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level: poverty, protest and social
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John J Williams

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Av. Callao 875 | piso 5º “J” [recepción] | C1023AAB | Buenos Aires | Argentina

Tel [54 11] 4811 6588 | Fax [54 11] 4812 8459

clacso@clacso.edu.ar | www.clacso.org



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The Everyday at Grassroots level: poverty, protest and social change in post-apartheid South Africa

John J Williams¹

Abstract

This paper posits that social change derives from how the everyday is encountered, analyzed and experienced at the grassroots level. Drawing extensively from the seminal work of Henri Lefebvre, the paper argues that for ordinary people in post-apartheid South Africa, the everyday is often an instantiation of multiple contradictions, tensions, conflicts and struggles as the promises of a “better life for all”, the mantra of the Mbeki government, would appear to remain largely rhetorical as evidenced by the increasing levels of homelessness and unemployment since the creation of the democratic State in 1994. The failure to substantively improve the everyday reality experienced by the poor, homeless and unemployed, has given rise throughout the country, especially from 2004 to 2009, to massive protests by communities against local authorities (municipalities). The paper concludes by considering the question whether or not this type of community discontent could serve to transform the everyday into a more equitable and democratic dispensation at the grassroots level.

Keywords:

Everyday, epistemic formations, Henri Lefebvre, existential suffering, structural continuities, institutional incompetence, Pierre Bourdieu, alternative understanding.

¹ John J. Williams, PhD (Illinois, USA), is a Professor in the School of Government, University of the Western Cape, South Africa and can be reached at jjwilliams@uwc.ac.za or jayjayconstl@telkomsa.net.

General Introduction

The Problems of Social Change in Post-apartheid South Africa

The new South Africa is not a miracle. On the contrary, it is the outcome of a tenacious struggle, by mostly black South Africans, against their exploitation and oppression by colonists and racists for almost 350 years. And, judged by the almost more than 10,000 social protests a year in 'post-apartheid' South Africa, which averages approximately 30 protests a day, these struggles for justice continue.² The challenge of fundamental, meaningful social change is, thus, far from over in South Africa! Indeed, based on my earlier research (Williams, 1989; 2000a,b,c; 2003, 2004a, 2004b) it can be suggested that the struggle for a just society can be divided into at least seven interrelated phases, namely:

1. Pre-1976 period: This is the strategic dormant participatory phase, which mostly consisted in the largely passive dream for liberation amidst unspeakable forms of oppression and exploitation;
2. 1976: The Soweto Revolt, when school students resolved not to be taught in Afrikaans, the mother tongue of the racist Afrikaner regime, which prompted black students elsewhere in the country to join in the struggle against gutter education and in pursuit of national liberation;
3. 1977–1983: The death of Steve Biko, in September 1977, signalled the need not only for community organization and mobilization at the grassroots level, but also for community control. Hence, in subsequent years, the multiple spaces of community organization and mobilization throughout South Africa especially after 1980 eventually culminated in the birth of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The UDF claimed operational spaces against the Apartheid State throughout South Africa, sustaining community forms of liberating struggles at street and neighbourhood levels, often in the name of the banned liberation movements, such as the African National Congress;
4. 1984–1989: Period of intensification of the struggle against the Apartheid State from the local to the international arenas, resulting in a range of divestment campaigns and cultural boycotts aimed at any sector connected with the Apartheid State. This period created moments of lack of governability throughout South Africa;
5. 1990–1994: This period signalled the end of the bans on liberation movements and the beginning of the consensual politics of negotiation. The negotiated settlement of a range of promissory spaces of participation, eg the Reconstruction and Development Programme of 1994 and the Constitution of South Africa in 1996. The former focused on the outcome of community participation and the latter on establishing the right to participate in local government planning programmes;
6. 1996–2000: The need for visible, experientially significant forms of social change gave rise to the establishment of various types of 'development' partnerships mediated by socio-historical relations of power and trust resulting in largely truncated spaces of participation as indicated in this paper;
7. 2000–2004 and beyond: Interpreting democratic practices based on the experiential index of the past ten years since the birth of

² This paper will provide detailed references about these social protests in a later section.

democratic South Africa in 1994, from euphoria to disappointment, from increasing hope to existential despair. This gave rise to the birth of transformative spaces, such as the Constitutional Court Treatment Action Campaign, Jubilee 2000 and a myriad other local initiatives that seek to democratize the politically liberated spaces in South Africa.

The preceding historical brief outlines the struggle for justice in South Africa. It indicates quite clearly that social change is the outcome of determined action by the oppressed against the oppressors. In a putatively democratic society such as that of South Africa change is supposedly carried out in an orderly fashion via planning. But planning from whose perspective? On whose terms? And in whose interests? Paradoxically, though, in the 'new' South Africa the past continues to exist in the present order, as planning still largely follows the oppressive apartheid-based model of 'separate spatial locations' for different 'racial groups' (cf eg City of Cape Town, 2009a; 2009b). In short, in comparison with the so-called 'whites', the majority of black citizens, generally, still experience debilitating socioeconomic conditions of homelessness, unemployment and poverty. For example, in the recent paper "South Africa's Economic Performance: global/local capitalist crisis," presented during a Public Discussion at the Riverside Hotel in Durban, South Africa, Patrick Bond, a political economist at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, pointed out eight core problems in the South African society, affecting mostly black South Africans,³ namely:

1. Gross inequality: In the immediate post-apartheid era there was a rise in income inequality, though slightly offset after 2001 by increased welfare payments, but the Gini coefficient⁴ soared from below 0.6 in 1994 to 0.72 by 2006 (0.8 if welfare income is excluded).⁵
2. Lack of jobs: the official unemployment rate doubled (from 16 percent in 1994 to around 32 percent by the early 2000s, falling to 26 percent by the late 2000s, but including those who gave up looking for work, 40 percent) as a result of imported Asian goods in labour-intensive sectors (clothing, textiles, footwear, appliances and electronics) and more capital-intensive production (especially mining and metals). Indeed, according to Du Toit and van Tonder (2009, p 15) "Robust growth of 5 percent after 2004 did not translate into meaningful lower poverty rates as government policies and their implementation were unable to resolve the unemployment and associated socioeconomic problems in the economy."
3. Lack of adequate housing: Provision of housing to several millions of people marred by small size of units (variously called by poor

³ Bond, Patrick (2009) "South Africa's Economic Performance: global/local capitalist crisis" Public Discussion, Riverside Hotel, Durban, South Africa, 9 March 2009; cf also: <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/files/Microsoft%20PowerPoint%20-%20Bond%20ANC%20economic%20manifesto.ppt.pdf>. This text has been adjusted to cohere with the arguments in this paper and the recommendation of the reviewer for CLACSO.

⁴ The Gini coefficient is an economic measurement of equality in society. A low Gini coefficient indicates a more equal distribution, with 0 corresponding to perfect equality, while higher Gini coefficients indicate more unequal distribution, with 1 corresponding to perfect inequality.

⁵ Cf also Charlotte Du Toit and Johann van Tonder (2009, p 16) in their chapter on "South Africa's economic performance since 1994: can we do better?" In Raymond Parsons (ed.) (2009) *Zumanomics: Which way to shared prosperity in South Africa – challenges for a new government* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media).

people in the ghettos⁶ of South Africa as ‘unos’, ‘smarties’ and ‘kennels’ and even apartheid ‘matchboxes’), location far from jobs and community amenities, construction with less durable building materials, lower-quality municipal services, and higher-priced debt if and when housing credit is available;

4. Poor services: ‘free’ water and electricity is now provided to many low-income people, but the overall price has risen dramatically since 1994, hence millions of people face disconnection each year (and cannot afford a second block of water consumption);

5. Lack of health facilities: There has been a deterioration of the healthcare system, along with an increase in AIDS, which meant life expectancy declined from 65 years (1994) to 52 years (2004);

6. Poor education: Most black schools are dysfunctional, as a result of excessive cost recovery and fiscal austerity. Consequently, more than 35 percent of students drop out by grade 5 and 48 percent by grade 12. Equally important is the fact that 27 percent of the schools lack running water, 43 percent lack electricity, and 80 percent lack libraries and computers (2001);

7. Increasingly toxic environment: According to the “2006 Environmental Outlook” governmental report, there has been “a general decline in the state of the environment”, with, eg CO₂ emissions now 20 times higher than in the US (by per capita GDP); and

8. Higher crime rates: Corruption reaches the highest ranks of the South African state executive, the army and police, and the high crime rate causes a micro arms race that leaves working-class households more vulnerable to robberies, house break-ins, car theft and other petty crimes (with increases of more than 1/3 in these categories in 1994–2001), as well as epidemic levels of rape and violent crime.

This author’s own research in poor communities in Cape Town, in areas such as Khayelitsha and Mitchell’s Plain, essentially, black dormitory townships, bears out the above-mentioned deteriorating circumstances in poor areas, especially since 1994.⁷ In this regard, the recently published texts of the City of Cape reinforce this picture of a highly unequal society, with black South Africans, suffering the brunt of the colonial-apartheid legacy, as copiously illustrated in their publications *Khayelitsha, Beyond 2010* and *Mitchell’s Plain: Beyond 2010*. In short, there are too few opportunities for poor people, high-school leavers, and university graduates to enter the formal economy, and in the meantime, the government-funded Sector and Education and Training Authorities (SETAS) spent only R4.3 billion of the R5.1 billion National Skills Fund in 2007–08. In the same way, in the Public Work Programmes, which started in 2004, with a goal of creating 650,000 real jobs within a year, only 19 percent of this target was met by 2007 (Du Toit and van Tonder, 2009, pp 20–24). It would, thus appear that meaningful change for ordinary people is not necessarily promoted through government programmes, as

6 In South Africa ghettos are called ‘townships’, whereas in Brazil they are known as ‘favelas’.

7 I am currently conducting research on Community Development Workers in Khayelitsha and Mitchell’s Plain where the social conditions of these townships are the *raison d’être* for Community Development Workers who are supposed to be the ‘voice and ears’ of government in communities to ensure that their complaints are attended to expeditiously (Comment by the Regional Director of Community Development Workers, the Western Cape, during a workshop, entitled “Research and its implications for public policy,” on Friday, September 18, 2009, at the School of Government, University of the Western Cape).

there seems to be institutional incapacity or inertia (that is, unwillingness to co-operate across the three spheres of governance to implement such programmes)⁸. As this paper later suggests, these problems are perhaps also related to a lack of political will, the determined efforts of those who served in the Apartheid order to undermine the ANC government, and the apparent incidence of corruption in the different spheres of government. Consequently, people at the grassroots level experience frustration and disappointment at government's apparent lack of concern for their daily plight of unemployment, homelessness and poverty. This explains their determination to see change happening in their communities, through social protests, embracing a cause in some instances, ie the very methods of struggle used against the former Apartheid State.

Indeed, it is argued in this paper that social change derives, dialectically, from the contradictions, tensions, conflicts and struggles in society. This is true not only for South Africa, but also for societies elsewhere in the world, especially in the global South or most areas of the world that, historically, were ruthlessly exploited and oppressed by colonizers, especially European ones. Thus, for example, in Latin America today the struggle is against the presence and practices of neo-liberal policies implemented through military and paramilitary means (with the US industrial-military complex) which play a significant role (Qayum, 2007); whereas in African countries social opposition is linked to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to the US by means of policies and practices that undermine the general welfare of especially poor citizens, and in India social struggles are waged against the construction of large dams which entail deforestation and massive resettlement of poor communities in major parts of the Asian subcontinent (Roy, 2002; 2006). These current struggles for social justice are essentially in opposition to neoliberalism, which largely privatizes the basic needs of ordinary people on the ubiquitous market, consequently resulting in the commodification of every aspect of society. Stripped of all nuances, and in its most simplistic/basic form, the market logic dictates: if you cannot pay for it, you must stay without it. This means if you cannot pay for water, health care, housing and related services you will not have such services notwithstanding the rhetoric of basic 'free services' to indigent citizens (Bond, 2003). This neoliberal rationale also operates in the 'new' South Africa where despite the provisions of the liberal constitution, basic rights such as access to housing, water, health care, and so forth, often show a disconnection between the constitutional provisions and the actual reality of ordinary people in short, people do not have access to basic services as they are simply too poor to pay for them, and if they are available, bureaucratic inefficiency often impedes access to them. This is illustrated by, for example, current education and health indicators:

Educational standards in South Africa, especially for black students continue to be dismal. Laments a former anti-apartheid activist: "South Africa is routinely outperformed in all standardized tests for literacy and maths. Results are nearly bottom in the Southern African Development Community and among the worst in Africa, despite higher levels of spending and greater resources. Just 7% of schools produce 67% of mathematics higher grade passes; 79% produce a dismal 15%. In the Western Cape, 85% of Grade 6 pupils at formerly white schools read at 6th-grade level in 2005; whilst only 5% of Africans can do so. The corresponding figure for maths is a mediocre 65% for white schools and only 2% for African. In matric (ie Grade 12), disparities remain: 39.4% of black candidates failed in 2007 against 1.6% of whites. Exemptions (ie results allowing a per-

⁸ The South African State consists of three spheres of government: national, provincial and local and they are supposed to co-operate to ensure effective, transparent governance in terms of the provision of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996).

son to proceed to university) for black students in matric in 2007 (10.9% vs 52% for whites) show that little has changed since 1991 when the figure was 10.8%. Half of all black learners drop out. By any measure, 60-80% of our schools are dysfunctional, achieving poor education outcomes. It is largely black, rural and poor learners who suffer." (*Cape Times*, March 13, 2008, p 9).

According to a recent report of the Medical Research Council of South Africa, about 75,000 children die in South Africa every year before they turn five. Of those, almost a third, ie 22,000, are dead within a month of being born, making South Africa one of only 12 countries along with Iraq, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Kenya, all ravaged by war and HIV-Aids with a rising child mortality rate. There are a further 20,000 stillborn babies every year... South Africa's child mortality rate of 69 every 1,000 [is] three times higher than Brazil's. [Furthermore], a third of the children who died were severely malnourished and more than 60 percent were underweight for their age; whilst at least 294,000 children live with HIV-Aids; more shockingly, perhaps, black infants are more than four times as likely to die than white infants (*The Times*, March 12, 2008, p 4).

Even quite early in the 21st century, it was noted by some commentators that 70 percent of the black people in Cape Town have problems feeding their children; unemployment for males is 32 percent and for females 53 percent; there are 5 persons per household; 82 percent have less than grade 12 education. In the meantime, the wealthy in the Cape Town area owe the municipality up to R1.75 billion, ie 70 percent of debt [arrears for electricity rates], yet their services are not discontinued at gunpoint, as in the case of the poorest 30-35 percent of people on the Cape Flats who owe the Council R750 million for services (*Cape Times*, May 1, 2003). Moreover, in these racial ghettos of Cape Town, hundreds of poor people still use the bucket system to remove sewage and in some areas refuse has not been collected for two years (*Mail & Guardian*, May 2003). And in 2008, at least 2 percent, ie 60,000 people, had no toilets and had to use the bushes to relieve themselves, whilst 3 percent, or 90,000, still use the 19th century bucket system; whilst more than 400,000 citizens in Cape Town, or approximately 15 percent, mostly black South Africans, are still homeless and live in shacks or informal settlements. These statistics suggest that life in democratic South Africa is 'far from a miracle' and falls far short of the lofty promises of the country's constitution. Accordingly, this paper has a three-fold aim:

First, it argues that in order to experience the post-apartheid democratic dividend of 'a better life for all', planning must be fundamentally transformed to meet the constitutionally held rights of all South Africans. This is where organization, mobilization and protests at the grassroots level seem to be playing a very important role by highlighting the continuing contradictions in the South African society.

Second, this paper posits that in a society undergoing transition to democracy, planning is often problematic as the planning bureaucrats do not necessarily respond proactively to the basic requirements of democratic practices such as transparency, meaningful community participation and social justice. On the contrary, as Robert Goodman argued more than a quarter of a century ago in *After the Planners* (1971, 12-13), architects and planners often promote inequity, injustice and oppression. In his judgment: "[Planners] aren't the visible symbols of oppression, like the military and the police. [They are] more sophisticated, more educated, and more socially conscious. They are the soft cops."

Third, this paper uses Henri Lefebvre's triad of spaces of *l'espace perçu* (perceived space), *l'espace conçu* (conceived space), *l'espace vécu* (experiential space),

and argues that in the 'new' South Africa urban and regional planning (henceforth 'planning') is replete with multiple contradictions, tensions and struggles.

The rest of this paper consists of the following interrelated sections:

- Introducing and problematizing Henri Lefevre's concept of planning;
- The racist construction of space in apartheid South Africa: *l'espace perçu* (perceived space), *l'espace conçu* (conceived space), *l'espace vécu* (experiential space);
- The epistemic formations of the everyday;
- The everyday in Henri Lefevre's parlance: *l'espace perçu* (perceived space);
- The everyday and existential suffering;
- Post-apartheid planning must change;
- Planning and its lack of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa;
- Planning and experiential poverty: a denial of basic human rights;
- Social protest to advance progressive planning; and
- Conclusions and recommendations

Introducing and problematizing Henri Lefevre's concept of planning: *l'espace perçu* (perceived space), *l'espace conçu* (conceived space), *l'espace vécu* (experiential space):

For Henri Lefebvre (1991), planning is a response by the State to the inherent contradictions, tensions and conflicts in society. Lefebvre analyzes space along three axes (Shields, 2001, 228–230). In simplified terms they are the 'perceived space' (*le perçu*) of everyday social life and commonsensical perception blends of popular action and outlook but often ignored in the professional and theoretical 'conceived space' (*le conçu*) of cartographers, urban planners or property speculators. Nonetheless, the person who is fully human (*'l'homme totale'*) also dwells in a 'lived space' (*le vécu*) of the imagination and moments which have been kept alive and accessible by the arts and literature. This 'third' space not only transcends but also has the power to refigure the balance of popular 'perceived space' and the 'conceived space' of arrogant professionals and greedy capitalists (ibid.).

Lefebvre's triad of spaces transfigures, reinterprets or recodes an historical 'settlement' of forces as space operates at all scales. At the most personal level, we think of ourselves in spatialized terms, imagining ourselves in relation to an ensemble of social relations connected to specific objects, groups of people, ideas about regions, media images and perceptions about particular experiences in society. That is the importance of Lefebvre's notion of differential positioning, which opens the way for alterity and otherness to be brought into the dialectical schema of being, consciousness and the possibility of social change within the living environment, where geographical space is the defining operational territory of social action, where to exist (in the ontological realm) means also to dream, understand, ponder and change the world within the immediate household, community, neighbourhood, environs and even beyond (Lefebvre, 80-86; 197). It is precisely in such a geographically specific territory where democracy, or its contemplation, understanding, contestation and instantiation, occurs and where people are and actualize their rights be they accorded, contested or claimed (Lefebvre, 249). In the South African context, the everyday comprises a range of spatialities through which people tie 'lived

space' to spatial practice, as well as the social imaginary of a 'better life for all' to the basic rights enshrined in the South African constitution (Act 108 of 1996). It is precisely the social imaginary realm that animates people, providing meaning to their everyday experiences at the grassroots level where too frequently, though, existential suffering is still too pervasive, as borne out by the evidence in the ensuing section. Wallacedene in Cape Town illustrates this triad of spaces most graphically, as shown by the Grootboom Case where the Court ruled in favour of poor people who, after being denied access to housing by local government officials, occupied vacant land in the late 1990s (cf Williams, 2005). At the beginning of the 21st century, the South African Constitutional Court ruled that government should take reasonable steps to ensure the progressive realization of the basic rights of ordinary people at grassroots level (ibid.). Despite this landmark judgment, seven years later, the State has yet to carry out the Court's instruction to honour the basic rights of ordinary citizens in Cape Town!

Generally, there would seem to be a lack of planning mechanisms among local authorities (municipalities) that deal explicitly with such Court rulings, which uphold the rights of ordinary citizens to housing and related services. Indeed, there would also seem to be some bureaucrats who are deliberately making significant *noise* of confusion, using all manner of red tape to negate the material dividends guaranteed by the post-apartheid Constitution. Here it has to be stressed that the everyday relations connecting citizens to the rest of society do not exist outside the larger web of power relations, thus structuring the very nature of citizen rights and obligations. And, in the case of South Africa, these relations of power have been profoundly shaped by the colonial-cum-apartheid planning structures of South Africa, which in turn were based on the British 'efficiency' approach to planning that emphasized technical solutions to extant societal problems, as defined by architects and engineers (McCarthy & Smith, 1984).

The racist construction of space in apartheid South Africa: *l'espace perçu* (perceived space), *l'espace conçu* (conceived space), *l'espace vécu* (experiential space)

In South Africa 'efficiency concerns' were largely expressed through a racist lens. Consider the following principles in terms of which planning had to occur in apartheid South Africa. On May 30, 1952 in a speech in Parliament, the then minister of Native Affairs, Dr Hendrick F. Verwoerd, declared: Everybody wants his servants and his labourers, but nobody wants to have a native location near his own suburb. Therefore:

- Every town or city, especially industrial cities, must have a single corresponding black township;
- Townships must be large, and must be situated to allow for expansion without spilling over into another racial group area;
- Townships must be located at an adequate distance from white areas;
- Black townships should be separated from white areas by an area of industrial sites where industries exist or are being planned;
- Townships should be within easy reach of the city, preferably by rail and not by road transport;
- All race group areas should be situated so as to allow access to

the common industrial areas and the CBD, without necessitating travel through the group area by another race;

- Black townships should be separated from white areas by an area of industrial sites where industries exist or are being planned;
- Townships should be at a considerable distance from main areas, and more particularly national roads, the use of which as local transportation routes should be discouraged; and
- Existing poorly situated areas should be moved (Williams, 1989).

The preceding colonial-cum-apartheid practices were vigorously challenged during the anti-apartheid struggle. Even so, because of the spatial embeddedness of dominant capitalist power relations, uneven development in South Africa in general, and in Cape Town in particular, continues to be an existential reality, especially in the lives of ordinary people at grassroots level (Williams, 2006). Here, however, it must be mentioned that since 1994 the South African government has made several successful efforts to introduce a range of policies and planning programmes that are geared towards the amelioration of the plight of the poor in the new democratic order (Pillay et al., 2006). Even so, as this paper highlights, an exemplary constitution and sound policies are not sufficient, especially when their associated human rights provisions are not implemented consistently and systematically in the planning frameworks and monitoring mechanisms of local authorities (municipalities). This prompted the almost regular protests against poor service delivery in South Africa in general, and in Cape Town in particular, since the ‘transformation’ of local government in 2000.⁹ Existing evidence seems also to suggest that for ordinary people, institutionally, the everyday is characterized by profound levels of incompetence amongst certain sectors of local governance. This prompted the protests against poor service delivery and related problems protests that were aimed at improving the everyday experiences of citizens at the grassroots level, acknowledging their dignity as citizens of the ‘new South Africa’.¹⁰

The epistemic formations of the everyday: *l'espace conçu* (conceived space)

Epistemic formations refer to the nature, origin and development of specific knowledge about the everyday and how such knowledge illuminates planning and advances social change, especially for ordinary citizens at the grassroots level. This research suggests that, in the South African context, focusing on the everyday allows us to gain epistemological insights that are as fresh and thought-provoking as the temporal/spatial axis which has shifted at least constitutionally to also favour the interests of ordinary people! It is in this regard that we should take note of Delanty and Strydom’s (2003, p 10) observation that “Knowledge is less about knowing reality than about emergent forms of the real and a reflexive relation to the world which is shaped by cognitive practices, structures and processes.”

The everyday is multi-layered and open to multiple interpretations and representations giving equal legitimacy to subjugated understandings of eve-

⁹ Some statistics are provided later in this paper to support this argument.

¹⁰ As one of the community activists in Cape Town inquired during a meeting with this author: “Where is the dignity when the poor still have to use the bushes as toilets, where is the dignity that the constitution talks about when we are still poor, still homeless, and when 100 percent of some households are unemployed? Tell me where is this much-talked about ‘dignity’!” Interview conducted on January 26, 2009.

ryday experiences of ordinary people, eg things that cannot be discerned, yet believed passionately by participants (Alain Badiou, 2003). This conceptualization of the 'everyday' suggests that one must confront and accept that one's research is embedded in practical discourses within particular socioeconomic, political-ethical frameworks. This also means that the social world where democracy is supposed to occur problematizes any simplistic or linear understanding of the human condition (cf Hannah Arendt, 1958). For me, therefore, 'democracy' or anything resembling it, is a product of continuous human engagement, endeavour and creativity. Thus, I take Michel Foucault's epistemological marker very seriously: "Hegemonic power creates and maintains social systems, hence the marginalization and exclusion of certain vulnerable groups in the name of 'order' knowledge leads to classification, power gives rise to marginalization and the concern with order results in systematized control. 'Institutional' forms of social control are exercised by authorities. Hence the lives of individuals are strictly regimented. 'Normative' patterns of behaviour are established in order to eradicate 'difference', since it is regarded as a potentially subversive element of behaviour" (Foucault, 1972:7).

Theorizing relations of power in such problematic Foucauldian terms, amongst other methodological implications, means that one has to take the deconstruction and reconstruction of subjectivity of the everyday experience seriously: the psychological, social, and cultural forms through which individuals are constructed as subjects; the complex and contradictory ways in which individuals define themselves as autonomous, self-legislating, and rational; the emotional investments that individuals come to have in their identities and communities; the impact that self-constitution carries for understanding the reproduction, disruption and transformation of society and culture via the everyday experiences of ordinary people; the relational nature of human experience the fuse that connects an identity of reason and reality or reconfigures the relation of self to other in the 'everyday'; questioning the positioning of the researcher/theorist via the notions of projection and transference; analysis of the symbols through which individuals represent the social world internally; exploration, questioning, and critique of the rich imaginary organization of psychic reality and ultimately selfhood; the clash or gap between consciousness, rationality, agency and unconscious desire, fantasy and emotion. In view of the aforementioned epistemological dimensions which constitute one's understanding of the everyday, there is, therefore, a need to be sensitive to experience, difference, otherness, and the existential needs and concerns of ordinary people "where they are and hope to be" and "not where we want them to be" (cf also Elliot and Turner, 2001, p. 5). This means that in Social Science research there are no eternal truths, only provisional truths as the experience of the everyday is in constant flux and change (Allaby, 1995, pp 24–40). It is this epistemological fluidity that characterizes my research methodology and hermeneutic disposition. Hence, allow me to conclude with a quote from the work of the inimitable French scholar, Pierre Bourdieu (2003, p 233) where he observes that:

We must try in every case to mobilize all the techniques that are relevant and practically usable, given the definition of the object and the practical conditions of the data collection... I would be tempted to say that the only one rule applies: "it is forbidden to forbid" or watch out for the methodological watchdogs!

Congruent with this Bourdieuan flexibility vis-à-vis the epistemological basis of research, transdisciplinarity and methodological open-endedness should, accordingly, also underpin how we theorize and understand the everyday. But this seems to be precisely the problem in South Africa at large, where the voices of the poor, especially, do not seem to count as informed, and where they are not

deemed knowledgeable citizens about their specific contexts. In the words of a very articulate activist in Cape Town:

You, as researchers, claim to know everything about the poor. Yet, when did you consult the poor, talk to the poor, listen to the poor when you draw up your research plans; when you decided about your research methodologies, carried out your 'research' and 'interpreted' your research results'? Are you doing this with the poor, or on the poor? Do you really know the poor? All this statistical stuff that you are showing us here, may make sense to you, but to us, this is only *your* interpretation, not ours (original emphasis). Therefore, it does not make sense to us. You now call us 'social entrepreneurs'. But this your interpretation! And in whose interests are your interpretations? I am going away here feeling that I have been interpreted. Yet, I must make it clear that you do not know the truth about the poor, how the poor struggle, and how the poor will continue to struggle for social justice, despite your research, despite your interpretations!¹¹

It is precisely these one-sided views, highlighted by the Cape Town activist, on what counts as research in capitalist societies that needs be interrogated, exposed and transformed through the dialectic of bottom-up engagement and social change at the grassroots level. It is in this regard, where the work of Henri Lefebvre's on *l'espace perçu* (perceived space) assumes epistemological significance in practice.

The everyday in Henri Lefebvre's parlance: *l'espace perçu* (perceived space)

For Lefebvre (2003, 100) the everyday in capitalist societies is inherently problematic as it consists of utopian discourses minus their materialization in the actual lives of ordinary people. Thus, there is a gap between the rulers and the ruled, the elected and the electorate, the demos (people) and the democracy (the governing system), giving rise to multiple tensions, contradictions, tensions and conflicts between those who exercise authority (the rulers) and those who are subject to authority (the citizens). It is precisely this gap between 'utopian' thinking and its associated promises of a 'better life for all' that characterizes the everyday in South Africa at the beginning of the 21st century. In order to understand planning in post-apartheid South Africa in general, and Cape Town in particular, it is important to understand the everyday experiences of ordinary people. As Henri Lefebvre (2003, pp 69–70, 06) reminds us, the 'everyday' is the prism through which ordinary people give meaning to their lives.

Against 'mystification', against the banality of the 'everyday' life, Lefebvre proposes that we seize and act-on all 'moments' of revelation, emotional clarity and self-presence as the basis for becoming more self-fulfilled (*l'homme totale*: 'total man'). This concept of 'moments' reappears throughout his work, as a theory of presence and the foundation of a practice of emancipation (Lefebvre, 172–175, 217–218). Experiences of revelation, *déjà-vu* sensations, but especially love and committed struggle are examples of moments. By definition, moments are instances of dis-alienation. They have no duration but can be relived. These cannot easily be reappropriated by consumer capitalism and commodified; they cannot be codified. They are 'escape-hatches' from the alienated condition of everyday life which can be experienced unexpectedly, anywhere and at

¹¹ Comment made at the end of the workshop, entitled "Research and its implications for public policy," Friday, Sept 18, 2009 at the School of Government, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa.

any time. In this sense Lefebvre can be said to have a form of temporal theory of authenticity based on the 'timelessness' and instantaneity of moments. Accordingly, he attempts to establish the presence of a 'lived' experience and understanding of geographical space alongside the hegemonic theories of space promulgated by disciplines such as philosophy or geography or urban planning or the everyday attitude, which ignored the spatial aspect completely (Lefebvre, 2006). In capitalist societies, for example, the geographical space is 'spatialized' as lots. Thus, land is always owned by someone. Hence a privatized notion of space anchors the understanding of property, which is a central cultural feature of capitalist societies (Lefebvre, 207-209).

Yet, what appears to be remarkable to this author, is that in the South African reality, this understanding of property appears to be alien to most academics, even those who would claim to be working towards a new socio-spatial order, where black and white need to be 'integrated spatially'. Most 'white' academics seem to take as a *fait accompli* that the ghettos of South Africa (euphemistically called 'townships', as indicated earlier) need to be 'developed', even though they are structurally separate from the 'developed' parts of the city and that less than 5 percent of the land in South Africa (both urban and rural) has been redistributed to the majority in South Africa, who happens to be comprised of black South Africans. Without addressing land ownership within South Africa at large, 'perceived space' in the Lefebvrian parlance will forever be 'white space' (even though they have been colonized and segregated by 'white' settlers since 1652). It is precisely this problematic of academic silence, and continued spatial planning along apartheid concepts, practices and imaginary constructs that the poor continue to experience exclusion from land as 'property lots', worth millions of rand in both urban and rural South Africa.¹² Yet, as experienced by the mostly landed or property-owning classes in places like Cape Town and its environs, poor people are refusing to remain quiet about their spatial exclusion from the land of their ancestors, as the ensuing sections will illustrate.

The everyday and existential suffering: *l'espace vécu* (experiential space)

The everyday operates not merely as ontological presence but also as a reflexive referent or image of the ideal world of promises fulfilled and dreams realized or deferred.

For example, contrary to the basic human rights provisions in the South African constitution, in South Africa as a whole, unemployment is more than 40 percent and the economy has lost more than one million jobs since 1995, affecting mostly lower-skilled black employees. About 45 percent of South Africans live in poor households, ie earning less than the Household Subsistence Level of R1,000.00 (ie approximately US\$125 per month), with adults earning R353.53 (approximately US\$44) a month on average. In rural areas, poverty levels have increased to more than 50 percent of the population. Sixty-one percent of Africans are poor, compared with 1 percent whites. Three million households lack housing; 7.5 million lack access to running water and 21 million do not have access to sanitation. Five million South Africans have HIV/AIDS, whilst the crime rate in South Africa is among the highest in the world (*Sunday Times*, April 27, 2003). This means that since the birth of democratic South Africa in 1994 unemployment has increased, while 2.5 million young people have entered the potential labour market and have been unable to get

¹² Cf eg Alison Todes (2006) "Urban Spatial Policy," in *Democracy and Delivery Urban Policy in South Africa*, edited by Udesch Pillay, Richard Tomlinson & Jacques du Toit (Cape Town: HSRC Press).

permanent jobs. The poorest 50 percent of South Africans, almost entirely black, are almost completely marginalized from the economy (*Sunday Times*, April 20, 2003). Economist Sampie Terreblanche, IRIN (2007) states that:

ANC policies over the past 13 years have created a black elite, the so-called 'black diamonds', of [around] 2 million people, and a black middle class of [about] 6 million. The gap between the [roughly] 8 million rich blacks and the 20 to 25 million poor blacks has become dangerously big. The other 10 to 15 million blacks are neither poor nor rich... The fact that [about] 20 percent of blacks have become rich, and even very rich, while 60 percent of blacks remain poor and have to live in deteriorating socio-economic conditions, is a deplorable and dangerous state of affairs... [The policy of black economic empowerment designed to overcome the economic injustices of the past had] "become derailed by corruption, nepotism and careerism... [and] built a comprehensive network of patronage, giving rise to the present [quite visible] power struggles within the ANC.

Ward Committees, established in terms of the Municipal Systems Act No 32 of 2000, are supposed to ensure public participation in issues of local governance (RSA, 2000). However, experience suggests that these committees are often riddled with troubling matters such as absenteeism, political favouritism, pressure from special racial interests groups, or else the councillors remain uncertain about their functions or when these committees are attended by community members, they often doubt that their attendance can make any impact on operating procedures and subsequent municipal development planning decisions. Hence such ward committees often suffer from a credibility crisis in the eyes of the communities at large (Hollands, 2003; Atkins, 2007, p 64). These credibility crises, or legitimacy crisis according to Jurgen Habermas (1973), are reinforced by a lack of perceived accountability of councillors to their constituencies as the ANC-led national government often handpicks the leaders at local government level, though local government, in terms of the SA constitution, is a sphere of governance in its own right and has concurrent powers with the national and provincial spheres. Also, the incidence of floor-crossing by political representatives of specific parties (ie changing parties) without losing their position as a Member of Parliament is high, and thereby undermines participatory democracy. The same applies to the practice of deployment by a specific party and the winner-takes-all executive mayoral system, the secret mayoral committees that are closed to the public, the decisions at council meetings which are ready for rubber-stamping by the 'party faithful', the ward committees are full of appointees belonging the dominant party, and the portfolio committees that lack the authority to call the executive to account. Thus open debates no longer occur in any meaningful way at local level all political practices undermine multi-party participatory democracy in South Africa (*Business Day*, February 7, 2006; Atkins, 2007, p 65).

The silencing of critical voices also applies to the manner in which planning continues to be along exclusionary, racist lines in Cape Town, as ward committees appear not to 'touch' topics that run counter to the neoliberal economic framework since 1996 in South Africa.¹³ But it is the poor who are challenging the silence of the ward committees and their official planning advisors, such as those at the University of Cape Town,¹⁴ who through social protests are putting the land issue

13 In 1996 the ANC-government dumped its quasi-socialist policy framework for the neoliberal economic framework, called "Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy" (cf eg Bond, 2000) in *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (Durban: University of Natal Press).

14 Cf eg Alison Todes (2006), p 52, "Urban Spatial Policy," in *Democracy and Delivery Urban Policy in South Africa*, edited by Udesch Pillay, Richard Tomlinson & Jacques du Toit (Cape Town: HSRC Press), where the influence on spatial planning of the privileged white universities is openly acknowledged.

in South Africa on the planning agenda (if not yet formally, then at least informally), as will be highlighted in several cases in the ensuing sections.

Post-apartheid planning must change: the challenge to transform apartheid *l'espace perçu* (perceived space), *l'espace conçu* (conceived space), *l'espace vécu* (experiential space):

Exclusionary planning practices did not end with the birth of democratic South Africa in 1994. On the contrary, it would appear that the affluent members of society, still mostly so-called 'white' in terms of chapter 7 of the South African constitution, subsections 152a-e often invoke the provisions made for public participation in the affairs of local government to maintain their privileges. In this respect, one only has to look at the 2006–07 conflicts around the plight of poor people in Hout Bay, Cape Town, to understand how the everyday experiences of ordinary people of homelessness are still largely ignored by the local authorities.¹⁵ To understand the historical roots of the everyday problematic of homelessness in Hout Bay, it is important to point out that Hout Bay was settled by the Dutch in the 1600s.¹⁶ They used the forested ravines to build and repair boats, hence the apt name 'Hout Baai' meaning Wood Bay. Currently, Hout Bay, like the rest of South Africa, consists of an unusual mix of residents living side by side in the little bay surrounded by mountains. On the one side there are those who live comfortably, and there are also those who live in the Imizamo Yethu township, to almost 16,000 residents, mostly black African and poor. The Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has been at the forefront of the struggle to improve the everyday experiences of poor people in Hout Bay by, amongst other steps, calling for a redistribution of land in Hout Bay. In their view:

Unused land must be expropriated from the wealthy in Hout Bay to serve the desperate land needs of the poorer community there, and the land occupiers should even be compensated a nominal amount. This expropriation will not be the first of its kind in South Africa; as we speak, land is being expropriated from communities in Gauteng to make way for the Gautrain, which will transport the wealthy to and from Pretoria. There is also an expropriation of sorts by Anglo Platinum of land for its mining operations, effectively displacing many households. The only difference here is that in Hout Bay the intention is to take land from the wealthy to use for poor communities. The issue is inequalities, and in this instance, the land question with specific reference to the Hout Bay situation, and the brutal attack of the Hout Bay Ratepayers' Association on the poor black communities through a court interdict.¹⁷

Accordingly, in 2006 the African National Congress Executive Mayor of Cape Town decided to rezone the adjacent 16 hectares of state land to build houses for the poor black people of Hout Bay. The Hout Bay Ratepayers' Association and the Hout Bay Residents' Association, however, objected to this decision and applied for a court interdict to prevent the rezoning of this particular area in Hout Bay. They were granted an interdict preventing government from using the designated 16 ha of government-owned land to provide housing for the poor people of Imizamo Yethu. The basis of this interdict derived from a 1993

¹⁵ cf eg ; Cape Times, December 10, 2006, p 9.

¹⁶ http://www.hsrcpublishers.ac.za/full_title_info.asp?id=1967 Morris, M. (2004) Every step of the way: the journey to freedom in South Africa (Cape Town: HSRC Press).

¹⁷ cf eg Cape Times, January 21, 2007.

apartheid, called the Less Formal Township Act, that decreed the 16 ha for amenities in terms of the provisions under the Separate Amenities Act under apartheid. Ironically, in a democratic South Africa, the notion of separate amenities is illegal, yet the court in the case of Hout Bay still used the Act to prevent poor people from exercising their democratic right to adequate housing.

In Cosatu's view, this court's interdict is "a declaration of war by the mainly wealthy, white community in the area, on the poor, mainly black community, and it has led to deep divisions."¹⁸ This ambiguity, or glaring contradiction in terms of the everyday dream (promised by the constitution of the new South Africa) and the application of racist apartheid laws (the court interdict), is an instantiation of what Henri Lefebvre calls the mythologization of the everyday as it would seem to be quite illusory to claim that oppression is absent from the actual reality of the poor in Hout Bay!

Planning and experiential poverty: a denial of basic human rights

Real estate valuations in Cape Town and its environs increased sharply especially since 1994; apparently as a form of market manipulation to keep black Africans out, especially from the formerly 'white' suburbs, as suggested by the South African Treasury:¹⁹

Despite the delivery of 1.97 million new subsidised since 1994, the housing backlog has grown. This is because of the increased demand and the pace of urbanization, with urban populations growing at 2.7 percent per year. The 2001 census indicated that there are over 1.8 million dwellings that can be classified as inadequate, meaning mostly shacks in informal settlements and back yards. This is up from 1.5 million in 1996, representing an increase of 20 percent. Despite increasing levels of construction in all housing markets, a spatially integrated residential market has not emerged. The repeal of the Group Areas Act in 1991 led to increasing demand for in well-serviced and well-located neighbourhoods. This has led to an increase in prices, sales and investment in this sector, while investment in large parts of the middle to lower end of the market has declined. While values in the upper 30 percent of the market have soared, the stagnation in township and inner city areas has been made worse by "red lining" by financial institutions. This means the institutions are unwilling to lend for housing in areas where the market is perceived to be unviable [ie in the black townships].

It also would appear that the more logical explanation for the 'redlining', and the objection to having black Africans as neighbours, derives more readily from "keeping Africans out of Cape Town as long as possible," presumably, and then ensuring that the City remains the last bastion of 'European-cum-western civilization' on the subcontinent. According to Verwoerd (quoted earlier in this paper), this might very well be a polemical view to outsiders who do not experience the continued marginalization and exclusion suffered by black South Africans in Cape Town, but if one were to read the 2006 slogans of the governing Democratic Alliance party in Cape Town ('Taking your City back'), this perception would seem to assume at least some experiential validity in view of the continuing contradictions, tensions and conflicts in urban South Africa in general, and Cape Town in particular (cf McKinley, 2006; May, 2006). In this regard, ponder

¹⁸ of the Cape Times, p 10, January 26, 2007.

¹⁹ <http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/ifr/2006/prov/06.%20Chapter%205%20-%20Housing.pdf>.

for a moment on the reflections of a 'white' resident of one of the most affluent suburbs in Cape Town, Constantia, when she writes:

What we have today, a democratic South Africa, [cannot] yet be run and inhabited by unembittered, well-educated, employed, responsible citizens at every level of society. The hugest crime of apartheid is its intensely complicated legacy, with which we are living. It [will take] decades to put into place functioning schools staffed by qualified teachers. To create jobs for an unemployed and untrained population. To condition people with hope to think that the way out of poverty is hard graft, not crime. The massive economic disparity between the poor majority in South Africa, who are black, and the minority who are mostly white, as well as black, coloured, and the rest of our wonderful mix, makes crime inevitable. Most of us are ordinary human beings. We bear grudges and we complain. We live in fear and keep our doors locked. We want ordinary lives free from pain. In our search for answers and solutions, let us not take the easy way out, and blame the problems we are facing on the colour of people's skin. (*Cape Argus*, February 3, 2007, p 14).²⁰

The insights of this affluent resident surely illustrate that, in a tension-ridden context, citizenship rights are not given, but interpreted and vigorously contested in the arena of multiple socioeconomic political interests.

Social protest to advance progressive planning?

Social protest often influence the trajectory and directory of planning (Castells, 1983). Resolving their everyday experience of material deprivation in post-apartheid South Africa, citizens have staged, especially since 2004 to 2006, various protests against poor service delivery by local authorities. Available statistics suggest that between 1994 and 2005, at least 50 protests were recorded in various local authority areas (Atkins, 2007, p 58). According to the Minister of Provincial and Local Government, in 2005 protests were recorded in 90 percent of the 136 municipalities identified as being in need of urgent assistance. The estimate by the Minister for Safety and Security was higher: in the 2004–05 financial year, there had reportedly been 5,085 legal protests and 881 illegal protests (Sairr 2006, 551), which translates into just more than 16 protests a day. And it would appear that the protests are increasing as from November 2007, the Minister of Safety and Security indicated that in 2005–06 an estimated 10,763 protests had taken place, and in 2006–07 there had been an estimated 9,446 protests.²¹ It would also appear that protests are against a range of malpractices at local level, ranging from a lack of service delivery to protests against corruption in local government. For example, according to a Public Service Accountability Monitor survey in the Eastern Cape, corrupt practices seem to be endemic in municipalities as:

- 48 percent of the officials believed that it was wrong but understandable to receive gifts in return for something that is part of their jobs;
- 275 reported witnessing political patronage (awarding jobs or

²⁰ This article is entitled "The crimes of apartheid are coming home to roost today," *Cape Argus*, February 3, 2007, p 14.

²¹ In response to a question posed by an opposition party member in Parliament, in 2007

contracts to political allies);

- 33 percent felt they witnessed nepotism (awarding jobs or contracts to relatives);
- 27 percent said that ‘all’ or ‘most’ of their fellow government officials in the province were involved in corruption; and
- 41 percent expressed the fear that syndicates would intimidate them if they reported corruption (Allen et al. 2005; Atkins, 2007, p 67).

Perception or actual corrupt practices seem to have increased since the reduction of the original 843 apartheid municipalities to 284, as there are now fewer management positions available among local authorities and also because salaries for such municipal councillors have increased substantially (Atkins, 2007, pp 68-70), literally making a municipal position, with a guaranteed salary, a lucrative career. The perception of corruption seems to be reinforced by the apparent link between affiliation to the governing party (the ANC) and business. For example, in parliament, 40 percent of ANC MPS are directors of companies; many own them completely. Such interests are often in construction and mining. The ANC national executive has several ultra-rich members involved in business or, as is the case of several cabinet ministers, whose spouses are business highfliers.²² In the meantime, the poor people seem to be forgotten by the *nouveaux riches* in democratic South Africa. Consider, for example, the experience of typical grassroots activists, concerned about the plight of the poor, mostly black South Africans, in different parts of the country:²³

“Q: Why did you take part in the protests for service delivery? What conditions and issues drove you to move into action?”

Zolile Mevana of Walmer (ZM): We do not get services from the Nelson Mandela municipality. The municipality increased the rates for electricity and water without consultation. If you owe the municipality, you buy electricity for R100 but you get electricity worth R40, with R60 going towards debt. And 90 percent of the people here in Walmer are not working. Even the 10 percent that work are not permanently employed.

The main demand is for a housing project that should have taken place a year ago. The people do not want to move. The place the municipality wants to move people to is about 60 km from Walmer and it is going to cost R30 per person per day to come and work in Walmer.

We got information that the municipality sold most of the land to developers. In a meeting of the housing standing committee where they took the decision to sell the land. Our councillor said nothing despite him knowing how we live and what we want.

Mimie Sebolai of Kliptown, member of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (MS): Service delivery does not meet all that we need. People get sold water even though they were promised that they would get it for free. People are evicted from their houses. These are the reasons we

²² Financial Mail, ANC AND BUSINESS, SOUL FOR SALE, by Carol Paton, <http://secure.financialmail.co.za/07/0119/cover/coverstory.htm>; accessed January 19, 2007.

²³ Source: Amandla! No 1, July 2007, <http://www.amandla.org.za>; accessed December 29, 2007.

protest. Our parents are suffering with the municipality demanding thousands of rands. This is why I joined the APF. This government is stubborn. We will continue fighting until we achieve our goals. Our organisation is only seven years old.

Mzonke Poni of Gugulethu, member of the Anti-Eviction Campaign (MP): I do not have water and housing. I am unemployed and I do not have any skills as a young person. If people want to relieve themselves, they must go and beg for a toilet. To go and beg for a toilet undermines my dignity. The Constitution has become meaningless and useless. The government does not advance the interests of the poor. When we voted, we were so excited that the people's conditions would change. These things move me to stand up and challenge the government in public. If this was a people's government, there would be no need for people to go out and burn tyres.

Pheliwe Macebiswane of Protea South, member of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (PM): We have no toilets, no electricity, no water. In our area, we have 8 taps for 620 families.

Thus far this paper has suggested that there is a structural relationship between citizenship and the nature of the everyday experiences of ordinary people, especially the poor. This has prompted the need for proactive remedial planning as stated in the conclusion below.

Conclusion

It would perhaps be useful to review and adapt those models of mobilization that communities used to plunge the Apartheid State into systemic crisis and that resulted in the birth of a democratic South Africa on April 27, 2004. These forms of struggle at the level of communities include, but are not limited to, issue-based protests and mass demonstrations such as the confrontational model, exposing existing contradictions, tensions and conflicts inherent to specific planning programmes vis-à-vis basic human rights; the engagement/consensual model by trying to reach harmonious equitable planning programmes especially in relation to those sections of society that have been historically marginalized; and the transformative model by accenting the dominant and uneven relations of power in planning bureaucracies and institutional networks with a view to ensuring both the physical and programmatic presence of historically marginalized communities in all planning departments in terms of *l'espace perçu* (perceived space), *l'espace conçu* (conceived space) and *l'espace vécu* (experiential space).

Reforms in the planning and social policy machinery have to choose, as one of their primary targets, the task of creating an efficient bureaucracy that can deal with these spatial expressions of the everyday reality of citizens, especially of ordinary people at the grassroots level. Consequently, with the intention of deepening and sustaining the process of transforming the South African society, it has also to be noticed that management is not merely the managing of people but, most importantly, the management of time, skills, abilities, potential and aspirations in relation to specific tasks, exercises, projects and programmes. This shows the importance of an intersectoral and multidisciplinary networking, liaison and communication programme in defining the form and substance of the development planning.

We change our world, our society, our community, and ourselves through the courage of our questions, the depth of our answers and the consistency

of our actions. It is precisely in this regard where social movements continue to play a dynamic role from the alienating sand dunes of the Cape Flats to the historic battlegrounds of Soweto!

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