Home as a Site of Resistance & Learning: The Housing Assembly, South Africa

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South Africa Case Study: The Housing Assembly, Cape Town

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In memory of Michael Blake,

founder of the Housing Assembly and mentor to its comrades

Rest in Power

1954-2017

Preface

This Nepal Madhes case study is part of a broader project, funded by the UK's Economic & Social Research Council, under grant number ES/R00403X/1: '*Social Movement Learning and Knowledge Production in the Struggle for Peace with Social Justice: Case Studies from Four Conflict-Affected Contexts'.* This preface will provide a generic overview of the broader research rationale, theory, methodology and aims of this project.

Research Rationale

In an era of increasing global inequality, conflict and rising authoritarianism (Streeck, 2016; Piketty, 2014, Scarhill, 2013, Rogers, 2016) social movements often represent a first line of defence for some of the most marginalized communities on the planet, seeking to defend and extend the conditions for a basic and dignified human existence. That is to say, 'social movements matter' (Cox, 2018; SC, IDS and UNESCO, 2016; McAdam et al, 1999). Yet in the developing world, they often operate, organise and advocate in conditions of state repression, threats and insecurity, conditions which can serve to undermine movement cohesion, solidarity and effectiveness (Earl, 2013). This is particularly the case in countries affected by or emerging out of armed conflicts.

This research seeks to explore the learning and knowledge production processes of four very different organisations that are part of broader social movements, located in four distinct countries and continents, as they advocate for peace with social justice in contexts of violent conflict and/or its aftermath. These institutions, who are core partners in the proposed research, are NOMADESC, a grassroots NGO based in Colombia; The Housing Assembly, a grassroots organisation from South Africa; The HDK (Peoples' Democratic Congress), an umbrella organisation that brings together different social movements in Turkey; and the Madhesh Foundation, Nepal, an organisation that works with and for the excluded Madhes community of the Terai, the Southern plains of Nepal. Each organisation, in different ways, advocates with and for marginalized communities seeking to defend and extend their basic rights to education, health, housing, life, dignity and equal treatment before the law. Each organisation, to different degrees, has also been victim of state repression, violence against it members and activists, and sustained surveillance and persecution.

The research combines detailed case studies of the learning and knowledge production processes of each social movement institution, and incorporates within that a dynamic process of inter-movement learning and knowledge exchange, facilitated through a series of workshops and field visits to each of the country contexts, with the objective of building collective knowledge and inter-movement solidarity.

The overarching aim of the study is to identify and critically analyse the strategic knowledge and learning processes of the four social movement organisations operating in conflict affected contexts. This was done through a co-produced process of intra- and inter-movement reflection on these strategic knowledges and learning processes with a view to improving their effectiveness and supporting the promotion of more equitable and sustainable peacebuilding processes.

The specific objectives are:

- Critically examine the learning and knowledge production processes of four social movements in conflict affected contexts
- Strengthen the respective social movements' learning and knowledge production processes, their reflexivity and strategic development
- Promote South-South and North-South dialogue and relationships to promote improved practice and international solidarity
- Enhance national and global understanding of social movement learning and the role of social movements in promoting sustainable peacebuilding
- Co-produce four detailed social movement case studies and a critical comparative synthesis, extracted from the case studies.

These objectives will be achieved through empirically grounded, co-produced case studies of each respective social movement organisation, combined with inter-movement engagement, drawing on popular education techniques and ethnographic research methods to answer the following research questions:

RQ1) *How do social movements, located in complex conflict affected situations learn and produce knowledge, and how does this process of learning and knowledge production assist in the development of strategy to achieve the demands of their constituencies?*

RQ 2) *What knowledge have the social movements developed and what have they learned?*

RQ 3) *What have been the effects of these social movements on the promotion and realization of peace with social justice within their country context?*

RQ 4) *What can we extract from the four case studies about learning and knowledge production within social movements in complex, conflict-affected contexts that can assist in assessing the possibilities for strengthening civil society movements' role in building peace with social justice?*

Theory

For the purpose of this research, we draw on the work of Paul Routledge, who defines social movements as:

> "organisations of varying size that share a collective identity and solidarity, are engaged in forms of conflict in opposition to an adversary (such as a government or corporation), and attempt to challenge or transform particular elements within a social system (such as governments, laws, policies, cultural codes and so on)"(Routledge, 2018:4).

Our particular definition, emphasises the geographical nature of social movements, which sees them as:

> "networks of people, resources and connections. Most operate at the intersection of a series of overlapping scales – from more local municipalities, through regions to the nation state and, increasingly, international forums. These different politics of scale – and their associated networks of activity – provide movements with a range of opportunities and constraints (ibid,6).

As a body of work, social movement research emerged from North America and Europe in the 1950s, with the functionalist 'resource mobilisation theory' (RMT) becoming a dominant strand that focused on social movement organization, resources, and opportunities (Tilly, 1985; Tarrow, 1999; McAdam, 1982). Resource mobilization theorists have been criticised for their overtly structural approach and a tendency to extract the struggles of social movements from the broader analysis of the socio-economic context (Choudry, 2015; Scandrett, 2012). They also tended to arrive at levels of abstraction and generalisation which inevitably produced reductive, simplified theory. 'New Social Movement' (NSM) theory emerged from Europe to challenge RMT (see Buechler, 2013; Touraine, 1981; Melucci, 1980) and the inadequacy of orthodox structural approaches, both Functionalist and Marxist, to account for social movements which began to emerge from 1968 onwards as significant subjects of struggle, but which could not easily be slotted into the traditional class analyses of these theories, e.g. the peace movement and the women's movement. NSM theorists tend to have a concern for questions around why new social actors emerge, and take into account cultural factors such as the construction of collective identities and lifestyles. Some strands seek to analyse motivation, experience and communication networks of individual activists involved in social movements (Melucci, 1980). Such theories can be useful in helping us to grasp the internal dynamics and heterogeneous characteristics of social movements. In development studies, the political and economic struggles of social movements have increasingly been linked to battles over knowledge, coloniality and modernity, with alternative ways of knowing, being and producing at the heart of debates (c.f Escobar, 2004). Finally, there are important literatures on the way social movements in the contemporary era of globalization, use space

and operate across borders to strengthen their claim-making (Kriesi et al, 2016, Routledge, 2018).

One general criticism, which has been made of much social movement theory, is that they often lack relevance for the movements themselves and '*often have little of substance to say about the struggles of the day*' (Cox and Nilsen, 2014:p17). Flacks (2004) surveying the ever-growing field of social movement scholarship asked '*What is all this analysis for? In what way does the validation, elaboration, and refinement of concepts provide useable knowledge for those seeking social change*?' (ibid, p138). From Flacks' critical starting point, a small but significant body of literature has emerged over the past decade which seeks to radically turn the mainstream trend on its head, challenging the detachment of the scholar from the movement by prioritising the aim of making research relevant and accountable to social movements themselves (Bevington and Dixon, 2005; Novelli, 2006, 2010,2004; Choudry, 2015; Cox & Nilsen, 2014; McNally, 2013). Flacks, Bevington and Dixon call for a new wave of 'movement-relevant theory' that is useful to those involved in struggles for social change (2005). This type of research represents an opportunity to increase both the academic utility and credibility of social movement research and its support for social impact. In relation to this, the study of social movement organising and learning processes has been identified as one particularly relevant area for social movement analysis, which seeks to be movement-relevant (Zibechi, 2007; Santos, 2006; Della Porta and Pavan, 2017).

Moving slightly away from social movements to issues of conflict, in much of the literature on peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding there is a recognition that the voices of civil society, and the social movements that emerge from them, are often insufficiently included in determining the nature of peace agreements and post-conflict development policies (Pugh et al, 2016; Richmond & Mitchell, 2011). Too often, national political elites, armed movements, and international actors fail sufficiently to take into account the demands of civil society actors and social movements for access to basic rights and basic goods – demands and grievances that underpin many conflicts - favouring agreements that prioritize security, democratic elections and the promotion of markets (Paris, 2004). These peace agreements often result in what Galtung (1976) has famously termed 'negative peace', characterised by the cessation of armed violence without addressing the underlying drivers of conflict that underpinned the violence. Instead Galtung argued for 'positive peace', which seeks to end both violence and the underlying causes of that violence. At the heart of the drivers of conflict in many contexts is inequality, in its multiple economic, political, cultural dimensions (Cramer, 2005; Stewart, 2005; 2010): unequal access to resources, land, food, housing, education,

healthcare, and unequal treatment before the law and/or the political system, particularly for different cultural and ethnic communities. As a result, for many social movements in conflict affected contexts, the struggle for peace cannot be separated from the struggle for social justice – with many drawing on the discourse of 'peace with social justice' as the rallying call. For many analysts, failure to build 'positive peace' lies at the heart of why many peace agreements fail and relapse into violence. Strengthening social movements and the organisations that they form, and seeking to pressurise states to redress inequalities, is therefore a crucial peacebuilding measure. How these organisations develop strategies, develop their members and build capacity, extend contacts and solidarities with other movements, and their effects on national policy in these conflict contexts is central to the concern of our research, yet has often been overlooked by research on security, conflict and peacebuilding (Richmond, 2016).

Linked to the role, nature and importance of social movements is also the role of knowledge within these movements. Social movement knowledge production and learning have been key to the historical evolution of social scientific thought. Central to this argument is both a critique of top down knowledge, which presumes that academics theorise and social movements produce empirical evidence and receive theory, to a much more grounded understanding that social movements at the point of praxis build knowledge from below that can move social scientific thought forward and change the world. Laurence Cox (2018), Aziz Choudry (2015), Shukaitis & Graeber (2007) argue that those at the coal face – suffering the harshest contradictions of contemporary neoliberal capitalist development - have privileged knowledge about the nature of the system under which we all reside.

Similarly, it is when academics engage with social movements that provides the most fruitful potential for breakthroughs in social science. Critical theory owes its roots to intellectuals' engagement with social movements – not just Marxism, but feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism etc. However, since the 1980s onwards critical theory, particularly in the USA and Western Europe, has become distanced from grassroots struggles and has developed in very particular directions. This has made it less relevant and powerful – and also distorted its focus (Shukaitis & Graeber 2007).

Part of the argument – and position - we are developing here, also feeds into the broader debate around the 'decolonization' of knowledge – the subaltern knowledge of social movements-in its worker, indigenous, feminist, black and anti-racist forms has been silenced/undermined/hidden through processes of both imperialism and elitism – that have prioritized Northern knowledge over Southern knowledge; University Knowledge over Social

Movement knowledge, Elite academic over Movement Intellectual, Middle class knowledge over working class and peasant knowledge; Traditional Intellectuals over Organic Intellectuals. This is not a plea for the abandoning of Universities, but for reconnecting and reinvigorating them, alongside a recognition and vindication of alternative modes of knowing and thinking, to produce what Boaventura de Sousa Santos called an 'ecology of knowledges' and a challenge to the process of 'epistemicide' that is impoverishing our capacity to see, think and move beyond our contemporary, highly unequal and brutal world.

Knowledge, therefore, takes on a particular importance in the pursuit of social transformation and social justice. The importance of education and knowledge production in the contemporary era has not been lost on those engaged in processes of hegemonic globalisation, and it is common to hear corporations talking of themselves as 'learning organisations', ' knowledge institutions' and discussing the 'learning society', the 'information society' , 'the knowledge economy' and recognising the need to set up structures able to change and adapt to new circumstances, be that fast capitalism, lean production, flexible accumulation, which reflect the need for more mobile structures and a workforce skilled to adapt to a fast changing environment (Ranson, 1994; Jarvis, 2001). In this context it appears logical to ask how social movements are taking seriously the necessity to rethink strategies through processes of research, investigation and learning. In social movement studies there has been little focus on knowledge and education processes. However, more recently, from both the margins of the field (Cox,2018; Choudry, 2015; Novelli & Ferus Comelo, 2007) and from the centre (Della Porta & Pavan, 2017) there is an increased recognition that knowledge in social movements really matters:

In their effort to pursue or resist social and political changes, these actors do not limit themselves to protesting in the streets or the squares. Rather, they form collective spaces of knowledge production wherein collaboration and participation lead to the "rethinking [of] democracy; the generation of expertise and new paradigms of being, as well as different modes of analyses of relevant political and social conjunctures" (Casas-Cortes et al., 2008, p. 20, cited in Della Porta, A & Pavan, E (2017)

Della Porta & Pavani (2017:300) call for the study of 'repertoires of knowledge practices'. Which they define:

> " as the set of practices that foster the coordination of disconnected, local, and highly personal experiences and rationalities within a shared cognitive system able to provide movements and their supporters with a common orientation for making claims and acting collectively to produce social, political, and cultural changes"

Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis' (Marxism) was accompanied by his interest in a 'pedagogy of praxis' (Pizzolato and Holst, 2017) which saw the construction of both hegemony and counter-hegemony as fundamentally pedagogical. Gramsci (1971), noted a distinction between 'common sense' (which reflected hegemonic knowledge) and 'good sense' (that knowledge emerging from the peoples own analysis derived from the everyday), and his work had a strong focus on workers education.

So what types of knowledge do social movements produce? As Chesters notes:

> "social movements have long been bearers of knowledge about forms of oppression and injustice, expressing political claims, identifying social and economic grievances and bringing new or neglected issues to public prominence "(Chesters, 2012, p. 153).

As Casas-Cortes et al. (2008:42-3), note, this knowledge is often:

> "embedded in and embodied through lived, place-based experiences, [able to] offer different kinds of answers than more abstract knowledge [...] situated and embodied, rather than supposedly neutral and distant".

Classically, we can see that social movement knowledge production has operated at three levels. Firstly, all movements seek to provide a structural critique: *how can we understand the oppression we are suffering?* This might be thematic – why are people being pushed off their land? To more macro-societal, such as a critique of capitalism/feudalism etc. Secondly, and emergent from the first, they develop a strategic critique – how can we challenge the oppression we are facing? This is both in terms of modes of resistance (strikes, protests, occupations etc) and institutional forms (the centralized party, the umbrella organization, popular front/united front, the trade union etc). Thirdly, movements develop an alternative vision: What is our alternative vision to the problem? This might be thematic – solutions to social housing, or societal: the vision of a new society - communism/socialism etc. In summary, what the above is suggesting is that social movement knowledges produce knowledge on the nature of the system, the strategies and tactics to overthrow it, and defend the space once taken, and finally develop visions of what it might be replaced with: Critique, Resistance, Alternatives. According to Cox (2018) because academic/top down knowledge has become separated from the movements it has been less able to address Resistance & Alternatives, and therefore focussed largely on Critique. However, to paraphrase Marx, the task is not just to understand the world, but to change it. In order to do that – we need to reunite the trilogy of Critique, Resistance, Alternatives in order to build real viable alternative solutions to the highly unequal and brutal world that we live in.

As Gramsci notes every 'revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism'(Gramsci, 1977, p.12). Within this process, Gramsci talked of the important role of 'organic intellectuals', committed to an alternative counter-hegemonic project and able to articulate, strategise and transmit this to broader publics (Gramsci, 1986, pp.3-24). While Gramsci often portrayed this function rather mechanistically and unidirectional, another influential Marxist educator, Paolo Freire, would later provide a far more dialectical conceptualisation of this process. According to Freire (2000), true education is not a monological but a dialogical process between teachers and learners: leaders cannot merely tell activists what to do. If this occurs, then even a victory is a hollow achievement. Nor can education ever be understood as 'neutral', but instead a process riven with differences in power and placed at the service of competing political projects. Popular education is seen as one of the vehicles through which the process of challenging unequal structures can be achieved (Kane, 2001). It has, at its centre, a fundamental commitment to social change in the interests of oppressed and marginalised classes. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between this type of education and the institutions and organisations, such as trade unions and social movements, that have historically emerged to defend the interests of the poor and the marginalised – movements that this education seeks explicitly to strengthen (Jara, 1989 cited in Kane, 2001, p.9). This organic relationship means that the 'organisation' becomes the 'school' in which popular education takes place, and their "struggles and actions, their forms of organisation, their 'culture', in the broadest sense, constitute the starting point of popular education and its field of enquiry" (Kane, 2001, p.13).

In that sense, 'popular education' needs to be seen as not only involving formal educational events in social movements, but as part of much bigger processes which, though appearing 'informal' and 'arbitrary,' are very deliberate. In this definition, both the 'popular education' events that take place, and the actual practice of 'strategy development' and 'protest actions' can be seen as examples of popular education, whereby the 'school' (the social movement) learns. The first occurs whereby people consciously engage in educational practices (schooling), and the second whereby people are learning through social action. Foley (1999) suggests that a broad conception of education and learning should include *formal education* (taking place in educational institutions), *incidental learning* (taking place as we live, work and engage in social action), *informal education* (where people teach and learn from each other in workplaces, families, communities, social movements) and *non-formal education* (structured systematic teaching and learning in a range of social settings). There is also a need to think through the relationship between individual learning processes and movement

learning processes – which represent the transfer or fusion of individual experiences into the collective or institutional learning. We also have to ask questions about the temporality of learning – short, medium, long term processes and the way different forms of learning interact.

If we are to explore these educational processes, then we need to extend our gaze beyond formal training courses for activists and develop an analytical framework that is 'open' and which allows for the rich diversity of ways that social movements (their organisations, activists and supporters) engage in learning. In studying these different types of education and learning, Foley (1999, p.10) suggests this needs to be firmly grounded in an analysis of the political economy, ideology and discourse of the focus of study. Recent work has built on these foundations to theorise how processes of neoliberalism and globalization have affected social movement learning and praxis, and the way movements are learning to operate transnationally to achieve their objectives (see Novelli and Ferus-Comelo, 2010). Similarly, Choudry's (2015) work on *'Learning Activism: the intellectual life of contemporary social movements'*, provides both a vindication of the importance of social movements as sites of knowledge production, and an insider's view of the complex ways that education, knowledge and strategy development are built in and through social movement struggles. More recently, Choudry & Vally (2017) have deepened the historical aspects of this, to evidence the importance of learning from the history of previous struggles, through archive work, to inform the battles of today.

Methodology

In the multiplicity of approaches which have emerged within popular education, there has long been an interest in research strategies which are able to somehow capture the collective learning and knowledge production processes that take place within social movements (Torres Carrillo, 1999; 2010). This has meant an overlap between popular education and participatory research, since participatory research methods and strategies have been developed to be implemented in popular education contexts (ibid). The most prominent example here is the work of the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, whose technique of "participatory action research" (PAR) has been enormously influential and is recognised as one of the most commonly used research techniques in popular education, especially in Latin America (ibid, Fals Borda, 1979, 1987, 2008).

During the 1990s, a participatory popular education research method known as the 'systematisation of experiences' gained prominence within the field of Latin American popular education. Based on the recognition that unique, valuable knowledge can be produced

through popular education processes, the systematisation of experiences is a collective process which seeks to deepen understanding and improve practice through collective reflection and analysis of experience (Jara, 1997, 2015; Kane, 2012; Torres Carrillo, 2010, Ruiz Muñoz, 2004). Systematisation:

> 'enables organisations and educators to learn from each other's experiences, successes, problems and failures; it helps educators analyse and evaluate their own work; it is part of the educative process itself, in which encouraging people to interpret developments helps them reach new levels of understanding' (Kane, 2012:p78).

There exist a range of different systematisation methodologies, however it can be understood as an intentional, collective process of knowledge production which tries to '*recover and interpret the meanings that manifest themselves in social practices, with the purpose of strengthening them'* (Torres Carrillo, 2010: p196). The following passage from Chilean popular educator Oscar Jara demonstrate the relevance of systematisation for the study of social movements:

> ... the new scenario of this end of the (20th)century has raised questions over the practices and theoretical conceptions of Latin American social movements and social sciences. We are faced with new questions and challenges. It is a privileged historical moment full of creation, but the answers to the new questions will not arise from any other place but from accumulated historical experience. Unfortunately we have not yet accumulated the necessary learning contained in these (social movement) experiences. Systematisation, as a rigorous learning exercise and critical interpretation of lived processes, remains a pending task and today more than ever can decisively contribute to the re-creation of the social movement practices and to renew theoretical production within social sciences , based on the daily experience of the peoples of Latin America, in particular those committed to processes of popular education and organisation (Jara, 1994).

The systematization of experiences means a critical interpretation of an experience (process or event), beginning with its reconstruction and ordering, in order to discover the logic of the process, the factors that have influenced it, how they are related to each other, and why things happened as they did (Jara 2015, Torres 2004). To reconstruct, to order or organise, in order to understand and interpret what happened and to then be able to draw lessons from that experience and transform practice (Jara, 2004). It is an investigative process that seeks to allow the experience to speak for itself, through all the voices of those who have been part

of the experience (or at least a representative section) (Jara, 2004).According to Jara, one of the purposes of systematisation is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas, for example between different social and pedagogical processes, because it allows the protagonists of a process to communicate their process effectively.

Jara argues that:

> 'it is not the same to exchange stories about experiences, as to exchange systematized products of experiences; because many times in the exchanges of experiences we waste the opportunity to have exchanges of substance and we limit ourselves to exchanging stories in which each person or organization tells what they do and everybody says: "oh, yes, very interesting ..." and the others reply: "Well, that was your experience ... Now, mine ..." and it does not get beyond this (Jara, 2004)

In line with this, our approach builds in ample space for critical, collective reflection and engagement in order to create spaces where the protagonists of the movement can engage in dialogue and exchange.

Phase One

The initial stage of the systematisation involves a process that seeks to 'reconstruct' the lived experience of the movement, using any and every means of data available, and in line with the thematic threads identified for the process. This involved individual interviews with key informants, archive and documentary analysis, newspaper articles, photos, videos, and much more. This phase required a process of organising and classifying information, which facilitated a descriptive account of the evolution of the movement in question, based upon multiple sources. This is the foundational phase, and involved forming some initial analysis in identifying emergent themes and points of interest, which were later fed into the subsequent phase of the process. This stage is carried out in a collective manner, and has the participation of many people who have been protagonists in the process to guide and support the research process.

Phase Two

This is the key moment of the systematisation process, which seeks to 'discover the logic of what happened in the course of the experience' (Taberes Fernandes et al, 2002, p26). Based on the initial framing of the systematisation process, this phase involves a collective process of reflection and analysis by those people who have lived the experience. The point here is not to arrive at a single, unified viewpoint, but to access the multiple voices in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the lived experience. This necessitates engaging with a broader cross-section of constituencies, then stage 1, with multiple workshops and focus groups with

leaders, activists, supporters. These participatory space allow for a rich engagement between the researchers and the participants to develop research findings, check them with participants and refine and develop ideas.

Phase Three

The Systematisation processes will lead to the production of a final written report, but will also involve a number of other creative end products such as videos, leaflets and theatre productions. One important consideration is the issue of the communication of the knowledge produced in the process is not only how is it going to be made available, but also to whom and in what languages and media? And, why these audiences and not others? It is also the case that some of the knowledge produced will be for internal use only, not to be shared with broader audiences. These are important questions, and decisions which are being taken collectively as the research has progressed.

Phase Four

In this phase, with the case studies produced, we then move into a dialogical process of attempting to explore whether the synthesis of the four case studies, might produce more than its component parts. What collective insights can we draw from the cases on the nature of social movement knowledge production and learning in the contemporary era? The outcomes will emerge out of a one week retreat by the core research team to explore, debate and discuss key emergent ideas from the research that will underpin the final synthesis document.

PROCESS

To clarify, there are two parallel, but interlinked processes taking place across the two-and-a-half-year research period**.** Firstly, there is *National Data Collection Process*: This 'systematisation' process has take place in the respective country of each of the social movements. This included multiple focus groups, in-depth interviews with key movement activists, review of movement documentation, in order to develop detailed narratives of their experiences and processes of movement organisation and develop the social movement case studies. Secondly, there are a series of *Inter-Movement Meetings and Engagement*. These research team meetings are being held across the cycle of the project – and in the countries involved in the project. These meetings provide a moment for the researchers to engage in a public event targeted at social movements and academic researchers in each of the respective countries, and an opportunity for the visitors to learn more about the particular history and struggles of social movements in the host country. Throughout the research period, research teams have been able to engage regularly and to share experiences, challenges and insights.

Conclusions

We hope that you enjoy these studies, that they are thought provoking and useful, and that they help to move the discussion forward. On behalf of the research team we can attest to the extremely inspiring and transformative process that we have been through during this project. We wish to thank all the amazing activists and leaders from the respective movements that we have had the privilege to engage with for sharing their thoughts, their passions and their stories: their struggles have become our struggles in rich, unpredictable and inspiring ways.

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Introduction

On 1 May 2018, the informal settlement named Siqalo, in the Western Cape, was the site of struggle for decent housing and access to basic services (Groundup News Agency, 2018). It quickly turned violent with two people injured and one person being killed. Earlier in the day, 30 people were arrested by the police following clashes between the police and protestors. In the aftermath of the protest and violence, the situation became charged with racialized tensions (Mail & Guardian, 2018).

Siqalo informal settlement, which means 'the beginning' in Xhosa, was given its name because the residents believed that living in a shack in the informal settlement was the first step towards owning a decent house. Owning a house was the beginning of a new life: it was the first step on the ladder to a life free from poverty. Siqalo residents are not alone in that belief. It is a belief based on promises made by the African National Congress ahead of its electoral victory in 1994. It is a belief deeply rooted in the post-apartheid constitutional provision on the right to decent housing.

This is why the protests and the subsequent racialised tensions in Siqalo represented the perfect storm, in which South Africa's colonial and apartheid legacy came into violent confrontation with the post-apartheid democratic vision. The fact that there remains a housing crisis more than 20 years into its post-apartheid era, has left the country's Black[1] population in disbelief and anger. As each tries to make sense of this, people begin to reach back into the racialised past of apartheid to present the case for their right to housing and service delivery. And in that process of reaching back, there is also the pulling forward of apartheid racial terminology, race divisions, violence and conflict, done by both survivors of apartheid as well as the newly democratised state.

Siqalo remains one of the formative moments for the Housing Assembly, a post-apartheid housing social movement, organising those living in the Western Cape's informal housing. Whilst Siqalo is a microcosm of racial tensions around housing struggles, the Housing Assembly, in their day to day organising are faced with not just the struggle for decent housing but also having to encounter the strongly entrenched racial divisions that play out in the structured access to housing in South Africa.

At the heart of the Housing Assembly's organising is the vision that South Africa's working classes will live in decent housing, and this vision has found expression in its campaign for Decent Housing. Embedded within this struggle are multiple other interlinked struggles of race, class and gender as well as geography – all of which come together to reimagine what a decent house is in a democratic South

[1] For the purpose of this paper, "Black" is used in reference to African, Indian and "Coloured" people who were collectively characterised as "Non-White" under apartheid. It is also in reference to political identity used to organise against apartheid. Where racial divisions are further acted out differently per race group, specific racial classification will be referred to

Africa. This reimagining also contains a vision for what the future could be for the millions of poor living in informal housing in democratic South Africa.

The Housing Assembly is a unique example of a social movement in South Africa's history. It is rare to find a social movement that centers education and learning at the heart of activism, and the Housing Assembly embodies this. This research attempted to capture this learning-centered social movement and to document how it learns and produces knowledge; and how this impact on the individuals, the communities they organize and the movement as a whole. The research methodology was also an experiment in challenging how we, as Northern based researchers, learn and produce knowledge about those that are learning and producing knowledge. Hence the research paper should function as a way to challenge our notions of what we, as Northern based researchers, know about social movement activism in the South and for movements who are being studied to contest and challenge that knowing – thus it becomes an experiment in '*research as a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other*' (Smith, 1999: 2).

This paper has six chapters which explore the Housing Assembly's learning and knowledge production, rooting it in South Africa's history and struggle for land and housing, as well as looking at how it transformed those strategies and tactics to center learning and knowledge production in its activism. The first chapter outlines the methodology used for the development of this case study. It was critical for those of us developing the case study to remain true to the purpose of this research project and use methodologies which disrupt the current colonial and patriarchal nature of academic research. We therefore made a conscious attempt to use decolonial and intersectional feminist approaches to research. The second chapter provides the context and backdrop to the Housing Assembly's struggle. South Africa has a history of colonialism, settler colonialism and apartheid – all of which had the same effect of dispossessing Black people from their land and taking ownership of their labour. It presents the unique history of the Western Cape, where the Housing Assembly is based, as the first place that was settled by the Dutch and which became the blueprint for colonialism and apartheid mechanisms. The uniqueness of the Western Cape persists today where in post-apartheid South Africa, it is run by the official opposition party, The Democratic Alliance, rather than the African National Congress, which runs the national government and all other eight provinces. This chapter draws out the anti-apartheid struggle highlighting the role of women in the struggle. It also explores the transition phase and the shortcomings of that process before coming to the democratic government of the African National Congress, the rise of new social movements and the fraught relationship between the state and the movements. The third chapter explores the history and nature of the Housing Assembly, providing insight into its vision, its mission, the governance structures and its relationship with the Western Cape

government. Chapter four describes how the movement learns and produces knowledge, exploring its strategy and tactics and its rootedness in systemic oppression, and developing a nuanced intersectional approach to the struggle for decent housing. Critical in this section is the fact that the movement was started by, enabled and grown by people who live the experiences of living in informal settlements, backyards and RDP houses and who experience the precarity of their existence through the violent acts of evictions. In chapter five, the paper explores the content of the learning and knowledge production and the centrality of the house/home as a political and pedagogical tool. It describes the distilling of complex knowledge into that which is accessible to all community members with the sole aim of building a knowledgeable movement, as well as some of the challenges still facing the movement as it grapples with intersectionality. The final chapter reflects on the effects of this learning and knowledge production, focusing on individual effects as well the effects on the shape of the movement and the nature of its struggle.

Chapter 1: Case study methodology

This Housing Assembly case study is part of a broader project, funded by the UK's Economic & Social Research Council, under grant number ES/R00403X/1: 'Social Movement Learning and Knowledge Production in the Struggle for Peace with Social Justice: Case Studies from Four Conflict-Affected Contexts'.

The Housing Assembly was selected as one of the case studies in this project because it advocates with and for marginalised communities seeking to defend and extend their basic rights to education, health, housing, life, dignity and equal treatment before the law. Historically and currently, communities fighting for land and housing, as well as the broader social movement for housing and access to basic services have also been victims of state repression, violence against members and activists, and sustained surveillance and persecution.

In attempting to answer the research questions, the Housing Assembly aimed to stay true to the overall purpose of this research project: that is to be a challenge to what is understood and valued as knowledge, and how this stacks up against academic research that is largely a colonial, Northern based product, even as it appears in the global South. Amina Mama has described academia as being steeped in neoliberal, patriarchal values and ideologies (Mama, 2011) which not only leaves women at the fringes but also largely excludes the poor and working classes from its realm (yet they are the most studied and written about).

During the research process, the research team continuously tried to radically turn the mainstream trend on its head, challenging the detachment of the scholar from the movement by prioritising the aim of making research relevant and accountable to social movements themselves (Bevington and Dixon, 2005; Novelli, 2006, 2010,2004; Choudry, 2015; Cox & Nilsen, 2014; McNally, 2013; Flacks, 2004). Bevington and Dixon call for a new wave of 'movement-relevant theory' that is useful to those involved in struggles for social change (2005).

To challenge the mainstream approach to social movement theory, all elements of the research process were interrogated using a decolonial approach. This meant engaging with and disrupting power in the research process in order to challenge the colonial and imperialist ways in which knowledge about the colonised was '*collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonised*' (Smith, 1999: 3) in what Edward Said has called "Othering"

> Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realised. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and institutions that support them (including the state). It is realised in the myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the Other in scholarly and 'popular' works, and in the principles which help to select and recontextualize those constructions in such things as the media, official histories and school curricula. In a very real sense research has been an encounter between the West and the Other. Much more is known about one side of those encounters than is known about the other side. (Smith, 1999:8)

In challenging and disrupting colonial research methods and processes, this research project questioned: who was determining the research; for whose use; who was "doing" the research; what did "doing" the research mean; and where value was being placed in the research process. At each stage of engaging with these questions, the Housing Assembly tried to reimagine the research process with them at the heart - what would the research process look like if they were determining the research - including giving meaning to the four research questions, undertaking the research so that it was beneficial for the Housing Assembly and help build the movement. What would the research look like if the Housing Assembly, themselves did the research and designed their own methodologies and approaches?

In a sense, what the Housing Assembly tried to do in this research process, is to take ownership of shaping the research agenda, in order to shape how the research process was going to unfold. The attempt here was to make the research process less extractive, more democratic, and connect it to the socio-economic context as experienced by them every day.

In so doing, the Housing Assembly took a decision not to have a lead researcher but rather to put together a research team comprised of six members, drawn from within the movement. They would work with a long-time ally of the movement and social movement researcher who was part of the international research team. Their role was to collectively interpret and shape the research questions; design the research process and the methodology; shape how they were going to collect the data; conduct the data collection themselves; translating and transcribing the data; and shaping how the research would be written up.

Predominant modes of producing academic knowledge have tended to centre on the international researcher, knowing full well that their intellectual success '*relies heavily on national research staff, who are rarely credited, or indeed compensated, adequately for their work*' (Reddy and Hollowell et al, 2019:557). The Housing Assembly's approach has challenged this notion that '*national research staff who are working with international staff of research projects … be referred to only as 'fieldworkers' or 'enumerators' whose contribution is limited*

to data collection, while the term 'researcher' is reserved for the international members of the team, regardless of the inputs from the local contributors' (ibid).

In putting together the six member researcher team, we adopted an intersectional feminist approach where race, class, gender, geographical location and housing type played a key role. The six member research team represented the different housing types that the Housing Assembly organises for decent housing: informal settlements, backyard dwellers, social housing (RDP) and rental stock. As such we had people from each of the different housing types interviewing people from other housing types. The result was that people from different housing types were learning about each other's living conditions through the research process itself. This methodology is one that Housing Assembly had used successfully in workshops they held on access to water and took a decision to use it again for the purpose of this research:

> If you lived in an informal settlement you had to interview any other housing type that is there but not someone you came with now from your group. And I think that was interesting and that hit home for people that informal settlement's water issues was not much different from those in [RDP houses] (Interview with Ebrahiem Fourie, researcher, 14 September 2018)

The team was also made up of the dominant race groups who are living in the different housing types to ensure full representation. It was made up predominantly of women of colour, so that the experiences of women of colour and Black women be centered and attention paid to their experiences both in terms of who was asking the questions and engaging in discussion with respondents but also in terms of shaping the research questions to center women of colour at the heart.

This approach drew into focus the importance of reflexive practice and positionality. The makeup of the team created an awareness of each person's "intersecting identities" which we understood would '*influence their understanding of their context and shape their point of view'* (Reddy and Hollowell et al, 2019:556.

The current neoliberal approach to housing development in South Africa has created its own power dynamics and class divisions. At the very bottom rung of the housing ladder are those living in informal settlements. Just above them are those squatting in the backyards of people living either in rental stock or RDP houses. These are followed by those in RDP houses. Hence our research team, representing the different housing types and interviewing those from other housing types, did have to deal with unequal power dynamics. The fact that race played a key role (and continues to play) in identifying and categorising people, also meant that

African and so-called "Coloured" researchers would be viewed differently and through a lens of power and privilege. And because South Africa is still a strongly patriarchal society, women, especially Black and women of colour from low incomes, are viewed as having the least power. As such, we attempted to be as reflexive as we could by ensuring that regular spaces for reflexive practice were created to pay '*specific attention to unequal power relations'* (ibid) that we had identified above.

We also adopted an intersectional feminist approach in our research because we wanted to engage with '*the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics'* (Cho and Sumi et al, 2013: 787). This intersectional feminist approach was adopted in the selection of our research team, designing our research process and in the selection of samples. Feminist approaches to research were also adopted for how we worked together and for how we would go about conducting the research. We deliberately chose a feminist approaches to research because it aims to '*understand, interrogate and ultimately dismantle social and political structures that systematically disadvantage women, and the power dynamics that underpin these structures'* (Leung, Miedema Warner et al, 2019:431). We therefore adopted the following feminist research principles for our research (ibid):

- *Ethical:* research should adhere to the principle of 'do no harm' and to the highest ethical research standards
- *Collaborative and participatory:* researchers should work with existing community movements to build on existing methodologies, data and evidence. Research should be strength-based, actively building and valuing local capacity. Research is conducted with, not on, women and men
- *Transformative:* the research process itself and the conclusions which emerge from the findings should seek to transform current systems of oppression, including race, class and gender
- *Intersectional:* research acknowledges and actively seeks to dismantle inherent power imbalances not just related to gender, but also related to race, (neo)colonisation, class, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, age, housing type, location. The research process also acknowledges and seeks to address the power and privilege bestowed upon university-educated researchers from high income countries, as well as from within the research team as they relate to those in the movement who have had no or limited access to education

- *Accountable:* continuous critical reflection, learning and improvement are integral parts of the research process. This means that the research and (researchers) are accountable to the local community and to each other. Acknowledging that with disruptive research come potential risks to local researchers and local participants, the research methodology actively seeks to identify and mitigate these potential risks
- *Accessible and open:* research findings (and methods) are unrestricted and freely shared. This includes publishing and disseminating findings in a way that is accessible and understandable to potential users and research participants.

The research methodology used in the development of this case study drew on participatory action research which tries to capture the collective learning and knowledge production processes that take place within social movements (Torres Carrillo, 1999; 2010). The most prominent example here is the work of the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, whose technique of "participatory action research" (PAR) has been enormously influential and is recognised as one of the most commonly used research techniques in popular education, especially in Latin America (ibid, Fals Borda, 1979, 1987, 2008).

During the 1990s, a participatory popular education research method known as the 'systematisation of experiences' gained prominence within the field of Latin American popular education. Based on the recognition that unique, valuable knowledge can be produced through popular education processes, the systematisation of experiences is a collective process which seeks to deepen understanding and improve practice through collective reflection and analysis of experience (Jara, 1997, 2015; Kane, 2012; Torres Carrillo, 2010, Ruiz Muñoz, 2004). Systematisation:

> enables organisations and educators to learn from each other's experiences, successes, problems and failures; it helps educators analyse and evaluate their own work; it is part of the educative process itself, in which encouraging people to interpret developments helps them reach new levels of understanding' (Kane, 2012:78).

As such the research team developed this methodology to engage more deeply with how specific moments in the Housing Assembly timeline provoked learning and knowledge production, and also provided a reflexive moment to analyse and evaluate their strategies and tactics.

The first step in the process was to develop a timeline of the Housing Assembly. This involved the research team, working with members of the steering committee of the movement, brainstorming all the key moments in the Housing Assembly's history - from the events that led up to their formation, the launch, up to present day. The timeline was put up on the wall

of the Housing Assembly's offices using different colour post-it notes to distinguish between the different methods they were consciously (and subconsciously) using for movement building, and as such for learning and knowledge production. These post-its represented door-to door and street committee meetings, district visits, marches and protests, participation in various government processes on housing, workshops, the Political School, and workshops run by external organisations. The timeline has subsequently been further developed, and remains on the wall of the office at the time of writing. It is used as a tool for further learning and knowledge building. Members of Housing Assembly add to it as (structured and unstructured) discussions take place in the office, or as new documents, media, pamphlets etc are found from their archives.

From the timeline, the research team picked out the key moments that they wanted to use to begin the development of the research process. Shaping a first draft of research sub-questions, the team conducted a pilot study in October - November 2018. A workshop was then held in April 2019 which served as a reflexive and reflective practice from the pilot study. Here, we put up the pilot study as well as the development of the timeline to draw out what worked, what did not work and how we could improve our research practice. The workshop was also used as a space to delve deeper into who the research team felt was important to be included in the data collection. Here we used power mapping and stakeholder analysis methods to identify the sample, including constituent groups like women and youth, founding and new members, etc. An in-depth discussion was held about what tools we wanted to use to collect the data (Commissions, Focus Groups and Individual in-depth interviews) and where we were going to do this. For example, the site of the home was identified as a key site for data collection, due to the Housing Assembly's door-to-door method of learning and knowledge production. We then spent a considerable amount of time working through each of the four research questions, breaking them down so that as a research team we understood what it was we were asking. We then worked to break these down into sub-questions, using a key organising moments of the Housing Assembly as the catalyst for discussion.

We started the data collection process by holding a focus group with the research team in which the research questions that we collectively designed were posed to the team. This gave the team an idea of how the questions sounded, and allowed us to ensure that the questions were accessible to the average Housing Assembly activist.

This was followed by two commissions of 30 people, each held with a mix of new and founding members from Cape Town and Witzenburg (a rural area, North of Cape Town). The use of commissions was learnt and borrowed from the research process of NOMADESC in Colombia,

another case study in this research project. In the commissions, participants were divided into three smaller groups where they moved their discussions between various levels: from the individual to the organisational to the social consciousness level. From both commissions, up to 10 people were selected for individual in-depth interviews, making sure that women, youth, and the different housing types were covered.

Seven focus groups were held with constituent groups in both Cape Town and Witzenburg which included between 10 and 15 women, youth, and representatives from areas involved in recent occupations.

In-depth individual interviews were conducted with 20 people representing a cross section of housing types, women and youth. In addition a further 10 interviews were conducted with individuals who had participated in a recent occupation or prevention of an eviction. A further five interviews were conducted with participants attending the political school.

All interviews were conducted in the language that those participating in the data collection felt comfortable with. Where needed, translators were on hand to ensure that interviewees felt comfortable and safe to share their experiences. The interviews, focus groups and commissions were recorded by the researcher undertaking the interviews and uploaded to a secure online drive that was accessible to the whole research team. . The research team, with support from an external ally including the researcher from the international research team, transcribed the recordings. Afrikaans and Xhosa language interviews were translated into English.

The data was analysed against the four research questions. Common themes emerging were highlighted and documented manually. Interviews were then grouped according to those themes, and where sub-themes were emerging, these were also highlighted and documented. These themes were presented to the international research team so that common threads could be drawn from our various research projects.

Chapter 2: Country context (historical, economic, social, cultural, political, geographic)

To understand the deep racialisation of housing and land in South Africa we have to begin by contextualising it in the country's colonial and apartheid past, in which the creation of the Black labourer was central to the violent story of dispossession and deprivation. South Africa has always been singled out from other African states as having experienced a colonialism of a different kind, in that the lands were never initially colonised but rather settled on by a Dutch trading company which then went on to subject the majority indigenous population to some of the worst brutality witnessed in contemporary times.

Yet Dutch settlers weren't the only players in South Africa's history – the British colonised it in the late 1700s and played a critical role in establishing the segregation policies which went on to form the blue-print for apartheid in the late 1940s.

Both the Dutch and the British used slave labour to fulfil their labour shortages: the Dutch brought in slaves from West Africa, East Africa, Madagascar, Bengal, Indonesia and Malaysia to work in agriculture in the Western Cape; while the British imported slaves from India to work on the sugar plantations in Natal, and subsequently in small scale farming and fishing. The Dutch import of slaves had a major effect on the Cape: miscegenation took place between the slaves, the Khoi, San and white farmers and officials creating the "Coloured"/mixed race population group in the Cape. This allowed the Dutch to indenture the labour of the children born out of miscegenation who were raised on the farms in the Colony (Wolpe, 1972; M. Legassick, 1975; M. Lacey, 1981).

Segregation policies extended to the categorisation of the people of South Africa. First introduced by the Dutch East India Company, racial categorisation was continued by the British colonisers and then cemented under apartheid. Racial categories were ruled by law and ethnic classifications were ruled by a different and separate sets of customary law. The political and legal identities divided people into groups for the purpose of discrimination and dispossession where '*race was vertical, and ethnicity horizontal'* (Mamdani, 2001:26). During apartheid, several pieces of legislation were introduced to classify people into racial groups. The Population Registration Act No. 30 0f 1950 created four main racial groups, namely Whites, Natives (Black African), Indians and Coloured (people of mixed race). Indians and "Coloured" people were non-indigenous people, brought to South Africa as indentured and/or slave labour. Political, socially and economically, Whites were privileged by having the right to vote; access to state security and skilled jobs; and the right to own land and the means of

production. “Non-whites” were denied these rights (South African History Online website, 2015). The Black African population was further divided along ethnic lines with the major ethnic groups being Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Venda, Pedis, Shangaans and Tswana among others. These ethnic groups were separated out into homelands set up specifically for each group (ibid).

The acts of segregation and apartheid were crucial in dealing with the ever-present shortage of labour and for segmenting this labour into the different sectors of the economy (Wolpe, 1972; M. Legassick, 1975; M. Lacey, 1981). These policies were closely linked to dispossession of people from their land, disenfranchisement and the creation of subjects who would have no choice but to sell their labour power.

2.1. The logic of apartheid

Labour Capture and Economic Development

There have been debates as to whether segregation policies and the subsequent apartheid systems were purely tools for structured and systematised racism and social engineering or whether these policies were in fact implemented for economic reasons and to see capitalism through industrialisation prosper in the south. Writers such as Wolpe (1972), Legassick (1975), Lacey (1981), and Trapido (1980) believe that segregation and apartheid were tools used to address the shortage of labour that the British and the Afrikaaners faced in their quest to turn agriculture, mining and later, manufacturing into sites of capitalist production.

The labour and land question is omnipresent in South Africa’s history. The Dutch East India Company’s (VOC) success in its agricultural output in the Cape Colony was due in totality to the growth in the use of forced labour – from hunting down and forcing the indigenous population into labour submission; to the import of slaves from West Africa, East Africa, Madagascar, Bengal, Indonesia and Malaysia; and the indenturing of the labour of children born from “Coloured” people (the racial terminology created to describe the miscegenation that took place between slaves, the indigenous population and with farmers and officials), the VOC turned Cape agriculture into a lucrative business such that it caught the attention of colonialists, in particular, the British who colonised the Cape in 1795 and then again in 1806.

Having cut its teeth in the slave trade, British colonialism was the next step in securing dominance of Africa’s resources. However, the end of the slave trade meant that there were labour shortages which hindered their attempts to extract resources out of Africa. The need for labour became even greater when minerals were discovered in the North of South Africa in the 1850s. Following the example set by the Dutch in the Cape. Bringing their own uniquely

cruel and violent spin on subjugation, the British sought dominance over the Black population by capturing their labour through the introduction of legislation and policies.

The polices and legislation were systematic. The Masters and Servants Act (1880) tied the farm worker and his family (including children) to a farm owner, and prescribed methods of discipline and punishment – including the use of violent assault on men, women and children. Anti-squatting legislation (1878) made it impossible for Black people to be on any land unless they were working on it; and the Private Locations Act of 1899 (which limited the number of Black people that could be on a location and which was privately administered by the Native Administration Department) continued the systematic dispossession of Black people off their land.

For the British and the Dutch, the idea of squatting Black people did not sit well with some of the bigger farm owners and mine owners. People who squatted on land were able to get by on their own through income raised either through cash-crops, or other livelihoods. This was felt to be a labour wastage, especially given the labour shortage at the time, both in the mines and on farms. It also threatened the colonialists and settler's attempts to control and discipline Black people.

Stripping people of their land (either in South Africa, or in the home country of the indentured labourer) was critical in driving people into starvation and into work. According to Newton-King '*only those driven into the colony by starvation could be expected to become useful servants'*(1980:194). As much of this was to supply labour to the farms and deal with its shortages, the corralling and immobilising of this labour was largely to enact discipline and control over people.

These laws stripped Black people of any alternatives other than being labourers, tethering them not only to the work on the farm but also geographically to a designated location. More importantly, they became the blueprint for apartheid legislation.

Land and Spatial Planning

The Union of South Africa in 1910 saw legislation that was enacted in the Cape Colony being rolled out across the country. The anti-squatting laws of 1878 and the Private Locations Act of 1899 were used as blueprints for the 1913 Native Land Act. The Native Land Act of 1913 changed the landscape of South Africa and set the basis for segregation and apartheid which followed. The Act forcibly removed Black people onto 20% of the land in South Africa, giving 80% of the most fertile land to Whites – it did this by prohibiting the sale of land in white areas to Black people and vice versa. It also created African reserves which were demarcated areas, cordoned off spaces for Africans to live and were the only spaces in the Union where Africans

could own and occupy land and could live "freely" without having to sell their labour. Outside of these spaces, any Black person found on any land had to be there because he/she was selling their labour. According to Wolpe (1972), the reason given to Parliament for the Act was to ensure the "territorial segregation of the races", and this argument has been widely accepted and used as the rationale to support the view that segregation and apartheid was only about racial discrimination. But it was also used to create reserves of Black labour – be it for the farms, mines or domestic labour. As Beinhart and Delius put it '…*the population on the reserves became captive labour for the mines while tenants became trapped labour for farmers'* (1986:13). And it was used as a political tool to keep the different races groups separated whilst it acted out its differential racial exploitation.

The National Party apartheid government pushed the territorial segregation of the races to its limits. Apartheid spatial planning created "townships" - neighbourhoods located on the periphery of cities that were designed for racially segregated settlement. Black people were forcibly removed to these townships to create white-only areas on prime land. The racially segregated townships were seen as the solution to the apartheid-era housing problem, as it also provided housing for those living in informal shack settlements (Napier, 1993). The townships were created as a means of containing the separated race groups so that they didn't spill over into each other. Each area had its own schools, health clinics, markets and shops. A Black person found outside these designated areas had to possess legal permission, normally tied to employment. But there was a more insidious use for these townships. Their spatial planning and design allowed for the apartheid state to maintain '"*physical order," "social stability" and "visibility" where visibility means that the inhabitants could be kept under surveillance'* (ibid) - more than just segregation, it was a tool to maintain political and social exclusion.

In addition, African people were pushed further onto the margins of the country by being corralled into Bantustan/homeland reserves. In total there were 10 homelands each assigned for a different Black cultural group, for example, if a Black man or woman was Zulu speaking, he or she was sent to Kwazulu. Apartheid legislation such as the Banta Homeland Citizenship Act of 1970, made citizens of Black people throughout South Africa only in the homeland that was assigned to them. However, the citizenship was limited and did not grant South African citizenship, civil or political rights. Homelands were "self-governing" and each had a Commissioner-General who was tasked with the development of the homeland free from white intervention. The strategy behind the creation of homelands was to isolate all African people from the rest of South Africa and have them fend for themselves. But it was also a

strategy for the apartheid government to avoid responsibility for African people whilst still being able to benefit from their labour.

The "self-governing", "self-sufficiency" homelands were in fact a myth. No resources were provided to the homelands, including support for the development of its economies. The homelands were located on just 13% of South African land; and without any economy, many had to rely on farming. But with homelands being located on the worst agricultural land in South Africa, millions were forced to move between the homelands and the cities and towns in South Africa to seek employment. The Pass Laws were designed to facilitate this movement of labour from Bantustan/homeland reserves to urban employment in the mines, manufacturing, domestic and other menial work.

Townships held this reserve of labour. But in addition, single sex hostels were also built. This was one of the most pernicious creations of apartheid spatial planning, built purely to house African labour. The reason for creating single sex hostels was to emphasise the impermanence of the African worker whose transit through the city purely for work, did not entitle him or her to be accompanied by family. Hostel dwellers were restricted to living in the single sex tenements only for short, fixed periods of time. These were single sex tenements which housed African men and women (separately) without their families and for fixed periods of time.

Building a people's movement in the face of state violence

The armed struggle was launched in 1961 under Umkhonto we Sizwe, with members of the ANC, SACP, the SA Indian Congress and the SA Coloured Peoples organisation taking up arms. While the armed struggle waged on against the apartheid state, Black[2] people started organising at community level. Despite the surveillance and state control acted out on townships and hostels, these spaces became fertile grounds for grassroots organising and resistance. Grassroots civic organising at community level became the only viable form of resistance following the violent state crackdowns in the 1960's (Sharpeville Massacre) and 1970's (Soweto Uprising) (Seekings, 1996; M.Swilling, 1987; K. Jochelson, 1990).

In the 80s, the key role played by community organisations or "civic organisations" was to build a movement '*through strengthening the collective identity of township residents as members of the "community*"' (Seekings, 1996:137); to fight for the end of the brutal and violent apartheid state and for development especially that which was withheld from Black people – houses, land, basic public services such as electricity, water and sanitation (Swilling,

[2] "Black" became a political organising tool were African, Indians and "Coloured" people joined together to end apartheid and its separate development

1987). The community organising was successful in mobilising, through tactics such as the many rent and transport boycotts and stay-away protests which successfully undermined the control of the apartheid state. Critically, the building of a movement at the grassroots level fostered struggles across issues and brought on board different movements, such as the trade union movement, students movements all of which culminated in a struggle that connected labour issues, development issues, education with the brutality of a violent apartheid state.

The apartheid state's repeated use of the State of Emergency in the 1980s (including passing legislation that restricted the ability of groups to gather, meet and organise; that allowed for detention without arrest; and which banned some anti-apartheid groups), was indicative of '*the extent of the popular challenge to state power'* and '*the government's shaky hold on the future as it sought to conserve and control the status quo'* (Jochelson, 1990:2). The torture and killing of activists was common place, whilst others were sent to Robben Island to serve out life sentences with hard labour. Within this political context, neighbourhood-based community organising in Black townships became '*central to the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s'* (Seekings, 1996:135) and the building of a nation-wide movement.

In 1984 the United Democratic Front (UDF) was launched. It was the movement of the people that brought together civic organisations, trade unions, anti-apartheid organisations including the African National Congress, student organisations, NGOs and all other formations. It brought together anti-apartheid activists from all racial groups; including men, women and children. In total there were about 700 organisations and hundreds of thousands of people that had come together to form the UDF (Suttner, 2005).

This period of community organising and the formation of the UDF in the 1980s was the full expression of "people's power", '*the masses driving the process from below*' and '*democracy from below'* (ibid). Within the repressive and violent political environment, community organising through the UDF saw innovative organising practices emerge that gave life to the notion of "people's power". Door-to-door organising, area and street committees were critical at the time and subversive acts of defiance to get around the banning orders and restrictions to the gathering of people.

This expression of "people power" was also a direct challenge to hierarchical forms of organisation that were (and still are) commonplace. In place of top-down hierarchy, grassroots activists set up decentralised organisational structures that involved '*sophisticated forms of organisation based on street and area committees'* where '*(each) street elects a street committee, which in turn elects representatives to an area committee'* (Swilling, 1987). Preceding the setting up of street committees, activists embarked on door to door visits where

information was shared with whole households. This methodology not only built grassroots and a mass movement but also made the household and community sites where learning could take place and where knowledge was produced:

> We started with problems in the yard: only one line for washing, no drains, the bucket system, night soil spilling in the yard and kids getting sick. People tended to blame themselves or their neighbours instead of seeing it as the state's problem. People had to unite and direct their grievances at apartheid (Jochelson, 1987:7).

The area and street committees also gave Black people a sense of control and power over themselves, thus lessening the power and control the apartheid state had over them. In essence it gave the perception that the apartheid state had lost control of communities and the ability to govern over them.

> I can say the community is the main source of power, because the state has really lost the control over the people. He has no power over the people in terms of controlling them. This is why the people have formed these area committees, so that they can try to control themselves. What has been preached in the past about the Freedom Charter, even now we are trying to do that practically (Weza Made quoted in Suttner, 2005:62)

Grassroots organising and the building of people's power was also a clear signal that activists were direct actors directly involved in their own liberation as agents of their own change. They were in control, making their own decisions, devising their own strategies and innovating creative ways of organising and mobilising. This is a practice still seen today in social movements such as the Housing Assembly.

This period of people's power seen through mass community-based organising and mobilising, combined with the UDF, the armed struggle and international sanctions created periods of ungovernability which showed a weakened and disabled apartheid state (see Patel, 1998; Hassim, 2006; Gasa, 2008). It was this mass upsurge that pushed the apartheid state towards a negotiated peace settlement.

Women and the movements

The mass movement of the 1980s, as well as the rise of trade union activism, saw an unprecedented number of women enter the struggle against apartheid. The UDF provided this avenue for women to participate in politics. Women began forming their own grassroots civic organisations as well as organisations that operated on a national level. Whilst much has been documented about the struggle against apartheid, it has normally been done in the absence of recognising or valuing the role played by women, or recognition of the different and specific experiences of women both as they came up against the apartheid state, including

how access to housing and basic services, violence and brutality affected them; and their experiences within the movements they participated in.

According to Patel, '*Women are affected in a particular way by repression. They are the ones who have to see to the home and children if a husband is detained or in hiding. Women themselves face severe pressure from families and husbands if they are involved and risk detention or are forced into hiding'* (1998:30).

Feminists within the movements and through their participation in UDF structures tried to present a broader agenda that went beyond regime change and the institutionalising of people's power to include a change to the patriarchal systems which create, perpetuate and enable the discrimination, unjust and unfair treatment of women and which props up male domination. They saw their participation in political activism as going beyond the end of apartheid, and therefore their fight was for the emancipation of women as well.

In the quest to build "people's power" from the ground up, questions from key feminist writers raise issues of how much and what kind of autonomy women's movements had, how much space they had to shape the politics, strategy and tactics within the broader movement, and the effects of the political context on their organising and activism (ibid). Women's participation in community level politics was critical in shaping the politics at the time – it was women who brought the "bread and butter" issues to the political agenda, making the struggle against '*high rent, lack of basic services and corrupt local councils'* (ibid) compatible with the struggle against apartheid. It was women who made the connection between their oppression in the workplaces and the oppression in their communities, and in their homes where they had to carry the burden of domestic responsibilities. Their activism also had an impact on relationships in their households where, in addition to engaging in the struggle to end apartheid, they were still required to maintain their households. And because activist spaces were largely dominated by men, they did not factor the triple burden of women's oppression into their tactics and strategies.

All of this was unfortunately missed by the mass movement of the UDF. Even though it aspired to values of non-racism and non-sexism, the struggle and emancipation of Black women were folded into the broader national struggle for liberation. Thus the emphasis became on building the larger movement against apartheid/for liberation and less about the liberation of women – women's labour and leadership was therefore siphoned out of the women's movement and put into building the anti-apartheid movement. Unable to meet the heavy demands to build both the women's movement and the broader mass based anti-apartheid movement, women's organisations became incorporated into the anti-apartheid movement. Hassim

notes that '*Within two years of joining the alliance with the United Democratic Front, women's organisations shifted from being able to define goals and strategies in relation to their primary constituency of women to being auxiliaries of the United Democratic Front with the responsibility of mobilising a "sector" of the masses into the larger organisation'* (Hassim, 2006:13)

Whilst the mass movement of the UDF was successful in pushing South Africa towards a negotiated settlement, it missed the opportunity to take a less instrumentalist approach to peace, democracy and power sharing. So as South Africa was pushed into a negotiated settlement, women continued to hold their breath to see if this negotiated agreement for a democratic society included the liberation of women.

The negotiated transition

Negotiations towards a transition from apartheid to democracy began to take place from the mid-1980s, with the National Party meeting ANC members including those who were exiled (South African History Online website, 2011). By 1990 the National Party government began to dismantle apartheid. First came the unbanning of anti-apartheid liberation movements, including the ANC, and the release of political prisoners that were serving life sentences. This included apartheid's most famous prisoner, Nelson Mandela. Paving the way for a negotiated settlement was the suspension of the armed struggle. A National Peace Accord was signed in 1991 between the apartheid government and 18 organisations including trade unions, political organisations and churches, committing themselves to a peaceful process of negotiations that would take the country to its first democratic elections.

With the unbanning of political parties and the re-emergence of the ANC came the dismantling of the UDF. The process also brought into question the need for autonomous, independent movements including civic organisations. Many leaders from civic organisations went on to take up leadership positions in the ANC whilst others held on to the belief that civic organisations were important representatives of the community and were the only viable option to represent the needs of the local in the negotiations (Seekings, 1996).

A similar process occurred within the women's movement. When the ANC Women's League relaunched in 1990, it also called into question the need for separate and autonomous women's organisations. By then, the women's movement had already been weakened by its absorption into the UDF and was further weakened when it collapsed into the relaunched ANC Women's League (Hassim, 2006). In 1992, the Women's National Coalition was formed which was made up of four regional coalitions and about 60 national organisations, and had

as its objective to ensure the equality of women in the new constitutional dispensation that was being negotiated by political parties, trade unions and churches (Meintjies, 1996).

In 1991, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was set up as the negotiation forum. The negotiations took place over two phases with the ANC, the National Party and representatives from 20 other political parties including the South Africa Communist Party (SACP), the Indian Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Leaders of the homeland governments and independent territories were also included. The trade unions were excluded, as were civic organisations and women's movements – these had to find representation through political parties. Out of a total of 228 delegates at CODESA, only 10 were women (South African History Online website, 2017).

The negotiations centred on the development of a new constitution; a constitution making body or process; the establishment of an interim government; the future of the homelands; and the international community. The restructuring of the apartheid economy was not on the agenda for discussion. After two rounds of negotiations, talks broke down in 1992 when agreement could not be reached on issues relating to majority rule and power sharing. The country plunged into violence again and South Africans experienced some of the worst political violence in its history with 3,699 people killed in 1990 and a further 2,510 in 1991 (Napier, 1993). As the country burned, the political leaders tried to rescue the talks. A Multi-National Negotiating Forum was set up and through this negotiating forum, the ANC and the apartheid government reached a Record of Understanding which set out a timetable for establishing a constitutional assembly, an interim government and dealing with political prisoners. After intense negotiations, agreement was reached between the ANC and the apartheid government, paving the way for the repeal of all apartheid laws (including the Group Areas Act), dissolved the homelands and for the first multi-party, one person one vote democratic elections to be held in 1994 and the development of one of the most progressive Constitutions and Bill of Rights in the world.

The RDP as election manifesto leading to South Africa's first democratic elections

Ahead of the 1994 elections, the ANC produced the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) as its election manifesto. The RDP set out the ANC's macroeconomic policy which stated that it would focus on the redistribution of the country's wealth and resources. It promised to give land back to the dispossessed. It also promised that the state would take back the wealth through nationalising certain industries and then redistribute it to all those who had been denied a better life.

Specifically in relation to land, the RDP stated that there would be a national land reform programme that would address the injustices of apartheid, including that of forced removals and the historical denial of access to land. At the heart of this programme was the promise that productive land would be given back to the poorest for residential and agricultural purposes and that people would be assured security of tenure. It also specifically mentioned guaranteeing women's access to land (African National Congress, 1994).

With regard to housing, the RDP stated clearly:

> The RDP endorses the principle that all South Africans have a right to a secure place in which to live in peace and dignity. Housing is a human right. One of the RDP's first priorities is to provide for the homeless (ibid)

The RDP sets out a comprehensive vision for housing delivery in the country. It set out clearly that national government would be responsible for providing houses to all; that this should be done within a housing policy and legislative framework; and that the government would make sufficient funds available (not less than 5% of the budget of the five year RDP) to facilitate the provision of housing. It also mentions that housing and service delivery must involve a process that empowers communities (ibid).

As election campaigning took off ahead of the April 1994 elections, ANC campaign posters of green, Black and gold went up all over the country. Adorned with the face of Nelson Mandela, each poster brought the RDP to life and engrained it in the imaginations of all Black South Africans. The posters promised "*A better life for all!" "Jobs for All!" "Houses for All!" "Free Basic Services!".* In more concrete terms the ANC promised to build 1 million low cost homes, provide electricity to 2.5 million houses by 2000, and provide running water and sewage systems to 1 million households (ibid). There was almost 100% voter turnout for the elections. Iconic photographs at the time showed snaking queues of people standing in line for hours to vote for a better life, a life free from poverty and a life of equality. The ANC won 62% of the vote and control of all nine provinces.

Smoke and Mirrors: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and neoliberal economics of GEAR

Just ahead of the elections, the situation for the Black, mostly African, population was dire. Almost half of the African population was living in poverty. Poverty was highest in rural areas (73%) and in homelands (92%). Unemployment was at 30% and the Gini co-efficient stood at 0.58, making South Africa one of the most unequal societies in the world. At least 7.5% of households lived in informal dwellings (Roberts, 2000). There was, therefore, a lot at stake going into the 1994 elections. Against that backdrop the promises made in the RDP held a very real meaning for those living in overwhelming poverty. When the ANC was elected, there was a general trust amongst the people that the party would deliver on its promises.

As part of the transition to democracy, it became necessary for the country to hold a healing process to help the country recover from the trauma experienced during the violent period of apartheid. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up in 1996 and was headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It took the format of court-room like proceedings for the purpose of hearing, documenting and in some cases granting amnesty, to perpetrators of human rights violations. The proceedings were open to everyone and anyone could be charged – including ordinary citizens, and both the apartheid state and the liberation movements were held accountable for their actions during the apartheid period. There were 7,112 petitioners of which 5,392 were refused amnesty and 849 were granted amnesty (South African History Online website, 2011).

While the country was in the grips of dealing with its painful past, reliving the trauma and horrors of apartheid, the ANC government released its Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. GEAR was a complete shift away from the redistributive policies of the RDP, and a full embrace of neoliberal economic policy and ideology that was permeating the global space. Some thinkers held the position that one of the reasons why the economy was not put on the transitional negotiations agenda was because the ANC had long decided that it was going to go down the route of neoliberal capitalism:

> …the relative ease of the political transition was principally guaranteed by the ANC's withdrawal from any form of genuine class struggle in the socioeconomic realm and the abandonment of any economic strategy that might have been expected directly to service the immediate material requirements of the vast mass of desperately impoverished South Africans. (Saul, 2002:435)

The worrying feature of the shift in policy was that the ANC in its RDP policy fully acknowledged the damage that apartheid had done to the Black, largely African, population. It knew the political-economic context where:

> …the poorest 60% of household's share of total expenditure is a mere 14%, while the richest quintile's share is 69% and where, across the decade of the nineties, a certain narrowing of the income gap between Black and white (as a growing number of Blacks have edged themselves into elite circles) has been paralleled by an even greater widening of the gap between rich and poor. (ibid)

There was nothing extraordinary about GEAR in that it was '*fairly standard neoliberal one'* (Habib and Padayachee, 2000) which proposed cuts in government spending to reduce the deficit, tax concessions for big business, reduction of tariff barriers (in the clothing, textile, leather, car manufacturing industries), privatisation of government assets (which included the provision of basic services), reduction in state welfare programmes and a more flexible labour

market. The new macro-economic policy completely reversed the tenets of the Freedom Charter's "The People Shall Govern" and the community empowerment principles of the RDP, instead placing the interests of (white) business at the heart of the country's economic policy. According to Saul, it was very clear that the central premise of South Africa's economic policy was '*ask not what capital can do for South Africa but what South Africa can do for capital*…' (Saul, 2002:440).

Without the full dismantling of the apartheid economy that saw the deliberate creation of a white elite and middle class, GEAR set about creating a Black elite. Adopting a neoliberal agenda did nothing to eradicate poverty but through Black Economic Empowerment schemes set about increasing the inequality gap within the Black population as had never been seen before (while the inequality gap continued to widen between Blacks and whites) (Bhorat and Kanbur, 2005). More worrying was the fact that by 2001, it was observed that people seemed to have been trapped in chronic poverty:

> Last year, the same people were designated poor. The same were poor the year before, the year before that and before that, down into a longitudinal graph that spans back before the 1994 democratic turning-point, into the apartheid period (Sitas, 2001)

The effects of GEAR on the poor

Poverty was felt in a very real way. The neoliberal nature of GEAR attacked every aspect of the lives of the poor – from their jobs to being food secure. Opening up the economy to the whims of the market saw a massive haemorrhaging of low and unskilled jobs: between 1993 and 1998, formal employment decreased by 12% in the immediate aftermath of GEAR being introduced (Carter and May,1999) and by 2002 unemployment had risen to 41.8% (Kingdon and Knight, 2004) Those most affected were Black women who made up 56% of the unemployed (Kehler, 2001).

Whilst the government increased expenditure on public services, it simultaneously adopted a cost-recovery approach to the provision of water, electricity, housing and education. According to Bhorat and Kanbar (2005), social spending between 1995 and 2000 increased between 21 and 38% for the poorest in the country. But whilst it increased social spending on water provision, electricity and housing development schemes, the new democratic state removed the subsidised provision of these services and imposed cost recovery prices thereby turning public services into a profit making exercise, thereby turning public services into a profit-making exercise. Many of the poor found that their access to water and electricity was affected by the installation of prepaid water and electricity meters which cut off water and electricity once the purchased amount of electricity and water was consumed (McDonald,

2002). The cost-recovery prices of basic services put access beyond the reach of most, as the poor were forced to choose between having water or electricity and food (Benjamin, 2011). But often the choice was taken away from the poor. The democratic government punished those who couldn't afford basic services by cutting off their access. Desai notes that between 1999 and 2000 there were approximately 75,400 water disconnections in Cape Town; 20,000 households in Soweto had their electricity supplies disconnected every month (Desai, 2004).

The shift to neoliberal economic policies also put the housing backlog in crisis. The ANC noted in 1994 that there were about 3 million homeless people in the country thus acknowledging that addressing the crisis was one of the most critical areas of intervention needed (Bond,2000). This was the one critical area that the ANC needed to get right because:

> From the standpoint of the household – particularly women caregivers – decent housing improves family health and hygiene, provides privacy and a chance to raise children, and ensures the psychological security that comes from 'tenure' (the ability to stay in a house without fear of being displaced). Finally, secure, well-integrated housing developments can enhance community and mutual aid activities within a given neighbourhood.(ibid)

But the ANC-led government missed a series of opportunities. Rather than opt for a central role for the state to play in housing provision as well as a number of measures to help get the poorest people onto the housing ladder in a way that did not exacerbate their already indebted household, the ANC government opted to handover low cost housing provision to private developers and the banks.

Those that are on the periphery of social housing waiting not just for a house but to actually get on to the waiting list do so in '*partially visible yet precarious, the grey spaces of informality and illegality'* (Oldfield and Greyling, 2015). The housing crisis has created a crisis in the living conditions of the millions of homeless people who are forced to live in overcrowded conditions in shacks that have been erected in the backyard of rented houses paying rent for the space and to share bathroom facilities with those living in the rented accommodation. Sometimes the rental house belongs to a family member of a landlord. Others are forced to erect a shack in an informal settlement that may or may not be legal (the latter is normally on "illegally" occupied land that either belongs to the state or a private owner). If the settlement is regarded as legal then services are provided in the form of a few portable toilets and water standpipes that are erected outside shacks and have to be shared by the entire community. Some settlements have bucket toilets provided by the state and residents have to wait indefinitely to have the waste removed.

The 2001 Census found that 1.38 million households lived in a shack that was not in a backyard, 1.11 million households lived in informal settlements that included backyards and just over 700,000 households lived in both (Housing Development Agency, 2012). The Census report of 2001 showed that the province with the largest concentration of households living in informal housing was Gauteng (34%) whilst eThekwini Municipality in Kwazulu/Natal was the city with the most number of households living in informal housing (25%). The Western Cape (along with Gauteng and the North West Province) had the most number of households living in backyards (6-8%) (ibid). The number of people living in informal housing has more than doubled since 1994. Many of the people who were living in shacks in informal settlements had been doing so for over 20 years and some had been on the government's waiting list for a house for the same period of time. It was no surprise that by the second national elections, the ANC lost control over the Western Cape province to opposition party, the Democratic Alliance.

In 2007, the South African government passed the Emergency Housing Programme to provide temporary housing to people affected by emergencies such as homeless people living on the streets, residents whose homes have been burnt in a fire or flooded, or those facing homelessness because of evictions (Pillay et a, 2017). The temporary housing is provided in camp-like areas known as Temporary Relocation Areas (TRAs). Essentially TRAs are state run informal settlements. Houses are built out of tin, with no indoor bathrooms, toilets or piped water, and residents are required to share these services with their neighbours.

Blikkiesdorp (meaning "tin can town" in Afrikaans), is a TRA that lies on the outskirts of the city of Cape Town. The residents of Blikkiesdorp gave it this name because of the silver tin the shacks are built out of and the cramped nature of the camp. However, Blikkiesdorp is far from temporary. People were moved to the TRA in 2010 during the City of Cape Town's cleanup of the city ahead of the 2010 World Cup that South Africa hosted (Groundup website, 2017). Blikkiesdorp houses 5,000 people in 2,000 shacks with up to 10 people living in a shack. Because people have been moved miles away from their jobs or prospects of employment, the unemployment rate is at 73% (ibid). People in Blikkiesdorp, and in other TRAs across the country, were told that these living conditions were temporary and that people would be moved to social housing. They have been waiting for close to ten years.

This waiting, whether in informal settlements, backyards, or TRAs, puts citizens in direct encounters with the state. As they wait for ten, twenty years, patience turns to subversion turns to agency turns to resistance. And because the civic organizing during apartheid was still fresh in the minds of people, resistance was like a match to a tinder box.

2.2 Social movements as a key feature of post-apartheid South Africa

Today, with the changes that have been made in capitalist societies that have resulted in the restructuring of the economy, increased unemployment, rising costs of basic services and deteriorating living conditions are seen as *'subtle forms of symbolic violence'* (Charlesworth,2000) that neoliberal economies inflict on the bodies of the poor. This economic violence is also echoed in Elizabeth Povinelli's work on 'Economies of Abandonment' where the neoliberal economics of today is 'weakening the will' of the poor. She calls this 'the violence of enervation' (Povinelli, 2011).

This neoliberal economic violence and the abandonment of the state felt by the poor signifies a loss and a dispossession: a loss of a way of living that centred around a particular expectation of a life that post-apartheid South Africa was supposed to deliver, a loss of dignity and respect, a loss of a future and plans for a future, a loss of security and some of the pleasures that a life free of poverty could afford (Charlesworth,2000).

Economies of abandonment and the loss associated with them allow for actions of mourning, melancholia, trauma, nostalgia, sadness and depression (Eng and Kazanjian, 2003). In the sense of affect, it the body's capacity to act against its subjection to an external power that has caused it to become dispossessed. With the loss of something integral to the formation of the subject, there is an endless mourning for not only what has been lost but what remains and the inability to understand why that loss has occurred. This endless mourning is what Freud calls "melancholia": *'the inability to resolve the grief and ambivalence precipitated by the loss of a loved object, place or ideal'*(ibid).

In the South African context, the loss of the dream promised by the fall of apartheid and the rise of democracy was felt acutely. The desperate need by those still poor to do something to deal with the feelings associated with the abandonment by the state was swift.

Just five years into the fledgling democracy, the impoverished communities across Durban (eThekwini), Johannesburg and Cape Town rose up in resistance against the democratic state's neoliberal economic policies. It started small – first a small community of residents living in council flats in the township of Chatsworth in Durban resisted their evictions because of rental arrears. This caught on to other areas around Durban where people living in council housing began to resist evictions and to refuse to pay the arrears which had suddenly spiked in the age of cost-recovery. Not long after, communities in Soweto began to resist the electricity cut-offs, whilst others across settlements in Johannesburg resisted water cut-offs.

As resistance spread from community to community, the social movements of post-apartheid South Africa were born, and it gave poor communities and whole families a space to belong.

The post-apartheid state's economies of abandonment had the unintended consequence of creating organised groups of poor people who were again excluded from notions of citizenship – in ways that were similar to the apartheid state. Social movements became spaces for belonging – creative, healing spaces for the sharing of grief, for bonds of friendships to be formed, to alleviate that feeling of not being alone in the lived experience. It became the space for family and families.

Desai describes the community-based social movements as follows:

> The rise of community movements saw the emergence of the family as a fighting unit…They organize militantly around [not paying for services] and the state is directly brought into the conflict. They act much like Hobsbawm's 'city mob' which he describes as 'the movement of all classes of the urban poor for the achievement of economic or political changes by direct action that is by riot or rebellion'…These movements concentrated on fighting in their own locality and are often animated by the immediacy of the situation.(2004:63)

Whilst the movements were spontaneous, immediate and reactive to their situation, they were able to effect change through direct action. Equally interesting is that despite the local nature of its organising, movements were able to learn about each other's tactics, using both formal spaces, such as workshops, as well through informal channels such as using mobile phones, and adapt it to meet their own circumstances. Movements across the country who were organising in informal settlements began to roll out "Operation Khanyisa" (switch on) where activists illegally reconnected the electricity of those that the state had disconnected – it was done in such a way that thousands of shack dwellers were able to access electricity without paying for it. This forced the state to roll out an electrification policy that saw electricity being provided to informal settlements. In Cape Town, the movements fought and resisted evictions putting people back in their home and in Durban, the movements occupied land and resisted evictions by the state. Over time, the movements began to use multiple tactics, for example using the courts to challenge evictions thus strengthening the law and making it virtually impossible to evict anyone from their home – be it a shack or a council house.

The withdrawal of the state's provision of public services such as water, electricity, housing, sanitation and transport was a direct attack on the private household work of women (Benjamin, 2004).

> In a society structured under the notions of patriarchy, women have been siphoned off into the private sphere of the household. It is therefore their social responsibility to take care of all things related to the home and the welfare of their family. In addition, old forms of patriarchy in capitalist economies ensured that this work that women provided in the home was never valued. However, in some instances providing free basic services such as education, health care, water, electricity can be perceived as the state giving value to the private household work of women. Under the auspices of capitalist globalisation and through neoliberal economic policies, the private sphere of women is under attack. (Benjamin-Lebert, 2011:284)

Thus many poor Black women found that the new social movements provided a space for their resistance against a patriarchal state. Many of the women who joined the movements had some experience of being evicted, forcibly removed, having their water or electricity cut off, or having their children turned away from school because they couldn't afford the school fees or school uniforms.

It was not long before poor Black women became the face of social movements. They were front and centre during standoffs with the police as they resisted evictions and cut-offs. Yet, between 2000 and 2005, as social movements ascended onto the political landscape, women found it difficult to break the domination of men at the helm of the movements. As a result, the movements failed to take into account the gendered nature and effects of neoliberal economic policies on women and therefore failed to adopt strategies and tactics that included fighting for women's rights (ibid).

As Sheila Rowbotham (Rowbotham and Linkogle, 2001) points out, there is often a hierarchy of social rights where race precedes class precedes gender. During the struggle against apartheid, the emancipation of women was relegated behind the struggle against racial injustice. With many social movements, the class struggle took precedence over the struggle for gender equality.

The state vs. social movements

The struggles for decent housing and an end to the privatisation of basic services put social movements in direct conflict with a fledgling democracy. There was commonality amongst the movements' tactics as they challenged the neoliberal economics of the post-apartheid state, feeding energy back into the enervated poor. Using multiple actions the movements have balanced community organising, marches, protests with engagement with the state either through negotiations, litigation or the electoral space.

One of the most memorable tactics used by the movements was started by the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). The SECC was born out of state's electricity disconnection

programme. In 2000, the Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM) the parastatal responsible for the provision of electricity in the country, began disconnecting electricity in Soweto, the country's largest township. At least 20,000 households per month were disconnected (Ngwane and Veriava, 2004). Rather than trying to deal with the disconnections on an individual, case-by-case basis, the SECC focused on developing a collective approach:

> …the SECC unfolded through a series of community meetings, marches and demonstrations organised under it banner. Through experimentation with these tactics the SECC arrived at … Operation Khanyisa. This campaign was defined by the organised reconnection of residents by SECC members, and its success was premised on a high degree of permanent mobilisation to ensure that ESKOM officials could not simply return the next day and cut people off again…the power to cut off and switch on [electricity] was no longer ESKOM's alone. (ibid)

Operation Khanyisa spread across the country as other movements, like Abahlali base Mjondolo, the shack-dweller movement in Kwazulu-Natal, began the campaign to reconnect electricity. Whilst the campaign resulted in the Ministry of Public Works placing a moratorium on electricity cut offs and a policy to electrify shack settlements, it did inadvertently result in the installation of pre-paid electricity meters.

A similar campaign was launched by other movements organising against the privatisation of water provision where pre-paid water meters were installed which automatically disconnected water once a household had reached it subsidised water limits. With water meters, activists smashed through plastic and concrete to "destroy the meter", however that didn't stop the disconnections:

> But the meter broken doesn't work and you are still cut off. The meter has learned from struggle. They are celebrated as tamper proof and work in a very specific way to limit your possible options. They foreclose any negotiation or institutional mediation. The only option becomes feeding the device. They are in a sense a pedagogical tool teaching the new laws of the economy…As such they define the new condition of the citizen, that of the consumer.(ibid)

But what it did do was present a framework where destroying the water meter was an attack on neoliberal economics and as such putting water back in the hands of citizens. When smashing the meters did not stop the disconnections, community activists tried to stop the workers who were laying the pipes to supply water to the water meters and when that didn't work, community activists dug up the pipes themselves:

> There was no master strategist or leader: just insurgents with 'destroy the meter' on their lips moving to the next section of pipe. (ibid)

Social movements have also used the courts strategically. Abahlali base Mjondolo, a social movement for those living in informal settlements, has on a number of occasions successfully challenged the state through the use of the courts, including the Constitutional Court. In 2015, Abahlali challenged the constitutionality of a blanket interdict that the Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Minister of Human Settlements obtained:

> The interdict was used by the state to evict shack dwellers in the Marikana Land Occupation settlement in Cato Crest, Durban more than 12 times. In the process people's shacks were demolished. Activists were shot at resulting in the deaths of Nqobile Nzuza who was just 17 years old, Nkululeko Gwala and Thembinkosi Qumbela. In Sisonke settlement in Lamontville, the same interdict was used to repeatedly evict and demolish shacks over 24 times! (Benjamin, 2015)

The constitutional court ruled that the interdict was unconstitutional. The use of the courts has not stopped the state in various provinces from evicting people. Even though South Africa has legislation that makes it difficult to evict people from their homes without using the right processes, the state has still found creative ways to get around the law. The interdict case above is one such example.

Another such example was a case in which City of Cape Town sought to evict people off a settlement also named Marikana Land Occupation. In that eviction attempt which was challenged in court by shack dwellers, with the assistance of Legal Resources Centre, the state argued that a shack was not a home because of the temporary materials used in its construction and therefore the demolition of these can be lawful. In the Cape Town case, the judge, whilst finding the eviction not unlawful, went on to deliver a landmark judgment defining a home as a structure built for the purpose of occupation in order to make it their home thus making its legality irrelevant. This judgement has now made it impossible for the state to demolish any shacks which have been erected for the purpose of occupying it as a home.

A final tactic worth mentioning was the use of the electoral space to bring about change. In the local government elections of 2000, a few social movement activists challenged the ANC as independent candidates. Just 10 years after the first democratic elections, the Landless People's Movement organised the "No Land! No Vote!" campaign to highlight the failure of democracy for the poor in South Africa. It called on the landless and those living in informal settlements to withhold their vote. This was followed, in 2006, with the "No Land! No House! No Vote!" campaign called by Abahlali base Mjondolo which called for a boycott of the 2006 local government elections. The president of Abahlali base Mjondolo, Sbu Zikode said:

> The community has realised that voting for parties has not brought any change to us - especially at the level of local government elections, 'At [the] local level, whoever wins the elections will be challenged by us. We have been betrayed by our own elected councilor. We have decided not to vote. (Toussaint Losier, 2009).

Because of the newness of this democracy and the fact that the ANC had captured the narrative of the anti-apartheid struggle making itself the deliverer of liberation, any criticism of this new ANC state was seen as counter-revolutionary, as being against the national democratic revolution. Social movement activists were vilified, portrayed by the state as criminals (McKinley, 2004). Activists who were "Coloured" or Indian were labelled as racist.

When this vilification did not stop the growth and might of the social movements, the state cracked down with brutal violence and repression. President Mbeki stated publicly:

> this ultra-left works to implant itself within our ranks … it hopes to capture control of our movement and transform it into an instrument for the realisation of its objectives…They should also have known that the people know that, historically, those who opposed and worked to destroy the ANC, and tried to mobilise the workers to act against our movement, were the same people who sought to entrench and perpetuate their oppression. (ibid)

The democratic post-apartheid state's response to social movement activism was an active crackdown which ran through Mbeki's time as President and into Jacob Zuma's Presidency. During Mbeki's time, activists were arrested, imprisoned and physically assaulted. During Zuma's Presidency, activists in Durban, and specifically the movement of shack dwellers, Abahlali base Mjondolo, have been killed. Since 2013, 16 activists from Abahlali baseMjondolo have been killed with seven shot dead between November 2017 and August 2018.(The Citizen newspaper, 2018). In 2012, 37 miners were shot and killed when police opened fire on striking miners – it was the ultimate turning point for South Africa's fledgling democracy. This kind of state violence was only known to South Africans under a white apartheid government. It was a kind of violence that never entered the imaginations of democratic South Africans.

The repression of the state and its attempt to disrupt the movements did have an effect on social movement organizing. By the mid-2000s social movements fighting for the right to housing and basic services began to wane. There were several reasons for this. As the movements gained popularity and their strength grew they became attractive to other groups. In particular, leaders were co-opted into taking positions in ANC run municipalities. Some movements started receiving funding from international NGOs and the sudden flush of money destroyed relationships within the movements. Some leaders of social movements decided to enter into electoral politics, standing for local government elections as

independent candidates. As such, the waning of the movements created a void in the political landscape.

Whilst the movements began to wane, service delivery protests have been on the increase. In just the first six months of 2018, 144 service delivery protests were recorded (IOL news website, 2018). Between 2012 and 2017, there were over 150 service delivery protests per year (with the exception of 2016 when there were 137); 191 protest actions were recorded in 2014 (Municipal IQ, 2017). The Western Cape recorded the third highest number of protests. These protests put civilians in direct, and sometimes violent, conflict with the democratic state – no organisations were needed. They arose spontaneously and were akin to the cap blowing of a pressurised container.

But social movements are alive. They go through peaks and troughs and often in the troughs they emerge reimagined, re-strategised with new ideas, new tactics and renewed political energy.

The struggle for housing is deeply connected to South Africa's settler colonialism history, and embedded in struggle for land. Through the eras of British colonialism, Dutch settler colonialism and subsequent apartheid, Black people were stripped off their land, dispossessed of their rights to their own bodies as their labour was captured for capitalist production, and denied fundamental social, economic, political and human rights. But this did not happen without a fight. Community organising at grassroots level has been as prevalent in South Africa's history as every step that the colonialists and apartheid architects took – for every attempt taken to dispossess and oppress Black people, a struggle was waged in response. Apartheid laws tried to crush these struggles through legislation that made it illegal for people to gather, to protest, to meet and organise, but it was through community organising and through informal networks of communication that the struggle to end apartheid was sustained.

Tactics and strategies that emerged during the fight against apartheid have found their way into the post-apartheid social movements' struggle. These movements breathed life back into community movements that went dormant in 1994 as the country shifted into its democratic era. It took less that five years into democracy for community structures to kickstart again as Black communities began to experience the reality of democracy – that it was a political victory but not an economic one. As poverty worsened, land and housing remained out of reach for the millions of dispossessed Black people, as segregation persisted on race and class lines, communities responded through organised protests, using similar tactics from the apartheid era to organise. Historical ways of struggle have been passed down from one

generation of freedom fighters to the next through story telling, memories, and documented struggles, and taken up by whole family units as mothers, fathers and their children became social movement activists.

Chapter 3: History and nature of the Housing Assembly

The Housing Assembly comes out of this rich legacy of the new social movements, highlighted in the previous section. It was built on all the past tactics, tactics, victories and defeats, and still organises alongside some of these movements, such as Abahlali base Mjondolo and new iterations of those movements. Whilst the new social movements were often in direct confrontation with the state, the Housing Assembly has taken a slightly different approach to social movement activism, putting knowledge production and learning at the centre of its work.

This section will explore the roots of the Housing Assembly and its connection to apartheid-era community organising strategies and struggle tactics. Founded out of an eviction and introduced to activism through a learning event, the Housing Assembly has a strong working class politics and ideology. This is clearly evident in its vision and mission and features quite strongly in its structure, its organising and in centering knowledge production and learning in its activism. These will be explored in this section.

3.1.The Birth and Rise of the Housing Assembly

Timeline

The Housing Assembly was born out of an eviction in post-apartheid South Africa. In 2008, a group of landless and homeless families had occupied land in Cape Town. They erected structures out of scrap materials. On that piece of land there was no access to water or toilets. The families, including children and babies stayed in these conditions for months. Every day they were violently and repeatedly evicted by the City of Cape Town's anti-land invasion unit. Every day, the homeless families would dismantle and bury the materials used to build their shacks. In the evening they would dig up their materials and reconstruct their houses. This was the only way they could prevent their daily evictions and destruction of their homes. As if this was not enough violence and cruelty, one of the families lost their baby, and had to bury the body of the baby in the same place where they would bury their scrap materials for their homes. This powerful story has been told many times by the founding members of the Housing Assembly and is deeply embedded in the historical memory and DNA of the movement. It is the story that has formed the core of their struggle.

Confused and bereft by the violent and cruel nature of the democratic state, and knowing that their responses were unsustainable, the group joined a community activist course facilitated

by an NGO, the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG). Most of them initially attended the workshop so that they could wash themselves in the bathroom and get some food to eat at the training venue:

> When I came to [ILRIG at] Community House for the first time, it wasn't …about getting consciousness, about political education. It was about 'I'm looking for help because I'm facing eviction and I am living in an open field'. And then it was about the coffee and I couldn't wash my hands and my first year in the toilet because we were living on a field. And that's what brought me there. Because when I walked into the room, honestly, capitalism? Neoliberalism? …And first thing in my mind was, 'I'm never going to learn all of this'"…But the more we came and the more interest [Michael Blake]showed in what was happening there, because he would come to the field and have meetings with us there, you know, and bring other comrades from different areas, we started having workshops in the community and that's where my consciousness started shifting. That's where I began to see the bigger picture. (Respondent 2, Office Bearer, Focus Group 3, 2019)

But during the course, they got to listen to other activists talk about their experiences of facing evictions, living in backyards, badly built RDP houses, Transit Camps and informal settlements, living in overcrowded conditions with little or no basic services. At first bewildered by alienating concepts such as "neoliberalism" and "capitalism", through this learning experience, the group came to the realisation that they were facing a housing crisis that was a direct result of a system which benefitted the wealthy and powerful, and that the only way they could achieve decent housing was through building a grassroots organisation.

At the time, other community movements that were fighting evictions, organising shack dwellers and backyarders in the Western Cape were also recognising this crisis and were having discussions as to how to address the problem. However, with state repression on the increase and with some of these movements being externally funded, some began to implode and ceased to exist. Others failed to organise into a representative movement. The Western Cape had a political vacuum at the level of grassroots organizing.

It was during this time following the workshop at ILRIG that the group met veteran anti-apartheid activist and socialist, Michael Blake, who himself had survived evictions when he and his family were removed from the area they were living in when it was declared a Whites-only area under the Group Areas Act of the apartheid government (Workers World Media Productions, 2017). He was first strongly influenced by the writings of Steve Biko and the activism of the Black Consciousness Movement before beginning to engage with Marx's class theory. Blake became convinced that apartheid could only be defeated if capitalism in South Africa was brought to its knees. He came from the civic movements organising against

apartheid and knew first hand the kinds of tactics that had to be used to build community movements under state oppression and violence. After returning to South Africa in the 1990s after being in exile in the UK for about ten years, he began supporting communities and the social movement that preceded the Housing Assembly, the Anti-Eviction campaign.

After a year, in 2009, the Housing Assembly was born. Michael Blake had spent that entire year with the group taking them through a "community activist course" where they talked through their living conditions and shared their experiences. One of the founding members remembers:

> I think the brilliance of Mike, he always workshopped things to the point where we answered the question ourselves. Where we eventually sat in the room and for a long time, I asked him afterwards, why did you never just initiate this organisation. And he said 'no, that's not my job. I am not here to do that. I was here to build experiences and give people (the chance) to do the research, to build consciousness, to give people how local government works etc.' I never had to build an organization and people had to come together and build the organisation and when they did, [Michael] was so excited. He was super excited people had finally figured it out (Office Bearer, Focus Group, 3 May 2019)

Today, with a membership of close to 6,000, it organises in six districts – five in Cape Town viz. Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain, Southern Suburbs, Greater Athlone and Northern Suburbs; and one in Witzenburg, a rural area north of Cape Town. The movement organises across the different working class housing types including, those living in formal housing in former apartheid townships, informal shacks in townships and on occupied land, informal shacks build in the backyards of formal houses, social housing either as RDP houses or multi-story buildings. The Housing Assembly has built its membership through visiting each and every backyarders, shack dweller, households living in social housing and in transit camps; and through working with community movements such as Gugulethu Backyard Dwellers, Tafelsig Residents Unite, Delft Integrated Network, Overcome Heights Integrated Development Settlement, Blikkiesdorp Concerned Residents, Makhaza Community Forum, Newfield's Village, 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 (Murray, 2019). The very first door-to-door took place in a community where a shack had burnt down. Housing Assembly visited every household in that community through their door-to-door visits, documenting the impact of the fire on the community.

By 2010, the nascent movement was called in to deal with mass evictions that were taking place in the Western Cape. These evictions were directly related to South Africa hosting the World Cup for football (Pillay, 2017). Many homeless people were moved off the streets in affluent areas where tourists were expected to visit; others were evicted off land where stadiums were being built to host the games. During this time, the Housing Assembly continued with their organizing and mobilizing which included passing on rights-based knowledge on people's rights during an eviction and, more importantly, getting people to understand that their living in shacks and in backyards was of no fault of their own but rather the failure of the state and rooted in neoliberal capitalism.

During the door-to door visits, Housing Assembly activists met workers, unemployed people, young people looking for jobs, people who were in precarious employment. Realising that it was the same system that created unemployment, precarious work and homelessness, Housing Assembly partnered with the South African Municipal Workers union (SAMWU). The influence of working with a trade union can be seen in the working class politics and in its democratic structures and accountability mechanisms. Housing Assembly and SAMWU worked with shack dwellers, back yarders, social housing residents and TRA residents on the local government elections held in 2011 and the need to use that moment to pressurise local government to provide basic services and housing to the poor in Cape Town. The latter saw the Housing Assembly and SAMWU make submissions to the local government urban planning process consultations held in all of the Western Cape districts and municipalities.

By 2011 and 2012, it was clear that a movement was taking form and by 2011, the Housing Assembly elected an interim committee made up representatives from five districts that would lead the movement towards its official launch in 2014.

Since its loose formation in 2011, the Housing Assembly has always formed alliances with organisations and movements that shared their politics and ways of movement building. In 2013, when the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) left the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) – which was part of the tripartite alliance of the ANC and the South African Communist Party – and formed the United Front, Housing Assembly formed an alliance with the movement in an attempt to build a broad base democratic movement but also to put the housing crisis on the political agenda. Today it has built alliances with other community movements across the country who have come together to form the National Campaign for Decent Housing.

As part of the movement building process, Housing Assembly undertook a roadshow through all the districts where it was organising. In these roadshows they spread political and rights

based knowledge about the housing crisis and the right to not be evicted, and the right to a house. This was all done to build not just a mass movement, but an informed mass based that could lead a sustained struggle for housing. In 2013, Witzenburg, a farming community north of Cape Town and in the rural parts of the Western Cape became the 6th district to join the Housing Assembly.

In 2014, the Housing Assembly launched itself as a social movement campaigning for the right to decent housing and access to basic services. Its membership was made up of 50% women and most of the district and executive leadership were, and still are, women who are active and vocal front-line activists in the struggle. The Housing Assembly also set up task teams to deal with specific housing and basic services issues. For example there was a task team for TRAs, informal settlements, back yarders and social housing (RDP). Housing Assembly was also able to develop a five-year strategic plan and managed to secure funding from War on Want, a UK NGO, to help it deliver on its strategy.

The first Annual General Meeting of the newly launched Housing Assembly took place in 2015. Housing Assembly elected a woman as its Chairperson – the first social movement in South Africa to be led by a woman. The membership also elected women into the executive and district leadership such that there were more than 50% women represented in the Steering Committee of the movement. At the time that Housing Assembly was establishing itself through ensuring it had properly functioning democratic and inclusive structures, other movements were rising up amongst them. The most significant was the student movement which led the Fees Must Fall campaign.

2016 was a critical year for the movement. Against the backdrop of the local government elections, the Housing Assembly held a successful AGM and started a two-month round of district meetings, and ensuring that Housing Assembly was organising at the district levels and represented at all local government meetings to make sure that the housing crisis was on the political agenda. In that year they also launched the Campaign for Decent Housing along with 22 other community organisations from across the country. Recognising that women needed their own space for sharing their experiences of living in poverty and of being women activists, the Women's Collective was set up in 2016. Alongside the collective, Housing Assembly also launched its Train the Trainer programme to follow on from the speak outs and door to door visits[3].

[3] These are explained and discussed in section 4.

In that year, the Housing Assembly also participated, for the first time, in the City wide Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process.[4] This was the outcome of a number of workshops on the IDP run by ILRIG, the setting up of a task team from within the Housing Assembly, running a train-the-trainer programme on the IDP to pass on the knowledge to members of the communities where the Housing Assembly was organising. This was a learning experience for the movement where they came face to face with the tactics of the city, the use of power and disempowering language:

> So this one meeting we attended in Khayelitsha, we came in, it was a two hour IDP meeting…in the two hours, they came with a Powerpoint presentation, full hour Powerpoint presentation on how the five years, the next five years, the last five years went through planning and explaining, breaking down everything. People were more confused than enlightened […] in terms of access to information. And then they give 30 minutes to the ward councilors and PR counsellors for them…All the councilors for the 30 minutes and the final 30 minutes now they open it up for the wider community…(Office Bearer, Focus Group held on 10 September 2018)

Housing Assembly's first formal encounter with the City highlighted the political game of public participation. Even though they had gone into those meetings to disrupt the IDPs by putting decent housing on the political agenda, they found the space contrived to benefit the elites. However, because their names had gone onto the meeting registration, they had helped the City fulfill its constitutional obligation for public participation. It would be the last time that Housing Assembly participated in the IDP process, and an important lesson around state/social movement collaboration and the dangers of co-option.

Following the momentous year of 2016, the Housing Assembly hosted its first political education school in 2017, and its second one in 2018 under the banner of "Everyone an Organiser". The School has become a gathering of activists from around the country where political learning takes place and through learning and sharing, a national movement for decent housing is being built. The Political School held in August 2019 brought together 150 activists from around South Africa who came from communities struggling for decent housing.

[4] The Integrated Development Planning process was introduced during Mbeki's Presidency. It involved a vertical and horizontal approach to planning: vertically, planning took place from the ward levels up to provincial level and horizontally, included a cross-government department approach. In theory it was supposed to democratize the government planning process, however in practice it retained the space for elites as the IDP process was framed by the country's neoliberal economic policy.

3.2. The vision, mission and politics of the Housing Assembly

The politics of the Housing Assembly is "working class", "socialist" (Interview with Ebrahiem Fourie, researcher, 14 September 2018) with '*its] structures, constitution and [founding] documents [being] socialist in nature*' (Open letter to the Steering Committee from Kenneth Matlawe, researcher, 2018). This is the beating heart of the movement and it is the lens through which they analyse and understand why it is that they are in existence, what they are struggling for and how they struggle.

The vision of the Housing Assembly is a society free of oppression, where the people shall all live in decent housing. It sees housing as an intersecting issue that connects the inadequate provision of basic services such as healthcare, water, electricity, education, public transport and employment.

Decent housing sits at the core of Housing Assembly's struggle. The movement advocates against overcrowded, insecure and bad living conditions and the reinforcing nature of these issues, e.g. the increase in water tariffs add to the cost of rents which further result in forceful evictions.

> The one thing the Housing Assembly has done is to say there is a struggle in housing, there is a struggle in the informal settlements, there's a struggle with the RDP, there's a struggle with backyarders. But for us we are saying this is a housing crisis. Its not a struggle for the individuals, right. So there was one thing we understood relating to our conditions but how your own living conditions can be understood as part of this movement.(Researcher from the research team facilitating a focus group held on 9 May 2019)

Its mission is to have every person currently living in informal settlements, backyards, RDP and TRAs living in decent housing. Its aim is for all communities to be informed of the politics underpinning their living conditions, and to understand what their rights are in terms of the laws enabling evictions, occupations, protests and gatherings as well as the right to decent housing as enshrined in the constitution. The house is their political and pedagogical tool.

> I've been an activist for other social issues for quite a number of years but ultimately I come back to housing because if you have a house that is where home is, that is where your heart is and that defining moment for me is when I saw to what lengths people will go to secure a decent house. (Participant, Focus group held on the 9 May 2019*)*

The Housing Assembly is clear in its struggle. Even though it is important to know what the law is saying (or not saying) on the right to decent housing, movements with a radical transformative agenda like the Housing Assembly cannot rely on the law alone. The law is

embedded within a neoliberal agenda which the Grootboom court case[5] was a clear example of this. Whilst the Constitutional Court declared that the government had not met its Constitutional obligations and ordered the government to devise, fund, implement and supervise measures to provide relief for all, including those without children, who are in desperate need, it added the caveat "within its available resources":

> The third defining aspect of the obligation to take the requisite measures is that the obligation does not require the state to do more than its available resources permit. This means that both the content of the obligation in relation to the rate at which it is achieved as well as the reasonableness of the measures employed to achieve the result are governed by the availability of resources. Section 26 does not expect more of the state than is achievable within its available resources (Paragraph 46, Judgement in Government of South Africa and others vs. Irene Grootboom and others)

This judgement, whilst having positive impacts such as municipalities including "Grootboom allocations" in their budgets, has also provided limitations to Section 26 of the Constitution where '*everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing'* has come to be interpreted as access meaning being on the waiting list. Activists from the Housing Assembly have testified to being on the housing waiting list from between 10 to over 20 years; and adequate housing being described by Housing Assembly activists as being a "raw house" meaning a shell of the house, with just external walls and windows, no interior walls, unpainted walls, unfinished floors, asbestos roofing and badly connected sewage, water and electricity systems.

Hence for the Housing Assembly, understanding the politics and how systems act to oppress the poor, is critical. In all of their learning experiences, formal and informal, Housing Assembly establishes that the reason why people are living in the conditions they are in is because of the prevailing neoliberal capitalist economic policies. It is also the same economic policies that have resulted in rising unemployment, a decline in service delivery and public infrastructure

[5] In 2000, Mrs Grootbboom, together with the 900 shack dwellers living in the Wallacedene informal settlement in Cape Town, took the Tygervally Municipality to court for the illegal eviction and that their right to adequate housing and their children's right to shelter were violated. Of the 900 residents, 510 were children with 276 younger than eight years. The case went all the way up to the Constitutional Court which resulted in a judgement that the government needed to take into account the immediate housing needs of the poor in planning for the medium to long term needs. However, the implementation of this judgement was constrained by the resources of the government. Government could only provide adequate housing as long as it had the resources to do so. There was no compelling of the state to prioritise housing in its resource allocation. The Grootboom case became a clear example of how constitutionally provided human rights can be circumvented by neoliberal economics. http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2000/19.html

development - the reason why public health care, education, public transportation, water, electricity costs are increasing.

> I think I learned by comrade Michael Blake about capitalism and housing and how capitalism impacts on housing. I learnt about privatization – we need to understand privatization because if we understand that then we will understand how [housing policy] is connected to housing. Neoliberalism – these type of big words but all in the context of housing. Where do all our issues come from, why do people occupy houses? (Participant, Commission held in Witzenburg on 16 June 2019)

These political foundations emerged through the door to door activities that Housing Assembly undertook in all the communities where they were organising. When they knocked at each door on either a shack, a backyard shack, an RDP house or flat or rental stock, in addition to the bad living conditions, they found unemployed, underemployed, precarious workers in these houses and so the connection between the right to decent housing became infused with working class politics. It was also helped along in its development through their early learnings through workshops held by ILRIG, its alliances with the trade union movement, and its founder and mentor, Michael Blake. This working class politics was strongly in place in civic movements and trade unions organising against apartheid. It was also strongly in place in the new social movements that emerged in the late 1990s.

State-Movement Relations

The Housing Assembly organises in the Western Cape. This is the only province run by the opposition party to the ANC, the Democratic Alliance (DA). For the poor in the Western Cape, having the DA as the ruling provincial party has made no difference to their lives, as it has shown itself to be a strong supporter of the economies of abandonment of neoliberal policy, especially as it relates to basic service delivery.

The housing backlog in Cape Town is sitting at 365,000 (City of Cape Town authority, 2018). In 2017 and 2018, the City of Cape Town delivered only 3,766 houses through the various housing programmes including the Breaking New Ground programme which delivers houses to those households earning less than £176 per month (R3500). In the 2018/2019 financial year it built a total of 3,919 (Groundup news website, 2019). None of the government housing schemes were built in the city of Cape Town, but in the far outer reaches of the city such that the spatial planning used to segregate the races is being further entrenched amongst the poor, who are still Black. Even though the City has acknowledged that '*most of the informal settlements in Cape Town have been in existence for considerable number of years'* and '*[backyard] dwellings is a growing phenomenon in the country and is becoming more prominent in areas such as Du Noon, Doornbach, Joe Slovo in Milnerton, Khayelitsha and numerous state subsidised housing projects as well as public rental stoc*k (ibid), it still revealed

its R14 billion inner-city mixed-use development plan that does not include affordable housing for the poor (Groundup website, 2019). Instead its plan for informal settlements is '*possible relocation and resettlement of people on a voluntary and co-operative basis, as may be appropriate*' (City of Cape Town authority, 2018), thus further abandoning the poor.

The waiting list for houses is growing with people waiting for a house for over 20 years, adding more to the weight that people have been abandoned.

> There was a new housing development in Bella Vista and people were worried they are not going to get houses, and my mother was already 21 years on a waiting list…With enquiries at the municipality, also realised that my mother is not going to benefit from this housing project. All of a sudden she was now no longer 21 years on the list. They apparently have record of her being on the list for five years. I know because I was still in school. I did not have kids. My eldest son turned 21 years last year. I remember because I took the form away as my mother was working in Cape Town that time. (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, Cape Town, 23 June 2019)

People have been waiting for such a long time and being on the City's waiting list for between 15 to 20 years that most of them don't believe that there is actually a waiting list for houses (Cape Town Commission 2, 22 May 2019):

> She mentioned something about the waiting list is a myth. Is it really a myth? What does she mean by that? As far as I know you have to be on a waiting list to get a house, isn't it so? (Community activist 8, interview, 2019)

> Yes, Let me make an example…with my comrades from the Housing Assembly we go the University of Western Cape, where we sat with the government and ask them, since we have been on since the olden days (apartheid) we've been in a book, 'is my name still there?'. Those people say no, they still going to look and never came back. So I have to start all over again to register, which means it's a myth. They didn't brought anything to us to prove there's a waiting list. (Movement leader, interview, 2019)

> I can really relate to the myth of the waiting list, because at that time I was 15 years on the waiting list and we started a homeless project in Hillview and there was where people who was two years on the list got their plot before me. That's why I can really relate it's a myth, because they are not working according [to a waiting list] as you can see in the different housing projects, even in Pelican Park, I can witness, there are young people who are stating in houses in Pelican Park who is not even on the database of the City. That's why I can really say that, because when you go to the housing office in Cape Town then they will tell you no, and you are 20 years on the waiting list, they will say no, you must wait. (Community member 3, interview, 2019)

People are in arrears for water and rent. And in all of this, government bureaucrats are becoming less able to deal with the issue.

> I was also facing eviction from that farm …I walked around to many different offices because I was told that these were the places to go to get help. When I get there they just ask for all my information and then they say I must come back tomorrow. If I go back the next day then they just say that there is nothing they can do, they can't help me. He then sends me to the next office and it goes on and on, that is how I ended up not having anywhere to go. All the doors eventually closed for me. There was really no help and that's how I decided to join the Housing Assembly and that's where I began to understand why all these doors kept closing for me, why no one could help me. (Participant, Witzenburg Focus Group, 16 July 2019)

Service delivery and the promise of housing are used by both the ANC and the DA to win votes. Ahead of elections, these political parties come to impoverished communities to hand out food parcels and t-shirts and make a number of empty promises, normally of providing housing. Disgruntled members of these political parties also use the frustration and suffering of communities for their individual self-interests and political aspirations. However, there is no real desire to shift the macro-economic policies that would see houses and basic services provided as not-for profit.

Political parties create environments of economic and racial tensions within communities, putting activists like those from the Housing Assembly in direct conflict with the state (both the provincial government led by the Democratic Alliance and the ANC, as the opposition party in the province). These parties intervene in communities that are strongly organised and which are perceived as a threat so as to keep the voter membership intact. They cause conflict and divisions by offering jobs, houses, food in exchange for votes. ANC aligned organisations such as the South African National Civics Organisation (a key player in the fight against apartheid) has completely closed down democratic and public participatory spaces by employing tactics like harassment and intimidation of activists to prevent any other community based formation from organising freely.

Since the beginning of 2018, there have been 263 land occupations in the Western Cape with 176 taking place in Cape Town. This does not include the protests for service delivery which are happening on a daily basis in Cape Town. This reflects the deep frustrations and disillusionment of communities. The city of Cape Town has responded to these land occupations and protests with heavy police interventions. The provincial government intervenes through the use of law enforcement and the privately owned Anti-Land Invasion Unit which has used rubber bullets, teargas and stun grenades at protests.

> You know with the occupations there is a brutality that's coming in from the Red Ants[6], the Black Ants, the police, law enforcement all those. So it's a lot of things that's attached to thing so communities are suffering now from that. If we look at Steenvilla, those people are staying on the side of the road…The way their belongings were demolished, and you know, there was three times where law enforcement came and took all their stuff away. You know there was a 6 year old child who jumped out of the window and broke her legs because Red Ants and police just came forcing into the house. So people are traumatised with all these things. (Movement leader 3, interview, 2019)
>
> Same as in Oceanview, the Red Ants came in there and that child wet himself 'Mummy, I am so afraid because where we going now?' You see it's a lot of things and this city, it just don't care.(ibid)

The local ward councils have also intimidated communities and have warned them against joining the Housing Assembly. They have also closed down spaces, preventing the movement from using public halls for organising activities.

With the state being so distant from the people, and the poor feeling abandoned by the state and distrustful of the state, the Housing Assembly has had to step in to not only provide support to communities, but also act as a refuge for those struggling to get houses.

> The most important thing I have learnt about the organisation was that it was not a political party and it makes me feel good to know that this person I can trust. These are the people I can trust, because politicians only comes around to listen to what we have to say and then they go away and never return.(Individual interview with member of Housing Assembly, Witzenburg, 15 June 2019)

But as the movement grows in numbers and in its power to mobilise grassroots community, the more the city marginalises the Housing Assembly from policy processes and urban planning forums where decisions on land usage and housing provisions are made.

The implementation of neoliberal policies like privatisation of water and lack of decent housing places pressure on communities. Rifts, divisions and conflicts start to arise amongst community members as each struggle for access to services: for example, those that are living in RDP houses have had water management devices forced onto them. They in turn accuse those living in informal settlements for not paying for the water and as such the water management devices have been installed to cover the gap forcing backyarders to pay exorbitant service charges. Neoliberal approaches to solving the housing problem have also

[6] Red Ants and Black Ants are the local names given to the land invasion unit. It derives its name from the red overalls the unit wears and the sheer number of them deployed to an eviction or occupation makes them resemble a colony of ants

created class divisions. Those that are in RDP houses are perceived to be better off than those living in informal settlements - and in terms of housing structures, they are. Those who rent out their backyards to squatters are now in a position of landlords thus placing them in a position of power over those living in the backyards.

In post-apartheid South Africa, these divisions and rifts often manifest themselves along racial lines which get played on and used by political parties for their own political use. The fact that apartheid spatial planning has not been rectified for the poor by the state but instead, through its housing policy has firmly entrenched it. Housing Assembly is aware that the racial tensions in communities like Phumlani and Siqalo (predominantly Black) and Pelican Park and Mitchell's Plain (predominantly "Coloured") is underpinned by a political ploy to divide, control and destabilise organised communities.

> …what they did in the Apartheid era, those years they segregated us by making us look at ourselves as Black and Coloured, but in the meantime, we are all just South Africans. And they're still going with that narrative…The reason apartheid was successful is because they divided and ruled us. Now the politicians are doing the same. We cannot depend on these politicians to bring to fruition our constitutional right. (Member of Housing Assembly, Focus Group, Cape Town 25 July 2019)

The recent protests in Siqalo saw the sudden emergence of the Gatvol Capetonians, an organisation that exists to fight for the liberation of Coloured people who have been living in the Cape since before 1994. They specifically exclude people from the Eastern Cape. This kind of racially divisive language is like a lit match to dry tinder in an already fragile province and country that has been ripped apart by recent xenophobic attacks against Black foreigners, and in Cape Town, against Black South Africans coming from places like the Eastern Cape.

As such the Housing Assembly has had to adopt a strategy that tries to bridge the rifts, and the racial divides that not only exist, but which are used to push the agendas of the different political parties. And in so doing, its focus on class politics is also one of a strategic choice to build unity amongst a fractured class of people, all of whom are suffering from the abandonment of the state and state economic policies.

Community led structures

In attempting to bridge the rifts and build relationships across different housing types and across racial lines, the Housing Assembly has developed and implemented a structure to lead the organisation that inverts the hierarchical nature of organisations: Instead of the movement being led by its executive committee, it is currently being led by communities.

The level of communities is critical to the building of the movement. At this level each community member engages in door to door visits, building knowledge capacity and mobilising through street committee speak outs. This is done by the area working groups which are formed in each community area, after the door-to-door and street committee speak outs. This is where the majority of members are.

The next level down from the community level are the districts. This is where representatives of each area working group come together in district meetings. Here a district finance committee representative, media representative, education representative and conveners will be democratically elected to represent the district at the city wide level. The district committee meets regularly to hear what the current experiences are around housing and access to public services from the various areas, and then to plan and implement activities. There are six districts that are organised by the Housing Assembly.

The Coordinating Committee is the next level down and is made up of all the district committees. This is the biggest decision making body other than the annual general members meeting.

The Steering Committee is the next structure below the Coordinating Committee. This is where everything is pulled together, where constitutional and subcommittees meet. The steering committee includes district conveners, media, education and communication convenors, the finance committee and office bearers. It is a structure that is critical to the democratic and socialist ideals of the Housing Assembly :

> We cannot stress enough the importance of the steering committee as a constitutional structure, linking the office bearers and the executive communities in the street. As soon as the steering committee is ineffective and inefficient, we are failing in democratically centralising our struggles, failing in the democratic coordination of community struggles and related working class issues, especially in what we call Housing Assembly areas. As soon as the steering committee is not functioning, office bearers and executive committee ceases to be community representatives but become autonomous entities of structures – structures accountable only to themselves. (Open letter from an Office Bearer to the Steering Committee, September 2018)

And finally, at the bottom of the inverted pyramid is the Executive Committee. At this level sits the office bearers who have been elected at the Annual General Members Meeting and consists of a chairperson, deputy chairperson, Secretary, deputy secretary and treasurer plus conveners of each district and representatives of the media and education committees.

The inverted pyramid of the Housing Assembly is only as successful as its grassroots structures are developed and strengthened. It relies on this for building the movement and to ensure

that there are strong, organised structures on the ground. Therefore that connection to the house on the street in an informal settlement in Khayelitsha becomes more important than the executive committee lodged in the Housing Assembly's offices in the inner city area of Cape Town.

3.3. The building of a movement through learning and knowledge production

At the heart of the Housing Assembly is learning and knowledge production: learning is seen and used as an emancipatory tool. This is a critical intervention against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa's use of education as a tool of oppression.

Under apartheid, education was not really education but rather a tool for domestication and indoctrination of the Black population:

> Ranging from the racial segregation of schools, the patent inequalities in educational provisions, the banning of educational organisations and information, the practices of discrimination in schools to misrecognition and nonrecognition of "Black" views and experiences in the construction of knowledge (Carrim, N.H 2007)

And this was done to '*ensure control over the intellect of the learners and teachers, and propagating state propaganda'* (Kallaway, in V.Msila 2013) such that '*…the Nationalist government set out what was allegedly the greatest piece of ideological manipulation of the young, since Hitler.*' (Christie and Collins, 1982:60)

Managed by separated education departments, White South Africans were given education that would secure their privileged positions in managerial jobs as well as to hold prominent roles in the economy and in social and political life; whereas Black South Africans were given education that would merely equip them for menial, unskilled jobs and to occupy inferior roles in the economy. Adopting a class analysis of the apartheid education system it is clear to see how it was structured such to reproduce apartheid capitalism (Carrim, 2007:174):

> In simple terms, the argument of the class approach is that whites are not oppressing Blacks merely because they are racists (which they may well be) but because they need them as noncompetitive cheap labour(Christie and Collins, 1982:61)

The Housing Assembly's approach to situating learning at the centre of its activism and role as the social movement is a radical act of subversion. Whilst its vision is for every person to be living in a decent house, its theory of change is for every single person living in a shack, squatting in a backyard, living in a transit camp or badly built RDP house, to understand what the political underpinnings are for their living conditions. There are two fundamental reasons

for this - the first is to remove the guilt and shame that has been transferred on to the poor by the democratic state's anti-poor narrative, and the second is to have people understand that the situation can change for good if the system is changed.

> We are here for an information session because knowledge is ever powerful. Its not money that moves you, its knowledge. Its because of knowledge that we stand like how we are, that we live in informal settlements, that we live in these RDP houses, because the knowledge that we needed to have to access our rights that isn't there. I am trying to do that. I am trying to have political schools, speaking to people on how to use your rights…I want to give you the information so that you are informed. (Office Bearer Focus Group, Cape Town 25 July 2019)

This approach to learning and knowledge is very much in line with Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon's approach to liberating the mind as the means to freeing ourselves from the shackles of the coloniser and oppressor. Fanon and Biko have both written explicitly about the complex parameters of colonisation and apartheid in South Africa – how racialised economic, political, social, geographic, cultural structures and systems acted simultaneously to enervate the will of Black people and to create dependency, helplessness and inadequacy (Fanon, 1967, Biko, 2005). Biko, following in this thread, firmly believed:

> The logic behind white domination is to prepare the Black man for the subservient role in this country. Not so long ago this used to be freely said in parliament even about the educational system of the Black people. It is still said even today, although in a much more sophisticated language. To a large extent the evil-doers have succeeded in producing at the output end of their machine a kind of Black man who is man only in form. This is the extent to which the process of dehumanisation has advanced…as long as Blacks are suffering from inferiority complex---a result of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision---they will be useless as co-architects of a normal society where man is nothing else but man for his own sake. … The first step therefore is to make the Black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of "Black Consciousness" (Biko, 2005)

In every interview done for this research project, when asked the question "Why did you join the Housing Assembly?", the answer was first and foremost "to learn" and the purpose of the learning was so they could change their living conditions:

> I live in Wolseley and I live in a shack. The conditions we have to live under is very difficult. Me and my husband we live in a shack that is divided into two and that makes it difficult for us. There is no space. My children are teenagers and they need their space. There is no electricity. We have no toilet and its really difficult to live there and that why I am

> here today so that I learn more and so that we can change our living conditions. (Member of Housing Assembly, Focus Group with women, Witzenburg, 9 July 2019)

Considering the context in which many of these activists live, one would have thought that their response would have been that they joined the movement to change the system, but instead it is worth noting that knowledge has been centred as the tool for achieving that change, rather than protest or resistance.

At first many thought that the Housing Assembly was the organisation through which they could get a house. When they found out that was not the mission of the movement, and that it was about building the agency of communities to demand their own houses, it was a step change for many, especially those who had been on waiting lists for years, and the need for a house was desperate.

> You always told us that Housing Assembly was not going to give us houses. Because of the name of the organization and because I desire my own place, but that is what I thought but when I got there I learned that we are not getting houses there and that you only learn us and give us guidance. Look I have matriculate now. I now know of everything. I really enjoy it."(Member of Housing Assembly, Commission 2, Witzenburg 16 June 2019)

> I was never interested in the stuff but my wife was before me at Housing Assembly and when she invited me out to become active there, I reminded myself that this is the right place where I must be because I heard that Housing Assembly can't give you [a house] but they can fight together with you for what you want. (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)

Whilst some members were introduced to the Housing Assembly by the office bearers, others were directed to the Housing Assembly by members of their families such as their parents and grandparents who had suffered the housing crisis during apartheid and want their children and grandchildren to have the information they did not have to fight this system:

> The reason I got involved with the Housing Assembly, my grandpa ask me to come for the day and see what happens, and see if I'm interested, and then the day we went there, I met other youth from different locations talking about the struggles they are going through in the informal settlement. (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual Interview, Cape Town 29 May 2019)

Others have joined the movement so that they can learn but then also pass on the learnings to others. There are feelings of power once members know about their rights to housing such that they want to empower others with that knowledge. The knowledge that people are getting from the Housing Assembly is so valuable that there is not a single person interviewed who did not say that they went back to their communities and shared the information with their neighbours, with their families and with their friends:

> Since I've joined the Housing Assembly I go back to my community – as we have a pact in the community to go back to the community and I tell them about the Housing Assembly. There was so interested and want to know what is the Housing Assembly. Then I say since I'm new in Housing Assembly I can't explain broadly but I would invited some of the members of Housing Assembly to explain what is Housing Assembly and what they're dealing with in the organisation. (Member of Housing Assembly, Commission 2, Cape Town 22 May 2019)

There is also the feeling that the Housing Assembly not only passes on information but that it passes on the right information and knowledge – information that can properly explain why people are living the way they do:

> There are other organisations here but they don't empower us like Housing Assembly does. They will keep it to themselves…They have never informed us about our rights around housing but the Housing Assembly did and that helped empower us…[people] will still come knock on my door if they have issues with housing etc. Then I can share the information I got from the Housing Assembly with them and I will even go with them to the municipality to assist them. So for me its important to inform my community about their rights. I don't want to be the only one that is empowered because if anything happens to me that person can help himself with the information he got from me. (Member of the Housing Assembly, Individual Interview, Cape Town 23 June 2019)

> And I go out into the community, we keep meetings and we speak about Housing Assembly and I told them what is Housing Assembly, what does Housing Assembly's aim and what it stands for and we fighting for proper decent houses…And they said to me 'no, then we also want to join the Housing Assembly…now I've started to recruit more people for Housing Assembly because why I did have the education in Housing Assembly so I take it out into the community (Member of the Housing Assembly, Commission 2, Cape Town 22 May 2019)

In the moments of feeling abandoned by the state through its neoliberal economic policies, the Housing Assembly has given people a space to come together and a purpose. The power in the knowledge production and learning processes of the Housing Assembly is its ability to build collective power. The idea of a house can be an individual pursuit and in many cases it is, but the Housing Assembly has shifted this to making it a collective struggle. Rather than individually waiting for a house for over 15 to 20 years, they are now collectively fighting for decent housing. Rebuking the apartheid approach to education, the Housing Assembly has turned learning and knowledge production into a tool of liberation – both from the system but also freeing the shackles of oppression from the minds of the poor. At the center of its learning and knowledge production is "the house" which has become a political and pedagogical tool. Through the concept and struggle for a decent house, activists and community members get to understand the systemic and structural nature of their oppression. This is

why so many members of the Housing Assembly have testified that they joined the Housing Assembly because it went further than getting a house to seeing knowledge as the catalyst for changing the system that will result in getting a house.

Chapter 4: How does learning and knowledge production occur in movements?

> It's the general principle of the Housing assembly, right: struggle and education. And that's why we have workshops, we have political schools, we have train the trainers, we have these tactics of struggling pickets, and so on. But it is an ongoing process of education within the Housing Assembly within different places….its the overall, that marriage…between struggling in one side but also educating ourselves through the struggle all the time. (Researcher in Housing Assembly Research Team, Focus Group 3 May 2019)

The Housing Assembly has developed a number of different methodologies for learning and knowledge production. Some have been firmly embedded as the core strategy of the movement, such as the Door to Door, the Political School and the Train the Trainer programmes – each designed to deliver on the key knowledge produced by the movement, namely "Decent Housing"; "Everyone an Organiser" and the politics of power depicted in the "Big Fish Small Fish". However, at the centre of everything is the house/home which remains its pedagogical and political tool.

In the Housing Assembly there is always an understanding that through democratic and participatory principles the movement will grow. As education is key, the movement takes a popular education approach and this puts activists and those living the struggle at the center of deciding what is relevant to understand at that moment, what will build the knowledge within the activist, but also looking for collective solutions and understanding the power everyone has when working together. This way the learning becomes a two-way stream that consistently flows both ways:

> Many political and educational plans have failed because their own authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account (except as mere objects of their actions) the [people]in a situation to whom their program was ostensibly directed. For the truly humanist educator and the authentic revolutionary the object of action is the reality to be transformed by them together with other people – not other men and women themselves. The oppressors are the ones who act upon the people to indoctrinate them and adjust them to a reality which must remain untouched. (Freire, 1996: 75)

Through door-to-door activities, meetings, workshops and street committee speak-outs Housing Assembly tries not only to recruit across race groups and housing types but also to educate everyone so that they can form part of the community. Political education and an understanding of class is key here as is the understanding that it is only through collective struggle that neoliberal capitalism can be defeated.

4.1. Building people's power through informal learning

When Housing Assembly's founding members started to build the movement, they were introduced to the "door-to-door" method of organizing. This method was the corner stone of community organising under apartheid and introduced to the Housing Assembly by Michael Blake, who was active in the civic movements during apartheid and familiar with this revolutionary style of organising.

When the apartheid government issued several bans on gatherings of people either in community meetings or in protests, especially during the various states of emergencies, and clamped down on community organising through extremely violent means, communities found other creative ways to keep organised:

> On June 12 1986, the South African government responded to a strong, resilient upsurge in popular resistance with an intensive security crackdown. The imposition of the country's third State of Emergency was part of a determined campaign to re-orientate the political process in favour of white domination. For close on two and a half years, the state's control over the country's turbulent townships had been in severe jeopardy. A spiral of violence, beginning in September 1984 with township protests signalling intensified and broad-based resistance to apartheid, met with an immediate and heavy-handed response from the security forces. By June 1986 over 2 000 people were estimated to have died in the unrest. Yet the townships remained mobilised as community organisations explored new and audacious ways of defending themselves against repression. In the space vacated by the collapse of unpopular local government structures the grassroots, decentralised democracy of street and area committees had begun to take hold. (De Villiers, 1986)

This decentralised democracy found in street and area committees was preceded by the act of knocking on people's doors and organising them in their homes. In this way, not only did community organising subvert the state banning of gatherings, but it also managed to weaken the extraordinary powers of the police given to them by the State of Emergency. By using this method of organising, community movements built stronger community structures giving power back to the people:

> …in the face of the increased powers the emergency gave to the police and army that new forms of organisation began to appear. The grassroots, decentralized structures of street and area committees were formed during this emergency, designed to withstand the onslaught of repression by allowing for layers of leadership to be trained as replacements for those detained or on the run. In many parts of the region these structures began to take over certain aspects of township administration like rubbish removal and crime control, where the collapse of local government meant that these services had

> stopped. Thus the street and area committees had begun to function as rudimentary organs of "people's power" (ibid)

The door-to-door has become a powerful tool for building the Housing Assembly. The first few years, from when the movement was born out the eviction and occupation to its launch, was spent building the foundations through the door-to-door. It emerged as a practical, revolutionary act of organising to build the movement without relying on external actors or funders but also, drawing on the method's legacy, building power where power is:

> …how do we sustain this organization would be the first step. And the first step would be to build an organization where I am from, each and every one of us. Build an organization from where you are from and going door to door and knocking on people's houses doesn't cost money and its that interpersonal relationship, understanding, sharing our own experiences and then getting people to come on board on that basis. (Researcher on Housing Assembly research team, Focus Group, 3 May 2019)

This method has brought something important two things to the fore: the first is making public the private issue of the house/home; and second is making the house/home both as pedagogical tool but also the site of resistance and belonging. These sit as complementary as well as in tension with each other.

4.2. The home as a site of resistance and learning

The state has been technical in its approach to housing such that when talking about housing it does so from an infrastructural point of view, dehumanizing the space of the house. It also treats the house as an individual construct, not as part of a collective or a community.

When the Housing Assembly activists knocked on doors of people's houses, they began to humanise the house and started to recognise it as a living, breathing, organic home. In these homes, they found not just a person living in a cramped house, with no access to water or electricity, or in a house built of informal materials in the middle of a shack settlement. They also found men, women, youth, children. They found people who were unemployed, underemployed, workers on precarious contracts, workers in full time jobs. They found young and old people. People who spoke Xhosa, Zulu, English or Afrikaans. Some were born and raised in Cape Town. Some came from other parts of the Cape or other parts of South Africa and beyond South Africa's borders. The people they met were sad about their living conditions, some were severely depressed. Others were angry, frustrated. Some blamed

themselves for their situation. Others felt guilty that they couldn't take proper care of their families.

Using the home as the first point of political and activist engagement, the Housing Assembly has again defied the neoliberal conception of the home as the private, individualised sphere:

> …the neoliberal preoccupation with seeing home as being in the private sphere means that home as a space of belonging, or agency, or resistance, for individuals and for communities, is ignored. This is important because it means that everyday actions undertaken by "ordinary" people at home go unnoticed within the world of formal politics. Yet such actions may do more to redress the injustices that a contemporary social movement has highlighted than any formal government account.(Watson, 2019:5)

And so it is that the living, breathing, organic home becomes a site to harness the emotions and develop an intersectional approach to struggles. Intersectionality was a concept introduced to feminist theory by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) to develop the theory further. Following on from Audre Lorde who wrote '*there is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives'* (2007:138), Crenshaw introduced intersectionality to highlight how systems of oppression including race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics "intersect" with one another and overlap creating different forms of struggle and experiences of oppression.

The door to door methodology for organising presented the Housing Assembly with a struggle that was not a single issue "housing" struggle, but a struggle against racism, a class struggle of the working class, and later on in their timeline, a recognition of and struggle against patriarchy. It was also not a single issue "housing" struggle because the home presented them with how the poor accessed basic services – through pre-paid electricity and water meters; how they accessed education (or not). In the homes they found parents battling against drugs and gangs in the community: they found drug addicted parents who couldn't feed their children or send them to school, and embattled youth struggling with drugs and with gangsters. Through the door to doors they met workers who were on strike at the local supermarket. And so the struggle for decent housing became a multiplicity of struggles which were encountered through the home.

Through the struggles of oppression that Housing Assembly members encounter through the door to door visits, not only do they use the visits to share learning and build the knowledge of the right to decent housing, but they also learn from the people they are visiting. Through this learning they are able to develop their actions. In one example, following an eviction in Oceanview, Housing Assembly activists helped to put those evicted back into their homes.

They then followed this up with door to door visits where they learned that people were receiving letters of rental arrears from the rent office and that they were going to be evicted. From door to door visits in other communities, they were able to establish that this was happening throughout the city which then allowed them to develop a city wide response to this by staging a protest march that brought together all the communities that were simultaneously affected by the City's eviction action.

The home as a site of belonging and resistance

The majority of the members of the Housing Assembly are women. They also occupy a number of the leadership positions in the organisation from district structures to the steering committee and executive leadership. When the women were interviewed for this research project and asked why were there so many women involved in the Housing Assembly, they said it was because they were affected the most by the lack of water, electricity, and badly built houses or living in shacks. And this was largely due to the fact that women were seen as being responsible for creating and caring for the home:

> In our young minds houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as a place where all that truly mattered in life took place – the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls. There we learned dignity, integrity of being; there we learned to have faith. The folks who made this life possible, who were our primary guides and teachers, were Black women. (hooks, 1990: 383)

In apartheid South Africa, such an act of creating bell hooks' 'Homeplace' was radical and an act of resistance. In post-apartheid South Africa, with its economies of abandonment, and its violent, brutal acts of evictions and disconnections of water and electricity,

> …one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all Black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts, despite poverty, hardship and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world.(ibid: 384)

To build a home, however tenuous or fragile as a shack in an informal settlement or in a backyard, is a radical political act of creating belonging in a place where you are made to feel like you do not belong.

The tension of this emerges when one intersects racism and the class struggle with that of patriarchal oppression. Whilst creating a home in such conflict-ridden contexts of neoliberal practices is an act of resistance, patriarchal oppression keeps women in the space of home with societal expectations placed on women to perform the unpaid care work in the form of domestic responsibilities. Maxine Molyneux (2003:102) quoting Engels, notes the family as a

site of the oppression of women in which the "open or disguised enslavement of women" was condoned. The home therefore co-exists as a space of belonging as well as a site for potential resistance – potential because when the Black family's home is under attack (by the white state under apartheid and the post-apartheid neoliberal state) the fight is always to maintain the family unit regardless of the fact that it is this family unit that is oppressing Black women (Benjamin-Lebert, 2011:282; Basu, 1995:133). Even though the Housing Assembly is fighting for decent housing, and that this struggle is emanating through their engagement with families in their homes, dismantling the patriarchal nature of the family and how it plays itself out in the home is not yet on their political agenda. In very few instances, women members were able to shift the household power dynamics that keep them in the submissive role of being wholly responsible for the unpaid care work in the home. While the struggle for housing is led by the women of the Housing Assembly, it has not yet transformed into a struggle to eradicate patriarchal power from within the household. The fight for housing is being done whilst keeping that intact such that if houses are delivered, it would not mean or translate into the emancipation of women from the yoke of patriarchy in community, and in the household.

The House as a pedagogical tool

Similar to how the water meter was used as a pedagogical tool by the new social movements, the Housing Assembly has used the 'house' as a tool for learning and a way into activism. The Housing Assembly has used the door to door visits as a means of personalising and humanising the fight for decent housing. By crossing over the threshold of the house and into the home, the house has become the site of resistance and learning. But at the same time, the Housing Assembly are in the home to talk about the house and the living conditions. Using the house as the subject or theme, and bearing in mind that the Housing Assembly activist who is leading this conversation in the home comes from that area and lives in exactly the same conditions, an exchange happens that is not only centred on sharing experiences but learning is also taking place.

In this instance the 'house' has become the 'true word' that is enabling not just a dialogue to happen, but a dialogue that is transformative in that through reflection upon the living conditions in the home and through the house, an ordinary, disaffected person in transformed into an activist (Freire, 1996: 68). Through this exchange, the family being visited in their home learns about the political reasons for why they are living in that particular house, why they are unemployed, underemployed or working in a full time job as a semi-skilled worker in a menial job, why they are unable to afford the school fees or food for their children. They learn that the bad housing conditions are linked to the private water meter and the prepaid electricity –

that it is all part of the same system of oppression. They learn that these living conditions are no fault of their own. They also learn about what their rights are to decent housing and affordable basic services. Further, they learn that they are not alone and that there is a movement where they can meet others living in the same conditions.

> One of the first activities that I came to remember is the roadshow that we had and we went out to various parts of the community and we spoke to community members. We also saw things like houses that had burnt down that the city was not interested in repairing and that type of thing. And it gave us a lot of exposure because that was my first experience of door to door and that actually showed me the way forward and that the door to door strategy actually works and that we are getting to know people in their own spaces and that makes them a whole lot more comfortable…I've been to pickets and door to door and workshops and everything else that the Housing Assembly offers. But that door to door strategy has got that one factor and that is we are meeting people in their own spaces so they are automatically comfortable and its easier to draw their issues out and all of our issues are basically the same and the interaction is like, if you are picketing your interaction has got to be more shorter and powerful in like a short space of time you need to say a whole lot of things whereas with the door to door you can have a general chat and things will come out so it makes life a lot easier.(Participant, Cape Town Commission 2, 16 May 2019)

The door to door tactic of meeting people where they are, using the house as the pedagogical tool is the first step to building the local and building power where the people are. This is followed up with street committee gatherings which eventually lead to the formation of area committees and eventually into district committees. As mentioned earlier, the building of area committees during apartheid was one of the most successful ways of building grassroots movement where layers of leadership could be built, giving space to everyone to participate in activism in whatever way they felt comfortable with.

The Housing Assembly's approach to forming area committees was, before engaging in door to door activities, to divide the communities they were organising in into blocks. Each activist was given a block to organise and would do this by knocking on every door on every street in the block. During the visit, in addition to having a dialogue about the house and the systems of oppression, the household is invited to a speak out – a gathering of members of the community facing similar struggles.

The speak outs have proven to be a very powerful tool, then during the violence of apartheid, and now during the violence of neoliberalism. Neoliberal capitalism creates economies of abandonment and it does so, not only by a receding, uncaring state, but also by eating away at communities and if anything, promoting individualism and othering. It uses social media to

consistently advertise the perfect “nuclear family” and their successes. The emphasis is always on the few who are successful with the narrative being that if a person works hard they can be doctors, nurses, lawyers, business women and men. The othering takes place on the flipside of this narrative where those who are unemployed and living in an informal settlement are depicted as lazy. This creates a feeling of shame and embarrassment amongst the poor for being poor, for smelling because they don’t have enough water to bathe, for begging because they are hungry, for becoming sex workers because they have children to feed.

Because the Housing Assembly is aware of this, in preparation for a speak out, representatives from the movement are mentored to willingly share their stories of what it means for them to live in poverty, to live in a shack, to be unemployed. This encourages others to speak out – it becomes easier to share amongst people who have had similar experiences or worse experiences. It becomes a space free of judgement and embarrassment, a space for collective experiences, sharing and learning. The speak outs provide a platform for people to share their own experiences of struggle and the impact it has on the whole family and the community as a whole. Women are often the first ones to get up and speak out.

Speak-outs give people confidence to share their own stories, allow space for communities to get to know each other better and at the same time expose the suffering under capitalism. To ensure equal representation and opportunities to engage and have a say in the development of the organisation, the Housing Assembly encourages members to attend all meetings, to participate in all activities, to own the spaces and to steer from below. This means everyone is checking in on processes and making sure everyone is accountable.

Speak outs are also planned across districts, thus taking the sharing and learning beyond the community. This builds a stronger movement and also raises awareness across the city of Cape Town. It also becomes a space for where knowledge from research that the Housing Assembly has conducted can be shared. This is all for the purpose of building an informed, grassroots led movement.

During door to door visits, members of the Housing Assembly take along a booklet which they produced that outlines people’s rights to decent housing. In the booklet is a petition calling for the local authority to commit to delivering decent housing to the people of Cape Town. As each member visits a family through the door to door and has the discussion about housing, the family is asked to sign the petition. The door to door activities which eventually lead to the speak outs is a critical methodology for shifting the learning into activism. It is in these spaces where people are recruited into the movement, where they can sign onto a petition to submit to the City council, where they can begin to collectively organise a community march or protest whilst feeling safe that they are not acting alone.

4.3. Building activism of scale through formal learning

The Housing Assembly has two key formal learning processes. The first is the Train the Trainer programme and the second is a national workshop in the form of the Political School. Both methodologies are attempting to build activism at scale. With the train the trainer programme, the scale is horizontal with the purpose of building grassroots people's power, whilst the Political School is attempting to reach a vertical scale of activism by transcending from the local to national organising.

The Train the Trainer was first introduced to the Housing Assembly, by Michael Blake and ILRIG, in 2012. Since the passing of the late comrade Michael Blake, the Housing Assembly has been co-facilitating the sessions with ILRIG and have been running some sessions on their own.

In keeping with its democratic principles, the steering committee, made up of representatives from the six districts, decides on the topic for training. This is drawn from the needs of the communities they are representing. The training could be on occupations and evictions, for example, especially when evictions are prevalent. When the City was holding public consultations on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), train the trainer workshops were help on the IDP. In other instances workshops have been held on housing rights and legal provisions on evictions, water rights and the water management devices.

These topics are discussed with ILRIG, which is then tasked with facilitating a workshop on the topic with the steering committee. The members of the steering committee then develop a training programme using popular education methods to ensure the inclusive participation of everyone. The programme is designed in a way that links the topic back to the vision and mission of the Housing Assembly. The steering committee then goes back to their districts and trains others to be trainers on the topic and this is rolled out in the different districts by the district leadership and then down to the community level. One of the researchers from Housing Assembly describes the process for the train the trainer:

> So we basically started the discussion about when we going to have a steering committee and we said it would be a train the trainer steering committee meeting. We want to look into [an issue from the community] So we've designed like [Michael Blake] told us – three hour workshops that comrades can have in their area. Anything you can have it with five people, ten people or 30 people, and its just three hours…if comrades feel that they are not confident enough in whatever we will say okay, 'Nokuzola, you and Kenneth are close to each other in terms of areas, so maybe Kenneth will be there'. Because Zola if you're not confident enough or comfortable enough to do here, Kenneth will be there to support, to assist or maybe you will go and see how Kenneth does it in his area and see if you are comfortable with that and then come back. (Researcher, Focus group, 3 May 2019)

Currently the movement has 31 trainers who have been part of this project for more than 2 years. These trainee trainers are now ready to become trainers in their own communities and they can co-facilitate the upcoming train the trainers with new members. Using this methodology, Housing Assembly is able to reach more people with less resources.

More recently, the Housing Assembly, has been using the train-the-trainer programme to also train members how to approach and conduct the door to door visits.

> …we started talking about doing train the trainer sessions, practical sessions on the door to door because we're also I think, realizing that not everyone is doing the door to door and we say lets talk to comrades and figure out why. But lets begin to run mock sessions. In our train the trainer sessions in our steering group meetings, maybe 10 minutes of each meeting becomes a mock session on door to door and we prepare comrades. And lets say as an example, Kashiefa becomes the difficult person that you will knock on the door, the one that's going to ask 'who are you? Are you a political party? How can we trust you?' and then see if candidates can respond to that. Because we know when you go to do door to door someone is going to close the door in your face, you know what I am saying. Some people will call you in, some people will let you stand in and everyone looks away as if you are not there. You know, so how do we deal with that? (Office bearer, Focus Group 3 May 2019)

The Political School is the second formal training used by the Housing Assembly. The first school was held in 2017 and was put together to build the political consciousness of Housing Assembly activist around the Campaign for Decent Housing:

> [The political school] 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" (Murray, 2019: 182)

The idea for the political school came from the Housing Assembly participating in ILRIG's annual Globalisation school which is held for social movement activists in Johannesburg.

Over the three years that the political school has been run, it has been able to bring together the diversity of the movement in one space to learn about the systems of oppression, to share experiences and to build solidarity. The school is a combination of formal learning through workshop sessions as well as informal learning through sharing of experiences. The school is a space for cross generational learning with the youth collective sharing space and learning with some of the older members of the movement who have been struggling for decent housing since the days of apartheid. The space for the youth also has created opportunities for members of the student movement to participate, as they did in the 2018 Political School.

The Housing Assembly's report of the 2017 Political School shows how this sharing and learning across the diverse contexts and backgrounds takes place (Murray, 2019:182):

> 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. (Housing Assembly, 2017)

There is also space created for the different housing types from different parts of the country to come together and share their lived experiences (such that people living in RDP houses can learn about the experiences of those living in informal settlements) and develop collective strategies as the Campaign for Decent Housing. Below is an excerpt of this kind of sharing at the August 2019 Political School, between activists from Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town, and generating ideas for a campaign strategy:[7]

> Community activist (3): "We must go to parliament in numbers"
>
> Community activist (4): "Comrades, you know we in Pretoria … we occupy the city, the metros...We say we are here to look for a job for the municipality. We are staying too far that is why we sleep here. After that we go to the offices of the municipality…even take the dustbins, put it on the door of parliament so that the President must listen,

[7]

> otherwise he won't listen. Take the rotten vegetables and out it there also. They will listen to you. Its how we do it in Pretoria"
>
> Community activist (2): "A sit in. That could be another action. A sit in"
>
> Community activist (5): "Let's just connect this together we and we decide what we must do to this problem"
>
> Community activist (2): "Unity and solidarity! I think those are one of the things we spoke about in all the days."
>
> Community activist (7): "Ah comrades! When you attend such sessions where you are being conscientized politically, showing another picture that was hidden politically. So as Soweto, Johannesburg we will be embarking on a journey, final journey to the national parliament because strategically it is one of the issues we must assess – how do you wage the struggle and how do you capitalize on the situation? You are capitalizing on the situation because you are next to the parliament and then we came prepared to say we will also submit the memorandum, the petition, the emails that we have sent the President. So we will be going there now to officially petition and get the acknowledgement from the petition committee …On the solidarity part we were hoping, and we believe and trust that you will find time and space in your revolutionary soul to join us as we will be embarking on a journey to deliver the petition…so comrades, my proposal is we don't want to theorise solidarity, we have to practice it." (Recording of discussion at Political School, August 2019)

It is also a space for national level organizing around the Campaign for Decent Housing. The campaign was launched at the 2016 ILRIG Globalisation School and then built up steadily through the Housing Assembly's own political schools:

> So in 2016, how we initiated the campaign from the Globalisation School, in fact we had been talking about it for years. So we had a workshop strategy for a campaign for what, for why, all of that we did. And then in Johannesburg we managed to get 23 other organisations nationally to buy into the campaign. There was a committee established to stay in contact, to start talking about what work is going to be done across. (Office Bearer, Focus Group, 3 May 2019)

As mentioned earlier, the Campaign has over 23 national organizations signed up to it. Housing Assembly activists are clear that the Housing Assembly, as a movement, is not the same as the Campaign for Decent Housing. Whilst the movement has initiated the Campaign, it is not the Campaign:

> The campaign opens up the door to a broader audience, people we don't necessarily have to bring completely with our politics, you know, but if you are struggling and are living in bad housing conditions, join us in the campaign (ibid)

The Campaign for Decent Housing has become the final stage for lifting the scale of activism from the district areas where Housing Assembly and the other 23 social movements are organising to a national

scale campaign. This has come out of the Political School, which created the formal learning space for this strategy to emerge organically.

4.4. Learning through protest

In 2019, there were 176 occupations in the City of Cape Town (Housing Assembly Office Bearer, 2019). Each of these occupations created a space for learning to take place through the Housing Assembly. When an eviction or an occupation is taking place, comrades from the Housing Assembly are called in to assist. When they get there the first thing they do is help stop the eviction from taking place. This means asking the law enforcers for the legal notices that grant permission for the eviction. In addition to having the legal documents for the eviction, the owner of the property can only carry out the eviction if he/she has found alternative accommodation for those being evicted. In most cases either the paper work or the accommodation is not secured and the eviction is stopped. The time is used to then pass on information to those being evicted of what their legal rights are. Once the eviction is stopped, the Housing Assembly works towards getting people back into the space they have been evicted from – this could be either in a RDP house where people have been evicted because of water arrears, or from government rental stock because of rental arrears or from a vacant piece of land that people have erected their informal structures.

Whilst the learning that takes place through an eviction or occupation is on legal rights to prevent an eviction, and the right to housing to facilitate an occupation, the knowledge being produced is beyond that which can be found in research reports. The knowledge being produced out of the learning is practical knowledge to survive the economies of abandonment. When asked what was being produced through an occupation, one of the office bearers of the Housing Assembly said it was the knowledge of how to occupy and how to build a shack – the occupation and the shack being the actual knowledge production output:

> [When] they occupy its like in stages, because their things were demolished, they occupy in stages. So what the City does is when people occupy they come in and demolish all the shacks immediately. That is what they did the first time, you build a house, they will break it down. So now they put them up in stages. Today they put one here and tomorrow they put another two up there. So they don't put all the shacks at once because everybody cant work at a pace to complete the shack. So what they do is they complete it as a community, they work together. So they finish off this one and do another one, everybody is doing one person's shack and they occupy inside the room. (Office bearer, Focus Group 3 May 2019)

The ultimate aim of the Housing Assembly is for all communities facing evictions to have the knowledge to prevent eviction, without having to call in an office bearer or member of the steering committee to assist.

> I think we must consciously get people to say, because if they go to my house and evict me, I am going to go back myself. So for me we must build that consciousness where people can refuse. People must actually refuse to be evicted.*(ibid)*

When it comes to protest marches, the Housing Assembly is somewhat different to other social movements. It is not quick to put together a big march unless everyone who is on that march knows why they are there and the systems of oppression that brought them to the march. Because the march is actually a space for learning – even though it is a short space of time to be in contact with another person it is still a moment to pass on information as quickly as possible. Therefore, according to one of the office bearers of the movement:

> Housing Assembly does not believe in renting crowds. We've seen organisations take people to the streets, we've been on the streets with organisations and when we come back we still don't have any idea what was said and that's not good. We want everyone to go out and to be able to speak, everyone…We want people to go out to the streets because they know why.*(ibid)*

The organisation started a **Women's Collective and a Youth collective**. These platforms look specifically at the issues affecting the particular constituency they represent. It also works on strategies that can be used to better mobilise and recruit community members to join the Housing Assembly. The Housing Assembly has a strong youth constituency, especially female, who are very much involved in planning and organising. Youth also play facilitating and leadership roles within the movement and its activities. It promotes women leadership and of the 31 leadership roles (steering committee) currently 80% are female.

In 2018, on the birthday of Nelson Mandela, the Youth Collective staged a protest of a different kind. They erected a shack outside Premier of Cape Town, Helen Zille's official residence (Eyewitness news Youtube channel, 2018).[8] Zille lives in the plush neighbourhood of the Leewenhof Estate so the protest of building a shack was highly symbolic, in highlighting the life of the youth and the conditions in which they are living, including the fact they are unemployed and there are no jobs for them. The protest moment is also used as a form of learning – the young protestors stayed at the site for a while talking about their experiences and learning from each other. They sang protests songs and spoke to the press

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about their living conditions. The protest got media coverage and other young people in similar living conditions learnt something from it.

The Housing Assembly has made use of both formal and informal methods to produce knowledge and to learn. Alternative methods for educating community members is what is unique about the movement. Every opportunity and space is seen as potential for passing on knowledge. This knowledge comes not from outsiders coming in and teaching the community activists about their conditions of existence, but rather it is their conditions of existence and their lived experience that drives the learning in the Housing Assembly. It is a movement that has emerged from its context – from the lived experiences of its members and from the conditions of their existence. Because the right to decent housing is the fundamental basis for this movement, it has become the political and pedagogical tool to organise, to build knowledge and to develop activism from. It is therefore crucial that, in staying authentic to its working class politics and ideology, the Housing Assembly has used the house/home to defy the neoliberal conception of the house as private and individualised and has transformed it into a public good and a collective struggle. It is also the space through which the Housing Assembly has encountered the any intersecting identities and struggle that has enriched the movement and its activism.

Chapter 5: What do social movements produce knowledge and learn about?

5.1 The Prefigurative politics of a "decent house"

The heart and soul of the Housing Assembly's politics is the struggle for a decent house. In order to fight for this "decent house", members of the Housing Assembly were asked to explain what they understood as a "decent house". Many of those interviewed started with what the structure of the house would be including details such as it being made out of brick and having space inside with a number of rooms to accommodate not only their immediate family but also their extended family. They then moved on to some of the essentials such as water provided through a tap in the house, toilets inside the house, electricity. Then they talked about the house being warm, with no leaky roofs, being lit up. And then they moved beyond the house to the outside environment where they began to include having a yard, a garden and sufficient space between houses. Once they were outside the house, they began to imagine their communities beyond the house and "decent house" began to also mean having things that make a community – parks, clinics, schools, good transport systems.

> A decent house…maybe a nice house – a brick house that is going to be decent for you and your children and the old people living with you and of that…a decent house will have parks close by for children to play, clinics that are close by for the old people living with you. (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, 29 May 2019)

This act of defining a decent house does two things – one is that the dream of a decent house goes beyond the individual to the collective – which is exactly what the Housing Assembly as a movement has been trying to achieve as a means of disrupting the neoliberal agenda of firstly focusing on the individual and remedying the abandonment poor people feel being on the receiving end of neoliberal economic policies.

Secondly, the imagining a "decent house" means engaging in an exercise with members of the Housing Assembly to generate alternatives to their current situation. In so doing the movement is saying that what democracy looks like to its members, in this post-apartheid South Africa, is actually in the image they have in their minds as a "decent house". The act of achieving decent housing through learning and producing knowledge about the systems of power and oppression; the act of occupation as a counter to evictions and to achieving the "decent house"; the act of building community through people's power; are the counter-power to these systems.

Whilst '*to prefigure is to anticipate or enact some feature of an 'alternative world' in the present, as though it has already been achieved*' (Yates, 2015:4) the act of imagining the future in the form of a "decent house" becomes difficult to do when the lived reality is too painful to move beyond. In interviews where members of the Housing Assembly were asked what their idea of a decent house was, most of them would start by describing the things they would want for themselves. But because imagining the future involved recognising where they were living now, so many of those interviewed found it difficult to do this without starting to talk about their current living conditions:

> Decent housing means running water, clean running water; making sure there is electricity in the house, and making sure that our people are safe in the communities. And not only that but our facilities – making sure that they are in good working conditions. So in my opinion, good housing should make sure that my health, my safety, the school – also the schools in that area don't even have proper facilities for these kids and with that being said, if we look in our informal settlements and our informal settlements' schools that are out there, the toilets are not in the school – they are outside the school base meaning those kids are sent alone to the toilets. Those kids are being abused or they are getting raped because of toilets being outside of schools and like I said before, if you think about about proper housing, I don't think it is right that people need to live in houses that are so close together… (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, 25 June 2019)

The politics of the Housing Assembly is socialist in its nature, and centres the working class. The imagining of a "decent house" is a way of building activism to dismantle the neoliberal capitalist economy of post-apartheid South Africa. This is evident in how prefigurative politics shows up in the way in which the organisation is structured in an inverted pyramid that gives power to the people, and it is evident in safe spaces the movement provides for activists to articulate their lived experiences. And while the dismantling of neoliberal capitalism is a critical focus of the Housing Assembly, the inequality that still exists in post-apartheid South Africa creates the picture of the decent house that people envision.

In WItzenburg, which is a rural farming community, the idea of a decent house has been derived from looking at the housing inequality: the difference between the shack that the farm worker lives in and the house that the farm owner lives in:

> It is important by right that everyone must have a decent house, not a shack where there's no space. Everyone is looking for a decent house with warm water, electricity and all that…the houses they building isn't a decent house but if we look at the houses the boere (farm owner) live in – its decent houses and that what the word decent housing stands for.(Member of Housing Assembly, Focus Group, WItzenburg 18 June 2019)

> We want to live in houses that the farmers live in: big room, privacy, big yard. No making fires, toilet inside the house. That's the housing we fighting for. (Respondent 2, Commission 2, WItzenburg 16 June 2019)

The idea that members of the Housing Assembly hold in their imaginations of what a decent house is drives them forward with their struggle for decent housing. The idea for what decent housing should be comes from the movement's own politics which tries to push beyond and disrupt the state's plan for housing.

5.2 "Everyone an Organiser": Using the image of Big Fish, Small Fish

In order to achieve the imagined and envisioned "decent house" with the brick walls and spacious rooms, the running water, electricity, toilets inside the house, the warmth, the safety, the yard and garden, the parks, clinics and good transport system, the Housing Assembly has developed an image to show how power shows up in the capitalist state and how this power can be disrupted by building the power of people.

The image of the big fish and the small fish has been used as a powerful tool to explain that if the poor organise they can become a powerful tool to take on the big fish. Immediately when members of the Housing Assembly were shown the image, they could see themselves in it as well as being able to name the big fish:

> For me its almost like the big fish is like the rich people and the small fish is like the poor people – like the big fish is now like the white people and that the small fish is like the Blacks and Coloureds, like poor, like for me, everyone of the small fish is in the control of the big fish (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, Cape Town, 21 May 2019)

For others, they named the big fish as the government and politicians as well as farm owners, which in the case of Witzenburg activists, were their employers:

> When I saw the big fish, small fish I had no idea what it means or what message it is trying to send, but when I got involved in the organisation, I began to understand more what it means, like who is the big fish? These big politicians, and the government – they keep coming to us with

> empty promises. (Member of Housing Assembly, Focus Group, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)
>
> The most important thing that stands out for me is the big fish, small fish. Some people wont understand it but if you understand the pyramid[9] you will know that the big fish is the government and these rich farmers. (Member of Housing Assembly, Commission 1, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)

Through the image and being able to name who the big fish is, members of the Housing Assembly have learned that neoliberal capitalism creates inequalities not only in relation to income but also in terms of how power is held, used and distributed. It goes a long way in explaining why a Housing Assembly activist lives in a shack and why the farm owner or politician lives in a "decent house".

By including the slogan "Everyone an Organiser", the movement is providing the means to disrupt this unequal power and to inevitably disrupt the neoliberal capitalist economy. It presents hope and optimism that through collective action, which can be achieved through door to door organising, speak outs, organised areas and districts, democratic and inclusive structures and through building a knowledgeable grassroots movement, the systems of oppression that creates the big fish can be transformed:

> Interviewer: When you see the big fish and the small fish, what does it say to you as a young person?
>
> Community member: "The big fish is before they form the big fish and the small fishes are all in different places and they are splitting up and once they stand together collectively they organize themselves and they can conquer all."
>
> Interviewer: How is this linked to 'everyone an organiser'? Do you as a young person fell like you are part of 'the everyone'?
>
> Community member: "Like I said, with the big fish, if you organize yourself then you can conquer anything. Everyone, all of us, that are living in informal settlements. Yes, I do feel I'm part of the everyone and its because we can do everything, we can communicate. That's my reason I'm part of this 'everyone'. (Individual interview, 29 May 2019)

The slogan of "Everyone an Organiser" gives people ownership over their futures and of the organisation. The movement is only as strong as the people who come together to engage in the struggle for decent housing. The movement is also only strong if its members are properly informed.

[9] This refers to the pyramid that Housing Assembly uses to show how power is held in the political landscape before they introduce the movement's inverted pyramid as the basis for how it is structured. See earlier discussion in report.

> The big fish and the small fish in life is like when I was the small fish and when we started getting our minds open and moving to the big fish…so we are here by the small fish. So you must start to work to the big fish and this is what the Housing Assembly was doing to start to move to the bigger fish (Member of Housing Assembly, Focus Group, Cape Town 22 May 2019)

> The small fish – we're like, we're the little people in our organisation. We build it up so good that we can say we are the big fish now. And we work together – there's no fighting. We will work together – that is our big fish in our organisation. Big fish means actually we are united in our struggles. (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, 24 May 2019)

It also gives importance to the Housing Assembly's cornerstone strategy of building people's power, and that is for everyone to organize in the simplest method of organizing, ie. The door to door:

> How to organise …to go to the people in their houses where you knock on the door and speak to people on the ground level. The best organisational manner is to go door to door, talk to the person in his comfortable space. That did help a lot for me to understand how to organize going forward with our organization.(Respondent 7, Focus Group, Cape Town 22 March 2019)

> And what did we do as the small fish? We went out into the community and we started mobilising people and because of the mobilisation we became a bigger group and that is how we learned to take on the government and the big rich farmers. (Respondent 1, Commission 1, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)

The Housing Assembly has taken the complexity of neoliberal capitalist economics and the inequalities that persist through intersectional oppression of race, class and gender, and captured it in an image. The solution to the problem has been captured in its slogan: Everyone an Organiser. This has come through from their own lived experiences shaped by their material conditions. It comes from grassroots knowledge. There is brilliance in this approach of the Housing Assembly's distilling of complex ideas of structural oppression into a set of knowledges that when used together, has the effect of doing what Biko, Freire and Fanon have been arguing for and that is that grassroots knowledge is power and has the ability to change the situation and shift power.

5.3. Women Rights and the Housing Assembly

'Mother says there are locked rooms inside all women; kitchen of lust,

bedroom of grief, bathroom of apathy.

Sometimes the men - they come with keys,

and sometimes, the men - they come with hammers'

(Warsan Shire, The House)

The most powerful shift that has happened in the Housing Assembly has been the space it has given for women to feel powerful, to feel like they have a voice. The movement has between 80-90% women members and the majority of the leadership at all levels is women. This, combined with the knowledge that has been passed on to these women, has resulted in growing confidence amongst women members to take on municipal officials and farm bosses:

> Housing Assembly encourages us to stand up especially women. We raise our voices, like my daughter. She just told the farmer to leave our property and she did it with so much confidence and that's what we got from Housing Assembly. (Member of Housing Assembly, Commission 2, WItzenburg 15 June 2019)

> I have also learned at Housing Assembly that as a woman I can be brave and raise my voice. Where a man can, I can go. When I talk to the ward councilor and we sit around the table, I am not afraid to raise my voice. (Member of the Housing Assembly, Commission 1. Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)

In some of the commissions and focus groups, the researchers from the research team (who are also the office bearers of the movement) talked about shifting power in the household.

> Researcher 1: We must also practice these things at home, because in my experience women say the Housing Assembly has also changed their lives at home. The men are doing the washing now and they understand now that its not the wife's duties to do everything. It's the responsibility of the whole family.

Following that statement made by the researchers in the commission, only one woman responded to say that her husband takes care of the children and was babysitting while she was at the workshop.

So while this notion is slowly catching on amongst women in the movement it is not as widespread as would be expected for a movement with so many women members and leaders. The consciousness is being built but not across the movement in the same way as an understanding of class politics. And that consciousness may not necessarily be rooted in disrupting patriarchal power.

> …things have changed…women have a voice now and there are lots of men that does not understand this. We are somewhat equal but not really. Because if the wife tells me to go and fetch a bucket of water, I'm only fetching it to keep the peace, because if I don't go then I get a long story. (Member of Housing Assembly, Commission 2, Witzenburg, 15 June 2019)

Because domestic responsibilities are seen to be that of women - the housing crisis is seen to be disrupting how effectively and efficiently women can engage in these responsibilities. Women entering into the struggle for decent housing is not to disrupt domestic responsibilities or because a right to a house is also a right for women, but because domestic responsibilities are her area of power. Below is an excerpt from a facilitated focus group that shows the connection between the number of women in the movement and the care responsibilities social norms place on women.

> Researcher 1: I think also is Housing Assembly, majority of our members are women and I think women are very powerful and we're not afraid to speak our mind. Also and go into areas and talk to communities. So I think that makes us unique within Housing Assembly as women.
>
> Researcher 2: Okay, but that brings us to the next question. So you say that majority of the members in the Housing Assembly, and its evident even here today. You know here's three of four meant here today so you see there is more women. So the question is why do you think that's the case?
>
> Respondent 4: It affects them directly in that women are mothers, women are carers, you know. If a child does not have water and that water is off, it affects you straight, because the child is going to come to you as the mother…If there is no food, same story. (Focus Group, Witzenburg 16 June 2019)

This has been repeated several times by many of the women interviewed for this research.

> I am in because there are children involved. My children are my first priority. I want a future for them and myself but my partner will see things differently. (Community member, Commission 2, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)
>
> …if the water meter is being installed, the husband is not there and water is needed for many duties in the house, so when the services are not delivered adequately, then it is the women that struggle. (Member of Housing Assembly, Commission 2, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)

Even though the connection of neoliberal capitalism has been made to why less services are being delivered, the connection between women's care responsibilities have not been made to the patriarchal structures of oppression found both in the state and in the home.

> …because of neoliberalism, women are under more pressure because its not by coincidence, its not by accident that we can see in the struggle, the majority is women. Its not an accident that we see in Housing Assembly 90% of the leaders are women, its by no accident. But because of the impact of neoliberalism capitalism even less services are delivered, the woman struggles even harder. Because if he accepts the water meter that 350 litres switches off at 12pm, its more stress for the wife. She has more stress to worry about. That woman must decide if she's going to wash the washing or cook the food because the water

> is going to switch off. Just think what quality of life does that woman have if she that stress all day. Watching the electricity box, watch the water box. Where is the children? (Researcher 2, Housing Assembly, Focus Group, Cape Town, 21 May 2019)

Not only are women members of the Housing Assembly struggling against patriarchy as it appears in their homes, they also have to face patriarchal state bureaucrats, which in addition to the enervation of neoliberal economic policies, is also exhausting specifically on women:

> …you get to your municipality and it is a man, a man that makes decisions without even discussion the context of my occupation. I just have to convince you that I am valid to be at the table and that already drains you and takes your energy, because you come there, you are only men with suits…who come with sophisticated patriarchal ideas. We are already tired. We occupied the land, the police are chasing us around, everywhere we come out there is someone with a gun. (Member of Housing Assembly, Commission 2, WItzenburg 15 June 2019)

The Housing Assembly has also provided a space for women to talk about how access to basic services affects them differently. For example, not having a toilet affects a woman differently, especially when she is menstruating. In informal settlements, not having a toilet or bathroom in the house means that women have to walk a distance to access the portable toilets provided by the state. At night, this walk has to be done in the dark because there are no street lights thus placing them at even greater risk of violence. However, none of these experiences have been used in the education and learning in the movement, or in the setting of the agenda when demanding basic services, including decent housing, but it is, nevertheless, the driving force for the increased number of women in the movement.

This is even though Housing Assembly women have started discussing patriarchy, it has not evolved into shifting power within the household but seen more in relation to women's leadership in the movement. However, even though there are more women in the movement and in leadership, the call for decent housing and basic services has not been done from the perspective of achieving gender equality in the home, or transforming societal norms. Or framing that call to the state to make sure that providing public funded basic services is being done in a gender responsive way rather than only because it is a way to address class inequality. The outcome of such a shortcoming means that while public funded basic services such as water and electricity have a way of reducing women's care burden in the home, it does not redistribute it. And this could be the role of the Housing Assembly in its communities and through its methods of reaching people in their homes.

This could probably be because there has not been a significant shift of care work within the movement itself. And here is where the prefigurative possibilities of the movement fall short

along gender lines. Even though the majority of members and leaders in the Housing Assembly are women, women still take on the care work in the movement such as the cooking and providing refreshments at events or meetings or cleaning the office.

> I did not really want to take this cool drink, we are talking about this here and now but the women are pouring and serving the cool drink to the man, we are talking about it and we are still doing it. (Researcher, Housing Assembly, Focus Group, WItzenburg 16 June 2019)

> …Patriarchy rears its head even in the Housing Assembly. When there's food to be made, the women make it. When the kitchen needs to be cleaned (except for two very brilliant male comrades) I haven't seen any other male in the kitchen. (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, 21 May 2019)

In some areas, particularly the outlying ones, women members spoke about the hard work they do of organizing but it is the men that end up getting elected into positions at community and district level. This can be seen in an excerpt from a facilitated focus group with women from Witzenburg:

> Researcher 1: In the Housing Assembly 90% of our leaders are women. In each district we have four leaders and it is very seldom that they are men. However, we do have a small problem in Witzenburg and we need strong women like you all because at the moment for this district its only four men.
>
> Community member 1: Because when there is elections, the men get elected not the women
>
> Community member 2: But if we need 15 people to go somewhere it's the women that must run around and invite people not the men. They wont do that.
>
> Community member 3: If I must use an example, last night one of the men leaders asked me if I had already mobilized the people. I said I did but then ask asked if he could maybe also mobilise some people on his side. So he said he will see. (Focus Group, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)

Getting an analysis of patriarchal oppression embedded into the politics of the Housing Assembly and having it play a transformative role across the communities being organised is critical. Potentially as critical as putting the class struggle at the centre of the movement's politics. This is because without an intersectional feminist analysis that integrates class politics with patriarchal oppression, neoliberal capitalist economics, is allowing for a dangerous narrative to emerge amongst members of Housing Assembly, where poverty is being used as an excuse for gender based violence:

> That's all part of oppression and that's how the system survives, to divide us and to rule us. It does not only divide us by race but by gender as well. We have domestic violence because the man thinks he is the

> head of the house but now he is unemployed. The wife now goes out and brings home the bread. The man now feels small. He is not now going to talk…he rather going to hit the wife after a few beers and not because he don't like her, or he is just violent person. It's the conditions that contribute. He is unemployed. The stuff breaks in the house. He feels less of a man. He cant fix the things. He cant take care of the family. (Researcher, Housing Assembly, Focus Group, Witzenburg 16 June 2019)

Engaging in imagining what a decent house means to the membership of the Housing Assembly is a powerful tool that has allowed the movement to engage in prefigurative politics where democracy, and the world the activists want to live in, is embodied in that imagined house that extends beyond its four walls, electricity, water, indoor toilet and yard, but also includes schools, health clinics and parks. It is a powerful imagery that spurs the movement to continuously engage with their existing conditions because it is a fight that is bigger than the house. It is a fight for a transformed system which is depicted in its slogan of Everyone an Organiser and its Big Fish Small Fish imagery. This has shown us that grassroots knowledge is a powerful transformational tool that has the ability to change systems. Yet whilst imagining a transformed class system, the Housing Assembly has not imagined the patriarchal system transformed where women have equal rights in the home, in society and in activism. The fight for decent housing is being led by women in the movement but is not connected to the fight for women's rights. It is being led by women because the inadequate housing and lack of basic services is hindering the women from doing their domestic care work properly and without inconvenience. Whilst there are lone women's voices trying to push the boundaries of the working class ideology to begin to incorporate struggles against the patriarchy, it has yet to be centered in the movement in the same way that working class politics has been rooted.

Chapter 6: What are the effects of the production and learning of knowledge in movements?

The Housing Assembly is less than 10 years old. It has taken the long route in its building of a movement, placing learning and production of knowledge as the foundation. It sees an educated membership that understands their material conditions within the context of systemic and structural oppression as the key driver for change. The tactics borrowed from anti-apartheid struggles merged with their learning and knowledge production have had a transformative effect on individual members, on the politics of the struggle and the shape of the movement itself.

6.1. The Political is Personal and Collective

> What I have learnt from being part of the Housing Assembly is that I can stand for myself. I can walk in by the city and say what I want to say because I know my rights. For me it is a decent house for our children. (Member of the Housing Assembly, Individual interview, 24 May 2019)

The biggest impact that the Housing Assembly has had has been building the confidence of those living in poverty. Confidence has been gained as a direct result of the production and learning of knowledge that has happened in the movement. Everyone interviewed for this research project said their confidence had grown because they know their rights, because of what they had learnt about capitalism and that their living in poverty was not their fault. This helped to fill members of Housing Assembly with pride and dignity which the state has tried to strip away with the narrative that the reason for their living in poverty was because they didn't work hard enough or because they were lazy.

The Housing Assembly has, by producing knowledge and opening up learning spaces to explain the systemic and structural nature of the oppression of community members, undone generations of state-sanctioned denial of education, knowledge and information for Black people. The Housing Assembly was able to see and value their community members and through doing that has created a cadre of housing activists that are strong and confident and powerful agents of change.

> As a woman, as a youth, I never thought there was something with my condition. I thought things are the way it should be. I never knew what housing meant…What I am grateful for is that the comrades in the Housing Assembly is people who learn from us and they share experiences with us as well. I have a voice and I am not standing alone. That is what I learned for the past year when I had nowhere to go…(Respondent, Commission 1, Witzenburg, 16 June 2019)

The movement has also given those struggling for decent housing a place of belonging: *"In Housing Assembly nobody is leaders. We stand as a family, as one nation." (*Individual interview, 25 May 2019).

This is particularly important in a neoliberal capitalist state where economies of abandonment thrive to weaken the will of the people. The very existence of the movement and the space of belonging it has created has disrupted this abandonment and has infused people living in poverty with a sense of purpose, a sense of action, agency – the antithesis of enervation.

When members were asked what they did with knowledge they had gained from the Housing Assembly, every single one of them said that they went back to their communities, to their families and passed on that information. They said they did this because they felt empowered after learning what they had and they felt that this power needed to be passed on.

This passing on of learning has developed a powerful knowledge base at the grassroots level that has translated into people being organised into the movement. This is an effect of the Housing Assembly's "Everyone an Organiser" slogan combined with the "Big Fish Small Fish" imagery. This was a powerful learning tool that has not only created a movement but also instilled a sense of ownership of every individual which has translated into a collective ownership of the movement. This was far more effective than the slogan, "Everyone a Leader" used by the new social movements, because it is has shifted from the individual leader and an individual pursuit to the collective building of a movement.

6.2.The House/Home as a pedagogical tool

> …if you have a house that is where home is, that is where your heart is and that defining moment for me is when I saw to what lengths people will go to secure a decent house, to secure their place in the summer and it made me feel insignificant that day…I grew up on the different side of the tracks. I had more than most and I had to come down a few notches. I had to come down because I didn't identify with the struggle. I identifies with other social ills but I didn't identify with housing because I had a home. I had a house. And now it has become relevant in my life where the Housing Assembly is concerned: is that I can take up that struggle with my brother and sister…I can safely say …it defines me as being a better person because not knowing what others go through – you can stand on the side lines and say, okay that doesn't touch me at, but is some way of the other it did find me, it did touch me, it did inform me. I can say that this struggle is not their struggle alone. It is mine as well.(Participant, Commission held in Cape Town, 22 May 2019*)*

Using the house/home as the site of resistance, the Housing Assembly has disrupted the neoliberal capitalist narrative that the house is an individual and private pursuit, and transformed it into a collective and public struggle. The house as a site of resistance comes through, not just in what knowledge and learning is produced on the conditions of existence, but also in the how of the learning – this learning takes place in and through the house. The house, which is at the center of the struggle, has also become the pedagogical tool which can be seen in the door-to-door visits. And in so doing it has opened up the struggle for decent housing to a collective one, through which a mass based

movement is developing – a movement that is forming not just to secure decent housing but a movement for system change.

This political and pedagogical tool has also had the effect of creating a rallying call for a national campaign for decent housing. The Housing Assembly is quick to say that they are not the campaign, and this is in line with their values of it being not a singular movement's struggle but a collective one. The campaign is deeply infused with the politics associated with the house – that it represents multiple struggles that are all rooted in systemic and structural oppression of race and class.

6.3. The Struggle is Intersectional

When the Housing Assembly activists knocked on the doors of community members' houses, they did not anticipate that this would transform their struggle from a single issue struggle for decent housing to one that would become a broader struggle for the working class. This learning through practice that took place through the door-to-door and in the house itself, has shaped the movement into what it is today. And this has been a profound shift into an intersectional approach to struggle. On meeting people in their homes they found different kinds of workers in various stages of precarity, and they found that the house was also a holding space for struggles around access to basic services, to education, to health services, transport issues, social issues – all of which have its roots deep in racial inequality. This realisation has helped to shape the Housing Assembly's struggle from one that was a working class struggle for housing, to a working class struggle for systemic change.

The tactic adopted by the Housing Assembly to engage in learning exchanges across the different housing types also transformed the strategy and political ideology of the movement, making it more intersectional with race and class. Organising across the different housing types using the door-to-door tactic, achieved two fundamental things: the first is that it showed the movement the vast inequalities that exist in accessing services across the different housing types and that this inequality also included race. And secondly, organising across housing types transcended the spatial inequalities that existed under apartheid but still persist today. This has gone a long way in cementing in members minds that the problem they were facing was systemic and structural, and it also in building unity within the diversity that the movement brings together.

> We also saw that housing is not a Witzenburg issue, it's a provincial issue. It's a national issue. (Participant, Commission 1, Witzenburg 16 June 2019

> I think what is important to me is how different groups can come together and share information or share their experiences. Then Khayelitsha can see that they have the same issues as Wolseley and I

> think that also makes people stronger, because then people feel that they are not alone. (Commission 1, Witzenburg 16 June 2019)

This building from the ground up, and building across geographical locations and housing types has also opened up the space to talk through the racial disparities that still exist in housing and access to basic services. This has been a source of great tension within the movement and between communities, but the approach that Housing Assembly has used – of learning exchanges between housing types – has gone a long way in building knowledge on racial discrimination. This has helped diffuse racial tensions at the level of communities, and to be able to build a collective struggle despite the Western Cape and City of Cape Town's attempts to cause racial divisions.

However, despite shifting their struggle to being more intersectional, gender is yet to make an impact on the organisation in terms of how the struggle for housing is articulated. Whilst there is a strong women's representation in the movement's structures, it has yet to influence the movement to include gender and the patriarchy as another system of oppression alongside race and class. This is an unfortunate legacy from the anti-apartheid movement which also put race and class struggles ahead of gender. The effect of this is that the struggle for housing has not engaged with the unequal social and power dynamics that exist between men and women in the home and in the community, with the majority of women members still carrying the burden of care responsibilities. And so the fight for housing has left out the fight for gender equality or the rights of women.

There are a few women within the movement who have been trying to push this agenda and have been successful in achieving small changes. They have done this through setting up a women's collective for women members to gather and share experiences and using that space to introduce new knowledge on patriarchy as a system of oppression. Whilst it has not become an organizational-wide adoption, it has brought about changes in some members' household dynamics:

> When I joined the Housing Assembly I realized it's a two way thing. This is not only one way and a woman needs to cook, work and you give your wages [to your husband]. So I learnt a lot that late one night I came home and I said to my husband 'We need to talk. I cant work for you. You need to work for me'. He said what is this you are talking about. I said 'we need to do both. You come from work, I come from work and if you are first you clean, you start making food. If I come first I need to clean and make food. I said its not a man in the roof and a woman on the floor. And since to date both of us share the work in our house. (Participant, Focus Group, Cape Town 13 June 2019)

There were a few women interviewed who told similar stories of changes in their households. Whilst this is not a change across the movement or pervasive throughout the communities, it has the potential to bring about this change. This can be done if the prefigurative politics that we see emerging in the visioning of a "decent house" begins to include an intersection with gender equality and the role that

women play in the household; and if the Housing Assembly starts to embody this in the way care roles in the movement are redistributed. This will then have the effect of influencing the political agenda of the movement such that the call for decent housing and basic services is done from a gender responsive angle that seeks to also redistribute the care work in the household.

The Women's Collective that women in the Housing Assembly set up presents an opportunity to shift the movement's political agenda to one that is an intersection of race, class and gender.

> A women's collective is a good thing and we really need that space because it would take us away from our male comrades and there are things that would be easier to discuss if they were not part of us. (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, 21 May 2019)

But this is not going to be easy as gender equality is constantly in battle with the class and race struggle within the movement. The class struggle always takes priority, in the same way as race took priority in the struggle against apartheid, and the struggle for gender equality carries less importance and is not prioritised:

> …We haven't really done anything aimed specifically at women. I would say do more focused activism maybe even a bit of feminism (Member of Housing Assembly, Individual interview, 21 May 2019)

The effects of the how and what of learning and knowledge production of the Housing Assembly is slower to see, but the groundwork has been established for real power shifts to happen that are driven by a grassroots movement. The Housing Assembly has turned the site of its struggle into the pedagogical tool and together with that, has grounded the pedagogy in the politics of systems of oppression as experienced through the house. It has taken an apartheid tactic for organising and turned it into a powerful tool to build a movement where its cornerstone is learning and knowledge production. The house as the site of struggle has also enabled the movement to push through the barriers of former social movements and anti-apartheid movements to present the struggle as intersectional, as not a singular struggle by incorporating racial and class oppression (and more recently gender oppression). Perhaps one of the key effects of the knowledge production and learning has been that in the bid to build a grassroots movement for systemic change, it has also defied the individualism perpetuated by capitalism, by creating a space – a common area almost- for community members and activists to feel like they belong, that they are part of a family, that there is a collective struggle and voice.

Conclusion

The housing crisis has deep roots in South Africa. It is rooted in colonial and apartheid history. The dispossession of Black people from their land and their homes, the denial of their right to claim basic human rights and the violent repression of the colonial and apartheid state to act out this dispossession and violation lies deep in the consciousness of Black people. But that past has laid the foundation for what is present in South Africa in two fundamental ways.

The first is that the housing crisis still remains today. This paper has reflected on the economic choices made by the African National Congress at the point South Africa became a democracy. Abandoning its redistributive ideology founded in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the ANC consciously chose a neoliberal path upon which to take newly democraticised country down. This homegrown structural adjustment programme saw basic services being turned into privatised, for-profit assets of the state. Housing, which was promised in the 1994 elections, became a commodity upon which private developers (rather than the state) traded a profit. Not enough houses could be built through this private-public partnership. Not enough jobs were created. And more and more people were plunged into poverty and forced into homelessness either in shacks in informal settlements, shacks in backyards or in temporary relocation camps. Those fortunate enough to get social housing found that in order to make a profit, private developers used inferior building materials and in some cases handed over incomplete houses. The waiting list to get an RDP house is now over 20 years long. And as this paper has mentioned, the people who were poor during apartheid are still poor today.

The second foundation laid by the past is grassroots community mobilisation and resistance. One of the answers to the question of why poor Black South Africans were so quick to react and respond to the effects of GEAR was that the struggle against apartheid was so strongly rooted in the grassroots communities. Black people from state-neglected and impoverished communities felt, very quickly, their lives getting significantly worse because of the neoliberal capitalism that came with democracy - so much so that there was a sense of nostalgia that sat uncomfortably even with those who uttered the words '*things were better under apartheid*' (Benjamin, 2011). Most still remembered how much was lost to apartheid and none were prepared to lose any more. This frustration, anger and disappointed found an outlet through grassroots community organising and mobiliz=sing – the structures of which remained after apartheid.

Tactics and strategies that emerged during the fight against apartheid have found their way into the post-apartheid social movements' struggle. These movements breathed life back into community movements that went dormant in 1994 as the country shifted into its democratic era. It took less than five years into democracy for community structures to kickstart again as

Black communities began to experience the reality of democracy – that it was a political victory but not an economic one. As poverty worsened, land and housing remained out of reach for the millions of dispossessed Black people, as segregation persisted on race and class line, communities responded through organised protests, using similar tactics from the apartheid era to organise. Historical ways of struggle have been passed down from one generation of freedom fighters to the next through storytelling, memories, and documented struggles, and taken up by whole family units as mothers, fathers and their children became social movement activists.

The Housing Assembly comes out of this history as one of the new social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. They have brought into the present the continued struggle for decent housing, basic services, fair and just treatment for the poor. Through their own analysis of why the poor, twenty years on, are still homeless, still don't have access to basic services, education, health care and jobs, they have found that this is because of systemic and structural oppression given expression in neoliberal capitalist economic policies that have been imposed by the democratic government. Using this knowledge, they have begun passing this information on to shack dwellers, backyarders, renters, people living in TRAs and in social housing. The Housing Assembly have done this using tactics for organising and mobilising that were developed in 1980s apartheid South Africa – a time when anti-apartheid activists were heavily surveilled, violently repressed and forbidden from gathering.

Even though South Africa has transcended apartheid and been hailed as Africa's great success story (because the country transitioned peacefully into democracy) it still remains a state in conflict with the poor. From its violent economic policies, use of violence to evict and make people homeless, to its excessive use of violence against activists and social movements shows a state that has not cut its ties with the past but instead has brought that past into the present.

In the moments of feeling re-abandoned by the state through its neoliberal economic policies, the Housing Assembly has defied the individualistic nature of capitalism and given people a space to come together. Even while evictions force people from their land, dispossessing them of everything, the Housing Assembly has provided a collective space, a home, a family and a sense of belonging. And it has used learning and knowledge production to do that. As this report has showed, community members joined the Housing Assembly, not to get a house or to see the movement as a vehicle to protest for a house, but to learn and gain more knowledge so that they could make sense and understand their material conditions, so that they could know their rights to protect themselves, to feel dignity and purpose again.

The power of the knowledge production and learning processes of the Housing Assembly lies in its capacity to build collective power. It has used the struggle for housing, which for all the intent and

purpose of capitalism can be an individual pursuit, and shifted this into a collective struggle. Rather than individually waiting for a house for over 15 to 20 years, or individually standing on the sidelines watching their shacks being demolished, they are now collectively fighting for decent housing. Rebuking the apartheid approach to education, the Housing Assembly has turned learning and knowledge production into a tool of liberation – both from the system but also freeing the shackles of oppression from the minds of the poor. At the center of its learning and knowledge production is "the house" which has become a political and pedagogical tool. Through the concept and struggle for a decent house, activists and community members get to understand the systemic and structural nature of their oppression. This is why so many members of the Housing Assembly have testified to why they have joined the Housing Assembly – it went further than getting a house to seeing knowledge as the catalyst for changing the system that will result in getting a house.

The Housing Assembly has made use of both formal and informal methods to produce knowledge and to learn. Alternative methods for educating community members is what is unique about the movement. Every opportunity and space is seen as potential for passing on knowledge. This knowledge comes not from outsiders coming in and teaching the community activists about their conditions of existence, but rather it is their conditions of existence and their lived experience that drives the learning in the Housing Assembly. It is a movement that has emerged from is context – from the lived experiences of its members and from the conditions of their existence. Because the right to decent housing is the fundamental basis for this movement, it has become the political and pedagogical tool to organise, to build knowledge and to develop activism from. It is therefore crucial that, in staying authentic to its working class politics and ideology, the Housing Assembly has used the house/home to defy the neoliberal conception of the house as private and individualised and has transformed it into a public good and a collective struggle. It is also the space through which the Housing Assembly has encountered the any intersecting identities and struggle that as enriched the movement and its activism.

Even the act of imagining what a decent house means to the membership of the Housing Assembly is a powerful tool as it has allowed the movement to engage in prefigurative politics where democracy, and the world the activists want to live in is embodied in that imagined house that extends beyond its four walls, electricity, water, indoor toilet and yard, but also includes schools, health clinics and parks. It is powerful imagery that spurs the movement to continuously engage with their existing conditions because it is a fight that is bigger than the house. It is a fight for a transformed system which is depicted in its slogan of Everyone and Organiser and its Big Fish Small Fish imagery. This has shown us that grassroots knowledge is a powerful transformational tool that has the ability to change systems.

This understanding house as a political and pedagogical tool has also transformed the movement and how it approaches struggle. Through the house Housing Assembly activists have encountered a multitude of different but connected struggles – it was no longer a single issue struggle of the working class for a house but an intersectional struggle that mapped race and class discrimination over each other. However, the movement is still to overlay the patriarchy as another system of oppression and include, in its struggle, the fight for gender equality and women's rights. The fight for decent housing is being led by women in the movement but is not connected to the fight for women's rights. It is being led by women because the inadequate housing and lack of basic services is hindering women from doing their domestic care work properly and without inconvenience. Whilst there are lone women's voices trying to push the boundaries of the working class ideology to begin to incorporate struggles against the patriarchy, it has yet to be centered in the movement in the same way that working class politics has been rooted.

The effects of the how and what of learning and knowledge production of the Housing Assembly is slower to see, but the groundwork has been established for real power shifts to happen that are driven by a grassroots movement. The Housing Assembly has turned the site of its struggle, into the pedagogical tool and together with that, has grounded the pedagogy in the politics of systems of oppression as experienced through the house. It has taken an apartheid tactic for organising and turned it into a powerful tool to build a movement where its cornerstone is learning and knowledge production. The house as the site of struggle has also enabled the movement to push through the barriers of former social movements and anti-apartheid movements to present the struggle as intersectional, as not a singular struggle by incorporating racial and class oppression (and more recently gender oppression). Perhaps one of the key effects of the knowledge production and learning has been that in the bid to build a grassroots movement for systemic change, it has also defied the individualism perpetuated by capitalism, by creating a space – a common area almost- for community members and activists to feel like they belong, that they are part of a family, that there is a collective struggle and voice.

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