court. The judge ruled in favour of the respondents, declaring that the state was responsible for providing alternative shelter in the case of evictions and that the failure to do so would be breach of Section 26(3) of the Constitution.

In spite of these legal protections, the 'war against shacks' proceeded apace. Following the Grootboom decision and other legal proceedings (see Smith 2013), which slowed the eviction process and/or won victories for some informal settlements, eradication efforts have removed residents to Temporary Relocation Areas (TRAs) like Symphony Way in Cape Town—known as Blikkiesdorp ("tin town" in Afrikaans)—before returning them to housing developments in their prior locations or, more frequently, relocating them to greenfield housing developments on the urban periphery. The coercive apparatus of the state has been increasingly used in the eviction process. The South African Police Service (SAPS) and private security companies are frequently deployed to clear informal settlements and land occupations. The City of Cape Town has gone so far as to create an Anti-Land Invasion Unit (ALIU) that works closely with SAPS in the city for the purpose of monitoring and clearing 'land invasions.' For residents, confrontations with security forces are often violent and traumatic and the process of eviction, relocation and housing allocation can take years, even sometimes exceeding a decade.

Meanwhile, other legislation and policy emphasizing the necessity of upgrading in addition to highlighting the importance of measures, to indirectly target slum formation were largely ignored. For example, despite the fact that the UISP program had been in place for nearly a decade, in 2011 the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) (Tissington 2011, 9) observed that "we have yet to see one successful and properly executed in situ upgrade of an informal settlement in Durban, Cape Town or Johannesburg." As Huchzermeyer (2011, 69) argues, official urban planning in South Africa

> deals with informal settlements either by stamping them out and replacing them, at best relocating their inhabitants to formally planned, regulated and taxed environments, or by applying the exception of in situ upgrading—the recognition and permanent incorporation of informally developed neighbourhoods into the city. Policies for urban competitiveness have shunned applying this exception. Instead they wish away any signs of informality ever having existed.

These dynamics both support and nuance arguments, like the one made by Huchzermeyer (2010, 2011), that locate housing policy failure in the prioritization of urban competitiveness and accumulation. These priorities indeed exert enormous pressure on urban governance and play a key role in housing delivery failures. They are exemplary of the disconnect between housing 'policy' and 'politics' in South Africa whereby even the more progressive of policy elements often fail to be realized in practice due to underlying macroeconomic and fiscal imperatives and market mechanisms of implementation (Huchzermeyer 2010). Complicating this straightforward relationship, however, is the state's perceived need to create the conditions for successful capital accumulation and maintain orderly urbanization while simultaneously addressing the legacies of apartheid in the context of (formal) democracy (Levenson 2019). As we will explore in Chapter Four, these tension-filled dynamics continue to have a destructive impact on both working class life and unity in struggles around housing and services in the present, perhaps even more so than would the straightforward dispossession Huchzermeyer implies.

FBS are another example of the contradictory effects of the ANCs interventionist turn. FBS have been provided to 'indigent' households since 2001. For many South Africans, however, service levels remain well below international standards for basic subsistence with the country underperforming relative to its peers (Marais 2012; Sulla and Zikhali 2018). Here we consider the case of water and sanitation services.

There is no doubt that access to water and sanitation services has improved since the transition from apartheid. Officially (StatsSA 1996, 2016) 84.5% of households had access to safe drinking water in 2016 compared to 81.2% in 1996, and 67.6% had access to improved sanitation, up from 50% in 1996, while access to electricity rose from 58.2% in 1996 to 84.2% in 2016. While these statistics appear to be quite an achievement a number of factors continue to limit the ability of South Africans to actually benefit from their connections to this expanded infrastructure (Dugard 2013). Just because a household has a water connection does not mean that it can afford to buy what flows through the pipes. Free Basic Water (FBW) has been accompanied by a proliferation of cost-recovery mechanisms such as the installation of access and flow restriction devices and the introduction of regressive tariff structures. In his State of the Nation address in 2014, then-President Zuma claimed that 95 percent of the population had ‘access to water coverage.’ Another government official admitted the next day, however, that despite this impressive coverage rate only 65 percent had access to ‘flowing water’ (in Bond 2015, 255).

The pervasive logic of cost recovery has been particularly pernicious in constraining access to services. As Greg Ruiters (2016, 3) argues, the provision of FBS is not merely a tokenistic welfare or patronage exercise, but rather establishes a “field of power’… in which government hegemony has to be [and is] constantly reinforced.” Indeed, FBS are instruments to manage not just municipal liabilities but the ‘poor’ themselves (CoCT 2007). In this critical view, rather than a policy reversal that aimed to mitigate against the damaging effects of the privatization of services, FBW was designed as a management strategy "integral to cost recovery." As one private consulting firm, the Palmer Development Group put it:

> The availability of options, which restrict the flow to consumers, is an important attribute of a good local free basic water policy. It allows people who cannot afford to pay more, to get only a basic supply (poverty relief level). Under a free basic water policy, it is essential that all unrestricted supplies are metered (quoted in Ruiters 2016, 4).

Embedded in the logic surrounding FBS is the notion of dividing the working-class, continuing the process of separating the 'can't pays' from the 'won't pays'—and disciplining the latter—that characterized the years prior to FBS immediately after apartheid (1994-2001) when cutoffs were widespread. The basic level of survival FBS provides becomes part of a strategy that seeks to instill the correct behaviours in people such that they improve their circumstances and "exit" the indigent category. 'Free,' basic amounts of services have also entailed the intensification of state monitoring, surveillance, coercion and criminalization around residents' status as 'indigent' (see Ruiters 2016; Hart 2014).

The FBW policy has been most pernicious for large households, many of whom are dealing with health crises related to HIV/AIDs and other communicable diseases. As Ruiters (2016, 5) observes, "[f]ixing the basic water supply at 6000 litres per month (and delivering this amount through the communal tap [or prepaid meter or WMD]) is often not realistic given the needs of large poor households and the densely populated townships where water requirements are around 15,000 litres per month – significantly higher than 6000 per month" (Ruiters 2016, 5; see also Smith 2004). Patrick Bond (2014, 255; emphasis in original) similarly observes:

> In Durban – the main site of Free Basic Water pilot-exploration starting in 1998 – the overall cost of water ended up doubling for poor households because of a huge price increase in the second [tariff] block (the city soon had the second highest price amongst its South African peers for the 6-10 kl/hh/m [kl/household/month]). For poor people, this led to consumption *cuts by a third* in the subsequent six years, from 22 to 15 kl/hh/m.

In other words, when it comes to accessing services like water working-class South African households find that despite the fact that access has been extended, their ability to effectively use these commodified services is increasingly mediated by the market, that is their ability to pay. In a society characterized by spiralling inequality and 'jobless growth,' more and more working-class people are unable to afford the cost of paying for services. Eking out an existence on what little the state provides free of charge and perhaps what little they can afford in addition, these policies have resulted in escalating water costs for working class households and *decreased* per capita consumption (Bond and Dugard 2008a, 2008b).

The 2014 U-Turn: No More 'Free' Houses

By the latter half of the second decade post-apartheid, housing policy appeared to shift more substantively towards the BNG goal of 'sustainable human settlements' at the same time that the government signalled its intention to get out of the business of providing housing. In 2009, the government revised the National Housing Code to more adequately reflect BNG, including another round of additions and updates to existing programs: support for better located and integrated greenfield housing developments; additional national support for informal settlement upgrading; an Emergency Housing Program; enhancements to participatory housing; and support for rental housing and housing finance both targeted to various income brackets reflecting efforts, albeit still unsuccessful ones, to provide so-called 'gap housing' to address those unable to access formal credit markets despite being ineligible for a housing subsidy (Lemanski 2017; Bond and Tait 1997). At the same time, however, the incoming Zuma Presidency (2009) also released a series of documents in the wake of the 2009 election which, while re-emphasizing a commitment to the BNG principles of spatial transformation and upgrading, among others, signaled its intention to move away from state housing provision in its traditional RDP/BNG form (DHS 2009, DHS 2011). Outcome 8 of the Presidency's new Outcomes Approach (Presidency in Huchzermeyer 2014) announced that

> the target is a shift away from the current paradigm of exclusively state-provided housing for the poor. It explicitly includes improving livelihoods through the provision of different forms of tenure, and provides for alternative methods of housing delivery. It is the first large-scale programmatic response to incremental upgrading of informal settlements in the country.

In signaling this new approach, Outcome 8 set a series of delivery targets to be achieved by 2014:

- upgrading 400,000 units of accommodation within informal settlements;
- improving access to basic services;
- facilitating the provision of 600,000 accommodation units within the gap market for people earning between R 3,500 and R 12,800;
- mobilisation of well-located public land for low-income and affordable housing with increased densities on this land and in general.

Shortly thereafter, this new approach was made explicit in the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) which also articulated a more thoroughly private sector mode of delivery.[18] Echoing the BNG's conclusion that "post-apartheid housing policy had reinforced apartheid spatial geography" the NDP recommended that the state "[u]rgently review the existing grant and subsidy regime for housing with a view to: Ensuring diversity in production and finance options that would allow for more household choice and great spatial mix and flexibility", emphasizing "economic opportunity… livelihood production and job creation," shift public funding to broader goals beyond top structures, "leveraging private-sector funding," ensure proper incentives, and

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[18] According to its critics, the NDP, produced by an 'expert' commission appointed by the Zuma Presidency, represents the ANC's latest re-articulation of a neoliberal growth path. "Elements of the NDP, in NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim's words appear to be lifted directly from [centre-right] DA policy documents calling for wage suppression and 'market-driven growth'" (Fogel 2013, np; see Jim 2013). Bond (2014, 265) notes that as deputy chair of the National Planning Commission which produced the NDP, Cyril Ramaphosa facilitated some $100 billion in state investments, much of it to be privatized, oriented towards the extractive industries or Minerals and Energy Complex (Fine and Rustomjee 1996), the very sector that made him a Rand billionaire. To those on the left like Bond who critiqued this "entrenched NDP neoliberalism" Ramaphosa countered that it was "the only game in town" (Fogel 2012, np).

"introduce mechanisms that would make land markets work more effectively for the poor," among others (NPC 2012, 268, 287-288; emphasis in original). In doing so and echoing the global governance agenda long reflected in housing and water policy in South Africa, the suggested "a facilitating rather than providing role for the state in relation to housing" (Huchzermeyer 2014, 245).

Despite this qualitative shift in housing policy—a turn away from building houses and towards upgrading informal dwellings and providing sites and services among others—which were hoped would speed up delivery, it was soon clear that delivery was not keeping pace and the NDP targets would not be achieved by 2014 (Tissington et al. 2013). With clear signals in the NDP and elsewhere identifying both the fiscal risk entailed in the continued growth of the existing subsidy scheme—the housing budget was then the fastest growing area of government expenditure, implicating rising construction costs and the rapidly increasing subsidy quantum which had been pegged to inflation for nearly a decade (FFC 2012)—and a desire to move away from delivering RDP/BNG houses, these seemingly intractable problems would provoke another shift in post-apartheid housing policy just two years later.

'First you are evicted from your home, then from the promise of a house itself'

In 2014, the government made what the Housing Assembly calls a dramatic 'U-Turn' on housing policy. Citing budgetary constraints at various levels of government, a range of governance and coordination problems, a rising backlog amidst slowing delivery and escalating costs for building (and repairing) houses Minister Sisulu announced in her 2014 DHS budget speech to parliament announced that only 500 000 more 'free' houses would be built. Another one million housing opportunities of other types would be provided. Sisulu (2015) would go on to announce that despite the deteriorating condition RDP/BNG houses that the state would cease fixing houses built after the year 2000 transferring responsibility to the NHBRC and ultimately to the developers responsible for construction.

In making this U-Turn, Sisulu (Tomlinson 2015) accused South Africans of a culture of entitlement and of suffering from a "syndrome of dependency" created by state housing provision.[19] In order to deliver on her promised 1.5 million housing opportunities, Sisulu (2014) also announced a Marshall Plan for Human Settlements which places new emphasis on megaprojects of a minimum of 10 000 homes or 5 000 serviced sites. This new approach also aims to cut red tape, streamline the housing project portfolio and overcome governance challenges while fostering greater beneficiary participation through the organization of youth and women's self-help construction brigades. Despite Sisulu reiterating the connections among the new policy, the NDP and BNG's emphasis on integrated human settlements, these megaprojects have frequently ended up being built on the urban periphery in the interests of meeting these unilaterally established delivery targets (Ballard and Rubin 2017). The disconnect between housing policy and politics in South Africa (Huchzermeyer 2010) has again reared its ugly head.

The Housing Question in Contemporary South Africa

Post-apartheid housing policy has unfolded under conditions of fiscal austerity recommended by international financial institutions. In 1994 the World Bank recommended that the post-apartheid housing budget be 5% of the national budget but it has averaged under 2% since, reaching a high of 3.7% in 2015, and often remains unspent (Tomlinson 2015). The Housing Assembly contends that if the ANC had followed the advice of even the World Bank—which it has undoubtedly taken quite seriously in other respects—houses could be twice the quality and/or many more houses could have been built. But instead, they say, RDP houses are crumbling, and policy has turned away from building houses or housing units and toward upgrading informal dwellings, providing sites and services and expanding access to housing finance with an emphasis on self-help that downloads costs onto working class households.

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[19] This is a powerful invocation of the state failure argument (World Bank 1997). In going so far as creating entitled and dependent citizens, the logical corollary is implied that 'reform' is needed of both state policy and citizens themselves.

Despite not meeting targets for the housing budget, the ANC has increasingly followed international best practice in engaging the private sector in housing governance and emphasizing the need to make housing markets work for the poor. While clearly reflected in Outcome 8 and the NDP detailed above, these elements have been more clearly articulated in recent policy documents and announcements. In line with the 'fail forward governance' strategies of the Bank and the prescriptions of its allies, McKinsey (2014) and UN-Habitat (2015), the DHS (2014) outlined a 'social contract' for private sector partnerships in 2014 which emphasized

> Radically revising the housing finance regime; Building capabilities so that human settlements can be transformed and; Focusing on more forthright measures to develop sustainable human settlements and engage in a proactive manner with an understanding that settlements will be best developed through a well- coordinated partnership between government, citizen, civil society and the private sector.

More recently the DHS has created a Human Settlements Development Bank (HSDB) to merge existing development finance institutions in the department and "facilitate the increased provision of finance across the human settlements value chain" (Sisulu 2017, np).

There is, however, significant tension between policies which facilitate market inclusion and those that simultaneously limit market participation in a way which could help homeowners meet their daily needs (selling or renting their poorly constructed and located RDP house for example). On the one hand are policies which advocate property titling and financial inclusion to encourage entrepreneurialism and (formal) market participation as a central component of housing development and poverty reduction (c.f. de Soto 2002). On the other are those that protect the right to housing and from eviction (PIE), and limit repossession and transfer of housing (the Housing Amendment Act 4 of 2001 prevents the sale of state houses for eight years after they have been allocated). The argument for limiting transfer is to protect homeowners from selling their houses off quickly and to incentivize the use of housing as collateral for home improvement—more recently finishing or building one's own house—or entry into the economy via microenterprise (see also Bond 2013; Bateman 2019).

This tension is made all the more significant by several contextual factors particular to post-apartheid South Africa which undermines that ability of homeowners' to leverage their houses. It should be evident by now that RDP, BNG and privatized apartheid rental houses make for unsuitable collateral given their often incomplete or crumbling condition and poor location. But even if they were of suitable quality and in a convenient location the aforementioned secondary housing and finance markets have not been forthcoming for these reasons among others discussed earlier including an absence of titling, high unemployment, stagnant wages and redlining (already acknowledged in BNG in 2004). While the effects are complex and uneven in general the outcome most immediately felt by working class people is a lack of agency. While parts of the (aspiring) middle class have become involved in housing as a commodity, which has increasingly figured more prominently in recent ANC rhetoric and policy, these populations have development unsustainable levels of debt (James 2015). Those that have received a government house remain, for all intents and purposes, excluded from the formal housing market, metaphorically trapped inside houses that may literally fall down on their heads.

This policy agenda also contradicts research, including by McKinsey (2014) itself, which concludes that market inclusion does not work for the poorest segments of the population, which in South Africa is the majority, evidenced by the low number of credit linked subsidies, informal dwelling growth and high levels of poverty and inequality. Minister Sisulu (2017) elaborated the aforementioned Sustainable Human Settlements Policy Framework and the forthcoming White Paper on Human Settlements as it pertains to this majority in her 2017 DHS budget speech:

> [w]e have to hasten the pace of delivery on an urgent basis. The use of innovative material is an absolutely essential response to our solution to build more houses right now. It is quicker and on scale cheaper. We'll have a phased-in approach to remove people from the most appalling conditions to decent temporary shelters before their final allocation. It will also help us weed out beneficiaries of the system and those who are double dipping…
>
> We are now concentrating on serviced sites. The HDA has identified land for our purpose, ensuring that it is serviced. It will be partitioned and people would be able to move to their own stand and build their own houses…
>
> it is always worth emphasising that the government is an enabler. We call on society to work with us to create their own future and help build their own houses. A house is the most fundamental need for humanity and it requires each one to play their part.

The trends of increasing fiscal thrift, reduction in government liabilities, outsourcing delivery to the private sector and downloading costs and risks onto the poor are clear and continuous in the most recent phase of South African housing policy evolution. This trajectory was re-affirmed in the February 2019 national budget which announced progressively deeper cuts to the housing portfolio and reallocated spending from housing subsidies to slum upgrading including services extension (Treasury 2019). In her remarks on the DHS budget vote this past July as newly re-appointed Minister of the newly formed department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Lindiwe Sisulu reiterated the need for belt-tightening and highlighted a number of priorities including: "the blending of public investments with private capital and equity to ensure increased and rapid delivery" and expanding access to housing finance and the issuing of title deeds to "unlock much of the dead assets that the house represents" (both to be facilitated by the HSDB); removing barriers to private construction industry participation citing the benefits of their " investment in infrastructure for the 2010 World Cup"[20]; "creating a do-it-yourself culture… and making sure every able-bodied person entitled to a house is able to do it by themselves" and; finding technical fixes to a myriad of housing and water provision problems including slow delivery, corruption, contractor transgressions, and the 'criminal behaviour' of the undeserving poor like land invasions and illegal housing construction (Sisulu 2019).

Conclusion

Much of the widely lauded transformative legislation and policy introduced in South Africa since 1994 has been limited in practice, particularly at the municipal level, by fiscal constraints embedded in the post-apartheid neoliberal macroeconomic framework, ensuing governance failures, and policy choice and implementation practice in key sectors. Formally established in 1996 with the adoption of GEAR the ANCs neoliberal trajectory has been regularly renewed despite appearances to the contrary most notably and explicitly with the launch of the NDP in 2012. The further and sizeable cuts to the public sector announced in a series of more recent national budgets threaten to exacerbate the sustained municipal crisis that emerged in the late 1990s out of this turn and the intensification of restructuring after 1994 as the government doubles down on austerity. Despite a decade of successive plans designed to improve the financial viability of local government, restore confidence in it and improve services (COGTA 2005, 2009, 2014), municipalities remain mired in debt, plagued by corruption and unable to deliver adequate housing and services to those that need them most (Blake 2016). This neoliberal onslaught has been a brutal experience for the working class particularly in light of their aspirations for a better life in the 'new' South Africa.

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[20] The consensus of critical scholars is that the massive investments in the 2010 World Cup did little for the majority of South Africans. Quite the opposite, they were hugely profitable to private capital, plagued by corruption and price fixing, and saddled the state with massive debts still being paid off by residents and 'white elephants' like the money losing Cape Town Stadium which the CoCT still runs at a loss (Maharaj et al. 2011).

In keeping with global governance trends, and while the public purse remains the ultimate backstop, a key strategy on the part of the local state in South Africa has been the transfer of risk to the for-profit private sector through the corporatization and privatization of housing and service provision including massive outsourcing, and onto individual households, through growing household debt, user fees like insufficiently progressive water tariffs, pre-paid and restrictive technologies like WMDs, beneficiary contributions and participation like those to housing construction, and discourses of efficiency, responsibility, opportunity, self-help, and resilience. In this context, these strategies function "to further individualize risk and to 'responsibilize borrowers,' while failing to address the reasons that a growing number of households have had to rely on debt as a means of securing the costs of social reproduction that are being offloaded by capital and the state" (Roberts 2016, 157). Indeed, linked to the expansion of social grants (Torkelson 2017a) a growing number of South African's have turned to the formal and informal credit market to finance consumption, much of it to meet basic needs like housing and water (Bond 2013; Bateman 2019; James 2014). If recent policy announcements are any indication, this trend seems set to expand. As has been shown in the UK by Adrienne Roberts (2016) and in India by Marcus Taylor (2011, 2012), however, the turn to debt financed consumption under the guise of and as a result of 'banking the poor', is not a sustainable solution to the everyday needs of the working class. Nor is it a path to transforming the persistent inequalities which characterized apartheid and their intensification since. This is perhaps most "evident in the bodily and emotional harms generated by housing insecurity, homelessness, and hunger" (Roberts 2016, 147), harms which are almost universally skewed along gendered and racialized lines and particularly acute in South Africa given the historical legacy of apartheid.

Despite his own capitulation to the incremental housing approach adopted after 1994, the ANC’s first Minister of Housing, the late Joe Slovo, anti-apartheid struggle hero and former secretary general of the SACP, reportedly said that “we must make sure that we never return to the hated site and service schemes of the past.”[21] Some twenty five years later, and dripping condescension and the derisive language of the underserving poor, the South African state has returned to the hated site and services schemes of apartheid and the related policy of upgrading informal settlements. Combined with an emphasis on housing markets, financial inclusion and self-help and in the context of ongoing and widespread land occupations and evictions and the continuation of housing construction on the urban periphery it appears that the strategy of the South African government is indeed to make the old new again. South Africans have not been easily disciplined however, and, unsurprisingly, participants in widespread and intense community protests and in strike waves across the country consistently emphasize poor housing and service delivery amongst other key reasons for organizing and mobilizing (Alexander et al. 2018; Municipal IQ 2019; Ngwane 2017b). It is to this social movement response that we turn now turn to in Chapter Three.

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[21] NGO researcher personal comment, 2017.

Chapter Three: Post-Apartheid Social Movements and Working-Class Fragmentation

The turn toward austerity in the last 25 years of neoliberal capitalism has hit hard in working class communities across South Africa. Already struggling in vain for the better life promised to them after apartheid, South Africans have responded vigorously to this restructuring as the country has registered some of the highest protest levels in the world over the last decade (Alexander et al. 2018; Municipal IQ 2019). Despite ongoing and widespread mobilizations, the deteriorating material conditions of life in the new South Africa and the ideological management of this constant fracturing of the social[22] by the state and capital has made it very difficult for a working-class consciousness to emerge, which, relative to its ruling class opponents, "needs a larger segment of maturing time" (Bannerji 2016, 20). Various tropes—ideological tricks as Marx called them (Bannerji 2011)—are trotted out by the ruling class to rationalize the status quo: individual responsibility, hidden or 'third forces,' the meddling of foreign powers, xenophobia and the sowing of divisions along lines of race and ethnicity, and the list goes on. Backed by the coercive arm of the state and in the context of the grind of everyday life under neoliberalism and its ongoing restructuring of society along individualized, market lines, the ruling class has been particularly effective in disabling working class organizing in the post-apartheid marriage of markets and democracy overseen by the ANC.

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[22] In keeping with the philosophy of praxis (Allman 2010) adopted in the Introduction, Himani Bannerji (2005, 146, 1995; see also Marx 1970; Marx and Engels 1970, 121; Smith 1990) "assume[s] 'the social' to mean a complex socioeconomic and cultural formation, brought to life through myriad finite and specific social and historical relations, organization and institutions. It involves living and conscious human agents and what Marx called their 'sensuous, practical human activity'."

Since 2012, working alongside organizers in the Housing Assembly, I have witnessed many of the disabling moves made by the state and capital. I have also become painfully familiar with two interconnected trends that stubbornly persist in progressive thought and action which serve to undermine the South African left from within while the vicious attacks continue from the outside. The first is a division between workers and the formally unemployed/community or between struggles at the point of production and those around reproduction and the valorization of one over the other. The second is a distinction between struggles around class and those around place (the 'local' or 'community'), autonomy and identity which are, apparently, beyond class in various ways. While there have been important instances of these struggles coming together post-apartheid, they have remained relatively distinct in both theory and practice. While often asking important questions, these narratives are obstacles to creating unity within the working class. In remaining at the level of historical appearances and addressing only partially the myriad struggles and experiences of working-class life, these narratives also contribute to the conscious or unconscious reproduction of capitalist social relations, and constitute what Allman (2011) calls a "reproductive praxis," which undermines the very struggles they seek to augment.

This chapter begins by reviewing post-apartheid social movement struggles—waged by both so-called 'old' social movements like trade unions and the 'new' social movements—drawing on Chapter Two to situate them in political economic context. The second section reviews the representation of these struggles both within and outside movements before providing practical illustrations of these divisions in preparation for the empirical analysis of Housing Assembly praxis in Chapters Four and Five. In doing so this chapter highlights the relational construction of housing and water governance and policy restructuring through the interplay of social movements and the state, tracing these dynamics through the transition from apartheid and into the present. The chapter also provides an overview of broader political and economic developments in South Africa over the last decade—(roughly) the period during which both fieldwork for this dissertation has taken place and the movement that is the case study for it, the Housing Assembly, has been active—in order to contextualize struggles around the housing and water crises which have dominated organizing in this period and which are the focus of the remainder of the text.

Post-apartheid Social Movements

The First Wave

The South African working class has not been easily disciplined by the ANC's neoliberal political economic trajectory and, building on the rich experience of organizing and the deep alliances between workers and communities in the fight against apartheid, there has been consistent organizing and mobilization since the late-1990s within and beyond the state in opposition to it. Contention has been particularly intense in relation to housing and related services. Independently and in coalition, unions and so-called 'New Social Movements' (NSMs) dominated by community organizations fought, with varying degrees of success, the privatization and corporatization of public services, casualization and restructuring in the workplace, and the dispossession and eviction of working class South Africans from their homes and land (Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006; Bond 2003; McDonald and Pape 2002; McDonald and Ruiters 2005; McKinley 2016; Ruiters 2014). These struggles drew on the rich experience of organizing and the deep alliances between workers and communities in the fight against apartheid that was partial inspiration for Social Movement Unionism as a concept and strategy.

Particularly important was organizing under the banner of the United Democratic Front (UDF) that provided an umbrella for the thousands of community organizations or 'civics', which, alongside labour unions, were the backbone of the resistance to apartheid in the 1980s

(Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006). The first wave of these organizations and coalitions that emerged in the late-1990s included the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, the Concerned Citizens Forum (Durban), the Landless People's Movement, the Anti-Privatization Forum, the Anti-Eviction Campaign, and the Treatment Action Campaign. The country's largest union of municipal workers, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) was a key player in many of these coalitions and successful anti-privatization struggles (Pape 2001). For example, along with community partners, SAMWU was able to block water privatization in Bloemfontein, Free State, Montagu, Western Cape and Sedibeng, Gauteng (Pape 2001) and mobilized thousands in Cape Town and Johannesburg despite less favorable outcomes.

The high point of early mobilizations was had in the aftermath of the World Conference Against Racism in 2001 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, when thousands marched in the streets of Durban and Johannesburg. For several reasons, however, these labour-community alliances lacked the organic strength of the deep-coalitions (Tattersall 2003) of the anti-apartheid struggle. Many of the organizations involved had given up their

> [p]olitical independence… when the majority of both labour and community movements, in the form of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), entered into formal alliances with the dominant political forces of the liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) (McKinley 2016, 60).

The ANC drew on its enormous stock of symbolic and material resources developed in the struggle against apartheid to shore up its legitimacy in the collective consciousness of South Africans and to marshal consent amongst both its allies and society at a large. This included the move from the unfunded mandates that provoked the service delivery crisis to an "anxious interventionism" (Hart 2014; see Chapter Two). The ANC also quickly and immediately mobilized the coercive power of the state, in both a discursive fashion and using brute force, to discipline its opponents and dissenting partners inside and outside the Tripartite Alliance—made up of the ANC, SACP and COSATU (henceforth 'Alliance')— characterizing them as extreme, far left and attempting to undermine the National Democratic Revolution (NDR[23]) (Hart 2002; McKinley and Veriava 2005; Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006; Barchiesi 2011; Marais 2012).

The COSATU unions felt the pressure of the other Alliance members to fall in line. SAMWU, for example, arguably one of the most progressive and militant unions in South Africa at the time, was chastised by the ANC for its role in the anti-privatization movement. As McKinley (2016, 60) argues, the institution of a neoliberal-corporatist labour regime organized around the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), also "served to increase the social distance between (employed) workers and (unemployed/informalized) poor communities" as "'[f]ree market' forces and an individualist, work-defined citizenship became the change-agents of both social and political relations of the broad working class" (see also Barchiesi 2011). This social stratification and differences in goals, strategy, tactics, structure, organizational membership and resource base complicated processes of coalition building and hindered the ability of unions and community organizations to cohere (Xali 2005; Lier and Stokke 2006). These divisions remain and reflect the ongoing shifting character of the working class under neoliberalism in South Africa (Gentle 2015). While the leadership of COSATU has become dominated by white collar unions, the composition of the South African working class more generally has in reality shifted even further towards precarious work whether it be blue-collar or service work and in the formal or informal sector (Buhlungu and Tshaoedi 2013; Satgar and Southall 2015). These shifts are compounded by the pressure on union members to protect their jobs and the possibilities for upward mobility in union structures in the context of a South Africa where jobs are increasingly hard to come by (Masondo 2012).

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[23] The NDR refers to the first stage in the (Stalinist) two stage theory of revolution advanced by the ANC's Tripartite Alliance partner the South African Communist Party (SACP) to be followed by a socialist revolution once the material conditions for transition have been established.

Community based organizations (CBOs) and community movements have not been immune to the impact of these dynamics. Internally, organizations have been plagued by a lack of resources, both human and financial, and when the latter are present opportunism, corruption and the misuse of resources has been widespread (McKinley 2012; Oldfield and Stokke 2006; Veriava and Naidoo 2013). Since the transition a variety of party-affiliated NGOs and other 'front groups,' the ANC aligned South African National Civic Organization (SANCO) being one among many, have compounded these pressures and sought to demobilize, integrate and transform CBOs into partisan service delivery and charity organizations—often referred to as the 'NGOization' of community movements—and even labour-broking agencies (Zuern 2004; Millstein and Lier 2012).

Outside the Alliance, organizations generally took one of two routes: cooperation with the state, more critical and nuanced in some cases as opposed to others, or outright opposition (Marais 2012; Naidoo 2015). Those that chose the former, if critically so, like the Treatment Action Campaign, managed to make procedural gains but have still been frustrated by a lack of progress and broken promises on the part of the state. Those movements which chose the latter route were generally even less fortunate, and under the structural constraints of the Alliance and the ardent campaigns to paint them as extremists and violently clamp down on organized protest, were isolated from important resources and structures provided by the trade union movement and middle-class activists and intellectuals (Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006). The result was a fracturing of the solidarity that had been built between COSATU unions and community organizations and the almost complete demobilization of the bulk of critical civil society organizations, coalitions and movements by the middle of the 2000s (McKinley 2012).

'Movement Beyond Movements'

South Africans did not take the turn to 'anxious interventionism' in the early 2000s sitting down, however, and as the decade progressed, protest continued with an average of 9,000 'crowd management' incidents recorded by police per year from 2004-05 to 2011-12 (Alexander 2012). The ANC, the party's local structures and aligned organizations also played an important role in these protests—though they have not been entirely controlled by them—as growing conflict between factions within the party have spilled into the streets (Dawson 2017; Langa and von Holdt 2012; Mukwedeya and Ndlovu 2017). Public sector strikes were also intense in this period with some of the largest in South African history taking place in 2007 and 2010. Discord within the Alliance, which at times appeared to threaten its unity over the course of the decade, and the palpable dissatisfaction with the ruling party and President Thabo Mbeki, was temporarily overcome in dramatic fashion with his removal in 2007 and replacement by Jacob Zuma in 2009 on the back of what appeared to be a wave of support on the left inside and outside the Alliance.

The ascension of Zuma to office brought COSATU back into the fold—hoping that progressive forces would have more policy influence in the Alliance and that a leftward turn was on the horizon—but further distanced the trade union federation and its affiliates from other protesters who were making fierce demands on the state for service delivery, decent jobs and a more equitable share of post-apartheid wealth. As Marais (2012) points out, however, the Mbeki-Zuma struggle was in reality a remarkable feat of political theatre which, while settling some scores within the party, served to reinvigorate the ANC's political project in the face of waning electoral and popular support, further centralizing power in the presidency and the party elite at the same time that branch level activity was waning as local members felt increasingly alienated. An important and potentially dangerous aspect of Zuma's victory argues Hart (2014, 197), was the development of popular antagonisms—whether progressive or regressive (like the regular outbursts of xenophobic violence)—and their articulation with his political project, while attempting to contain them within certain limits.

This political maneuvering included an acknowledgment by the Zuma Presidency (2009) that not enough had changed in the everyday lives of the majority of South Africans which introduced the Outcomes approach to address this state of affairs, which included considerable national level support for various housing initiatives, including informal settlement upgrading, a commitment to improving access to basic services, water and sanitation especially, and to improve low income housing finance and land markets. The Outcomes approach was followed up in 2012 by the National Development Plan 2030 (NPC 2012) which, in a similar fashion but with a focus on the long term, couched the ANC's reinvigorated neoliberal development project in progressive language, setting out targets to eliminate poverty, reduce inequality and transform South Africa by 2030.

Soon after Zuma's election in 2009, however, cracks began to appear in the progressive façade both inside and outside the Alliance and ongoing protests and strikes intensified (Ceruti 2011). Delivery on what were lofty goals given the government's record continued to be painfully slow and a lack of preparedness for the arrival of the Great Recession in South Africa only made matters worse (Marais 2012). While independent formal organizations continued to play a role, the 'new' wave of community protest that began in the mid-2000s took on a less focused and fragmented form relative to earlier mobilizations, which Gillian Hart (2014) dubs 'movement beyond movements.' These protests were often referred to as 'service delivery protests' given the prominence of demands for housing and service delivery, an end to corruption and more responsive local government, which could potentially be resolved through governance reform and service provision (Booysen 2011; Fakir 2014; see Chapter Five). Many others argued, however, that they represent much deeper, racialized histories of dispossession anchored in the colonial and apartheid eras which continue to play out in complex and contradictory ways (Alexander and Pfaffe 2013; Duncan 2015; Hart 2014; McKinley 2012). As Hart (2014, 107) contends in relation to public services:

> part of the Faustian bargain through which people moved into the townships [during apartheid] was an understanding that they would be provided with housing, water, electricity and other very basic urban services at a low, flat rate. In places like these, moves to install water meters and commodify water represents a direct violation of this understanding, and is widely experience as another round of dispossession.

Though a number of more organized community-based organizations and coalitions in addition to the Housing Assembly have emerged—the most well-recognized and widely cited in the academy being the shack dwellers movement Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM)—they are few and far between, and have largely been unable to tap into the anger and discontent of popular protest (Hart 2014). Key union players like SAMWU who participated in the formation of earlier alliances, have been notably absent in these protests save a few limited instances, despite continuing to lead strike action including the largest public sector strikes in South African history in 2007, 2010 and 2012 (Ceruti 2011). These strikes, though massive themselves, did not achieve any significant policy changes or include demands for or lead to enduring alliances with CBOs and community protests. Nor did the labour movement make any considerable effort to unite these mobilizations failing to successfully offer any type of leadership or direction (McKinley 2012). Prospects for working-class alliances appeared grim; as a veteran anti-apartheid activist remarked to me in this period "so did you find those Social Movement Unions yet?"

The Marikana 'Moment'

The events at Marikana in August of 2012 would, however, shake the very foundations of the Alliance and usher in a new period of politics in the country (Alexander 2013). On August 16th 34 miners engaged in a wildcat strike against platinum giant Lonmin were shot dead by police near Rustenberg in the North West province. In the days and weeks that followed it quickly became clear that the state and highly placed officials in the ANC, including current President, then ANC National Executive Committee member, Cyril Ramaphosa, played a key role in the events leading up to this act of state violence on behalf of capital. A strike wave rolled across the mining sector for months in the wake of the massacre (Chinguno 2015), eventually spreading across the country and spilling over into other sectors, most notably agriculture (Webb 2017; Wilderman 2017).

At a special congress in December 2013 the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest union in the country and a member of COSATU, passed a resolution withdrawing support for the ANC in the 2014 election and announced its intention to launch a Movement for Socialism to unite the working class. 2013 also saw the launch of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by the charismatic former ANC Youth League (ANCYL) leader Julius Malema, who was expelled from the party in 2012. Self-styled as Marxist-Leninist-Fanonian, the EFF is variously described as ranging anywhere from radical populist to fascist. Combining left rhetoric with a strong racial populism, Malema and the EFF, unlike the relatively more measured Zuma project, seek to capture and amplify popular antagonisms in South African society, argues Hart (2014, 197). Definitions aside, this strategy has been successful, and the party has drawn significant support away from the ANC. The EFF won 6.5% of the popular vote in the 2014 national election and 11% in 2019. It is now the third largest party in parliament with 44 seats and, with the decline of the Democratic Alliance, is the de facto opposition in the South

African parliament. In early 2014, with support across the country of some 70,000 members, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) went on strike for five months, the longest and most expensive strike in South African history, and eventually won important concessions from what seemed to be an undefeatable employer that enjoyed the clear backing of the state (Gentle 2014). Near the end of the year COSATU expelled NUMSA for its actions in opposition to the Alliance (Bezuidenhout, Tshoaedi, and Bischoff 2017; Satgar and Southall 2015), perhaps hastening the development of NUMSA's Movement for Socialism. Most notably, NUMSA's actions include: the launch of the United Front in 2015, to bring together labour and community struggles as the UDF did in the 1980s; contesting, albeit unsuccessfully, local government elections in 2016; the launch of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), an alternative to COSATU, in 2017; and the establishment of the Socialist and Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) on the eve of the 2019 elections.

Meanwhile, although as aforementioned in a less organized form, widespread protest in communities across the country has continued and South Africa has registered some of the highest protest levels in world over the last decade (Alexander et al. 2018; Chigwata, O'Donovan and Powell 2017; Municipal IQ 2019). Unsurprisingly, analysis of the available data indicates that participants in these protests continue to consistently cite housing, poor service delivery, a lack of local government accountability and rampant corruption as the central reasons for their discontent. Building on years of struggle in the historically black colleges, or so-called 'bush colleges,' the #FeesMustFall student movement spread across the country in 2015 shutting down campuses and demanding free, decolonized education and an end to outsourcing on campuses (Booysen 2016; Chinguno et al. 2017; Langa 2017). Struggles around outsourcing in the universities have continued despite the marked decline of the student movement, as have struggles in historically black colleges. Independent worker organizing in several sectors around smaller general workers' unions—like the General Industrial Workers Union of South Africa (Giwusa)—workers' centres, forums and advice offices—including the Simunye Worker's Forum and Causal Worker's Advice Office in Johannesburg—that focus on organizing precarious workers, and workers' committees like those at the centre of the Marikana strike wave, has also steadily increased (Hlatshwayo 2018; Scully 2016; Sinwell and Mbatha 2016).

Collectively these unfolding dynamics have fractured the Alliance and have loosened the political and ideological hegemony of the ANC amongst the wider working class, evident in the dwindling of support for the ANC in a series of national elections over the last decade (McKinley 2017; Nieftagodien 2018). Although election results, including those in the most recent 2019 election, show strong though declining support for the ANC as a percentage of the popular vote, these results obscure the magnitude of the party's electoral decline (Veriava 2015). Falling voter turnout, which reached 65.99% in 2019, its lowest point since 1994, indicates that a huge portion of the population feel that any chance of 'reclaiming the real ANC of the past' has disappeared and are searching for an alternative (Marais 2012; Matlala and Benit-Gbaffou 2012; Gentle 2014). Struggles inside the Alliance over its decline in the midst of deteriorating macroeconomic conditions and numerous 'state capture' scandals resulted in Zuma's replacement as President with Cyril Ramaphosa in December 2017 (see Bhorat et al. 2017 on this period of turmoil). And it remains to be seen whether or not Ramaphosa will rescue the ANC and its Alliance partners economically or electorally. This uncertain outlook would seem accurate according to a pair of critical commentators who estimate that "only 27% of adult South Africans voted for the ANC" in the 2019 election (Fogel and Jacobs 2019, np) and the evidence which suggests that Ramaphosa's 'New Deal' appears to be floundering.

Post-Marikana, in the context of the upturn in labour organizing and strike action not just the unions but by workers' committees and more marginal labour formations and ongoing community protests and the emergence of nascent organizations and alliances—the Housing Assembly for example—many suggest that possibilities exist in the present conjuncture for the emergence of strong, inclusive and democratic organizations to advance the interests of the working class in South Africa (McKinley 2013). Indeed, in contrast to the relatively skeptical, even dismissive attitude of scholars in relation to the union movement in the preceding period—in which the literature on NSMs experienced a veritable explosion—an enormous amount of popular and academic work has wrestled with the potential of the 'new' union movement to lead a working class resurgence in South Africa (Ashman, Levenson and Ngwane 2017; Ashman and Pons-Vignon 2014; Beresford 2015; Bond 2014; Democracy from Below 2014; Gentle 2014; McKinley 2017; Nassen-Smith 2018; Neocosmos 2016; Ruiters 2014; Satgar 2014).

Broad and deep working-class coalitions have remained elusive, however, and the organized left remains weak. SAMWU has been notable for its absence and has experienced a decline in militancy as it struggles to cope with a scandal of its own. The trajectory of NUMSA and the United Front remains questionable (Beresford 2016; Paret 2016), and SAFTU has been unable to recruit public sector unions to into its ranks. As McKinley (2013), among others, has noted, practically speaking, organizers inside and outside the trade union movement have long considered reclaiming the public sector and public services a key site of struggle, a campaign which has the support of various national and international institutions—including the formal trade union movement and human rights groups, and is legitimated within South Africa by the Constitution and various pieces of related legislation. But such a maneuver would require bringing together two constituencies which, despite acknowledging the strategic necessity of alliances, have for years been increasingly divided by the material and ideological trajectory of their organizations and fortunes post-apartheid. Indeed, one cannot easily draw a line between objectively clear class interests and their subjective realization in the consciousness of working class and collective articulation in the form of broad-based, militant organizations. It is into this context and these debates that the present intervention sits inquiring into how movements and/or movement organizers understand their circumstances and strategize in this context? How are theoretical understandings implicated in the molecular process of building genuine working-class solidarity in practice?

Theoretical Divides and Reproductive Praxis

The dynamics of struggles around public services in South Africa are best understood as challenges to ongoing forms of neoliberal restructuring. Several waves of so-called 'popular protest' of various forms characterized by the participation of a variety of social actors have and continue to be present across the global South and North (Barker et al. 2013; della Porta 2015; Dwyer and Zeilig 2012; Ellis and Kessel 2009; McNally 2011; Motta and Nilsen 2011; Ness 2015; Ngwane, Sinwell and Ness 2017; Paret, Runciman and Sinwell 2017; Seddon and Zeilig 2005; Zibechi 2012). While restructuring has increasingly exposed society to the whims of market forces in this period, it has also directly and indirectly weakened the power of working class and popular organizations (Silver 2003). This period has also given rise to an increasingly diverse and diffuse collection of actors, organizations and groups spread across society movements forming "in aggregate a less focused political dynamic of action" (Harvey 2003, 168).

While a strength of the popular and academic debates around social movements in South Africa has been their attention to inequality, the state and capitalism post-apartheid, some of which takes class quite seriously (e.g. Dwyer 2004; Alexander et al. 2013), movements and the academy have not been immune to the current of post-class analysis discussed in Chapter One. As Seddon and Zeilig (2005, 13) observe, the experience in Africa has been much the same as elsewhere in the world, as "post-structuralism and postmodernism have swamped African studies with an emphasis on identity, indeterminacy, complexity and performance." Within such analyses, the tools of political economy and organizational forms associated with the 'old' social movements are rejected on the grounds that they are an imposition, the 'paradigm of the yoke,' and inapplicable to the unique nature of the continent (Bayart 1993). Rather, the complexity of social relations and formations becomes the object of inquiry informed by a diffuse theory of power (Mbembe 2002) that celebrates creative, entrepreneurial survivalism on the urban fringe (c.f. de Soto 2000). The latter is often celebrated as resistance itself from which it fails to be adequately distinguished (Makhulu 2015; Simone 2004). In their most extreme form, these perspectives display an aversion to the topic of struggle and liberation (Harrison 2002). Similarly, as others argue in relation to South Africa movements in particular, "[a]utonomist politics from the global anticapitalist movement have blown like leaves on the wind into South Africa" (Dywer and Zeilig 2012, 127; see also von Holdt and Naidoo 2019). Veteran South African activist-academic Trevor Ngwane (quoted in Bond 2012, 258; additions in original; see also Ngwane 2019) expresses the

> concern… that the [autonomist] ideology of no leadership means, by default, the principle of 'self-selection' and thus encourages a lack of accountability. There is also the danger of [autonomism] drowning in its own militancy, because of its refusal to develop long-term political projects in favour of immediate and short-term and militant actions.

While internal democracy and organizational independence are important principles for many movements, some scholars of South Africa have argued that, as opposed to 'old' social movements, these 'new' movements are radically democratic, reflect a genuine voice of the poor, seek to assert local identities and carve out spaces relatively autonomous from the state, downplaying the relevance of an organized working class (Desai 2002; Pithouse 2008, 2009, 2013; Neocosmos 2009; Gibson 2011; Chance 2018). This interpretation has been propagated globally in the literature on transnational social movements and the anti-globalization movement (Patel 2008, 2011; for a critique see Sinwell 2018). This assertion appears highly questionable, given the range and number of movements making demands on the state for service provision often framing struggles in terms of rights to be achieved through class and/or citizenship demands directed at the state, many of them espousing an explicitly socialist politics (Ashman, Levenson and Ngwane 2017; Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006; Dawson and Sinwell 2012; Dawson 2010; Dwyer and Zeilig 2012; Habib and Opoku-Mensah 2009; Larmer et al 2009; Nassen-Smith 2018; Ngwane, Sinwell and Ness 2017; Ngwane 2003, 2012, 2019; Runciman 2015; Sinwell 2011; Spronk and Terhorst 2012; Thompson and Tapscott 2010).

What makes these critiques somewhat understandable, however, are equally problematic analyses which hold to an economistic line of argument and/or a limited understanding of class and which seek to subsume the diversity of class struggle(s) under that of the narrowly defined worker, union and party: “[M]any in the new social movements, understandably repelled by Stalinist and formalistic party politics, have long been reluctant to discuss or propose forms of collective organization that could begin to build this bridge [between struggles] and provide civil society activists with a practical, strategic, ideological, and educational form” (Dywer and Zeilig 2012, 128). The Stalinist politics most often associated with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the narrow Marxist-Leninism which dominates in much of the trade union movement, including NUMSA despite its ‘workerist’ past (Ashman 2015; Friedman 2011), are exemplary.

The SACP holds to a bureaucratic, authoritarian form of democratic centralism in its steadfast commitment to the realization of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). The first stage in the party's Stalinist two stage theory of revolution against the internal colonialism of apartheid, Colonialism of a Special Type, the NDR seeks to develop the productive forces and working-class capacity before embarking on a radical economic transformation to socialism. This first stage necessitated the formation of a multi-class alliance or 'popular front'—the Alliance in the case of South Africa—to struggle for national liberation and democracy after which the struggle against capitalism and the transition to socialism would eventually occur. In practice however, the SACP—although not without varying levels of protest—has been subordinated to the ANC and its neoliberal economic restructuring program since 1994. While tensions within and beyond the Alliance have escalated with the formation of the new trade federation SAFTU and the workers party SRWP, large sections of the union movement including COSATU and SAFTU identify the organized working class as the privileged agent of social transformation in South Africa and the sphere of production as the key terrain of struggle.

Thus, while there have been many hopeful instances of working-class unity forged in and through post-apartheid struggles, they have largely remained temporary and informal leaving contemporary organizing on the left on a number of parallel tracks, representative of the broader theoretical and political debates discussed here and a reproductive praxis. These tracks are well illustrated by two of the most celebrated examples of organized movements on the South African left in the recent period. These are, on the one hand, community-based organizing of which the shackdwellers' movement AbM is arguably the most notable and widely cited in the literature, and, on the other, organizing in and around the trade union movement, the most notable case of which is NUMSA and its United Front.

Abahlali baseMjondolo

The now famous shackdwellers' movement AbM emerged in Durban in 2005 around a struggle to stop the sale of land promised to residents for housing and has since grown to address all manner of struggles around access to housing and services with a Western Cape branch eventually emerging in Cape Town and various branches in and around Johannesburg. AbM is perhaps the most oft given evidence or example in South Africa in recent past of a 'New' Social Movement that genuinely reflects the 'voice of the poor,' seeks to carve out autonomous, radically democratic spaces and assert local identities—the 'shackdweller' or 'poor'—"in defiance of the state" (Gibson 2011, 168) while downplaying the relevance of an organized working class (see also Desai 2002; Desai and Pithouse 2004; Neocosmos 2009; Patel 2005; Pithouse 2009, 2013, 2018; see Holloway 2010 on this more broadly).

While oft celebrated on the left, this view of AbM has been resoundingly critiqued for what appears to be a hyper idealization by intellectuals and academics close to the movement of what is a far more fluid process of engagement and contestation with and beyond the state in efforts to improve the living conditions of its members and, in some cases, to transform the country (Ballard, Habib, and Valodia 2006; Dawson and Sinwell 2012; Desai 2006; Dwyer and Zeilig 2012; Larmer 2010; Ngwane 2012; Ruiters 2014; Sinwell 2010; Steyn 2012, 2016). This observation is not to deride AbM or its membership but rather to take a critical-sympathetic view (Dawson and Sinwell 2012) of social movement praxis and critically engage with representations of AbM, both internally and external to it, as radically democratic and relatively autonomous from electoral politics and the state and their impact on the movement.

Though by and large dominant, such views appear to contradict the evidence though they have had an indelible impact on AbM's praxis (Mdlalose 2014; Steyn 2016). These impacts include strategic mishaps such as proposing informal settlement upgrading and self-help initiatives for housing, reinforcing the states abdication of its responsibility of provision, rather than situating the BNG policy, and other more minor yet equally problematic policy changes and concessions—not to mention the use of narrowly legal and constitutional tactics—within the broader political economy of housing and service delivery. These and far more egregious tactics, such as AbM's declaration of support for the right-wing Democratic Alliance in the 2014 elections, contribute to the fragmentation of left politics in the country more generally. The Housing Assembly has also noted the disconnect between claims to radical democracy and the centralized and highly gendered operation of power within the movement which they describe as a church or kingdom with "Zbu [Zikode, AbM's longtime leader] is its Pope/King!" (Organizer March 2018; see the debate around former AbM Secretary General Bandile Mdlalose's [2014] critique of the movement and the debate in the journal *Politikon* [2015, 42(11)] that followed).

NUMSA and the United Front

Arguably the most notable recent effort to explicitly build working class unity was/has been NUMSA's establishment of the United Front to "coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities" (NUMSA 2013) along similar lines to the UDF that led the fight against apartheid in the 1980s. Several years later, however, the record and trajectory of the United Front remains questionable (Ashman, Levenson and Ngwane 2017; Paret 2017). While the United Front's organizing work has been uneven across the country, rather than focusing on building solidarity in struggle, quite early on it devolved into a bureaucratic 'talk shop' to influence political discussion on the left and in many regions degenerated into a mobilizing device for what was a very poor showing by United Front-aligned candidates in the 2016 local government elections. According to Housing Assembly organizers, the United Front in Cape Town is largely defunct. Relations with other organizations in the city, in the rare case that the United Front actively engages, are paternalistic and appear to attempt to subsume broader working-class struggles under those of organized labour, NUMSA in particular, consisting of what many activists and organizers call ‘rent-a-crowd’ alliances. It has very little grassroots engagement with working class communities and organizations and a dismissive attitude towards broader working class organizing and rank-and-file worker participation in it.

Though in the immediate aftermath of its departure from COSATU, NUMSA was far more progressive and radical both on paper and in practice than other unions in the country (Ashman and Pons Vignon 2015; NUMSA 2013), it appears to have reverted to a patriarchal, bureaucratic form of unionism based on a narrow conception of class and reading of Marxist-Leninism more akin to that of the SACP’s Stalinism than they would like to admit (Pillay 2017). While NUMSA has long espoused a more democratic form of workers’ control and rank and file unionism, even in the aftermath of its break with COSATU and the Alliance it has continued to invoke the NDR as the path to socialism, arguing that the SACP has erred only in not following through on it and being captured by capital (Ashman 2015; see SAFTU General Secretary (then COSATU GS) Zwelinzima Vavi and NUMSA GS Irvin Jim’s debates with SACP theorist Jeremy Cronin following NUMSA’s break; Vavi 2014).

There is a growing body of evidence for this assertion in NUMSA’s reorientation away from rank-and-file worker democracy and education and the facilitation of economic, ecological and gender justice and towards the new union federation SAFTU—despite the latter’s commitment to the former principles it remains a top-down initiative—and the hasty establishment of the SRWP to (poorly) contest the 2019 national elections (Ashman, Levenson and Ngwane 2017; Nassen-Smith 2018; Pillay 2017; ECS 2019). Housing Assembly organizers were particularly unhappy with the way NUMSA attempted to tightly control the proceedings at the latter's Working-Class Summit held in Soweto in July 2018, where the union adopted an almost authoritarian democratic centralism. As a part of a left caucus that formed in the course of the summit, the Housing Assembly representatives pushed for a more open democratic process and for the inclusion of the voices of community organizations present and their daily experiences of social reproduction but with little success despite the inclusive appearance of the summit statement (Organizer November 2018). Indeed, "the iconography and language employed by NUMSA often uncritically reproduces the traditional image of the male, industrial South African proletariat. It often fails to properly recognize the nature and importance of struggles that don't easily fit into Marxist-Leninist orthodoxies" (Fogel 2014, np).

A Basis for Unity?

Several of these currents played out in a particularly complex fashion in the militant South African student movement that emerged in early 2015 fighting for the decolonization of higher education (#RhodesMustFall), a freeze on tuition fee increases as a first step towards free higher education (#FeesMustFall) and an end to labour outsourcing on college and university campuses (#OutsourcingMustFall/#EndOutsourcing) (Booysen 2016). Through massive direct action and campus shutdowns students extracted a number of concessions from the state in a relatively short time, although limited in hindsight, re-invigorating pre-existing and long fought struggles by students, the majority in formerly black colleges around tuition fees and by outsourced workers with which they developed alliances to end outsourcing and for a living wage (Blake 2015; Grossman 2006, 2016). In the face of fierce state repression, however, and without strong organizational structures—there were frequent and strong claims that the movement had no formal leaders (Ngwane 2019)—the movement quickly fractured and declined. Other reasons for this decline have been located in the movement's inability to: adequately address the articulation of race and class in South Africa amidst charges of elitism in which the result was “a false choice between race and class—either/or instead of both/and” (Ashman, Levenson and Ngwane 2017, 100); successfully combat internal gender-based domination, exclusion and violence; sustain and deepen alliances with workers within the universities and beyond to fight for public education more generally, struggles which continue into the present despite the decline of the student movement; link up with other labour struggles and those around social reproduction waged on a daily basis in working class communities (Dlakavu 2017; Jacobs 2016; Lester et al. 2017; Long 2018; Miller 2016; Naidoo 2016; Nassen Smith et al. 2017; for a relevant intervention in relation to similar struggles in the US see Kelley 2016). In spite of these shortcomings, the student movement injected much needed energy into struggles on the South African Left while problematizing many stale debates internal to it. They also marked yet another moment in the fracturing of support for the ANC.

At first glance and as discussed above, it may appear that these divisions within the working class reflect the increasing social distance between the objective class positions of unionized workers and under/unemployed and informal workers and residents amidst the growing flexibilization and casualization of labour (the intensification of which South African capital regularly calls for and about which a debate intensified in the business press in mid 2019; Hlongwane 2019). While this gap is significant, upon closer examination of the living conditions of workers’ and their families, particularly their access to housing and services, it appears that the experience of these seemingly divergent sections of the working class is far similar in some respects than employment status suggests (Ngwane 2017b, 2019; Paret 2017). This includes many of the students labelled ‘middle-class’ engaged in #FeesMustFall.

What appears to be an equally important obstacle to unity are the broadly held yet differing understandings of class, identity and social struggle and the forms of organizing, strategy and tactics they inform. The neoliberal corporatist post-apartheid labour regime, the bureaucratization of unions and a move away from shop-floor organizing have institutionalized labour struggles to a large degree, whereas community and other protests in spaces of reproduction and consumption are more loosely organized, primarily at the local scale, and highly disruptive, often described as violent (Paret 2015; von Holdt 2011, 2014). Both are narrowly conceived, despite claims to the contrary: the former is dominated by a focus on the abstract worker while the latter is oriented towards the subjective experience of struggles around everyday life brimming with affect. Relatedly, Alexander and Pfaffe (2013, 2) argue that, "In a sense, for the poor, the capitalist lies beyond the state, and for workers, it is the other way around" the latter seeking higher wages from their employer, and the former better services from the government, again with the local state as a key site of contestation (Hart 2002, 2014). These appearances obscure the ways in which the neoliberal restructuring of both production and social reproduction serve 'capital in general,' elaborated in the discussion of SRT in Chapter One, regardless of whether the immediate opponent is the state or capital (Lebowitz 2003).

Conclusion

In spite of the apparent theoretical and practical divisions between struggles around production and reproduction and class and identity, autonomy and place there are, I would argue, both many recent cases in which solidarity has been built from common working-class experience and a legitimate basis for expanding and deepening these relations. Along with the moments of genuine solidarity that were indeed forged in struggles around higher education, these cases include the wildcat strike in Marikana where workers rejected the representation of their union—

in which pressures in the hidden abode of social reproduction were among the most powerful motivating factors—which have since continued (Alexander et al. 2012; Bond 2013; Ngwane 2017b; Sinwell and Mbatha 2016); the subsequent rise in new forms of organizing around advice offices which prioritizes whole-worker organizing[24] (see the Casual Worker's Advice Office; the Simunye Worker's Forum (CWAO 2018); Hlatshwayo 2018, Scully 2016, Sinwell and Mbatha 2016); and efforts by organized community formations to contest the commodification of social reproduction (like the Housing Assembly and its comrade organizations, including branches of AbM, discussed in this dissertation) and their engagement in the forms of organizing above through coalitions. All of these suggest that divisions, whether in theory, practice or both, are not insurmountable (McKinley 2016; Ngwane 2019; Pillay 2017). Informed by the analytical framework established in Chapter One, and by SRT in particular, and based upon evidence provided by its praxis, in Chapters Four and Five I will suggest that efforts like those of the Housing Assembly may present alternatives to overcome this working-class divide.

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[24] To borrow American Communist Party General Secretary and IWW member William Z. Foster's (1936) term. See McAlevey (2016).

Chapter Four: The Housing Assembly as a Working-Class Social Movement

As I argued in the last chapter, organized struggles around production and reproduction have remained relatively distinct in post-apartheid South Africa (Ashman, Levenson and Ngwane 2017; McKinley 2016; Paret 2017). Although there are a number of factors implicated in working class fragmentation in the country that are beyond the immediate control of working-class organizations—economic restructuring and state repression for example—there are also those that serve to undermine attempts to build deep working-class solidarity and strong organizations from within.[25] These include understandings which separate struggles around production and social reproduction, those waged by workers and those waged by the unemployed, those against exploitation and those against oppression, in which distinctions between autonomy, identity and place on the one hand and an abstract economistic notion of class on the other, are pronounced. Though often occluded from analysis and practice of social struggle in the country, patient organizing in workplaces and communities to overcome many of these divisions has continued.

This chapter is informed by the analytical framework established in Chapter One which offers a critique of limited conceptions of class, like those that have prevailed in South Africa discussed in Chapter Three, and develops an alternative understanding of class which conceives of struggles beyond the workplace around social reproduction, inclusive of those against oppression, as part of the class struggle. In an effort to overcome the obstacles to organizing that narrow understandings of class—those that hold to its economistic definition and either embrace or reject it—create or exacerbate, this chapter draws in particular on Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and the praxis of the Housing Assembly to argue for a reconceptualization/ renewal/reconstruction of our understanding of working class struggle that takes seriously both the working class as it actually exists and the process of organizing it. Taken together, SRT and Housing Assembly praxis offer a more adequate theorization of struggles beyond the workplace as class struggles within a capitalist totality, rather than merely gesturing at their relationship to workplace struggles, and a way to convert these understandings into practice.

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[25] See the very relevant debate in the North American context around Jane McAlevey's (2012, 2016) argument for a focus on what is within workers control: strategy.

This chapter explores the Housing Assembly's praxis—its organizing around social reproduction in Cape Town—bringing it into engagement and conversation with SRT to highlight the success and potential of its organizing work to overcome divisions based on race, gender and class and to build working class power. The three sections offer illustrations of Housing Assembly struggles are offered by way of illustration: a series of key struggles around housing; water and the Cape Town Water Crisis; and a labour-community alliance where issues of housing, water and employment all played key roles.

Social Reproduction Theory and Working Class Organizing

As explored in Chapters Two and Three, the post-apartheid policy trajectory and the state and capital's material and ideological onslaught in South Africa, especially when it comes to social reproduction, is brutal, individualizing and demoralizing. This reality is evident in the country's rising levels of unemployment, poverty, inequality and indebtedness. These conditions prevail despite, and in many respects as a consequence of, the contradictory outcomes of state social expenditure, including mass housing provision, 'free basic services' and the country's large social grant system. In Cape Town the pressures brought on by restructuring have intensified in the recent period as residents struggle to cope with an ongoing housing crisis, which has long been at the forefront of community protest and includes land occupations and informal dwelling growth, and the ongoing drought and water crisis that peaked in early 2018.

Both the disciplinary discourse around and practice of the corporatization, commodification and privatization of these various facets of social reproduction place the responsibility for crumbling housing and water cut-offs and restrictions, as two examples among other indignities related to housing and public services, directly onto the shoulders of the working-class. This has both significant material consequences and a deeply fracturing impact. As one Housing Assembly organizer argues "we've gone from communities to individuals. That's what neoliberalism has done to us" (Organizer November 2015). This atomization and the intensification of competition amidst manufactured scarcity (Hildyard 2018) throws up enormous obstacles to the organizing process in both how working-class people understand their circumstances and in the practicalities of struggle so that divisions abound based on "racism, sexism, no jobs, our own issues… people are struggling to survive" (Organizer November 2015). David McNally (2011, 149) refers to these impacts of neoliberalism as "molecular transformations at the most basic levels of everyday life" which serve to disrupt collective subjectivity socially, culturally and historically.

The Housing Assembly's organizing around life in capitalist society begins with the patient work of going from house to house and street to street, bringing together these many diverse and, virtually without exception, physically and psychologically painful if not violent everyday working-class experiences of poor housing and service delivery. As detailed in the Introduction, this organizing work includes community organizing, popular education, research, writing and propaganda production, mutual aid and collective provisioning, coalition building with unions and other worker and community organizations and direct action, all at a number of scales from the local to the international (work which we will explore in more detail in Chapter Five). Rather than merely seeking to secure the simple amelioration of poor housing and service delivery, Housing Assembly organizing starts by engaging the daily experience of working-class households and communities in an effort to facilitate critical reflection, self-organization and action to engage and contest the state and capital.

Although their perspectives vary widely, the Housing Assembly's comrade organizations on the left often construct the struggles of working-class South Africans as a result, if an extreme one, of the depredations of global or white monopoly capital.[26] While this is quite accurate in many respects, this narrow analysis reproduces what Hart (2006) calls impact models of globalization, obscuring the relational character of capitalist social relations and the role of the state in maintaining these relations, depriving the broader working class of their agency. The Housing Assembly is critical both of this conception of capitalism and of the two diametrically opposed points of defensive struggle which it, somewhat paradoxically, privileges. On the one hand, are workers' struggles waged on the shop floor (really at the bargaining table by union leaders), as the only social forces powerful enough to combat capital. On the other, are place- or identity-based struggles to secure the amelioration of particular problems (in which NGOs and NGO professionals frequently play a prominent role, for better or for worse).

While attempting to defeat or move beyond them, both perspectives remain unable to escape, in whole or in part, the terrain defined by capital and the state. The universal worker is trapped in the realm of production and the community member, is mired in the immediacy of the local and the particular. As Gillian Hart (2014, 234) argues in relation to the former:

> exposing the systemic qualities and commonalities of the depredations of global capitalism is insufficient to enable 'local particularities' to cohere and 'be articulated as a general oppositional interest'… not least because this insistence of transcending such

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[26] See Bhorat et al. (2017) and Lehulere (2017) for a discussion.

> 'particularities' abstracts from race, ethnicity, gender and other dimensions of difference that operate as constitutive forces in class processes.

But, while Hart (2014, 234) identifies "the local state as key terrain for political action," place—the local or community—is not to be privileged as an alternative but must be "understood… in terms of the production of space, in which 'place' and the 'local' are always understood in terms of the relations and connections to that which lies 'beyond.'"

SRT concurs, offering an integrative analysis of capitalism in which the frequently separated spheres of production and social reproduction are theorized as constitutive of a broader social totality. In addition to struggles in the workplace against particular capitals, the working class wages struggle across the length and breadth of capitalist society against 'capital in general' whose power is transmitted through the market, the state and other formal and informal institutions and social relations which are integral to the social whole. Moreover, the concrete capitalism that both characterizes everyday life and is the terrain upon which class struggle takes place within and beyond the workplace is "actually a concatenation of existing social relations, shaped by past history, present institutions, and state forms" (Bhattacharya 2017, 87) which is co-constituted by and organized according to gender, race, and sexuality among other social relations of oppression. Thus "[i]nsofar as the internal relation of all oppressions with each other and with the capitalist totality is politically highlighted, such struggles can advance a class (as opposed to sectoral) consciousness, an awareness of the unity of the diverse relations that produce capitalism and society" (Ferguson 2016, 57). In articulating this integrative analysis, SRT offers a theory and potentially informs a practice of class politics which is more attentive "to the diversity of life experience in capitalist society" (McNally 2015, 139).

Beginning with their mutual point of departure—working class experience—in what follows I will suggest that the praxis of the Housing Assembly is well captured by SRT and is an example of a revolutionary praxis in the process of becoming. Through productive engagement with movement praxis, SRT's integrative theorization of production and reproduction situated within the totality of social relations can offer much to this organizing effort and has the potential to contribute to the vital task of (re)building working class unity in a time of class fragmentation and organizational disarray. Further to this, the Housing Assembly's work represents a potential if partial alternative to the reproductive praxis prevalent on the left in South Africa today which, although limited in scope and magnitude and constantly under threat from both within and without, is a concerted project with the aim of developing a critical, revolutionary praxis to organizing around social reproduction.

Housing Assembly praxis starts with the totality of everyday working-class life and its experience to collectively form a concrete critique of the political economy of neoliberal capitalism. In doing so it seeks to build the solidarity, organization and strategic knowledge necessary to challenge the demoralizing and individualizing material and ideological onslaught of the state and capital. The following exploration of Housing Assembly organizing helps to illustrate this praxis, its attempts to navigate, both conceptually and practically, the political field in which it operates. In making this effort the discussion revolves around the housing and water crises which have characterized daily life for working class Capetonians and South Africans in recent years and which continue to frame social movement struggles in the present.

A Decent House?

> When people get out of an informal settlement and into an RDP [house] within six months that RDP, that place is going down and the walls inside and everything. To me that is an informal settlement built with bricks. It's a shack. But what? In bricks. Because it's the same conditions, in terms of space, in terms of the quality that is supposed to be there, of everything that is supposed to be there, the plastery, the roofing, there is a shack or two in the yard also, so what I see is… as long as you are still in an RDP house, backyarder, rental stock, you are in the same situation as us in the informal settlement, and we need to come together (Organizer February 2017).

The Housing Assembly (2014) argues that the history of post-apartheid state housing delivery in South Africa can be summed up as a series of big promises, a rising housing backlog and then total failure. The organization contends that over the course of the last 20 years of ANC rule at the national level, a shift from public to private with many parallels to the agenda prescribed by neoliberal international financial institutions, has been the general experience in the country. The move from public rental housing to private individual home ownership, already underway in the 1980s, was to be accomplished via a trickle-down theory of self-help: the state will provide you with a starter house of 30m2, the economy will continue to grow, jobs will be created, access to finance will be expanded and you will be able to buy your own building materials and extend your house. Much like elsewhere in the world this strategy failed to work as planned. Worse still, the houses that were built by the state are now crumbling; 'the RDP scandal and disaster' is "a scandal for the government, a disaster for the working class" (Housing Assembly, 2014, 3). Many people have died and/or been seriously injured as a result of poor living conditions and collapsing RDP houses, while millions of people now live in a state of insecurity, their houses cracking, rooves loose, continuing to endure a range of associated health hazards given substandard living conditions despite the promises of the national housing program. Finally, in the wake of the 2008 crisis, over and over the state framing is that everyone is going to have to learn how to do more with less. More recently, when it became clear that the housing backlog was not shrinking despite efforts to find efficiencies, the state turned to apartheid era policy of providing sites and services, again with the assumption that via self-help, savings and expanded access to credit people could and would build their own houses.

In Cape Town, as of December 2015 the total number of housing applicants registered with the city was 303 953. Though it is undoubtedly higher, official estimates based on 2011 census data put the housing backlog at approximately 365 000 units (CoCT 2018d). Taking into account new demand, the CoCT estimates that 35 000 housing opportunities are needed annually in order to overcome the backlog in 20 years. Cape Town's housing market has supplied between 15 000 and 20 000 units per year over the past decade during which time there has been a shift in the type of units provided from majority formal, whether market or state, to majority informal (CoCT 2018e). Thus, given that the number of households is growing at a rate of 1.5-2% a year and housing delivery remains at 0.8-1%, it is highly unlikely that the backlog will be eliminated in 20 or even 40 years (URERU 2018). Moreover, according to the CoCT's (2018e) Municipal Spatial Development Framework and as the Housing Assembly points out, plans for state housing delivery remain dominated by large mega projects of formal housing and/or sites and services on the urban periphery and informal settlement upgrading.

Equally frustrating for the Housing Assembly is the state's awareness of its failure, despite public statements to the contrary. For example, three-time Minister responsible for housing Lindiwe Sisulu referred to her first tenure (2004-2008) as "the golden era of housing, both in policy and delivery" (Sisulu 2014, 1). Meanwhile, as early as 1996, the Department of Housing warned that "it will be no solace at all that we created our new ghettos democratically" (DHS 1996). Ten years later, in the middle of Sisulu's first mandate, the Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) responsible for housing in the Western Cape said, "we did not change the framework of the past… all we did was replace shacks with bricks" (Dyantyi 2007). And in 2016 the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCG 2016) said it was "harder to reverse apartheid geographies than it was in 1994." The Housing Assembly argues that the policy choices and implementation practices of post-apartheid governments have made sure that apartheid continues to live today, with the new RDP ghettos being constructed even further away from workplaces, business districts, services and amenities. In addition to the poor and deteriorating living conditions that are the norm in the Cape Flats and across South Africa—living conditions that are also organizing conditions (Schein 2014, 173) which, poor and deteriorating as they are, have a contradictory relationship to struggle—a number of divisive and destructive outcomes have a arisen from the neoliberal restructuring and governance of public services since 1994.

Market Fragmentation

The process of housing allocation has been particularly pernicious in this regard. Despite the widespread belief in its existence, "it is clear that there is no all-encompassing housing 'waiting list' that operates in a fair and rational manner to allocate houses on a 'first come first served' basis. Furthermore, no housing waiting 'queue' exists in the sense that it is currently understood by most people" (Tissington et al. 2013, 56). Rather, there exists a number of lists and databases maintained at various levels of government which, in theory, attempt to fairly allocate the limited number of housing subsidies and houses, or more recently, housing opportunities, i.e. houses and serviced sites, to those that have applied and been approved for a subsidy. These various lists and databases are themselves the outcome of a highly uneven process that amalgamated housing waiting lists from the apartheid era with lists of new applicants over a long period of time and in the context of multiple restructurings of both local government and of the responsibility for housing provision functions.

> While the specificities of this restructuring [have] played out in particular ways in cities across the country… [i]n Cape Town each of the thirty-nine local authority councils that existed during the apartheid era had housing waiting lists of their own, merged from neighbourhoods and managed in different ways. In 1996, when the thirty-nine local metropolitan areas were amalgamated into seven local authorities, the ways in which the housing waiting lists were managed changed again. For residents, these changes were not typically explained or understood in terms of the shifts in regime and in institutional configurations of government. Rather, these variations were noted as a change in the

> officials at the front desk and a move in the location of offices—from the centre of the city 15 km away, to a closer northern suburb, back to the city centre again—where applicants went to update their details or to apply for housing (Oldfield and Greyling 2015, 1106).

When the Cape Town Metropolitan area was created in 2000 these arrangements would change once more. In the state effort to amalgamate these waiting lists and apply a non-racial housing policy to a society stratified by apartheid, a process of housing allocation and service delivery emerged in South Africa that appears to favor some populations over others, lacking the impartiality with which it was originally conceived (Oldfield and Greyling 2015). This is the case whether intentional, as is the common perception fed by the instrumental use and abuse of service delivery as an political tool (Rubin 2011), or as merely a circumstance of the competitive process of allocation in the context of budgetary constraints, delivery mechanisms largely dependent on the private sector and demand that vastly exceeds supply (Huchzermeyer and Karem 2014).[27]

In the latter case, these dynamics and pressures have opened up or exacerbated numerous rifts and divisions within and among communities and individual residents or households on the Cape Flats, as they jostle for a limited number of housing opportunities and the housing backlog and the number of informal dwellings continues to grow. In his study of land occupations in Cape Town, for example, Levenson (2017, 489) notes that

> scarcity [of housing] breeds competition among informal settlements. Settlements that are able to collectively represent themselves to the municipal government as organized communities are more likely to become exceptions to the rule of formal rationality, securing housing [and/or (more commonly) extension of services or a halt to evictions] on an ad hoc basis… [which] produces a hierarchy of needs… [and] stands in direct contrast to the formal rationality of the waiting list.

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[27] See Tissington et al. (2013) for an overview and critique of waiting lists and housing allocation in general.

Competition between communities arising from attempts to construct themselves as ‘deserving’ can only exist in relation to their opposite, ‘undeserving,’ or ‘queue jumpers’ in DHS parlance (also contributing to belief in the existence of an oversimplified waiting list) which reinforces already existing hegemonic discourses pitting various sections of the working class against each other. These discourses are similar to those mobilized as a central organizing concept in state efforts to separate the ‘can’t pays’ from the ‘won’t pays’ when it comes to payment of tariffs for water and other services. On the one hand these tactics valorize those contributing to the powerfully symbolic National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and the post-apartheid ‘Rainbow Nation’ building project—'Masakhane’ or ‘let us build together’ was the phrase in the 1990s—while vilifying those accused of undermining it on the other.[28] As a Housing Assembly Organizer (February 2017) puts it, in the context of manufactured scarcity “The fact that promises are made but are not delivered… [it becomes] a cycle and because of that we end up fighting against each other.” These struggles break out both within informal settlements and land occupations undermining efforts to avoid eviction and/or gain access to services, and between informal settlements and adjacent communities who, often under material stress themselves and fearful of disruptive or violent protest, engage in ‘not in my backyard’ campaigns in support of removal (Levenson 2017). The latter reinforce hegemonic notions of criminality and queue jumping in addition to adding, almost without exception, implicit or explicit racist, xenophobic and anti-working-class undertones.

In both informal settlements and in communities where formal housing predominates, state intervention alongside the explosion of informal dwelling rental markets has also had enormous ramifications. In South Africa, house rentals rose rapidly between 2002 and 2014 with the biggest increases in this informal sector. While formal dwelling rentals increased from 19.8% in 2002 to 21.7% in 2014, renting in the informal sector nearly doubled from 18.5% to 35.6% during the same period (SSA 2016). Upgrading informal dwellings in both settlements and backyards without adequately taking into account pre-existing systems and relations of tenure and private property ownership disadvantages working-class households, poorer ones in particular, and decreases security of tenure while strengthening the power of land lords regardless of their class composition and whether they are made up of large or small-scale holders (Desai and Loftus 2013). For example, the Housing Assembly's work engages with the contradictory desires of both backyard dwellers and their 'landlords', often RDP house owners, who frequently empathize with one another. While the former wish to contest unaffordable rent increases, their landlords are frequently unemployed with few alternative sources of income, and are often relatives (Organizer November 2018).

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[28] See Hart (2014) on the invocation of the NDR, by the ANC in particular in service of hegemonic projects post-apartheid.

As both of these examples illustrate, in this competitive environment in the context of formal equality in a society where working-class communities remain starkly divided along lines of race and class post-apartheid—as well as ethnicity and religion—racial and xenophobic explanations of why housing and services are being delivered to some individuals and/or groups and not others find particularly fertile ground. Both have powerful decomposition and containment effects limiting contestation over housing needs to struggles within and between working class communities and/or the landlord-tenant relation within and between working class residents. Both also serve to fragment communities for which it could be argued, as the Housing Assembly does, that the only viable option to secure better housing conditions is through collective action.

Housing Assembly organizing engages these dynamics and the policy trajectory of the state, the insufficient delivery of housing in particular, challenging the working class to confront and work through these relations of oppression. Reflecting on these divisions and the all too frequent invocation of the 'swaart gevaar'—black threat—by relatively better off coloured communities in his district to mobilize residents against neighboring and predominantly African informal settlements, an Organizer (March 2018) commented that

> We as so-called coloureds were taught that everything that was bad was black. It's a deep, entrenched racism. But I think that this particular campaign will give us an opportunity and platform to unlearn that particular thinking and behaviour. Because for many of us so-called coloureds they are not intentionally racists, but it is deep down. We must deal with it; we must not shy away from it. We must talk to it. I think the campaign [for 'Decent Housing for All'] will encourage us to unlearn those particular behaviours.

Sowing the Seeds of Division

These divisions are not insignificant and when conflicts between communities and individuals over housing or around elections boil over they are frequently played upon by reactionary racial populist groups and political parties.[29] One Organizer (November 2015) summed it up like this:

> the government comes and lies to that corner, and then goes and lies to that corner and maybe they put whatever they want in the news and 'now these Africans think they doing better than the coloureds and coloureds think they are doing better than the Africans' but none of us is doing any better, its only just that they are strangling us to be more poor than we are now.

Housing Assembly organizers are indeed adamant that in addition to the atomizing effects of neoliberal restructuring the state and capital have been enormously effective in dividing working-class communities more directly and deliberately through the instrumental use of social policy for political and financial ends. Patronage is a consistent and glaring feature of South African politics, especially around election time when parties go to great lengths to secure the support of constituents (Beresford 2015; Berman 2016; Dawson 2014). Political maneuvering often includes housing delivery promises, and ongoing tensions between levels of government controlled by different parties[30] result in a similar and relatively continuous use of housing and other social policy investments as political footballs that filter down to the level of municipal ward councillors. As a 2011 review concluded, access to housing subsidies "is a political process" in which "councillors play a powerful role often deciding who accesses housing and who does not" (Shisaka 2011, 35). In addition to elected officials, the local state apparatus has not been immune from political pressures and public servants have played a powerful role in exacerbating tensions and divisions within the working class by playing the role of gatekeepers controlling networks of patronage that have emerged around housing and service delivery (Rubin 2011; Tissington 2013). In spite of the demise of formal apartheid, these tensions and divisions are often expressed along racial and ethnic lines as, in addition to exploitation, working class spatial marginalization remains organized in large part on the colour of one's skin or, as demonstrated in the regular flaring up of xenophobic violence against residents from the rest of the continent, one's nationality (Perberdy and Jara 2011). A Housing Assembly Organizer (February 2017) elaborated on these divisions and their underlying roots:

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[29] These include the coloured nationalist group 'Gatvol Captonian', the secessionist Cape Party, and the white nationalist VF Plus party, which recently faired quite well in the 2019 national elections.

> How do they divide us? All the different ways in which they divide us: the policy, the allocations, the system of housing delivery is now shifting from delivery of fully developed houses… to upgrades. But we know that people are still interested in the waiting list and 'when are we going to get [a house]?' So we're saying that the problem in terms of an alternative is not your [the state's] delivery, because you [the state] deliver too little… it's not the allocation, because when people start focusing on allocation then they fight with each other and… it becomes 'you favour the Africans versus the coloureds' or you 'favour the locals or the foreigners versus'. All of those arguments are about how they try to divide the working class.

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[30] The ANC national government and the long DA controlled Cape Town and Western Cape province are the prime example relevant in this case.

Housing Assembly work is vital to the process of overcoming these divisions, not by making statements for racial harmony or through reconciliation activities infused with the nationalism of the post-apartheid ‘Rainbow Nation’—or some regressive articulation of nationalism—but by “working in… communities, going around and collecting peoples’ demands, speaking to them about their issues, relating to their issues in their own comfortable space [because we] are in the same situation and I’m relating with your issues and the importance of why we need to stick together…, as the working class” (Organizer November 2015). Another comrade articulated that the Housing Assembly’s

> approach is different. We’re saying we want a system where that kind of thing [competition and infighting] can’t take place. Where you [the state] allocate houses because you’re building millions of houses to make sure that there are decent houses for everybody and then… [the working class is] not going to fight with each other. So, we must be able to build the confidence in the working class… that… this is the way we are meaningfully going to move towards Decent Housing for all. It’s not going to come through upgrades. Upgrades might improve some people for a certain period of time but it’s not going to change things fundamentally (Organizer February 2017).

In thinking through the lived experience of working class South Africans, knowledge gathered and understandings formed by Housing Assembly organizers through hard conversations about gender, race and class and what freedom really means in the ‘new’ South Africa, are at the core of developing a relevant, concrete critique of capitalist social relations vital for building solidarity and strong working-class movements. The organization wholeheartedly rejects the dominant and ‘common sense’ perspectives offered by the state and capital locating responsibility for the current state of affairs around housing in the “failings of the state’s neoliberal capitalist housing policy” (Housing Assembly 2014, 2).

The Housing Assembly is particularly critical of the post-2014 U-Turn on housing announced by Minister Sisulu which accomplished both a material and ideological maneuver, marrying the intensification of austerity with the displacement of responsibility for the material conditions of working-class life onto the backs of those suffering in these conditions themselves. The U-Turn accused South Africans of being lazy and representative of a ‘culture of dependency’ that state provision of housing and other entitlements has created since 1994. Sisulu (2014b) directed her ire at youth in particular: “[o]ur intention in giving free houses was to right the wrongs of the past and make sure that we can give our people dignity. And that group of people is not the people below the age of 40… Now if it is not clear, say it in every language. None of you are ever going to get a house free from me while I live.” The solution Sisulu offered was a renewed turn toward both the market and an emphasis on self-help reminiscent of late apartheid combined with innovations in construction methods, materials and housing finance.

The Housing Assembly (2014, 1) counters these proposals and argues that “cheap policies such as site-and-services, the upgrading of informal settlements and backyard dwellings, ‘re-blocking’ initiatives, and self-help schemes, among others, are hopelessly inadequate changes and unacceptable as alternatives to decent housing for all.” The movement locates organizing as part of building a “mass organization that unites the working class… to especially reach out to and mobilise… disadvantaged and oppressed groups… [and] link up with international struggles… to develop a working-class alternative to the neoliberal capitalist housing policy framework.”

A Water Crisis for Whom?

These dynamics also play out forcefully around struggles for water, the key public service related to housing. The ‘blue top water meters’ equipped with water management devices or ‘WMDs’ (the ‘weapons of mass destruction’ joke is not lost on movement organizers) are at the centre of these struggles in Cape Town. WMDs have been foisted on poor communities for many years, especially those eligible for Free Basic Water. WMD installation (and a prepaid electricity meter) comes with a promise to write off previous water bills after six months which is an attractive offer as many people are massively in debt to the municipality (although often through little or no fault of their own). Historically WMDs dispense 200L or, if a household falls under the indigent line, 350L of water per day for free. Only if your account with the municipality is in good standing can you consume beyond this limit. At 350L per day this works out to 87L per person, per day, and at 200L per day 50L for a household of four. This is within the WHO long term minimums for water consumption but in cases of sub-standard housing, in which the large majority of Capetonians live, the WHO (2013) recommends much more. To make matters worse, average household sizes in poor, working class areas in Cape Town far exceed the standard household size of four with some houses having many more people living on one property whether inside the house or in shacks in the yard. The following description of one working class household's experience of coping with commodified service delivery and water restrictions in the water scarce Western Cape is, while extreme, representative of the broader conditions of everyday life in the townships of the city and helps to situate the deterioration of working-class living conditions in the recent period.

The working-class household in question is reminded everywhere to conserve water as if it is their consumption which is to blame for water shortages (the government's War on Leaks program started in 2015 focused on townships). This insinuation is made despite the presence of evidence which indicates that the poor use very little water relative to more wealthy residents and corporations (CoCT2018b). These messages, chiding and urging conservation are delivered via television and radio into the household constantly though they need no reminder relative to pool owners: the last drop of water the household has access to is usually scooped out of the bathtub well before noon. The bathtub is frantically filled every morning at 4AM before the faulty WMD, that is supposed to freely dispense 350L of water per day prematurely shuts off after dispensing only roughly 75 liters of water. At the time of my visit this was still happening more than a year after it was installed by a subcontracted plumbing company, in exchange for writing-off the household's water account arrears, a promise that had not yet materialized and that the city council seemed unable to resolve. It was the household's middle child, not yet a teenager, who signed the consent form for the installation of the WMD upon being threatened with the possibility of eviction by the subcontractor whom, upon the household being directed to take up the problem with the city council—which itself took repeated visits via expensive privatized transport to the local council offices by the retired, unwell and mobility-restricted legal head of the household—has repeatedly failed to repair the device. And so, the 14 people that live on the property continue to survive on approximately 75 liters of water a day (Interview, April 2016). This is approximately 5L of water per person, per day. Even if the meter properly dispensed the full 350L per day this is only 25 litres of water per person per day; just above the WHO (2013) minimum threshold for 'short-term survival.'

This case and countless of similar others reported in the course of the Housing Assembly's work appear to be the norm across the city and have been for some time.

> In many poor areas in Cape Town, households receive very high municipal bills which they are unable to pay. This is due to a number of issues, including leaks, inherited debt from previous owners, and many outside people using a household's water [including temporary occupants, back or front yard dwellers and neighbours]. Most residents don't know about their water rights and the indigent policy of the City of Cape Town. Some are aware that they receive a free basic amount of water but do not understand the complicated rebate system and what it implies for them. Residents are afraid to go and negotiate with the City to arrange for settling their debt, because several residents have found that when they go forward, they are then told that they must pay immediately, or receive disconnection of supply letters (Wilson and Pereira 2012, 6).

The experience of a faulty device which dispenses much smaller amounts of water than indicated is also common. An unresponsive or unhelpful CoCT is also the rule rather than the exception, directing residents to the sub-contractors who installed the device, who then direct them back to the municipality and so on. WMDs are also frequently installed on the wrong properties. Some experience with a faulty meter and problems and delays in getting it repaired are by far the norm in communities where the Housing Assembly organizes, a long-experienced consequence of widespread subcontracting and well established in the literature (Smith 2004; Mahlanza et al. 2016; Thompson et al. 2013). While the extreme experience described above was no exception historically, water restrictions, the installation of WMDs and the heavy-handed tactics that accompanied them intensified as Cape Town struggled to cope with ongoing drought and a water shortage that reached crisis levels in late 2017.

The Cape Town Water Crisis

After several years of below average rainfall, water levels in the reservoirs and dams supplying Cape Town reached critically low levels in 2017 and late in the year the City of Cape Town (CoCT) warned that it could run out of water, or reach "Day Zero," in early 2018. In March 2018, the crisis was declared a 'national state of disaster' by the South African National Disaster Management Centre. While initially set for mid-March, dramatic reductions in water usage meant that "Day Zero" predictions were repeatedly pushed back until the CoCT eventually announced that, given adequate winter rainfall, it would avoid running out of water in 2018. This was eventually the case and, at the time of writing in mid-2019, dam levels now exceed 80 percent (CoCT 2019). The enormous reductions in city-wide water consumption which averted the crisis, down to 500 million litres per day (MLD) in February 2018 from 900 MLD during the same month in 2017, were achieved primarily through household conservation, pressure reduction, the installation of household flow regulators (WMDs) and punitive tariffs. The CoCT's strategy to reduce water usage had serious implications for overcrowded working-class households in both the short-term, as they disproportionately suffered restricted access and escalating water bills as the shortage worsened, and in the longer-term as water restriction and commodification became increasingly normalized out of the "necessity" of managing the crisis and ongoing water scarcity through restrictions, rising rates and WMDs.

Several state reports had quite accurately predicted the current crisis as far back as the early 2000s and warnings about the risk of water shortages in the drought prone Western Cape province as far back as the early 1990s when drought risk was included in Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) plans which urged various levels of government to take action to address the problem (DWAF 2007; 2009; Isaacs 2018; Norwood-Young 2018; RSA 1998). It was paradoxical then when the CoCT insisted that it was caught off guard by the crisis and shifted the blame firmly onto the shoulders of residents. In a press release in early January 2018, the CoCT (2018b) admonished Capetonians, which it characterized as careless and unwilling to save water, that it would proceed to force wasteful residents to comply with water restrictions. As one city councillor and former executive deputy mayor pointed out in a speech to city council in late 2017, the city's claim that the crisis came as surprise was "complete nonsense" (Haskin 2017).

The CoCT's claim and the restrictions which accompanied it have been particularly infuriating and significant for working-class Capetonians, who use disproportionately less water than more wealthy residents. For example, informal settlements account for only 4% of Cape Town's water consumption despite making up some 15% of the city's population (CoCT 2018a). Yet the CoCT's narrative was powerful and there were frequent and ongoing reports of wealthy residents blaming the poor, including from members of the Housing Assembly, for the crisis, the latter who, if they apply and receive indigent status, can receive a basic amount of water free.

The contradictions between these claims and the reality that restrictions on ‘pool refills’ were not put in place until the middle of 2017 around the same time the city announced that dams supplying water to the city dipped below 20% capacity, were glaring (Wilson and Pereira 2017). Indeed, arguments frequently circulated, at least when it came to the sharing of blame and the general lack of water during the crisis, that Capetonians were all in the same boat. In a CBC.ca piece, the owner of a boutique hotel in Rondebosch, an affluent, largely white suburb adjacent to the University of Cape Town, characterized the crisis as “a leveller, we’re all the same now. If there’s no water, nobody’s got water” (Evans 2018). Adding to the irony she was having a well drilled on her property at the time.

But as the late geographer Neil Smith (2006, np; emphasis added) noted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina ‘There’s No Such Thing as a *Natural* Disaster.’ Drawing attention to the uneven social relations of ‘natural disasters’, the impacts and effects of which are mediated by the contours of race and class, to which we can add gender, among other social relations, Smith’s words and the Housing Assembly organizing around the crisis discussed below, draw our attention to the polarized impacts of the water crisis and the uneven impact of the CoCT’s thoroughly neoliberal response to it. In a society characterized by spiralling inequality, poverty and unemployment, in which access to services is increasingly mediated by the market and one’s ability to pay, more and more working-class South Africans are unable to afford services, eking out an existence on what little the state provides free of charge. What claims to the great levelling impact of the crisis and efforts to respond to it miss, as Smith (2006, np) reminds us “is that far from flattening the social differences, disaster [response and] reconstruction invariably cuts deeper the ruts and grooves of social oppression and exploitation.”

Underlying the inequitable distribution of these impacts is the corporatized system of water delivery in Cape Town. Since the 1960's water tariffs in Cape Town have been structured according to rising block tariff which was modernized in 1998 and has been updated several times since. In line with the cost recovery model of Water Demand Management prescribed by the World Bank (1993b; 2004; RSA 1998) to maintain financial *and* environmental sustainability, higher volume users pay a portion of the cost of infrastructure maintenance and expansion, while medium volume user pay for their own consumption and subsidize consumption at lower levels (CoCT 2018; Smith 2004). As Wilson and Pereira (2017) point out, however, beginning in 2010—at a time when water scarcity had long been on the government's radar—this tariff curve began to 'flatten.' In other words, water tariffs increased by a much higher percentage annually for consumption at the lower end, 10 kl of water per month, than those for consumption at the top end, >50 kl a month. By 2017, when the Water Crisis was in full swing, households consuming 10 kl per month had seen their water bill rise by 260% while those using 50 kl saw no increase in nominal terms (Wilson and Pereira 2017). In addition to WMDs this served to place a disproportionate financial and consumptive burden on the poor while simultaneously allowing wasteful consumption by the wealthy and forgoing revenue that could have been spent improving infrastructure to reduce water waste or increasing supply. These inequities would become particularly harsh in the context of the crisis.

Prior to the crisis, a 'progressive' six block tariff was applied to water consumption in Cape Town. All connections received the first 6kl of water for free after which the 6 – 10.5kl block was charged at R14.89 per litre (also free to registered indigent households) and from 10.5 – 20kl at 17.41.[31] In case of water shortage, consumption reduction was to be achieved through three levels of mandated restrictions and accompanied by escalating tariffs to both incentivize conservation and compensate for lost revenue. Three more levels of water restriction were eventually added to the CoCT's water policy in 2017-2018 to address the crisis. Although they initially began in 2016, restriction levels and tariffs ramped up quickly beginning in early 2017. In July, when Level 4 restrictions were introduced as the crisis worsened, a charge of R4.56 per kl (which would gradually rise over time to R28.90 per kl) was applied to the first 6kl of water, formerly free for all, to offset further revenue reductions and pay for ongoing production and expansion of water supply. This charge was added to the next tariff block (6-10.5 kl) charged at 17.75 per kl which eventually rose to R46 per kl at the height of the crisis. Registered indigents, a status which requires annual renewal, still received the first 6 kl free and the CoCT introduced an, albeit inconsistently applied, rebate for the remainder up to 10.5 kl.

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[31] All figures include the VAT.

Per our discussion of FBW in Chapter Two, however, poor households are 40% larger than non-poor households and often number as many as 15-30 people including informal dwelling occupants and extended families, much larger than the average household size of four used by policymakers (Smith 2004; StatsSA 2017). Even at very low per capita consumption monthly water use can still average 15-30 kl a month which takes households into the 10.5-35 kl block charged at as high as R120.27 per kl. Over the course of the crisis, from early 2017 to early 2018, a non-indigent household of 15 people using approximately 33 litres of water per person per day would have seen their water charges (not including sanitation and fixed connection charges) rise from approximately R180 to R1060, or $19CDN to $109CDN. Even indigent households would have been left with a bill of R541 up from R106 for a similar sized household at the peak of the crisis. However, most households are not aware of their water rights, how indigent policies function or are ineligible, unable or unwilling to apply, or have had their status lapse and are therefore not registered as such. This is in addition to widespread and long reported problems with administration of the indigent policy and system (Wilson and Pereira 2012).

The market mediation of access to services, which the water crisis and response has greatly intensified, has also had a disproportionate impact on women who do the majority of the gendered household and community labour of social reproduction. The reality is that working-class women bore the brunt of the crisis, as they were forced to manage escalating restrictions to water use in a situation already characterized by inadequate access. As Housing Assembly organizers and members told me at the peak of the crisis (March-April 2018), this is water that is cut off every day by a WMD after (a maximum of) 350 litres has been dispensed; water that in informal settlements must be fetched from the standpipe several hundred metres away (often at personal risk to women); water that, if one lives in a backyard shack must be negotiated for with the landlord (if it has been upgraded to have its own toilet and tap then the WMD applies); water that must be recycled over and over again and used for many tasks; water that must be conserved so children are told to not wash their hands and to not flush the toilet (over and over again and long before the water crisis parents described this as playing the role of the 'water police') increasing the likelihood of diarrheal and other diseases.

This deepening of inequality in Cape Town through the response to the water crisis is also clear in the disproportionate installation of WMDs in working-class communities, where more than two thirds of which had been installed at its peak (Roeland 2018); the disproportionate impact of water tariff increases on working-class household budgets and; the disproportionate impact of the crisis on the quality of working class life. Little changed for many wealthier Capetonians, however. One middle class resident of Vredehoek (March 2018) told me "I shower at the end of the day now, rather than at the beginning too." Meanwhile, as many working-class women noted that, despite the fact that in situations of inadequate housing—in which the majority of working-class Capetonians live—more not less water is needed to meet daily needs (WHO 2013), being told to get by on 50 litres a day was nothing new; the crisis and the CoCT's response had just made their reality worse, and more expensive.

The Water Crisis Coalition and the Housing Assembly

But despite the thin reality of the material conditions of life for the majority in Cape Town, they did not accept the CoCT's scolding silently nor did they take the disaster response laying down. In early January 2018, when the CoCT welcomed community organizations, ratepayer and tenant groups, businesses and other concerned groups into the council chambers to draw to a close a lacklustre public participation process around amendments proposed to the water bylaw—necessary to implement the series of aforementioned measures to deal with the crisis—they were given an earful. From the disgruntled conversations that followed, the Cape Town Water Crisis Coalition (henceforth the Coalition) was launched by a number of the community organizations present. A series of committee structures—organizing, media, research—were formed and in the following weeks through various campaigns, engagements with the city, national government and business and direct actions, a variety of small victories were won. These included efforts to offer an alternative to the CoCT's narrative of the crisis, the opening of public and private springs for public water consumption and challenging the installation of WMDs.

The Coalition began as a diverse, cross-class coalition however, and, while not nearly as out of touch as the boutique hotelier quoted earlier, the class character of many of its member organizations was strongly reflected in its strategy. As Housing Assembly Organizers (March, April and November 2018) engaged with the Coalition relayed to me, many of its statements and tactics failed to address the underlying roots of the crisis and the CoCT's response nor the working-class experience of the crisis and of service delivery historically. In meetings and discussions both inside and outside the Coalition, Housing Assembly organizers drew attention to these issues and the disproportionate focus on measures which only partially addressed the symptoms of the crisis and had little benefit for the working-class. The opening of springs for example, which, while they may be public, were in middle and upper-class areas and remained out of the reach of the working-class majority. The Coalition also made statements that appeared to be outright fiction, such as claims that the crisis was “a myth” or “fake news” manufactured by the CoCT to increase revenue from water and gain public support for new drilling and de-salinisation projects (Evans 2018a). While there were elements of truth to some of these claims, they undermined the Coalition’s credibility, distracting from critical questions and slogans advanced by the Housing Assembly which interrogated the social relations that gave rise to the Water Crisis and asked “A crisis for whom?” responding “A crisis for the working class.” The often-careless critiques offered by the Coalition also distracted from attempts to interrogate the CoCT’s failure to address the crisis through the maintenance of public infrastructure, reducing luxury consumption and raising rates on it among other water financing alternatives, and/or steps to bring springs and reservoirs back under public control. For example, although it is far lower than the national average and includes unmetered water delivered to informal settlements, non-revenue water in Cape Town remains at nearly 25% (CoCT 2018). This is far in excess of levels reported by cities in the global North and South like Ouagadougou 16%, Manila 11%, Phnom Peng 6% and Singapore 5%. Finally, the Coalition repeatedly responded on a technical, legal or procedural basis to WMD installations and rates increases (von Schnitzler 2016). In the words of the Housing Assembly (2018)

> We are currently in conflict with the Coalition around their demands in relation to the water meters…

> - They [the Coalition] are demanding [that the City]:
> - stop the unlawful installation [of WMDs]
> - [engage in] proper consultation
> - [and undertake a] review of questionable tender processes [it had since come to light that a family member of the Mayor was awarded a contract for WMD installation (Haffajee 2018)].
>
> The Coalition developed an affidavit that needs to be signed and certified as a legal refusal of the management device, to stop contractors from installing [WMDs], this didn't stop the them, they would return with law enforcement who would threaten to arrest residents if they refuse or interfere with the workers.

For a little more background, the key argument levelled by the Coalition was that the WMDs were not approved by the South African Board of Standards (SABS). On top of the fact that SABS approval has absolutely no bearing on the legality of WMD installation under the CoCT's amended water bylaw (CoCT 2018c), the Housing Assembly pointed out the limits of pursuing this sort of strategy: it legitimated the CoCT's move to render technical what is in fact a social problem and failed to address the underlying commodification of services or articulate an alternative strategy.

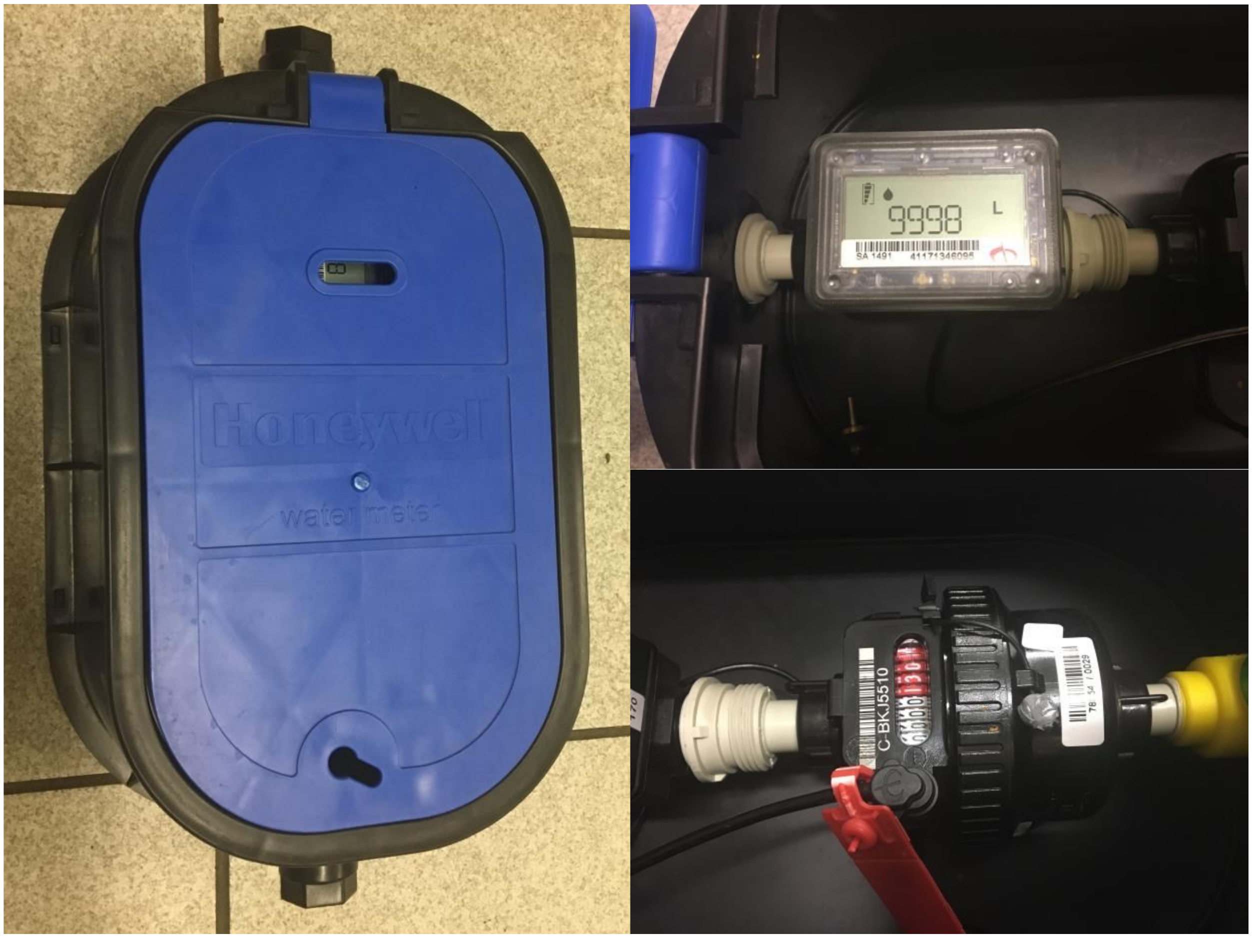

Image 4.1 *Water meter with water management device (top) and meter (bottom).* Source: Author.

> As water campaigners from below we were fighting inside of the Coalition to take the struggle to the masses, people are suffering with the water meters [WMDs], high bills, etc. We continued to raise the struggle and resistance against the meters. This led to the Coalition attending and arranging meetings closer to working class communities, as the meetings in the Central Business District have excluded many… [and integrating the anti-commodification critique more fully into their campaigns, which have gained an enormous amount of traction:]…
>
> The working class are saying No to water meters! We do not want our water to be privatised, we know the metering system is privatisation. Communities across the city have been getting organised, water crisis committees have been formed in various areas across the city [community run 'advice offices' have also been created], there have been marches to municipal offices, pickets and other activities, communities have also been resisting and chasing away the installers of the water management device [along with their police escorts].
>
> These meters are not only faulty but installed by workers who know nothing about plumbing [a result of the tender process—plumbing companies are assigned contracts to address service calls and are not paid unless the problem is resolved, with resolution

> meaning the installation of a meter (plumbing company interview November 2018)—and the use of the cheapest labour]. Often in our communities, after the meters have been installed, families are without water for days and in some cases for weeks (Housing Assembly 2018).

These efforts by the Housing Assembly to situate the Water Crisis within a broader critique of the political economy of service delivery in Cape Town and South Africa has played a key role in bringing working-class goals to the fore within the Coalition. Campaigning inside the Coalition also succeeded in bringing more communities from the Cape Flats into the organization, shifting its class composition, the content of its critique, its orientation vis-à-vis the state and capital, and its strategy and tactics. Particularly important were the somewhat successful efforts of the Housing Assembly to re-orient the Coalition's focus from the technical and legal terrain of capital and the state to the social terrain of the working-class, from the pursuit of arguments related to legality of WMDs to organizing working class communities to refuse their installation.

This is not an abstract critique but is fashioned from the working-class experience of living with restricted access to an inadequate supply of water. Reflecting on a community water meeting in February 2018, an Organizer (March 2018) describes the very simple strategy (discussed further in Chapter Five) the Housing Assembly uses to develop these 'concrete abstractions':

> the meeting put together a leaflet [which] highlighted the issues people are faced with. A questionnaire was designed to collect cases to expose how defective the [water management] devices are and how the limited amount of water impacts their daily lives.

Framed by the critique quoted above, these experiences, which highlight the varied experiences of, especially, women, youth, the disabled and so on, in all their visceral detail were used to build solidarity and organization, linking the concrete, common experiences of working-class communities, across lines of division marked by race and class. This strength was then mobilized to challenge both the immediate installation of meters in the streets, the payment of bills at local CoCT offices as well as at city council meetings and in larger direct actions. Several plumbing companies ceased taking on WMD installation contracts because community pressure and direct action prevented them from installing the devices (November 2018). As an Organizer (March 2017) argued, in relation to the more general strategy of bringing the struggles of everyday working class life, in this case both directly related to lack of adequate access to water, out of the townships and into the townsquare: "[Minister of Housing] Sisulu or [Mayor] de Lille are not going to tell us 'why are you make a noise about this?' when it involves diarrhea, when it involves death from fires." Rather than remaining mired in the technical and/or legal confines of neoliberal citizenship and service delivery, this is one illustration of how Housing Assembly organizing engages with the daily experience of working-class households and communities in an effort facilitate critical reflection, self-organization and action around access to the most basic means of social reproduction.

This critique of the CoCT's response to the water crisis viewed from the vantage point of the social reproduction of the working class is at the core of the Housing Assembly's approach to organizing and, I would argue, is one reason why it has been successful in drawing together a loose working-class coalition within but increasingly beyond the Coalition and beyond struggles over water alone. This approach works against commodification in both the short and long term by articulating a position in which the commodification of services and of social reproduction more broadly is consistently highlighted as a part of the state and capital's austerity agenda. The goal of the latter being the provision of new avenues for investment and maintenance of conditions favourable to accumulation, including limiting municipal spending on the 'poor' and the production of a divided and differentiated, flexible labour force. The Housing Assembly's approach simultaneously integrates and moves beyond reproductive praxis; in the case of the Water Crisis, approaches dominated by legal struggles over narrow technical and policy issues which, in remaining firmly within the realm of dominant capitalist social relations, fails to challenge and indeed reproduces them.

The Witzenberg Labour-Community Alliance

The Housing Assembly's more recent successes come after years of developing this critique and organizing strategy in the course of smaller and more localized struggles in communities in and around Cape Town. The relevance of the organization's approach to overcoming diversity within the working class, and developing consciousness, solidarity and organization was profoundly felt in a successful short-term labour-community alliance in the Witzenberg Municipality 120 kilometers North East of Cape Town in 2015. This alliance saw the Housing Assembly, struggling around water cut-offs and access to housing, come together with unionized workers (the majority Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) members), striking around wages and working conditions, in which gender, race, and class differences loomed large.

The Alliance in Context

The background to this struggle was the wave of farmworker strikes that rolled across the region in 2012 and 2013 inspired by similar actions in the mining sector in the wake of the Marikana Massacre. These strikes saw tens of thousands of farmworkers mobilize to demand a wage of R150 a day, a more than 100% increase from the previous minimum wage of R69. In a sector with approximately 3% of workers organized, a tradition of paternalistic farmer-farmworker relations, and in light of the history of racialized land dispossession in South Africa, the strike was unprecedented. In the end a new sectoral minimum wage was established at R105 per day, a 52% increase. As Greenberg (2014, np) observes, "[a]lthough land was a component of the demands, issues of tenure security and a living wage were more prominent." The latter, incorporated a decent wage but also services and secure access to land for production and shelter rather than partial ownership of commercial farms and other capital friendly proposals in line with post-apartheid market led land reform (MLAR) policies.

Farmers mobilized in response, however, and employed various strategies to avoid paying the new wage or to recoup it through other means. The Department of Labour also failed miserably in its duty to enforce the new rate. In his similar study of Brazilian fruiticulture, Ben Selwyn (2014, 118) "suggests that there is a continual process of strategic maneuver occurring [in the sector] …, as farms and trade unions attempt to position themselves most favorably within the accumulation process. As soon as one side changes its strategies in order to enhance its position, the other side responds, setting off a new trajectory of class interaction (ranging from re-negotiation to outright struggle)." In this case, South African farmers retrenched workers and increased mechanization while others simply refused to pay the new wage outright. Given the large number of workers living on farms and their traditional 'rights' or access to basic necessities on the farm, some farmers began to pull back on things they historically provided to workers 'free of charge' and/or instituted higher rates on essentials like rent, electricity, water, transport and food. In many cases the cost of some of these items in farm stores, long-termed 'robbery' as money lending, debt and unfree labour have increasingly come to feature in the daily lives of workers, increased massively. This roll back on the part of farmers also resulted in an increase in evictions from farms and growth in the proportion of farmworkers living off farm, the majority moving into informal settlements. Evictions have been particularly impactful for women who historically only have housing rights on farms through their husbands. When men lose their jobs farmers often evict the whole family despite the fact that women may still work on the farm on a seasonal basis and/or elsewhere in the sector. These battles are a practical illustration of the class struggle which Marx (1975) argued was built into the wage labour form, but also of its unfolding within and beyond the workplace, as Bhattacharya (2017) and SRT more generally contend.

These dynamics in the aftermath of the 2012 and 2013 strikes represent an intensification of trends towards casualization and the restructuring of the agricultural sector in South Africa since and even prior to 1994. Liberalization and an end to subsidies on the one hand and legislative gains by workers in the form of labour rights and minimum wage levels on the other are two key factors in this transformation to which farmers have viciously responded. As ILRIG explains, since 1994 some

> 2 million farm dwellers and workers have been evicted from farms and many of these people have been forced into townships in the rural areas, where they have become either unemployed, casual or seasonal workers on farms [and in processing plants and factories]. This now comprises the majority of farmworkers in the Western Cape, the majority of which also live off farm. Services in these townships are of an appalling standard with most people living in shacks or dilapidated Reconstruction and Development houses. Coupled to this, there has been a proliferation of labour brokers exploiting people’s desperate need for work, and piecework has been re-introduced on many farms. Farm owners obviously benefit from this situation: many no longer have to provide accommodation for workers, and hiring people on a casual basis or based on piecework keeps wage bills low (Hattingh 2013).

These changes have been similar in highly profitable and labour intensive fruiticulture production for export which has trended “towards consolidating a smaller core of permanent workers and increasing the number of casual workers” (Greenberg 2010, 16). While prevailing explanations cite competitive pressures and liberalization for the declining numbers of workers, especially permanent ones, it is important to note that the increasing profitability and *falling* labour costs in the sector since 1994 places moves by farmers to restore and increase profitability at the centre of these shifts. Workers themselves are also starting to come to hold this analysis quite broadly due in part to organizing work that engages with the process of strategic maneuver between labour and capital that plays out on a daily basis. The transformation of the sector post-1994 has in many ways eroded the notion of the farm as ‘family’ and the aforementioned paternalistic relations developed in the colonial and apartheid era that structured labour relations and disciplined farmworkers which, although they were highly oppressive, did ensure basic conditions of life for farmworkers and their families. While these changes have increased the vulnerability of workers through more precarious employment mediated solely by the wage relation, exacerbating the crisis of social reproduction, it has concentrated workers geographically simultaneously increasing the diversity of communities including in terms of race, origin and status. The failure to adequately uphold post-apartheid labour regulations coupled with the provision of social grants, housing and services to workers has partially exposed how the state facilitates capital accumulation through the maintenance of cheap labour. Indeed, some critics have gone so far as to argue that taken together these dynamics have effectively subsidized the flexibilization of the post-apartheid labour force and represent the continuation of subsidies to farmers, though in a less visible form, despite the more or less complete elimination of apartheid era agriculture subsidies (Devereaux and Solomon 2011).

The Organizing Process

Following several months of door-to-door campaigning and housing, water and political education workshops, several hundred residents—including unionized and precarious workers on their lunch breaks—marched on the Witzenberg Municipal offices in the town of Ceres in August 2015 to protest poor housing and service delivery and an unaccountable municipality. A memorandum was presented to the council which included cancelling plans for the installation of WMDs, an end to electricity cut-offs, an improved indigent policy and decent housing for all. While the municipality was slow to respond, the community succeeded in having the mayor thrown out of office. After a number of unsatisfactory interactions with the council and interim mayor, another march to the municipal offices took place in September. This time the community had the added clout of an alliance with striking fruit workers and their union FAWU for whom the community march had paved the way (Organizer September 2015). With this added pressure the municipality suspended the installation of WMDs pending further consultation with communities, national agencies and 'experts' and agreed to review the community's other demands. While this represented an important victory, and the strike was also relatively successful in the end, the municipality continued to drag its heels in the community portion of the consultation process and eventually announced that it would again begin installing WMDs. More localized struggles around housing and WMD installation have characterized struggles in Witzenberg since.

In this intensive process of organizing the Housing Assembly helped to address the reality that "workers and communities still find it difficult, even… during the strike… to see the link. It wasn't difficult for [us]… because we've come through the stage of being conscientized, talking about the issues… I'm living in the community before I became a factory worker… [the] community needs to support workers because that is our people in the community. They come home and their electricity has been cut, they are living in the backyards, so they also have [housing] waiting issues… it's one big thing that needs to come together" (Organizer March 2016).

Uniting the Spheres

And indeed, things did come together in a variety of ways. As one incensed Housing Assembly member put it, reflecting on the common experience of workers and community members (often unemployed) and the relationship between the state and capital that was generalized through the alliance over the course of the strike and prior and subsequent struggles: “die munisipaliteit is die baas en die baas is die munisipaliteit [the municipality is the boss and the boss is the municipality]” (Organizer March 2016). Cooperation between the state and capital played an important role in forming the context in which the alliance emerged and was evident in more than just the overt displays during the eventual strike which saw the owners of big farms stand shoulder to shoulder with the mayor and councillors on a number of occasions. Communities also drew connections between their experiences of MLAR, in which marginal land transferred to farm workers in the hope that they would become BEE entrepreneurs—simultaneously dampening demands for agrarian reform—was quickly transferred back to big farmers, and evictions from farms. The lawyers representing the farmers and enticing them to participate in land-reform projects were the same ones evicting them from farms and, in the latter case, close relationships with the mayor and council helped farmers avoid the negative repercussions of what were frequently unlawful evictions (Organizers March 2016).[32]

In this case, Housing Assembly Organizers again (March 2016) emphasized the importance of the gendered experience of productive *and* social reproductive labour as vital to propagating an integrative understanding of the two, adamant that

> It was the women that led the strike. The expectation would have been after six weeks women will start saying ‘but listen I have a family can we not negotiate, can we not stop the strike?’ But women were saying ‘let us go forward’! It’s the woman that says I can’t go to work today because I need to take my child to the clinic… it’s women that have been on the waiting list for 20, 35 years and there are no houses for them… It’s the mother that goes to the factory that must go home and work at the end of the day. It’s the mother that needs to go to the municipality and beg the official, ‘can you please, can I negotiate with my little wage, can you please put on my electricity’? It’s the mother… that gets on the truck at five o’clock to go to the farm, to go and work and doesn’t see her… household for the whole day. So, for me it was important that women needs to see that look this is affecting my life… now is the time for women to get much better organized because they are the people being affected at the end of the day.

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[32] See Hall and Kepe (2017) for more on elite capture in land reform projects.

The emphasis placed on lived experience was also important for overcoming divisions based on race. Deep relations of solidarity were built between African, often migrant, Xhosa speakers from the Eastern Cape or further afield and speaking other languages, predominantly occupying informal settlements and coloured Afrikaans speaking workers, more often occupying formal housing. The relations of each group to the state and capital are mediated by the historical legacy of apartheid and of agricultural labour relations which were played upon to stoke the fires of fragmentation and demobilization. These tactics, which I personally observed on occasion, included the municipality and farmers and packing plant owners and their representatives attempting to meet with, offer concessions and/or communicate threats to various constituencies. Different groups of workers, those living on farm versus those living off farm and those living in different communities whose populations were racialized, although these divisions were never explicitly referenced, were often targeted. Key organizers were also approached with offers and intimidated with threats throughout this period (Organizer March 2016). In the face of these naked attempts to divide and conquer, the organizing work of the Housing Assembly and its coalition partners proved pivotal in holding together a united front. One of the most inspiring and effective examples were roving groups of women—mothers, workers, grandmothers, aunties—and their comrades who worked from door to door and community to community to combat and in many cases overcome these divisions.

Conclusion

Housing Assembly praxis starts with the totality of everyday working-class life and its experience to collectively form a concrete critique of the political economy of neoliberal capitalism. In doing so it seeks to build the solidarity, organization and strategic knowledge necessary to challenge the demoralizing and individualizing material and ideological onslaught of the state and capital. Informed by its critique of the political economy of housing and public services and with the explicit goal of proposing working-class alternatives to the neoliberal status quo, the Housing Assembly's approach is summed up well by SRT. As Ferguson (2016, 57 emphasis in original) argues, in addition to struggles around the wage relation, "*[a]ny* struggle within the realm of social reproduction – be it anti-racist, feminist, anti-colonial, or be it over education, healthcare, transportation – that promotes human need over capital's interests can chip away at the capitalist social formation." Across the three episodes of struggle explored in this chapter, in the process of organizing around housing allocation, delivery, evictions, WMDs and in drawing these struggles together with the struggle for a decent wage, the Housing Assembly focuses on building relations of working-class solidarity to move collective struggle forward. Importantly, these organizing efforts work across lines of division marked not only by class differences based on living conditions and/or employment status but also those marked by divisions structured by social relations of oppression which remain deeply entrenched post-apartheid. In acknowledging the limited nature of the Housing Assembly's work and the frequent setbacks it continues to experience, the potential of its commitment to the slow, patient work of organizing the working class in all of its diversity and in all of the spaces in which it struggles for self-realization must also be noted. It is to a closer examination of this method to which we now turn in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Consciousness, Learning, and Knowledge Production in the Housing Assembly

Speculating about the significance of the ongoing so-called service delivery protests in South Africa, journalist and academic Jane Duncan (2015) recently posed the following question in relation to opposing perspectives on the issue: “Are they another means of pressuring the ruling ANC into delivering better services, or do they represent a new form of anti-systemic politics that promises to change how society is organized, and for the better?” If we take our lead from Thompson (1978), it would appear that these protests are potentially not just about services as a form of social inclusion (Booysen 2011; Fakir 2014), nor are they autonomous prefigurative projects or privileged ‘local’ places in the ‘space of flows’ (Neocosmos 2009; Pithouse 2013). Rather, in line with Alexander’s (2010, 2012) moniker ‘rebellion of the poor’ and as Duncan (2015, np) muses, while there is “little evidence of these demands being politicised, by being linked to broader failures of neoliberalised capitalism” and “just because protest organisers do not articulate their demands as being against neoliberalism and capitalism, does not mean that they are not reacting to their effects.” I generally agree with Duncan’s assertion about the nature of ‘service delivery protests’ and would argue that, in short, they are reflective of ‘people acting in class ways’ and merit Thompson’s distinction of ‘class struggle without class.’

Rather than attempting to find evidence of class as a structure, category, thing or object (Thompson 1963), the more interesting exploration for me then becomes the organizing work that is involved in the process of moving from, as articulated in Chapter One, “forms of consciousness that are shaped in various ways by class situations without yet finding expression in a self-aware and active class identity” to “the active awareness of class identity” (Wood 1995, 98-99). In other words, what is the content of the process of raising critical consciousness or conscientization, the process of moving from ‘common sense’ to ‘good sense’ (Freire 1970; Gramsci 1971)? This is an especially pertinent inquiry given that, in addition to a disregard for knowledge produced within and by movements, Cox and Nilsen (in Choudry 2015, 60) argue that “[w]hat is absent from much social movement scholarship is a strong sense of process: ‘of how movements develop through the fusion of people’s attempts to meet their local needs and organize around their particular issues, collective processes of learning through struggle at many levels.’”

This assertion is not meant to imply that a critical, revolutionary praxis is always present in social movements and/or that it can be easily confirmed or discovered through simple observation of the everyday activities of people engaged in struggle, whether individual or collective. Robin D.G. Kelley (in Holtzman 2010, 323), argues that

> everyday forms of resistance—all these daily actions—don’t really mean much without some sort of ideological intervention, political education. In other words, people learn a lot in process. They learn about what the weaknesses are in the system, but they’re not learning about whether or not they want another system, or what’s wrong with that system. They may just see it as their personal problem. That’s why all these forms of activities have to be followed up with political education. How does the system work? How does the state… work? Why are so many people in prison? How come wages aren’t going up, but CEO bonuses keep going up? Why is that? Where are the answers to those questions? Those answers don’t come out of everyday forms of resistance. They come out of political engagement and conversation and information.

Indeed, it is the case that many organizing initiatives which remain bounded in the local, or those that fail to engage with or situate their struggles in the broader social relations of capitalism, including the operations of the state and capital for example, demobilize after extracting concessions from local government or being overwhelmed by it and/or other forces (Sinwell 2011). This is a common experience within and beyond South Africa which is addressed in what follows. But this is not meant as a condemnation of struggles that remain trapped in a reproductive praxis. Rather, to reiterate once again, it is an acknowledgement of and a critical inquiry into the tension filled and often contradictory processes of how social movements move from consciousness to action; “from learning to only adapt, to learning that supports resistance”; “from voicing dissent ‘against’ to action and organization that would take us ‘beyond’ those limits” (Choudry 2015, 34, 66).

The central argument of this chapter is that the translation and production of knowledge by organic, movement intellectuals (Gramsci 1971) and the molecular, catalytic work done by organisers in working class homes, workplaces and communities—in other words, their praxis—are at the core of a dynamic process of becoming at the heart of class formation. This argument is elaborated through an exploration of Housing Assembly praxis which first explores the workings of the organization’s method of learning and knowledge production at the most intimate scale of the everyday before turning to its efforts to distill and diffuse this method throughout its organizational structures and to comrade organizations. The chapter concludes with the latter, and a discussion of the Housing Assembly’s attempts to develop relations of solidarity with other social movements struggling for housing and public services across the city, province and country through the campaign for ‘Decent Housing for All’ and its annual Political School.

Revolutionary Praxis in The Housing Assembly

The Housing Assembly’s praxis unfolds primarily within the context of struggles on the terrain of the local state around access to public services, including water, sanitation, electricity and housing. These struggles do not, however, remain mired in the immediacy of these problems with narrow demands for their amelioration by authorities, as the first of Duncan’s assertions would suggest. Rather, through engaging the experience of poverty, the organizing process turns to theorizing experience and critically reflecting upon it, revealing the exploitation and oppression beneath (Choudry 2015). At base, the day to day organizing work carried out by the organization seeks to grow and develop the critical consciousness sparked by the contradictions inherent in working-class life, situating this experience in the politicized social relations of capitalism which are so normalized for working-class South Africans.

The Housing Assembly's critique wholeheartedly rejects the dominant and/or hegemonic 'common sense' explanations offered as justification for the unbearably thin material conditions of life in the new South Africa, and, at times, the more critical perspectives offered by its interlocutors on the left. Rather, as we briefly touched on in the last chapter, through a collective process of strategic learning the organization uses everyday experience to build a critique of the political economy of neoliberal capitalism which challenges the demoralizing and individualizing material and ideological onslaught of the state and capital. Indeed, owing to these pressures, as well as internal factors, and despite the organization's successes the Housing Assembly remains limited in the extent to which it has been able to organize communities across Cape Town, the Western Cape and the country, which is its larger strategic goal (Housing Assembly 2014, 1). However, the strong pockets of organization that do exist in communities in Cape Town and the surrounds, organized on a house-to-house, rank-and-file, grassroots basis, and the relations of solidarity it has built and maintained with organizations and communities across the country, despite the important differences between them, are exemplary of its praxis and the potential therein. Three slogans of the Housing Assembly and the three facets of its organizing work they represent help to illustrate this praxis and structure our exploration of it in this chapter: 'We don't want to live like this anymore' and the Water Workshop; 'Everyone an

Organizer' and the Train the Trainer course; and 'Decent Housing for All' and the Political School.

'We don't want to live like this anymore'

The first of these slogans, '*We don't want to live like this anymore' - 'Ons will nie meer so bly nie' – 'Asifuni ukuhlala ngoluhlobo'*, reflects the starting point of the Housing Assembly's organizing: the issues of poor housing and service delivery that are experienced everyday by working class people in their households and communities. What are these issues? A series of discussion/focus groups held in February 2017 provide a vivid illustration. The following is a collection of issues which arise from the experience of living in a backyard shack and the impact on children especially (Organizers February 2017):

> No privacy, no space, not enough space for the children to develop and study. Leaking and very cold in the winter, terrible heat in summer. No flush toilets, using bucket system, children with infection… need to leave the bucket inside the house which causes a health risk. No taps, only water available in main house, and now with these water meters some of the backyarders don't even get water from the house, they have to go and buy water by other people. Paying for electricity and water for everyone even though many people in the house are unemployed and are not paying for anything. No place for the dirt and the refuse and the [garbage] truck refuses to take more than one bin or bag, they just take the one bin so we just end up dumping our stuff somewhere. Children—I'm giving an example of my children—have asthma and get sick often in winter, and there was the issue of TB in the house and because we living so overcrowded people quickly get affected or infected quickly…. We're always faced with eviction because you don't know if the landlord is in a good mood or a bad mood or if something is dirty outside is it going to be your children so you half abuse your children keeping them in the house. You don't want them to play outside because there might be a problem….
>
> So, the impacts to all the things that were mentioned. There is a big mental impact, and nobody talks about that. It affects us as parents and children in different ways, but it has an impact…. We become impatient, with ourselves and things that happen, our children end up dropping out of school because they don't have the space to study or their parents don't have the money to give them to go to school activities or shoes or whatever. Parents are always fighting because of the frustration in the house… and then overcrowding and all of the other things we just said now. There's no safety because you're living in an informal structure, anybody can come in and out as they like. It's not your house, you can't just close the gate, there's a landlord there. There's also a high risk of rape. Comrades talked about extended family living in that shack with you where the uncle the

> uncle is moving in or the cousin is moving in and you're all living in one space and there is sexual activities happening there. Whether it's the father and the mother, or the uncle and the children see these things and want to experience it. There is always health risks because of all the germs related to the toilet and all of the stuff we listed here. Diseases spread easily, like TB etc. Relationships are ruined… because of the difficulty of living in a backyard. It feels like a prison… the pressure to pay the rent, you have to pay it, there's no excuses and you become desperate, so you're always living in fear and you're always facing eviction because you never know.

Collectively reflecting on this lived experience is a central plank of Housing Assembly praxis as it is the basis for developing critical consciousness and overcoming both the material and ideological effects of neoliberal capitalism and its powerful ability to fragment working class struggle.

> We want to hear the raw stories of everyday life. That's the basis of the campaign…. It's the realities of capitalism, how the working class is forced to live under capitalism, that's what people must be raging about… all the consequences of bad housing conditions. We want to get that out (Organizer February 2017).

The working class's material conditions play a contradictory role in the organizing process, however.

> People's conditions are an obstacle, the austerity and the neoliberal policies, it's almost like it lessens people's energy. People want to organize but these policies and the things that happen to us every day… Positively it's the basis of wanting to organize but negatively its puts you down all the time. You know you are in real need of water and it's getting worse. You become despondent. You know those people that struggled for the ANC then [during apartheid], they are tired of struggling so why must I struggle again. It's just getting worse and it's not going to change… (Organizer November 2015).

These atomizing molecular changes have occurred at the most basic levels of everyday life under neoliberalism (see McNally (2011) Chapter Four) and can be significant obstacles to the organizing process. Drawing on Gramsci, Peter Thomas (2009, 373; see also Thomas 2009, 398 and Gramsci 2007, 57), concurs, arguing that "[t]he experience of the subaltern classes… subjugated by… the dominant class, is one of a continual molecular transformation, of disaggregations that decrease the capacity to act of both the individual and the class to which they belong." The Housing Assembly attempts to acknowledge and prioritize this subjective working-class experience in its praxis.

> In terms of organising, which I think is a first step in a solution, talking about an alternative, and I think that it's been proven... is working in our communities, going around and collecting peoples' demands, speaking to them about their issues, relating to their issues in their own comfortable space… I introduce myself as a backyarder, I'm in the same situation and I'm relating with your issue and the importance of why we need to stick together… as the working class (Organiser November 2015).

The urgency of this task is reflected in the perception that the working class in Cape Town is fragmented and does not

> understand exactly what is wrong as a collective. We are suffering as a collective, but we are fighting as individual households. Even family by family, one member to one member, competing for jobs, competing for my family instead of seeing this as a social problem (Organizer April 2016).

An important part of taking the everyday seriously, both its ups and its downs, is the collective amelioration of living conditions, which engages with the everyday in the 'patient work' of organizing in a way that goes beyond lip service. One such example is a Housing Assembly breakfast program that does not just serve food, filling in for a state that has abdicated its responsibility to ensure food security. Rather, akin to the Black Panther breakfast programs in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (Bloom and Martin 2013), this space is used to encourage critical reflection by others, to have the often-difficult conversations with those other than just the already converted. It also provides an opportunity for organizers to listen to experiences and collecting stories which can be used to challenge the state and its poor service delivery record. In other words, your porridge, or your child's porridge anyway, comes with a side of political education that begins with your concrete social experience. This opportunity for reflection amidst the collective amelioration of basic needs, challenges "the conditions of everyday life under neoliberalism [which] mean that few people have sustained, positive experiences of collective decision making, socialized resource allocation, or solidaristic, noncompetitive environments in which to work, learn, or play" (Schein 2014, 173; see also Foley 1999).

One organizer describes collectively working through this experience of atomization as a learning process of "getting our humanity back" (Organizer November 2015) in the context of a hyper competitive, individualized fight for survival, in which the dominant discourse and method of service delivery places the responsibility for poverty squarely on the shoulders of the poor. As they go on to argue, this 're-humanizing' process, sometimes simple, sometimes complex, can be quite powerful:

> getting people to understand why we live in these conditions, and I think people are starting to understand that and in the Housing Assembly at the moment you know you can feel these people gelling. You need to know who you are as a class and people are starting to feel that this is where I belong. We… do door to door and we had this one auntie saying to us one day 'I've been *waiting* for something like this!'[33] You know, and for me that's a victory because here she was suffering all alone and here's people coming to basically scoop her up [(emphatically gesturing)] and say let's struggle together, and for me that's the ultimate victory.

Beyond the Social Audit

But Housing Assembly organizing goes beyond the patient work of have hard conversations at the doors of crumbling RDP homes, and in the backyards and backstreets of working-class Cape Town. Beyond the cracking walls, caving-in roofs, and all the myriad impacts of bad housing excruciatingly detailed above, the provision of water is the other key issue, both immediate and underlying, that stem from the experience of everyday life in working class homes and communities. The Housing Assembly's simply titled yet powerful 'Water Workshop', which effectively turns the widely popular and problematic 'social audit' on its head, provides a powerful example of the aforementioned organizing process in action.

Among other mechanisms of participatory governance, the use of 'social audits' to hold governments to account for service delivery is increasingly widespread as a part of both state-sponsored participatory governance mechanisms and independent civil society efforts to engage governance processes (Citation). South Africa is no exception to the proliferation of social audits and prominent NGOs like the Social Justice Coalition and Ndifuna Ukwazi promote community-based monitoring through social audits as a part of their efforts to improve service delivery in the Cape Town and elsewhere in the country. The SJC (2015, 11) defines a social audit as

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[33] The depth of affect in this statement is difficult to communicate in the written word.

> a community-led process that facilitates public participation in the monitoring of government service delivery and expenditure. During the social audit process, communities study government documents and compare them to their experiences as recipients of a public service. Evidence and experiences are collected, presented, and then discussed with government officials at a public hearing.

While the South African constitution is one of the most progressive in the world, establishing human rights standards in many areas of life, and there exists considerable social investment and a wide variety of mechanisms for citizen participation in governance, in water policy for instance, these processes have long been critiqued for being consultative at the very best and undermining and devaluing the voices of the poor at their worst (Lemanski 2017b, 14; see also Bénit-Gbaffou 2008; Cornwall 2004; Miraftab 2004; Oldfield 2008; Sinwell 2010, 2012; Williams 2006). As Shukla and Saha (2014, 2) argue more generally

> [t]he global discourse on community participation and accountability… has been dominated by the perspective of the World Bank, which instrumentalizes it in the pursuit of narrow efficiency goals. In contrast, approaches based on rights that seek to reconfigure power relationships and strengthen public systems carry the potential to effect genuine change.

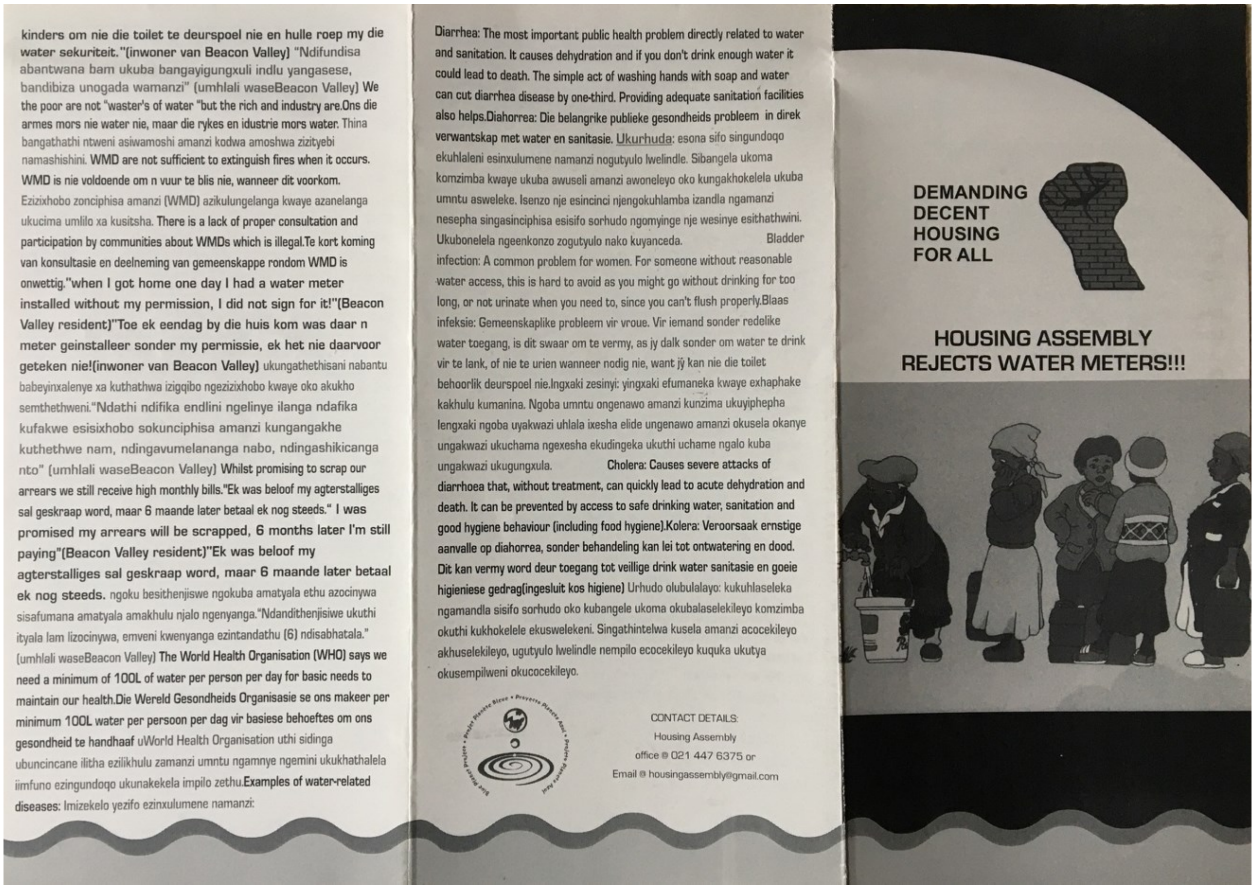
As a result, some organizations inside South Africa and elsewhere have turned away from ‘invited’ spaces of participation extended by the local state, where for example a social audit could be used to hold the state accountable for already existing service delivery, and towards a more transformative practice while others have strategically engaged with former, turning them to their own uses. Both approaches are examples of ‘invented’ spaces of participation, as some have termed it (Sinwell 2010).

In keeping with this critical approach and pushing it further, the Housing Assembly is highly suspect of social audits, arguing that such tools constitute a reproductive praxis if their horizon is limited to ensuring the delivery of services which are insufficient in any case and if they remain confined to a terrain whose boundaries are those set by the capitalist state. A social audit, they argue,

> only works if a liberal technical fix is the solution to these problems for you. If it is not, then you need an alternative. Listen to the working class in the bad RDPs… for example. Yes, record their experiences, but then relate to them and draw them into the campaign for 'Decent Housing for All' rather than compiling them for the purposes of a technical exercise in resource allocation and addressing grievances (Organizer April 2017).

When it comes to access to water, the Housing Assembly challenges the unjust logic of WMDs and the inadequate FBW allowance—a baseline of service delivery that is, as Selwyn (2017) argues in relation to International Poverty Lines (IPLs), a technocratic determination imposed from above by elites with no substantive consideration of the needs of the working-class poor as determined by themselves. Rather than accepting this determination and trying to help working-class households cope, 'do more with less' in other words, the Housing Assembly's Water Workshops offer an alternative understanding that starts with the needs and experiences of working-class households and all their inhabitants, but particularly from the experience of those performing the daily and generational labour of social reproduction: working-class women. This very straightforward yet powerful process works through the minutiae of individual, household and community water use to establish a magnitude of water, and mode of delivery, sufficient not just for 'survival' but for flourishing. At the same time, the workshop engages with the general and particular, daily experience and harmful impacts of insufficient access to water, its restriction and high cost. The health implications, discomfort, conflict within the household and in the community, links to other services, housing and employment, and broader notions of equity and sustainability are all interrogated and situated in a critique of water commodification.

An important part of this process is finding common experience across many dividing lines, particularly those of gender, and the disproportionate impact of the commodification of water and of the crisis on women, of race, and the divisions still intact, and frequently stoked anew (see Chapter Four and below), from apartheid, and of class, in which modalities of water access and restriction, including WMDs, have come to play a role in fracturing collective working class subjectivities (Hellberg 2017). While this can be a slow and difficult process it usually starts someplace simple and through one workshop after another the Housing Assembly has organized communities in Cape Town and elsewhere in the Western Cape, working through relations of exploitation and oppression to strengthen relations of solidarity while providing a basis for understanding the root causes of inequitable access to water and organizing for an alternative.



kinders om nie die toilet te deurspoel nie en hulle roep my die water sekuriteit."(inwoner van Beacon Valley) "Ndifundisa abantwana bam ukuba bangayigungxuli indlu yangasese, bandibiza unogada wamanzi" (umhlali waseBeacon Valley) We the poor are not "waster's of water "but the rich and industry are.Ons die armes mors nie water nie, maar die rykes en idustrie mors water. Thina bangathathi ntweni asiwamoshi amanzi kodwa amoshwa zizityebi namashishini. WMD are not sufficient to extinguish fires when it occurs. WMD is nie voldoende om n vuur te blis nie, wanneer dit voorkom. Ezizixhobo zonciphisa amanzi (WMD) azikulungelanga kwaye azanelanga ukucima umlilo xa kusitsha. There is a lack of proper consultation and participation by communities about WMDs which is illegal.Te kort koming van konsultasie en deelneming van gemeenskappe rondom WMD is onwettig."when I got home one day I had a water meter installed without my permission, I did not sign for it!"(Beacon Valley resident)"Toe ek eendag by die huis kom was daar n meter geinstalleer sonder my permissie, ek het nie daarvoor geteken nie!(inwoner van Beacon Valley) ukungathethisani nabantu babeyinxalenye xa kuthathwa izigqibo ngezizixhobo kwaye oko akukho semthethweni."Ndathi ndifika endlini ngelinye ilanga ndafika kufakwe esisixhobo sokunciphisa amanzi kungangakhe kuthethwe nam, ndingavumelananga nabo, ndingashikicanga nto" (umhlali waseBeacon Valley) Whilst promising to scrap our arrears we still receive high monthly bills."Ek was beloof my agterstalliges sal geskraap word, maar 6 maande later betaal ek nog steeds." I was promised my arrears will be scrapped, 6 months later I'm still paying"(Beacon Valley resident)"Ek was beloof my agterstalliges sal geskraap word, maar 6 maande later betaal ek nog steeds. ngoku besithenjiswe ngokuba amatyala ethu azocinywa sisafumana amatyala amakhulu njalo ngenyanga."Ndandithenjisiwe ukuthi ityala lam lizocinywa, emveni kwenyanga ezintandathu (6) ndisabhatala." (umhlali waseBeacon Valley) The World Health Organisation (WHO) says we need a minimum of 100L of water per person per day for basic needs to maintain our health.Die Wereld Gesondheids Organisasie se ons makeer per minimum 100L water per persoon per dag vir basiese behoeftes om ons gesondheid te handhaaf uWorld Health Organisation uthi sidinga ubuncincane ilitha ezilikhulu zamanzi umntu ngamnye ngemini ukukhathalela iimfuno ezingundoqo ukunakekela impilo zethu.Examples of water-related diseases: Imizekelo yezifo ezinxulumene namanzi:

Diarrhea: The most important public health problem directly related to water and sanitation. It causes dehydration and if you don't drink enough water it could lead to death. The simple act of washing hands with soap and water can cut diarrhea disease by one-third. Providing adequate sanitation facilities also helps.Diahorrea: Die belangrike publieke gesondheids probleem in direk verwantskap met water en sanitasie. Ukurhuda: esona sifo singundoqo ekuhlaleni esinxulumene namanzi nogutyulo lwelindle. Sibangela ukoma komzimba kwaye ukuba awuseli amanzi awoneleyo oko kungakhokelela ukuba umntu asweleke. Isenzo nje esincinci njengokuhlamba izandla ngamanzi nesepha singasinciphisa esisifo sorhudo ngomyinge nje wesinye esithathwini. Ukubonelela ngeenkonzo zogutyulo nako kuyanceda. Bladder infection: A common problem for women. For someone without reasonable water access, this is hard to avoid as you might go without drinking for too long, or not urinate when you need to, since you can't flush properly.Blaas infeksie: Gemeenskaplike probleem vir vroue. Vir iemand sonder redelike water toegang, is dit swaar om te vermy, as jy dalk sonder om water te drink vir te lank, of nie te urien wanneer nodig nie, want jÿ kan nie die toilet behoorlik deurspoel nie.Ingxaki zesinyi: yingxaki efumaneka kwaye exhaphake kakhulu kumanina. Ngoba umntu ongenawo amanzi kunzima ukuyiphepha lengxaki ngoba uyakwazi uhlala ixesha elide ungenawo amanzi okusela okanye ungakwazi ukuchama ngexesha ekudingeka ukuthi uchame ngalo kuba ungakwazi ukugungxula. Cholera: Causes severe attacks of diarrhoea that, without treatment, can quickly lead to acute dehydration and death. It can be prevented by access to safe drinking water, sanitation and good hygiene behaviour (including food hygiene).Kolera: Veroorsaak ernstige aanvalle op diahorrea, sonder behandeling kan lei tot ontwatering en dood. Dit kan vermy word deur toegang tot veillige drink water sanitasie en goeie higieniese gedrag(ingesluit kos higiene) Urhudo olubulalayo: kukuhlaseleka ngamandla sisifo sorhudo oko kubangele ukoma okubalaselekileyo komzimba okuthi kukhokelele ekuswelekeni. Singathintelwa kusela amanzi acocekileyo akhuselekileyo, ugutyulo lwelindle nempilo ecocekileyo kuquka ukutya okusempilweni okucocekileyo.

CONTACT DETAILS:
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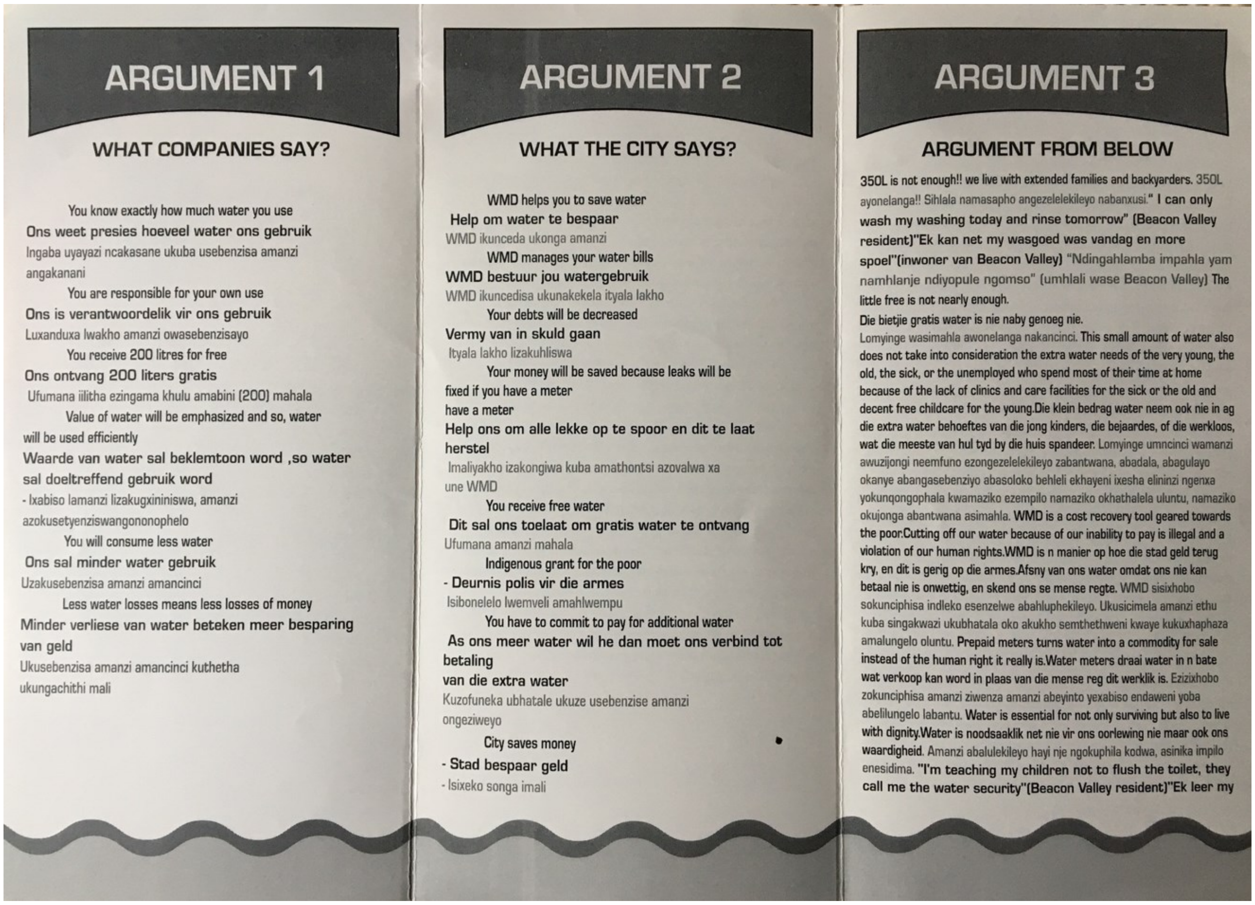
DEMANDING
DECENT
HOUSING
FOR ALL

HOUSING ASSEMBLY
REJECTS WATER METERS!!!



ARGUMENT 1

WHAT COMPANIES SAY?

You know exactly how much water you use
Ons weet presies hoeveel water ons gebruik
Ingaba uyayazi ncakasane ukuba usebenzisa amanzi angakanani
You are responsible for your own use
Ons is verantwoordelik vir ons gebruik
Luxanduxa lwakho amanzi owasebenzisayo
You receive 200 litres for free
Ons ontvang 200 liters gratis
Ufumana iilitha ezingama khulu amabini (200) mahala
Value of water will be emphasized and so, water will be used efficiently
Waarde van water sal beklemtoon word ,so water sal doeltreffend gebruik word
- Ixabiso lamanzi lizakugxininiswa, amanzi azokusetyenziswangononophelo
You will consume less water
Ons sal minder water gebruik
Uzakusebenzisa amanzi amancinci
Less water losses means less losses of money
Minder verliese van water beteken meer besparing van geld
Ukusebenzisa amanzi amancinci kuthetha ukungachithi mali

ARGUMENT 2

WHAT THE CITY SAYS?

WMD helps you to save water
Help om water te bespaar
WMD ikunceda ukonga amanzi
WMD manages your water bills
WMD bestuur jou watergebruik
WMD ikuncedisa ukunakekela ityala lakho
Your debts will be decreased
Vermy van in skuld gaan
Ityala lakho lizakuhliswa
Your money will be saved because leaks will be fixed if you have a meter
have a meter
Help ons om alle lekke op te spoor en dit te laat herstel
Imaliyakho izakongiwa kuba amathontsi azovalwa xa une WMD
You receive free water
Dit sal ons toelaat om gratis water te ontvang
Ufumana amanzi mahala
Indigenous grant for the poor
- Deurnis polis vir die armes
Isibonelelo lwemveli amahlwempu
You have to commit to pay for additional water
As ons meer water wil he dan moet ons verbind tot betaling
van die extra water
Kuzofuneka ubhatale ukuze usebenzise amanzi ongeziweyo
City saves money
- Stad bespaar geld
- Isixeko songa imali

ARGUMENT 3

ARGUMENT FROM BELOW

350L is not enough!! we live with extended families and backyarders. 350L ayonelanga!! Sihlala namasapho angezelelekileyo nabanxusi." I can only wash my washing today and rinse tomorrow" (Beacon Valley resident)"Ek kan net my wasgoed was vandag en more spoel"(inwoner van Beacon Valley) "Ndingahlamba impahla yam namhlanje ndiyopule ngomso" (umhlali wase Beacon Valley) The little free is not nearly enough.
Die bietjie gratis water is nie naby genoeg nie.
Lomyinge wasimahla awonelanga nakancinci. This small amount of water also does not take into consideration the extra water needs of the very young, the old, the sick, or the unemployed who spend most of their time at home because of the lack of clinics and care facilities for the sick or the old and decent free childcare for the young.Die klein bedrag water neem ook nie in ag die extra water behoeftes van die jong kinders, die bejaardes, of die werkloos, wat die meeste van hul tyd by die huis spandeer. Lomyinge umncinci wamanzi awuzijongi neemfuno ezongezelelekileyo zabantwana, abadala, abagulayo okanye abangasebenziyo abasoloko behleli ekhayeni ixesha elininzi ngenxa yokunqongophala kwamaziko ezempilo namaziko okhathalela uluntu, namaziko okujonga abantwana asimahla. WMD is a cost recovery tool geared towards the poor.Cutting off our water because of our inability to pay is illegal and a violation of our human rights.WMD is n manier op hoe die stad geld terug kry, en dit is gerig op die armes.Afsny van ons water omdat ons nie kan betaal nie is onwettig, en skend ons se mense regte. WMD sisixhobo sokunciphisa indleko esenzelwe abahluphekileyo. Ukusicimela amanzi ethu kuba singakwazi ukubhatala oko akukho semthethweni kwaye kukuxhaphaza amalungelo oluntu. Prepaid meters turns water into a commodity for sale instead of the human right it really is.Water meters draai water in n bate wat verkoop kan word in plaas van die mense reg dit werklik is. Ezizixhobo zokunciphisa amanzi ziwenza amanzi abeyinto yexabiso endaweni yoba abelilungelo labantu. Water is essential for not only surviving but also to live with dignity.Water is noodsaaklik net nie vir ons oorlewing nie maar ook ons waardigheid. Amanzi abalulekileyo hayi nje ngokuphila kodwa, asinika impilo enesidima. "I'm teaching my children not to flush the toilet, they call me the water security"(Beacon Valley resident)"Ek leer my

Image 5.1 *Housing Assembly Water Meter Pamphlet*

In the context of severe drought and water shortage during the Cape Town Water Crisis in 2017-2018 the Housing Assembly's Water Workshops were highly sought after as the CoCT's thoroughly neoliberal response to the crisis intensified tensions and divisions within and between working-class communities and households. As I argued in Chapter Four, the crisis disproportionately impacted poor and marginalized Capetonians, those living in substandard housing, whether crumbling RDP houses, informal settlements or backyard shacks, upon whom WMDs were being forced and/or at whom fingers were being pointed when they were in fact the ones using the least amount of water. Despite the availability of evidence to the contrary, included in regular CoCT (2018b) reports on the state of the crisis, the elite narrative that it was the poor, particularly those in informal housing using shared or individual taps, who were the ones wasting water that they get for free, became widespread even amongst working class communities. The Housing Assembly argued that this was a key tension to be overcome if there was any hope of challenging the CoCT's punitive response to the crisis.

At the heart of this urgency was the observation that the somewhat better off working or even middle class communities in the Cape Flats living in formal housing, having their water restricted by WMDs and feeling the crunch of rising tariffs, while often the most organized and well-resourced of communities in the crisis, were also more likely to accept the dominant narratives around water waste. Informal settlements, which are often more militant and, in some ways, effective in their use of disruptive protest tactics to extract concessions from elites and authorities, are the ones most implicated in the narrative of water waste by the poor, accessing water from communal standpipes and taps. Although those living in formal housing were of course targets of the state's response and were also the targets of blame for wasting water, the tension in this dynamic is clear.[34] Moreover, the geography of Cape Town is such that those formal housing and informal settlements adjacent to one another often differ in their racial composition, increasing conflict which was especially intense during the crisis. If broad based action was to be effective these obstacles within and between communities needed to be overcome argued the Housing Assembly. After taking on a leadership role within the Water Crisis Coalition as discussed in Chapter Four, the organization was invited into community after community across the Cape Flats to conduct Water Workshops and get people to think differently about the injustice of the water crisis and its underlying roots. To see it, in other words, as a collective problem rather than an individual one, an informal settlement or an RDP one, a coloured one or and African one, and organize and mobilize communities to contest the CoCT.

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[34] This tension was also present and these dynamics also played out in relationships between landlords and their tenants living in backyard shacks and within households.

‘Everyone An Organizer’

The Housing Assembly’s work does not remain in the realm of the subjective, however, as hinted at in preceding quotations and as the Water Workshop makes clear. The patient organizing work (Seymour 2014) that is at the core of the Housing Assembly’s praxis renders critical these experiences of housing, service delivery, (un)employment and the breakdown of social solidarity at the ‘sensuous level of everyday life’, situating experience within a critique of the political economy of neoliberal capitalism in South Africa.

> In the short term we need to get organised, to collect and combine demands, because it’s basically one demand; the demand that capitalism must be gone. But people... they don’t have the words to say that. They make the connection when you’re sitting there they say ‘ya in Constantia [a rich suburb of Cape Town] ... there are two people living in a big house and here we are 15 people living on this property, three backyarders and we get 350L of water a day and then it comes up on TV ‘please switch off your electricity’ etc.’ People might not say capitalism, neoliberalism, but when they talk and what they say, they are saying that because of neoliberalism my electricity is going up and I can’t afford to buy it (Organizer November 2015).

In doing so, the organising process turns to theorising experience and critically reflecting upon it, revealing the exploitation and oppression beneath (Choudry 2015). But as a Housing Assembly Organizer (March 2017) argues, “we’re not here to just talk intellectually about stuff, you drive home the fact that we’re not going to live like this… the impact on our families of your policies, of how your system works… we’re not going to make abstract speeches about capitalism, we live this capitalism, this is our day to day life.”

> So as a first step we must connect people on their issues and then we need to talk about political education, you know… Get everybody on the same page, people must understand. Because I think for years there have been protests… just as an example, if it was a backyarder protest around housing you’ll get the backyarders all out and they’re protesting about it but then they go back home and nothing happens because the only reason why they went out is because I’m a backyarder and I don’t want to live like this

> anymore. But there's no political understanding of why you are a backyarder so I think we must get people to understand and be angry and ready enough to go out to the streets you know so everybody that's there on the street understands exactly what we are fighting for and we all [working class people] come together to find solutions (Organizer November 2015).

The critical and analytical nature of this learning process is clear. Nor is it an elite process of education or movement building, an experience quite prominent in South Africa (Marais 2012), whereby an intellectual in the traditional sense or some other singular leader—the ubiquitous big man—or organizational elite gives guidance to the struggle or imparts the correct knowledge to working class people who, upon receiving it, become conscious and mobilized.

> People actually do know. They don't necessarily know how the whole thing works… but they know their lives and they know what they're angry and frustrated about and that is key to the learning, key to going forward, key to expanding… and becoming more united (Organizer March 2017).

In other words, organizing is a learning process open to all that ensues in the course of working-class political struggle facilitated by the work of organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense. Indeed, Gramsci (2007, 369) argued that "'[e]veryone' is a philosopher and the point is not to introduce a totally new form of knowledge into 'everyone's' individual life but to revitalize an already existing activity and make it critical." A second Housing Assembly slogan, '*Everyone An Organizer'* speaks directly to this aspect of the learning process.

> Everyone an organizer, because that, it talks exactly to what you understand of your daily experience, so you organize according to your daily experience… everyone an organizer, everyone a trainer, everyone a campaigner. And the working class becomes strong in this particular process (Organizer March 2017).

Choudry (2015, 18) argues that generally "organizers and 'permanent persuaders' emerging from the grassroots/working class are not seen as intellectuals capable of creating knowledge." But this knowledge is an important part of any effective praxis as it plays a key role in connecting experience with broader social relations of exploitation and oppression and their maintenance. In other words, as Gramsci argues, it is the process of making critical that which already exists. Recovering a collective memory of past struggles, like those against racialized dispossession including forced removals within Cape Town as Benson (2015) notes in the case of South Africa, and developing and disseminating understandings of society which challenge divisions within the working class, real and sown from above, on the basis of race, gender, orientation and employment status, among many others, are all examples of the generation of new knowledge. This knowledge is a vital component of the Housing Assembly's praxis as it challenges dominant and hegemonic discourses and practices in the present.

For the Housing Assembly organizing is an ongoing process of political and

> [p]opular education, drawing the experience of the comrades that are coming, so now we are asking what about your living conditions, issues, unmet needs, which are… things like… my toilet pot is moving around, mould and mushrooms on the ceiling. So from there, we… lead them, how does it affect their life, how does it affect the children, the students that are living [there], how does it affect the mother of the house… what is your experience then, in those living conditions? Why don't you like it? So that those problems can come up (Organizer February 2017).

The importance of this consistent, patient organizing work, a process of informal learning, is continuously emphasized:

> we have to connect with the working class, understand who the working class is for us to be able to connect with them on their issues, on our issues, share experiences, get people to understand why it is that we want to build this Housing Assembly. We don't go door to door and knock on the doors and you know, 'I'm the Housing Assembly' you know… Knocking on the door is first about we share the same issues. 'You have a roof that leaks, my roof leaks too' and that as a first step for me must connect us before we even go into the politics of organization… Capitalism vs. the working class… (Organizer March 2017).

Once these connections are established non-formal learning begins to take on a larger role: "You can talk about it in grand terms, but it's about popular education and the learning organization" (Organizer February 2017):

> we point out the contradictions and why it fails us and why we are not going to believe them [the ruling class, when they say] that 'ah just wait for the economy to you know, there is going to be an upturn soon and there will be a trickle down and we all benefit

> with jobs' and whatever. We must find the counter reasons. We not so stupid you expect us to believe that. Nobody, not even the leaders believe that.

Another Organizer (February 2017) emphasized that

> it's also important for us to understand who the capitalists are and who supports them. The government, the state, they're all there supporting the capitalists, to privatize, to steal the land, whereas we are living in small spaces, overcrowded. We get water restrictions but there's golf courses that uses 1000s of litres of water every day. Yet we are being told that we must restrict ourselves from the 350 litres of water that they already give us they want us to restrict that too (Organizer February 2017).

Reflecting on the challenges experienced in the process explored in the last chapter of building alliances between striking workers, struggling around wages and conditions, and protesting communities, struggling around water cut offs and housing problems, in an organizing context fraught with the politics of race and gender, an Organizer (March 2016) argued that understanding the links between the state and capital, workers and communities, is a strategic necessity:

> one of the things we've learned out of the strike is that we need political education. Now is the time more than ever… people need to understand that we need to bring the two [workers and communities] together.

Train the Trainer

The organizers, permanent persuaders and/or 'intellectuals' that Choudry identifies above play a key role in facilitating these processes of learning and knowledge production that I argue are at the heart of the organizing process. Lenin (in Sears 2014, 19) once argued that most Socialists in Russia, "for the most part… only learn words by heart… But how to change its forms in a new situation, how to learn and think anew for this purpose, this we do not understand." Inspired by their organically developing organizing approach and recognizing the level of knowledge and depth of experience required to carry it out effectively—to go beyond Lenin's buzzwords in other words—in 2016 the Housing Assembly began a concerted process of developing the skills of its core group of organizers in order that they would be able to capacitate members of the organization more broadly to conduct activities in its districts and areas and develop the "moments of consciousness within communities, organizations and individuals" (Organizer April 2018). The '*Train the Trainer'* sessions brought together this core group of organizers for a series of intensive non-formal courses between August 2016 and August 2017. The emphasis was on the process detailed above: starting with the everyday experience of working-class life to develop a critique of the political economy of housing and related services to inform organizing and action. In other words, an exercise in the capacitation of organizers to conduct their work via a method, already in use, of developing 'concrete abstractions' and the level of understanding necessary to adapt it to any and all of the circumstances and situations that the diverse working class in Cape Town finds itself in and to pass it on to others in a quickened fashion.

A leading organizer from Khayelitsha describes part of this method with great passion.

> [E]ach and every one of us will have to go out and share with every constituency… the campaign… We've got to talk about issues that makes us uncomfortable and in our communities once you start to talk about issues which are uncomfortable everyone starts… to look at you and it makes you to think, wait a minute, let me just keep quiet because… we are not ready to… talk about it. So we, *we*,… must be those agents to initiate conversations, conversations which makes people uncomfortable you know, not just to pass, conversations in the buses, in the taxis, in the trains we must lead people whereas… I got in the taxi… I must lead people there to say, really? I want more. People, they must think that in the taxi there is an agent of change, someone who wants to… make a difference and giving them that motivation, that they, in their own areas, can do the same. In the taxis, the trains, the buses, in the shopping queues. Instead of people complaining 'ah this queue is too long', let's take a conversation. Maybe then you will not realize that the queue was too long. Bank queues = community strategy meetings. Where the guys are standing on the corner, with the *madodas* [men], we initiate those conversations. From there because we are connecting the dots, you are from Tsepe Tsepe, from there, that personal engagement or commitment, then we start area activities, which is identifying key individuals… those people in your areas and then you propose a meeting. A meeting can start in your space, in your yard, or in a creche somewhere or identify a community space, in a hall there, and then in such a meeting where people… meet for the first time we then create a conducive environment for people to share their personal experiences in terms of the constituencies they are or the housing types that they

> are… make it regular, every week and from that we will agree to unlock other neighboring areas… door to door, pamphleteering, open air meetings… this is who we are, what we are looking for… then this will move over to the district level.

In focusing on the importance of relating to everyday experience the Train the Trainer sessions emphasized the attention paid to working-class diversity in the Housing Assembly's approach. All these myriad differences represent perhaps the biggest internal obstacle to achieving their goal of unity and is at the centre of organizing work. Rather than avoiding it to focus on the similarities, the lowest common denominator, this diversity—the different living conditions and housing types (RDP, rental, backyard, informal settlement), the varied constituencies (women, youth, unemployed, elderly and disabled, non-South African), and the different forms of oppression (race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, nationality)—is drawn out and used to work through and overcome differences within working-class experience as a path to solidarity. Quoting feminist historian Anna Clark (1995), David McNally (2013, 423) locates this approach in a long history of working-class struggle:

> What radical working-class movements do is create worldviews, forms of struggle, and popular institutions that tend 'to create a unified class consciousness out of divided communities.' In so doing, they cut against the grain of the many tendencies toward fragmentation, competition and atomism that run through the lives of oppressed peoples, forging bonds of solidarity, an appreciation of shared interests, and common social objectives that fit with the experiences of people whose conditions of work and life are broadly similar. In short, they struggle to create a 'unity of the diverse'.

As one Housing Assembly Organizer (April 2018) argues reflecting on the perhaps the most stark dividing line in South Africa, and both the strength the necessity of this approach, "[c]lass consciousness does not disregard race, it does not disregard identity, in fact it brings forth our unity in this diversity." This process of linking and situating diverse experiences so important in the Housing Assembly's approach and the Train the Trainer course also reflects the organization's emphasis on prioritizing and addressing the realities of everyday life while not losing sight of the longer-term processes and possibilities of social transformation.

‘Decent Housing for All’

The third slogan *‘Decent Housing For All’*, guides the campaign of the same name and is closely linked to the Housing Assembly’s vision for social transformation: “AN EQUAL SOCIETY, FREE OF OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION, IN WHICH ALL SHALL LIVE IN DECENT HOUSING” (Housing Assembly 2014, 1; emphasis in original). This is not merely an abstract horizon of socialism (Dean 2012) but proceeds to elaborate its content, including access to things like housing and water, in a way that acknowledges and prioritizes the lived experience of the working class in all its diversity. In doing so, this slogan, which is also the Housing Assembly’s primary demand, is used as both a pedagogical and political tool in a strategic learning process of organizing. A process that builds solidarity to overcome the divisions within the working class differentiated by relations of exploitation and oppression and connects their immediate needs to a longer term and larger scale vision of the future.

> We could have a demand that says ‘away with capitalism’. That’s a big demand but some of us believe that we’re not going to get what we want until we change that whole system… so the link between the immediate demands, the longer-term demands, the strategic demands, that discussion needs to take place. So when we say we want to live in a society, an equal society, free of oppression and exploitation and we shall all have decent housing—that’s in the Housing Assembly’s Aims—that’s a big demand. But what’s the relationship between the two? And that means we must have a discussion about the system… [M]ost organizations and communities have a list of their immediate demands and it’s not located within a broader framework, so the council says, ‘ah it’s a wishlist, go away’ … When we raise our demands, it’s helping people to understand how the system works. That’s the popular education part of it. You have your experience, your realities, that you know. You’re the expert about your own living and social conditions but how you understand the bigger picture is a process of education, a learning organization, of campaigning. And then we get to know the state, it’s policy limitations, what’s wrong with the system and then we have thousands of people that are asking the questions that we are asking as a small group but at a big scale and we’re saying, we’re not going to let you talk the talk about how there is not another system other than the existing system. We don’t believe that because we’re not going to continue like this… (Organizer February 2017)

Demands and their relationship to organizing and strategy are continually discussed in the Housing Assembly in relation to the material conditions of life, the balance of forces and the programs of their comrade organizations on the left. Reflecting on Trotsky's notion of 'transitional demands,' Daniel Bensaïd (2006, 65) speaks to the process described above when he contends that

> The appropriateness of the demands depended on their mobilising value in connection with a concrete situation, and on their educational value for those who entered into struggle. The concept of 'transitional demands' overcame sterile antinomies between a reformist gradualism, which believed in changing society without revolutionising it, and a fetishism of the 'glorious day', which reduced revolution to its climactic moment, [both forms of reproductive praxis I would argue] to the detriment of the patient work of organisation and education.

The goal of the campaign, as articulated above, is a long term one as the working-class in Cape Town "is not organized, not united, still fighting their own struggles in their own corners, the backyarders are still there, the informal settlements are still there, RDP, because people say 'RDP, you got houses already so why are you complaining'" (Organizer February 2017). The same conclusion holds in relation to the state of the South African working class and left more broadly, with one (Organizer February 2017) expressing the sentiment that

> as we fight in our different corners against the government and the ruling class and so on, the more we are met with reactionary repression and austerity. The more we protest the more they try to clamp down on protesting… [and as we're] running away its also offers of division, your racism and these social ills… the ruling class is going to be the arsonist and the fireman… so the how we get there… what are the steps taking us there to have that unity.

Sometime later, the same Organizer (April 2018) elaborated a way forward:

> Objectives. Our demands [and] slogans should not be limited to our particular concrete conditions in one community or household and our immediate struggle for reform. We should look at the immediate reforms we need and our longer-term strategy of the overthrow of capitalism because under it the working class will never be given a better life. There is the longer-term strategy of system change and the reforms to address our immediate needs. 'You must fight so that they don't install that water meter in your house, but you must also fight for access to free water for all.' Objectives must be clear so that our program can be clear.

The Political School

Since 2017 Housing Assembly organizing activities have included a now annual independent Political School to bring together housing and public services activists and organizers, and worker and student leaders from around South Africa to discuss, debate and organize their national campaign for 'Decent Housing for All' premised on organizing work in communities across the country. This self-organized and independent Political School, an unprecedented event in South Africa's recent past, provides a forum for a wide variety of organizations from all corners of the movement for housing and public services to come together to build solidarity and organization, develop alternatives and demand change not only to state policy and delivery, but to all those policies and practices which are detrimental to the lives of working class people. The Political Schools are followed up by coordinated national days of action in communities across the country intended to raise consciousness in the spaces of working-class life and facilitate ongoing organizing at a variety of scales but especially the local.

The first Political School, held in Cape Town in March 2017, was also intended as a platform for launching the organization's campaign for Decent Housing for All and building alliances with organizations engaged in similar and related struggles across the country, who are themselves an expression of the diversity and variation its organizing work constantly engages. The School was organized along the same lines as the Train the Trainer sessions and took the assembled activists, organizers, students and trade unionists through the Housing Assembly's approach step by step. A summary of the School written by a leading Organizer (Housing Assembly 2017) describes how this played out over approximately five days:

> All around the walls in the rooms, outside in the dining area and the main hall hang two pictures. In the first, a picture in which a big fish scatters a school of little fish. In the second, the little fish have organized in tight formation, and turned around to pursue the big fish. These framed the theme of the school – decent housing for all, and the slogan that guides us – everyone an organizer.

DECENT HOUSING
FOR ALL!
EVERYONE
AN ORGANISER
The Housing
Assembly

Image 5.2 *Housing Assembly Slogans at the Political* School. Source: Author.

The political school aimed at drawing from the experience of organized and mobilized communities and activists suffering from the same bad living and housing conditions and managed to pull together 100+ activists from 20 organizations in 4 of the South African provinces, Zimbabwe and Brazil….

Monday opened with a gallery walk where comrades had the chance to see and hear about the issues of the different districts of the Housing Assembly (HA) and the different organizations from other parts of the country… like the Orlando Task Team, Zola Concerned Residents, Kroonstad Advice Office… just to name a few.

The similarities of the struggles of the various communities and other formations—students and workers—were much more evident than the differences; all are suffering the consequences of neoliberal policies and repression on the part of national, provincial and local governments and their criminalizing of our efforts to exercise our right to protest.

The participants of the school then separated into the different housing types that we live in as working-class people, from informal settlements, backyarders and RDPers to public and private rental housing. In these commissions the in-depth discussions on the issues facing each of the housing types particularly, the demands and the reason the working class finds itself in this mess more generally, were rich and heated. Already and without prompting, a discussion of the types of housing we are struggling [in and] for began to emerge.

Finally, we broke into commissions based on ‘constituencies’ and the peculiarities of the suffering under bad living and housing conditions as experienced by women, youth, physically challenged, etc. in detail to better understand and describe the realities we face as the working class.

On Tuesday we explored and discussed the context of the housing crisis, the policies, public participation and what it means for the future. We learned of the Minister Sisulu’s u-Turn and the RDP scandal of the government. According to the minister of Human

> Settlements no one under 40 years old will get a house as long as she lives and the tap of what we call ‘free houses’ will run dry come 2019. We also learned of the 2.7 million of the 3 million house RDP houses built are at high risk, while 610 000 need to be demolished and rebuilt, and that the state will not be paying for the maintenance of these RDPs. What is of great concern is that this report is 5 years old and has not been made public, only mentioned in another government report.

These revelations around housing policy were quickly connected to the burning reflections that had emerged from earlier constituency commissions around the lived experiences of social reproduction and the detrimental role of cooperation between the state, private capital and global governance institutions like the World Bank in social and economic policy post-1994. The triad of the housing crisis, the already growing drought and water crisis and the then explosive scandal around social grants struck a powerful chord—especially among women. The scandal around social grants actually peaked in March 2017 during the School as the contract with the private provider administering grants, a subsidiary of US-based financial services firm Net-1, guilty of massive predatory lending and illegal deductions of loan payments and other charges enabled by the complex electronic delivery system, was coming to an end. Due to ramifications of the partnership and mismanagement by the minister responsible for grants, among other reasons, the future of grant payments was unclear and a source of much anxiety for many working-class people, particularly because over 17 million South Africans receive grants each month and they are an important part of household income.

Particularly striking for the School were the parallels between the social grant policy trajectory at the time and the involvement of the World Bank which seemed to mirror those in other sectors like housing (Torkelson 2017c; see also Chapter Two and Bateman 2019). Though there had been outrage about the domestic South African firm Allan Grey’s 17% investment in Net-1, it came to light that the largest investor in the company was in fact the World Bank’s investment arm the IFC which held a 19% stake. But what was considered even more outrageous by Housing Assembly comrades was that the IFC had invested this 107.7 million USD at the end of April 2016. This was some two years after South Africa's Constitutional Court had declared the contract invalid due to the manipulation of the contract—ironically for practices relatively in line with World Bank best practice—and its eventual awarding to Net-1 subsidiary Cash Paymaster Services; more than one year after the South African Social Security Agency had promised the court that it would bring the distribution of grants back in house; and also one year after the launch of a campaign by the Black Sash, a legal support NGO that has been advocating on behalf of grant beneficiaries, to stop illegal deductions, which had remained ongoing despite the issuing of new regulations by the Minister of Social Development in February 2016 to halt deductions. These investments were made "[i]n other words, [long after] there was substantial information in the public domain questioning the ethics of Net-1, particularly its use of beneficiary information and proprietary technology to profit from the social grant programme" (Torkelson 2017c, n.p.). The activists and organizers in the Housing Assembly immediately drew links between this institutional influence on government policy in relation to social grants, housing and water, and issues of social reproduction more broadly (see Cross 2008). The passion and anger in the room was palpable; a veritable leap in consciousness—one of many at the school—was had.[35]

Virtually without exception, activists, organizers and members of the organization at large rely directly or indirectly, in whole or in part on social grants to survive. In relation to housing in particular, grants are used to pay for rent in informal settlements, backyard shacks, or public/private formal rental housing or to make livable or fix dilapidated RDP/BNG houses whether old or new, and to pay for water, and prepaid electricity—if they can afford more than the meagre basic amount provided by the state—and property rates if they have been so ‘lucky’, as goes the usual sarcastic refrain, to have received a house and do not have indigent status. The massive investments made by the IFC in housing microfinance globally discussed in Chapter Two include South Africa, where among other initiatives it has partnered with the National Housing Finance Corporation (now part of the new Human Settlements Development Bank), a development finance institution that provides finance to low income South Africans, to facilitate the extension of finance. In the case of formal and informal loans taken to cover housing and related services expenditure, social grants are often the collateral, and given the market structure of micro-loans in this context it is enormously easy for loan providers to recoup their costs as they are guaranteed by the state. Despite this type of guarantee, which would posit the loan as low risk, often household debt burdens run out of control partly because of high interest rates. This mirrors the shift towards an emphasis on market inclusion in development policy pushed by IFIs in the early 2000s (Bond 2013; Bateman 2019; Gronbach 2018; see Best 2013 for more on these shifts in development policy around social protection).

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[35] As Trotsky (1977, 18) explained "The swift changes in mass views and moods in an epoch of revolution thus derive, not from the flexibility and mobility of man's mind, but just the opposite, from its deep conservativism. The chronic lag of ideas and relations behind new objective conditions, right up to the moment when the latter crash over people in the form of a catastrophe, is what creates in a period of revolution that leaping movement of ideas and passions which seems to the police mind a mere result of the activities of 'demagogues.'" Though I am in no way claiming that in 2017 large masses of South African's or even those at the School experienced a leap in consciousness of the magnitude to which Trotsky refers, and while conscientization is itself a molecular, patient process, there are moments when even these humble understandings move forward by leaps and bounds.

For many South Africans, evident in the protests and organizing around the Social Grants scandal (ILRIG 2017; Vally 2016), and for those involved in the Housing Assembly’s Political School and everyday organizing activities, the implications of this turn (elaborated in Chapter Two) are enormous and call for a more generalized critique of these trends in ‘development’ and their impacts on state policy trajectories in a way that can speak to South African’s immediate experience and assist organizing from house to house, street to street and in workplaces, formal and informal.

Returning to the Housing Assembly Organizer's reflection

> This very intense discussion [of the 'U-Turn' among other related issues] was followed by an input on the nature of the Campaign for 'Decent Housing for All' and the nature of the united front – building grassroots organization and alliances between students, unions, communities and foreign nationals… we looked at the challenges to building unity amongst the working class, the history of borders, Xenophobia, and our experiences of these dynamics.
>
> On Wednesday, … [a]fter having inputs on engaging the state and the campaign strategy of the HA, a discussion broke out on the 'for all' of the campaign, [and] whether foreign nationals should be included in the allocation of houses. Because the school was forging a way forward, the discussion altered the program and we had… a panel discussion on decent housing 'for all' and Xenophobia. The school collectively decided, with the presence of opposition, although only the very smallest of a minority, to involve foreign nationals in the campaign, and the struggle for Decent Housing For All.
>
> On Thursday the focus was on building provincial and national connections, deciding on a national day of action, framing our strategy going forward and a panel discussion representing different formations (GIWUSA on workers, Ndifuna Ukwazi on the NGO left, and students from #FEESMUSTFALL). This was followed by a panel discussion on international housing struggles, where comrades from Brazil (MST) and Zimbabwe (Amandla Centre of Zimbabwe) detailed the vibrant histories of their ongoing struggles.
>
> Participants collectively adopted and agreed to the slogan 'Everyone an Organizer' and elaborated it through the process of discussion and participation that took place over the week. The slogan is meant to motivate us and guide our struggle, organization, and work. It is also meant to help us dialogue with the wider society. The National Day of Action scheduled for the 27th of April, the tactics (picketing) and strategies (grassroots organization and united action) must not be seen as the finished products but the ideas that we have come up with based on knowledge stemming from the concrete practice of daily class struggle across the country. The implementation depends in large part on our ability to assert ourselves and put pressure on the government. We also note that, the day of action, tactics and strategies are always a work in progress, and will continue to change in the course of our struggles and as we encounter new challenges throughout the course of our struggle.

As this overview details, the Housing Assembly's approach, articulated in detail above, is consistently maintained throughout the School. Although optimistic and hopeful the organization does not engage in the teleological fetishizing of 'the glorious day' that Bensaïd warns against.

Rather, in its emphasis on the slow, patient work of organizing the fragmented working class in the context of deteriorating material conditions and an oppressive state, the Housing Assembly makes it clear that

> Willingness and readiness to fight is not enough, we need organized strength, political consciousness and creativity to defeat the enemy. We need, more than anything, the ability to strengthen our internal organization, and to continue building strength in our communities, in our schools, in our workplaces and in all the spaces we occupy. It depends also on our ability to build strong alliances with effective democratic mechanisms that motivate and facilitate broad working-class participation in discussion, decision, and action (Organizer April 2018).

The 2018 Political School was equally successful in bringing together organizers and activists from across the country and was particularly charged as the Cape Town Water Crisis reached its peak during the School. Immediately following the school, field visits were conducted with leading activists from across the country to explore and attempts to better understand the similarities and differences between communities in Cape Town struggling with the Water Crisis and those of communities elsewhere across the country who are struggling with water scarcity, if less intensely.[36] The 2018 School also saw the inclusion of comrades from Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) Durban, Ubunye bamaHostela (an AbM aligned group from Durban) and AbM Freedom Park (Pretoria) which, as can be inferred from the discussion in Chapter Three, provoked lively discussion across political divides. 2019 saw the further development of the School's pedagogical approach and integration of 'field schools' as a core component of it; two days of collective work was conducted as a plenary followed by three days of work in smaller groups in communities across the Cape Flats in different areas, dealing with different issues in housing types and the particular realities of poor housing and service delivery as experienced by the organizations various ‘constituencies’ before re-assembling to conclude the School as a whole.

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[36] Recently water supplies in the more arid regions of the Eastern Cape have run dry (see Ellis 2019).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the production of knowledge in and by social movements plays a key role in the formation of consciousness about the class nature of experience. It is through organizing processes in the course of concrete struggles, like those discussed above, that this knowledge is both produced and used as a tool through which relations of exploitation and oppression under capitalism are laid bare within particular, historically-given contexts, cultural, national and otherwise. Conscientization, learning and knowledge production are at the very heart of the ongoing organizing activities and direct actions of the Housing Assembly, like those described above and in earlier chapters. While a critique of political economy, especially of the commodification of housing and services, is an important component of these interventions, so are critiques, and strategies and tactics of organizing and engaging the state and capital generated in the movement itself and in movements elsewhere and in the past, in the process of struggle, and process through which they are mutual constituted. The organizing work of the Housing Assembly appears to be an alternative to the reproductive praxis so prevalent on the left in South Africa and elsewhere, and though limited and constantly under threat, is a concerted project with the aim of developing a critical, revolutionary praxis.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that the organizing praxis of the Housing Assembly appears to be a hopeful space in which everyday experiences of exploitation and oppression and their internal relations with the broader capitalist social whole can be revealed and contested. I have also explored the many challenges that its organizers face in doing this work in light of the objective material conditions in which they, and working-class communities more generally, are situated. South Africa's macroeconomic outlook remains persistently bleak. Austerity has been maintained and renewed in a series of recent national budgets, a significant decline in the value of the Rand over the last decade and rising levels of unemployment amidst unprecedented levels of protest suggest that social tensions will only escalate in years to come.

Although capital and portions of the liberal left expressed great delight at the rise of President Cyril Ramaphosa in late 2017 (Bond 2018), it does not appear that his 'New Deal' has altered the country's trajectory in any substantive way.[37] Despite the appearance that his government has made concessions to the demands of unions, students and housing advocates and protestors among others, recent legislation has curtailed the right to strike (Runciman 2019), reduced funding for education across the board—undermining the narrow provision of free university tuition to students from low-income households—and slashed the housing budget (Mboweni 2019; Treasury 2019). Consumption taxes have also been raised at the same time that the relatively well-paid public sector has experienced massive layoffs. The corporatization of state-owned services, most notably of the electricity utility Eskom, has also continued unabated, subjecting more service delivery to the logic of the market.

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[37] The Economist also offered its endorsement of him but not the ANC in the 2019 elections.

Yet, the hegemony that the ANC has enjoyed for decades may finally be waning and our comrades in Cape Town find additional reasons to be hopeful. The wave of strikes that followed the Marikana Massacre, including a five-month platinum belt strike in 2014, which was the longest and most expensive in South African history, and unprecedented action by farmworkers, were the start of a process of labour movement renewal in the country. This upturn in organizing and strikes has been driven by workers' committees within and outside unions and organizations like the aforementioned Casual Worker's Advice Office and the Simunye Worker's Forum. The pressures of social reproduction have played a key role in these processes and in some cases organizers and movements have directly taken up the issues of working-class life more broadly, including the crisis of housing and service delivery (Ngwane 2017b, 2019; Sinwell and Mbatha 2016). The departure of NUMSA, the largest union in South Africa, from COSATU and the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance, the conflicts in the Alliance this provoked, NUMSA's creation of the United Front to bring together workplace and community struggles, and the launch of the new trade union federation SAFTU, are all important fractures, despite their aforementioned limitations. Finally, the ongoing and intense so-called 'service delivery protests,' of varying levels of organization, in communities across the country are also an important element of these dynamics.

A Decent House, A Decent Job, A Decent Life: Crisis, Austerity and Revolutionary Praxis

In this dissertation, however, I have suggested that rather than the elite driven, institutionalized and professionalized, mobilization-focused praxis of many movements and organizations, which fetishize various privileged organizational forms, agents, spaces, and ideologies, the Housing Assembly is committed to a praxis that builds solidarity to confront capitalist social relations. In short, I argue that we must draw our attention to understanding and engaging with and in the patient and consistent organizing carried out in all of the spaces of working-class life by organizations like the Housing Assembly. I would here like to emphasize five interrelated reasons for this argument along with suggestions for their theoretical and political relevance.

First, the Housing Assembly argues that struggles beyond the workplace hold the potential to challenge, disrupt and overturn capitalist social relations. As Social Reproduction Theory contends, struggles like those around housing and public services explored here, directly confront capital's efforts to privatize social reproduction and represent the seeds of an alternative which seeks to (re)appropriate and (re)collectivize "the means of subsistence for all" (Ferguson 2016, 57). It would appear that the body of evidence to support this line of argument is growing as capital's efforts to privatize social reproduction, and those of the state in its service, continue to intensify. As this mutual cooperation becomes increasingly visible (Wood 2009), as it did in the labour-community alliance discussed in Chapter Four, apparent divisions between struggles around production and social reproduction become less and less tenable. Struggles to defend and expand access to public services like those in South Africa, particularly in the context of crises like the Cape Town Water Crisis and its aftermath in which the Housing Assembly became the go-to organization for fighting evictions as well as WMD installations, are exemplary. These difficult moments of intensification simultaneously offer opportunities to organize and build working class consciousness and movements in the process.

Second, social relations of oppression are co-constitutive and mutually determinant of concrete processes of capitalist expropriation and exploitation. Failing to grasp these internal relations movements remain "unrepresentative and incomplete social or anticapitalist movements, and as such participate in replicating the organization of capital and bourgeois rule"

(Bannerji 2011, 55). This argument signals the potential of struggles against oppressions of all kinds to be struggles against capitalism provided that their integral relationship is emphasized and the urgent necessity of this task lest we remain trapped in a reproductive praxis. The possibility then, of building a future that is socialist, anti-racist, feminist, queer-positive—which fights against all forms of oppression and against exploitation in other words—lies in collective consciousness raised and collective struggle(s) waged across the length and breadth of capitalist society.

Third, this outcome is not given, however, as Bannerji and the organizing experience of the Housing Assembly makes clear. Rather, David Camfield (2017, 222-223) argues that

> [i]t is a mistake to assume that the default response of the working class to capitalism is rising up in revolt, and then try to come up with a reason for why people fail to live up to this expectation. Instead, we should recognize that going on strike, protesting, rioting and other kinds of collective action are possible but less common ways of responding to the conditions that people find themselves in.

According to Ellen Wood, "[c]lass formations emerge and develop 'as men and women *live* their productive relations and *experience* their determinate situations, within "the *ensemble* of the social relations," with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways'" (Wood 1995, 80; emphasis in original). Drawing on E.P. Thompson, Wood is not arguing that class consciousness or its emergence is in some way a guaranteed outcome—even in the context of consistent protest and struggle as in South Africa over the last two decades—but rather that within the diverse, uneven and unendingly mediated social relations of capitalism this inherent potential exists. It is through organising processes in the course of concrete struggles to resist, transform and upend these social relations, like those explored in this dissertation, that the uncovering of relations of exploitation and oppression under capitalism can contribute to this process.

Fourth, the production of knowledge in and by social movements plays a key role in these processes and the formation of consciousness about the class nature of experience. The 'correct' ideas or knowledge, the presence of a 'struggle hero' or leader is not sufficient, nor perhaps necessary, to bring the relations of solidarity and organization required for the 'uprising' Camfield refers to above (Choudry 2015). Rather, and emphasized here, integral to these struggles is the learning process of conscientization and working-class solidarity and organization building. The link between theory and action is such that recovering class for social movement analysis and organizing is requisite for pushing forward our understandings of the 'new' working class in an era where material insecurity is increasingly the norm. In this process a class struggle theory of social movements is helpful in moving beyond the historical and theoretical pitfalls of NSM theory, radical pluralism and their rejection of class. It is likewise an antidote to the structural variants of Marxism that E.P. Thompson and some other Marxists have reacted so strongly to. While the renewed militancy of trade unions in South Africa in the past several years is likely to dampen claims that 'old' social movements and the working class can be relegated to the dustbin of history there, the politics of class and the task of building revolutionary praxis also remains ever present within, as well as outside, working class organizations and movements across South Africa, as reflected in the work of the Housing Assembly and its contentious relationships with many of its comrade organizations on the left.

Fifth, the outcome of the Housing Assembly's learning process of organizing—although it certainly accomplishes these things—is more than just the sparking of critical consciousness, the development of abstract solidarity, growing organizational membership or alliances and coalitions. Rather, it also has a very tangible impact that manifests in physical solidarity around the refusal of WMD installations, evictions and land invasions, other ways of coping with commodified service delivery and inequitable access including collective provisioning, and participation in and contestation of the policy process such as demands for improvements and increases to housing and service allocations. In other words, it is a process of transforming the immediate experience and future horizon of the working class in Cape Town and beyond. To reiterate the sentiment expressed to me by a leading Housing Assembly Organizer (2015), in the context of the relentless molecular disaggregation of the working class (Gramsci 1971) that is especially intense in the South African context, the Housing Assembly's collective act of critically reflecting upon experience, organizing and taking action constitutes a learning process of "getting our humanity back." It is a (partial) antidote to the capital-labour relation which Marx (1975) argued alienates humans from their humanity, their social 'species-being,' which scholars like Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaegii (2018) have extended beyond the narrow processes of production to include forms of domination and unfreedom engendered by capitalism across society.

This is not to say that the Housing Assembly has achieved great 'success' as it is generally defined, however. By any common-sense notion of the word the organization has failed. But as Robin D.G. Kelley (2002, ix) argues in his brilliant *'Freedom Dreams'*

> Unfortunately, too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they "succeeded" in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves. By such a measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to continue to struggle for change.

In the context of Kelley's body of work, as both intellectual and organizer, I read his argument of visions and dreams[38] to be about more than just ideas, but rather as also constituted by practices—a *praxis*—oriented towards the transformation of social relations. The Housing

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[38] Jodi Dean (2012) similarly speaks of a horizon.

Assembly seeks one such horizon of social transformation through a process of starting from the material conditions of everyday life of those that suffer the most in the present. But its praxis does not end there, stuck in the moments of everyday life where critical consciousness is sparked. It seeks, rather, to draw together, theorize, critically reflect on and work through all of the myriad struggles which constitute working class life; to build the organization and a broader movement that is embedded in a conscious working class (the agent or subject) equipped with the analysis required to guide it in working towards an alternative society. Nilsen and Cox (2013, 78)

> propose the term social movement project for these forms of collective agency, defined as (a) challenges to the social totality which (b) aim to control the self-production of society and (c) have or are developing the potential for the kind of hegemony – leading the skilled activity of different social groups – that would make (b) and hence (a) possible. At the heart of these challenges, there lie emergent structures of radical needs and capacities, and the transformative potential of a movement project lies in the goal of realizing these structures.

It is in this sense that I refer to the Housing Assembly's work as a revolutionary praxis in the process of becoming and it is in this sense that, along with my comrades in Cape Town and elsewhere, I too remain hopeful.

Further Research

This project opens a number of possibilities for research around class, capitalism, social movements, learning and knowledge production. First, discussions around decolonization have become more pronounced on the South African left in the wake of the #FeesMustFall protests. Debates around post-colonial theory and analysis and other currents of thought prominent in the student movement including Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanism also remain ongoing. These debates are not substantively addressed in this dissertation for the simple reason that they did not enter into the day to day struggles of the Housing Assembly to any considerable degree, as well as for reasons of scope and space. While in the context of the student movement all three have at times drifted into what some have termed identity essentialism, constructive engagements with these currents of thought are both warranted, as they have provoked important debates around social movements and political struggle in post-apartheid South Africa with relevance for other contexts, and necessary, given their wide engagement by a variety of students, activists and scholars (see Hart 2016).

Second, for similar reasons this project has not engaged with the role played by left-liberal social justice organizations active around housing and water. The most notable of which are Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU) and the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) both founded by activist Zackie Achmat of Treatment Action Coalition fame. NU, the 'Reclaim the City' campaign it runs, and SJC engage in a variety of activist research, advocacy and legal struggles around housing and services in Cape Town. The organizations have had some success in using the media and courts to challenge the sale of land in Cape Town's core to private developers that could be used for social housing and in improving services in informal settlements in the city. Housing Assembly activists note, however, that in not situating these struggles in the broader social relations of capitalism NU and SJC have ended up advocating for what amounts to a return to left or progressive neoliberal international best practice for integrated social housing and service delivery. A sympathetic critique of these types of legal juridical struggles is not without precedent in South Africa (Bond and Dugard 2008b; Greenstein 2003) but it is nonetheless important to highlight the limits of tools which render legal and technical that which is social, remaining within and on the terrain of the liberal capitalist state (Bond 2013b; Chipkin, Runciman and Pillay 2016; Ngwane 2019; Vally 2007), representative of a reproductive praxis as they are. Further inquiry into the articulation of these struggles with those waged by the

Housing Assembly and the perceptions of activists and organizers in both camps could be instructive for the creation of more cooperative relationships while avoiding the co-optation and demobilization often associated with an over reliance on narrow legal-juridical/liberal constitutional tactics.

Third, the NU has, however, published a number of reports exposing many of the City of Cape Town's dealings with property owners and developers and a wide range of materials which explain city policy and resident's rights that can be very useful for some aspects of organizing. This work is an important component of the very necessary mapping of what Alf Nilsen (2009, 109; see also Barker and Nilsen 2013; Cox and Nilsen 2014) calls "social movements from above." In my research with the Housing Assembly this mapping often consisted of the modest task of uncovering various elements of these relations at the local level; for example, who won the tender and is installing water meters in this area or who is involved in evictions or the building of new houses in that area? These closer to the ground processes of uncovering relations of exploitation, dispossession and oppression are key to successful organizing work at the local and wider scales and can be quite powerful when connected to fine grained analysis of the machinations of broader social movements from above, austerity coalitions at the level of the local state for example (Donald et al. 2014).

Fourth, in relation to the discussion of alienation above, and at perhaps the opposite end of the theoretical and practical spectrum, is the understudied yet vital affective and material labour of social reproduction involved in social struggle. This involves not only the work of combatting the material and ideological onslaught of neoliberal restructuring and the process of re-humanization that the Housing Assembly argues occurs in the process of organizing, but also the labour of (socially) reproducing movements themselves. These aspects of struggle constantly bubble to the surface in movements as the mental and manual labour of reproducing movements is organized along lines of gender and race provoking conflict and division but also holding out the opportunity for leaps in consciousness to be had and relations of solidarity renewed and deepened. Sorely needed then is an organizing-centered exploration of the simultaneously affective and material labour of building new relations of solidarity, community, organization, even of family and of friendship: the labour of building social relations which contribute to the process of working-class self-transformation and self-realization. Much as SRT does in drawing attention to the production—social reproduction distinction *and* relation, the goal is not to collapse affective and material labour into one another, or elide who actually does the work, nor other social relations of oppression as theories of immaterial labour do when it comes to gender and race, strongly critiqued by anti-racist socialist feminists among others. As Wendy Brown (2015, 104-105) has said, it is the affective (not to mention material) labour of women that acts as "the unavowed glue for a world whose governing principle cannot hold it together." Rather the intention is to make a strategic analytical distinction in attempting this inquiry. In particular around the construction, maintenance and intensification of working-class divisions via the social relations of capitalism, exploitation and the wage, oppression and the differential production of labour both in capitalist society generally and within the organizing process. The goal being to contribute to work which attempts to offer some insight as to how they might be overcome.

Finally, and most immediately, I intend to push this project further as a post-doctoral research fellow under the supervision of Dr. Aziz Choudry, Canada Research Chair in Social Movement Learning and Knowledge Production, in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. Drawing on empirical and theoretical insights from this dissertation, I will compare and contrast social movement organizing in the Housing Assembly around the Cape Town Water Crisis with the recent water crisis in Detroit, Michigan. Both are examples of individual and collective strategic learning processes in which popular education and knowledge production play critical roles, sparking shifts in consciousness to build solidarities that transcend working-class diversity, mobilizing resources, developing organizational infrastructure, constructing sophisticated critiques of political economy, opportunities and constraints, and framing issues (Choudry 2015, Scandrett 2012, Holst 2002, Novelli 2012). Applying this critical adult education perspective to coalitions in these two sites, I seek to illuminate these processes and dynamics in the course of organizing to overcome internal and external barriers to collective action in different contexts. In doing so I hope to contribute to scholarship on social movements, seeking an alternative to dominant trends in the literature that analyze movements as either increasingly concerned with identity and/or community and the local—largely disconnected from political economic context—or as rational responses based upon opportunities for claim-making in a given context and with a given set of organizational resources (Barker et al. 2013; Holst 2011).

"Housing Assembly is a way of life. I live this and I won't change. I will fight to the end"

Through this research agenda I hope to continue the process of engaging with the patient organizing work of the sort practiced by the Housing Assembly, which departs from the sensuous experience of everyday working-class life as a starting point to develop critical consciousness and build broad working-class solidarity, organization and movements. The Housing Assembly's praxis, well-illustrated by SRT, considers the struggles of differentially produced working class households and communities around social reproduction to be valid, and indeed urgent, class struggles against 'capital in general.' This does not mean that all contemporary movements around social reproduction are manifestations of a working class for ‘its own self-development’ but rather that within these struggles lies this incipient potential, one which can only be realized through struggle. As E.P. Thompson (1978, 149) remarked in describing class as both process and relation, “Class and class-consciousness are always the last, not the first, stage in the real historical process.” A working class theory of social movements, and Social Reproduction Theory in particular, helps us to theorize this real historical process and the importance of the struggles around social reproduction explored here which, while they may be relatively invisible, like much of the work carried out in spaces of social reproduction more generally, may prove to be an indispensable source of working-class power in the future.

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Appendix A

Application to Conduct Research with the Housing Assembly

I am a 30-year-old Canadian doctoral student from the School of International Development and Global Studies at the University of Ottawa in Canada. I am also a researcher affiliated with the Municipal Services Project and the International Labour Research and Information Group.

In 2012, as a part of my Master's at Queen's University I came to Cape Town and worked with the Housing Assembly, Samwu, Ilrig and the MSP as a part of the Samwu-Ilrig project. Over the course of several months I learned about the struggles around housing and services in Cape Town; struggles which have since intensified.

What kind of research do I want to do?

The academic literature on social movements in South Africa and elsewhere has used a number of different theories and concepts to explain and try to understand and explain these movements. In my reading of this literature and my time spent in the labour and anti-privatization movement in South Africa, Canada and elsewhere, I have observed that this literature often overlooks the close connections between everyday life in communities involved in the struggle and the relations of capitalism more broadly. Therefore, I wish to conduct research that pays close attention to lived experience of struggle and the way it is intimately related to the shifting political and economic terrain in and on which it takes place.

My research will attempt to do the following:

- Critique the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa
- Specifically in relation to economic and social policy and its effects on vulnerable communities
- To examine how the Housing Assembly and its affiliates and allies organize and mobilize
- To explore how collective identities and solidarities are formed around the lived experiences of everyday life at work and in the home

What does taking part in the research involve?

With the Housing Assembly and community affiliates I would like to:

- Conduct interviews and focus groups with executive, steering and coordinating committee members and other representatives
- Observe meetings and take notes
- Access printed materials

I would like to emphasize that, as in the past, it is my intention to conduct research with the Housing Assembly and not on the Housing Assembly. With this in mind I am very open to negotiating some aspects of my research. It is also very important to me that this research contributes to the organization. Therefore, I would be interested in assisting with any research the Housing Assembly wishes to conduct for itself. This could include questionnaire, survey, and research design and secondary research and report writing, skills that I would be happy to share and assist others in developing.

What assistance to do I require?

Despite the time I have spent in South Africa and Cape Town, I am a Canadian and still relatively unfamiliar with travelling in the region. I therefore hope that it will be possible to accompany members of the Housing Assembly when they travel to communities and speak with community members. I am unfortunately not in a position to provide financial remuneration for this assistance but I will reimburse any costs incurred by those assisting me and provide meals if and when necessary.

What will happen to the information the Housing Assembly provides?

I would like to be able to use this information in my doctoral thesis and in any journal articles or conference papers that I produce in the course of this project. Publications will not contain the names of any individuals and the greatest care will be taken to ensure that participants cannot be identified by other means. Any written works that I produce on the Housing Assembly or its affiliates will be made available to the organization. I also hope to be able to report back to the Housing Assembly on my work in a way that is useful to the organization.

Appendix B

Letter of Information and Consent Form

My name is Adrian Murray and I am a graduate student in the School of International Development and Global Studies at the University of Ottawa in Canada. I would like to provide you with information on my current research project in order to see if you would like to participate. This will also allow you to ask any questions or request further details on the project.

Please note that this project is being conducted independently from the Housing Assembly and its affiliates and your decision to participate will not impact your relationship with the organization. These organizations/groups will, however, be identified in the final research project.

Title of the Study

Contention and Class: Social Movements and Public Services in South Africa

Persons Responsible for the Research Project

Lead Investigator: Adrian Murray, South African cell #, email address

Thesis supervisor: Susan Spronk, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of International Development and Global Studies, 120 University Private, Social Sciences Building, room 8037, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 6N5, +1 (613) 562-5800 extension 4426, susan.spronk@uottawa.ca.

Any information or complaint related to the ethical conduct of this research project may be brought to me directly or sent to the University of Ottawa Office of Research Ethics and Integrity: 550 Cumberland, room 154, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, +1 (613) 562-5367, ethics@uottawa.ca.

Purpose of the Study

I am interested in the experiences of citizens and social movement organizations in post-apartheid Cape Town and South Africa. I would like your help in understanding the issues which are affecting your communities and how you form collective identity and solidarity with other members of your community and organizations in Cape Town and South Africa. I would like to be able to use this information in my doctoral thesis.

Rationale and Nature of Participation

I would like to conduct a semi-structured interview with you about your life and your experience of living within your community. I would also like to participate in any meetings or social gatherings important to your area or organisation which may help further my understanding. I would also like your permission to record or take notes during any discussions or contact we have.

Potential Benefits which may arise from Participation

Your participation in this research project may facilitate and contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of social movement organizing in Cape Town and South Africa. This may have implications for social movements organizing to engage the state around service provision. This project also seeks to contribute to academic knowledge around the understandings of collective identity and movement formation. Key findings will be made available to the Housing Assembly in electronic and hard copy format and series of debriefings will take place near the end of the research project. I can provide you with a transcript of the interview upon request.

Potential Risks Associated with Participation

No risks have been identified with regards to participation in this research project, aside from the time necessary for the semi-structured interviews or focus groups. In order to mitigate the latter, I encourage you to choose a time and secure, confidential location for the interview to be held which is convenient for you.

Confidentiality, Anonymity and Conservation of Data

The study will not contain any identifying information and the greatest care will be taken to unsure that participants cannot be identified by other means.

All information provided will be confidential, secure, and protected. Hard copies of notes taken at various events and activities will be secured in a locked compartment (requiring a key or padlock) before being transferred to electronic format, after which they will be destroyed. Information in electronic format will be stored on my password protected computer and online, in a password protected folder. My computer will be physically protected in a locked compartment. The only people who will have access to this information will be my supervisor and me.

Voluntary Participation and the Right to Withdraw Participation or Refuse to Answer Questions

You are free not to answer any questions and are free to withdraw at any time without judgment or justification, and without fear of reprisal. If ever you decide to withdraw from the research in question, I will ask you if you would also like for any relevant written, oral, or visual information to be destroyed. It will always, however, be possible to reconsider your decision. In this case, I will confirm your decision directly.

Free and Informed, Audio-Recorded Consent on Digital Audio-Recorder

Do you have any questions? For your reference, I am also providing you with a copy of the consent form. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to communicate directly with me or the University of Ottawa Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (contact details listed above).

Based on the information presented here: (please circle)

I have/have not understood the aims of this research.

I have agreed/declined to take part in an interview.

I have agreed/declined to allow Adrian to observe or take part at any local organisation meetings.

I have agreed/declined to allow Adrian to record our meetings.

I have agreed/declined to allow Adrian to take notes during our meetings.

I have agreed/declined to allow Adrian to present any information I provide in his thesis.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ____________________________

Signature: ________________________

Declaration of Principal Investigator

I, ____, principal investigator of this research project, declare that I am responsible for the development of this research project. I also commit to respecting my obligations and informing the participant of any changes which may modify their consent.

Signature of Investigator: _________________________________

Date: __________________________________

Location: __________________________________

Appendix C

Interview Schedule for Housing Assembly Activists/Organizers

Name:

Area; # years:

Age:

Gender:

‘Race’:

Employment (occupation; working days/mo; place; position at work; history of work):

Household (size; occupants, relations and their occupation; means of support; support others; loans):

Observations of dwelling and conditions:

Position/involvement in Housing Assembly and affiliate organization:

General Questions

Where did you grow up? What was it like?

Where did you go to school? What level did you achieve? Matric?

Are you working? Previous employment?

Married/relationship? Children?

Where in Cape Town do you live?

In what type of housing do you live? Previously?

What are the most pressing issues in your community/area?

What changes do you think are needed?

Who can do what about these problems/changes and how?

What are the obstacles to achieving the goals you laid out earlier?

Have you always had this perspective?

Housing Assembly/Affiliate Related Questions

What is your current and historical involvement with the HA?

Has the HA changed since you got involved? If so how?

What is the structure of the HA and your affiliate? How are decisions made? What is participation like?

How often do you have meetings? Where? What happens? What issues are raised and how are the discussed?

What is the social composition of the membership of the HA and your affiliate?

What are some success the HA and your affiliate have achieved?

What are some if any problems the HA or your affiliate have encountered? Individuals? Affiliates? How were they addressed?

Identity Questions

Have you belonged to a political party? Community organization? Union? Hawker's association? Business Association? If so why and which one? In what capacity? Why did you leave? Would you join one again?

What about this/these organizations did you identify with?

How would you describe the class structure of South Africa?

What class would you define yourself as belonging to?

Do you consider yourself working class?

Relations with the State

What is your experience, if any, with your ward councillor? Ward committee? (Access, response etc.)

Do you counter intermediaries, NGOs etc. when you interact or try to interact with our councillor?

What, if any, has been your experience with any other contact with the local state?

What could be done to improve the local state and its relations with you/your organization?

Focus Group Guides

Housing Assembly Core Activists

How do you understand the problems with service delivery in South Africa?

How can service delivery be improved?

What is socialism? What does it mean to be a part of a socialist organization?

What does the HA mean to you?

What is democracy? Is democracy present in South Africa?

How do you connect your understanding of service delivery in South Africa to the problems and issues in your area?

Housing Assembly Community Affiliate Members

What are the pressing issues in your area?

What was your area like before 1994? After?

Why did community meetings/mobilization start?

Why did you start attending?

How do you see your organization fitting into addressing the problems identified above? With other organizations? With unions? With political parties?

How does your organization relate to union organizations within the HA?

How do you as individuals relate to activists from unions in the HA?

What do you have in common in terms of service delivery? Employment?

How would describe the membership of the Housing Assembly in class terms?

Housing Assembly Labour Affiliate Members

What are the pressing issues in your areas as individuals?

What was your area like before 1994? After?

What are the pressing issues for you and your organization?

Why did union meetings/mobilization start?

Why did you start attending?

How do you see your organization fitting into addressing the problems identified above? With other organizations? With unions? With political parties?

How does your union relate to community organizations within the HA?

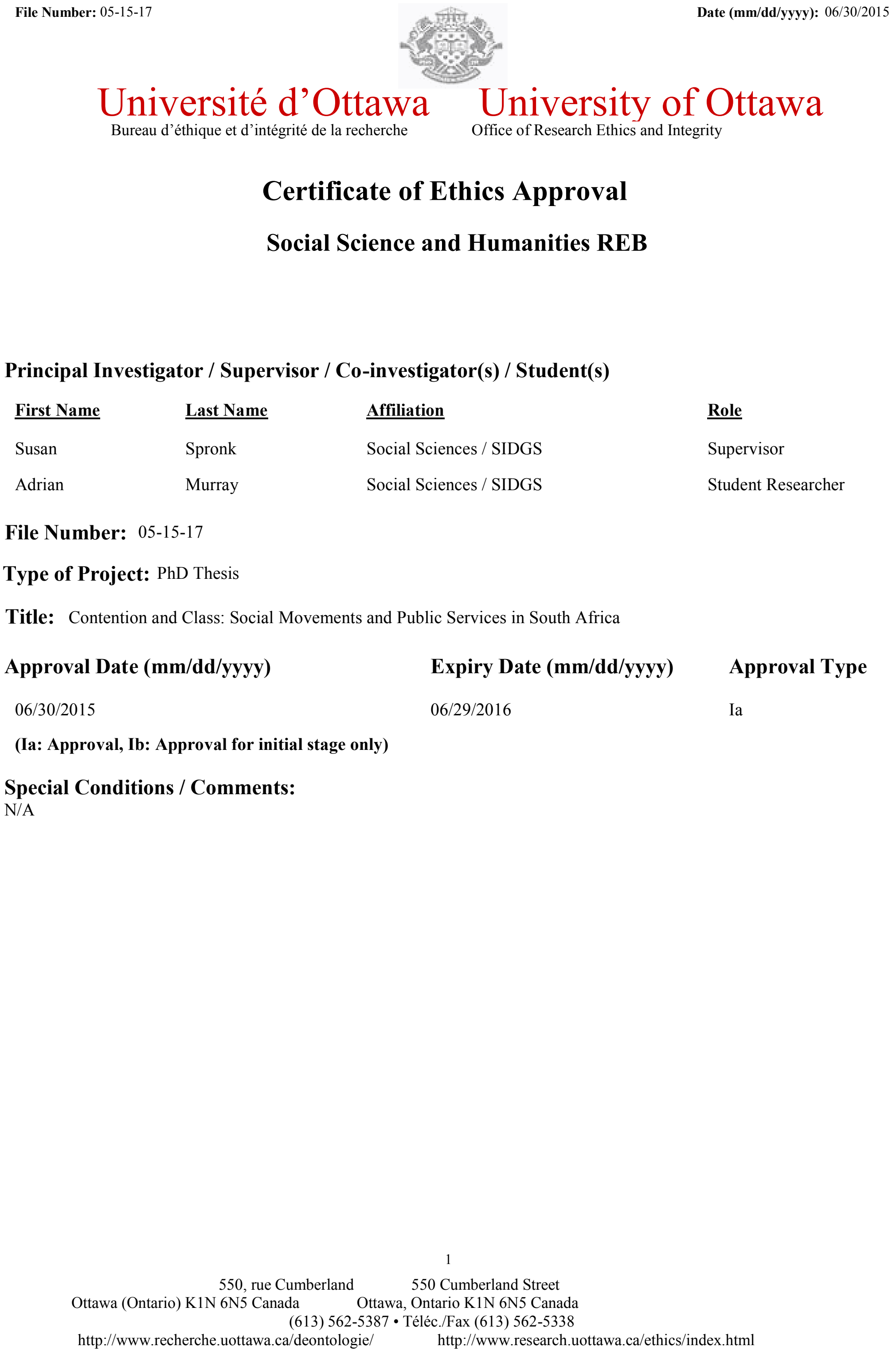
How do you as individuals relate to activists from communities in the HA?

What do you have in common in terms of service delivery? Employment?

How would describe the membership of the Housing Assembly in class terms?

Appendix D

Ethics Approvals



File Number: 05-15-17

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/30/2015

Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Certificate of Ethics Approval

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Role
Susan	Spronk	Social Sciences / SIDGS	Supervisor
Adrian	Murray	Social Sciences / SIDGS	Student Researcher

File Number: 05-15-17

Type of Project: PhD Thesis

Title: Contention and Class: Social Movements and Public Services in South Africa

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
06/30/2015	06/29/2016	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A

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3rd June, 2015

Dear Adrian Murray,

‘Class, Capitalism and Collective Identity: Social Movements and Public Services in South Africa’

This is a letter to certify that your Doctoral research proposal, as described above, has been granted ethical clearance by the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee through delegation to the Sociology Department Research Ethics Committee.

Your reference number is: SOC2015/13.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Owen Crankshaw:

Chairperson, Sociology Department Research Ethics Committee