

Social movements and the struggle for shelter: a case study of Durban

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Presentation

- ❑ Background to housing policy and programmes in South Africa
- ❑ Background to housing needs in Durban
- ❑ Introduction to the two movements
- ❑ Discussion of their strategies, tactics and successes
- ❑ The complexity of engagement with the state

South African housing policy

- ❑ More than 2 million dwellings constructed
- ❑ Means tested capital subsidy
- ❑ Designed by a stakeholder group dominated by the private sector and addressed their needs (win-win-win)
- ❑ Introduction of the PHP
- ❑ Quality concerns – increased in value from about \$2000 to \$7000
- ❑ Now the local authorities are much more central than before

Concerns about the housing policy

- ❑ Location (and associated difficulties of spatial exclusion)
- ❑ Size and quality (now much less of a concern)
- ❑ Participation and beneficiary involvement
- ❑ Delays in delivery
- ❑ Failures of top-up loans
- ❑ Lack of emergency provision
- ❑ Continuing, growing but changing informality

Consequences of the housing policy

- ❑ Increasingly informality but fastest growth in informal shacks in formal settlements
- ❑ Frustration about the lack of improvements (and the rising levels of public protest)
- ❑ Some evictions but hard to assess how many
- ❑ No alternatives to the subsidy – in part because it is so attractive

Durban

- Port city, commercial interests
- Municipality taxed beer to generate revenue and housing for the low-paid
- Increasing pressure from 1913 to push black Africans out of the city but also immigration. Clearances and fairly well-located settlements continued. High densities, difficult development conditions
- Now: 9% in backyard shacks in formal settlements, 12.6% in informal settlements, 4.2% in temporary units

Two major movement networks

- ❑ *Abahlali baseMjondolo*: emerged from Kennedy Road settlement in about 2005. Has had support from KZN and more recently Church Land Programme
- ❑ FedUP: support from uTshani and the Community Organization Urban Resource Centre
- ❑ Interviewees: the movement leaders and activists, associated professionals, local and provincial government and commentators

Everyone agreed on three issues

- ❑ Regulated and professionalised nature of subsidy financed housing developments
- ❑ Problems associated with the relocation and densification of low-income settlements
- ❑ Inadequate scale of housing programmes in Durban relative to need (about 16,000 units constructed and an estimated 20,000 households coming into the city). But an aim to be “slum free” by 2014

Movement strategies

- ❑ Seen as being very different: confrontational and collaborative
- ❑ But actually their histories suggested much similarity with both using both strategies
- ❑ Both seek land and housing using subsidy finance. Both also seek respect for their members
- ❑ Different kinds of professional networks, different experiences, different methodologies

Understanding success

- ❑ Cooperation: Need to be able to deal with the bureaucracy and demonstrate that can go to scale
- ❑ Cooperation: Manage hostility from councillors
- ❑ Contestation : opens a possibility. Very hard to conclude exactly what makes a difference. But everyone seems to think that it does
- ❑ Very mixed views on movement collaboration

Conclusion

- ❑ Dealing with the multiple “faces” of the state requires considerable skill. The bureaucratic state is a demonstration of Foucauldian power while the councillors operate a crude more coercive power. There is a recognised need for a more collaborative politics but hard to realise
- ❑ Movement members appear to be strongly orientated to the subsidy programme, although (arguably) their members cannot gain access. They are locked into playing a game although the rules and outcomes do not work for them.