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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING  
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## HOUSING AND INFRA-STRUCTURAL CRISIS

### Introduction

The object of this paper is fourfold:

- a) to trace the history of the housing crisis in South Africa,
- b) to highlight the failure of local government to provide infrastructure and housing to blacks,
- c) to show the failure of successive government reforms to gain political legitimacy and deliver housing and infrastructure,
- d) to highlight the land and housing crisis resulting from the repeal of land and Group Areas Acts, and
- e) to suggest ways and means of addressing this crisis and the role that the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa could play in addressing this crisis and the imbalances caused by centuries of apartheid.

### Background

Soon after the establishment of the Union of South Africa after 1910 the white minority government introduced the Land Act of 1913 and 1936 which gave 87 percent of the Land to the White minority and leaving only 13 percent for the occupation of the Black majority now totalling more than 75 percent of the population.

The White minority government created native reserves in the 13 percent of the land to ensure the segregation of blacks from whites. These reserves became labour reservoirs for the settler white minority; When they wanted to build cities and towns they drew labour from these reserves. Moreover, the barrenness of Black reserves, the destruction of their stock by whites forced more blacks to migrate to the cities and towns. These migrant labourers lived in shacks near the cities and towns until some local authorities and government began to provide some low-cost housing which resulted in the mushrooming of black townships in the urban areas.

Initially these townships were treated as part of the white cities and towns for administrative purposes. The cities and towns were responsible for the administration of townships. They covered the costs of their administration from the costs of liquor and sorghum beer sales.

The white minority only allowed those blacks whose services they required to enter into the urban areas. Thus they

provided limited housing and infrastructure and introduced tight influx control low as to ensure that the number of blacks in urban areas are kept to the maximum required to minister to their needs.

Following the institutionalization of Apartheid by the National Party in 1948 and the establishment of the Bantustan during the sixties the regime adopted a deliberate policy to resettle blacks further away from the cities and towns without providing them with adequate transport, sources of local government income and proper housing rather than the normal four-roomed (match box) and two-roomed houses.

In line with its policy of Bantustans the regime considered all blacks as temporary sojourners in the cities and classified them according to their respective ethnic Bantustan. It was envisaged that finally all Africans would return to their native reserves (later known as black homelands). To facilitate this the regime decided to create conditions which made the lives of blacks in urban areas as unbearable as possible.

For example, in 1967 the regime decreed that no new houses for Africans would be built outside of the bantustans. Accordingly, the financial statements of that period show the shift in the (meagre) allocation of housing finance to the Bantustans. In some townships, for instance Manguang in Bloemfontein, this "freeze" of housing development lasted until 1983. In 1971 the regime took over the control of black townships from white local authorities and placed it in the newly created Black Administration Boards and either privatised or transferred to these Boards the liquor and sorghum beer shops leaving the administering white local authorities without this main source of income for black Townships. The little income available to the Black Administration Boards was consumed by their bureaucracies. The Boards did not provide blacks with housing or infrastructure as the regime had planned that by the year 1978 all Africans 'would. have returned. to the homelands.

These inhuman policies and harsh conditions resulting from them unleashed wide scale resistance which culminated in the Soweto uprising of 1976. Despite this the regime continued with its segregation policy which led to the establishment of the Community Councils and the banning of 18 Community and political organisations in 1977. This repression afforded the regime the stability it required to introduce some Constitutional reforms. First, the regime upgraded the Community Councils to Black Local Authorities in 1982 according them equal status to the White Local Authorities without, however, giving them equal sources of income. Hardly a year thereafter (1983) the regime introduced a new constitution that established a tri-cameral parliament which brought in Indians and Coloured

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into Parliament as junior partners. Thus the new constitutional dispensation did not diminish white domination and privilege.

### Housing

The economically unviable politically illegitimate Black Local Authorities were given the responsibility of managing land, services and housing. At the same time the central government withdrew and adrogated its responsibility in respect of providing housing for Africans, arguing that its resolution lay in the relationship between the market and the individual.

These policies resulted in a huge housing backlog in South Africa. Currently this backlog is estimated at between 1,200,00 and 1,400,00 units and it is set to rise to a minimum of 2,300,000 units by the turn of the century. On the contrary there is no housing backlog for the white population.

The lack of housing and land forced thousands of blacks on to white farms and inner cities. According to the Department of Land Affairs there are today 67 chiefs and their tribes living in shacks on white farms.

The formal lifting of influx control in 1986 allowed even more blacks into the urban areas resulting in the deepening of the housing crisis. To alleviate this the regime passed the Free Settlement Areas Act 102 of 1988 providing for the opening of certain areas to all races. With the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the abolition of the Land and Group Areas Acts in 1990 many blacks from neighbouring white farms and backyards moved into the cities so that the entire economic and racial composition of South African Cities began to change.

The influx of blacks into the cities and the ill-conceived urban policies have generated a crisis of homelessness and landlessness. For instance, for the more than 3 million people living in "Squatter" Settlements, hostel dwellers and domestic worker "squatters" there is little prospect of housing in the next ten years unless a radical shift in urban policy is developed and implemented urgently. The current state operators in housing, the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) and the Black Local Authorities (BLAs) are not only incapable of responding to the problem constructively but also lack the will to do so. Instead the authorities are using the Illegal Squatters Act of 1951 to turn the homeless into criminals. Rather than provide them with shelter and basic services they use bulldozers to destroy their shacks leaving them with nowhere to go.

Research into 26 communities indicates that urban policy in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand and Vereeniging (PWV) region

with a few improved exceptions such as that of the former Midrand "Squatter" Community is substantially no different to that prevailing prior to 2 February 1990 which marked the beginning of the repeal of apartheid legislation. To give some credibility to his reform President F W De Klerk made R3 billion available for housing through the Independent Development Trust.

Meanwhile the sale of land by BLAs to private developers also lead to displacement and an increase in the homeless as shown in the McDonald's and Levenis Farms in Soweto. The former shack dwellers were relocated to a graded rubbish dump in Chiawelo. The BLAs have not developed programmes of action to deal with the thousands of low-income dwellers living in backyards, shacks or free-standing informal settlement within their jurisdiction. Only 12 of the 20 BLAs contacted in the PWV responded to a survey on programmes of action to address homelessness. Furthermore, only six of the BLAs who responded had scheduled to develop site-and-service schemes, provide services and/or upgrade existing informal settlements within their areas; These were Kwa-Thema (Springs), Tembisa (Kempton Park), Duduza and Ratanda (Heidelberg) and Mamelodi (Pretoria). Meanwhile, the BLAs laws backed by the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, 1951 continues to harass and evict urban homeless people.

For instance, the Phola Park informal settlement with 4000 shacks near Alberton has been declared a Section 6 transit camp and it is planned to relocate residents to Zondisizwe /Rietfontein (Section 6 settlement), to demolish the shacks and to sell Phola Park land to private developers. The Phola Park residents successfully opposed this move through the courts. Nonetheless the Town Council has successfully applied for the Removal Order under Section 5 and only the resistance by the residents has prevented the execution of this order. The harassment of the Phola Park residents aimed at forcing them out of the area has resulted in violent incidents which left many people including women and children dead.

In stead of developing a pro-active approach to housing for the homeless the authorities exact levies for unauthorised structures. Such harassment leads to land invasions elsewhere such as the takeover of streets in Alexander, overnight invasion of farmland west of Soshanguve, erection of shacks at Kliptown, Dobsonville, Daveyton, Katlegong and Bekkersdal and the subsequent demolition of these shelters. The Provincial Authorities (eg. the TPA) are responsible for accommodating and servicing "squatter" settlements outside the BLA boundaries/ In terms of Section 6A of the Illegal Squatting Act the TPA may establish informal settlements to accommodate the low-income homeless. But the TPA, for instance, has been motivated to develop

informal settlements to rid the white land of "squatters" and to relieve the pressure on accommodation in the black areas. Hence, the development between Johannesburg and Pretoria of Ivory Park, and Midrand site-and-service scheme; Orange Farm, and Evaton in the South, Zonkiszwe/Rietfontein in the South-east. Other homeless people, eg about 750 families from Kwa Green in Sandton (near Johannesburg) moved to Kaalfontein/Ivory Park after being offered sites 100 kilometres away in Orange Farm. In 1990 other white Local Authorities at Vanderbijlpark and Alberton sprang into action and demolished any and all erection of shacks in their so-called white areas. Other towns such as Verwoerdburg (near Pretoria) moved more subtly as they prepared plans to sell the land on which the squatters had settle to Taiwanese.

These squatters were lured away from the land under the pretext that the Taiwanese would create job opportunities for them. But the Taiwanese have insisted that they should buy the land and that they wanted job reservation for their people. The increasing settlement of Taiwanese in the PWV region is accompanied by the re-enactment not only of racialism but also discrimination.

All in all, existing urban policy in the PWV does not provide relief for the homeless but has also led to a degraded urban environment where millions are excluded from affordable land accessible to socio-economic opportunities such as jobs, schools and clinics. This policy continues to promote and sustain racialism and discrimination in the unequal distribution of land and financial resources. Consequently, it has increased the tension and conflict as homeless people are forced to compete for limited resources in an officially constrained environment.

The housing crisis is exacerbated by the fact that some parts of the private sector has delivered bad products and the majority of them effectively refuse to involve themselves in addressing the housing needs at the poorer and poorest segments of the backlog. The housing crisis in South Africa manifests itself through the proliferation of informal settlements around the established urban areas of South Africa such as Port Elizabeth, Durban, Bloemfontein and Cape Town.

The other constraints of the homeless is the lack of disposable income for investment in housing available to the black population. Decades of a low-wage economy, plus the ravages of structural unemployment, have left a terrible legacy. Thus this year (1992) it was established that nearly 60 percent of African households are unable to make any contribution to the cost of their homes. In short, housing is simply unaffordable to the majority of the black population. This situation is graphically reflected in the following selection of economic

indicators:

Since 1981, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen at an average annual rate of approximately 1,5 percent per annum. Conservative government statistics indicated that, in 1989, approximately 44 percent of the total population were estimated to be living below what is generally regarded as a "minimum living standard".

Meanwhile the labour-absorptive capacity of the formal sector declined rapidly between 1965 and 1989. This is reflected in the statistics of the Department of Finance issued in 1991. These statistics show the following percentage decline.

1965 - 1970 73.6%

1970 - 1975 62.7%

1975 - 1980 35.45

1980 - 1985 21.9%

1985 - 1989 12.9%

This situation impacts differentially within the economy, disproportionately affecting those already impoverished by apartheid. As the preliminary figures of the Bureau for Market Research indicated in 1990 the "personal per Capita" disposable income of Blacks, Coloureds and Asians amounted respectively to only 12.3 percent, 26.9 percent and 36.6 percent of the per Capita disposable income of Whites.

The inescapable conclusion, arrived at from a combination both of the housing shortage and the economic situation in South Africa is that an accelerated housing programme is needed, but with substantial financial intervention in the form of subsidies for the majority of the population. Recent programmes developed by the Independent Development Trust (IDT) have failed to meet the demands and expectations of the needy. The IDT adopted a uniform R7.500 Capital subsidy which was then allocated for the purposes of site-and-service provision, often located on the urban fringe. While this amounted to the most substantial "housing" activity in the Country over the past 18 months, it falls far short of the kind of intervention necessary for a meaningful resolution of the housing crisis.

The recently established National Housing Forum (NHF) is the most representative Forum on Housing which serves as a co-ordinating mechanism which seeks to remove some of the constraints on housing delivery in the short term. One wonders whether the NHF will be adequate to its tasks with government withdrawal on the basis that the NHF sought to introduce interim government by stealth.

## The Land Question

As said above, the 87 percent of the total surface of South Africa and 95 percent of its productive capacity lies in the hands of the white minority. The increasing homeless, eg, in the PWV region forced the regime to appoint the Niemand Commission in 1970 to investigate into the supply of land for township development.

Between 1985 and 1990 the government identified 19 000 hectares in the PWV for black residential occupation.

Theoretically the scrapping of the Group Areas Act increased the potential for more land for low-income housing but in practice nothing much has changed. Largely because although in many cases land has been identified its use has not been allocated for housing. The other constraints include the cost of serviced sites which has risen from R5 000 to R6 000 in just two years. Even where the roads are upgraded, no drainage, no electricity, a water tap for every twenty sites and only pit latrines the cost as shown in the Midrand Scheme cost R4 000 per site. The LUTSPLAN released in July 1992 and whose main aim was to identify land and its current zoning and other such studies undertaken by the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber and the Urban Foundation have all provided. JOMET' with 'the information to sell of 6 land privately to create buffer between black townships and white municipal areas. For instance, recently the Department of Land and Regional Affairs wanted to sell 53 pieces of land in various PWV cities by public auction. This was stopped by the intervention of the ANC (PWV) Local and Regional Government Commission. Despite the ANC opposition to these land sales and demands for a moratorium various local authorities and government departments are still selling land. These moves are very difficult to understand as there are many communities which are landless, eg. the Zevenfontein and Wheelers Farm Communities and any attempts to settle them anywhere in some municipalities, is resisted by white municipalities on various grounds.

Namely:-

- a) the value of their property will go down;
- b) blacks would pollute the air;
- c) the crime rate would increase;

As I am speaking here the Diepkloof Residents Association (North of Johannesburg) have applied to the Supreme Court of South Africa to stop the TPA from settling the Zevenfontein Community in Diepsloot, North of Johannesburg. The TPA itself and various white local authorities are



disposing of land on the fringes of and in the inner cities in order to keep low-income groups away and to keep blacks within the Cities in the minority so as to preserve white domination and privilege and keep the cities white. This movement has come to be known as NIMBY (ie. not in my backyard).

As part of their strategy to consolidate the homelands in their efforts to create an artificial federal state the regime has decided to transfer about 1,2 million hectares of land to the Bantustans. In other areas, for instance, Majaneng in the North. Western Cape, the community was forcibly removed. The Majaneng Community lodged a claim for the restoration of their land twith the Presidents Advisory Land Commission in March 1992. Despite this claim and the intervention of the Communities lawyers, government sold the land through an expedited process.

Household proportion

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30%  
20%  
10%  
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Household preportion

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50%

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Household proportion

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