

# Spatial Justice and Post-Apartheid Housing in Cape Town: Pathways to Resilience through the Redevelopment of Joe Slovo Informal Settlement

## A RCHI - MIT Case Study

By Lawrence Vale and Laura Wainer



Source: (SAMSET – Supporting Sub-Saharan African Municipalities with Sustainable Energy Transitions) 2014

### Abstract

Joe Slovo is one of the largest informal settlements in South Africa. It was established during the early 80s in Cape Town’s oldest Black African township, Langa, and named after anti-apartheid activist and former Minister of Housing (1994-1995), Yossel Mashel Slovo. Its relatively good location with respect to transport and sources of jobs had made it one of the fastest growing informal settlements in the city, especially between 1994 and 2004. Its phased redevelopment since 2004 exemplifies the evolution of post-apartheid housing policy, showing how—after significant false starts—it is possible to overcome the legacy of segregating the non-white poor population into distantly located, low density, underserved and environmentally fragile areas. The project, which started as any other top-down policy, reproducing the inherited authoritarian rationales from the apartheid era, has been transformed into a learning catalyst on how to best ensure the progressive realization of housing for lower income sectors. It also illustrates what Kahanovitz et al. (2009) call the “dynamic of risk” of informal settlements, to expose the dialectic relationship between social and environmental fragilities over a much contested territory. Finally, it demonstrates that different principles of housing (livelihood, safety, resilience and self-governance) are so intrinsically related that they cannot work in isolation from each other (Vale et al. 2014).

*The Resilient Cities Housing Initiative (RCHI) explores the ways that shelter and settlements can be designed to anticipate and respond to the 21st century environmental and security challenges of an urbanized and urbanizing world. <http://rchi.mit.edu/>*

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RCHI Criteria. Housing for resilient cities enhances:

L: Supporting community structure and economic livelihood of residents

S: Enhancing the personal security of residents in the face of violence and threats of displacement

E: Reducing the vulnerability of residents to risk and environmental stresses

G: Empowering communities through enhances capacities to share in their own governance

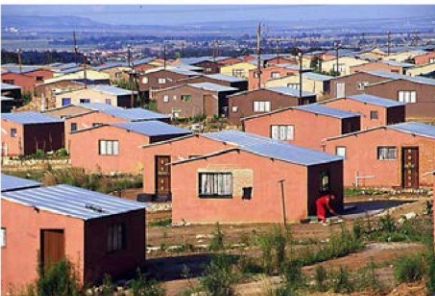
### Overview and Context

Figure 1. Apartheid Housing in Cape Town



Source: Building Apartheid: On Architecture and Order in Imperial Cape Town (Ashgate Studies in Architecture)

Figure 3. RDP Housing in Cape Town



Source:  
<https://ghettoverit.wordpress.com/2008/05/25/how-cost-housing-in-south-africa-a-story-of-fraud-corruption-and-general-mismanagement/>

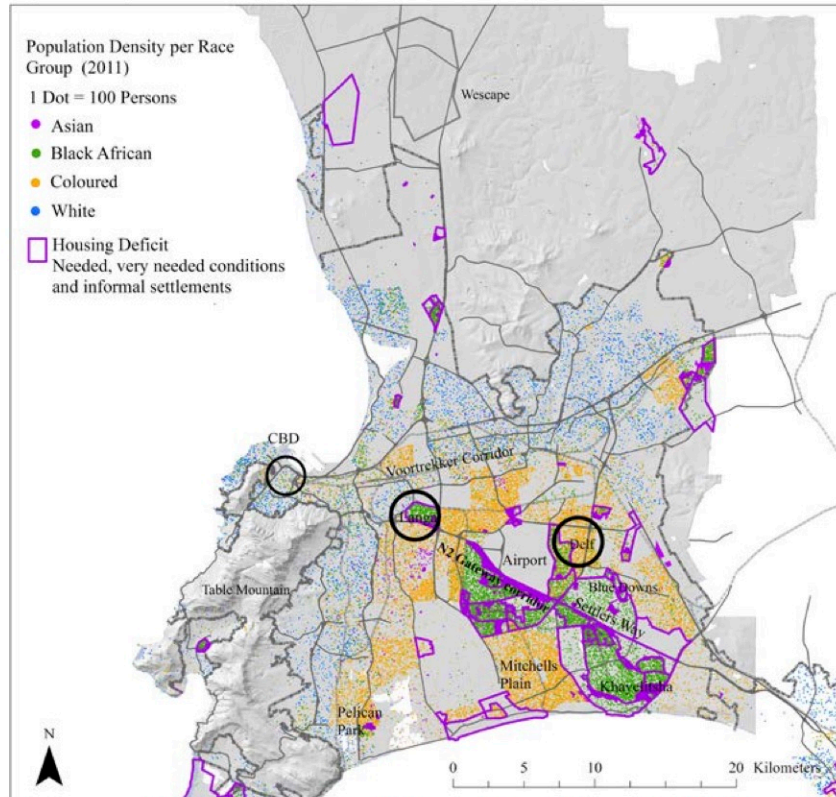
Cape Town's housing policy -and its political landscape- is deeply influenced by both the national and local levels. At a national scale, South Africa's democratic transition in 1994 was intended to bring the remaining 80 percent of the population into citizenship, recognizing social, civic and human rights previously unaddressed. The national Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP), introduced in 1996, included the urban strategy that set the government's vision for 2020. The RDP proposed that cities and towns would be centers of social and economic opportunity and free of racial segregation and gender discrimination through better housing and greater security of tenure to reverse spatial inefficiencies, especially the mismatch between residential and work areas (Urban Development Strategy of the Government of National Unity 1996, 2-18). In this context, the National government implemented one of the largest housing policies in recent history, constructing 3.3-million houses, nearly 20 percent of the current housing stock.<sup>1</sup>

Despite having been successful in quantitative terms, the RDP housing policy promoted the expansion of the urban footprint and reproduced the apartheid planning rationale of low density, satellite cities, and disconnection between jobs and residential areas (Turok 2011). In particular, Cape Town's Black African and Coloured townships are still as racially segregated, and their residents live in overcrowded living conditions that are under-served by transportation and infrastructure (Turok 2014). Also, regardless of the provision of heavily subsidized housing units at a cost of about \$30 billion, there is now a larger backlog of those seeking housing assistance than there was when the RDP program began in 1994 (Bradlow, Bolnik and Shearing 2011). According to a 2014 report of the Human Sciences Research Council, the estimated housing backlog in Cape Town is between 360,000 and 400,000 houses, and growing at a rate of 16,000–18,000 units per year.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data source: Buckley, Robert, Kallergis, Achilles and Wainer, Laura. "Addressing the Housing Challenge: Avoiding the Ozymandias Syndrome." May 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Mongwe Robert. "Race, Class and Housing in Post-Apartheid Cape Town." Human Sciences Research Council, 2015. <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/review/november-/race-class-housing>

Figure 2. Population density by race groups and housing deficit in 2011



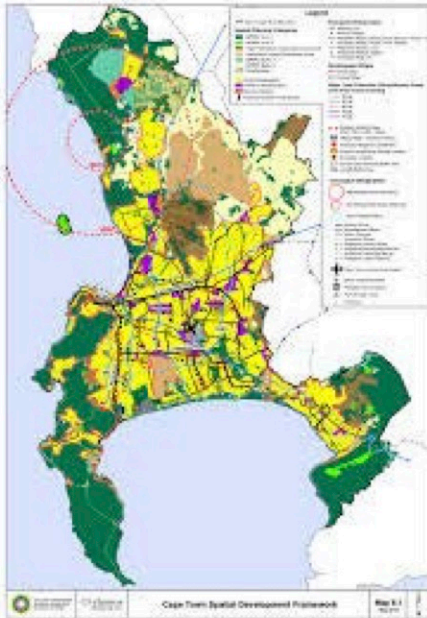
Source: own elaboration based on South Africa's National Census 2001- 2011 and GIS data from the Department of City Maps, Cape Town City Government, and the Geomatics Department of the University of Cape Town.

On the local side, the city government has been focused on positioning Cape Town as a 'world class' city. As Wilkinson (2000) argues, the democratic transition not only represented the end of apartheid policy but also the re-establishment of South African cities on the international scene. For both the local private sector and public sector, reintegration into the global economy presented an opportunity for Cape Town to finally acquire its global status. This goal started to be operationalized through the city's unsuccessful bid in 1996 to host the 2004 Olympic Games, and was more fully realized through hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2010 and by receipt of 2014 World Design Capital Award.

According to the city's Spatial Development Framework (2012), housing should compensate for the existing imbalances in the distribution of different types of residential development, avoid creating new imbalances, and promote a greater mix of market-driven and subsidized housing developments in as many neighborhoods as possible. It should also increase low-income earners' access to affordable housing that is located close to the city's economic opportunities. The general criteria to be used for the identification of land for subsidized housing should take into account the importance of containing urban sprawl, protect the Urban Edge to contribute to the development of a more compact city, and maximize the use of existing infrastructure and service capacity. Finally, it should support a mutually beneficial mix of social, residential, recreational, commercial and employment opportunities, and promote a relatively even spread of housing

opportunities across the growth corridors within the existing footprint of the city (SDF 2012, 72).

Figure 4. SDF 2012 Cape Town



In operational terms, the SDF proposes to facilitate a range of housing options and delivery approaches to the development of new settlements, and the upgrade and de-densification of existing informal settlements. It recommends support for a mix of land uses and higher-density residential development in appropriate locations along activity routes, and the encouragement of medium to higher-density forms. However, most of informal settlements are considered “too dense” to make their upgrade feasible. Specifically, most of slums are considered to be located upon not “suitable” land from an environmental point of view, since most of them are located below sea level. Thus, the government has mostly facilitated the relocation of households to alternative sites (SDF 2012, 57).

The Joe Slovo informal settlement was established during the 1980s in the city’s oldest Black African township, Langa. The settlement was set up by former occupants of Langa hostels and people living in backyard shacks (Kahanovitz et al 2009). Joe Slovo’s relatively good location with respect to transport, sources of jobs, and the city’s Central Business District made it one of the fastest growing informal settlements in the city, especially between 1994 and 2004. This created both problems and opportunities. Rapid densification in the precarious low-lying built environment contributed to several disaster risks, including many fires (2004, 2006, 2008, 2009) that killed many people and burned hundreds of shacks. In 2004, the Ukuvuka Operation Firestop Campaign, a partnership set up to address the issue of fires in the Cape Peninsula, provided evidence on the probable causes of several fires in Joe Slovo. The report found that social tension between Langa residents and informal settlers competing for space might have led to at least one fire. Also, recurrent flooding due to inadequate, or non-existent, storm water drainage caused water related health epidemics such as E-Coli bacteria (Kahanovitz et al 2009).

By 2004, Joe Slovo suffered from several and overlapping fragilities related to the poor living conditions and the precariousness of the built environment, the complete lack of household and community resilience regarding fire events and flooding, the low socioeconomic status of the residents and the social tensions among different sectors.

The upgrading of Joe Slovo informal settlement is part of a larger national housing program, the ‘N2 Gateway’. It was conceived as a pilot project of the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements, informally known as Breaking New Ground (BNG). This is the reframed national housing policy of 2004, created after eight years of the RDP Program and strong criticisms from academics, beneficiaries and technicians. For example, Charlton and Kihato (2006) argue that RDP housing did not contribute to poverty alleviation especially among Black Africans. Kihato (2015) also shows that by the late 1990s, scholars and urban practitioners began to question the quantitative emphasis on the delivery of “bricks and mortar” over other holistic urban approaches. Specifically, the location of the subsidized homes that perpetuated a ‘ghettoization’ of the poor was one of the biggest concerns. Lemanski (2009) explains that the national housing subsidy scheme has been failing to meet demand because of the persistent quantitative backlogs and the quality of the housing that the public sector delivers. According to the author, although backyard shacks pre-date the subsidy system, the characteristics of the

housing policy itself create a new supply of backyard space because the beneficiaries are cash-poor. Moreover, Lemanski argues that South Africa's informal backyard dwellings are a by-product of formal housing policies which also strengthen the social and racial segregation created by apartheid.

The BNG is a large project targeted at bettering the living conditions of 400,000 families in informal communities. Improvements typically take the form of the delivery of new fully subsidized units for families earning under US\$ 45 monthly; with close to a full subsidy for households earning up to US\$ 300.<sup>3</sup> Also, in the run-up to international events, South African cities adopted beautification measures that reduced the visibility of informal settlements near airports, stadiums or major roads (Newton 2009, Steinbrink et al 2011). Reflecting this, the preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup directly affected Joe Slovo since the slum is located along the N2 national freeway that connects Cape Town to the international airport (Bolnik 2009).

From a sponsor's perspective, the 'N2 Gateway' project has achieved a great success, even during the first phases when local residents were not a policy target. Phases I and II did not provide an answer to affordability challenges of the low income families that lived in Joe Slovo settlement. It had initially intended to deliver 15,000 houses, enabling the urbanization of six slums along one of Cape Town's major roads that connects the CBD with the international airport. At the same time, the project experienced a high demand for housing: 400,000 families expressed an interest in just 22,000 total units. Although it was initially conceived as a project for low-income groups, it has been observed that high demand across all income brackets has ultimately driven low-income families out of the market.<sup>4</sup>

Debates over who did and who did not benefit from the project generated great tension among different sectors of Langa. Once construction of Phase 1 started, tensions between the national government, the city government, and the local residents also increased. Project proponents actually targeted middle-income households instead of those with low incomes. The very poor local residents were relocated to the Transit Redevelopment Areas (TRA), created to "temporarily" host beneficiaries during the construction work. Soon, temporally relocated residents realized the TRA worked as de facto displacement territories.

The strong social discontent among local residents was the departure point of a long, complex process that included several actors, institutional reforms, Supreme Court Trials, massive protests, re-design of plans and strategies, and the development of innovative design strategies that completely reframed the question of who gets what. Spatial contestation also led to reframing the policy approach, in order to build the necessary conditions to deliver housing that addressed equitable development for the most vulnerable populations of the city.

Figure 5 ad 6. Joe Slovo Phases



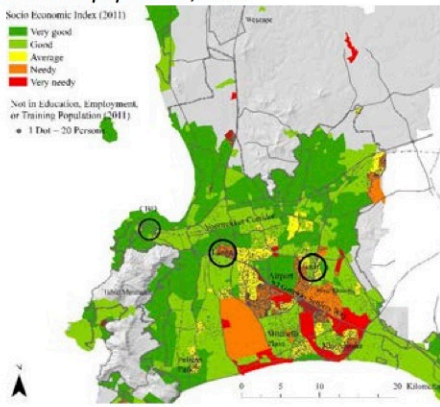
PHASE 1: National State – Middle Class Redevelopment with displacement  
 PHASE 2: Private Developer– Middle Class Redevelopment with displacement  
 PHASE 3: Collaboration with local communities and NGOs, Inclusive innovation



<sup>3</sup> Buckley, R., Kallergis, A. and Wainer Laura (2015). "The Reemergence of Social Housing: Comparative Perspectives." *Forthcoming*. Jordhus-Lier, David. "Local contestation around a flagship urban housing project: N2 Gateway and the Joe Slovo community in Cape Town." University of York. 19-22 September, 2011. Accessed January 29. <http://eadi.org/gc2011/lier-707.pdf>.

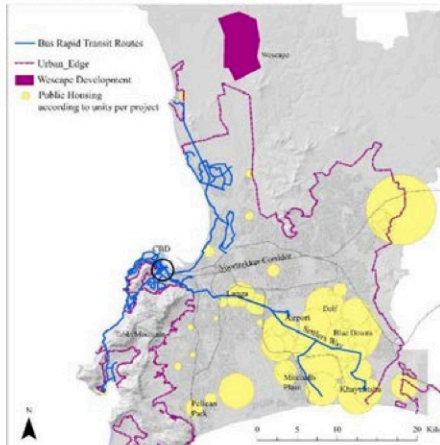
<sup>4</sup> Jordhus-Lier, David. "Local contestation around a flagship urban housing project: N2 Gateway and the Joe Slovo community in Cape Town." University of York. 19-22 September, 2011. Accessed January 29. <http://eadi.org/gc2011/lier-707.pdf>.

Figure 7. Socio Economic Index and Density of NEET population, 2011



Source: own elaboration based on South Africa's National Census 2001- 2011 and GIS data from the Department of City Maps, Cape Town City Government, and the Geomatics Department of the University of Cape Town.

Figure 8. Housing solutions according to number of units



Source: own elaboration based on South Africa's National Census 2001- 2011 and GIS data from the Department of City Maps, Cape Town City Government, and the Geomatics Department of the University of Cape Town.

## Supporting Community Structure and Economic of Residents

In South Africa, the productivity structure and education quality are reinforced by spatial difficulties that most of the population face regarding access to jobs (Leibbrandt, Woolard and Finn, Jonathan Argent 2010). A persistent 25 percent unemployment rate (with youth unemployment at 52 percent) are significant constraints to families' livelihood.<sup>5</sup> Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell (2000) say that the growth of urban unemployment in the post-apartheid period means that a greater number of people have to survive in the city without a regular formal source of income. Sectoral policies that focus on housing isolated from the rest of other urban dynamics do not increase poor's opportunities of access urban advantages.

The cost of transport and long commuting times prohibit lower-income households from taking full advantage of the large labor markets that exist in the cities. The National Household Travel Survey (2003) conducted by Stats SA found that the average travel time between home and work for commuters making use of public transport is 59 minutes. More than 1.3 million South Africans spend more than two hours a day travelling to and from their places of residence. Lall et al. (2012) demonstrated that in Cape Town people do not always choose to live in a proper house, but may instead prefer a better located shack that facilitates their access to jobs opportunities. Their comparison between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of a housing project, shows that public housing provision did not generate multiplier effects by stimulating complementary private investments in housing maintenance or upgrading. Indeed, there are many cases of subsidy beneficiaries selling their houses—illegally—at significant discounts and moving back to shacks in backyards or informal settlements in order to be closer to economic and social opportunities.

According to Bolnick (2009) Joe Slovo's economic activity was characterized by the majority of the population working outside the settlement in private services, the public sector, construction and manufacturing. Even if the informal settlement counts on a great variety of businesses, a minority of the population worked in situ (mainly corner shops, small bars or as traditional healers). More interesting is that, in 2009, only about 10% of the community depended on government grants for their livelihood, even when more than 60% of the adult population was officially unemployed. Bolnick emphasizes the importance of conserving well located areas, arguing that most of the employed worked in close by areas and that, thanks to the proximity to Langa's train station, about 57% of the households benefited from relatively cheap train services (only 10.7% of the families spent in 2009 20% or more of their income on transport). The author concludes that whether Joe Slovo residents had to spend a larger share of their income on transport, the poverty cycle would had worsened.

<sup>5</sup> Mc Kingsey's (2015) report on South Africa's economy: [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/africa/accelerating\\_south\\_africas\\_economic\\_transformation](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/africa/accelerating_south_africas_economic_transformation)

Figures 9. Temporary Relocation Areas (TRA) and Protests in central Cape Town



Source:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N2\\_Gateway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N2_Gateway)



Source:  
[http://abahlali.org/taxonomy/term/kerry\\_chance/kerry\\_chance/page/2/](http://abahlali.org/taxonomy/term/kerry_chance/kerry_chance/page/2/)

In this scenario, location and access to jobs, as well as mixed use land zoning allowing for trading and working, is a fundamental part of the project. Joe Slovo is the first attempt at implementing a high density housing scheme at a well located area, contrary to the typical RDP housing prototype of single family houses at the outskirts of the city. Still, it is possible to stand on the hypothesis that Phase I, II and III have significantly different development outcomes which will be studied in further research. In particular, we will focus on the diminishing living conditions of those local residents who were displaced to the TRAs in the name of development for Phase I and II and the development outcomes of Phase III.

### Enhancing the personal of residents in the face of violence and threats of displacement

In January 2005, when a major fire broke out at Joe Slovo, 3,000 shelters were destroyed and 12,000 people became homeless.<sup>6</sup> The fragility of the built environment and its consequent fires and flooding disasters played a vital role in the government's approval of enforced relocations. The socio economic and environmental vulnerability reinforced a situation of unsafe tenure for the original residents in an exponential way. Thus, the first phase of the project entailed the relocation of hundreds of families to Temporary Relocation Areas (TRA) in Delft, a neighborhood about 20km away from Langa.

As these areas were conceived as temporary solutions and resettled dwellers were initially given the prospect of returning, they lacked basic services such as sanitation. In fact, the TRA looked like refugee camps (Steinbrink et al 2011). Due to delays, lack of financial capacity and logistical support, most of those families were not able to return to the N2 Gateway area, so they had to permanently establish themselves in Delft, where they developed –again informally—a new slum, now disconnected from livelihood opportunities (COHRE 2009, Newton 2009, Steinbrink et al 2011, DAG 2007).

In 2005 remaining and displaced residents began to strongly resist more relocations, resulting in several civil protests and a prolonged court battle with the National Department of Housing. The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) represented the community all the way to the South African Supreme Court, arguing that the project acted against South African constitutional rights. Local residents also received the support of political activism organizations such as Social Justice Coalition and the Anti-Eviction Campaign. Mzwanele Zulu, one of the community leaders declared in a N2 Highway block out protest:

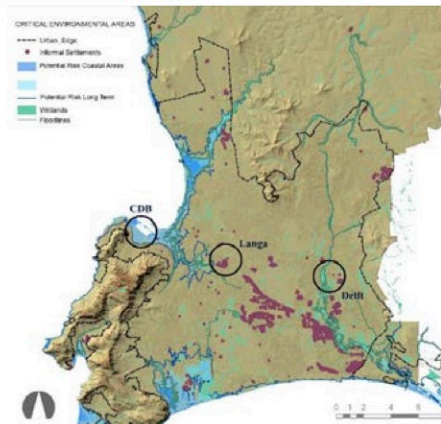
*"We are angry. We want RDP houses in Joe Slovo. We want the Department of Housing to stop moving our people to Delft. We refuse to be moved there. It is far from our workplaces and also from places where we look for work. We can't and won't move. The government took this decision without consulting us and now they must change it."<sup>7</sup>*

South Africa's Supreme Court approved a moratorium of all relocations and a revision of the N2 Gateway master plan, and the city started a negotiation with community leaders that ended, in 2010, with the approval of 11 pilot upgrades that do not involve any kind of permanent relocation.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/MediaReleases/Pages/FiresAtZone30.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Bolnick, Joel (2009), Case Study – Joe Slovo Survey 2009, Cape Town, South Africa

Figure 10. Critical environmental areas and informal settlements



Source: Own elaboration based on data of the Department of Development Information & the Research, City of Cape Town.

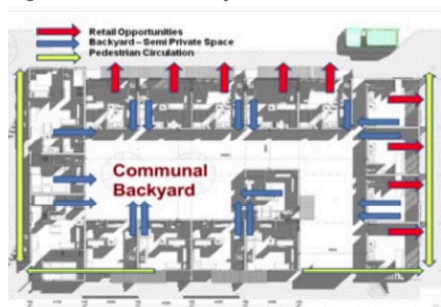
Stepping back to look more broadly at the Joe Slovo saga so far, there are important ways that the settlement’s vulnerability to fires and floods presented the possibility for both forced and enhanced resilience. Specially, we are interested on studying how these disaster events led to contrasting outcomes—both the opportunism to move people out to the periphery and the opportunity to seek more resilient ways to incorporate more of the poor within the redevelopment plan.

### Reducing the vulnerability of residents to risk and environmental stresses

In addition to eviction threats, the Joe Slovo community faced extreme environmental vulnerability, especially related to the severity of fire events. A 2009 community report indicated that almost one thousand residents had experienced both flooding and fire. From 2748 families surveyed, 1747 reported having had a fire experience and 1708 households said that they had experienced flooding that deeply damaged their houses and belongings (Joe Slovo Enumerations Final Report 2009).

The second major fire occurred in March 2009, just as the community was fighting the N2 Gateway project in the Supreme Court. This fire destroyed 513 shelters and left 1,500 people homeless, but it also opened a significant amount of space within the settlement, creating an opportunity to rebuild using a form of ‘re-blocking’—an in-situ upgrading system to re-arrange public and private space more effectively for infrastructure provision, emergency services plans and healthier environmental improvements. As Andy Bolnick, Director of iKhayalami --a NGO that develops affordable technical solutions for informal settlement upgrading-- explains, the re-blocking process is both a technical and social tool, since it dramatically changes the spatial structure of the settlements, especially upgrading the quality of public spaces and houses. And--at the same time—it enhances community participation in design, decision making and leadership. iKhayalami and the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) --a non-profit organization of professionals and grassroots activists who provide support on land, evictions, informal settlement upgrading and women’s collective savings- provided expertise and construction materials. The community worked together to keep the space unoccupied until a new lay out grid was designed.

Figure 11. Phase 3 Project



Source: (SAMSET – Supporting Sub-Saharan African Municipalities with Sustainable Energy Transitions) 2014

Recently, the City of Cape Town has recently adopted the “Proactive Re-Blocking of Informal Settlements,” to reconfigure the layouts of informal settlements by grouping structures into clusters and reorganizing the grid to optimize the space so it can provide immediate relief, through creating greater access to services and reducing the impact of fires and floods.<sup>8</sup>

This innovative design process clearly shows a successful bottom up approach that exposes the dialectic relationship between the physical and social landscapes, by showing how these reinforce communities’ vulnerabilities and empowerment. The enumeration process and community mapping supported the re-blocking approach as they provided accurate data that legitimized alternative solutions to displacements and top-down projects. Mapping also increased tenure security and reduced the risk of unfair dispossessions during the re-blocking process. They also gave an

<sup>8</sup> <http://sasdialliance.org.za/projects/sheffield-road/> and <http://sasdialliance.org.za/city-of-cape-town-adopts-reblocking-policy/>  
[https://www.capetown.gov.za/en/PublicParticipation/Documents/Have\\_your\\_say\\_human\\_settlements\\_Exec\\_Summary\\_English.pdf](https://www.capetown.gov.za/en/PublicParticipation/Documents/Have_your_say_human_settlements_Exec_Summary_English.pdf)

opportunity to engage people and therefore build a solid more informed community. Thus, together with inclusive design and the incorporation of new technologies, re-blocking represented both technical and social innovation.

Further research will focus on the way bottom up techno-socio innovation has been produced, will assess its specific outcomes, and explore the relationship between micro level inventions and international expertise and knowledge transfer.

### **Empowering communities through enhances capacities to share in their own governance**

Figure 12. Joe Slovo Phase 3 project and community planning



Source: (SAMSET – Supporting Sub-Saharan African Municipalities with Sustainable Energy Transitions) 2014



Source: SDI.net

Phase I (2004-2008) of the Joe Slovo redevelopment was implemented as a top down approach structured by the action of the National Department of Housing and consultation committees that intended to represent and communicate with 20,000 people but actually failed to do so (Bolnik 2009). The top-down policy approach entailed an extra risk of displacement for the original residents of the informal settlement, who decided to establish partnerships with several NGOs in order to ensure their continuity onsite. While the court battle was still in progress, some of the community leaders developed relationships with grassroots NGOs like the Community Organization Resource Centre (CORC) and the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) and Slum Dwellers International (SDI). They introduced the idea of enumeration and information-based empowerment.

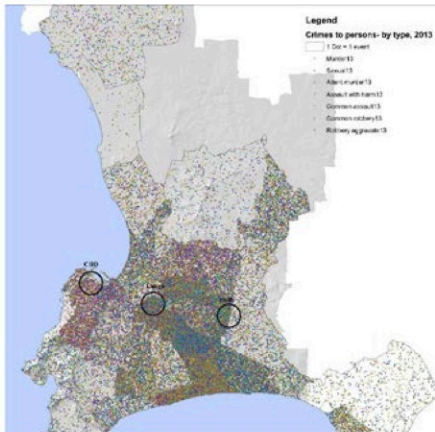
Slum Dwellers International's expertise on very specific actions such as savings groups, mapping and censuses facilitated a very important step forward regarding the negotiations with the government. Thus, the focus of the community shifted from protests and legal actions to information production and negotiation. This required the development of previously non-existent capacities. The role of the international federation (SDI) was essential to develop social capital in a short period of time. For example, the Kenyan Federation Muungano Wa Wanvijiji, travelled to Cape Town and provided support in preparation for the data analysis and mapping of the community. This international collaboration system also allowed the community to create a basis for faster and multiple innovations.

Once these new collaborations had been established, the second fire of 2009 acted as an open window for the consolidation of a new kind of approach. The re-blocking process was only possible because the Enumerations Final Report (EFR) of 2009, a slum census carried by NGOs and community groups (CORC, SDI) to measure demographic and socio economic indicators missing from the official Censuses and Surveys statistics, which had faced several difficulties in collecting data at the informal settlements. The EFR showed several findings that presented a very different scenario regarding population demographics in Joe Slovo. For example, it revealed that the population was actually much smaller than had been previously estimated. This fact proved that in-situ redevelopment might be feasible (Bolnick 2009). As previously noted, the report also showed that high levels of economic activity in Joe Slovo constituted a significant aspect of daily life and value for residents.

The EFR and this new kind of community organization meant to provide the community with leverage and knowledge in their negotiations with the State, and even came to impact the institutional structure of the housing policy, at national levels. By the date of publication of the first report findings (2008),

the national government decided to create the Housing Development Agency to carry out the BNG housing policy, especially the N2 Gateway project. The HDA has been created as a national public development agency aimed to create “well-located land and buildings available for the development of housing and human settlements,”<sup>9</sup> with some space for government and community consultation, in order to improve participatory processes. After the creation of the HDA in 2009, a steering committee with community representatives, building contractors and HDA representatives was formed.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 13. Crime to persons by type density 2013

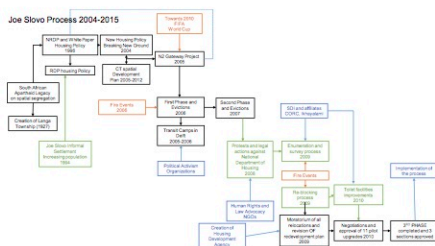


Source: Own elaboration based on data of the Department of Development Information & the Research, City of Cape Town and Crime stats SA.

The confrontational reactions of the community can be interpreted as a response to their previous lack of engagement in the planning process. The legal and engagement phases were a sign of increased community governance, thanks to the collaboration with right-based NGOs (Jordhus-Lier, 2015).<sup>11</sup> Certainly, however, this vital relationship between the Joe Slovo community and the community organizations had been slow to build.<sup>12</sup> The community was at first suspicious of the NGOs because it assumed they were working with the state and would further threaten their autonomy.

Andrea Bolnick (2010) illustrates the sequence on how action-based NGOs gained the community’s trust through time. According to the author, FEDUP established the first collaboration with the local residents in 2007. They implemented a small savings group for 20 families who lived in one of the poorest areas of Joe Slovo. In 2008, the same area was affected by a fire event. Ikhayalami and CORC, who were then part of FEDUP, offered the affected families support for the construction of 15 shelters. This rapid response called the attention of community leaders’ who proposed the NGOs to collaborate on the construction of a community hall. Ikhayalami and CORC provided technical and fundraising support. Bolnick explains that when another major fire occurred in 2009 destroying 512 shelters, the community already had had gained enough social capital to implement a major re-blocking process.

Figure 14. Joe Slovo Process 2004-2015



Source: own elaboration

The success of the re-blocking method attracted policy makers of the City government, resulting in an agreement to work on 11 incremental re-blocking projects in Joe Slovo and other informal settlements. Currently SDI and CORC are working in partnership with Informal Settlement Department in Cape Town--which is the only South African city that has a department whose primary focus is informal settlements. Their focus is on the ‘improvement’ of basic services in informal settlements that are on land ‘not suitable’ for residential development.

The first decade of collaborations has engaged a vast number of stakeholders in a complex process. Interestingly, the community has engaged with different NGOs at different stages of the process, shifting from confrontational political activism to “action-based” and negotiation organizations, such as SDI. Further research will study the structure and dynamics of the relationships among different actors and how these affected the evolution of the process, while permitting local residents to gain enhanced capacities for their own governance.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.thehda.co.za/content/page/who-we-are>

<sup>10</sup> <http://upgradingsupport.org/news/entry/part-one-communities-and-social-change-what-happens-when-an-informal-settle/>

<sup>11</sup> David Jordhus-Lier, “Community Resistance to Megaprojects: the Case of the N2 Gateway project in the Joe Slovo informal settlement, Cape Town”, *Habitat International* 45 (2015), 169-176

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.criminology.uct.ac.za/usr/criminology/news/JoeSlovo\\_diary.pdf](http://www.criminology.uct.ac.za/usr/criminology/news/JoeSlovo_diary.pdf)

## **Further steps of this research**

Joe Slovo's upgrading process, especially its third phase, is an example of innovative housing intervention under complex socioeconomic, environmental and political pressure. It also illustrates a case of policy evolution. It started as a top down approach ostensibly designed to improve the living conditions of the poor residents, but which actually moved in the opposite direction: displacing the population, in ways that underscored the extent to which policy makers ignored (or were ignorant of) the socio economic structures in informal environments. Even if Phase I and II can be considered successful from a financial and implementation point of view, the project failed to addressing affordability options for the local community. It also failed to address the broader challenge of producing investments to repair structural problems facing low income families in the city.

Controversies over who benefited from the project--and who did not--generated great tension among different stakeholders. Seen most positively, this led to necessary empowerment and self-governance capacities to avoid the reproduction of authoritarian rationales. Unexpected outcomes on technical and social innovation led, for the first time in the city, to transformations that have effectively addressed the housing and housing-related needs of underserved low-income people in a safe, equitable, and sustainable manner. The next stages of research about Joe Slovo will focus on the preconditions, the process and the outcomes of what appears to be a method for bringing about the progressive realization of housing for lower income sectors, as viewed through the lenses of livelihood and wellbeing, governance and empowerment, safety and resilience.

The future research plan proceeds as follows. First, we will more fully investigate national and local policy to understand how the experience fits into a broader context and --at the same time- contests the mainstream narrative. We will also analyze the preconditions that enabled Joe Slovo to become a catalyst for change and innovation for so many stakeholders (state, NGOs, community members, developers). Second, we will compare the development outcomes of each of the three intervention phases, to judge the impact on the community's social structure and economic livelihoods. We will also compare the phase III development outcomes, especially regarding the community's social structure and economic livelihoods, to the living conditions of the people at TRAs and other low income projects previously implemented in Cape Town. Third, we will explore the ways that the community has gained increasing resilience in the face of different types of risk and threats, such as displacement, fires, violence, and ecological risks and stresses. This will entail analysis of the consequences of the fire and flooding events and the responses of the community when state intervention did occur. Fourth, we will study the structure and dynamics of the relationships among different actors over time, and how these affected the evolution of the process, while permitting local residents to gain enhanced capacities for their own governance.

## Basic Information

Joe Slovo, Langa, Cape Town South Africa

Population: approx. 20,000 (enumerations report 2009)

N2 Gateway Housing Pilot Project: <http://www.thehda.co.za/content/page/n2-gateway>

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