

State ambitions and peoples' practices:
An exploration of RDP housing in
Johannesburg

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ABSTRACT

South Africa's RDP housing programme has delivered ownership of a house and serviced land to millions of first time home-owners since 1994. Intended to both provide shelter and address poverty, the housing programme is typical of improvement initiatives of the modern state aimed at advancing the physical, economic or social situation of a target population. Yet little is known about the results of the South African housing programme for recipient households, except that some beneficiaries attract state censure for interacting with their houses in unexpected and unwelcome ways. Despite the lack of clarity on its effects, the large-scale costly housing programme continues to be implemented.

This study investigates the programme's outcomes in Johannesburg through the perspectives of both RDP beneficiaries and state housing practitioners. Findings transcend the denigration of RDP housing as 'poorly located', revealing people's complex interactions with their housing which show its flaws and limitations but also their attachment to it. To minimise the shortcomings of the housing benefit RDP settlements are appropriated, adapted and transformed, households composition may be re-configured and alternative accommodation off-site brought into play. In general the state has limited insight into this intricacy, little institutional appetite to explore it and holds contradictory positions on the outcomes of the programme. Despite the evident resources and power of the state, it is confounded by the complexity of people's practices.

More broadly, the study contributes to housing and planning literature through its focus on the interface between state and beneficiary practices. Peoples' responses to RDP housing emphasise both the state's limited capacity in addressing the housing need, but also the catalytic value and potential its intervention triggers. Rather than portraying the state and the subaltern as clashing over conflicting rationalities, it illuminates their overlapping aspirations and mutual shaping of space.

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ACRONYMS

ANC – African National Congress political party

ARP - Alexandra Urban Renewal Project

BNG – Breaking New Ground policy

CoJ – City of Johannesburg

IRDP - Integrated Residential Development Programme

JHB - Johannesburg

JOSHCO – Johannesburg Social Housing Company

MEC – Member of the Executive Committee (provincial government)

RDP – Reconstruction and Development Programme

1 CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In 2008 the Sunday Independent newspaper in South Africa ran a prominent story on the vexing issue of how beneficiaries of the state housing programme were making use of the houses which the government had built for them and which they now owned. This matter concerned the largest and most dominant aspect of the state's low-income housing programme¹, colloquially known as 'RDP' housing², which uses government funds to build houses³ which are allocated for ownership to qualifying recipients. 'RDP' stands for Reconstruction and Development Programme, the multi-faceted rebuilding initiative of the post-apartheid democratic state in its first term of office in the mid-1990s.

The newspaper article reported the response of then Minister of Housing Lindiwe Sisulu to indications that people who were not the designated beneficiaries of the houses were ensconced in them.

Asked if those illegally occupying the houses would be evicted, Sisulu replied: "Of course, yes."

Sisulu said the government would take back some of the houses. "We are going to examine their circumstances. If they no longer deserve it, then we will take the house back. But if they are living in informal settlements, not only are we going to charge them but we will force them to go into their house.

¹ Other aspects of the state's low-income housing strategy include the delivery of some social rental housing, and a more recent emphasis on informal settlement upgrading.

² I use the term 'RDP housing' to refer to all low-income housing for ownership delivered through state funding after 1994, including that delivered under the 2004 policy amendment 'Breaking New Ground' (BNG) and the Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP), the current title of the initiative. I recognize however that the nature and quality of 'RDP housing' varies widely across the time period under review, and between projects. The term 'RDP housing' remains widely used as a shorthand for houses-for-ownership delivered by the state.

³ And associated infrastructure.

“It’s a criminal offence, it’s against the law to sell these houses before a particular period of time. If they do not have a problem with poverty, they should not have accepted these houses, they should not have applied,” she said” (Ngalwa 2008).

These comments reflect government’s serious concerns about what was happening with the new houses being delivered in vast numbers throughout the country: the programme that was being realized through many individual development areas or projects. Since 1994 delivery of a house on serviced land for individual ownership, using a state grant or capital subsidy, has resulted in more than three million (FFC 2012)⁴ units being built around the country, generally as detached single story houses in new neighbourhoods. This has added a staggering 24% to the formally registered residential stock of the country (Finmark Trust not dated)⁵ and is estimated to now accommodate 13 million people (Kotsoane cited in Mzolo 2009: 8). The scale of delivery is impressive, but ordinary peoples’ responses to the benefit are more puzzling, and indications of ‘inappropriate behaviour’ are a cause of considerable frustration to the state.

In her 2008/ 09 budget speech to Parliament the Minister of Housing expressed two concerns which together reflect something of a contradiction: some people (mainly government employees) were cheating the system to acquire an RDP house, whilst some rightful beneficiaries were getting *rid* of their houses (Sisulu 2008). Housing ministers at the provincial level of government had expressed similar concerns about what they saw as inappropriate behaviour and non-compliant practices (Mackay 2003; Masinga 2010; Department of Human Settlements North West 2010), including that houses were being used for non-residential purposes such as running businesses.

⁴ The Kayamandi (2011) report notes that by 2010 2.37m houses had been completed through government programmes, but figures are disputed and ways of measuring are contested.

⁵ Finmark Trust (nd) notes that over 1 million beneficiaries have not yet had title transferred to them and less than 50% of RDP/ BNG stock has been formally registered; one consequence of this is that RDP/ BNG housing as a proportion of registered residential property is likely to increase as transfer is effected.

The issue of who was 'legitimately' living in RDP housing was given an added twist in the xenophobic violence which rocked the country in May 2008. Allegations were made – some by the official opposition party, the Democratic Alliance – that non-South Africans were living in RDP houses, implying that this was the result of fraudulent practices. Government announced it would assign the Special Investigations Unit to the matter (Sisulu 2008); it urged people to appreciate what they have received from the state. (Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa in Property 24 2011) and commissioned research on how to encourage beneficiaries to do so (Department of Housing 2008)⁶.

In different ways therefore the state was showing considerable agitation about who was occupying the houses government had built, and about how the houses were being used. Government was also trying to get people to use the houses 'correctly'. But at the same time, actual housing needs and practices remained unclear.

Better understanding of this issue is called for: the RDP housing programme is large in scale, and consumes significant human and financial resources. It has a considerable impact on the lives of many people, but peoples' interactions with it and the benefit they gain from it are not well understood, or are misunderstood. Housing carries enormous symbolism and significance in South Africa: 'housing for all' was encapsulated in the Freedom Charter drawn up in the 1950s; housing was a key site of contest in the anti-apartheid struggle; and housing has been a major part of the reconstruction and re-development programme of the democratic government after 1994.

⁶ *'How to stimulate beneficiaries of government subsidized houses to show greater appreciation and respect for their houses'* (Department of Housing V50/63 July 2008). The tender was awarded and a report submitted, but further actions by the Department in response are not known.



Figure 1-1: Department of Human Settlements' billboard in the inner city of Johannesburg (author's own, 2009).

Discussions of RDP housing refer to various ways in which people are not using their housing as the state intended: beneficiaries not living in their allocated houses (Tomlinson 1999; Huchzermeyer 2003; PSC 2003; Rust 2003; Zack and Charlton 2003; Karam 2008); other people apart from designated beneficiaries occupying the houses; people abandoning their houses for long periods (Ntsabula 2009); and unsanctioned trade in houses (PSC 2003; Lemanski 2010). There is little clarity on the extent of these practices, with figures cited varying widely across projects and studies (see for example PSC 2003; Vorster and Tolken 2008; Department of Human Settlements Mpumalanga Provincial Government 2010).

Whilst selling and renting out of RDP houses is perceived to be a widespread practice, less clear is why this is so and what the characteristics of the phenomenon are. Some studies

into the post-occupancy performance of these houses⁷ have considered the financial, social or economic dimensions of these houses as assets (Bauman 2003; Shisaka 2011; Lemanski 2010). Other studies have evaluated beneficiary satisfaction with the quality of the house and the settlement (Mehlomakulu and Marais 1999; Aigbavboa and Thwala 2011; Moola, Kotze and Block 2011), or have extended this focus to include a range of beneficiary perceptions related to the receipt of a house (Zack and Charlton 2003; PSC 2003).

A further key area of investigation has concentrated on who is occupying the house, and whether the details of this occupant accords with the records of the Department of Human Settlements and the Deeds Registry. One example, the Western Cape Occupancy Survey of 2008 also considered the impact of the housing on peoples' lives (Vorster and Tolken 2008).

Despite these and related studies a set of important questions remain. These include why some people interact with the housing benefit in unanticipated ways, and why the state takes a particularly hostile view of this, whilst nevertheless proceeding with the development of as many free houses for ownership as it can, as quickly as possible. This research seeks to address the lack of information about why housing recipients react in certain ways and why these are viewed in particular ways. This is contextualised in relation to the aims of the RDP housing programme, which include improving peoples' shelter circumstances and access to basic engineering services, but also helping to lift people out of poverty and providing a secure base for improved life circumstances.

In this research I explore peoples' interaction with their state provided houses, how this differs from usage considered appropriate by the state, why these practices occur, and how they are understood by the state. I investigate these issues in Johannesburg,

⁷ There are many other studies into aspects of RDP housing, including key reports commissioned by the state such as FFC (2012), Kayamandi (2011). Here however I focus on studies particularly concerned with the performance of the housing post-delivery.

drawing on both the views of those who use the houses in various ways, and the views of state housing practitioners who deliver and reflect on the housing.

The results of this research show an intricate relationship between state ambitions, peoples' practices, and the socio-economic context in which these play out. On the one hand, the state sometimes fails to perceive and understand people's unexpected physical and emotional relationships with their houses and the considerable consequences of these practices on neighbourhoods and households. On the other hand, I have found evidence of some shared views between state practitioners and dwellers. I argue that state provided housing is a catalyst for the complex co-production of urban space and activity by its users, in a manner largely unrecognized or accepted. These awkward processes of co-production, contested amongst people and between people and the state, constitute both a challenge to the vision of the housing programme and also an adoption and an adaption of it. Similarly complex, the state's view on this is at once insightful and constrained.

This introductory chapter discusses first the problem 'on the ground' and the related research problem that stimulated this study. In the following paragraphs, I formulate the research question, my approach to the research and my methodology. I refer also to housing policy and to academic literature dealing with the theories and concepts used in the research.

1.2 The research question

My research question can be formulated as follows:

if beneficiaries of RDP housing engage with it differently from the state's expectations, what is the nature of this difference, how can it be explained, and what is the significance of this?

Whilst my research shares some of the concerns of other studies into RDP housing, it has particular characteristics which constitute a different investigative orientation: these

include its qualitative approach, its concern both with the practices of beneficiaries and with the views of the state, its attention to spaces and practices beyond the RDP settlement itself, and its concentration on Johannesburg.

1.3 The approach

The approach I take draws on two major clusters of literature and concepts. The first is to do with housing issues as an object of study, and three particular dimensions of this. First is a concern with the political and economic context of housing; second is to do with home ownership as a low income housing strategy; and third is a focus on the outcomes of housing interventions for households.

1.3.1 Housing issues

I align with those who critique the tendency for housing studies to have been thought about in relative isolation from economic and political forces shaping the world (Jenkins, Smith and Wang 2007; Atkinson and Jacobs 2010). In many rapidly urbanising areas⁸⁹, economic growth is neither a driver, nor even necessarily a partner, of urbanisation as it was in the past (Jenkins et al 2007), and into the future, significant numbers of urban dwellers may remain excluded from mainstream social and economic development (c.f. Davis, 2006). Amongst other things this means that housing interventions are unlikely on their own to solve major income deficiencies. These authors thus advocate for the relevance of a political-economy approach¹⁰ to conceptualizing housing. Whilst this study of RDP housing is not an exploration of how economic conditions are structured by power relations, it is concerned with how social, economic and political conditions in South

⁸Jenkins et al (2007) use the term 'rapidly urbanising' rather than developing or third world, to refer to recent, consolidating and establishing urbanising areas.

⁹ I see South Africa as in a developing country when viewed through the lens of its low income housing programme, but acknowledge that SA is a mixed income, industrialised and highly developed country in other ways.

¹⁰ They define political economy as 'how power relations within societies structure economic relations and in turn are affected by these' (Jenkins et al 2007: 56 with ref to Hoogvelt 2001).

Africa and specifically in Johannesburg form important context against which the perspectives and actions of the state and users of RDP housing need to be interpreted. In particular I consider the historical political environment and expectations of the programme, and the context of widespread unemployment and poverty.

The second 'housing' theme I draw on is home ownership as a low income housing strategy. Whilst the South African housing programme is unusual, at least in Africa, in the extent to which the state funds the delivery of a substantial built product to very poor households, its emphasis on freehold tenure and its linking of decent housing to increasing prosperity echoes contemporary approaches dominant in a number of other countries. The strategy has two key facets. The first relates to state involvement and commitment in housing delivery. The emphasis on home ownership aligns with a pragmatic realization of the inability of most developing countries to sustain subsidized public rental accommodation. Using capital subsidies to deliver houses for ownership such as the programmes in South Africa, Chile, Colombia and Mexico (Gilbert 2004; Tamés 2004; Salcedo 2010; Lizarralde 2011) offers a way to create decent shelter through state funding mechanisms which are contained and fiscally prudent (Gilbert 2004). The second facet of the approach conceptualises the conferring of home-ownership as an anti-poverty intervention for the household (De Soto in CDE 2001; Rust, Zack and Napier 2009). This notion of housing as an asset incorporates housing's performance relative to the property market, and the importance of freehold tenure to facilitate this¹¹. The effectiveness of this approach in developing countries has been questioned from various angles (see for example Gilbert 2002a, 2012; Jenkins et al 2007). A further concern is that a home ownership strategy delivers a housing solution which is fixed in location and, depending on how it is accessed, allocated, and the terms of its occupation, linked to a

¹¹ By contrast Jenkins et al (2007) argue that transactions in land and housing in some rapidly urbanising parts of the world are not driven solely by 'market rationality', and alternative rationalities and existing hybrid practices are likely to persist.

particular household for a period of time. I consider in this research how these characteristics accord with the socio-economic context, in particular employment and income acquisition practices of households.

The third housing theme centres on the outcome of a state housing intervention for beneficiary households, as revealed by their use of the housing and relationship with it. The space in or around the house can be key for income generation (Schlyter 2003), though the increased use of home space and household labour to earn income tends to be neglected in housing studies (Kellet and Tipple 2003). Although poverty alleviation is often emphasised as an aim in housing policy interventions (Schlyter 2003), the particular forms this might take – such as sub-letting – is often not supported (Kellet and Tipple 2003), with a particular ‘moralistic bias’ condemning private income generated from state subsidised housing (Tipple 2000: 53 with reference to Strassmann 1987). Income generation might involve housing transformations (Tipple 2000), physical alterations and extension to houses or properties made by their residents, such as rooms built for lodgers, or family members (Schlyter 2003). A wide variety of changes to government-built housing¹² are described in research by Ghannam (2002) in Egypt, Tipple (2000) in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and Egypt, Schlyter (2003) in Zimbabwe, Bouzarovski, Salukvadze, and Gentile (2010) in Georgia and Macedonia, and Ejigu (2012) in Ethiopia. Reviewing transformations to government housing stock delivered between the mid-1940s and the mid-1970s in various countries, Tipple (2000) contests the often officially expressed view that these ‘build slums’, arguing that they constitute ‘a valid housing adjustment mechanism’ (Tipple 2000: 36), which provides more housing stock and more space for households. Embodying household agency, the extensions to apartment building in post-communist cities in the Balkans and Caucasus are thus argued to ‘spatialise’ household coping strategies and embody a kind of ‘DIY’ urbanism’ (Bouzarovski et al 2010: 3), in this case tolerated by authorities and generally accepted by

¹² Transformations also occur in middle-income neighbourhoods, such as that described by Anyamba (2011) in Nairobi.

the local population (ibid). Tipple concludes that in addition to expanding space for households, transformations deliver rental accommodation, introduce built form variety, and on balance 'improve the social, economic and environmental quality of the living and working environment' (Tipple 2000: 137).

Examples of post occupancy research of households' interaction with government housing in South Africa such as that by Ross (2005; 2010) and Lemanski (2009) are relatively limited (Ross 2005). Whilst much of the literature concerns interactions in physical proximity to the house itself, my study extends this to consider also interactions and relationships across geographic space. I concur with Ghannam (2002) that peoples' endeavours to shape their lives in housing can have wider impacts in moulding the city. Turner's (1976) seminal work on what housing does in peoples' lives flagged that accommodation which has the ability to sustain household economic survival can trump physically superior housing. Particular physical circumstances can curtail or facilitate practices and activities, as shown by Tamés' (2004) comparison between informal settlement living and that of formal housing developments in Mexico City. In addition physically inadequate or sparse conditions can mask a degree of strategy, agency and calculation (Tipple and Speak 2009). My study draws attention to the relationship between government provided housing and these other circumstances.

In keeping with these three themes from housing literature my research is concerned with the political and economic context of the housing delivered, the key expectations and characteristics of the home ownership strategy, and the outcomes for beneficiary households as indicated by how they use their housing. These outcomes of housing interventions in developing countries appear to be relatively under-researched. In addition, literature generally focuses on a particular geographic area or areas, such as a slum and/or a new neighbourhood project, and few studies consider also the views and perspectives of the state. Below I briefly make a case for taking account of dweller perspectives, perspectives from the state, and the interface between them.

1.3.2 State-society relations

The second cluster of concepts and literature concerns state-society relations in the context of an improvement intervention. In this research I explore outcomes of the housing benefit through the observations of beneficiary households themselves. But I also examine how the state views and understands outcomes, which influences how policy success is conceptualised, how these views inform the subsequent management of housing neighbourhoods, and understandings of poverty relief. I contend that looking at both will illuminate the dynamic interface between policy manifestation and everyday lives. This means that policy outcomes may reflect a more complex set of processes than anticipated in the policy itself, and that the results of policy interventions may vary considerably (Bähre and Lecocq 2007). How the state interprets these outcomes can be a further factor in shaping outcomes, I suggest.

The key dimensions for this study are first dweller perspectives on their interactions with the housing benefit; second state views on these and responses to them; and third, the interface between them.

Dweller perspectives

Rigg (2007: 8) argues for 'the importance of the everyday and of grounded, micro-level perspectives' for illuminating why and how things are. By way of illustration most published work on the housing programme in Chile is theoretical or statistical in orientation (Salcedo 2010) but when the views of residents are explored, both positive and negative effects of the housing policy surface, and the effect of the housing programme as a whole on the poor is unclear (Salcedo 2010). This highlights the need for more localised, empirical studies and an approach that includes the views of dwellers on their circumstances. Key studies on residents' perspectives of their housing circumstances (for example Perlman 2005; Tironi 2009; Ross 2009; Ghannam 2010) offer insights into daily and longer term household practices, and provide explanations for these. These help illuminate the reasons for actions which are opaque, confusing, or open to

misinterpretation from the outside, and help test the validity of assumptions made - by the state, academics, funders - about peoples' circumstances, which are used to inform policy and practical interventions. In my exploration and interpretation of dweller perspectives I draw on theories and concepts from 'the everyday' (Rigg 2007; Bayat 2004; 2010; Ghanamm 2002; Bank 2011) which I define and explain in Chapter Two.

State perspectives

In addition to the perspectives of residents, the views of the state on usage of the housing intervention are also relevant, to shed light on how the state understands the impact and success of a scheme to improve peoples' lives (Scott 1998), how analysis informs subsequent policy adjustments, and what wider claims can be made from the housing intervention by authorities. My focus on the state starts from a position that the state matters (Corbridge, Williams, Srivastava and Véron 2005), and understanding better about the state is necessary. James C Scott's seminal work articulates how states typically 'see' the world, and in particular citizens (Corbridge et al 2005). Although his work is critical of the state and particularly high modernist¹³ approaches, Scott (1998) emphasises that modernist state practices have advantages as well as detriments. While he uses draconian illustrations for his arguments, many contexts are much more benign, and in these cases 'we are left to weigh judiciously the benefits of certain state interventions against their costs' (Scott 1998: 7). Corbridge et al (2005), in extending and responding to Scott (1998), argue for reflective analysis of funding and development organisations, including the state. This is a constructive alternative to 'simply lambasting these institutions' (Jeffrey 2007: 598) as in many post-development approaches. In this research I explore ways of examining and interpreting the views of state housing practitioners on beneficiaries' use of the housing benefit, as further discussed and theorised in Chapter Two.

¹³ Scott distinguishes 'high modernism' from modernism, as noted in Chapter Two.

The interface between dweller and state perspectives

It is in this intersection between the two sets of practices and views – state and beneficiary household - that this research is positioned. I argue that this is a relatively neglected area in housing studies in developing countries, where the meaning and outcomes of housing interventions for key players such as those involved in policy formulation and delivery, and those at the receiving end of ‘improvement’ processes (such as discussed by Scott 1998; Li 2007), often remain un-explored. Harrison (2007) argues for a view of both ‘the political and technical practices of a modernising local state, and the non-formal arrangements that constitute the city’ (Harrison 2007: 5); that which Watson calls ‘the ‘interface’ between the rationality of governing and the rationality of survival’ (Watson 2009: 2268, 2269). Li (2007) refers to this as investigation of how government interventions ‘become entangled with the processes they would regulate and improve’ (2007: 27):

where attempts to achieve the “right disposition of things” encounter – and produce – a witches’ brew of processes, practices, and struggles that exceed their scope (Li 2007: 28).

I return to Li’s words in the concluding chapter of the research.

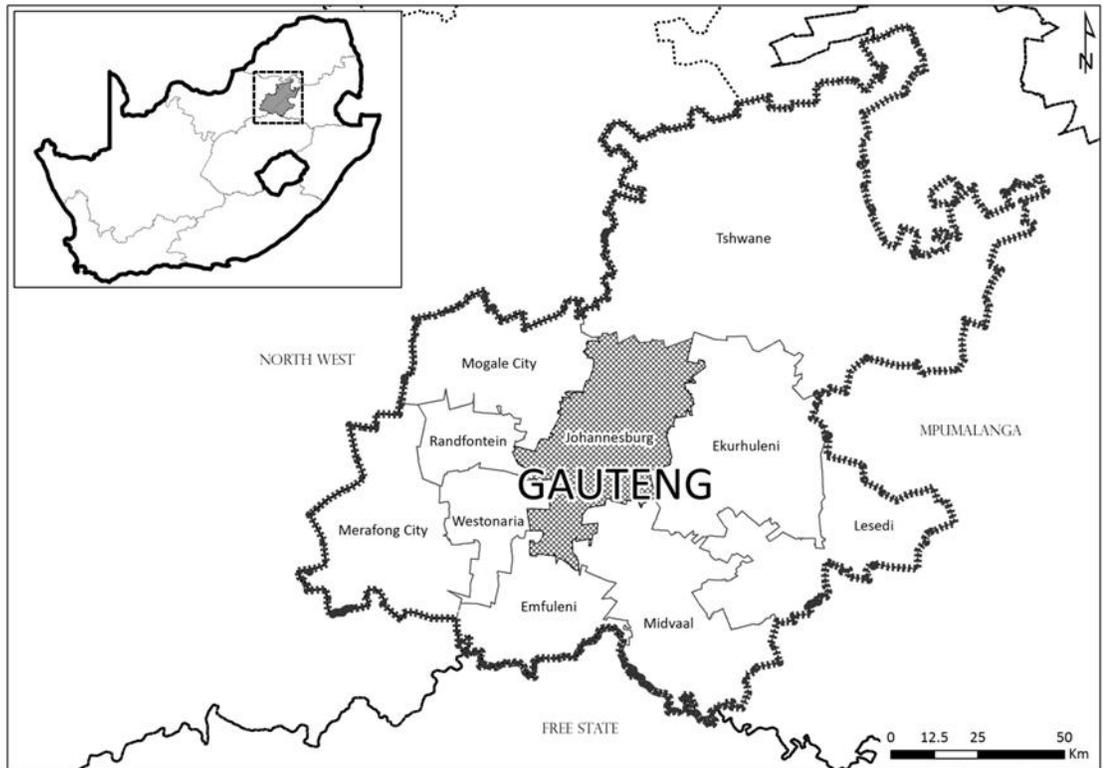
In South Africa the government’s low-income housing programme has received attention as an example of the apparent disjuncture between state ambitions and everyday lives and priorities. In discussing an attempted housing intervention in an informal settlement in Cape Town, Watson highlights what she refers to as ‘the clash of rationalities, or the differences in world-view between the various parties involved’ (Watson 2003: 403), where differences are so great as to make resolution through discussion and deliberation improbable. In considering the interface between dweller –state perspectives I reflect on the application of this interpretation of irreconcilable conflicts, and conclude that this research reveals rather an adaption, adoption and creolisation of state and beneficiary perspectives such as that described by Robins (2003), and Watson (2009) in her later work.

In this research I thus draw together literature predominantly from the 'development' terrain, on state improvement interventions and peoples' responses to them, with that on housing studies and the outcomes of low income housing programmes. Explicit links between housing and 'development' studies such as this appear to be relatively uncommon (Jenkins et al 2007).

1.3.3 Method

Understanding what goes on at the interface and how planning interventions impact positively, negatively or are hybridised to suit particular local contexts, requires in-depth, grounded and qualitative case study research (Watson 2009) on state–society interactions. This stance resonates with those who argue for localized investigation to avoid grand generalisations, to describe characteristics and identify explanations for differences (Salcedo 2010). This sort of exploration also allows for the recognition of diversity in peoples' circumstances. This point is richly illustrated in Wiesenthal's (2011) research into RDP housing in Barberton, South Arica which reveals the complex and diverse nature of households, in composition and in spatial distribution.

Case study research which takes context seriously is thus adopted here. I probe the views and practices of beneficiaries of RDP housing in Johannesburg, and the views and insights of state housing practitioners across three spheres of government.



Map 1-1: Location of Gauteng province in South Africa, and the Johannesburg metropolitan area within Gauteng (Map produced by Miriam Maina 2013).

The views of dwellers of housing projects can be sourced in various ways, such as the focus groups used by Salcedo (2010) in Santiago de Chile, Ghannam's (2002) personal immersion in a neighbourhood in Cairo, and the longitudinal study of favelas in Rio de Janeiro undertaken by Perlman (2005)¹⁴. In-depth studies of particular places are demonstrated in South Africa by Bank (2011) in East London, Wiesenthal (2011) in Barberton and Ross (2010) near Cape Town, while Schlyter (2003) examines particular households in her study near Harare, Zimbabwe. In this research I draw mainly from interviews with resident and non-resident beneficiaries of RDP housing, who are themselves spread across sites and project locations. This type of case study thus differs from those described above, in part because it attempts to gain insight into a programme

¹⁴ in which she considers the outcomes of informal settlement interventions building on her seminal work on marginality and its misconceptions.

beyond a particular project. In addition, I use interviews to probe the views of state housing practitioners, and I also draw on analyses of policy documents.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter Two I locate this study within a wider literature in critical development studies on programmes of modernization executed through the state, and on peoples' responses to such programmes. Four main theoretical and conceptual dimensions are discussed in the chapter: firstly the notion of a state improvement programme (Li 2007; Corbridge et al 2005), and related debates on modernity and development (Scott 1998; Escobar 1997; Rigg 2007; Li 2005). I consider what outcomes might attract the attention of the state, discussing concerns with informality (Scott 1998; Tipple 2000; Ghertner 2011), with post-delivery control of practices (Scott 1998; Rigg 2007), and with the conduct of households (Ghannam 2002; Li 2005; Anand and Rademacher 2011). In the second section of the chapter I discuss the notion of a view from the state (Scott 1998; Corbridge, Srivastava, Williams, Véron, 2007; Corbridge 2008). I argue that the view may be contested rather than coherent, and may be distorted by some of the tools and mechanisms the state relies on for information. In the third section of the chapter I move from a focus on the state to the recipients of state improvement interventions. Drawing upon literature on everyday life (Scott 1985; Rigg 2007), I consider peoples' interactions with state infrastructure (Tipple 2000; Ghannam 2002), including notions of resistance (Scott 1985; Bayat 2004, 2010), and embracing or clinging to state interventions (Ross 2005; Salcedo 2010; Bank 2011). In the fourth section I consider how to theorise the interface between peoples' interactions with a state intervention, on the one hand, and state views on these interactions on the other hand (Li 2005). I discuss perspectives which see clashes and conflict (Watson 2003, 2005) and conclude that those that emphasise adaption and transformation (Fuller and Harriss 2001; Rigg 2007; Bähre and Lecoq 2007; Watson 2009) apply to this research.

In Chapter Three I discuss the mixed methods, qualitative case study methodology I have used. The case study is multi-scalar, employing a range of methods including interviews, observation and document review. The three constituent dimensions of the case study are first its geographic span across Johannesburg, second its institutional span of 'state housing practitioners' across government departments and associated organisations, and third the experiences of those at the receiving end of the housing programme. These three dimensions of the case study – the geographic, state-institutional, and people-experiential – enable me to consider a national programme applied locally, experienced by its occupants, and viewed both 'from above' (by state housing practitioners) and 'from below' (by those who have had an RDP house).

Chapter Four explores the specific housing approach embraced in South Africa. I first describe the origins of the RDP housing approach and key aspects of it before locating its essential features relative to typical approaches in developing countries. I then focus on the aims of the approach, and consider its successes and its shortcomings in meeting aims, especially in relation to outcomes for recipient households.

Chapter Five discusses Johannesburg as a site of study. I highlight the inequality, poverty and unemployment and the specifics of low income housing and planning issues in the city. I describe and account for the complex spatial pattern of low income housing in the metropolitan areas. I argue that the track record of housing delivery in Johannesburg is mixed, and that analysing accommodation issues is complex in part because of shifts from the socio-economic context envisaged when RDP housing was first conceptualized.

Chapter Six is an empirical chapter discussing the views of state housing practitioners, and addressing four broad themes: how the state determines housing needs and identifies and perceives the recipients of housing benefits; state practitioners' views of how recipients benefit from the housing programme.; how the state gathers information about recipient practices; and finally, state practitioners' explanations for recipient practices and their solutions to what they perceive as problematic. The interviews do not

present a unified position but highlight diverging perspectives, tensions, contradictions and, sometimes, the influence of personal experiences among state housing practitioners. Whilst some state practice resonates with that described by Scott (1998), the chapter also demonstrates nuanced state practice, as well as insight, although agency might be constrained.

Chapter Seven discusses the responses of people who are *not* living in their RDP houses. I first describe and categorise the diversity of circumstances amongst respondents and reasons for these. I then describe the alternative accommodation interviewees' occupy, and note that this is often in parallel with the RDP accommodation. I discuss why these circumstances persist and the consequences of them for the household and for the state. The interviews reveal various strategies by which people manage the geographies of their work and living circumstances, and some complex and unexpected relationships with their RDP houses.

Chapter Eight discusses the lives and views of beneficiary respondents who do live in their houses, examining how the RDP house and its neighbourhood offers a platform for daily and longer term activities and has contributed to improving life experience. I discuss the configuration of households and how the house, site and neighbourhoods are being used by respondents. I consider how and where respondents generate income and how this connects with their house. I investigate respondents' attitudes to their houses, neighbourhoods and the state housing benefit. I conclude that in general, respondents have an attachment to their house, are very grateful to the state for having received it, and are largely satisfied with most aspects of their benefit. Most of the difficulties people face relate to the cost of transport and the lack of jobs.

Together Chapters Seven and Eight explore beneficiaries' 'engagement with the housing benefit', which I compare and contrast with state expectations as discussed in Chapters Four and Six. I conclude that conventional usage, attachment to the house and gratitude to the state can simultaneously accompany usage and interactions which are

controversial, challenging or discomforting for the state. I do not read beneficiary practices as rejection or resistance to state ideals, since people often aspire to conform to the norms promoted by the state. However peoples' circumstances often lead to pragmatic strategies stitched to or in response to state infrastructure.

Chapter Nine considers the key arguments that emerge from this interface between state and user perspectives and practices, and the significance and contribution of this study. I conclude that the state operates with imperfect information and 'guesses'. While some of the suppositions by state housing practitioners do align with findings from this empirical research, they are not acted on or used by the state. While some state actors show care and concern for recipients' circumstances the institutional imperative remains with the notion of compliance with systems and procedures of record-keeping. State housing practitioners' limited engagement with peoples' need to generate income is a major gap. Recipients' attachment to RDP housing is evident from their strong efforts to retain or acquire an RDP house, even if it could not provide the basis for daily life. State and recipients world views, or paradigms, seem largely in accord. However there are real restrictions on peoples' ability to use the house optimally to realize dreams and aspirations.

This suggests a state which is both powerful and resourced, able to deliver a vast housing programme, and yet at the same time perplexed by hugely complex socio-economic problems. The state's failure to understand and engage with recipient behaviour suggests fear of the unpredictable outcomes that sit uncomfortably between, on the one hand, the imperfect results of enormous effort and expenditure by the state, and on the other hand, pragmatic solutions by people in response to social and economic pressures.

2 CHAPTER 2 - STUDYING STATE AND PEOPLE INTERACTIONS WITH A HOUSING BENEFIT

2.1 Introduction

This research relates to the broad field of state-society interactions described by Corbridge (2008). I focus on what people do with a state benefit, and how the state views this usage. I am less interested here with claims-making or navigations of the state by ordinary people. Rather, I ask: having been 'seen' by the state and received an intended resource, how do people interact with it and how does the state view, interpret and respond to this – whether interactions are on the terms offered by the state or outside of them. I am concerned predominantly with peoples' encounters with the state 'as embodied in an outcome', rather than their interactions with the state as an institution, and I am concerned with the state's encounters with 'people as beneficiaries' rather than as 'claimants'. My focus is thus not how power is negotiated to effect resource distribution¹⁵ but rather the 'materiality' of a situation (its physicality, usage, and how this is interpreted).

Whilst the object of study is not the state-society encounter around claims-making, resource negotiation or contestations of power, the overall political context remains of direct relevance to the study. The broad political history and contemporary political significance of housing is explained in Chapter Four, and aspects of this surface in various ways in the subsequent empirical chapters. The theoretical discussion in the thesis is taken to be situated within this context. This discussion considers explanatory material for considering how and what the state views, as well as for people's responses to the benefit, and takes as given the dominance over the last 18 years of the African National Congress in the political terrain and in government. Against an overall backdrop of the politicised nature of housing, the thesis thus considers the practical and emotional

¹⁵ That is 'politics', in the sense of processes and activities around negotiating power and distribution.

encounter between recipients and the housing benefit, and how this is interpreted by the state.

The research is concerned with the manifestation of projects of modernity and views on this: that is, the thesis stands as a critique of the idea that modern interventions have straightforward or predictable outcomes, and a critique of approaches that see state interventions as inevitably aimed at, or resulting in, social control. The chapter begins by discussing programmes of modernisation executed through the state, drawing from literature in critical development studies (Scott 1998; Escobar 1997; Rigg 2007; Glaser 2001; Li 2005). I argue for research that does not take either the ends or the outcomes of state improvement interventions (Li 2007; Corbridge et al 2005; Migdal 1997) as pre-given. Despite the ideological baggage that often accompanies the interpretation of modernist-oriented interventions, their outcomes are context-dependent and warrant empirical investigation (Corbridge et al 2005; Li 2005; Valverde 2011). I argue for a focus on the interactions between how the state (as defined and conceptualised below) understands the nature and outcomes of its interventions (especially its ideas of 'improvement') and the ways in which ordinary people may experience and see those interventions.

Following the discussion of modernity and state improvement interventions, I review theoretical and conceptual material that can illuminate the interactions between state initiatives and peoples' responses. I consider the applicability for this research of Migdal's (1994) thesis on the mutually transformative nature of the encounter between state and other social forces. But I focus first on the view from the state (Scott 1998; Corbridge et al 2007; Corbridge 2008), exploring how a state identifies and conceptualises problems and needs, what it prioritises and values in responding to problems, and the ideas that shape its thinking. These perspectives help identify and structure the nature of the encounter between it and people. The specific aspect of state 'seeing' for this research is with respect to the intentions of the housing programme for beneficiary households, and how its outcomes for households are viewed, measured and assessed. In this discussion I thus

identify for scrutiny the state itself; specifically the state in its 'developmental' orientation, characterised by Corbridge et al (2005) as

those aspects of state and governmental practices that are charged with improving or protecting the incomes, capabilities and legal rights of poorer people (2005: 24).

This approach contrasts with a post-development view articulated in the 1990s by Escobar (1997), which saw the state as imposing technical interventions with little regard for peoples' existing routines and experiences. Escobar's stance also takes the state to be relatively homogenous, implying a degree of consistency and rational functionality in the state for which postcolonial and postdevelopment studies have received critique (Sharp 2007). Moreover it has been argued that a negative association of the state with modernisation leads to something of a scholarly dead-end in which all 'development' interventions are assumed to be bad for poor people (Jeffrey 2007). This association, and the assumption of uniformity in the state critiqued by Migdal (1994) and others, may account for the comparatively limited scholarly examination of the state in relation to improvement interventions. By contrast, Corbridge et al's (2005) exploration of the state and other development organisations in India moves beyond this impasse (Jeffrey 2007). In this research project I consider the state as an object of scrutiny and anticipate the possibility of fracture, disjuncture and contradiction within the state, and the significance of this.

In using the term 'the state' I am mindful of debates on the difficulty of defining it as an entity demarcated from society – as boundaries between the two are eternally elusive (Mitchell 2006) – whilst at the same time mindful of the temptation to refer to it as a coherent and separate entity, 'other' than the society it governs. Li (2005) uses Mitchell (1991) to illustrate how one can both accept the concept of the state idea, seemingly solid and distinct, and at the same time not assume that the state is a cohesive, consistent, self sufficient entity. It is thus possible to grasp that an appearance and image exists that is not a straightforward projection of actuality. Mitchell (2006: 175) contends

that the distinction between state and society is important; he argues however that the focus should not be on defining where the edges are between them when conceptualised as different organisations abutting each other, but rather how internal lines within cross-cutting networks – ‘realms of practice’ - produce difference between them, constituting an ‘apparent boundary’.

In the third section of the chapter I examine the notion of ‘everyday practices’ and how to interpret these in relation to a state intervention. I draw from literature on everyday life (Scott 1985; Rigg 2007), which draws attention to ‘the normal’, ‘the routine’, the seemingly banal, unheroic and typically unremarkable practices and routines of people in their daily lives (Rigg 2007). I consider particularly peoples’ interactions with state infrastructure (Tipple 2000; Ghannam 2002; Schlyter 2003), including notions of resistance (Scott 1985; Bayat 2004, 2010), and notions of embracing or clinging to state interventions (Ross 2005; Salcedo 2010; Bank 2011). I propose that organising these theories and concepts along a linear spectrum illuminates points of intersection and points of divergence between peoples’ practices and the views of the state.

Last I briefly consider two theoretical stances: first, that differences in state and recipient perspectives are so fundamental that they reflect a conflict of rationalities (Watson 2003, 2006; Swilling, Simone and Khan 2002), in stark contrast to a view that such developments can embody relative harmony and alignment of purpose (Corbridge et al 2005). The second perspective I consider is that there is more typically creolisation and adaptation during implementation of a state intervention which transforms the nature and outcomes of the intervention (Fuller and Harriss 2001; Rigg 2007; Bähre and Lecoq 2007; Watson 2009). I conclude the chapter by highlighting how this discussion of theory and concepts shapes my approach to the empirical investigation and my interpretation of my findings.

2.2 Improvement, modernity and development

State programs can explicitly aim ‘to improve the condition of the population in a deliberate manner’ (Li 2007: 1), intending for example to have a positive impact on peoples’ health, security, or living conditions. Improvement is a critical element of Scott’s theory of the logics of the modernist state, manifested through the delivery of services and facilities to people lacking such access. Improvement is often wrapped up in the notion of modernisation, modernity and development – and the South African housing programme has been characterised by some as modernist in its orientation towards technical efficiency, order, and standardisation (Spiegel 1999; Murray 2008; Huchzermeyer 2011). Programs of improvement associated with modernism have been extensively critiqued as reflecting inappropriate impositions of norms in ways that ignore local contexts. By contrast, I discuss how such improvement initiatives can invoke modernist norms to heterogenous ends, and do not lead automatically to problematic outcomes. Following Li (2007: 9) I am open to considering that ‘the will to improve’ can be a primary motivation and may not be simply a strategy for control by those in power. Furthermore, intended outcomes can be appropriated and adapted by recipient communities, with less straightforward effects than initially anticipated. Methodologically, such an exploration is most robust when assessed through localised fieldwork.

Rather than attempt to generalize, the effects of planned interventions have to be examined empirically, in the various sites where they unfold— families, villages, towns, and inside the bureaucracy, among others (Li 2005: 391).

2.2.1 Modernisation and modernity

Despite the ambiguity and uncertainty associated with the term ‘modernity’ (Rigg 2007) and scholarly critiques which describe it as an ‘unhelpful abstraction’, it is widely used as short-hand for a set of processes or outcomes. The term derives potency and relevance from being extensively used both by those in power and by ordinary people in the South (Rigg 2007: 58).

Whilst the condition of modernity is open to interpretation (Williams, Meth and Willis 2009; Rigg 2007), it has typically used the socio-economic organisation of the Western capitalist world as the norm or benchmark. In conventional development studies modernisation has been understood as a process by which ‘third world’ countries transform from traditional socio-economic practices to become like countries of the industrialised world¹⁶ in two senses (Rigg 2007): in embracing technical and industrial processes and associated urbanisation; and in embracing ‘political and social’ orders such as valorizing scientific expertise, market economies, and national government as the centre of political structure, with associated administrative bureaucracy (Scott and Marshall 2005). Focussing on the state itself, Migdal concludes that a state is ‘modern’ not only in the extent and reach of the requirements it imposes on a population but also because of its ability to tap into, and to shape collective identity and consciousness, thereby ‘re-inventing society’ (Migdal 1997: 230). Dimensions of modernity relevant to this research are reflected in the physical attributes of housing settlements such as the technical logic of construction or engineering. Modernity is also reflected in the human attributes of residents such as independence from tradition, and participation in citizen activities (Rigg 2007), and compliance with official rules and prescriptions of urban governance.

James Scott (1998; 2003) makes a careful distinction between modernism and *high* modernism, identifying the latter as ‘a particularly sweeping vision of how the benefits of technical and scientific progress might be applied – usually through the state – in every field of human activity’ (Scott 1998: 90). Coupled with certain other conditions – such as weak civil society¹⁷ and excessive state power – these ambitions are enacted in distorted

¹⁶ The process of modernisation was initially assumed to consist unproblematically of a linear set of stages (Williams et al 2009).

¹⁷ Scott identified three elements that make seemingly well-meaning state initiatives crafted in the ideology of high modernism (1998: 4) fail so dramatically: a desire for the ‘administrative ordering of nature and society’, an ‘unrestrained use of the power of the modern state’, and ‘a weak or prostrate civil society’ unable to resist various plans (Scott 1998: 89).

and grandiose schemes. This extreme mode should not to be conflated with modernism more generally.

Glaser (2001) describes three broad positions on modernity in South Africa. The first, 'essentially optimistic' (2001: 59) view¹⁸ emphasised that scientific advances could be used to overcome various problems bedevilling mankind. The second view considers it more fundamentally problematic, though motivations for scepticism may differ (Glaser 2001). From this position, modernisation is tyrannical in its application of scientific, industrial and technocratic logic on the human condition. Glaser (2001) notes that not all who share this perspective are necessarily anti-modernist: some are confident that the dominating effects of modernism can be ameliorated by democratic processes or other restraints. The third position on modernity is held by the more 'pessimistic anti-modernists' who see it as a fundamentally inappropriate imposition of Western rationality,

enacting dangerous projects of social engineering, erasing cultural difference in the name of universal western values (or squashing it under a commodifying consumerism), and silencing the understandings and voices of those who do not conform to its model of the rational citizen (Glaser 2001: 60).

This last perspective is echoed in Escobar's (1997) critique of 'development' in the mid twentieth century, which, he argues, valorised as correct and forward-thinking the paradigms of 'Western science and modern economics' whilst condemning poor 'undeveloped' countries as ignorant and backward. Adherents assumed that that 'science and planning', assumed to be rational, necessary, value-free and benevolent, offered a route to salvation (Escobar 1997: 181). Escobar argues that this is in fact a constructed perspective, relying on two complementary conceptualisations: the notion of Western modernity, which is a construct of a particular history and culture rather than a value-free idea, and the notion of underdevelopment or lack of development, similarly constructed

¹⁸ A view shared by both liberal modernization theory and by orthodox Marxism (Glaser 2001).

from a particular set of assumptions and judgments (Escobar 1997: 176). These constructs establish Western perspectives, values and ideals as the norm, and cast the developing world as impoverished and problem ridden, whilst ignoring the value in local systems and practices. Thus people get labelled as being in need of improvement. They

achieve a certain visibility, albeit only as a development 'problem', which makes them the object of powerful, even violent, bureaucratic, interventions (Escobar 1997: 187).

Scott (1998) similarly takes issue with an over-reliance on scientific approaches and with a failure to value indigenous and endogenous knowledge.

Li's (2005) account of a recent World Bank scheme in Indonesia describes approaches to village infrastructure decision-making which attempt to overcome many of Scott's critiques of high modernist practices. Despite efforts to do things differently, Li notes, it remains experts who '...define what counts as development and how it can be achieved' (Li 2005: 384). Further, Li concurs with Ferguson (1994) that an emphasis on infrastructure as a key resource and intervention reduces an understanding of structural and political issues impacting on peoples' lives to a technical concern. This perspective views 'the problem of poverty' as being the result of faulty planning (Li 2005: 384).

Glaser agrees that elements of modernity can be variously deployed, including for 'darker' political purposes¹⁹, as the concept of modernity can encompass a variety of conditions, contexts and conjectures (Glaser 2001: 64). But this conflates the 'good, bad and indifferent features' of modernity, condemning also those dimensions that are 'deeply necessary to any good society or polity' (2001: 67).

¹⁹ This includes 'projects of utopian social engineering driven by encompassing metanarratives of progress and implemented by impersonal and centralized bureaucratic machines' and 'the project of building a homogeneously conceived national unity that effaces cultural diversity' (2001: 67).

2.2.2 Varying outcomes

How then are the outcomes of improvement interventions viewed, in particular by those who have conceptualised or implemented them? Valverde (2011) critiques an assumption that there are inevitable, predetermined results of state interventions that conform neatly to an ideological objective. She refers to this as ‘the methodological tendency to regard legal and governance inventions...as tools chosen to implement a fixed political project’ (2011: 280) rather than more flexible tools invoked in particular directions at particular times. For example zoning and land use techniques do not have a ‘political essence’, she argues, but can be used in a range of ways (Valverde 2011: 302).

So modernist-oriented interventions do not inevitably result in a particular outcome, nor do they always imply a top-down imposition of order and control. Robbins and Rice (2007) note that the situations discussed in Corbridge et al’s (2005) book *Seeing the State* reveal complex, diverse and multi-dimensional facets of interventions in India, which do not lead to easy generalisations (Robbins and Rice 2007). Because of this unevenness in outcomes, Corbridge et al (2005) advocate for evidence-based engagement with the outcomes of development interventions, as results cannot be assumed (Painter 2007).

At the same time Li argues that local knowledge is not always ignored or overlooked in development interventions; rather it may be used to support the perspectives of states or other agencies. Much more accurate than the totalising view of the state as a grand generator of overall plans is the realisation that the context in which plans are applied modifies and compromises them (Li 2005). Rigg (2007) notes that modernisation is added to existing conditions rather than simply replacing them, with varying results.²⁰

²⁰Rigg therefore critiques what he sees as a ‘slightly lazy coupling’ of modernisation and Westernisation (2007: 61), although there is usually a link between them.

Mosse (2004) argues for a more complex consideration of policy outcomes and how to think about them. Key for him is how notions of success become 'produced', through a particular narrative that is created about a development situation. Those involved – even if they have very different roles in the process - become complicit in maintaining what Mosse describes as 'coherent representations of their actions' as amounting to 'authorized policy', because it is advantageous for them to do so for a variety of different reasons. Thus 'recipients' of development might act in various ways different to that intended but simultaneously be involved in validating the overall framework of authority. Mosse thus advocates for an understanding of development that recognises the intertwined nature of the "intentionalities of the developers and the 'to-be-developed'" (Mosse 2004: 665). For him, ethnographic method is essential to uncovering 'the processes of order and disjuncture' linking policy to outcomes (Mosse 2004: 666) and the 'multiple rationalities of development' (Mosse and Lewis 2006: 17).

For Schaffer, gaps between policy intents and outcomes can in part be explained by how the systems and practices of 'administrative procedures' become ends in themselves. How people respond to the methods of organisation – procedures such as 'gates, lines and counters; eligibility, priority and itemization' – then start to establish 'the outcomes of those public policies themselves' (Schaffer 1980: 198).

Schaffer (1980) argues that the targets of policy interventions – those outside of the state trying to access its resources and policies – inadvertently contribute, through their participation in administrative rituals and procedures, to a particular, powerful but fundamentally inaccurate depiction of the bureaucracy, one in which the bureaucracy is assumed to be depoliticised in nature. The idea that the bureaucracy is de-politicised absolves it from responsibility for its actions, by overlooking 'the political (that is the involved, interested and discretionary) role of bureaucracy itself' (Schaffer 1980: 192). Schaffer argues that much of the state administrative machine is set up to intervene where there are shortages, or to address gaps. But bureaucracies depend for their existence on these 'deficits', and on creating the systems and procedures to fulfil some of

these needs: they are thus self-serving, though at times inaccurately couched as de-politicised, rational and technical institutions. Frustrations in accessing the state through the bureaucracy are mixed with faith in it:

Particular moments of institutional encounter – an application, a ration, a contract, a procurement - express pain, disappointment, cost; but also justice, welfare, hope. The overall structures survive accordingly (Schaffer 1980: 199).

Overall the considerations in this section suggest that a study of the outcomes of housing policy in South Africa needs to identify what notions of improvement or modernisation are contained in the South African housing policy, which this study does in Chapter Four; state housing practitioners' views on this (Chapter Six), and how people's responses to the programme challenge or reinforce these (Chapters Seven and Eight). The ways in which the outcomes of the programme are viewed by the state – in particular housing practitioners in or associated with the bureaucracy - and how these views are explained or accounted for is discussed in Chapter Six.

2.2.3 What attracts state attention in reviewing improvement interventions?

Whilst the literature suggests that outcomes can be diverse, locally specific and transformed during implementation, what comes into view for the South African state in assessing the results 'on the ground' of its housing intervention? I discuss three aspects of state improvement programmes which appear to attract state attention: first, practices of informality; second, the appropriate behaviour of the targets of 'improvement', and third, the extension of political or social control through improvement. These are not issues which the state necessarily sets out to systematically assess, but are rather aspects to which the gaze of the state is drawn.

The relevance of these themes stems from three factors. First, as indicated in Chapter One of the dissertation, they emerge as a preoccupation in the pronouncements of South

African politicians on people's uses of RDP housing. The statements of national and provincial ministers show concerns with the appropriateness of behaviour and conduct, with state desire to prescribe and control beneficiary actions and activities, and with unsanctioned and unauthorised forms of occupation that might loosely be termed 'the informal'. Second, these issues have attracted commentary in the literature on housing in South Africa where, for example, the informality of backyard shacks is seen to undermine state intentions (Robins 2003; Lemanski 2009); informal property transactions are condemned by authorities (Marx and Rubin 2008); and government and developers make distinctions between what they see as acceptable and unacceptable beneficiary behaviour (Robins 2003; Ross 2005). Third, similar issues are also reflected in the international literature on the outcomes of housing projects, primarily in developing areas, when unofficial or informal housing transformations are viewed by authorities as creating slums (Tipple 2000), and unplanned home-based economic activity is not supported (Kellet and Tipple 2003) or is actively criminalised (Schlyter 2003). These three issues of informality, conduct and control are reflected also in wider literature on development and the state (Scott 1998; Ghertner 2011; Li 2005; Ghannam 2002).

In this second section and in later parts of the chapter I refer to authors who draw on the notion of governmentality, a concept developed by philosopher Michel Foucault which refers to the combined set of forces which together act to shape human behaviour in a particular society. These forces include explicit incentives and sanction by authorities, as well as norms, conventions and rituals that people themselves subscribe to and therefore discipline themselves to comply with (Scott and Marshall 2005). It could be summarised as the manner in which a government and those it governs interact (Williams et al 2009).

Informal practices and the aesthetics of order and informality

State improvement programmes, particularly those involving capital expenditure, are often associated with a desire for a particular aesthetic *visual* orderliness. Scott's (1998) analysis of the villagisation programme in Tanzania identifies as one aspect of the state's

agenda 'a powerful aesthetic dimension' (Scott 1998: 224), constituting 'visual representations of order and efficiency'.

But the 'look' of regularity may become, irrationally, an end itself. Scott contends that high-modernist plans at least are inclined to stand as a proxy for order and effectiveness: if a scheme 'looks right' it is assumed to work well (Scott 1998: 224, 225). In a similar vein Swilling et al (2002) refer to Marshall Berman's (1998) work which demonstrated the link between the look of progress as adopted by the middle class after the industrial revolution and efforts to reconfigure settlements to reflect modern norms. They contend this notion of modernity gets reproduced in many contexts, including various situations across Africa (Swilling et al 2002).

The obverse is a concern with, and a condemnation of, the look of informality. In contemporary Delhi, Ghertner (2011) argues that visual codes are a shorthand for what is assumed to align with legality and illegality. In what he terms a 'rule by aesthetics', property developments are summarised and judged by the way they look: 'if a settlement looks polluting, it is sanctioned as unplanned and illegal' (Ghertner 2011: 280). He uses the examples of a proposed glitzy shopping mall and a slum to demonstrate that these visual associations may not accord with the legal situation, but they nevertheless persist in the minds of many. Tipple notes that criticisms of user-transformations of government-built housing include that these additions and alterations 'look chaotic rather than disciplined...[and] change the look of the neighbourhood from that which was planned' (Tipple 2000: 133).

Concerns about informal practices and imagery may extend to income-generating activities too. In Rustenburg, South Africa, policy sentiments in favour of locally based ways of earning a living clashed with the informal look that resulted from such practices (Mosiane 2011). Rustenburg city council saw the ideal post-apartheid city as one where everyone could achieve 'decent housing and sustainable livelihoods' (Mosiane 2011: 45). But the support for this proved not to include the reality of home based enterprise, as

officials viewed informal income-generating activities as 'inappropriate' (2011: 43) and demolished shops and businesses, even where operators had valid trading permits. Similarly in Schlyter's study in Zimbabwe a variety of income generating practices 'can all be seen as an informalisation of formal housing' (2003: 23). Although policy trends in South Africa in the early 1990s seemed supportive of poor peoples' income-generating activities, by the late 1990s and 2000s the thrust tended more towards a sanitised, orderly city aiming at formal economic growth (Mosiane 2011).

Tipple argues that authorities' direct particular moral disapproval to those earning an income through rental or home based business in state subsidised housing (Tipple 2000: 53 with reference to Strassmann 1987). However in several African countries state built housing has transformed in a generation from a house for one family to accommodating several households in various configurations of rooms (Schlyter 2003 with reference to Tipple 1999), with home-owner landlords generating an income from the government initiative.

By way of contrast Tarlo (2001) reports that in Delhi in the 1960s people who were relocated to settlement camps were required to agree *not* to build any *permanent* structures. Here the fear of people making permanent claims to the land trumped the disorderly look – or, the informal look was used as a means to code and encapsulate their temporary status.

In practice therefore state attitudes to the look of informality might be more ambivalent than a straight forward condemnation of it. In Barberton, South Africa, Wiesenthal argues that despite shack living being looked down on, it is in part 'officially accepted' to build a shack whilst waiting for an RDP house (2011: 8). Also the *enforcement* of an ideal may not be feasible, where for example regulations cannot be administered (Wiesenthal 2011). In practice therefore a dominant sentiment against informality might be locally transgressed or may operate in parallel with other imperatives.

The unease about informality discussed earlier might be not only about appearance but what this seems to represent, in particular in relation to the state. These concerns identify the look of a place as being representative of other characteristics. While formal structures and sanctioned activities signify order, the opposite stands for temporariness, disorder, unruliness and perhaps a lack of cleanliness.

An informal, disorganised look thus might imply a lack of state control of poor living conditions, and associated concerns such as in-migration. Formal planned and ordered structures by contrast represent progress²¹, efficiency, perhaps productivity. The state's view on how housing should look and operate therefore influences their attitudes to actual practices, an argument I develop further in discussion of the SA housing programme (Chapter Four), and in Chapter Six where I discuss the interviews with officials.

Conduct

The second issue which may attract state attention is how people act in relation to the housing. From a governmentality perspective²², Li (2005: 387) argues that the activity of government includes 'setting conditions so that people will be inclined to behave as they should'. Ghannam (2002) describes the relocation of people to new accommodation in Cairo and contends the state had ambitions for what effects this would have on peoples' activities and conduct, including assisting them to contribute more towards building the country. But these government directives are through a 'light touch': encouraging, nudging rather than coercing or dictating. Sometimes the behaviour, ambitions and expectations accompanying a state improvement programme are not explicitly articulated but nevertheless referred to in other ways, such as disapproval of 'wrong'

²¹ Schlyter noted in 2003 that 'in Zimbabwe, as in South Africa, you can still hear municipal councillors promise that squatters and backyard shacks will be eradicated' (2003: 72).

²² Li sees this as 'the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means' (Li 2007: 5).

conduct. Anand and Rademacher (2011) discuss the actions of slum dwellers in Mumbai who receive a new apartment through negotiations with private developers seeking to build on land they occupy. Some residents subsequently *sell* the flats they have acquired, the authors note, in an action not well understood by the state nor by the supporters of the slum dwellers. Sellers disappoint activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who have supported residents' rights to stay in their localities, and who see the allocation of an apartment as a hard-won victory. This disapproval, the authors argue, stems in part from the fact that the sellers do not conform either to a category of 'deserving' citizens who have earned an intervention into their lives, or to a picture of 'resisting subjects' who contest state intervention (Anand and Rademacher 2011: 1765).

South Africa's President Zuma noted that investment in human settlements is an investment in the future: 'habitable and decent settlements promote human dignity and the stability of our communities' (Buanews 2010). In these comments he reveals expectations of the impact of housing on the behaviour of people. These expectations resonate with the high modernist projects discussed by James Scott, which have similar expectations that spatial reorganization would result in 'improved conduct' (Li 2005: 387). They also echoes Ross's (2010) description of how the developers and authorities involved in The Park housing development in Cape Town spoke of creating a 'model community of fully urbanized residents' (2010: 32). The project, which aimed to accommodate indigent beneficiaries living in very basic shack conditions, thus consisted not only of an orderly, hygienic and planned physical settlement, but also of the norms and regulations which would shape behaviour in the occupation of the development, and the need for residents to comply with them. In this case both developers and beneficiaries made connections between 'urban planning, the spatial layout of homes and morality' (Ross 2010: 34 with reference to Broadbridge 2001; Robins 2003).

It is not uncommon for moral judgments to be made of the 'beneficiaries' or recipients of improvements schemes, and their actions. If they are initially perceived as marginalised poor people who have a right to a decent home in the city, this suggests an expectation

that they should consolidate their gain, and perhaps be grateful. If the gain once secured is then disposed of or used in a different way to that anticipated, the attitude of the 'facilitating cast'— the state, activists, support organisations - shifts from one of largesse and sympathy to puzzlement and frustration, that an expensive, time-consuming investment has seemingly been rejected or not appreciated. This suggests the need to explore what expectations the state has of beneficiary behaviour, and the states' attitudes towards deviations from this.

Control

A further logic of the state, Scott (1998) argues, relates to political control. Drawing once again on his Tanzanian example he contends that

The thinly veiled subtext of villagisation was also to reorganize human communities in order to make them better objects of political control and to facilitate the new forms of communal farming favoured by state policy (Scott 1998: 224).

More generally, Rigg notes that colonialism in the Global South introduced systems of management and organization 'which had the intention of putting people in their place so that they could be counted, mapped, controlled and taxed' (Rigg 2007: 146).

This in turn necessitated mechanisms of 'disciplining' and coercing local populations including through the practice of planning (Escobar 1997: 198). Escobar argues that 'one cannot look on the bright side of planning, its modern achievements (if one were to accept them), without looking at the same time on its dark side of domination' (Escobar 1997: 178).

Tarlo (2001) provides the powerful example of how relocations from slums in Delhi to resettlement areas during the Indian emergency in the 1970s were linked into another state agenda around family planning. Proof of 'voluntary sterilisation' was in some circumstances a prerequisite for allocation of a plot or confirmation of legitimate occupation. Sterilisation of an allottee (or of another person willing to be sterilised in their

place for a fee) was 'encouraged' by officials through threats of eviction or withholding new allocation. Despite denials over the years, the state's own records of personal files of the area reflect the practice of linking housing access to sterilisation (Tarlo 2001: 74).

Tarlo suggests that what appears to be extreme coercion and control by the state of poor and relatively powerless people can be read in a more complex manner. In some ways the system was manipulated: in paying others to be sterilised in their place, for example, people evaded the state's directive, and thus correspond neither to a label of 'victim' nor complier (Tarlo 2001: 83).

Improvement interventions might articulate with simultaneous or subsequent agendas to manage, influence or shape recipients, though implementation of these initiatives may be confounded in practice. For example, the state can attempt to achieve control through housing programmes by setting conditions, usually around behaviour change, for the access and receipt of a benefit: for instance, linking state contributions to monthly housing costs with expectations of certain standards of behaviour (Deacon 2004). The notion of conditionality thus requires welfare recipients to 'fulfil conditions regarding their own behaviour and that of their children' (Deacon 2004: 911). These attempts to shape behaviour through conditionality would apply mainly to situations where the state has an ongoing financial relationship with recipients of benefits; in housing policy terms there is a clearer link to these ideas through housing vouchers or rental tenure than ownership.

Tensions and contradictions

The foregoing discussion has focused on issues of informality, conduct and control, which continue to be important themes within the management of a 'housing problem' in South that are also closely linked to notions of modernity and improvement. But there may be tensions and contradictions linked to these concerns, as this section briefly notes.

One tension for the South African state might be a potential ambivalence to or conflicted relationship with the notion of modernity as implicated in the apartheid project and its legacy (Glaser 2001; Van Holdt 2010). Apartheid's extreme forms of social and physical engineering represented some sort of epitome of technical rationality. Modernist influences shaped South Africa's racial order, with urban planners drawing from European and American spatial planning approaches in the manifestation of this order (Glaser 2001: 63). Glaser (2001) cites Parnell and Mabin's (1995: 55) contention that modernist thinking in urban planning and architecture 'lent itself to apartheid'. This was through a shared focus on

large-scale spatial engineering to manage problems of urban economic and population growth and especially [on] slum clearance and the creation of coherent communities separated by green belts...characteristic of urban segregation (Glaser 2001: 63).

The apartheid legacy lingers not only spatially but also in the contemporary operation of the bureaucracy. Van Holdt (2010) contends that the South African state was coloured by particular racial and colonial dimensions, and that these taint the postcolonial and post-apartheid state. For example, the conceptualisation of what constituted professional skill was deeply entwined with racial power. So struggles to overcome the legacy of the particular apartheid colonial state, Van Holdt argues, involve 'a tension *over* the selective appropriation and rejection of different aspects of modernity' (2010: 257). He argues it is not only scarcity of skill that explains the dysfunctionality in government departments but also ambivalence towards historically embedded skills and expertise, often represented by white technocrats (van Holdt 2010: 250).

In her focus on city administration, Valverde (2011) also argues that 'premodern logics' persist within local government administrative frameworks of policy and administration. Taking the example of nuisance logics which shape by-laws and zoning regulations around land use (such as concerns with noise and odours), she contends that that cities try to replace specific and subjective judgments with 'hard-and-fast, objective' rules, but that this is a no-win process as managing 'urban disorder' in fact necessitates such 'embodied,

experiential, and relational categories' (2011: 280, 297). Valverde uses the phrase 'seeing like a city' to refer to the tussles that result in more adaptive legal tools being invoked at local government level. This, she contends, invokes a 'pragmatic approach that uses both old and new gazes, pre-modern and modern knowledge formats, in a nonzero-sum manner and in unpredictable and shifting combinations' (2011: 282).

Similarly, for Valverde, the practices described by Ghertner (2010 in Valverde 2011) of the approach taken to restrict and control slums in New Delhi do not surprise. Ghertner sees officials resorting to an aesthetic logic in their attempts to manage and manipulate the settlements, after their initial tools of mapping and quantifying were appropriated by settlement residents and used by them for unanticipated purposes. For Valverde, officials in Delhi initially deployed a modernist logic (using mapping and counting) but then shifted to an 'offensiveness' or a 'nuisance' logic in their declaration of the informal settlements as 'aesthetically offensive'. She sees similarities elsewhere in her contention that 'this way of constructing the problem could be in the end more successful than modernist planning and zoning' (Valverde 2011: 306).

Ambivalence towards modernity may exist in other modes too. Asef Bayat (2010) argues that authorities in developing countries are often conflicted by ordinary peoples' processes of using the city. Bayat's (2004) term 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' encapsulates poor peoples' activities in appropriating public space through incremental occupation of various kinds. Whilst these activities flout official (modernist) rules and convention, they can also serve the state by, for example, enabling the poor to provide rudimentary shelter for themselves, at little cost to the state. Although effectively an invasion of authority and of land, this can be simultaneously a useful 'self-help mechanism' of the poor. Therefore Bayat argues 'it is no surprise that governments often express a contradictory position toward these kinds of activities' (Bayat 2004: 95).

This discussion indicates the need to explore the ways in which the promotion of, critiques of and tensions with modernity are evident in the state's view of the housing program and its realisation. The literature suggests that informality, conduct and control might attract the attention of the state after housing delivery, and in this thesis I explore how these issues are embedded in the expectations of the state, and how they are realized or thwarted in the practices surrounding the realisation of the housing programme. Chapter Six takes seriously the contention that state actors will not simply be uncritical implementers of conventional conceptualisations of modernity, but will look at their different roles in championing and challenging these expectations within South Africa's housing programme. Informality, conduct and control are also important in the discussions of beneficiaries' responses in Chapters Seven and Eight, and the ways in which their attitudes and practices around these three issues accord with or challenge expectations placed upon them by the state. But to do this, I first need to explore the notion of seeing from the state, as well as the mechanisms the state uses to see.

2.3 Seeing from the state

2.3.1 Seeing from the bureaucracy

Since 'seeing is always situated and a view is always a 'view from'' (Painter 2007: 606) my gaze here is from within the housing programme, and a key concern is with the perspectives on housing usage and related issues of those who conceptualise, implement, administer, evaluate and pronounce on the outcomes of the programme. This focus suggests that one route to exploring the state's perspective is through the implementers and administrators of housing: what might be termed 'the bureaucracy'. Van Holdt (2010) argues that the bureaucracy is 'one of the core institutions of modernity: It is what makes the modern state and the modern capitalist economy possible' (2010: 256). In South Africa, he argues, discussions tend to focus on developmental policies, neglecting consideration of the 'organisation': the administrative machine necessary to effect these policies. Migdal (1994) argues for exploring the state at a finer grain, to bring into view different levels and component personnel of the state, such as those in the 'commanding

heights' of top leadership as well as those in 'the trenches' of daily interaction with ordinary people. This examination can reveal 'distinct structural environments' (1994: 16) within the state, and can illuminate the various encounters and struggles which occur internally to the organisation, as well as with the external forces that officials interact with. This focus on the bureaucracy is not to suggest that administrators constitute the state, which I understand as a broader concept extending beyond government departments to include political, ideological and judicial dimensions (Corbridge et al 2007). But in this research I take the position that officials' explanations of their own practices and views, as well as how they interpret the views of politicians, is a key means to gain insight into views from the state. I turn now to explore what might be expected from a consideration of views from within the bureaucracy.

A focus on the bureaucracy suggests a consideration of the human face of the state, the people that make up the state²³. Of relevance to how they think and act is their background and experience, and their exposure to different influences and trajectories. Formative influences might stem from some peoples' past involvement in processes of change, in their advocating for progressive transformation. Staff from civil society organisations might move into employment in the state, maintaining links externally which provide a conduit through which ideas between the two are able to filter (Tendler 1997). There is an echo of this in Scott's (1998) observation that many state interventions are clothed in good intentions. Far from being perpetrated by fascist governments 'much of the massive, state-enforced state engineering of the twentieth century has been the work of progressive, even revolutionary, elites' (Scott 1998: 89). These progressives he argues

have come to power with a comprehensive critique of existing society and a popular mandate ...to transform it. [They] have wanted to use that power to bring

²³ This component of the study could be seen as a form of anthropology of the state, as anthropology is 'concerned with ordinary peoples' beliefs and practices' (Fuller and Bénéï 2001: 2). Corbridge et al contend that 'states should be understood anthropologically' (2007: 5).

about enormous changes in peoples' habits, work, living patterns, moral conduct, and world view (Scott 1998: 89).

Smith (2011) uses the term 'guerrillas in the bureaucracy' to refer in her South African study to 'officials with an activist background or with a political will to strengthen local democracy' (2011: 516). Whilst referring to their progressive orientation, the use of the word 'guerrillas' however suggests that, for her, these officials are somehow at odds with a dominant culture and approach that is not very progressive – they are exceptions. Tandler (1997) however highlights a series of laudable performances from officials in four different sectors in Brazil, a story of 'good government' in contrast to the predominance of research and commentary on why states perform poorly. Her examples are not just about staff fulfilling the basic requirements of their jobs, but reveal staff with exceptional commitment to their responsibilities, taking on tasks beyond their portfolios and responding to the wider needs of their clients.

The views and perspectives of individuals in the bureaucracy who work with a particular intervention can help illuminate how it is understood, how it is implemented and how it is assessed. But individuals might not share a common understanding or set of approaches, revealing rather a more splintered institution along the lines Smith (2011) describes. Here she observes fracture 'across spheres of government and between politicians and officials' (2011: 504). During a particular period of political instability and insecurity in the Cape Town local authority, Smith notes, city officials piloted 'by stealth' an initiative in the field of water delivery aimed at assisting the public to hold the local authority accountable and responsive. This low-key approach was adopted as officials were concerned that fear and suspicion might scupper the programme during its passage through City structures. But officials were unconfident and ill-equipped to handle the diverse and serious issues raised through the newly created platform, a situation which ultimately jeopardised its effectiveness and institutionalisation (Smith 2011: 514).

Van Holdt describes a more fundamental form of institutional contestation, not centred on policies and projects, but on paradigms or world views. He argues that a common (but

not universal²⁴) characteristic of the contemporary state bureaucracy in South Africa is friction over what its 'purpose and meaning' is (2010: 257). In many departments, he contends, 'non-Weberian rationales' are at play, rendering many departments 'dysfunctional, if considered from the classical Weberian perspective'²⁵ (2010: 257). Van Holdt suggests that these departments have more in common with the 'intermediate states' described by Evans (1995 in van Holdt 2010), states which are in between developmental states and predatory states.

In her work on water distribution in Johannesburg and Mumbai, Bawa (2011: 498) calls for recognition of the differences in 'institutional contexts' that affect delivery. These include varying interactions between politicians and officials in local authorities. Thus Bawa argues that a focus on 'the process of mediation' as an explanation for how marginalised and neglected groupings manage to negotiate access to state infrastructure, as explained by Chatterjee (2004), is useful but insufficient: attention is also needed on this 'institutional context' and the different ways in which it affects access and outcomes. This echoes Migdal's (1994) concern with relationships that develop both within components of the state, and between these and social organisations; he draws attention to the impacts and necessary adjustments that result from these various forms of interactions.

Tensions can exist within the state, and particularly between local and central state (Lemon 2002). Citing Taylor (1993), Lemon flags that the power of local authorities can range along a spectrum, from the power only to administer centrally determined policy,

²⁴ Van Holdt identifies organisations such as the South African Revenue Service and National Treasury as departments showing 'features of Weberian bureaucracy such as meritocracy, a high premium placed on skill and expertise, and corporate cohesiveness' (2010: 257).

²⁵ A bureaucracy as conceptualised by Max Weber would be made up of administrators that are impersonal and objective, uninfluenced by personal backgrounds or situations, efficient, rational, united in a common project (Corbridge 2008).

to the power to initiate policy. He concludes that 'the central-local government relationship is often an uneasy one, characterized by mutual recrimination' (2002: 20). Tendler (1997) draws attention to a different experience from Brazil, in which a healthy tension developed between central and local government in a context of limited decentralisation. In this example central government remained involved in aspects of some local projects, and this oversight, along with a level of mistrust between the levels of state, had a paradoxically positive effect in spurring better performance from within the state.

Sharp (2007: 602) highlights the disjuncture between 'the scripted plans of the centre' and 'the more strategic performances' of local players in the state to which Corbridge et al (2005) draw attention. These uneven paths and relationships can give rise to unforeseen results. Migdal's theorisation of the mutually transformative nature of state-society relations offers an explanation for why policies devised at 'the centre' of the state may morph and shift during the process of realisation through more dispersed and localised parts of the state. All states, he contends, aim for social control, a condition in which they provide not only the means by which people are able to invoke survival strategies but also the symbolic significance or meaning imbuing people's activities whilst they do so (Migdal 1988: 26). But in attempting to shape this environment according to their particular visions and ideological projects, states come up against an array of existing social organisations - 'clans, clubs and communities' (Migdal 1988: 25) – which have their own 'rules of the game' (Migdal 1988: 29) which draw on religious, cultural, family or social prescriptions and conventions to guide people's behaviour. The ensuing tussle for social control between the state and such organisations involves a series of 'thrusts and parries' (Migdal 1994: 9), a process which alters the nature of the state itself as well as those with which it spars. Shifts and changes occur in the state through various attempts at different levels of the state to manage, navigate and interact with these

forces outside of the state, a situation of conflict, contestation and accommodation which leaves its mark on all parties:

The engagement of state and society involves the creation of alliances and coalitions and, for each side of the bargain, the incorporation of a new material basis as well as new ideas and values into its constitution (Migdal 1997: 225).

Migdal (1988) also draws attention to the strategies and devices used by top leadership in the state to hang on to power in contexts where there is fragmentation of social control across many organisations beyond the state. These tactics include dispensing patronage and state resources. But Migdal also focuses on 'implementers' in the state, the middle level officials who are key in the distribution of resources from the centre to smaller locales and more distant parts of the state. These officials are subject to various pressures and influences in mediating the needs and demands of several groupings both within and external to the state, such as line managers, target populations, and local leaders or strongmen who mediate access to and from ordinary people. Implementers often have to navigate between groupings, a process termed by Migdal as making 'accommodations', involving 'bargaining relationships' with strongmen, other officials and political party representatives (Migdal 1988: 248) which distort policy implementation and outcomes.

explicit or covert bargaining among organised social interests , bureaucrats, and politicians is a hallmark of nearly every contemporary state (Migdal: 1988: 248).

The extent of the distortion during implementation depends on factors such as the extent of supervisory oversight and other indicators of how strong or weak the state is, which can account for what Migdal sees as often 'the yawning gap' between state rhetoric and performance (Migdal 1997: 211).

Difference, dispute and conflict may therefore be evident in various quarters including from within the state. For example, 'bottom-up' negotiation with local state

representatives or officials can result in pragmatic interventions by the state itself that are in contravention of policy. Hossain (2012) describes how organised dwellers of a savings club in an informal settlement in Dhaka obtained an authorised water connection from the City water and sanitation authority, contrary to official practice. In another example of contradictory practices within the state, an authorised electricity connection was illegally extended by slum dwellers in a complex sub-leasing arrangement, and some new beneficiaries enlisted the help of another arm of the state, the police, in preventing sanctions against competing and contesting factions in the slum. Hossain sees these practices as privileging some groups within an area and marginalising others through practices of fragmentation and division with the community itself, and through the state exercising 'multiple and flexible policies' (Chatterjee 2004: 137 in Hossain 2012: 76).

Li comments on other contestations which may arise within the state:

resistance may be found at the heart of the bureaucratic apparatus, where experts debate the merits of diverse plans or argue against excessive intervention in peoples' lives (Li 2005: 385).

Corbridge concurs that although many states aim at creating 'modern citizens – men and women who will govern themselves', these efforts are implemented 'by people who might not share the ambitions or perhaps even the vocabularies, of those who first enact public policy' (Corbridge 2008: 114).

Whilst differences might be apparent within the state, amongst officials, and between officials and politicians, the perspectives, views and attitudes of state employees are also not held within a container of 'the state', immune to the pressures and outlooks 'on the ground', a point made strongly in Migdal's (1994) contention that state and social organisations shape each other through their encounters. Bawa (2011) notes that distinctions between the state and society can be very blurred if the administrators themselves are potential beneficiaries of state initiatives. In Mumbai for example officials might also be found living in slums because of the high cost of alternative accommodation, and, in so doing, complicate the relationship between deliverer and

beneficiary in interventions in such areas: they straddle both sides of the ‘distributor’- ‘recipient’ categorisation (Bawa: 2011).

Thus whilst relationships of ordinary people with authority can be ‘both personal and institutional’ (Thorn and Oldfield 2011: 526); the inverse also holds: *state officials* can have professional, job-bound and official relationships with people and also personal ones.

The view from the state on a particular issue might therefore be non-uniform and diverse in a number of ways.

In this section I have flagged a range of issues that might surface through a focus on ‘the bureaucracy’ as a means to gain insight into the state’s view of peoples’ interaction with the housing benefit. In addition, ‘peopling the state’ – taking seriously the backgrounds and perspectives of the individuals who administer and review the housing programme, both within and outside of the state, acting on its behalf – suggests that diversity of understanding and positions might be as likely as commonality, that friction and fragmentation in perspectives and in practices might be apparent, and that the distinction between state and society at the level of individuals might be blurred. I have also noted the contention that the state itself experiences change through its interaction with social organisations (and vice versa), and that policy can be distorted by the navigations and negotiations of officials during these processes.

2.3.2 Mechanisms and techniques

In this section I consider the techniques states draw on to effect their programmes and to see their outcomes. I discuss the argument made within critical development studies that states have difficulty in conceptualising and handling complexity (Scott 1998), and the mechanisms states invoke to manage these situations - by greatly simplifying their analyses (Scott 1998; Li 2007), relying on assumptions that can be flawed (Spiegel 1999), taking only a snapshot or static view (Wiesenthal 2011), compromising or adjusting policy

intents through local level bargaining (Migdal 1988), and resorting to technical tools (Li 2007) that may be limited. I note the possibility for a counter narrative though, which argues that in practice states are regularly more discerning (Wong 1999), potentially through the approaches of responsive and dedicated officials (Tendler 1997).

Difficulties in conceptualizing and responding to complexity

Li (2007) notes that there are two aspects to transforming the will to improve into explicit interventions, namely 'problematization...identifying deficiencies that need to be rectified', and second, describing and capturing the object of intervention in ways that can be managed (2007: 7). There is a direct relationship between the two: 'the identification of a problem is intimately linked to the availability of a solution' (Li 2007: 7). Not unsurprisingly, she notes, problem definition generally avoids bigger questions of socio-economic structure and power in society.

One of the difficulties states have in devising and implementing improvement programs is the trouble administrations have in addressing complexity (Scott 1998). Scott argues that states operate best with fixed measures, dimensions and repetition, and therefore construct 'a terrain and a population with precisely those standardized characteristics that will be easiest to monitor, count, assess, and manage' (Scott 1998: 81, 82).

Processes of reduction and simplification are needed to enable officials to have a fairly narrow, focused view of a broad group, a view that is 'replicable across many cases'. Then, collating these various synoptic lenses necessarily entails conflating 'distinctions that might otherwise be relevant' (Scott 1998: 81). This simplification may be applied to social or economic organisations (Hibbard 1999) or to physical situations. For example, for improvement to be effected in Tanzanian villages there was a need for spatial reorganisation, although this might contain its own limitations: 'only by radically simplifying the settlement pattern ... was it possible for the state to efficiently deliver such development services as schools, clinics, and clean water' (Scott 1998: 224).

Scott has some sympathy with an approach which reduces and simplifies:

certain forms of knowledge and control require a narrowing of vision. The great advantage of such tunnel vision is that it brings into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality (Scott 1998: 11).

Li is more harsh in her critique, arguing that planners and development workers 'render technical' the situations they analyse. In other words, observed phenomena (social, economic, cultural for example) are categorised and described in ways that enable and facilitate a technical 'solution'; their political dimensions are largely ignored (Li 2007: 7).

Planning data, as James Ferguson (1994) demonstrated, is sui generis: It identifies only those problems for which a technical remedy within the competence of the planners can be supplied (Li 2005: 389).

This practical need for generalisation and simplification in the state's approaches tends to obscure a view of complexity and diversity amongst households and urban systems. For example, Spiegel (1999) argues that the South African housing policy views potential beneficiaries as homogenous households with the same needs; research, however, demonstrates enormous diversity of households' situations and needs (Spiegel Watson and Wilkinson 1996). Wiesenthal (2011) provides the example of a group of nine members of a family who simultaneously occupied more than one house for everyday activities, and, over time, for sleeping and storage. With reference to Ross (2005) Wiesenthal argues 'state-led planning tends to equate a house with a household and thereby assumes a fixed link between a social structure and a material structure...' (2011: 19), but her example shows that

they are neither one household spread over four sites (and seven dwellings), not four independent households ...[therefore] how the single dwellings' usage relates to units of family evades easy definition... (2011: 13, 14).

Simplification and generalisation might result in flawed assumptions. Spiegel (1999) argues that a housing program requiring self-build by the owner, such as the approach in South Africa in the 1990s, makes two assumptions: first that urban dwellers aim to settle

in and develop their new houses and, second, that they are able financially and economically to consolidate in one place. Research shows both these assumptions to be faulty, he argues. Wiesenthal also contends that the SA state has a static image of RDP-living which is encapsulated at the point of handover of the completed unit to the beneficiary, and does not envision or accept a process of change to the dwelling over time (Wiesenthal 2011: 21). This 'snapshot' view she argues falls into the same trap that Scott (1998) and Holston (1999) critique when they argue that:

such an attempt to stabilise spaces fails exactly due to its deficiency to include time, future development, contingency, the unexpected and unintended, as well as an anticipation of local practices, the complexities of informality, and contradicting aspects of lived local realities, and render many well intended planning projects unsuccessful (Wiesenthal 2011: 21).

Further analyses of South African socio-economic conditions illustrate similar disjunctures. Oldfield and Boulton argue that 'individuals and families are stretched across cities and regional and 'household' contexts constantly shift reflecting tenure and work insecurities' (2007: 10). The authors cite the South African Cities Network's (SACN) State of the Cities report of 2004 which noted a trend towards 'household decomposition', meaning the splitting from dual-location households – households divided across two sites of residence – to a greater number of smaller household units. The SACN argues that the RDP housing programme is implicated in encouraging household fragmentation as people want to access the benefit²⁶. This point is reinforced by several authors and in research by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (Catherine Cross pers comm. 2009)²⁷.

²⁶ This is the explanation given for the far higher growth in the number of *households* than of people evident between 1996 and 2001 in the Census data. The 2011 Census data show that nationally the number of households grew by 29% since 2001, whilst in Gauteng the number of households grew by 42.9% (SAPA 2012). Over this period the SA population grew by about 13.5%, showing a far great growth in the number of households than population.

²⁷ Cross (pers. Comm 2009) refers to women respondents in the HSRC study who had moved into shacks in order to get in line for an RDP house.

In Wong's discussion of Scott's (1998) work he takes a different position on the tendency of states to simplify. He contends that in practice states 'engage in all manner of distinction-making that bedevils efforts to simplify or generalize, making difficult... choices among several proposals for different purposes' (Wong 1999: 341). This counter position suggests more discernment, agency and responsiveness in the state than Scott's characterisation allows for, opening up a different view on state abilities' in respect of complexity. An alternative view is supported also by Tandler's (1997) identification of interested and receptive officials that can be found within some administrations.

In Chapter Six I consider how the SA government reflects on the outcomes of its RDP housing programme, and whether this suggests a tendency to simplify a much more complex situation, to build on inaccurate assumptions and a static snapshot view; or whether an alternative analysis should prevail. I consider whether in practice a different mode of operation is evident.

Tools for seeing and doing

I now consider *how* the state sees and assesses, through what mechanisms and techniques. With respect to mechanisms, Scott (1998) argues that specific tasks for modern states include counting and categorizing people, and locating them in space. He contends that this is a vexing task as the lifeworld does not fit neatly into the schema of the state. The 'continually frustrated goal of the modern state' is to

reduce the chaotic, disorderly, constantly changing social reality beneath it to something more closely resembling the administrative grid of its observations (Scott 1998: 81, 82).

Activities might include mapping (Rigg 2007), and keeping records and personal files (Tarlo 2001). Gathering information might relate to the state's desire to collect revenue - tax - from people, to be able to deliver services (Parnell 2008) and more generally to

manage the population²⁸. Tools, instruments and activities of the state directed towards gathering information are aimed at comprehending a complex situation, coordinating diverse activities in responses, and inserting coherence and commonality of purpose into a situation (Scott 1998). At the same time, information could also come ‘from the ground’ through a variety of channels, such as from informers, popular complaints or media reports.

Tarlo (2001) demonstrates in her historical study in Delhi that while government records of a situation can seem to be straightforward and even comprehensive, they can in themselves be unreliable. Moreover, they should not be seen as necessarily encapsulating the whole situation, even in their own narrow terms. The files Tarlo studied revealed ‘official truths’ but ‘they also concealed unofficial truths’ well known to those in the bureaucracy (Tarlo 2001: 77). She concludes that scrutiny of files in her research provided her ‘not so much with accurate data to be charted, as with insights into how the bureaucracy itself did the charting’ (2001: 86).

Li (2005, 2007) refers to underground or subterranean practices, which include ‘looking away when rules are broken, failing to gather or use information that undermines the linear narrative of the plan, and constructing data to demonstrate unerring “success”’ (Li 2007: 29). A disjuncture between intentions in plans and how they actually manifest might stimulate the state and others to strive to create a different impression. In reporting on outcomes and accounting for them, Li speaks of how bureaucrats ‘fix facts’, manipulating tools to encourage projects to speak better to expected outcomes: ‘devising practices to translate shaky numbers into solid ones or failed projects into plausible versions of success’ (Li 2005: 389). Or, as Migdal (1988) describes, officials might intervene to choke off negative reports on a situation to prevent them from working their way up the system to superiors (see also Gupta 2013). But these practices of ‘compromise and collusion’ dent or undermine the power of specialists, Li says.

²⁸ This includes for example the flow of goods, and of people.

Li (2005) contends that there are many examples where there is not a direct relationship between the information states collect on the subjects of their interventions and the nature of the intervention itself does: in other words, information gathered is not necessarily used to inform action, and is not necessarily directly useful. One example she gives is Thomas's (1994) account of how chiefs under colonisation in Fiji were under direction to record almost every human activity, however trivial. The information was not needed for anything per se, but the practice served to entrench the presence of the state in day to day life (Li 2005).

These processes of collecting data and scrutiny may not necessarily be unwelcome to those receiving the attention. Rigg notes that many of the recipients of modernization interventions 'feel deeply ambivalent' (2007: 58) about it. But others note how people jostle to be seen by the state, to be identified as a subject of attention and intervention. Li (2005) comments that

populations excluded from official maps and invisible in the national census may be more deeply taken by the idea of "the state" than savvy, urban skeptics; therefore, they devise strategies to position themselves closer to what they imagine to be the centre (2005: 385).

Tools of the state deployed in improvement interventions include counting, categorising, sorting, and organising; they demonstrate a practical need to bring aspects of the world into focus in a form that can be addressed by the state. By extension, these sorts of state techniques and processes may also be those used in assessing outcomes of interventions through inspecting, checking, ordering and verifying in relation to an expected result. These activities are useful for sharply illuminating some dimensions of a situation, but are also noted to simplify a reality that is much less coherent and orderly than the aspect which is brought in to view.

Whilst these mechanisms and procedures of the state can be straightforward in nature, in some instances they may not be coherent or clear, either to administrators or those

administered. Thorn and Oldfield's account of land occupiers engagement with the state in Cape Town testifies to what they call

the ambiguities and contradictions produced through the state's multiple faces, procedures, legal processes and law enforcement attitudes (2011: 528).

Similarly Rubin (2011) notes the confusion caused by inconsistent approaches to allocating subsidised housing in South Africa. Different lists and allocation systems used at project level provide fertile ground for suspicions of corruption²⁹ in situations where state procedures remain unexplained and impenetrable (2011: 487).

A further area for disjunctures in view and understanding comes from the institutional organisation of the state. The institutional structure of housing responsibility in South Africa, discussed further in Chapters Four and Five, is complex, spread across all three spheres of government. Rubin notes that in delivery at least, the actual and perceived functioning of the state can be incoherent: 'the various roles and responsibilities of councillors, provincial authorities and local officials are often obscure, and in some cases there is confusion among officials about who should be doing what' (Rubin 2011: 485).

Thus the tools and instruments of the state, as well as the structure of the housing function might present a less coherent and more multi-faceted picture than first assumed. This discussion is important to my thesis in suggesting a set of practices which states might typically undertake to assess a situation, and what the limitations of these might be. Accordingly, in Chapter Six the thesis investigates the implementation of housing policy, considering the tools and instruments the state uses to assess outcomes, and what accuracy and usefulness the state ascribes to them. In subsequent chapters the thesis also considers whether beneficiary practices accord with the information these

²⁹'Little of the process is generally explained to the potential beneficiaries; all that they see are people who applied after them, receiving houses before them.' (Rubin 2011: 485).

tools produce, or reveal weaknesses and contradictions in the information; and further, whether beneficiary practices are themselves influenced by the tools and instruments of the state.

2.4 People

Moving away from considerations of the state, its views, concerns and practices, I turn to thinking about the beneficiaries of housing: people. In analysing peoples' responses to their housing I draw on literature from the broad area of 'ordinary people' or 'everyday life' (Rigg 2007; Williams et al 2009; Simone 2004). In contrast to prioritising the planned spaces, policy prescriptions and regulations of authorities, this body of work focuses predominantly on what residents and users of cities actually do in time and space, because of or in spite of such official plans. In this way it is relevant for reflecting on the actions of the users of RDP housing.

This work on everyday life acknowledges the scale and extent of the practices and activities that characterise, shape and inhabit many cities of the south. It concentrates on inter alia informal practices, networks, systems and lives, and seeks to demonstrate the agency, ingenuity and complexity of everyday lives which are often unknown and unseen by the state. Research in this area focuses predominantly on activities outside of the state, but some texts specifically discuss responses to or intersections with state-provided infrastructure, the area of concern of this research.

The field of study of 'everyday life' is imprecisely defined. Rigg defines the everyday as 'the commonplace', 'the ordinary', and notes that less satisfactory descriptive terms include 'the banal and the prosaic' (Rigg 2007: 16). Other terms that are used include 'everyday practices', 'lived realities' 'everyday usages' 'everyday spatial practices' or more specifically 'the spatial dimensions of active livelihood strategies' (see for example Wiesenthal 2011). Rigg's concern with the everyday is with 'the details and minutiae of local lives and livelihoods and the local structures and processes that create such everyday lives and which are, in turn, created by them' (2007:7). By starting with these

issues he hopes to avoid the inclination 'to see and explain local outcomes as the result of overarching meta-processes' (ibid), and to also give recognition to human agency. For Schlyter (2003) an everyday perspective considers the residents 'as the agents of change, while policies, planning interventions and regulations are seen as limiting or providing opportunities for their activities' (2003: 10). Dierwechter's (2004: 959) focus is on what he terms peoples' 'socio-economic geography of survival' in relation to planned strategies and interventions.

Despite advocating a focus on the local, Rigg (2007) is clear that the local is entwined with broader scales. This issue of scale is important in my work, which has a spatial focus both at the scale of the city of Johannesburg (and its pattern of low-income housing), and at the scale of the lives and geographies of particular RDP dwellers. These geographies are not at the ultra-micro scale within the housing unit (such as where/ how people cook, eat, sleep – see Swart-Kruger, 2001), but span the use of the property and the location of the unit relative to the neighbourhood, sub-region and city. Of interest is the intersection between 'lives' and such spaces and, further, the connection *between* spatial scales. Beyond the geographic and spatial the research also considers the functioning or performance of the house in peoples' lives – in terms of income generation, household 'coherence', services, facilities, amenities and neighbourhood quality of life.

2.4.1 Considering the applicability of literature on the everyday

In the discussion below I draw on a range of concepts from the literature on the 'everyday' which relate to this study. However there are also key differences between what I see in my research and some of the contexts discussed in the literature, which I briefly review first. The first issue pertains to who are the ordinary *people* engaged in everyday activities. In some of the literature the notion of 'ordinary people' is presented as synonymous with 'the marginalised', 'the poor', the subaltern or dominated, 'outsiders', or the 'oppressed' – those outside of the formal economy and systems of governance, but also perhaps often unseen, dispossessed, sidelined. For example, Bayat's work in this area refers to migrants, refugees, the unemployed, squatters and

street vendors (Bayat 2004: 91). This conflation of ordinary people with those that are marginalised is however not completely clear in my research context, where RDP dwellers might well be poor (by income qualification definition), and also economically marginalised in a structural sense, but on the other hand are recipients of the state distribution of goods and services expressed concretely and materially. In addition, RDP beneficiaries are also an important constituency of recognised voters, rendering the distinction between ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’ –as invoked by Miraftab (2009) – not always clear in this context. In my research ordinary people derive from a broadly encompassing state category: income qualification criteria for RDP housing is estimated to include about 64% of SA households (Rust 2011), covering a large part of the population who can be argued to constitute ‘ordinary people’ in numerical and economic terms, being not decision-makers, not part of the elite or part of the middle-class.

The second issue is that my research concern is with the actions of individuals and individual households, not self-constituted groups or organisations. Bayat for example positions his work relative to work on urban social movements, and although he clearly advocates for recognition of individual or atomised actions – ‘nonmovements’ - he also valorises the coming together or collective mobilisation of like-minded individuals in defence of gains won by disconnected but similar practices (Bayat 2004). Similarly Migdal (1988) points to social *organisations* in his discussion of state-society relations, and only more indirectly, the ways in which individual behaviour might be shaped by affiliation to these. Further, he is concerned with various kinds of resistance or opposition from these groups, considering how these might effectively pose ‘impenetrable barriers to state predominance’ and thus explain why some states are unable to achieve intended goals (Migdal 1988: 33) In my research, as Chapter Three indicates, beneficiaries are clustered into groups for the purposes of the research according to whether they live full-time in their RDP house or not; they are not, to my knowledge, self-identifying groups relative to any to particular cause.

The third issue is that more typically the literature focuses on everyday activities in relation to public space, contesting the rules and prescripts of authority around spaces such as sidewalks, streets, piazzas and similar public open space. Bayat describes contestations 'shaped and expressed in the physical and social space of the streets, from the back alleyways to the more visible streets and squares' (Bayat 2010: 11). In my research the focus is on a privately owned space, dispensed and allocated by the state, although arranged in a neighbourhood with inevitably significant public spaces such as streets.

Fourth, some of the literature which relates to concerns of the 'everyday' positions itself in relation to particular urban planning or urban social theories. Watson's (2003) concern with the rationality of ordinary people in relation to the rationality of the state is positioned in relation to a particular concern in urban planning theory: that which focuses on the possibilities of deliberative or communicative rationality³⁰. In a related vein Mirafteb's (2009) work on insurgent planning considers the limitations of participatory processes and the assumptions underpinning this, whilst Bayat (2004, 2010) is concerned with alternatives to urban social movements. Anand and Rademacher (2011) are ultimately focusing on urban inclusion and debates around this. In my research the relevant theoretical gap is not centred on processes for achieving particular outcomes, but rather on a product, and state-beneficiary relationships around the usage of this. My research question calls for explanatory theory and method, which Huxley and Yiftachel (2000) make an argument for in planning, where theorisation is often 'normative and prescriptive', neglecting the initial step of explaining 'why things are as they are' (2000: 337). The position I take is that the local experiences of RDP housing are important to understand, for policy considerations, amongst other reasons.

³⁰ Roughly the ability for different interest groups or individuals with different positions to use reason, discussion and other kinds of communication to debate an issue, air conflict and ultimately to come to agreed way forward.

Finally, the wider contexts in which everyday activities are considered in the literature often differ, particularly in relation to the way the state operates. Bayat's work is located in a (pre-2011) Middle East which is wealthy but lacks social development and political transformation to democracy. By contrast South Africa has a democratic political system with high voter turnout at elections, and many of my interviewees are likely to support and vote for the dominant party (in other words they are not opposed to the current government or obviously or straightforwardly 'oppressed' by the state). Robins (2003) argues that the SA state is not perceived as an aggressive imposer of unwelcome projects, and development is invited:

in fact throughout Southern Africa, calls for development have become a rallying cry in the popular struggles of the urban and rural poor demanding houses, clinics and more state resources in a context of job losses, grinding poverty and neo-liberal fiscal austerity (2003: 281).

Despite the distinctions discussed here, literature on the everyday retains considerable relevance for this research in which I examine the activities of ordinary people. The differences I have noted here are significant in teasing out what dimensions of concepts and arguments of 'the everyday' resonate with the fieldwork discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight, and where gaps and inconsistencies illuminate discords which demand revised thinking.

2.4.2 Organising along a spectrum

I turn now to discuss a range of literature which describes and/ or accounts for actions of ordinary people and has relevance for this study's focus on the use of the housing benefit. I propose that the concepts and explanations discussed below can usefully be deployed or organised as a spectrum of responses and actions. This spectrum provides a palette of explanations for peoples' interactions with the state-provided infrastructure of housing, which I discuss in Chapters Seven and Eight.

The spectrum of actions by people has at its one end, *distancing or disengagement* from a state intervention (or housing product), implied through discussions of mobility by

authors such as Simone (2002), Rigg (2007) and Roy (2007). A little further along the spectrum are conceptualizations which suggest people overcoming limitations with the intervention, ‘making a plan’ around or in relation to the object, or more actively *adapting, appropriating or transforming* the product (Ghannam 2002; Schlyter 2003; Ross 2005; Robins 2003). Beyond these are practices which suggest more actively *seeking out and clinging* to the state’s products (Bayat 2004; Bank 2011), and further, those which strive and *aspire to* ‘live up’ to the intervention or further *embrace* the object and its environment (Schlyter 2003; Ross 2005; Salcedo 2010; Anand and Rademacher 2011). The gamut is thus broadly from rejection to adoption. The linear diagram below represents how I have organised literature along this spectrum³¹.

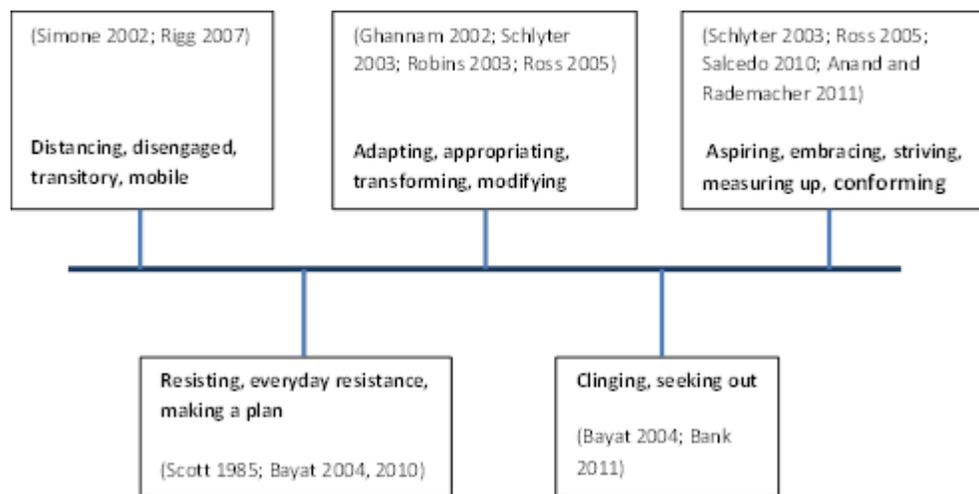


Figure 2-2: Author’s representation of her categorisation and organisation of the literature discussed in this section of the chapter.

³¹ The locations along the spectrum are not seen as ‘points’ but rather sections of the spectrum where a cluster of terms signify closely related though not identical concepts.

Distancing, disengagement

At one end of the spectrum of responses is that of not engaging with an intervention, or ignoring it, or cutting ties with it. One set of explanations for this draws from writers who argue the need for mobility and exercising of opportunities to move on physically from a particular location. In what some refer to as a state of hyper-mobility, people migrate onwards or return to homesteads as key strategies to deal with adversity or as a response to opportunity. Rigg refers to the 'heightening, widening and intensifying levels of mobility that characterise the lives of people in the Global South' (Rigg 2007: 118). With reference to diverse urban areas in Africa, Simone comments on the 'provisional' or fluid nature of cities, citing a variety of authors writing between the 1960s and the 1990s in his contention that

people have been prepared to migrate at a moment's notice, to change jobs, residences, social networks with little apparent hesitation (Simone 2002: 296).

This fluidity refers to the apparently constant state of change of many African cities, in large part due to the changes in activities, and in 'city commitment', of their residents. Simone (2002) argues that whilst households do show commitment to a particular place at a particular time, this is not the only recipient of their attention; other places are simultaneous foci of a household. He contends that there is a constant stream of people moving in and out as well as within the city (Simone 2002: 297).

While previous characterisations of people in the Global South as being inherently *immobile* have been revisited, Rigg ponders why there should now, in current times, be more people moving greater distances more often (Rigg 2007: 120). Factors which may be contributing to this 'mobility revolution' range from better transport and infrastructure to changing cultural norms, such as those governing travel by women (Rigg 2007). Rigg also notes that migration is often characterised in negative terms as being a response to a 'push' factor, a failure in the area of origin, and also as generally undesirable (from the perspective of the observer or scholar). This view however is also

shifting as migration is understood in relation to a household's strategies rather than an individual's (Rigg 2007: 124).

From a livelihoods and an asset/ vulnerability perspective, 'letting go' of something like a house and property is a strategic choice. The notion of assets considers the portfolio of resources which a household is able to build up and then draw on to manage adversity and maximize opportunity at various times. These resources include social assets (such as personal relationships of support), capital assets and natural assets. Housing is a key one of these assets, potentially offering a place from which to earn income or to provide refuge in times of crisis, for example. This conceptualization of assets and how they are used strategically by households provides a more intricate way of viewing both what constitutes poverty and how to alleviate it. It is thus used both as an analytical tool to widen understandings of poverty (beyond an income measure for example) and of people's strategies in dealing with poverty, and also as a way of approaching improvement interventions (as contributions towards the accumulation of a set of resources) (Moser 2007; 2008).

From this perspective, distancing or disengagement constitutes relinquishing something – an asset - that is not useful *enough as a place of residence* in a particular place and time relative to other demands and opportunities. A key reason for leaving could be because of poverty or an inability to afford the direct costs of the house (Bauman 2003), or its longer indirect future costs. Bayat (2004) argues that poor and marginalised people gravitate towards independence from bureaucracy and authority, not from an 'essentially non- or anti-modern' stance but because of the expense and difficulty of conforming: 'because modernity is a costly existence, not everyone can afford to be modern' (Bayat 2004: 94). Alternatively, or simultaneously, a household might 'dis-encumber' itself from the physical structure whilst maintaining a relationships with the house for rental income, or for a future use, for example. What can be labelled as distancing, 'strategic disposal' or unburdening could also be viewed by some as rejection, although this term suggests more active refusal or denunciation that may be involved in a considered disposal.

Resistance, 'making a plan' or 'everyday resistance'

Moving along the spectrum from 'distancing' is a label for peoples' actions that relates to 'everyday resistance'. Literature on everyday resistance is concerned with a wide range of peoples' actions in response to the situations in which they find themselves that do not support their lives, or are a point of friction or tension. The everyday-ness of the resistance refers to daily, ordinary activities, tactics and strategies people deploy to get around these obstacles, problems, inconveniences and threats.

Rigg (2007) characterises everyday resistance as 'undeclared rebellion'³². As examples he cites foot-dragging and gossip – what Scott refers to as 'the ordinary weapons of less powerful groups', which also include '...dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage' (Scott 1985: xvi). Scott argues that people engaged in these actions are generally not focused on overthrowing or transforming the state but rather concentrate at a more basic level on self-interested manipulation. Everyday resistance he notes is 'informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate de facto gains' (Scott 1985: 33). Bayat (2004) sees resistance as the small scale everyday activities which people can undertake within the confines of the limited power they have.

This raises the issue of intentionality. For acts to count as 'everyday resistance', even if not aimed at broader transformation of systems, how conscious do the actors need to be of the intention to resist, undermine or circumvent? Bayat (2004) argues that for Scott, resistance is deliberate and intentional³³. MirafTAB (2009) also valorises intentionality in actions against a dominant state. In the context of states drawing people into

³² Rigg is critical that these practices have attracted little scholarly recognition by comparison with more obvious forms of resistance (2007: 167) – such as protest, demonstrations, boycotts or campaigns - thereby tending to 'overlook the normal patterns of activity that lie beyond the field of resistance' (2007: 182).

³³ Bayat notes that James Scott's definition of resistance is 'any act that is intended to mitigate or deny claims made on that class by a superordinate class' (2004: 87).

participation³⁴ Miraftab celebrates, in context, those practices which act to resist or counter such hegemony – what she defines as ‘insurgent planning’³⁵, a concept which has some resonance with ‘resistance’. For Miraftab such responses are deliberate, intentional and oriented towards challenging and changing the power structure and dominant system, implying (requiring) a clear distinction between ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’.

But Bayat (2004) notes that identifying the intent or motivation of the resistor can be difficult, and he makes the argument that *unintended* acts of resistance are equally deserving of attention. Here he is referring to things that people do that are not deliberately intended to be anti-authority but are rather pragmatic and, from the point of view of the subaltern, necessary life strategies. He cites as an example poor households in Cairo or Teheran drawing illegal electricity or water. He argues that

they do not steal urban services in order to express their defiance vis-à-vis the authorities. They do it because they feel they need these services for a decent life, and because they find no other way to acquire them (Bayat 2004: 88)³⁶.

Bayat finds the concept of everyday resistance useful but limited: his main critique is that it does not recognise, or at least underplays, the weightiness of the state and state power. In building on the notion of resistance whilst acknowledging the complexities of power distribution, Bayat (2004) introduces the notion of the ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’, or ‘the quiet encroachment of the poor’. This refers to intrusions by the subaltern which he describes as ‘discreet’ invasions that are not only made on those with power and land but also ‘on society at large’ (Bayat 2010: 14, 15), motivated mainly by peoples’ desire to improve their lives. Examples might be unauthorised residential

³⁴ This, she argues, effectively add up to ‘dominance through inclusion’ (Miraftab 2009: 32).

³⁵ ‘...purposeful actions that aim to disrupt domineering relationships of oppressors to the oppressed, and to destabilize such a status quo through consciousness of the past and imagination of an alternative future’ (Miraftab 2009: 44).

³⁶ Bayat suggests encroachment can elicit a response from the state to extend services or utilities, but then people may refuse to pay for them, referring to reports on this from Chile and South Africa. (2004: 92).

occupation of land, trading or providing services without permission in public places, or making use of infrastructure without permission or payment.

Bayat (2004) describes individualised or atomised ‘advances’ (such as individuals or households occupying a portion of a pavement or public place for street trading), but often how people come together or develop solidarity in protecting such victories against counter action by authority³⁷. Bayat makes these points about individual versus collective as part of positioning his work relative to the theory and literature of urban social movements. He refers to the notion of ‘nonmovements’, arguing that organised group protest is not always feasible and alternatives to this should be recognised. These individual struggles do nevertheless aim to re-allocate resources and, in addition, strive to break from the rules and procedures of authority (Bayat 2004: 93). Here Bayat contends there is a key tension, however:

the fact is that not only do the poor seek autonomy, they also need the security that comes from state surveillance, since an informal life in the conditions of modernity is also an insecure life (Bayat 2004: 94).

South African studies that echo these ideas include Oldfield and Boulton (2007) and Smit (2008), who note that moving to informal accommodation such as a shack can be part of a deliberate strategy. In a study of the gendered nature of actions taken to access accommodation in New Crossroads, Cape Town, indications are that men tend to stay longer at the family home, enjoying semi-independent backyard rooms whilst they save for various traditional obligations. Women live within the main house until they are able to move elsewhere – to a shack in an informal settlement, or to an RDP house, for example. In some cases it is suggested that shacks are purchased as part of a strategy for

³⁷ ‘...a key attribute of quiet encroachment is that while advances are made quietly, individually and gradually, defence of these gains is often (although not always) collective and audible’ (Bayat 2004: 92).

accessing an RDP house (Oldfield and Boulton 2007: 29). Smit (2008) argues that policies in South Africa

prioritise informal settlement residents for RDP housing, and this can sometimes contribute to people from other options (such as backyard accommodation) moving to informal settlements (Smit 2008: 4).

Important for my research is whether the notion of resistance captures peoples' actions relative to their RDP housing. If so, what they are resisting or contesting, for what purpose and in what way?

Adapting, appropriating, modifying

In this section I move on from labelling as 'resistance' acts which advance or encroach on a recognized status quo seen to favour a more privileged 'other'. I discuss acts which can be seen as people adapting, appropriating, working with or modifying a situation that they are located within. Whilst interventions by the state into ordinary peoples' lives are sometimes portrayed as dismissing vernacular practices, Rigg (2007) notes that in practice the situation is less straightforward. As noted earlier, development interventions aimed at modernisation have not simply displaced traditional and local systems in a stark manner but have rather 'infiltrated' local contexts and been absorbed in a variety of different ways (Rigg 2007: 67, 68; see also Watson's 2009 discussion of Arce and Long 2000). Rigg draws on various research in Africa and Asia to suggest that these situations may also reveal a more complex relationship in which the nature of influence and infiltration is not simply uni-directional from state to dweller (Rigg 2007).

Ghannam's work in Cairo leads her to conclude that both the idea of people 'resisting' and that of people 'conforming' to a state initiative are too restrictive as labels (Ghannam 2002: 177). Working class families relocated to public housing use the new spaces in ways unintended by state planners, and alter and add to their houses³⁸, usually without

³⁸ Similarly Bayat speaks of people 'redesigning and rearranging' their housing (Bayat 2004: 91 with reference to Bayat 1997 Middle East report No 202).

official permission or conforming to regulation. When these and other activities of residents are compared with the plans and intentions of the state, the relationship appears as 'ambiguous and shifting' (Ghannam 2002: 172). Practices are neither completely in accord with that of the state nor opposed to it, representing both 'continuity and rupture between the plans of the state and the practices of the people' (Ghannam 2002:172).

To Ghannam's surprise, many people in her study talk positively of the state's attempts to improve their housing, despite the disruptions of the move and the inconvenience of the new location. Rather than expressing resentment, people argued they had 'better and more "modern" housing' (2002: 41) which they would eventually own. The feelings of people Ghannam interviewed were neither a simple 'reflection' nor a 'rejection' of state policies but resonated rather with an 'appropriation' of the housing project (Ghannam 2002: 41, 42, 52, 57).

Ghannam thus argues that planned space – housing and spaces beyond this - is adapted and transformed by its users, and that the city is constituted by both the designers of the city and those who constantly modify the design through their daily practices. This notion of city space being wrought from the activities of many forgers and users is echoed in various ways in other work (Miraftab 2009; Perera 2009; Roy 2009; Bayat and Biekart 2009).

Ghannam's focus in the Cairo study is on adaption and interaction with physical space, place and material structure (buildings, apartments, squares, streets). An 'assets/vulnerability' perspective on this usage could view this as households invoking the housing asset in different ways. As suggested earlier literature on assets refers to people deploying a range of resources including their homes to deal with shocks and impacts – such as health crises and income shortfalls (Chambers 1995; Moser 1996). It is also argued to be an important lens with which to understand the trajectories of households

out of poverty (Moser 2008)³⁹. Examples from housing studies in South Africa support this. Lemanski's (2009: 474) analysis of RDP housing beneficiaries in her Westlake study concludes they are 'cash-poor [but] asset-rich', and they use these assets strategically to generate income through sub-letting.

Bauman (2003) argues that using an asset-vulnerability framework illuminates how, having weighed up the options and resources available to them, households can make a strategic decision to leave a formal house.

The discussions above have been about households adapting to physical space and location, or adapting the physical space to accommodate needs. Adapting or modifying state-provided infrastructure can also be in the form of usage, such as expanding the role of a house beyond its residential function. Tipple (2000) emphasises the importance of housing for income generation in poor societies, which, besides sustaining the resident household, often provide useful and convenient activities and services for neighbouring households⁴⁰. Schlyter's (2003) study finds home-based businesses as essential to her respondents' survival, amongst them activities such as having lodgers, running a shebeen, and sewing from home. But she notes that most of these involved 'illegal livelihoods and illegal outbuildings' (2003: 30), contravening various regulations and prohibitions. Her key case study resident, Esther, essentially 'survived through and within a criminalised urban economy' (2003: 71). In Mumbai, Anand and Rademacher (2011) question the 'fit'

³⁹ A focus on assets, livelihoods and vulnerabilities offers a multi-faceted lens of considerable use in studies of poor households, the strategies they deploy to manage shifting circumstances and need, and the kinds of interventions that assist with resource-accumulation. Whilst the notion of assets resonates powerfully with South-Africa's low income housing intervention, the focus of this research requires tools with which to examine the nature of the *interface* between state and households, beyond the strategies of poor households themselves. The notion of assets is thus used at relevant points in the thesis, but is not the main lens in discussing the encounter between the state benefit and its beneficiaries.

⁴⁰ '... unless, of course, they generate negative externalities such as noise, fumes, harmful effluents, increased heavy traffic' (Tipple 2000: 58).

between the dwelling space provided in resettlement programmes and peoples' activity needs and practices: the authors argue that government rules and developer agendas 'often produce housing that may be too inflexible to accommodate the diverse forms of sociality and domestic economy horizontal slums enabled' (Anand and Rademacher 2011: 1760).

A different dimension of deploying assets picks up on interactions with housing that change over time and space. Several South African studies point to shifts in housing arrangements over space, with multi-nodal households having more than one place of residence: these can include urban and rural residences, or more than one urban residence, even within the same city (see for example Finmark Trust 2004). Oldfield and Boulton (2007) draw on various authors to make the point that family configurations spanning several geographic situations morph and change in accordance with 'tenure and work insecurities' (2007: 10). Watson (2003: 402) notes that well-recognised in Africa is the occurrence of households spread over several near or distant physical structures, sequentially or simultaneously⁴¹. Viewed in relation to a particular shelter, an occupying household might shift in various configurations. Ross (2005) points to the range of configurations that households might deploy relative to a particular shelter structure. Referring to a specific informal settlement in Cape Town she notes that

sometimes a single structure housed more than one domestic unit while in other instances a single household was spread across several structures (Ross 2005: 636).

Wiesenthal's (2011) study of an RDP settlement in Barberton raises similar points about the complexity and fluidity of domestic arrangements.

⁴¹ These are referred to as spatially 'stretched' households (Spiegel et al. 1996).

Practices such as these are echoed in the Abahlali Basemjondolo⁴² report of 2007, focusing on relocations to Delft in Cape Town. Some household members continue to rely on work in the closer-in neighbourhood of Langa, some 18kms away, and lodge there during the week because the cost of commuting is too high. Does this suggest that RDP housing can in fact precipitate fragmentation of a household over time and space?

The phenomenon of seasonal work may mean that at certain times of the year some beneficiaries move back to rural areas or to other residences elsewhere. Anecdotally, sales of RDP houses increase at the end of the calendar year when people join their long-term family households for the Christmas break (Rubin and Charlton 2008). Urban-periurban-rural linkages are generally complex, with focus group participants in a South African study (Smit and DAG 2007) noting both short-term (weekly) as well as longer term oscillations between urban and rural homes.

Cross suggests a likely two-way movement between shacks and RDP housing as part of long term life trajectories – people moving into informal settlements in order to be in line to access RDP housing, and people moving out of housing into shacks when the house is no longer a viable place of residence (Cross pers comm. 2009).

On the other hand, Schlyter's (2003) research in Zimbabwe finds that poor homeowners 'were empowered by the ownership of their house' (2003: 67) and that this in itself facilitated household formation and, by extension, household consolidation. Whilst Schlyter found that *tenants* in backyard rooms often sent their children to live elsewhere to benefit from better schools in another area or the 'safety' of a smaller village, for example, none of her *owner* respondents reported split families. This leads her to conclude that 'household formation is dependent on housing conditions' (ibid). This suggests that the ability to live together is highly influenced by the space and tenure security available, an issue which she says is often not recognized in policy considerations.

⁴² Abahlali Basemjondolo is a movement of shack dwellers which originated in Durban.

'Adapting, appropriating, modifying' as a category thus includes both changes to dwellings to accommodate household needs and configurations, and shifts in household composition and location in response to physical spaces and opportunities. I consider whether these two strategies are evident in the beneficiary practices I discuss in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Staying, clinging

Moving beyond adapting, transforming and modifying is a more direct 'clinging' to the infrastructure of the state (Bank 2011). This may not always be because of the possibilities or opportunities for income generation or other material benefit as might be assumed; it can also be *despite* of the limited opportunity offered around this, surfacing other reasons for 'hanging on', or sticking close to what is available.

Bank (2011) contests what he sees as Simone's (2002) assertion that urban dwellers in Africa are too mobile and transitory to focus on deeply investing in and transforming place. In his deep anthropological study of Duncan Village in East London, SA, Bank introduces the notion of 'fractured urbanism', a concept he brings into dialogue with Graham and Marvin's (2000 in Bank 2011) 'splintered urbanism'. Fractured urbanism applies to poor, marginalised areas where people, rather than becoming autonomous from state services and connecting globally as the rich might do in locations beyond the urban boundary (as splintered urbanism refers to), instead cling to state services and resources, compete for them, demand more of them. This resonates with Bayat's (2004) assertion that some people seek the protection or comfort of being within the state gaze. Bank (2011) further discusses peoples' efforts to 'suburbanise' their houses, despite a context of massive unemployment and disillusionment with the disappointing fruits of democracy. These efforts are driven by aspirations for a good life and their attempts to reclaim a decent place from their neighbourhood.

This idea that some embrace the state infrastructure directed at poor people may be contentious, as it has inadequacies in not serving needs such as income generation. Those

that argue that residents suffer from a form of ‘false consciousness’ might suggest that they have simply been duped and co-opted by the state, that their acquiescence is a reflection of state control within society. Miraftab (2009) argues along these lines in her critique of how inclusion and participation have been used in neoliberal states. She argues that community struggles have been deliberately depoliticised through absorption into ultimately meaningless community participation structures (Miraftab 2009). Bayat and Biekart (2009: 818) too are suspicious of ‘neoliberal strategies’ on the part of the state which appear to be progressive (such as participation) but which they argue do not contribute to a real right to the city⁴³. More broadly, Miraftab contends that in South Africa and elsewhere the rhetoric of citizens’ rights is at odds with their poor material conditions and indeed actively erodes such conditions. In societies that have emerged from a colonised legacy, ‘citizens have gained rights they cannot eat!’ (Miraftab 2009: 41)

Chatterjee (2011) argues that the nature of the interface between people and the state has shifted in recent years, at least in the Indian context. He uses the term ‘political society’ to describe the new playing field of governance, and in particular ordinary peoples’ *participation in* and *manipulation of* this field, by negotiating exceptional practice from the state. Chatterjee views political society as ‘a condition of un-heroic everyday politics’

...more often than not, [political society] is resistance that tests rather than overtly violates the limits of conventional political practice. In so doing, it sometimes manages to induce responses from governmental agencies that change the familiar forms of the conventional (2011: 310).

Chatterjee contends that what he is observing is not a struggle of people against governmentality but an extension of governmentality, ‘not merely as technology but as practices of everyday life among rural people’ (2011: 317). This resonates with Mosse’s

⁴³ Huchzermeyer (2011: 14) draws on Lefebvre’s (1996 [1968]) conceptualization of the right to the city as ‘the right to shape the city and its public space, the right to permanently inhabit meaningful locations within the city, and the right to participate in decision-making’.

point that governance through development schemes 'cannot be imposed; it requires collaboration and compromise' (1997: 297).

Of use to this research are the ways in which Chatterjee and others point to the manipulation people invoke in order to entwine themselves with the benefits being dispensed by the state. McFarlane (2008), however, argues from his study of sanitation provision in Mumbai's informal settlements that people are able to attract interventions only to the extent that it suits the state in responding to them as a broad grouping 'targeted for welfare' rather than as citizens with rights; therefore these gains are limited. But important for this research is the discussion that focuses on peoples' embrace and appropriation of what can be accessed, rather than resistance to it. It must be noted however that some readings around interaction with the state (such as Chatterjee and Miraftab) emphasise what people do in order to draw down benefits from the state. By contrast my research focuses on what people do with what they have already received from the state.

Striving, embracing and aspiring - 'measuring up' - conforming?

A step beyond clinging to the state is what I see as a more active attempt to measure up to the suggested 'terms' or aspirations of the benefit. Fiona Ross (2005) refers to this in her detailed study in Cape Town of the relocation of an impoverished informal settlement community to an RDP project. On the part of residents, officials and developers there was assumed to be a close link between types of (new) housing/ physical environments and the 'behaviour' and prospects of people. People themselves strove for the decency, respectability – 'ordentlikheid'⁴⁴ – that they thought was appropriate to the formal, subsidised housing development. Ross discusses peoples' desires for improvement in their own eyes, plus their yearning to look better in the eyes of others, and their hope

⁴⁴ Afrikaans word encapsulating the idea of respectable, decent, upright behaviour.

that the new houses ‘might restore some dignity to daily lives too often undermined by poverty, violence, mobility and everyday humiliations’ (2005: 633).

Ross is critical of the naivety on the part of planners and developers that the housing project could transform lives. Her discussion is ultimately about the painful and inevitably traumatic attempts by people to live up to the (unrealistic) expectations of the housing project given the dire poverty of their lives and the complex ways in which they had to manage everyday life just to survive. For example, a number of women reported that a ‘proper’ home should have a certain appearance – key items of furniture and appliances, net curtains, antimacassars and so on – and these ideals competed with existing income and expenditure patterns (Ross 2005: 643). Lemanski cites Meintjes’ (2000) contention that ‘homeownership brings pressures to exhibit “proper living”, for example purchasing furniture, electrical appliances and decorative ornaments that were not deemed necessary in informal settlements’ (Lemanski 2009: 22). Ross (2005) concludes that these sorts of pressures resulted in subterfuge as residents made a plan to meet perceived requirements. Nevertheless a key point of relevance in this research is the sense that the new housing, far from being awkward and inappropriate in the perceptions of potential beneficiaries, was something to strive for.

Salcedo (2010) notes that a number of studies in Chile confirm that the country’s emphasis on home ownership accords with the desires of poor people⁴⁵. But he also argues that a particular case study, that of residents’ efforts to acquire their subsidized housing specifically within the Peñalolén municipality of Santiago, suggests that location is increasingly a key factor and focus of struggle⁴⁶. Home ownership should therefore be thought of the baseline target, but in itself it is not sufficient to ‘overcome marginality and disintegration’ (Salcedo 2010: 90).

⁴⁵ Although alternatives to home ownership are not even discussed as ownership is an unquestioned assumption (Salcedo 2010).

⁴⁶ This validates concerns about the Chilean housing programme such as the disconnections between some subsidized housing areas and other neighbourhoods (Salcedo 2010).

Related to the theme of people embracing state-supported housing plans, and attempting to meet the expectations they see embedded in them, Anand and Rademacher (2011) describe how many residents of informal settlements in Mumbai, India, aspire to participate in the housing programme that replaces their shanty areas with multi-story blocks of flats built on the same sites. These residents, the authors argue, 'actively seek inclusion'⁴⁷ (2011: 1751) in a complex process of negotiation with private developers that results in people receiving free flats or apartments in exchange for development rights to provide private housing on the site⁴⁸. The authors note that from a wider societal perspective of equality this housing approach creates winners (those that benefit) and losers, as many in the informal settlements do not qualify to benefit for various reasons and are removed to more peripheral areas.

Residents in the Peñalolén study in Chile display pride in their housing, but Salcedo (2010: 111) notes this relates in part to the contribution they themselves have made towards their housing through the regular financial repayments they make and also the struggle they waged for a valued location. Whilst speaking positively of their previous experiences in the shantytown, this former life is not romanticised over their current housing and settlement conditions⁴⁹. The loosening of community bonds, participation, and local social rule is not lamented but rather seen as part of a process of normalisation, in which material needs and deprivation no longer dominate the underlying framework of life (Salcedo 2010: 112). Salcedo speaks of these peoples' desire merely to 'pass', to be

⁴⁷ The authors argue that the residents' participation in these housing schemes contributes to urban inclusion as well located sites are retained by existing residents (at least in the short term), and higher income groups come to live next door. But these gains have become dislocated from historical movements against inequality. People actively pursue what they see as 'transformative opportunities to participate in a thriving real estate market' (2011: 1763) knowing that others' from the same settlement are ineligible for these opportunities.

⁴⁸ Those 'slum dwellers' that do benefit remain on the land they have been living on, and are not relocated to another, less desirable site in the city.

⁴⁹ One exception to this is that residents feel they previously shaped their immediate neighbourhood in a more direct way that resulted in crime and drugs being a rare occurrence, unlike in their new areas.

accepted as neither tainted by their shantytown past nor exceptionalised for their struggle for housing in a good locality: they want to be ordinary (ibid).

In addition, studies have recognised the value residents themselves place on permanence and stability⁵⁰ (Varley, nd), and on regulation, orderliness and protection from disorder (Schlyter, 2003).

These examples indicate that processes of transformation from dire living conditions to better ones can be moments of disruption for communities (e.g. Mumbai) which create winners and losers, but with inevitable buy-in from some members of the community. Many people, it would seem, are relatively in accord with the values, symbolism and stability of these sorts of state programmes. But while new formal housing may well be something to strive for, it can also create enormous pressures. This suggests that this research should explore both what it is that people value in their housing benefit and also what difficulties it may create for them, and how they respond to both of these dimensions.

In the 'people' part of the chapter I have thus discussed what I see as a spectrum of potential relationships with state interventions, derived from literature on the everyday, and some reasons for these relationships. The conceptualisation of a spectrum offers more range with which to tease out potential diversity and complexity in response to this category of state intervention, RDP housing, with which there may be various kinds of user interactions, both within and/ or between different settlements. The ideas discussed in this section, such as resistance, clinging, adapting and embracing will be used in the evaluation of beneficiary interactions with their housing in Chapters Seven and Eight.

⁵⁰ In contrast to portrayals in literature where 'mobility and transience are celebrated' (Varley nd).

2.5 Conclusion

I now consider ways of comparing or juxtaposing the views and actions of beneficiaries and the state on the outcomes of a low income housing intervention. I discuss two positions: the first of these is 'imposition and resistance', in which the state imposes something unwelcome and people resist this. This view has been reflected in the development and subaltern literatures discussed earlier, and here I focus on an explanation that accounts for this perceived mismatch: the extent to which rationalities or world views are in conflict. The argument that there is a fundamental difference in world view between the state and the objects of development, particularly in the African context, characterises the divide as one of rationality or logic. The mismatch arises from the conceptual roots or origins in which state interventions are located: a non-African conceptualization of development which rests on alien 'epistemological assumptions' (Swilling et al 2002). Watson describes one side of the divide thus:

concepts and assumptions regarding the role and functioning of state, society and citizens...could be described as closely linked to ideas of modernity and progress shaped by a Western experience, as well as to normative ideas about state, citizenship and recognition of identity...they help to define the notion of 'proper' citizens and communities which, at least at the level of rhetoric, drives the policies and actions of local authorities in South Africa and in other parts of Africa as well (Watson 2003: 398)⁵¹.

The other 'side' of the perceived divide is reflected in the practices of ordinary people in their use of African cities. These practices include relationships, networks and activities of associational life (Simone 2002), fluidity in household composition and social systems (Ross 2005; Wiesenthal 2011), and household mobility (Simone 2002). These practices exist in 'cultural, political and economic contexts' fundamentally different to those in

⁵¹ Spiegel (1999) argues that this modernist orientation is nevertheless compelling: modernisation ideals persist because of dominant conceptualisations of 'development' linked to 'urban industrialisation, economic growth, orderly administration' (1999: 65).

which Western modernism was shaped (Swilling et al 2002: 305), and are therefore at odds with the norms, protocols and aspirations of the state. One dimension of this argument is the extent to which the paradigm of the other party is comprehensible to a modernist-oriented state. Swilling et al (2002) argue that post-apartheid and post-colonialist urban analysts are still far from 'seeing' and comprehending 'the soul(s) of the African city' (2002: 305). Watson (2005: 2) is stronger in her contention of the depth of difference between actors, seeing fundamental material and cultural distinctions, and conflicting value systems. In these extreme situations she sees little prospect of consensus between different groups or between professionals and ordinary people Watson (2003, 2005). Simone (2002) too has little faith in the ability of deliberative processes to reconcile difference under these circumstances and sees these tensions as more or less irreconcilable: 'no matter what formats of participation and decision-making are adopted, there will continue to be on-going conflicts between various forms of rationality, legitimacy and ways of doing things' (Simone 2002: 300).

Whilst Watson uses terms such as competing or conflicting rationalities, Harrison (2006) tends towards the notion of 'multiple rationalities', perhaps less oppositional or essentialist in its implications. His orientation is towards the points of contact and similarity, seeking out the possibilities for connection within the differences. Harrison's engagement with post-colonial thought leads him to conclude that 'transversal reasoning is possible...we are not bound by discrete rationalities, value positions and world views' (Harrison 2006: 333).

Housing projects seem to lend themselves to an analysis which pits state logics against everyday lives. The perceived resonance relates in part to the fixed location nature of many housing approaches, at least those based on ownership of land or housing. This is contrasted with user practices which are more fluid, socially and spatially (Spiegel 1999). In an example from Cape Town the heterogeneity of households and their experiences of urbanisation is juxtaposed with the 'homogenising' or 'normalising' discourse of policy makers (Spiegel et al 1996). Wiesenthal (2011: 2) argues that both fluidity amongst

households and the use of informally-built structures on RDP plots in Barberton constitute everyday spatial practices that are at odds with state 'imaginaries' of nuclear families in their houses rooted in stable, fixed locations. Watson (2003) concludes that

most urban projects assume commitment to a particular piece of land or territory and a continuity of presence, but it cannot be assumed that individuals or households will meet the requirements of 'proper' community members, investing in their land or home, contributing to rates and service charges, helping to build social capital and local democracy when survival demands frequent movement (Watson 2003: 402).

In contrast to the notion of a fundamental clash between the state and peoples' views and practices, the second position I discuss is that there is an extent of overlap in aims, but also some disconnect between state and dweller, and that people can appropriate, creolize, and adapt to a new situation. As is apparent from earlier discussion, the argument in this research is for a view that can account for the range, complexity, diversity which may be encountered at 'the interface', where a diverse (and sometimes self-critical) state might meet a spectrum of beneficiary responses. As Rigg notes (2007: 182) 'the domination/ resistance binary...simplifies a set of relationships with multiple axes', and does not acknowledge the potential in bottom-up agency (Mosse 2004). This perspective thus avoids a dichotomised view in favour of one where the gradations, texture and contradictions can emerge.

This resonates with a number of varied but related critiques of binary-thinking that contest a simple view of the notion of resistance. Meth (2010) highlights the limitations of a 'binary logic' (2010: 243) either (merely) 'celebrating or condemning the contributions of the marginalised to diverse and unequal cities' (2010: 241). She critiques how the label 'insurgent planning' is often used to applaud activities of marginalised people in tackling neglect and advancing gains, actions which resonate with conceptualisations of everyday resistance. Through her discussion of poor women's often brutal strategies to manage crime and violence in Durban, South Africa, Meth draws attention to the inadequacy of categorisations which tend to simply support some

practices and deride others. Robins (2003: 66) sees an 'artificial divide' between notions of the traditional and the modern, which surface both in modernisation theory and shape the perspectives of post-development thinkers⁵². Both these positions fail to see 'the complex realities' of how beneficiaries react to state projects (Robins 2003: 267). Using three case studies Robins argues that recipients of land-related state initiatives in South Africa deployed 'hybrid and highly selective and situational responses to development interventions' (2003: 265), which he termed 'indigenous modernities'. As indicated Ghannam (2002: 176) comments that she finds it unhelpful to characterise peoples' actions in her Cairo study as either 'resistance' or 'conformative'; and in her more recent work Watson considers how improvement interventions can be manipulated by people 'making use of them, rejecting them or hybridising them in a myriad of ways' which were not foreseen (Watson 2009: 2268, 2269). Examples in Fuller and Benei's edited collection show in the main how people exploit state resources and procedures where possible: '...mostly not resisting the state, but using the 'system' as best they can' (Fuller and Harriss 2001: 25).

These authors' characterisations of a more complex terrain are echoed in Wiesenthal's (2011) ethnographic work on RDP housing in eMjindini township, Barberton. She criticises the state for contributing to the precariousness of peoples' situations, 'producing spaces contradictory to their everyday lives' (2011: 21); but at the same time she argues that state housing sparks off 'new uses, appropriations and employments...[which] only enables further agency and livelihood strategies' by users of the housing (2011: 22). Despite contrasting what she sees as the 'stasis' of the state's view of RDP housing with the dynamic practices of RDP users, this situation does not necessarily reflect different aspirations. Both the state and households might strive for stable living in a fixed location dwelling, she argues, but the strategies of poor households involve moving between

⁵² These Robins sees as one-dimensionally celebrating peoples' *resistances* to government initiatives.

different kinds of dwellings⁵³ over both local and wider spatial scales and in different household configurations, at least in the short term, as ways of improving their income, social and safety situations. Aspirations might be similar but practices differ: 'exactly these highly dynamic practices aim at stability, but in a very different manner than holding on to a certain moment of implementation' (Wiesenthal 2011: 22).

Robins summarises the anti-binary position around this:

Local responses to state interventions are generally neither wholesale endorsements nor radical rejections of modernity and its bittersweet fruits. Instead the beneficiaries of development interventions are often highly selective in their responses and engagements with development initiatives and the modern state...responses to development interventions are often selective appropriations of specific components of development packages rather than an unqualified embrace or rejection of modernization (2003: 281).

Thus Roy notes that Miraftab (2009) suggests that 'space-making is a complex terrain of contestation and complicity, of protest and co-optation, of the familiarised⁵⁴ and the de-familiarised' (2009: 10).

Whilst these authors focus largely on complexity in peoples' practices, there may be further complexity in the relationship between state and urban dweller, where the nature of influence and infiltration is not simply uni-directional (Rigg 2007 drawing on various research in Asia and Africa). Migdal (1994) draws attention to the 'mutual transformations' between state and social organisations, in which both parties are coloured by the interaction with the other. Acknowledging this suggests that the challenge to the binary view needs to extend also to how the state is characterised. Bähre and Lecocq (2007: 4, 5) call for a recognition of 'the fragmented, the ambiguous and ambivalent in the nexus of development, community and the state', arguing that

⁵³ RDP houses, backyard shacks, traditional dwellings.

⁵⁴ In looking at historical Colombo, Perera (2009) draws on the notion of familiarization, defined by Roy (2009) as 'the process by which the subaltern citizen comes to inhabit, reshape, and rewrite the spaces of the colonizer' (Roy 2009: 8).

‘confusion, chaos, and ambiguity’ characterise development. Allowing for this helps explain why development interventions vary so in character and outcomes, being

liberating to some, oppressive to others, and many other things that do not fit in the duality oppression-resistance (contingent, confusing, chaotic, ambiguous) to a lot of other people (Bähre and Lecocq 2007: 5).

Bähre and Lecocq (2007) argue that a dominant pattern of friction and failure does not emerge from a broad and wide view of state interventions. Rather, variation, complexity and differing outcomes *is* the ‘pattern’.

To conclude, in this chapter I have noted that literature on ordinary and everyday lives suggests a whole spectrum of engagements with state infrastructure. In addition, discussion of the state suggests far more complexity, contradiction and conflict than that of a totalising worldview. Adapting Bähre and Lecocq’s (2007: 4, 5) phrase, this research is situated in the nexus between development, people and the state⁵⁵. It is neither an anthropology of the state nor an ethnography of a particular place and community. Rather it tends towards a form of anthropology of development: it considers a national ‘improvement intervention’, a state sponsored low income housing programme which manifests in many sites across the country, and the outcomes of this for the household. It focuses on peoples’ responses to this, and the state views on this.

In the following chapters I examine housing policy (Chapter Four), bureaucrats’ interpretations of state and peoples’ practices (Chapter Five and Chapter Six), and people’s responses (Chapter Seven and Eight). Drawing on literature interpreted in this chapter, my exploration of housing policy considers what state expectations of beneficiary behaviour are evident and what assumptions appear to be made about this. In examining state housing practitioners interpretations of housing policy and practice, I explore their views on informality, conduct and control of practices that occur after the

⁵⁵ Rather than ‘development community and the state’.

housing has been delivered. I also explore the tools and mechanisms the state has for understanding beneficiary practices – what they know and how they know it. In my investigation of beneficiary responses I consider in what ways their activities relate to the spectrum of interactions from disengagement to embrace. Finally, in Chapter Nine I juxtapose my interpretation of state understandings with my interpretation of beneficiary practice to consider to what extent the interface reflects appropriation and adaption, or resistance and conflict in world views. First, in the next chapter I describe in depth the methodology I adopt to conduct these explorations.

3 CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodological approach I adopt in this research is a mixed methods, qualitative one centred on a case study. In this chapter I first discuss the type of case study, which is a multi-scalar one employing a range of methods including interviews, observation and document review. This qualitative approach suits the exploration of the complex situation that this research focuses on. I then refer to support for a grounded, qualitative approach in housing, planning and development literature. I discuss and justify the research design, and the data gathering strategies I used. I also consider my positionality in relation to the research.

Overall the methodological approach enables me to answer the research question ‘if recipients of RDP housing engage with it differently from the state’s expectations, what is the nature of this difference, how can it be explained, and what is the significance of this?’ Lerise (2009) notes that in case study research, asking the questions ‘how’ and ‘what’ offer an easier route to uncovering reasons for something than asking a direct ‘why’ question, which can be paralysing in its complexity. Following this I phrased my research question and sub-questions as ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions as shown in the table below.

Table 3-1: Research question and sub-questions

OVERALL RESEARCH QUESTION	If recipients of RDP housing engage with it differently from state’s expectations, what is the nature of this difference, how can it be explained, and what is the significance of this?	
WHAT	1. What did the state expect the interaction between people and the RDP benefit to be? (Chapters Four and	2. What does the state understand actual practice to be (its own practice and that of beneficiaries), and

	Six)	what is its view on this? (Chapter Five and Six)
HOW	3. How are recipients of state housing who are living and/or working in Johannesburg (JHB) engaging with the housing benefit? (Chapters Seven and Eight)	4. How does actual practice compare with that anticipated by and understood by the state, how can this be explained (and what is the significance of this)? (Chapter Nine)

3.2 A case study: peoples’ interactions with RDP housing in Johannesburg and how this is viewed

This investigation takes the form of a case study delimited in a particular way. While the study considers peoples’ interactions with RDP housing and state views on this, the case is made up of a set of geographic, institutional and experiential components as elaborated below. These dimensions of the case study permeate the subsequent chapters: Chapter Four on the origins and key dimensions of the RDP programme in South Africa and Chapter Five on Johannesburg, and those chapters that report on the experiences of state housing practitioners and of RDP-users (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight). I describe and justify here the three components of the case study, arguing that its ‘breadth’ approach is appropriate and effective to explore the complex phenomena under consideration.

3.2.1 Geographic

From a geographic perspective the research considers a large scale national housing programme as applied in the city of Johannesburg (see Map 5.1). As I describe in

Chapter Five the city is physically large⁵⁶ and very complex in its dynamics, and my engagement with it is necessarily partial and selective. I consider the spatial pattern of RDP housing in Johannesburg, characterizing it in Chapter Five as a mix of peripherally located neighbourhoods and more advantageously situated ones, and I explore what accounts for this pattern. Low income housing in Johannesburg takes many forms beyond RDP housing, and I argue that connections between these circumstances mean that RDP housing projects cannot be viewed in isolation from other ways and places in which poorer people live in the city. This relates to the socio-economic context of this study, and I discuss in Chapter Five economic activity, poverty indicators and unemployment levels in Johannesburg, and related informal and everyday activities and practices. I consider how these factors and some City strategies in relation to them connect with low income housing approaches and practices, and the complex environment constituted by historical and contemporary needs as well as the impact of private development forces.

While the Johannesburg metropolitan area provides the focus⁵⁷ for the housing situations of RDP beneficiaries that I explore, the connections and circumstances revealed stretch beyond the city boundaries. In Chapters Seven and Eight I discuss specific RDP neighbourhoods through the views of residents of them. This does not provide a detailed picture of particular RDP settlements, and the settlements that come into the discussion are not case studies in themselves. Rather, glimpses into five⁵⁸ RDP neighbourhoods in various parts of the city help collectively to build a picture of the programme as realised in these places in Johannesburg. Insights into RDP settlements also extend beyond the

⁵⁶ Johannesburg has an estimated population of 3.8 million (CoJ 2011: 39), spread over an area some 60kms long and 30kms wide and situated within a wider urban conglomeration of about 11 million people (OECD 2011). Further key characteristics of Johannesburg and Gauteng province are discussed in Chapter Five.

⁵⁷ One area I conducted interviews in, Tembisa, is in the neighbouring municipality of Ekurhuleni but is on the boundary with Johannesburg and almost contiguous with the adjacent Ivory Park neighbourhood which is within the city limits.

⁵⁸ 1) Braamfischerville, 2) Ivory Park and Tembisa, 3) Freedom Park and Devland Ext 27, 4) Lehae, 5) Orange Farm.

boundaries of the city into neighbouring municipalities and other areas further away, and I explore how these areas connect with living circumstances in Johannesburg.

This 'breadth' engagement with various RDP neighbourhoods across the city is appropriate for a national housing programme which has an overarching policy, a collective identity and symbolic value. It is also appropriate for a programme realised in many diverse ways in different projects over the years, differences that result from factors such as ground conditions, local authority specifications, shifts in policy prescriptions, and implementing agents, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Further, it suits the exploration of the intersections between state and beneficiary. These intersections happen in part at the house and neighbourhood level, but also at other scales and levels, inter alia through policy formulation, policy and practice assessment, review and evaluation, at city, provincial and national level. While the approach doesn't have the advantages provided by an in-depth focus on one place, it has allowed other insights to open up as explained below.

3.2.2 Institutional

The second dimension of this case study deals with the spheres of government which shape the manifestation of the 'RDP' component of the housing programme⁵⁹. This research explores how the intentions and outcomes of RDP housing are viewed by key people in or associated with the state, in national, provincial, and local government. The study considers the perspectives of people involved in policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, spatial planning and project implementation, in several departments across the three spheres of government, a group in this research that I have called 'state housing practitioners'. This 'vertical' slice of 'state thinking and doing' helps illuminate how a nationally conceived and managed state programme (discussed in Chapter Four) is

⁵⁹ As noted in Chapter 1, the focus is on the largest aspect of the state's low income housing programme, now called the Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP) (Department of Human Settlements 2009).

translated within/to a city (Chapter Five) and how the results for the beneficiary household are viewed by that slice of the state (Chapter Six).

Also linked to the institutional context is the political framework within which the housing programme was conceived and has evolved. I discuss how the housing intervention has been thought of in relation to conceptualisations of poverty alleviation and wealth creation at a national and at a local level (Chapters Four and Five), and how these relate to the wider political dimensions of the programme.

3.2.3 Experiential

The third dimension of the case study considers the experiences of those at the receiving end of the housing programme – those that have or had an RDP house. In this research I explore what interactions these people and their households have with their RDP house, and why this is so. I also probe their views on the housing benefit, and on the state which delivered it. In their actions and relationships with their houses I am concerned with a type of ‘everydayness’ of interactions with the housing. I interviewed a selection of people who live and work in Johannesburg, and who have, or had in the past, an RDP house. These people offer insights into the RDP neighbourhoods in their lives and what the role the RDP house plays for them. But they also provide insight into other physical circumstances and localities beyond the RDP house where they earn an income, and dwell. In Chapters Seven and Eight I explore the relationships between these places and activities, and RDP housing.

3.2.4 The case as a whole

These three dimensions of the case study – the geographic, state-institutional, and people-experiential – establish a type of case study suited to exploring a national programme applied locally, experienced by its occupants both in an everyday and in a more complex manner, and viewed both from the outside (by state housing practitioners) and from within (by those who have had an RDP house). This is appropriate to a study concerned with the interface between a state improvement intervention and its users.

With this approach there is not an in-depth examination of a particular neighbourhood as described in studies relevant to this work such as Ross (2005) and Ghannam (2002); and there is also not a focus on detailed case histories such as Schlyter (2003), nor longitudinal trajectories such as Perlman (2005). In these senses it does not constitute multiple dimensions of a particular event or a particular place; and is thus not typical of those described in the planning literature by Flyvberg (2011), or Watson (2003)⁶⁰. It also does not focus straightforwardly on a particular issue over a particular time period where the set of events studied add up to the case (Lerise 2009).

Rather, this case study considers various dimensions of a phenomenon played out across places and situations, and how this phenomenon is understood. Case studies are constructed (Rule and John 2011) and I have constructed the case around a particular focus which 'includes certain aspects, perspectives, participants and periods, and exclude[s] others' (ibid: 19). The 'exclusions' in this research I see as the limits or boundaries of the study: for example five RDP settlements were used to source resident beneficiary respondents out of a number of settlements across the city. However I argue that the elements that have been used to constitute this particular case form a convincing site of study for the diverse material under consideration. The approach in this research reflects the case study concern with context (AAPS 2011; Rule and John 2011; Yin 2003), and the case study characteristics of intensive or in depth examination, focusing on 'detail, richness, completeness' (Flyvbjerg 2011: 301), and 'depth and texture' (Rule and John 2011: 19). These characteristics are valued for revealing 'what has actually happened in a given setting, and how' (AAPS 2011). The setting in this case is geographically quite wide and is multi-scalar, but in its constituent elements, the experiences of and views on these, it forms a connected and coherent whole. Amongst various types of case studies it could be termed revelatory and exploratory, focused on revealing aspects of a phenomenon not well understood or exposed.

⁶⁰ which can be characterized as a story with intrigue, institutions and power dynamics, in the realm of planning as an activity.

Whilst a single case study can be critiqued for having unique characteristics which render findings not generalizable (Yin 2003; Rule and Young 2011), case studies do not usually aim for generalisation. Rather, case study material can be used to confirm, extend or contest theory. Rule and Young (2011) discuss ways in which case study research can also have 'horizontal' application, such as when thick descriptions enable findings to resonate for a reader who has in mind other situations. The case study under discussion in this research is not necessarily 'typical': the situation may not be the same as one of RDP housing in a smaller urban area in South Africa, or state funded housing in another part of the world, for example. However the dimensions flagged here are arguably relevant to similarly-oriented research: how policy is interpreted and plays out spatially; what the local economic, employment, and social conditions are; in what ways people's practices spread across various spatial scales, and how this is understood and analysed. In this way it offers an innovative case study approach.

Johannesburg as the particular choice of study area offers a scale and range of housing projects within a large and complex urban system. Similar contexts would be found in other metropolitan areas in South Africa, though these would be overlain with particular local conditions and factors. Johannesburg is possibly a site of greater state institutional capacity and state attention than other areas, given its size and economic prominence, and attracts a greater number of job and opportunity seekers that suggest a 'demand' for housing. In these ways it might offer a particularly rich case study for exploring the dimensions of state-beneficiary interaction. For me as a researcher, Johannesburg is where I live and work, and thus offers the opportunity for sustained examination and reflection over a number of years whilst immersed in its daily life.

3.3 Location of the case within literature

The form of investigation in this research aligns with work in geography, housing and planning literature which has a concern for empirical investigation characterized by specificity, detail and context (such as Pain et al 2001; Mason 2002; Watson 2009). In

housing research it resonates with those who caution against generalised pronouncements on whole programmes or collections of initiatives and their outcomes, and who call for specific localized investigation (see for example Salcedo 2010; Tironi 2009). Similarly the notion of ‘the poor as a whole’ is challenged by those who contend that “‘low income people” is too broad a group for housing purposes’ (Sastrosasmita and Amin 1990: 75), as shelter needs and priorities are diverse. Variation in household composition and needs over time calls into question a standardised housing product (Spiegel et al 1996). In addition to diversity amongst households there may be complexity within households, as shown in the intricate spatial and clustering strategies around RDP housing in Barberton (Wiesenthal 2011). As noted in Chapter Two, this calls for close attention to people’s daily practices, to consider ‘the trivial, local and everyday human experience’ (Pain et al 2001: 6), what Mason refers to as ‘the texture and weave of everyday life’ (Mason 2002: 1). At the same time the research is concerned with a contextually informed view of housing which considers wider political, institutional or social factors (Tironi 2009) that might constrain, facilitate or shape the practices of households (Howard 2003).

These themes dovetail with my theoretical approach: I have positioned the housing programme as an improvement intervention of the state in its developmental orientation, located in the broad field of state-society interactions (Corbridge 2008). My concern is with both how the programme manifests and how it is understood. This requires an exploration of the state in a particular sense: in its specific views on RDP housing, and in its understandings of practice as realized in concrete settings. It also requires a specific exploration of how individual beneficiaries in particular places are interacting, and how this can be explained. The research ultimately focuses on the interface between the two, in the specific context of contemporary Johannesburg.

As noted earlier, the case study is at a level above or wider than a single housing project. Beyond the motivations given for this earlier, I argue that its spatial spread is also the result of a particular and deliberate entry point into the people-experience part of the

research: through people rather than place in the first instance. Below I discuss how this ‘people-based’ starting point is a key element of the research design.

3.4 Research design

Yin (2003) argues that the case study is ‘a comprehensive research strategy’ (2003: 14) which must shape the research design, data collection and data analysis. Research design needs to be ‘the logic’ linking data to the question under investigation (Yin 2003: 19). Part of the design involves how and where the data is sourced, which must be adequate in amount and quality to answer the research questions: data must be sufficiently deep to convey ‘substance, richness and subtlety’; sufficiently complete to convey ‘multifacetedness and connectedness’, and sufficiently lively to convey ‘a sense of being there’ (Rule and John 2011: 72).

This investigation has two main aspects to it: how people are interacting with their housing benefit⁶¹ and how the state views and understands this. My primary method of data collection was through interviews with three groups of people: first, state housing practitioners; second, people who were allocated a government house but who do not live in it on a nightly basis; and third, people currently living in their housing. A secondary source of data is various forms of writing on the RDP component of the SA housing programme. These include policy documents and policy reviews, as well as scholarly literature. I draw on material focused on the housing situation as well as the South African context and the Johannesburg situation. These I used for my analysis in Chapters Four and Five.

The subject of RDP housing is fundamentally geographic and spatial but exploring peoples’ interaction with it as defined in this research requires also exploring their ‘non-interaction’ with it, as the practice of people selling and renting out their houses is of key concern to the state. Those who are not living in their houses constitute a form of

⁶¹ By ‘interaction’ with the housing benefit I refer to how people use the house in their lives.

'hidden population' (Heckathorn 1997). Where these people live and the geography of their lives is not immediately apparent, thus making a focus on a locality or place inappropriate as an entry point to finding these respondents. I sourced these respondents initially through a snowballing technique based on the two criteria of their having at the time of the research or having had in the past an RDP house, and their currently living and working in Johannesburg. I discuss this further below.

These discussions led to certain places and neighbourhoods in Johannesburg with which this set of respondents had relationships, to come in to view. The RDP settlements amongst these then became the site of further fieldwork and channels through which to connect with interviewees who *were* living in the RDP houses, a second set of respondents. This approach revealed a much more complex pattern of dwelling and livelihood within and beyond RDP settlements than anticipated. It is possible that these intricacies may not have been revealed in this research by a place-based starting point. For example, I learnt about connections with unoccupied RDP houses through speaking to absent owners; in an investigation based only in settlements the story of an RDP house that was locked and empty may not have emerged as I may have by-passed it in favour of an interviewee in residence. The illumination of more complex patterns that emerged through the non-place specific starting point became a key dimension of the study.

To investigate how the state views and understands recipients' interactions with the housing benefit I identified a range of 'key informants' in, and associated with the state, which I called 'state housing practitioners'. Their understanding of housing projects in and around Johannesburg, the locational advantages and limitations of them, and the explanations put forward to account for where they are located formed the basis of my analysis of the spatial pattern of RDP housing in the city, discussed in Chapter Five. This was then supplemented by insights from previous work I have undertaken⁶². A secondary

⁶² In the past I have been involved in several studies commissioned by national and local government on SA's low-income housing policy approach (Charlton, Silverman and Berrisford 2003; Zack and Charlton 2003; Rubin and Charlton 2008; Zack et al 2010, PPT and ULM 2012); as well as in scholarly analysis of the

source of information was government policy documents on, or related to, the housing programme, discussed later in this chapter (and listed in the Appendix).

3.5 Data gathering activities

3.5.1 Interviews

Table 3-2: Categories of interviewees

Category of interviewees	Number of interviews
1. Non-resident beneficiaries	16
2. Resident beneficiaries	18
SUB-TOTAL (beneficiary interviews)	34
3. State housing practitioners	22
TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	56

I briefly discuss each of these three categories of interviewees, starting with ‘non-resident beneficiaries’ summarised in the table below.

Table 3-3: Non-resident beneficiary interviewees

PSEUDONYM	DATE	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	LANGUAGE	TRANSLATOR/ ALSO PRESENT
Nandi	27 January 2010	Wits seminar room	Xhosa	Pam Notununu
Bernice	15 February 2010	Melville (my house)	isiZulu & Afrikaans	Lerato Motlaung

housing programme (Charlton 2003; Charlton and Kihato 2006; Charlton 2008; Charlton 2010). I also worked for a period of eight years in housing delivery, first at a non-governmental organisation, and then within the state in local government, mainly in the role of project manager involved in conceptualising and delivering housing projects. I draw on this experience in my analysis of RDP housing in this research.

Pam	17 February 2010	Forest Town (employer's house)	English	Lerato Motlaung
Adele	18 February 2010	Parkview (neighbour's house)	Pedi + English	None
Evelyn	19 February 2010	Hyde Park (employer's flat)	Sotho	Eulenda Mkwazi
Lyn	24 February 2010	employer's house in Parkview	Afrikaans	None
Dumisani	08 March 2010	Benmore shopping centre	English + little Zulu	Lerato Motlaung
Priscilla	10 March 2010	Forest Town (friend's employer's house)	English	(none - assistance from Pindi)
Theresa	16 March 2010	office in Braamfontein	isiZulu + English	Lerato Motlaung
Christine	16 March 2010	office in Braamfontein	isiZulu	Lerato Motlaung (did the entire interview)
Danny	22 April 2010	Newtown pavement	English	Lerato Motlaung
Sizwe	22 April 2010	Newtown pavement	English	Lerato Motlaung
Andile	25 May 2010	Pavement in CBD	English & isiZulu	Lerato Motlaung
Val	24 June 2010	Emmentia and her house in Devland	English	None
Amy	26 October 2010	House in Protea South	Mostly English	Lerato Motlaung

The first interviewees in the 'non-resident group' (the 'hidden population') were found using a snowballing technique. I started with an email and word of mouth requests to

colleagues and friends, asking if any of them knew of anyone who was not living in their RDP house. I got several responses from people who knew of an employee or worker they encountered who met the criteria. I made contact with the suggested people and asked their permission for an interview. Through this method I was able to conduct four interviews. I asked these interviewees for other referrals and secured two more interviews through this strategy. Then, I asked a colleague working at a housing help desk in inner city Johannesburg if she knew of possible interviewees, and she put me in touch with two more respondents. A research assistant⁶³ spent some time amongst street traders at the central railway station in Johannesburg and was able to secure one more interview. Following leads from previous research, he made contact with informal recyclers at the place where they sort their goods and secured two interviews in this manner⁶⁴. I approached a hawker in my neighbourhood who turned out to meet the criteria and who agreed to an interview. A colleague referred me to another interviewee, and my research assistant found one more through his personal network, making a total of sixteen interviewees. Interviewees were thus sourced from the initial 'snowballing e-mail', by approaching people working in public space, by following up on clues from other research, by approaching workers likely to fall into the required income category, and by asking specific people for potential contacts. The table above summarises the set of sixteen respondents secured through these means.

About half of those interviewed in this category of respondents have stable regular employment, most of these in the form of domestic work, with one respondent employed as a golf caddy at an upmarket golf club. Four other interviewees are self-employed, all in what might be termed the informal sector: a street trader, a mobile hawker selling from a cart in the suburbs, and two informal recyclers. A further two interviewees describe themselves as not working, surviving inter alia off contributions from relatives and child

⁶³ Lerato Motloung assisted with this section of the study.

⁶⁴ This was a follow up to a project with students I was involved in in 2010 during which we came across informal recyclers who have RDP housing.

support grants. All interviewees were supporting family members, most as sole breadwinners, with two having partners who also bring in an income. Four of the interviewees were men. In most cases the discussion took place at the respondent's place of work (their choice), which ranged from up-market private homes, to pavements in the centre of town. One interview took place at my house, another in a shopping centre, another at Wits University, and a further interview took place at the respondent's house (not an RDP house).

Table 3-4: Resident beneficiary interviewees⁶⁵

Pseudonym	Area	M/F	Date	Source of income	Appearance of house	Yard
Temb 2	Tembisa	M, elderly	17 Sept 2011	Unemployed, wife is an informal trader	Unaltered	Fenced, vegetable garden, outside rooms
Temb 1	Tembisa	F, middle aged	17 Sept 2011	Part time office cleaner 3 times / week	Large, transformed	
IP1	Ivory Park	F, fairly young	17 Sept 2011	Irregular domestic work ('piece work')	Immaculate, decorated	Backyard shack
FP1	Freedom Park	M, middle aged	1 Oct 2011	Shebeen on site, rental income from a shop	Unaltered but with 2 businesses on site	Shop on site
FP2	Freedom Park	F, middle aged	1 Oct 2011	General worker at a clinic in Eldorado Park	Fundamentally transformed	
FP3	Freedom Park	F, elderly	2 Oct 2011	Supported by lawyer son	Transformed, unfinished	House occupies most of yard
FP4	Devland Ext 27	M, middle aged	3 Oct 2011	'Piece jobs' – tiling, ceilings etc	Large, immaculate, completely transformed	Two cars in driveway

⁶⁵ In these interviews I was assisted by Mwabo Msingaphantsi, and Lerato Motlaung for the Lehae interviews.

FP5	Devland Ext 27	M, elderly	5 Oct 2011	Shop assistant, mans a fruit and veg counter outside a grocery store	Interviewed at place of work (shop in a transformed RDP house), he described some modification to his house	
FP6	Devland Ext 27	M, middle aged	11 Oct 2011	Unemployed carpenter, wife employed in admin in an office	Some alterations and additions	
OF1	Orange Farm	M, older middle age	24 Sept 2011	Self –employed mechanic, works from home	Basic, unaltered	Open air car repair business in front, shack behind
OF2	Orange Farm	M + F (mimddle aged couple)	25 Sept 2011	Self employed satellite tv dish installer, F unemployed, child support grant	Close to original but spruced up, modification, immaculate	Fenced, lawned, immaculate
OF3	Orange Farm	M, middle aged	25 Sept 2011	Self employed gardener	A few basic modifications	Outside rooms, beautiful gardens
B1	Bramfischerville Phase 1	F, elderly	8 Oct 2011	Supported by children	Some internal wall divisions added	Outside rooms added, vegetables in front yard
B2	Bramfischerville	M,	8 Oct 2011	Fridge repair,	Basic, unaltered	Outside rooms

		middle aged		mowing lawns		
B3	Bramfischerville	F, middle aged	11 Oct 2011	Internet, business card service; rental income from shop	A few basic modifications	Outside room, shop on site, walled
L1	Lehae	F	3 March 2010	Supercare cleaner		
L2	Lehae	M	21 Oct 2010	Supercare cleaner, after hours electrical repair from home		Vegetables and fruit trees
L3	Lehae	F	5 March 2010	Admin assistant at Netcare Rehab Centre, Auckland Park	Described as unaltered	Growing vegetables

The second group of interviewees were those who do live in RDP houses. A total of eighteen people were interviewed in this category. Fifteen of these respondents were approached and interviewed in the RDP neighbourhoods of Tembisa and Ivory Park, Orange Farm, Freedom Park (and also a particular section of Freedom Park known as Devland Extension 27), and Bramfischerville. These areas were selected as places to source interviewees for two reasons: because they were mentioned in the first set of non-resident beneficiary interviews as places where those interviewees had a house, and in addition, because the neighbourhoods fell within, or were very close to,⁶⁶ the municipal area of the City of Johannesburg⁶⁷.

In addition, three of those interviewed live in the RDP neighbourhood of Lehae. These interviews were conducted in 2010 at the same time as the non-resident beneficiary interviews, and prior to the interview taking place, were thought to fall into the 'non-resident' category. On discovering at the beginning of the interview that interviewees live permanently in their RDP housing, the interview proceeded and the transcripts retained for analysis in this phase of the project. These interviews were conducted at the interviewees' places of work: in the other resident beneficiary interviews I was able to supplement interview data with my own visual observations of respondents' houses and settlements (fourteen were conducted at the interviewees' RDP houses and one at his workplace within the neighbourhood, between August and October 2011).

In terms of the location of projects, with reference to Map 3-1 below, Orange Farm is generally considered a marginalised area, being some 40kms to the south of the CBD and a known area of impoverishment with origins as an informal settlement on farmland. Lehae is a much newer neighbourhood, an RDP greenfields development, and is also quite far to the south of the city, fairly close to the historically coloured area of Eldorado Park

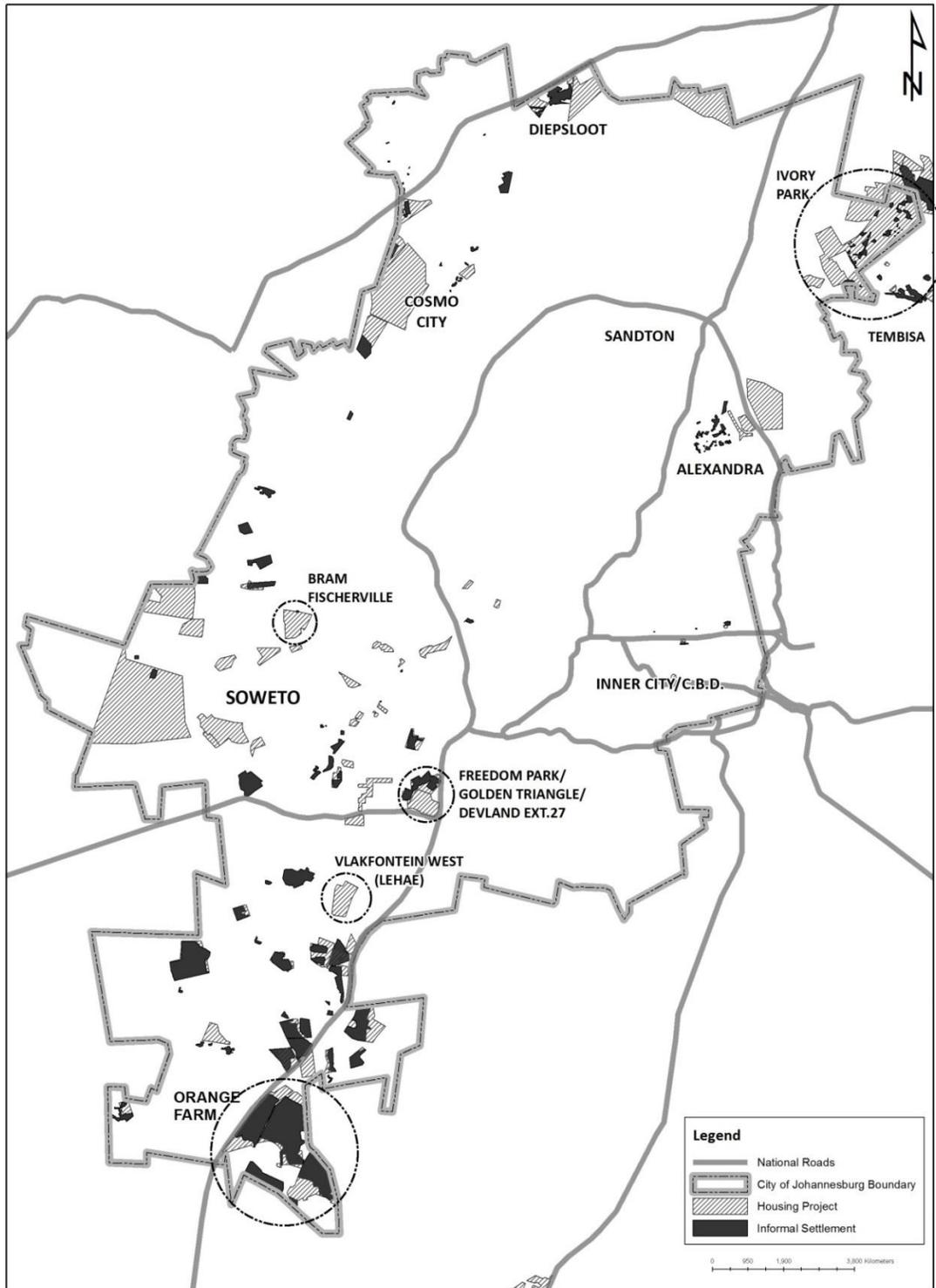
⁶⁶ Ivory Park and Tembisa are contiguous settlements to the north east of central Johannesburg which are traversed by the municipal boundary between Johannesburg and EKurhuleni.

⁶⁷ Some 'non-resident' interviewees are connected to RDP houses outside of the Johannesburg area but I focused on those within the city as this is the geographic location of this study.

and the historically Indian area of Lenasia. Freedom Park and Devland Extension 27 (an area also known as Golden Triangle) are closer in to the city, located on major road networks, close to Eldorado Park and fairly close to parts of Soweto such as Kliptown. Bramfischerville is on the western edge of Soweto, not far from the town centre of Roodepoort, to the west of Johannesburg. Tembisa and Ivory Park are northwest of Johannesburg, roughly in the centre of Gauteng. The projects therefore include both those that might be characterised as fairly well located in certain respects (Tembisa, Ivory Park, Freedom Park, and Bramfischerville), and those poorly located (Orange Farm and perhaps Lehae)⁶⁸. Interviewees' occupation of their sites⁶⁹ dated from the early 1990s to 2008.

⁶⁸ In SA housing discussions, 'good' locations would be those well served by public transport, and in reasonable proximity to commercial, retail and industrial activities which might offer work opportunities. Poorly located would be the opposite: those areas considered far away from and disconnected from areas of economic opportunity.

⁶⁹ In some instances interviewees received a house on their site some years after living in a shack on the site.



Derived from Gauteng Department of Housing and Local Government Data

Map 3-1 RDP settlements in Johannesburg that respondents have houses in (map produced by Miriam Maina 2013)

All but the Lehae respondents were found by my research assistant, Mawabo Msingaphantsi, by going to the settlement itself. Mawabo visited project areas on weekdays by public transport, and then spent some time walking an area and looking for people willing to be interviewed. He found people who were visible in their yards, or approachable because their front door was open. He tried to include amongst the respondents different age groups, genders, differences in appearances of the RDP house (eg cared for or neglected, transformed or original in appearance, planted or untended yard space), different activities in and around the house (such as evidence of home businesses, or backyard rooms), different locations within the settlement (such as on a main road, or on a quiet back road). He was not concerned with whether the occupant of the RDP house was an original beneficiary or not⁷⁰. Mawabo would then make an appointment with those who agreed to be interviewed, and he and I would go together by car to conduct the interviews, which each took about one and a half hours.

In six cases the interview that took place was not the scheduled one, as the person was not at home when we arrived at the appointed time. In these cases we looked for other people to interview in the area, either on the same day or the next day. Sometimes particular features would catch my eye (such as someone with a trading stall in their property, or shack material for sale, or evidence of investment in the house, or an impression of particular poverty), and we would approach this house for an interview but were not always successful in securing one (mainly because of people's time constraints or other arrangements rather than unwillingness to be interviewed). On one occasion we were approached on leaving an interviewee's house by a young man and on hearing the subject of our business offered himself and his house for an interview. We followed up on his directions the following day ('the double-storey house up there'), and proceeded with an interview with him and his grandmother (the house owner).

⁷⁰ In the end all interviewees were original beneficiaries; perhaps only those confident of such status agreed to an interview.

In contrast to non-resident beneficiary interviews, therefore, and with the exception of the three interviewees from Lehae and one in Devland Ext 27, people were sourced at their place of residence, and we were able to view, and in all these instances, photograph (with the interviewees' permission), the house and the neighbourhood. From my observations during the brief time spent in the different areas (ranging from a few hours, to several hours over a few days), different impressions were gained from the neighbourhoods. The areas that seemed to offer the most attractive living environments were Tembisa, Ivory Park and Orange Farm⁷¹, where there were gardens, trees, and considerable evidence of public infrastructure such as halls, schools and community facilities. Freedom Park seemed impoverished, with poorly maintained roads, and an 'edgy' feel to it, although its neighbour Devland Extension 27 was prosperous and well managed, judging by the considerable amount of private – and some public⁷² – investment in the area. Braamfischerville was badly serviced and poorly maintained with streets in a considerable state of disrepair and an informal access route developed across the veld to avoid the congestion of the main entry road. It was very spread out as a settlement, and its proximity to dusty mine dumps was noticeable. It did demonstrate however, a lot of backyard rooms, and izozo's⁷³ being advertised and sold everywhere, suggesting its popularity as a place for secondary rental accommodation. These and other observations, and photographs I took during my visits, form part of the discussion of findings in Chapters Seven and Eight.

In total I interviewed 34 people who have or had an RDP house. These were in-depth semi-structured interviews. I probed where people lived, their relationship with their RDP house and neighbourhood, their accommodation trajectory, their perceptions of RDP housing and of the state in delivering the housing, how and where they secured an

⁷¹ Orange Farm has been the subject of some attention and investment by the state, because of its marginalised status.

⁷² A lovely children's park, for example.

⁷³ A type of pre-fabricated hut used as an outside room.

income and in what way this connected with their house: in sum, the geography and economy of their lives relative to their housing, and how they view this.

In each RDP settlement area I conducted three interviews⁷⁴ which allowed for settlement specific insights which are not necessarily generalisable. But the intention is not to focus on conclusions per settlement; rather, the aim is to add detail and texture to the picture of RDP housing in Johannesburg and how it is understood and experienced. This contributes to a contextually rich, complex, multi-scaled and people centred investigation. The eighteen interviews with resident beneficiaries therefore need to be viewed in relation to, and taken in conjunction with, the sixteen conducted with non-resident beneficiaries and the twenty-two conducted with representatives of the state, discussed below. The impressions and perspectives of these fifty-six people, coupled with the analysis of housing policy and practice in Johannesburg, and observations, together constitute a body of information from which this story of RDP housing in relation to the beneficiary user and the state is developed.

Table 3-5 ‘State’ interviewees

Pseudonym	Nat/ Prov/ Local	Department or organisation	Type of work	Date of interview	Place of interview
JF	N	Servcon	govt agency which did physical audits of RDP housing projects	Mar-09	Her office, JHB CBD
QU	P	Gauteng Dept of Housing	Policy	2010	Her office, JHB CBD
FQ	P	former Gauteng		2010	His office,

⁷⁴ Freedom Park and Devland Ext 27 had three each, because of the intriguing contrast between the two nearby areas in terms of impression of poverty and investment.

		Dept of housing official, now with Social Housing Foundation			Houghton, JHB
MX	N	National Department of Housing	Policy	Nov-10	His office, Pretoria
NC	N	National Department of Housing	monitoring and evaluation	16-Feb-11	Her office, Pretoria
NN	N	National Department of Housing	impact assessment	16-Feb-11	Her office, Pretoria
QB	L	City of Joburg spatial planning, former Gauteng Department of Housing	spatial planning, integrated planning + previous housing experience at province	2011/02/21 & 1 March 2011	Restaurant, Greenside JHB
DX	N	National Department of Housing	national registry, demand	1-Mar-11	Her office, Schoeman St, Pretoria
OM	P + L	Alex Renewal Project	housing in Alexandra	28-Feb-11	His office, Wynberg, Sandton
XP	P	Gauteng Dept of Housing	provincial experience + current private sector delivery experience	4-Mar-11	His offices, Illovo, JHB
NO	P	Actstop activist, former Head of	expectations of housing,	1-Mar-11	Restaurant, Parktown

		Gauteng Dept of Housing in the 1990s, now housing consultant to national government on informal settlement upgrading	link to jobs, lives		
XN	L	Acting head of dept, City of Joburg Housing dept	Joburg approach and issues	3-Mar-11	his offices, Braamfontein
KM	P	Urban Dynamics	delivery on big projects	10-Mar-11	his offices, Parktown
BW	N	Office of the Presidency, former DDG/ DG National Dept of Housing	conceptual thinking policy etc	11-Mar-11	his house, Morningside
MO	P	Dir Human Settlements Joburg, Gauteng Povincial govt	Provincial approach in the Joburg region	14-Mar-11	her offices, JHB CBD
AN (participated along with MO in the first part of her interview)	P	Gauteng Provincial govt		14 Mar 11	MO's offices, JHB CBD
TC	P	Bigen Africa	delivery on big projects	16-Mar-11	his offices, Pretoria
TO	N + L	former City of Joburg housing dept, former	CoJ delivery - policy & practice,	16-Mar-11	Restaurant, Pretoria

		National Dept of Housing , now national treasury	relationship with Gauteng		
BX	P	Gauteng Dept of housing			His office, JHB
LU	External	SERI	State society relations		SERI offices, Braamfontein
MT	L	City of Johannesburg planning		15 June 2011	JHB News Café
KL	L	City of Johannesburg social development	Poverty and housing	3 June 2011	Braamfontein coffee shop

The third group of interviewees, twenty-two state housing practitioners, included officials across three spheres of state, or those who act for officials. Eighteen interviewees were current or former state officials, drawn from across the three spheres of government, in senior or relatively senior positions. Another four respondents worked or interacted closely with the state in their current positions, although they were located in institutions outside of the state (three of these were also former state officials). State respondents were current or former⁷⁵ officials in the National Department of Housing (five), Gauteng Province Department of Housing (five) and Gauteng Provincial Planning Department (two), City of Johannesburg Department of Housing (two), City of Johannesburg (CoJ) Department of Urban Planning and Development Management (three), and CoJ Department of Social Development (one). Other interviewees were from planning and/or engineering firms: Urban Dynamics (one) and Bigen Africa (one) have been active in planning and project managing large housing developments on behalf of provincial

⁷⁵ Three former housing officials were at time of writing with state or quasi-state institutions: the Presidency, National Treasury and the Social Housing Foundation.

government. A further respondent was from the Socio Economic Rights Institute which has been involved in housing-related litigation against the state, and one interviewee was from Servcon⁷⁶, which has been involved in a large scale housing occupancy audit for the state.

Interviewees were chosen for their involvement in housing policy, monitoring and evaluation, housing project implementation, or involvement in spatial planning, and for their seniority and experience in the housing or planning field – a form of purposive sampling where respondents were selected for their ‘relevant knowledge, interest and experience in relation to the case’ (Rule and John 2011: 64). About half the interviewees I know personally, having encountered them in the housing terrain over the years. Almost all the people approached agreed to an interview, although one official in the national department of human settlements and one in the provincial department successfully evaded an interview without actually refusing to grant one. Politicians in the housing field were not interviewed as part of this research, although one interviewee has acted as an advisor to a national Minister of Housing.

Whilst I can clearly categorise respondents in this group as ‘state housing practitioners’ because of their work now or in the past in designing, implementing, or monitoring the housing programme, I also acknowledge that they do not unambiguously or only represent the state. A number of officials interviewed had been anti-apartheid activists who were brought into government post 1994 (interviewees BW, NO, QU). One interviewee illustrated the multiple positions and roles many people have had, and how this blurs their ‘position’ in the field. Whilst at the time of the interview she was a senior official in the Gauteng Provincial department of housing, she commented that

I also worked previously for the [national] Minister of Housing, although for a very short time, but my experience with the housing of course goes back to the early

⁷⁶ An institution initially established by the state to manage payment defaults from bonded housing.

[nineteen] nineties with the National Housing Forum⁷⁷, and COPE affordable housing even before that ...So, I am never sure if I speak as a government person or as a housing sort of activist, if that is possible (QU interview).

In these interviews I asked about the respondent's personal involvement in the housing programme, their views on the outcomes of delivery, what interactions with the housing were occurring, and how they, and others in the state, viewed this activity. Depending on the respondent's area of responsibility, I also asked about the location of housing projects, about relationships with other parts of the state in housing delivery, about monitoring of housing performance, and about beneficiary audits.

Some interviewees appeared to relish the opportunity to reflect on their work and commented on the lack of time in their daily jobs of analyzing and reviewing what they do

when you're in government you are in the coal face of delivery, you got to deliver, you've got to work with people, you've got to make sure that things go right and you very seldom get a chance to step out of that and see what's going right and what's not going right (QU interview).

All of the total batch of 56 interviews consisted of discussions with people, generally over a period of one – two hours, at a location of their choice. These ranged from formal offices and residences to street pavements, as shown below.

⁷⁷ The multi-party and multi-organisation negotiating forum that debated a post-apartheid housing policy for the country in 1992 and 1993.



Figure 3-1: Pavement where interview with Sizwe and Danny took place (author's own, 2010).

In most cases the interviewee granted permission for the interview to be recorded, and the discussion was subsequently transcribed by a transcription service. The written material so produced ranged between 20 – 60 pages of discussion per interview. During the course of the fieldwork I was assisted at different times by four translators⁷⁸, all of them 3rd year or Honours year urban planning students from Wits University. Their involvement in urban issues through their studies, and in having participated in housing courses I teach at Wits, gave them some familiarity with the issues I probed in the interviews, and our common understanding of the research project was deepened through the preparatory discussions we had prior to the fieldwork. In 21 beneficiary interviews I relied considerably on the translator to interpret the discussion during the interviews which included the languages of isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho and Afrikaans. Most respondents also included some English or Afrikaans, and I was able to follow most of this part of the discussion. I was thus able to make use of both the interpretation by the translator as the discussion unfolded, and the translation as

⁷⁸ Most of the non-resident beneficiary interviews were interpreted by research assistant Lerato Motlaung, and most of the resident beneficiary interviews were interpreted by research assistant Mawabo Msingaphatsi. The state interviews were all conducted in English.

professionally transcribed, which assisted in establishing confidence in the accuracy of what was discussed.

3.5.2 Interview analysis

For each of the three groups of interviewees, I undertook what can be termed ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ analysis⁷⁹. For each interview I considered what for me were the key points, the main ‘character’ of the discussion, points that reinforced other interviews and points that differed from them (vertical analysis; that is, analysis within a particular interview discussion). I then looked across the batch of interviews, grouping information sourced into themes. This was done first using numerical coding on the hardcopies of transcripts, and then copying or summarizing information into a matrix (horizontal analysis across the batch of material). Whilst codes in part related to interview question categories, there were others that emerged from the data itself, echoing both aspects of what Rule and John call deductive and inductive analysis (2011: 77). Whilst the process of identifying key content and labelling themes involves applying ‘higher order’ labels that become increasingly abstract and removed from the words and expressions of the respondent, I have used quotations extensively in this document (edited minimally to enhance clarity if necessary), and have referenced points to particular interviews, linking evidence to claims made and interspersing “the real’ and the abstract’ (Rule and John 2011: 78).

3.5.3 Policy documents and analyses of policy

A second source of data were government policy documents, which I reviewed for the discussion on the national housing programme, and the discussion on RDP housing in Johannesburg. My research in this area has extended over a longer period of time than this case study as noted earlier, and for Chapters Four and Five I have both reviewed key documents (such as the Department of Housing’s Housing Code 2000) and also drawn on

⁷⁹ A term used by Prof Van Zyl in her regular seminars on interview analysis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2010.

analysis in my own previously-produced published and commissioned work, referred to earlier. The data I have used also incorporates published analyses of policy and practice by a range of authors, which is also reflected in these chapters.

Appendix One shows the list of government produced or commissioned documents I have reviewed. In these documents I looked for indications of what the state expected from the housing programme, the expectations it has of beneficiaries, and its means of assessing outcomes.

3.6 Personal positionality and ethical considerations

Li (2007) sees the roles of critic and implementer of programmes as needing to be separate. She argues that implementers necessarily have to see the problem they are addressing in terms of what they are able to offer as an intervention. They therefore can't afford to subject their scheme or intervention to detailed examination: 'under pressure to program better, they are not in a position to make programming itself an object of analysis' (2007: 2). However in this research the boundaries between 'critic' and 'implementer' are not so clear. Whilst my role in this case study is that of observer, detached from the day to day fray of either delivering an RDP project or being a beneficiary of one, I acknowledge an intimate relationship with RDP housing. In my professional career I have been directly involved in the delivery of RDP housing whilst a City official at eThekweni (Durban) municipality. Whilst this was more than 10 years ago now, it was part of a formative portion of my career. I left the public service partly to secure time to reflect on what South Africa (as a country) was doing in terms of delivery, having entered the public service with a firm conviction of the 'rightness' and potential of the housing programme.

As Pain et al (2001) note, many facets of our own experiences can enrich our understanding: in my case I seek to understand better what I see as the benefits and flaws of the RDP housing intervention, taking a scholarly and critical lens. In the analysis that follows, I am alert to any tendency to look too hard for 'the good' in a programme

that I have been 'implicated' in delivering. Nevertheless I acknowledge the situatedness of this research, which reflects my interpretation of the situation and my interpretation of what others see and interpret, agreeing with Pain et al that 'beliefs and knowledge are rooted in the social and political positioning of those who construct it' (Pain et al 2001: 5).

A further dimension of my position as researcher is as a white female middle class academic, researching a context I have lived and worked in for years. This has shaped the work in various ways: for example, defining the network of friends and colleagues I contacted to find beneficiaries not living in RDP houses, which might have resulted in domestic workers featuring amongst interviewees. My work over many years in the housing sector in all likelihood facilitated my ability to access fairly quickly and easily many of the interviewees in the state.

My position at Wits University was identified by some respondents as potentially of assistance to them: one asked me to follow up on his status on the provincial housing 'waiting list'⁸⁰. Several months after their interview, Sizwe and Danny arrived at my office asking for assistance in resolving a dispute with an NGO⁸¹ I had put them in contact with. But in most cases I developed no on-going relationship with beneficiary interviewees, unlike in much ethnographic work. These respondents agreed to the interviews after hearing the research explanation provided on the information sheet (Appendix Two) and the interview protocol in Appendix Three. I was aware that some parts of the discussion might touch on sensitive matters, such as peoples' unauthorized practices to acquire or dispose of housing; and strove to ensure that my use of such information did not precipitate or exacerbate peoples' vulnerability. Although I did not offer payment in exchange for any of the interviews, at the end of each beneficiary interview I presented

⁸⁰ I tried to get information for him but was ultimately not very successful, providing me with a glimpse into the frustration a potential beneficiary might feel whilst caught up in the opaque bureaucracy of trying to access a house (discussed in Chapter Six).

⁸¹ The NGO was trying to establish facilities in the inner city of Johannesburg for sorting, weighing and storing the goods that informal recyclers source.

the respondent with a small donation⁸² which for me represented a gesture of acknowledgement for the time spent and insight provided. In a few situations I also provided juice or biscuits⁸³, or paid for coffee or meals where interviews – with beneficiary or state respondents – took place in restaurants. In the case of these state respondents I was aware of the difficulties some interviewees might have in discussing contradictions or weakness in the state’s approach, or personal views which might be at odds with official positions. In almost all cases my sense was that interviewees were very frank and forthcoming with their take on the issues explored.

3.7 Limitations of the methodology

Whilst the approach taken has advantages in offering a way to study a programmatic intervention, limitations are apparent. The form of snowballing technique used to source non-resident beneficiaries via personal and professional networks may have resulted in sampling bias, potentially reflected in the relatively high proportion of domestic workers interviewed. Identifying resident beneficiaries for interview requests through visible indications of their being at home and seeming approachable excluded those temporarily away from the area, occupied elsewhere in the settlement or indisposed. Importantly, these resident respondents, by virtue of the fact that they are found in the settlement, come from those who have stayed in the area and not those who have vacated the area, and their sentiments thus might reflect a more positive experience of the settlement. In both the cases of resident and non-resident beneficiaries the small number of interviewees and the sampling approaches clearly do not allow for generalised conclusions to be drawn. Resident beneficiary and non-resident beneficiary material thus needs to be viewed with these potential respondent biases in mind, but the methodology nevertheless allows an important original contribution to the literature through surfacing

⁸² R100.

⁸³ Such as the pavement interview with Sizwe and Danny. After the interview with Bafana I bought some sweets from his stall.

diverse and complex experiences, explanations and views which require more nuanced theorising than available categorisations commonly allow for.

A further limitation relates to the focus on interviewing state housing practitioners without interviewing also politicians such as ward councillors, the relevant member of the mayoral committee in the City of Johannesburg and the executive committee of Gauteng Province, and the Minister of Human Settlements. This approach was partly informed by the practical consideration that these interviews would be difficult for me to secure because of the many demands on politicians and the likely invisibility for them of this work and my status as a researcher. I thought I would have little chance of securing such discussions, although this assumption was not tested. Direct interviews with politicians would have helped elaborate different elements of the state-beneficiary relationship, such as politicians' understanding of the role and capacity of the state in people's lives, and these remain important avenues for future research as noted in the concluding chapter. In this research, at least two of the state housing practitioners interviewed have strong ties to politicians (including one who was an advisor to the Minister of Human Settlements) whilst most would interact frequently with their political champions as part of their jobs and thus have relatively informed interpretations of how politicians might view the issues explored. However, the focus in this research is on housing officers and practitioners, for the particular insights they bring to the interpretations of policy objectives and outcomes that they themselves are intimately involved in formulating, realising and reviewing, and how beneficiaries practices and needs feature within these.

3.8 Conclusion

This methods chapter has described and justified the geographic, institutional and experiential dimensions of the case study of peoples' interactions with RDP housing in Johannesburg. I have referred briefly to literature in the fields of housing, planning, geography and development which supports empirical investigation which similarly

focuses on everyday experiences, policy and other frameworks, and the relationship between them. I have discussed the data gathering activities I undertook, paying particular attention to how I conducted interviews with three groups of respondents. More briefly I have touched on the use of policy documents and previous work as additional sources of information. Finally I have reflected on my person position on the matter of RDP housing and this research, and some of the ethical and practical dimensions of the study.

4 CHAPTER 4 - SOUTH AFRICA'S RDP HOUSING PROGRAMME

4.1 Introduction

Amongst a range of expectations the South African state has of the RDP component of its low-income housing benefit, I focus here on what is anticipated in respect of beneficiary households. I describe key aspects of the RDP housing approach before relating its essential features to approaches common in developing countries. I discuss in more detail the aims of the RDP approach. Whilst some household-oriented goals are not explicitly articulated in policy documents, underlying assumptions and expected impacts can nevertheless be discerned. Assumptions and aims for the beneficiary household have evolved over time, influenced by new pressures and ideas.

Critical reflection by the state and in the literature on housing practice has identified ways in which anticipated outcomes have not materialised. Shortcomings in meeting aims can be ascribed to differences between intention and implementation, differences in the wider context to that anticipated, and further, 'mixed messaging' from the state in response to unforeseen uses of and demands placed on the housing. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the significance for this study of the set of expectations for the household, the successes and failures in achieving these, and the reasons for this situation.

In this chapter I draw on policy documents of the state housing programme and a range of commentary that has been written about it. I also make use of my own previous work in analysing the housing programme, as explained in Chapter Three.

4.2 The nature of the housing benefit

South Africa's low income housing programme is emotionally linked to the ideals of the Freedom Charter, a document forged at a mass non-racial gathering in Kliptown, Soweto in 1955. In a future South Africa free from racial restrictions, the Charter proclaimed, 'there shall be houses, security and comfort for all'. Nearly 40 years later, ideas from the

Charter underpinned the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)⁸⁴, the African National Congress's (ANC) manifesto for post-apartheid repair introduced in 1994. A key chapter of the RDP document was on 'Meeting Basic Needs', including a comparatively long section on 'housing and services' (ANC 1994). This was a politically charged matter and had been the subject of multi-party negotiations prior to the ANC taking power in 1994, as discussed below. As noted in Chapter One 'RDP' housing is the unofficial nickname for what is in effect the main thrust of the SA government's low income housing programme: the construction of a house on a serviced plot of land and given 'free'⁸⁵ to qualifying households. Heavily entwined in the political history of the country and of the ANC liberation movement, featuring strongly as a key issue in the transition period, and an essential component of the post 1994 ruling party's redistribution and delivery strategy, the significance of housing and the conspicuous addressing of housing need should not be underestimated in the South African landscape. In this thesis I retain as essential underlying context this sense of the political significance of housing, at both a macro scale – the magnitude of delivery in the housing programme - and at a micro scale – the individual beneficiary acknowledged and touched by the state: a state in effect synonymous with the party.

'Access to adequate housing' is enshrined in the South African Constitution as a right, and government is duty-bound to endeavour to give effect to this right. The Freedom Charter – created and adopted by the ANC and three other organisations⁸⁶ - is still referred to in government discourse half a century later: in 2009 for example the phrase 'houses, security and comfort' appeared in promotional material, added to the slogan 'Breaking New Ground in Housing Delivery' (Department of Housing 2009a). By 2011 approximately

⁸⁴ 'The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is a developmental programme aimed at co-ordinating government's developmental efforts in terms of a common vision of reconstruction, development, growth, employment and redistribution' (Department of Housing 2000: 6UF).

⁸⁵ Beneficiaries in the income category R1500 – R3 500 are supposed to make a financial contribution of R2479 (DHS 2009 Part 3.3), but this requirement is generally overlooked in practice.

⁸⁶ Constituting the Congress Alliance.

'R115.56 billion at current 2010 prices in capital expenditure' had been spent on the housing programme (Kayamandi 2011: iii).

The housing scheme as a whole is more complex and diverse than the delivery of new houses, involving a range of activities such as encouraging the banking sector to lend to low-income households, and rationalizing institutional capacity in the housing sphere⁸⁷ (Department of Housing 2000: 8UF). These measures aimed at stimulating 'the market' and normalizing a financial, delivery, administrative and spatial environment that had become severely distorted by the apartheid system. Jones and Datta (2000: 393) summarise the 'unenviable housing record' inherited by the Mandela government after the collapse of the apartheid state:

18% of households (about 7.4 million people) lived in squatter settlements or backyard shacks, and a further 500 000 people lived in hostels (Mackay, 1995; Ministry of Housing, 1995; Goodlad, 1996). Over one-half of the urban population lacked basic services such as water and even established settlements lacked formal access to electricity (National Business Initiative (NBI), 1995; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), 1996) ... [in] the remnants of a draconian planning system that combined spatial as well as social control ... The response of civic groups had been to challenge the legitimacy of local government through rent and bond boycotts with the aim of making townships 'ungovernable' (Mayekiso, 1996; Bond, 2000).

Broadly, the approach to low-income housing which was adopted conforms to a 'whole sector' and 'enabling'⁸⁸ approach, by and large aligning with World Bank orthodoxy of the late 1980s with respect to low income housing in developing countries (Jones and Datta 2000). There are different perspectives on the extent to which the World Bank, or models from other countries, directly influenced the South African approach, with Gilbert (2002: 1911) for example arguing that South Africa 'ignored' relevant learning from other

⁸⁷ For example, during apartheid state institutions involved in housing administration and delivery were fragmented and divided along racial lines, and needed to be consolidated in the years after 1994, to help with the housing effort.

⁸⁸ Enabling markets to work.

countries and resisted 'pressure from the World Bank' where policies advocated were considered to be unsuitable. Jones and Datta (2000) note that whilst the South African approach conforms in principle, it also challenges the World Bank's list of 'do's and don'ts' in the way the policy was set up, and that some of the measures adopted – notably the subsidy mechanisms and loan finance from the formal sector - received more emphasis than others.

The range of housing initiatives the South African state is involved in has been largely overshadowed by the most visible and high profile dimension of the programme: the vigorous delivery of new housing stock subsidized by the state. This was considered essential whilst various corrections to the market were being addressed⁸⁹, with the subsidy becoming 'the primary assistance measure of the National Housing Programme' (Department of Housing 2000: 36UF). Whilst various subsidy categories were introduced⁹⁰, most significant for this research is the Project Linked Subsidy and its successors, used to deliver RDP and BNG⁹¹ houses and used in informal settlement upgrading. This particular subsidy mechanism has consistently consumed the largest

⁸⁹ The Housing Code makes reference to '...government's plan for a normalized, vibrant housing market in which dwelling units are bought and sold among subsidized beneficiaries' (Department of Housing 2000: 15).

⁹⁰ These included the Institutional Subsidy (for social rental housing) and the Individual Subsidy (for individual purchase of sites or houses) (Department of Housing 2000).

⁹¹ BNG houses would also be subsidized units for ownership, but would generally reflect better quality construction in more fully developed neighbourhoods, likely to be mixed-income and mixed- use, in line with the 'BNG' policy amendment of 2004 which emphasized housing delivery in a context of sustainable human settlements.

portion of the national annual subsidy budget⁹² and has delivered by far the most housing stock⁹³.

New housing stock was intended to offer both rental and ownership accommodation, but the ownership component dominated from the beginning. A key tension at the National Housing Forum negotiations on future housing policy between 1992 and 1994, was between a model of state-financed and run rental stock, and that of state subsidized land and housing for ownership. State-run rental stock was broadly favoured by the left (the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the civic movement, constituting the Mass Democratic Movement), drawing on socialist-inspired housing forms from various parts of the world. On the other hand, the delivery of plots of land for individual ownership was advocated by 'big business'⁹⁴.

The ownership model is seen to have won⁹⁵ at the negotiating table, predominantly for fiscal reasons: this form of housing could be financed by a one-off capital subsidy⁹⁶, and would not incur the on-going financial commitment for the state that a rental subsidy would require (Charlton and Kihato 2006).

⁹² Specific figures on expenditure by programme are not available from the Department of Human Settlements (PPT and ULM 2012a). The housing subsidy is currently valued at about R140,000, which includes the provision of a 40m² house on a 250m² plot of serviced land, entirely for free, to households earning less than R3,500 per month (FFC 2012: 13).

⁹³ For example the social housing programme had delivered just over 30 000 units throughout the country by 2005 (SERI 2011) whereas the project linked subsidy had delivered close to 1 million houses or sites by 2001.

⁹⁴ Referring to the business, mining and industry (Charlton and Kihato 2006), although within the business community, the private construction industry also favoured the rental stock which would mean bigger, more robust and complete buildings, rather than site and service-type schemes.

⁹⁵ Although it has been pointed out that what was agreed involved some compromise also for the business lobby (Walker interview in Charlton and Kihato 2006).

⁹⁶ Once-off per beneficiary household.

In effect, in the ownership model the on-going cost of living in the house would be borne by the household. By contrast, in the rental model the state would bear significant on-going costs: for rents to be affordable to very low income earners, the cumulative rental income for a scheme would be too low to cover the costs of building maintenance, municipal services and taxes, and management, and these costs would have to be subsidized by the state. Goodlad (1996: 1634) argues however that not just the interests of the state but also the interests of the poor were considered, in that 'site and service' supported by a capital subsidy was designed to 'avoid large rental, maintenance or loan payment for the poorest people'.

Broadly this approach conformed to policy approaches in Africa and Latin America which in effect work with ways of limiting the financial outlay and commitment of the state. Few approaches in developing countries in recent years advocate for the sort of on-going financial obligation of state rental accommodation, recognising the scale of housing need in many contexts, the extent of poverty of needy households, and the poverty and limited capacity of governments. As is noted in section three below, state subsidized housing was adopted in some contexts (Gilbert 2004), but through once-off *capital* subsidies rather than rent subsidies. In countries too poor for housing subsidies, other strategies were supported, such as micro-loans, or informal settlement interventions, often supported by donor organizations rather than any broad-based state programme.

In South Africa, whilst the provision of houses for ownership was the main approach, the need for rental housing continued to be acknowledged. Rental accommodation was clearly advocated in the RDP document: 'sufficient affordable rental housing stock should be provided to low-income earners who choose this option' (ANC 1994: 24), and a component of rental housing – known as 'social' or 'institutional' housing – was envisaged in the 1994 White Paper (RSA 1994). A small but vibrant social housing sector has developed over time. Numerically this stock is tiny in comparison with RDP housing – in 2007 less than 2% of the number of RDP units - although it is significant despite its limited size; providing rental housing, often in desirable urban locations; and contributing to

urban renewal in decaying city centres. Its major flaw however, from a housing-for-the-poor perspective, is that it has largely failed to accommodate very low-income beneficiaries (see for example SERI 2011). In the absence of a rental subsidy as explained above, the on-going cost of running the complexes has had to be financed from rental income, forcing monthly charges beyond the reach of the very poor, and serving rather the 'poor, but less poor'⁹⁷. So whilst the benefits of social housing include well located, well managed high density rental stock which help to diversify the income profile of established city suburbs, these benefits have, apart from a very few exceptions, not been available (affordable) to the RDP-housing target market.

Beyond fiscal containment, an ownership model of low-income housing was attractive for other reasons: the incoming ANC government was wary of the dangers of potential rent-payment boycotts against authorities, a tactic used by the ANC and its allies against the apartheid state in the late 1980s as part of the political strategy of making South Africa 'ungovernable'. In addition, land and houses for ownership had high symbolic and political value in a context where most poor black families – in effect the beneficiaries of the programme, although race was never a qualifying criterion – had been prevented from owning urban property under apartheid. For the ANC, being able to distribute land and housing for ownership on a large scale to disposed and excluded voters was a politically charged and attractive approach.

Shortly after the 1994 elections therefore the South African government embarked on a massive land development programme. New housing stock was created in the form of land, engineering services, a title deed, and in the early days of the programme, a 'starter

⁹⁷ In effect, households with monthly incomes between about R2500 and R7500 have afforded the rental amounts required for the social housing institutions to survive. A percentage of households with incomes over R3 500 may be accommodated in social housing developments, as households with incomes up to about R12 500 (the 'gap' market) are acknowledged to face difficulties in accessing decent housing (as there is little available for purchase at prices which they are able to afford). State assistance has recently been extended to households with incomes over R3500 in the form of a finance-linked subsidy to assist with access to mortgage finance.

house⁹⁸. This assistance was aimed at the poorest of the poor (defined in income terms), those with inadequate shelter who had never owned property before. From the beginning income cut-off was set at R3500 per household⁹⁹, estimated by the Affordable Land and Housing Data Centre to encompass about 64% of SA households (Rust 2011). Although the amount of the housing subsidy has increased in recent years to take account of rising delivery costs, the household income cut-off for the RDP/ BNG grant has not changed¹⁰⁰. In the 1990s the state drew on the private sector as delivery agents – developers who forged ahead identifying land, securing funding commitments via the provincial administration, and rolling out mass housing estates.

This section has described in broad terms the post 1994 low income housing approach in South Africa as one encompassing diverse strategies dominated by the RDP housing programme aimed at the poorest group of households, proportionally a huge grouping. Below I show that this accords with a predominantly home ownership-orientation in low income housing in developing countries in recent decades.

4.3 Locating the South African housing approach

Schlyter (2003: 8) notes that since the 1970s the promotion of home ownership has been the dominant thrust of housing policy throughout southern Africa. Prior to this, in the 1950s and early 1960s, some countries recently independent from colonialism attempted the delivery of formal rental housing for some citizens, paralleling post-war reconstruction efforts in Europe and Britain that included a state house building programme. But it soon became apparent that these housing schemes were not affordable to economically fragile states, where the scale of need was becoming

⁹⁸ Although this varied in nature from place to place, it was often a small one-room structure (of say 12m²) with a 'wet-core': a room which had plumbing connections for a toilet and a basin. The intention was for the new home-owner to extend and improve this house over time.

⁹⁹ Defined as the combined income of household head and spouse.

¹⁰⁰ Although as noted earlier subsidy assistance of a different form has also been introduced for the 'gap' market.

overwhelming (Jenkins et al 2007). Site and service schemes were adopted as more manageable, whereby government demarcated plots of land and provided them with basic services and facilitated self-build by individual owners. But as the pace of urbanization picked up, people began settling in and around urban centres at a rate faster than governments could manage, and informal settlements developed.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the writings of John Turner on how to conceptualise squatter settlements gained currency. Drawing from his observations in Peru, Turner (1972) advocated working with peoples' own initiative and energy in creating their shelter, and argued for the state to improve and upgrade these initiatives rather than condemn them. He contended that informal settlements were part of 'the solution' rather than 'the problem'. His ideas were picked up strongly by the World Bank and UN (Harris 2003) and the notion of dweller-control over the housing process was widely advocated. Harris (2003) argues that Turner's central theme of owner-managed housing delivery became conflated with self-build, a more narrow assumption that everyone is able to literally use their hands to create their dwellings. Despite a Marxist-oriented critique that viewed this approach as the state avoiding its responsibilities and loading burdens on to poor people (Burgess 1982), donor organization began to advocate informal settlement upgrading as a key housing response. It soon became apparent however that initiatives were relatively isolated, individualized project-based responses, which were slow, time-consuming and unlikely to solve the growing housing deficiency in many towns and cities. Mathey (1997) noted that forms of assisted self-help 'made little contribution to solving the housing problems of the poor' (Mathey 1997: 283-4). His own position was to advocate community-based housing finance as a means to assist with housing improvement.

By the 1980s, two themes were strong in low income housing policy debates. The first was the need for basic service provision, which emphasized infrastructure upgrade as a key response (Stren 1990). The second was a conceptualization of the importance of multiple strategies across the housing sector: the 'whole sector approach' (Pugh 2001) or

the 'enabling markets to work' approach of the World Bank (Datta and Jones 2001). This advocated, for example, intervention in the financial sphere to make housing loans more widely available, and the supply of land for housing. Sri Lanka's Million Housing programme, which was introduced in the 1980s, was a form of aided self-help, and included a focus on loan finance to help households build or improve their own homes. It was conceptualised as a government supported or enabled programme, rather than state-provided housing, and emphasised community involvement in settlement planning and delivery of infrastructure, as well as house construction (Joshi and Khan 2010).

In the early 2000s the ideas of Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto were receiving wide attention, centred on the notion of housing, in the form of property, needing to perform as an economic and financial asset for not only the middle classes but also for the poor. If housing was able to perform this function, he argued, this would offer a stepping stone towards prosperity for the impoverished (CDE 2001). The real appeal of his message lay in his contention that many existing illegal and informal shelter conditions could become such assets through regularization, legalization and land titling initiatives; attractive indeed for states struggling financially and in capacity terms to implement mass housing provision. Land titling, along with the notion of housing as an asset, gained popularity amongst some governments, although in other contexts the titling approach already had a long history. De Soto's ideas were critiqued; for example for not sufficiently taking into account local land use practices and systems, actual effects on the poorest and most vulnerable (Cousins, Cousins, Hornby, Kingwill, Royston and Smit 2005), and for the links assumed to exist between formal title, trade in houses and finance (Gilbert 2002a; Gilbert 2012).

This brief historical overview has made the point that the trajectory of low income housing policy and practice in much of Africa and Latin America has for some time been oriented towards home ownership. But very different strategies and tools can be invoked

under this broad umbrella, some reflecting direct state involvement in the creation of new developments of formal housing units, others which advocate for interventions in existing self-built settlements, and some which facilitate access to housing finance, or combinations of these. There are also variations between large, state-driven programmatic approaches to housing and more scattered, project-based initiatives. These various schemes have different objectives, funding and allocation mechanisms, and impacts on both the built environment and the end user. This discussion helps contextualize the capital subsidy approach adopted in South Africa and I draw out specific dimensions of the South African approach in subsequent sections of the chapter.

4.4 Diverse housing instruments

Examples of approaches to low income housing from Chile, Peru, Brazil and China all demonstrate an emphasis on home ownership, but different conditions with respect to the creation of new housing stock and funding arrangements. Countries with the means to do so have adopted strategies to encourage the creation of new housing stock, mainly through capital subsidies through which the state injects grant funding into the cost of housing delivery, thereby reducing the cost of housing acquisition by poor people. Alternatively, or sometimes in addition, strategies such as the different approaches adopted in Brazil and in Peru target the upgrading of the physical quality of existing self-built living conditions, and confer legal status and land ownership through titling interventions (Fernandes 2011). Predominantly these strategies apply to existing settlements, where legally-recognised ownership of already-occupied land can be effected. China has recently shifted to promoting ownership by providing mortgages and loans through state-owned banks (Deng, Shen and Wang 2011). Where states cannot afford (or choose not to prioritise) programmatic strategies, fragmented and localized housing initiatives take the form of micro-loan initiatives, informal settlement upgrading or pilot projects, often supported by donor funding organisations. In these situations people improve their own housing situations slowly over time, such as in many parts of

Africa (UN Habitat 2011), ideally with short term loans of small amounts which do not require assets to be exposed (Datta and Jones 2001).

Chile, like South Africa, has a policy of subsidising¹⁰¹ the development of housing, aiming to 'make home ownership affordable even for the poorest of citizens' (Salcedo 2010: 91). The housing programme is structured around a range of capital subsidies all of which appear to be linked to household savings or loans of some sort (Smit 2006). Salcedo contends that 'no other country in the world can show a housing policy with such a large number of built housing units relative to the country's population' (2010: 91). The Chilean programme is hailed as a success for the large numbers of houses built, for significant improvements made to peoples' material conditions¹⁰², and for the virtual elimination of squalid housing conditions (Salcedo 2010). But despite its successes, the outcomes of the Chilean programme are critiqued on spatial, locational, and asset-performance terms, amongst other things, and there is a debate about the extent to which beneficiaries have been spatially marginalized. Many of these criticisms echo those levelled at the South African housing programme: for example that Chile has merely replaced shantytowns with 'residentially segregated urban ghettos in which opportunities are *less* available than in other parts of the city' (Salcedo 2010: 96 citing Rodriguez and Sugranyes 2005). Or, from a property-performance perspective, that there is 'no market for the ill-located and small housing units' (Salcedo 2010 citing Gilbert 2004). Amongst criticisms is that life in the new settlements has become privatised, atomized and individualized, in contrast to the perceived social solidarity of the shantytowns (Salcedo 2010). In addition, at least in the early years of the Chilean programme, an emphasis on peoples' ability to save meant

¹⁰¹ In recent years there has been no required repayment to the state of a portion of the subsidy, as in the past (Salcedo 2010).

¹⁰² Democratisation and economic growth set the conditions for significant reduction in poverty over the last 20 years, accompanied by extensive social investment, which have contributed to 'huge quality-of-life improvements' for poorer people (Tironi 2009: 975).

that less than a third of beneficiaries originated from the lowest income groups (Smit 2006, citing Nieto 2000 and Gilbert 2004).

Smit (2006) draws on Gilbert (2004) to argue that there tends to be a conceptual problem with the capital subsidy approach, in that it is motivated in the first instance by the imperative to cap and curtail state expenditure. Capital subsidies are considered a 'once-off' payment towards benefiting households, and are therefore fiscally circumscribed, budgetable, contained, in contrast to state-funded rental housing which draws the state into on-going, expanding and annually ballooning rent subsidy obligations. This fiscal motivation means that finances allocated to capital subsidies tend to be inadequate: the number of subsidies is insufficient and the subsidy amount unable to deliver reasonable accommodation on prime sites (Smit 2006:1 with reference to Gilbert 2004). This might be part of the reason why the Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa (CAHF) refers on its website¹⁰³ to the RDP/ BNG subsidy instrument as 'the most notorious' of the post-1994 housing mechanisms. Chile is something of an exception to the problem of too little funding going into capital subsidies, having prioritized housing and matched this with significant resources¹⁰⁴ (Gilbert 2004 in Smit 2006). Nevertheless there appear to be both positive and negative effects on the lives of the poor of the outcomes of the Chilean housing policy (Salecedo 2010: 92).

In the Chilean approach as well as others noted earlier, the cost of on-going habitation of the new or improved accommodation is seen as predominantly the responsibility of the household, not the state, although subsidization of some living costs is apparent in a few circumstances¹⁰⁵. Amongst these approaches there are different attitudes and possibilities with respect to informality. In some situations, states, or donor

¹⁰³ CAHF is the housing finance division of FinMark Trust, which is funded primarily by UKaid with a mission of 'making financial markets work for the poor'. It does extensive research and advocacy work on housing in SA and other parts of Africa. <http://www.housingfinanceafrica.org/projects/rdp-assets-study>.

¹⁰⁴ about 6% of total government expenditure.

¹⁰⁵ Such as water, electricity and rates concessions provided by municipalities in South Africa.

organisations, work with informal, self-built housing through incremental improvements, such as well-known programmes in Brazil and Peru. Informal settlement upgrading may also occur in contexts where there is no capacity or fiscal provision for formal housing delivery. In other instances, informally delivered housing is condemned and is the subject of sanctions by authorities, even if alternative housing delivery modes are highly constrained, such as occurred in Zimbabwe during Operation Murambatsvina¹⁰⁶ in 2005 (Potts 2008). Where large country-wide programmes for new housing delivery do exist, such as in South Africa and in Chile, views on informally constructed or delivered housing appear to be more complex, as in peoples' minds at least a different, and potentially much better alternative is within reach, rendering self-built options an inferior, unworthy and unnecessary alternative.

In the next section I return to the South Africa RDP housing programme and discuss more specifically what it aimed to achieve, beyond 'the delivery of housing'.

4.5 The aims of the RDP housing programme

In the six years after 1994, South Africa delivered a million houses¹⁰⁷ (ULM and PPT 2012a), and mass delivery was a source of pride to government. This was particularly important politically in showing progress and fulfilment of promises by a government struggling to effect significant changes in other arenas, such as the educational or economic spheres. In 2009 the Director-General in the Department of Human Settlements¹⁰⁸ noted that 2.8 million houses had been built, accommodating more than a

¹⁰⁶ Meaning 'clear out the trash/restore order...At least 92 460 dwellings were demolished, and 570 000 people lost their homes' (Potts 2008: 160).

¹⁰⁷ In some parts of the country the house was not much more than a single room as much of the subsidy funding was spent on engineering requirements on more technically expensive land or where local authorities imposed stricter development conditions.

¹⁰⁸ As the Department of Housing was re-named after the 'BNG' policy amendment of 2004, which emphasized sustainable human settlements.

quarter of South Africa's population of 48 million people (Mzolo 2009). The Director General described the scale of the achievement:

the number of people who have benefited is equivalent to the populations of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland combined (Kotsoane cited in Mzolo 2009).

But beyond the objective of creating numbers of houses, a set of further aims of the housing programme can be discerned.¹⁰⁹ I argue that aims can be categorized into first, those that address national ambitions, second, those at the scale of urban areas that address issues facing towns and cities, and third, those involving households (Charlton 2009).

Political or national-level objectives include demonstrating delivery to an expectant electorate, constituting a fulfilment of election promises and a milestone in the long struggle for freedom. For towns and cities expectations included the contribution that the housing programme could make to restructuring and integrating the apartheid city, in both a geographic sense, and in a social sense. This could be by developing former apartheid 'buffer strips'¹¹⁰ for example, and by bringing poorer people closer to places of advantage in the city and closer to people of other income levels, class and race. The Department of Housing was clear that

ultimately, the housing process must make a positive contribution to a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and integrated society (Department of Housing 2000: 4)¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁹ This section is largely derived from Charlton, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Under apartheid the living areas of different race groups were separated, often by a band of undeveloped or industrial land, referred to as a buffer strip.

¹¹¹ The wider contribution of low income housing delivery to cities is also implicit in some of the values underpinning the housing vision, such as 'sustainability, viability, integration, equality, reconstruction, holistic development, and good governance' (Department of Housing 2000: 3).

But it is the state's intentions and expectations for beneficiary households which are of most interest in this study¹¹². A primary aim was to provide shelter to households, and to meet basic infrastructure needs such as access to clean water and adequate sanitation:

the most critical need is to ensure, through State intervention, affordable access for the poor to a minimum acceptable standard of housing and necessary services, within the context of both fiscal and other resource constraints (Department of Housing 2000: 11).

Essentially the housing programme was intended to replace poor living circumstances (shacks in informal settlements, overcrowded apartheid-era township housing, backyard shacks and so on) with decent accommodation, family by family. Every new house handed over, it was assumed, would reduce the identified housing backlog by one household in need, in a direct one-to-one relationship. The housing 'backlog' was the number of households thought to be in need of decent accommodation, derived from counts and estimates of numbers of people living in inadequate circumstances. Recently the National Department of Human Settlements estimated the backlog to be 'over 2 million households' (FFC 2012: 24, 25).

Many types of accommodation were considered inadequate, including rural homesteads. From discussion with the Department of Housing in 2003, Gardner lists categories in the national census that fell within the Department's definition of the backlog: 1) a house/flat/room in back yard; 2) a room / flatlet¹¹³ not in backyard but on shared property; 3) an informal dwelling/shack in back yard; 4) an informal dwelling/ shack not in back yard; 5) a caravan/tent/ship/boat (Gardner 2003: 73).

This quite wide spectrum of accommodation not only takes into account inferior building quality (which might be a feature of many 'informal dwellings/ shacks' in the above

¹¹² Although at times these are difficult to separate out from the larger set of expectations for the housing programme as a whole.

¹¹³ A small flat.

categories), but also picks up on where the house or land is not owned (the ‘back yard’, ‘shared property’ and mobile accommodation descriptions). Surprisingly it also encompasses traditional dwellings, many of which could be argued to provide ‘decent shelter’ in their construction quality, thermal performance, and environmental quality¹¹⁴. Lack of clarity about how inadequate accommodation translates into ‘the housing backlog’ and what this reveals about housing demand, has received recent critique and has been identified as a ‘research gap’ (FFC 2012: 9):

the demand for housing in South Africa is poorly understood, mainly because of the lack of a common understanding of how backlogs are estimated. As a result, backlogs may be overstated and assumed to be effective demand for new housing, rather than demand that could be met through upgrading existing dwellings or social housing rentals (FFC 2012: 7).

The first aim of providing decent shelter to people living in poor conditions evolved over time and these changes deserve some attention as they help explain some current disjunctures in the use of the housing. A key shift concerns the nature of the house and how it was to be realized. Initially there was a clear expectation that beneficiaries would help create their adequate house, taking the ‘starter’ house provided by the state and improving and maintaining it over time (the notion of the progressive realization of the housing right described in the Housing Act 107 of 1997). This has similarities with the Sri Lankan Million Houses Programme which emphasised the state as an enabler and households and communities¹¹⁵ as having a direct role in improving their own circumstances, including involvement in key community-based decision making (Joshi and Khan 2010; Abbott 2002) . In South Africa, beneficiaries were intended to participate in

¹¹⁴ A recent review of the housing programme seems to concur that traditional dwellings are in need of replacement: ‘It is encouraging to note that unlike the informal dwellings, the number of traditional structures declined from 1.8 million households in 1996 to 1.4 million households in 2009’ (Kayamandi Development Services (2011: 27). Another recent review differs, suggesting that ‘traditional dwellings may not need to be replaced, although the owners may wish to improve their homes as and when they have the financial means to do so’ (FFC 2012: 24).

¹¹⁵ Often in existing shanty settlements.

the overall development process, acquiring skills and, at a collective level, being 'empowered' as communities (Department of Housing 2000: 27UF). This would complement the state's initiative which on its own was unable to meet the cost 'of providing a formal complete house to every South African family in need' (Department of Housing 2000: 15UF). The subsidy followed the principles of *breadth* rather than *depth*, in which 'a large number of families will get a lesser subsidy rather than a small number of families getting a larger subsidy' (Department of Housing 2000: 15UF), and of the gearing of private and individual finance to complement government funding (Department of Housing 2000: 26UF, 27UF).

This helps explain the construction of RDP houses in 1990s with, for example, porous block walls needing plastering, bare roof trusses needing a ceiling to be fitted, or a one-room shell requiring internal sub-division. Starter houses varied in design, quality and size throughout the country, depending on project-specific variables such as the cost of land, and the specification and cost of settlement infrastructure. This variation in product occurred because the subsidy quantum per household (i.e. the amount allocated to deliver a house on serviced land) remained a fixed amount regardless of site-specific conditions, apart from a particular variance allowed for specifically-defined geotechnical conditions in two regions of the country (Department of Housing 2000).

At this time the notion of 'adequate housing' expressed in policy emphasised aspects such as 'legal security of tenure, the availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, affordability, accessibility and location' (Department of Housing 2000: 5UF), rather than the technical specification of house itself. Beneficiaries would partner with the state, so the thinking went, in completing their housing through accessing housing credit, or with 'personal resources' such as savings and labour (Department of Housing 2000: 15UF). This incremental approach was contentious from the beginning, and politically unpopular amongst some sections of the ruling party (see Goodlad 1996). The idea that very poor households would actually be able to access and afford formal

loan finance has also been strongly critiqued for being unrealistic (Jones and Datta 2000; Baumann 2003).

However by 1999 this approach of starter houses for individual completion had been largely abandoned, replaced by the Norms and Standards, which specified that each house delivered must be at least 30m² in size and of a defined standard of construction. At the same time minimum levels of services were specified, and a financial limit was placed on the infrastructure which could be financed out of the housing subsidy. Imagining the subsidy as a pot of money, the previous approach involved first taking from the pot whatever was needed to pay for infrastructure (of a standard agreed with the local authority), land and professional costs. What was left over in the pot was then available for a starter house of some sort. The revised approach prioritised payment for the specified house (or a better quality house if possible), and the minimum level of services: thus almost an inversion of the previous approach.

Table 4-1: Minimum levels of services as currently defined (Department of Human Settlements 2009).

Minimum levels of service			
Sanitation	Water	Stormwater	Street lighting
Ventilated Improved Pit Latrine (VIP) per erf	Single metered standpipe per erf/ designated plot of land	Lined open channels	Highmast security lighting

In effect, this marked the start of an increasing emphasis on the house itself. Whilst there was no restriction in policy on delivering higher level services (such as water-borne sanitation rather than pit latrines), funding for this had to be found outside of the national housing subsidy – for example from municipal funds. The significance of this was that the house itself became elevated in the conceptions of ‘success’ in the housing programme, in the minds of beneficiaries and government. Other components of a wider

understanding of housing – such as the combined package of location, shelter and services – and what this offered the beneficiary household in terms of accessing opportunities, slipped to the background. Specifying minimum levels of service suggested that this base line was acceptable, yet this countered efforts towards more central locations and higher density developments: pit latrines for example implied larger site sizes in more peripheral areas.

This period also marked a downgrading of beneficiary involvement in house construction, although a particular stream of the housing programme, the Peoples' Housing Process¹¹⁶ remained in place. Centred on end-user involvement in the delivery of housing and inspired in part by Sri Lanka's approach to low-income housing, it encountered a number of difficulties in practice and remained small scale relative to other forms of delivery. One difficulty was that of cohering a group of beneficiaries from different places of origin, to work on their houses on a greenfield site. Another was the relatively long period of time the self-build took, and the active technical support needed for beneficiaries. Housing-oriented non-governmental organisations that offered technical assistance were not able to access from the housing programme financial or other resources for their efforts. Those who worked on the PHP felt unsupported by the department and its procedures.

The shift towards delivery of a complete house described above had as one of its key drivers the taunts that 'Mandela's houses are half the size of Verwoerd's'¹¹⁷ (Nell interview in Charlton and Kihato 2006: 267; see also Tomlinson 1998), and the political concern that a housing department must be seen to deliver *houses*, not land with some or

¹¹⁶ The People's Housing Process aimed to provide support to households involved in their own housing provision and construction, and was influenced by the Sri Lankan housing approach including through direct exchange between the two countries facilitated by UN Habitat (Huchzermeyer 2004).

¹¹⁷ Referring to Nelson Mandela, the first president of the democratic, post-apartheid South Africa and leader of the African National Congress liberation movement, and Hendrik Verwoerd, president during the 1960s era of 'high-apartheid' minority white rule.

other version of a 'top-structure'¹¹⁸. 'We are in the business of building homes and not bus shelters [the nickname used to describe starter houses made of structural columns and a roof, but without the infill walls]. We would be abrogating our primary responsibility if we did otherwise', proclaimed Housing Minister Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele in 1999 (Media Briefing, 12 February 1999 cited in Jones and Datta 2000: 411). The introduction of the Norms and Standards was also a partial response to complaints that houses were shoddily built, and that private-sector developers were cutting corners and profiteering at the expense of the poor¹¹⁹.

But further than this first aim of providing shelter and meeting basic infrastructure needs, the housing programme also aimed, second, to facilitate access to economic opportunities (RSA 1997), facilities and amenities – the opportunities of the city. In this way it aimed, implicitly at least, to offer a platform for life improvement. Whilst the specific path to further household development was not clearly spelt out, by inference this would be through things such as the ability to perform daily work and therefore earn an income, fostered by a supportive house – and home - environment. For the breadwinner this would be possible by being healthy enough to work (through access to health care facilities, good nutrition), well rested (through safe, comfortable accommodation), and able to get to work (through safe affordable convenient transport). Other household members would progress through being able to go to school nearby, use recreational facilities, and rest in safe and healthy environments, for example.

Accordingly, RDP housing was intended to occur in 'habitable, stable and sustainable' residential environments 'to ensure *viable* households and communities' (RSA 1997: line 39; Department of Human Settlements 2009: 8, emphasis added). New neighbourhoods

¹¹⁸ The term commonly used in the 1990s by housing practitioners to distinguish what was built on top of the land from the other (engineering) infrastructure.

¹¹⁹ A claim that appears to have some substance in some instances, but which in other cases overlooked the high cost of infrastructure development in some technically-difficult projects, leaving very little money for construction of a 'top-structure' (see Tomlinson 2006).

were planned according to layout norms, with the necessary land provision made for standard facilities such as schools, playgrounds and religious buildings. Underlying the vision of how houses and the settlement as a whole would function, was an expectation that from a stable, secure and comfortable home base, most RDP beneficiary breadwinners would be able to earn a reasonable income, probably by securing gainful employment somewhere within commuting distance of where they lived.

The 1997 Urban Development Framework¹²⁰ posits an urban vision in which there are employment choices, where cities will be 'centres of economic, environmental and social opportunity' (cited in Department of Housing 2000: 4). This assumption – that housing beneficiaries would be, or become, employed workers - was presumably fostered by expectations of economic growth in the 1990s, an increase in jobs, and increasing numbers of poor low- or no-skilled people being absorbed into the working world. . As Tomlinson notes

it was expected that, following the transition to democracy, the economy would begin to grow more rapidly than the population, and that per capita income would increase (Tomlinson 2006: 89).

In the absence of income support from the government¹²¹, it can be inferred that people were expected, over a reasonable period of time, to access an acceptable means of income-generation – for the most part through a formal job¹²² - and that their economic circumstances would thus improve.

The Growth, Employment And Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) introduced in 1996 was in part a response to the recognition that growth in jobs was happening far too slowly and

¹²⁰ A document produced by the Department of Housing and approved by Cabinet in 1997 to take forward the idea emanating from the RDP for a 'coherent approach to development'. It encapsulated government's 'vision for sustainable urban settlements, as well as guidelines and programmes for the achievement of the vision'(Department of Housing 1997: i).

¹²¹ Whilst various forms of social assistance were adopted by the state, (such as grants for the elderly and disabled), child- support grants were amongst the very few aimed at households with the potential for economic activity.

¹²² Though some short term job losses were expected in the 1990s due to economic policy adjustments.

that the economic growth trajectory¹²³ was not stemming ‘the unemployment crisis in the labour market’ (Department of Finance 1996: 1). The document argued for ‘accelerated economic growth associated with stronger employment creation’ (Department of Finance 1996: 22). The mass construction of the housing programme was itself seen as an important contributor to job creation and skills development (ibid). It has had some success in this regard: by 2011 estimates were that the programme had contributed ‘7.1% towards total employment within the construction industry’, which itself makes up about 6.5% of employment in SA (Kayamandi 2011: iii). However it is clear that whilst contributing to job creation ‘housing delivery... is not expected to solve unemployment in the country’ (Kayamandi 2011: vii).

Whilst the importance of the *settlement* in which a house is located was emphasised from the start of the housing programme, by the early 2000s there was an *increased* emphasis in government discourse on the need to create well-functioning neighbourhoods: ‘sustainable human settlements’ was the phrase captured in the 2004 policy amendment dubbed ‘Breaking New Ground’ (Department of Housing 2004). The elevation of settlement-level concerns responded to wide-ranging critiques of the inadequate and provisional nature of many RDP areas developed in the first decade of democratic rule. Whilst neighbourhoods were *planned* to contain all typical facilities and amenities in accordance with their population thresholds, these often remained unbuilt for years, a point explained further below. The concern for quality neighbourhoods existed in parallel, and in some tension with the drive since 1999 for quality houses, given the competition between the two over funding and delivery timing.

A third expectation for the housing programme was that with access to some form of income and a decent house in a safe, secure and nurturing neighbourhood, RDP beneficiaries would gradually be absorbed into the cohort of urban citizens. The Department of Housing explained that

¹²³ about 3% per annum (GEAR 1996).

government is committed to a South Africa in which each and every person has access to adequate housing *in a manner that supports their development as functioning members of society* (Department of Housing 2000: 45UF, emphasis added).

Stable and rooted in their homes, in 'socially and economically viable communities' (Department of Housing 2000: 27UF) people would consolidate their lives and, in urban areas, be able to contribute to the growing prosperity of their city or town. The Department of Housing noted that housing adds to:

on-going growth and prosperity, and enhances the creation of stable and productive communities (Department of Housing 2000:13).

The City of Johannesburg notes the benefit to the city's tax base of poor peoples' progression up 'the property ladder' (City of Johannesburg 2006). The notion of the property ladder accords with national government perspective, encompassing an idealized view that changes in housing circumstance should progress towards increasing comfort, desirability, suitability and value through lifestyle and lifecycle shifts in the household (see also Huchzermeyer 2001). The availability of different kinds of accommodation at different 'levels' is important to the overall functioning of the ladder (City of Johannesburg 2006: 64). In the current context this requires assisted supply at the 'bottom rung'. The City of Johannesburg explains how the national housing programme fits into the ladder:

in principle, [national] government wishes to subsidise low income house-holds out of informal housing by giving them a basic housing unit with decent services for ownership. On the basis of this ownership, government expects subsidy beneficiaries to invest in their housing and at some stage in their lives, sell the housing for a profit so that they can buy another home higher up the housing ladder. The sold home becomes the entry-level accommodation for the next low income person – and in this way, a subsidy beneficiary becomes part of the housing supply chain (City of Johannesburg 2006: 35).

Historically, this progression by property-owning families was seen to benefit residents by building their assets, and to benefit authorities through supplying property-related taxes (City of Johannesburg 2006: 33). The City of Johannesburg argues that housing is essential

to assist with social advancement. 'Houses are not just places to stay. The potential asset of saleable homes in good neighbourhoods is a crucial ingredient in promoting conditions for social mobility' (City of Johannesburg 2006: 64).

Fourth in terms of aims, therefore, was that receipt of a house was expected to help alleviate poverty (Charlton and Kihato 2006). The state's housing programme is argued to have been the 'biggest pro-poor public investment' (both in amount of money spent and numbers of people reached) (TIPS and Urban LandMark 2008). More ambitiously, receipt of a house was to contribute to wealth creation through the notion of housing as an asset (RSA 2003, 2003a). A key dimension of this, as illustrated above, conceptualizes housing not just as accommodation but as 'property', able to perform in the property market, offering real or perceived exchange value. This accords with the approach that housing should ultimately form part of 'the (property) market'. In line with the ideas of Hernando de Soto referred to earlier, not just RDP housing but apartheid-era housing in the former black townships, and shack housing in informal settlements all had the potential to play a role in a formal property market, given formal title deed status and a functioning market place (CDE 2001; Finmark Trust 2004).

The poverty alleviation/ wealth contribution aspect of low-income housing is however unresolved and these ideas are variously deployed by the state. In an interview in 2008, Human Settlements Minister Lindiwe Sisulu made it clear that she saw the free housing benefit as being for the most impoverished, not for the working poor. She is quoted as saying:

the houses will go to those *without* the prospect of getting a job - those *entirely relying on the grants*. Our new focus will be the elderly and our primary focus will be *the indigent*, those with children and those with disabilities....we want to *cut off those who can survive (on their own)* because that's where we have encountered problems [with people selling their houses] (Ngalwa 2008, emphases added).

The Minister's words in this newspaper interview do not reflect a view of RDP housing as part of a thriving property market, forming the first step on a ladder where housing is

traded. Rather they reflect a view of RDP housing as an essential intervention for the poorest of the poor, seemingly in its shelter and services function. However the multi-faceted notion of housing as an asset, including a financial asset, was firmly in the BNG policy amendment introduced in 2004.

Other interpretations of housing as an asset describe its social dimensions, its symbolic and practical roles as a gathering place, place of safety, a home, and a place which confers status— including through an officially-recognised address (Rust et al 2009). As an economic asset (Rust et al 2009) housing can earn income, for example as a location for a business, shop or home industry, or where house or yard space can generate rental income.

The state's household level aims for the housing programme therefore spanned a range of objectives, from providing decent shelter and services, to fostering a stable and secure base to support work, education, and recreation, encouraging behaviour as a responsible, fee-paying urban resident, and delivering an asset to assist (mainly) with wealth creation. The ambitious nature of the policy and the potential pitfalls were acknowledged:

our [housing] crisis is not just about an enormous backlog, but also about a dysfunctional market, torn communities and a strained social fabric, spatial as well as social segregation, and a host of other problems. Our response to this crisis must be innovative and diverse. If we respond only to the numbers that must be built, we risk replicating the distorted apartheid geography of the past. If we respond only to the dysfunctional market, we risk alienating households so impoverished that they are unable to access any market. And if we develop our houses as though the housing crisis is only about bricks and mortar, we risk wasting the enormous potential for gearing the massive reconstruction and development effort happening in our country' (Department of Housing 2000: 15).

Despite this insightful reflection on the difficulties and tensions around the housing programme, the delivery of RDP housing has been unable to avoid a number of pitfalls. In the next section I consider the criticisms that have been directed at how the programme has played out.

4.6 The manifestation of housing policy

In their physical manifestation, low-income housing projects have differed from intentions in various ways. First, many 'urban' RDP projects are accused of being poorly located (see for example Huchzermeyer 2001; Todes 2003), peripheral to the established areas of the city, far from areas of economic opportunity, well serviced transport routes or other higher order city facilities. In many cases these observations are hard to refute. But there are exceptions to this characterization, and a number of RDP projects across the country have met the criteria of 'good location' and do conform to the ideals of offering access to opportunity¹²⁴, as I discuss further in the case study of Johannesburg in Chapter Five. In addition, the location issue is contested. Schoonraad 2000 (cited in Todes 2003) critiques the conventional wisdom of 'bad' and 'good' locations, and Todes (2003) highlights the diversity of needs amongst households, as research that suggests that for some households, larger plots on the city periphery offer certain advantages.

Second, neighbourhood facilities such as schools, clinics and police stations have often lagged house construction and occupation by years, and projects have failed to attract or stimulate economic opportunities. Many new RDP suburbs have therefore been difficult places to live in, at least in the early years. With neighbourhood amenities and economic opportunities lacking, areas suffering from maintenance neglect, and costly, time-consuming and sometimes unsafe transport options, many settlements have not offered a direct platform for socio-economic advancement for households (Zack and Charlton 2003).

Charlton and Silverman recount the story of single mother Selina Boyani, choosing to live in her tiny backyard shack in Diepkloof, Soweto which she shares with four children, rather than relocate to an area where she would be in turn for an RDP house. The shack is

¹²⁴ Examples include Pennyville and Alexandra in Johannesburg, and Cato Manor in Durban.

dark, cramped and poorly ventilated, but it has one crucial advantage: it's only a 10-minute walk to school for Nombulelo, 17, the oldest child. That means no expensive taxi fares and no long hours spent commuting (Charlton and Silverman 2005).

By contrast the relocation area is an hour's taxi ride away, and many of Nombulelo's friends who moved are no longer attend school or do so by lodging in a shack nearby.

RDP housing has generally met basic needs of shelter, although there are many complaints of the poor quality of construction. Access to basic services is much improved, although even here there are concerns. Govender et al (2010: 341) provocatively claim that instead of RDP housing improving living conditions and thereby the health of residents, some design shortcomings currently 'contribute to an increased risk of communicable diseases, rather than an improvement'¹²⁵.

Beneficiary satisfaction studies reveal similar criticisms to those of professionals (see for example Zack and Charlton 2003; PSC 2003). Beneficiaries talk of having to travel far to jobs, and spending a lot of money on transport. They also complain of the poor construction quality of their houses and of the lack of care of the public environment and infrastructure by local authorities. But in some studies beneficiaries have also spoken of their pride and satisfaction in having received decent housing, or even just some form of housing of their own, for the first time. Many are deeply grateful to government (Zack and Charlton 2003), and are relatively uncomplaining of their seemingly-inadequate neighbourhoods. Two quotes from the focus group discussions in Zack and Charlton (2003) are used to illustrate this 'other side' of the RDP story:

I just sit in my house and watch it and walk around it, and observe how beautiful it is. Dan Village, Tzaneen, 27/01/03.

¹²⁵ The authors refer to the 'pathways of disease created by the provision and layout of sanitation-associated structures such as the toilet, taps and disposal facilities' (Govender et al 2010: 341 with reference to Dannenberg et al 2003).

I am very excited to have what I call a home. Even my family in rural areas are proud of me. I have water and electricity and a yard...Westernburg, Polokwane, 21/01/03 (Zack and Charlton 2003: 21, 25).

Fourth in differences in manifestation from intentions, the cost of living in the new houses appears to be an unmanageable burden for some households. Important in the housing policy was the notion of affordability, which included 'the long-term costs associated with rates and service charges, maintenance etc' (Department of Housing 2000: 45UF). But by the early 2000s the extent of dire poverty in urban areas was becoming apparent as the beneficiary study undertaken for the national department in 2003 illustrates:

a message of widespread poverty emanates from all the focus groups, with anecdotes in all but three areas indicating that many households barely manage from month to month...Many beneficiaries say they cannot afford monthly service payments and the cost of on-going home repairs...Some even report that people are leaving their subsidised houses because living in them is too expensive (Zack and Charlton 2003: 43, 44).

Lemanski argues that people in the Westlake project resorted to having backyard dwellings in order to bring in income¹²⁶ (Lemanski 2009) – often because they don't have a job or other form of regular income. Soweto's Anti Privatisation Forum concurs that sub-letting or selling a RDP house is a survival strategy:

even though they get houses, poor people can't afford to pay for electricity and for rates and are trying to find means and ways to survive (Ngalwa 2008).

Referring mainly to services charges, Baumann (2003: 99) comments that 'even 'free' RDP houses impose increased financial outlays on beneficiaries', although government has made efforts to minimise these costs as noted below. In 2011 Kayamandi (2011) reported

¹²⁶ Costs would vary from place to place but might include direct costs such as water and electricity (over and above free basic amounts introduced in many municipalities in the 2000s), and the cost of transport to work or facilities such as hospitals. Property rates would generally not be charged on RDP housing.

that ‘nearly half (48%) of beneficiaries revealed that expenditure has increased post-housing assistance’ (2011: v), whilst most peoples’ (65%) ability to earn an income has remained unchanged¹²⁷ (ibid).

In the early 2000s several municipalities introduced ‘indigency policies’, which allowed quotas of free basic services – water and electricity – to qualifying households. Whilst these indigency grants are available, officials suggest some people aren’t aware of these or can’t access them for some reason¹²⁸, and the cost of maintenance and service charges may leave households ‘with bills and debts far beyond their ability to manage’ (Rubin and Charlton 2008: 24). Lemanski agrees that poor awareness limits the take-up of indigency assistance packages (2009: 22).

Fourth, beyond shelter, services and access to work, the asset aspect of RDP housing has also not performed as expected. Research shows little evidence of RDP beneficiaries being able to use their house, through resale, to move ‘up the property ladder’ – although the sale value of the property may be increasing (Rust et al: 2009: 53). Even in a neighbourhood in Cape Town with ‘multiple positive factors’ relative to other RDP settlements, Lemanski finds that the financial jump to the next rung on the ladder of decent formal housing is not possible on the proceeds of these house sales, and that the RDP house ‘remains a weak financial asset’ (Lemanski 2010: 16). The same study found that few RDP beneficiaries have used their housing as collateral to secure credit, being wary of indebtedness to a bank, and of risking their prized home, amongst other reasons (Lemanski 2010). Research thus indicates that beneficiary households are unwilling or unable to make use of their property as a financial asset (Marx and Rubin 2008). By contrast, using the house as an economic asset to generate income is common in RDP settlements (Shisaka 2011), but Lemanski points out this is ‘largely for survival rather than

¹²⁷ Most beneficiaries report no change in their work status after housing assistance (Kayamandi 2011: vi).

¹²⁸ Such as not having a valid identity document.

profit-driven entrepreneurialism' – i.e. it is not generally a route to capital accumulation (Lemanski 2010: 14). But housing's potential as an asset continues to be flagged:

the Department of Human Settlements is the only department that distributes an asset that can allow the poor to escape poverty with the possibility of household savings and gradual capital formation (Kayamandi 2011: vi).

Amongst the range of accommodation for the poor, including shacks and RDP housing,¹²⁹ Smit makes the point that these offer different benefits which are factored in to consciously-made choices: 'different options are suitable at different stages in the history of households and individuals, and there is frequent movement between options' (Smit 2008: 4). However none of the options are ideal. Whilst informal settlements may offer 'relatively good locations and affordable accommodation', RDP settlements will offer 'adequate shelter/ services and secure tenure'. Significant trade-offs need to be made as poor people can rarely achieve all aspects at the same time (Smit 2008). Recent public hearings into housing by the Finance and Fiscal Commission resulted in a related point, also made by Cross (2006)

the need for housing depends on where the individual is at in their life cycle... Unemployed work-seekers first need ultracheap, immediate-access informal shelter, then family housing later. Until a job is secured, no household is formed, delaying the demand for permanent housing (FFC 2012: 25).

Shortcomings in the realization of RDP housing thus include the poor location of many RDP projects, the provisional and incomplete nature of RDP neighbourhoods, the costs of living in such places, and the limitations in RDP houses performing as financial assets. These shortcomings in achieving explicit or implied aims, are however offset by some clear achievements and positive comments and sentiments from users of RDP housing. This leads to an assessment of the housing programme being quite ambiguous and mixed

¹²⁹ Including 'ownership of a shack in an informal settlement, rental of a shack (or of a room within a shack) in an informal settlement, rental of a backyard shack in a township (or having one's own shack in rented backyard space), rental of a room in a township and ownership of an RDP house (either in an upgrading project or a greenfield project)' (Smit, 2008: 4).

in its outcomes. Relative to identified aims, the housing programme has fared uneasily, achieving some objectives but failing in other areas (Charlton 2009). Reasons for the key shortfalls are discussed below.

4.7 Why some aims are unachieved

South Africa's RDP housing programme was conceptualized with basic needs in mind, and the additional expectations – particularly those of wealth creation - have been added to a policy ill-suited to meet these ambitions (Charlton and Kihato 2006). These authors argue that initial policy *drivers* were in fact issues of 'pragmatism, workability, and feasibility' (2006: 275) of a housing delivery strategy, and that subsequent adjustments over the years have been prompted by various influences but not a clear understanding of what works for the poor¹³⁰.

In addition to this perspective on the policy, reasons for shortcomings in the realization of policy need to be understood. The first set of explanations considers how and why projects have been developed in locations considered deficient. Reasons include the high price of prime land relative to housing subsidy funding; competing land pressures pushing projects to less desirable locations; the NIMBY (not in my back yard) phenomenon blocking adjacent development considered unpalatable to established property owners; the political need for 'quick wins' prioritizing ready projects on uncontested land (even if this does not meet integration or restructuring objectives); the vigour of the housing programme relative to the sluggish planning framework (Charlton and Kihato 2006); the political sensitivity of confronting vested property interests (Huchzermeyer 2001), and the amount of effort required to translate policy sentiments into a specific realizable project in the face of these interests (Charlton 2003). Further, the basic service levels funded by the subsidy after the introduction of the Norms and Standards inadvertently

¹³⁰ The housing policy was not intended to be a static product but rather to evolve and develop through the 1990s, although this did not occur (Nell and Cobbet interviews in Charlton and Kihato 2006) .

reinforced sub-prime locations, where pit latrines and gravel roads¹³¹ were not out of place as this strategy prioritised the house over the engineering infrastructure.

In short, a variety of pressures and problems have stymied the acquisition of well-located land for housing, contrary to policy intentions. There is a view that these land problems, and their likely spatial impact on urban areas, were anticipated but ignored at the time of housing policy formulation (see Huchzermeyer 2001). An alternative view argues that ‘responsibility for building integrated cities’, including the housing contribution to this, was left for *municipalities* to resolve in future (Tomlinson in Charlton and Kihato 2006: 272) – with hindsight, a rather naïve view given the various pressures and challenges newly restructured post-apartheid municipalities were confronted with.

In a second category of explanations, the absence of integrated development within settlements - the failure to create neighbourhoods supporting a range of amenities, facilities and activities - is largely ascribed to poor coordination between spheres of government responsible for the delivery of public services, and different budgetary and implementation cycles (both capital and operating) between delivery agents (Charlton 2003). From this perspective the shortcoming is really one of timing, as the necessary spaces and places within settlements do offer the *potential* for realization at some stage in the future.

However it seems likely, third, that attention and capacity to focus on settlement-level issues has been overshadowed by the drive for houses of a certain size and quality. Preliminary research into the trajectory of informal settlement upgrading in Durban indicates that the slower, more complex processes of ‘people-development’ in in-situ

¹³¹ If a local authority was unable or unwilling to put in extra funds, minimum engineering infrastructure would prevail using housing subsidy money, but these levels of service would not be acceptable or appropriate in well located and established parts of the city which enjoyed higher service levels.

projects, as well as the post-delivery care of settlements¹³², have been neglected in recent years in favour of rapid house-building (Charlton and Klug 2010).

Fourth in the reasons why some household-level aims have not been achieved, is ambivalence or confusion in the state around interpretation of policy, and mixed messaging around this. Three dimensions of 'asset' were identified above and although the term is advocated in policy discourse, its realization has been largely unsupported. For example, in terms of an economic asset, rental income from a sub-tenant (living on site with the landlord) is not forbidden¹³³, but the most common and affordable manifestation of this - an outside room¹³⁴ to let built of lightweight materials such as timber and corrugated iron – *is* forbidden in several areas¹³⁵. In addition as noted in Chapter One, the use of an RDP house for a local shop (run by a tenant renting from the original beneficiary) has incurred political condemnation, which was in turn criticized by several people active in the housing sector (Tissington et al 2010). North West Human Settlements Member of the (Provincial) Executive Committee Desbo Mohono

gave the businessman 14 days to remove his belongings, saying the owner would be deregistered and his house given to another beneficiary on the waiting list (Tissington et al 2010).

The state also appears in two minds about the resale of RDP housing, and has prohibited this within the first eight years of ownership. Consequently, a clause has been included in

¹³² Such as ensuring a postal service is operating, street names are allocated, maintenance of the public environment occurs and so on.

¹³³ In a few cases it is even actively encouraged – see for example the Alexandra Renewal Project's K206 project.

¹³⁴ Kayamandi (2011: viii) notes that 'on average, every fourth household adds on, improves or renovates an additional permanent formal second dwelling/room, and approximately every third household an additional temporary informal second dwelling/room'.

¹³⁵ Such as Lehae in southern Johannesburg.

title deeds to this effect – preventing sale of the house during this period¹³⁶. Critics argue that this has had the effect not of preventing sales but of pushing sales ‘underground’, or at least bypassing the Deeds Registry, although the transaction might be witnessed in other less formal ways (Urban Landmark 2008). At the same time, national government advocates a functioning property market at all levels, and has supported large scale research aimed at identifying and unblocking problems in the township residential property market, including RDP settlements (see Finmark Trust 2004). The Finmark Trust study of 2004 found that markets were constrained by a range of factors such as the limited availability of mortgage finance in these areas and the existence of properties without transfer of the necessary legal status. This latter is a big issue: Kayamandi (2011: viii) notes that just under half of beneficiaries surveyed ‘still have no proof of ownership’.

Also in relation to the house as financial asset, there is a shortage of stock ‘the next level up’ the property ladder, as well as indications of ‘downward raiding’ of RDP houses in well-located settlements (Lemanski 2011). With very little formal housing to move on to, RDP house sales appear to be financing other priorities rather than progress up the housing ladder.

Fifth, an additional area of explanation for shortcomings in meeting aims may be found in the allocations system, although this is a neglected area of research¹³⁷. From this perspective, one might shift attention to the match – or mismatch - between the existing geographies of potential beneficiary households, and the proffered project location. The allocation system tends not to have been able to match details such as current place of schooling and place of work of beneficiaries, with where housing projects become

¹³⁶ In exceptional circumstances the house can be offered back to the Provincial government for reallocation.

¹³⁷ The Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) have recently undertaken an investigation into the confusion, opaqueness, suspicion and dysfunctionality that seems to exist in the house application and allocation processes, using the Western Cape and Gauteng as case studies (SERI 2013 forthcoming).

available. Fearful of losing their places in the 'queue'¹³⁸, beneficiaries accept whatever is offered when their turn comes. Reconciling these geographies will place great strain on households.

Sixth, whilst the discourse favours quality settlements, which suggest slower, more careful, considered development, as well as quality houses, demand for rapid delivery prevails. The backlog has grown, feeding further fervour to *deliver*. In 2009 the Department of Housing noted that 'the waiting list or housing deficit (currently at more than 1.2m), keeps rising – thanks to population growth and urbanisation' (Financial Mail 2009: 8). The possibility that delivery might *foster* demand - for example, by encouraging households to split over space because of disadvantageous location – appears to receive little consideration.

Seventh, the extent of poverty amongst beneficiaries – and in the country as a whole – was not foreseen. South Africa continues to experience a dire shortage of jobs, although the National Planning Commission reported in 2011 some marginal growth in the number of jobs (NPC 2011). Unemployment is widespread (26% for Johannesburg as discussed further in Chapter Five), with very little prospect for many people of ever getting a formal job. Poverty has not assisted the consolidation of houses, settlements or lives. People have turned to other ways to earn an income, many of these informal.

Explanations for the shortcomings in meeting household-level aims therefore include differences between 'as-built' housing developments and that intended by policy; skewed policy emphases (on the house for example); lack of clarity in policy interpretation; a different economic context to that predicted; and conditions outside the control of the housing sector (such as inter-governmental coordination) (Zack and Charlton 2003).

¹³⁸ In 2009, the 'waiting list' – or demand side data base as it is now called – had an individual waiting period of about seven years in Gauteng.

4.8 Significance for this study

I turn now to the significance for this study of this review of the expectations, achievements and failures of the housing programme. The first issue is how review of the housing programme occurs and what aspects of the programme receive attention. The Department expresses concern with 'the performance of housing development' (Department of Housing 2000: 34UF), and the need to monitor 'critical areas' of the development of sustainable human settlements (DHS 2009), and in Chapter Six I investigate with state housing practitioners how this occurs in relation to the impact of the programme on households. A second set of issues relates to poverty and income generation. If housing beneficiaries were intended to sustain themselves through jobs somewhere near their residential base, I explore in Chapters Seven and Eight how beneficiaries actually earn an income in the current context of extensive unemployment, and the implications of these practices on their housing situation. In Chapter Six I examine how the state understands and views these practices, and how it considers the house contributes to poverty alleviation. The third set of issues is around the location of RDP houses and what this offers households. The location 'debate' mentioned earlier, and the evidence of RDP house *sales* in diverse areas indicates that there are buyers interested in areas 'written off' as poorly located. In Chapter Eight I explore what RDP settlements *are* offering those who reside there. First, however, the thesis turns to a discussion of Johannesburg, and the housing situation in Johannesburg.

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5 CHAPTER 5 - JOHANNESBURG

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the metropolitan area of Johannesburg which provides the context for this research. It is a site of formal low-income housing delivery as well as responses to this housing. The city therefore provides the location of research subjects either as housing and city users, or as people who direct their professional attention to housing policy or its application to city issues. This chapter begins by describing key characteristics of Johannesburg before discussing the specifics of low income housing and planning issues in the city. In the latter part of the chapter I describe and account for the complex spatial pattern of low income housing in the city, drawing on the interviews conducted with state housing practitioners for explanations. The chapter argues that the track record of housing delivery in Johannesburg is quite mixed from the perspective of location, there are complex reasons for this, and that the socio-economic context into which housing is inserted has shifted from that envisaged in the early to mid 1990s.

5.2 Key features of Johannesburg pertinent to this research

Johannesburg is not the administrative, legislative or judicial capital of South Africa¹³⁹ but it is widely regarded as the economic powerhouse, not only of the country but of sub-Saharan Africa. The source of its wealth and influence has shifted since the heyday of its gold mining days¹⁴⁰, and it is today the heartland of financial services, corporate headquarters, commerce, retail and manufacturing for the region. Johannesburg's formal economy is now concentrated in finance, insurance, real estate and business services, which sectors combined made up a third of the Gross Value Added (GVA)¹⁴¹ in the five

¹³⁹ The cities of Pretoria (Tshwane), Cape Town and Bloemfontein (Mangaung) perform these roles.

¹⁴⁰ The city originates from a mining boom after the discovery of gold on a farm in 1886, part of a rich reef of gold spreading over 100kms in an east-west direction, which spawned a series of mining towns.

¹⁴¹ A 'value for the amount of goods and services that have been produced, less the cost of all inputs and raw materials that are directly attributable to that production' Investopedia available at <http://www.investopedia.com> accessed 16 December 2012.

years between 2003 and 2008 (City of Johannesburg CoJ 2011). Manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, catering and accommodation are also significant, and whilst the construction sector has been growing fast it has a much smaller share of real value added (CoJ 2011: 49).

The mantra of the metropolitan municipality is that Johannesburg is a 'World Class African City' (City of Johannesburg 2008). The suburb of Sandton some 20kms to the north of the central business district (CBD) has been home to the securities exchange since 2002, and Sandton's hotels, shopping malls, offices, convention centre and apartments reflect the gloss and sophistication of high capital. For many of its approximately 4 million residents¹⁴², Johannesburg is a formal, ordered, wealth-creating city easily navigable by car, offering a high standard of living in its sunny, tree lined suburbs. Immediate concerns for these inhabitants are likely to be crime, fear of crime, the impacts of the transformation of the economy to a new elite and the long term political stability of the country.

For others however, the experience of the city will be different. There are high levels of poverty for such a seemingly wealthy city. Although the average income per capita in Johannesburg (R53 830 per annum) is considerably higher than its closest national rival (the City of Tshwane, adjacent to Johannesburg immediately to the north), in 2005 nearly a quarter of households (24%) in Johannesburg had an income below the poverty income¹⁴³ (defined as the minimum monthly income needed to sustain a household) (City of Johannesburg 2008). The City's Growth and Development Strategy 2040 contains sub-heading 'A city where too many go hungry' and reports that Johannesburg reflects amongst the urban poor a figure of '42% and above' in the measure of 'the number of

¹⁴² Population estimates for Johannesburg vary from 3.8 million (CoJ 2011: 39) to 4.4 million (Stats SA Census 2011 depicted in the GCRO 'map of the month' available at <http://www.gcro.ac.za>, accessed 24 March 2013. The population is also growing rapidly, at a rate of more than 2.7% annually between 1997 and 2007, nearly three times as fast as the OECD metro-region average (0.96%) (OECD 2011a).

¹⁴³ Even more dramatically, more than half of the households in Johannesburg were cited as earning less than R1600 in the Human Development Strategy published in 2005 (CoJ 2005).

households that have gone without food for between 3 and 10 times in the preceding four weeks' (CoJ 2011: 46).

Unemployment is a key concern, not only in the city, but in its surrounds. Johannesburg lies at the heart of contiguous urban area known as the Gauteng City-Region¹⁴⁴, an area with a population of about 11 million people (22.4% of the country's population) (CoJ 2011: 38). By mid-2010 the unemployment rate was at the alarming figure of 27%, more than 4 times that of Brazil and 2.5 times that of India (GCRO 2011), countries with which South Africa is often compared¹⁴⁵. The City of Johannesburg's recent self-evaluation notes that the formal economy has failed to create jobs in sufficient supply¹⁴⁶ (CoJ 2011: 51). There is also the quadruple burden of disease that afflicts poor people¹⁴⁷ (CoJ 2011).

Youth unemployment is a particular problem faced by both the nation and the city, and of great concern are those dubbed 'NEETs': youth who are 'not in education, employment or training' (CoJ 2011: 51, 52). Most people in this age cohort in Johannesburg do not have any tertiary education or qualifications, have received relatively poor quality school education and are unable to enter the job market (CoJ 2011). With limited skills and low levels of literacy

this group has few prospects of employment, and join an estimated 3 million South Africans who would like to work, are able to work, but have never had a job (CoJ 2011: 52).

¹⁴⁴ An urban region identified by the Gauteng provincial government for observation, data-gathering and research which can assist with 'better planning, management and co-operative government', as explained on the Gauteng City Region Observatory website.

¹⁴⁵ 'By comparison, in Brazil, the unemployment rate (based on the narrow definition) is 6,2 percent...in India – 10,7 percent' (CoJ 2011: 52).

¹⁴⁶ . In SA 'Labour force participation rates are among the lowest in the world, at 54 percent, while labour absorption rates are currently 40,5 percent (meaning that 60 percent of those between 15 and 64 years of age are not working – some because they are at school or university). But between 7 million to 11 million more adults could be working – or working on a more full-time basis' (CoJ 2011: 52).

¹⁴⁷ Diseases associated with an unhealthy lifestyle and with poverty, injuries from trauma and violence, and the effects of HIV/ AIDS (CoJ 2011).

Research drawn on by the National Planning Commission for its Diagnostic Report on the state of the country draws attention to the 'belt of crisis' that exists around the country's metropolitan areas: a ring of poverty and unemployment concentrated in nearby but outlying urban areas which constitutes a crisis in terms of social stability and social cohesion around the more prosperous metro municipalities. Johannesburg is a prime example (Harrison 2011). The Gauteng City Region Observatory comments on maps from the Department of Human Settlement's 'Spatial Viewer on Protest Actions (SPAVOPA)'. These map show that the region is

a hub of housing and service delivery protests, with over 80 protests within a five year period, most of which were peaceful and indicate a high degree of social cohesion and organisation; but some of which resulted in damage to infrastructure, violence and arrests (GCRO 2011).

Violent crime is a key concern in both wealthy and poorer neighbourhoods. There has been little improvement in crime statistics in over a decade, and alcohol abuse has recently been directly implicated in this situation (CoJ 2011: 80).

With this picture of both slick wealth as well as widespread poverty, inequality is flagged as key problem and threat, as highlighted in the Gauteng City Region Observatory 'State of the City Region' report (GCRO 2011). The key issues of unemployment, inequality and exclusion and the relationships between them is a preoccupation not only in Gauteng and Johannesburg but nationally. In a recent assessment by national government focussing on the share of working age adults with jobs

Brazil rates as a far more inclusive society than South Africa, with close to 70 percent of adults in Brazil holding jobs, in contrast with the approximately 40 percent of adults holding jobs in the South African context (The Presidency 2011c cited in CoJ 2011: 51).

With a high rate of unemployment and poverty on a significant scale, informal economic activity is widespread in Johannesburg. These activities take diverse forms, some evident in practices such as pavement trading or in the privately run mini-bus taxi industry, whilst others are less visible. Silverman and Zack (2007) for example point to the unsanctioned

activities taking place in the dense high rise residential buildings of Hillbrow, in the inner city. These range from hairdressing salons to churches, crèches and drinking taverns in many buildings, and are unseen by the City's land use regulatory apparatus. In economic value, however, this activity in the non-criminal informal sector in South Africa as a whole is thought to be relatively low: 15% compared to India and Brazil's 50% (OECD cited in CoJ 2011: 43). Nevertheless informal economic activities are pervasive and are part of many peoples' lives. For example, 70% of respondents in a survey in Orange Farm in 2009 sourced food from informal street traders at least once a week (CoJ 2011: 46).

Spatial disparities result in a very uneven economic opportunity pattern across Johannesburg (CoJ 2011). The city reveals key elements of its planned former apartheid settlement pattern: a car-based layout, an historic separation of industrial, residential and commercial land uses, 'buffer strips' to divide different land uses and race groups, sprawling 'townships' planned predominantly as 'dormitory' living areas for non-white workers accorded precious rights to reside in urban areas. In policy, planning and implementation much effort has been expended post-1994 to reverse or undo key aspects of this legacy, and there have been notable successes. In Soweto for example, an area of major symbolic and political importance housing close to a million people, kilometres of unpaved streets have been tarred, parks and recreation facilities developed, retail centres facilitated and basic services¹⁴⁸ have been delivered.

Nevertheless, disparities persist. In a metropolitan area almost 60km long and 30km wide, much of the high value economic activity and upmarket accommodation is in the northern third of the longitudinal axis of the city, whilst many of the city's poorer residents live in the south. Key aspects of the apartheid-era space economy persists, and 'on the whole not much economic activity has spread to the poorer parts of the city-region' (GCRO 2011: no page number). Many poor people are concentrated in 'high-poverty rather than mixed income neighbourhoods' (OECD 2011: 68), contending not

¹⁴⁸ Potable water, sanitation and electricity.

only with their own unemployment but with that of their social networks, poor quality schooling, and infrastructure deficiencies (ibid). Thus whilst household services have been considerably expanded and extended¹⁴⁹ the City laments that spatial reconfiguration remains elusive:

the challenge...is still how to transform our Apartheid city, to build liveable communities and create a more humane city for all (CoJ 2011: 76).

However Johannesburg cannot simply be portrayed as having the rich in well located areas and the poor on the periphery. Key localities accommodating many poor people include the historic township of Alexandra¹⁵⁰, housing close to 500 000 people near to Sandton, and the inner city, where blocks of flats, former office blocks and warehouses have been appropriated as residential accommodation, mostly illegally. 'Pockets of poverty' (Cross et al.,2005) therefore exist not only in peripheral areas but throughout Johannesburg; for example the central business district has changed character over the last 25 years and now records high poverty levels amongst residents. In Jeppestown in the eastern part of the inner city 68% of households surveyed in the Johannesburg Poverty and Livelihoods Study were found to be moderately or severely 'food insecure' (University of Johannesburg 2008: 21).

New problems have also emerged in the post-apartheid city, such as gated communities – 'islands of exclusion' (CoJ 2011: 76), - and more urban sprawl through middle class housing developments, which have further strained engineering infrastructure capacity (ibid). Whilst there is low average residential density in the city, unevenness in the distribution of population is a more accurate feature than low densities (SACN 2011). A spatial density map of Gauteng shows huge variation, with population densities in areas such as Alexandra and the Johannesburg city centre 'exceptionally high' (SACN 2011: 67).

¹⁴⁹ For example over 15 years approx. 797 000 RDP houses were built in Gauteng, 27% of all housing delivery across the country (OECD 2011: 98)

¹⁵⁰ Alexandra or Alex was something of an anomaly in the apartheid system in that black residents were able to own freehold land (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008).

The city's sprawling spatial organisation and weak public transport system make it expensive, time-consuming and difficult to traverse without a car. Yet high volumes of movement are necessary, because of 'the contemporary splintered structure of Gauteng and the separation between residential communities and employment nodes' (SACN 2011: 68). Over the years large numbers of poorer people have shifted from using state-owned bus and rail transport under apartheid, to using minibus taxis. There is also a metro rail system in some parts of the city, used by many people but 'recognised as not being safe or reliable' (CoJ 2011: 68). The City also operates a bus network, and has recently introduced the first phases of a bus rapid transit system. A high speed train, the Gautrain, now connects the CBD, with the city of Pretoria and the airport, though the cost of the fares excludes many poorer people and it is primarily aimed at reducing private car congestion on the freeways.

Writing in 2003, Robinson notes that in Johannesburg

quite different policy agendas and an imagined future circulate. City managers have to grapple with these divergent elements and devise responses to the multiplicity of a city's economies and social networks (2003: 270).

The subsequent process of developing a City Development Strategy in Johannesburg in 2006 and again in 2011 elevated the complexities of finding coherent strategic direction under conditions of limited resources, structural inequalities and diverse and competing demands – the 'growth/ poverty-reduction dilemma' that Parnell and Robinson (2006: 351)¹⁵¹ refer to.

By 2007 the City's vision and strategies for city had shifted somewhat from the strong orientation towards economic growth evident in the 'Joburg 2030' strategic document of 2002. The Human Development Strategy of 2005 and the Growth and Development

¹⁵¹ An example can be found in contrasting the activities of the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) with that of the City's pro-poor discourses; during much of the 2000s the JPC seemed to prioritise the disposal of city property to stimulate private development, rather than retain strategic land parcels for residential development for the poor excluded from the private market.

Strategy of 2006 are key documents which reflect a greater focus on development strategies to intervene in poverty. The revised strategy-speak still emphasises economic growth but has elevated a concern for the poor:

this will be a city of opportunity, where the benefits of balanced economic growth will be shared in a way that enables all residents to gain access to the ladder of prosperity, and where the poor, vulnerable and excluded will be supported out of poverty to realise upward social mobility. The result will be a more equitable and spatially integrated city, very different from the divided city of the past. In this world-class African city for all, everyone will be able to enjoy decent accommodation, excellent services, the highest standards of health and safety, access to participatory governance, and quality community life in sustainable neighbourhoods and vibrant urban spaces (CoJ 2006: 84).

The revised Growth and Development Strategy developed in 2011, which is intended to underpin other City plans and strategies, commits to a trajectory towards a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and just City (CoJ 2011: 8), but this 'pro poor' discourse is accompanied by a lack of clarity over the city's position vis-à-vis a variety of informal practices including informal housing and economic activity.

5.3 Housing and planning in Joburg

This brief picture provides some context for a discussion of the approaches taken to low income housing in Johannesburg. In line with national policy and practice, the state drove housing delivery in the 1990s, partnering with the private sector as implementation agents to supplement capacity. 'The state' in this instance took the form of provincial government, which as in many other parts of the country, played a key role in implementing housing projects located within the geographic area of the municipality. Johannesburg as a local authority had a limited role in this new housing delivery in the 1990s, although it did pursue a bold attempt at rapid settlement of people on sites across the city (discussed below). In recent years local government has received increased attention as arguably being central to realizing delivery and also transforming the local economy and political structure (Chipkin 2002), as well as realizing 'urban rights' (Parnell 2007 in Ovens et al 2007).

The initially limited involvement of the City authority in housing delivery can be explained in two ways: first, the housing function was designated a concurrent responsibility of national and provincial government, and thus was not widely viewed initially as a local government mandate. With many other demands to attend to, local authorities were reluctant to take on yet another big function. Second, Johannesburg was undergoing major institutional transformation as apartheid-era local authorities were being amalgamated and reoriented towards their new role (Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell 2002). Consumed by the complexities of this process, the city had little capacity to focus on housing delivery. A range of housing projects were therefore initiated within the City's area of jurisdiction but with generally limited input from the City. These projects responded to the demand for rapid delivery.

More recently, in the 2000s, local government has taken a stronger hand in housing delivery, partly in line with the emphasis on developmental local government, and a re-conceptualised role for local government in national housing policy since the late 1990s. The City has also been under pressure from various court battles over the 'right to housing'. Currently the City's Housing Department, the Central Strategy Unit and the Urban Planning and Development Management departments are all actively engaged in various initiatives related to low income housing in the city, ostensibly well-coordinated and aligned.

At a strategic level, low income housing features in Johannesburg's seminal Growth and Development Strategy (2006). One of six strategies making up its development paradigm is the 'proactive absorption of the poor'. This concept is extended to suggest that the poor will be assisted onto the 'ladder of urban prosperity'. One component of this ladder is the property or housing ladder, as mentioned in Chapter Four. This notion of the property ladder recognizes different levels of quality, cost, size, function and value of property, and anticipates that households will move progressively up the 'rungs of the ladder' as lifestyle and financial circumstances shift over time. In emphasising this

approach the City of Johannesburg accords with national government's view that property can be a lever out of poverty.

At the same time, the City has been under pressure to forge new models of practice to accommodate poor people on well-located land. This has largely been driven by existing situations in which poor people already occupy key land or buildings, and have resisted attempts to relocate them elsewhere. Examples include Alexandra and the Inner City, where a ground-breaking Constitutional Court judgment in 2008¹⁵² has resulted in the City providing alternative, inner city accommodation for groups of people evicted from degraded and run-down 'bad buildings'¹⁵³, a matter I return to at the end of this chapter. Part of the significance of this is that national housing policy offers little direction in this regard; its attempts at rental housing have missed the very poor as a target market, ultimately because these projects have had to rely to a large extent on cost recovery from the tenants without any form of rental subsidy. Consequently rentals have been too high for many poor people. In invoking the right to housing enshrined in the Constitution the residents in the court case have made a case for their (inadequate) housing situation in bad buildings not to be worsened through relocation to more peripheral areas (SERI 2011). For the City, the requirement to negotiate an accommodation solution within the inner city has major implications (financial and spatial) relating to the tens of thousands of other poor people in similar circumstances.

Of further significance is the recognition of the importance of cheap rental accommodation in strategy documents such as GDS2040 (CoJ 2011) and in a few instances, in practice. For example the Alexandra Urban Renewal Project (ARP) recognized the heterogeneity of residents of Alexandra and their priorities, and

¹⁵² 'The Rand Properties case', colloquially known as the Olivia Road case, formally: Occupiers of 51 Olivia Road Berea Township and 197 Main Street Johannesburg vs City of Johannesburg, Rand Properties (Pty) Ltd, Minister of Trade and Industry and the President of the Republic of South Africa

¹⁵³ A term (some would say pejorative term) for residential, commercial or industrial buildings in Johannesburg which have become run-down and occupied in unsanctioned ways. See expanded definition in the glossary.

questioned the suitability of ownership as a universal tenure model. A survey undertaken in 2005 found that close to a third of households would choose to take their property benefit in a location outside of Alex, leading the ARP to conclude that that in Alex a group 'would be best served by access to affordable and safe rented rooms' (ARP 2008).

In addition to the demand for it, rental plays another role in Alexandra, having been dubbed 'the business' of Alexandra. Julian Baskin, former Director of the ARP, recognises that

we cannot intervene in programmes such as shack relocation without understanding the role that these structures are playing in a local economy ...there is resistance to an upgrade that will alter the existing landlord-tenant relationships in which landlords earn income from renting out space (ARP 2008).

A few housing models in Alex have therefore been developed in response to the need for very cheap rental accommodation and the need for private landlords to supply it, what the project dubs 'an affordable alternative to shack dwelling'. This has not been replicated much elsewhere in the city or taken on board as official national housing policy.

Overall therefore, Johannesburg's current approach to low income housing is complex. On the one hand it strongly punts home-ownership, and the notion of the property ladder as a key component in its strategy of proactively absorbing the poor. A range of new housing projects for ownership are currently under construction or are planned by the City. Whilst some of these are located in areas offering access to various metropolitan opportunities (such as Pennyville), others are still on the distant periphery of the metropolitan area (such as Lufhereng/ Doornkop), a matter discussed further below.

On the other hand, a few rental projects for the very poor in very well located areas are being piloted by the City itself and other entities, in response to both new readings of context and to legal contestations. At the same time the private sector has been developing new housing for 'the market' (middle to upper income residents) in a variety

of locations loosely associated with the economic growth path in the north of the city. This has sparked criticism that the City's planning strategies are unable to direct or withstand the vigour of developers, whose impact on the city spatially reinforces the potential estrangement of the poor. The City has also attempts to contain sprawl by the introduction of an urban development boundary, but this is likely to push up land prices within the boundary with negative consequences for low income housing.

Apart from managing these challenging conditions, financial health is of key importance to the City of Johannesburg, since its impressive recovery from its financial crisis of the mid-1990s (CoJ 2006). The City is concerned to maintain a steady income from property taxation while at the same time recognising that free basic services and a social package for the poorest 'must be accommodated in the City's finances' (CoJ 2006: 33, 34).

Whilst many people qualify for free basic services, the broader issue of payment for service delivery is a crucial part of the strategy. The 2006 Growth and Development Strategy reflects on the difficulty of subsidising households and the 'financial versus developmental' dilemma they are in:

the City does not have a transactional relationship with many of its residents, even many of those to whom it provides services. In order to deliver on the 'basic needs' of households the City often extends a level of service that is not metered, and that does not result in the recipient becoming an account holder. The unmetered yard tap and VIP [ventilated improved pit] latrine are typical of this level of service. In this arrangement the City avoids a higher upfront cost of installation, and the future risk of accumulating bad debts at a higher operating cost of supply. But this short term saving is at the expense of future revenue foregone should the household turn out to be able to pay for their consumption after all. In this self-fulfilling prophecy, the City retains a strong fiscal incentive to continue to regard many households as 'likely to cost the tax base more than they can contribute to it', and a strong fiscal disincentive to extend quality services to these households (CoJ 2006: 71).

This discussion on cost recovery has a clearly link to property ownership, the notion of a billing address and a party responsible for payment – although *ownership* does not necessarily need to be part of the equation. The issue is not only how to get income from

households, and how to make services affordable, but how to give them access to subsidised services at all. Many of those living in the City's approximately 189 informal settlements (CoJ 2011: 46), or living informally in inner city residential, commercial or industrial buildings do not have easy access to service policies targeted at the most poor and marginalised. Service delivery has been largely linked to defined and recognised private property ownership, and an individual or household identified with such property, although the City has made efforts in recent years to expand access¹⁵⁴.

Thus *land issues* for the poor tend to still be conflated with the notion of *housing*, and the notion of housing tends to be conflated with *ownership*, and in addition, 'in South African cities the concepts of land, housing and services are often used interchangeably, by both politicians and professionals' (Ovens et al 2007: 17 cited in Charlton 2008: 17).

Much land use management in South Africa is rooted in a conception which envisages a separation of land use activities, an assumption of general formal employment, and the desirability and feasibility of a certain kind of order and control. This is underpinned by a strong promotion of the ownership of property, and the protection of property rights, for those permitted to enter into ownership arrangements (Charlton 2008: 17, 18).

This discussion has described the circular relationships between housing, ownership, service delivery, cost recovery and rates payments, but has also juxtaposed this against a background of a diversity of informal living arrangements in the city. Apart from the benefit of providing shelter, the delivery of formal housing may seem at one level a useful device for 'capturing' urban dwellers currently living in informal circumstances, into the systems of the city – systems which both relate to rights of access to services, and to responsibilities for payment. If, however, the formal housing is not being used as

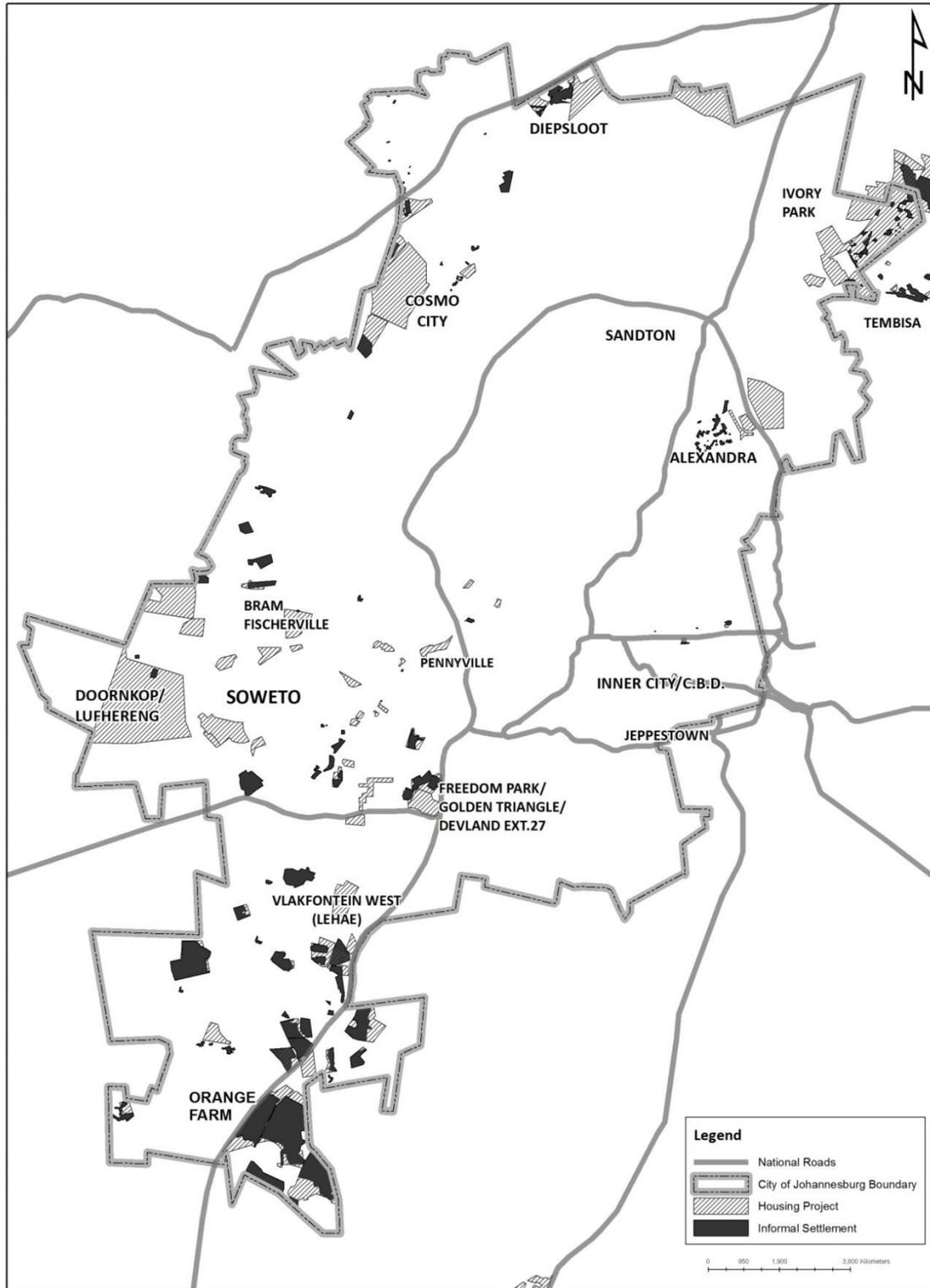
¹⁵⁴ To access the City's Expanded Social Package (called 'Siyasizana') one no longer needs to be an account-holder for subsidies on water, electricity, rates, sanitation and refuse removal, provided you can be linked in some way to a recognized property (eg as a tenant), are a SA citizen and are approved by the City (City of Johannesburg website).

expected by some people, the city may not be succeeding in this task. The implications and significance of this are part of what this research explores.

5.4 The spatial pattern of Johannesburg's low income housing

I now turn to describing and explaining the spatial pattern of post-94 housing in Johannesburg¹⁵⁵. Delivery of housing in the region has been significant. Estimates are that in the three metropolitan areas in Gauteng, about one in nine households live in 'state-subsidised or RDP housing' (Stats SA 2009 cited in SACN 2011: 52). But disappointingly, at first glance at least, the spatial pattern of post-1994 publicly-funded low income housing in Johannesburg appears to reinforce an apartheid-type spatial pattern in which poorer people are peripherally located. Worse, in some cases housing developed after '94 appears to *extend* the apartheid spatial pattern, locating housing beneficiaries on the *outer* edges of apartheid townships (Map 5-1).

¹⁵⁵ Analysis here is developed from the interviews with 22 state housing practitioners, and is expanded upon in Charlton (2013 – forthcoming).



Derived from Gauteng Department of Housing and Local Government Data

Map 5-1: Pattern of post-94 'RDP' housing and informal settlements (map produced by Miriam Maina 2013, derived from Gauteng Province base maps).

This impression runs contrary to national housing objectives, and the City of Johannesburg's own vision which strives for 'integration, efficiency and sustainability... for all communities and citizens' (CoJ 2006: 13).

Despite these national and local objectives a number of housing developments constructed since 1994 in Johannesburg appear to offer little access or opportunity to the poor. As one official put it in the interviews of state housing practitioners conducted for this research:

in terms of spatial location, I think any map that you look at will show you everything [to do with low income housing] on the periphery of the city...[on] the margins of the existing urban areas (QB interview).

Many peoples' impression is of the predominantly peripheral development heavily critiqued in commentary on South African low-income housing delivery. Commenting that public housing in Johannesburg is 'depressing from a spatial point of view', the City official explained that

for every better [housing project] effort, like at Pennyville and at Cosmo [City], there are many Lufherengs, Driesig Extensions, Lehae and so on (QB interview).

Whilst this comment emphasises the projects that don't conform to the spatial vision, it does suggest that the spatial score-card is much more mixed. A closer look shows significant examples where state funded low income housing breaks from the peripheral pattern. New housing developments around Alexandra, the Pennyville project between Soweto and central Johannesburg, and inner city social housing, for example, offer good locations in the city. These areas accord most directly with post-94 objectives in housing policy of infill¹⁵⁶ development and restructuring the apartheid city¹⁵⁷, and also with City of

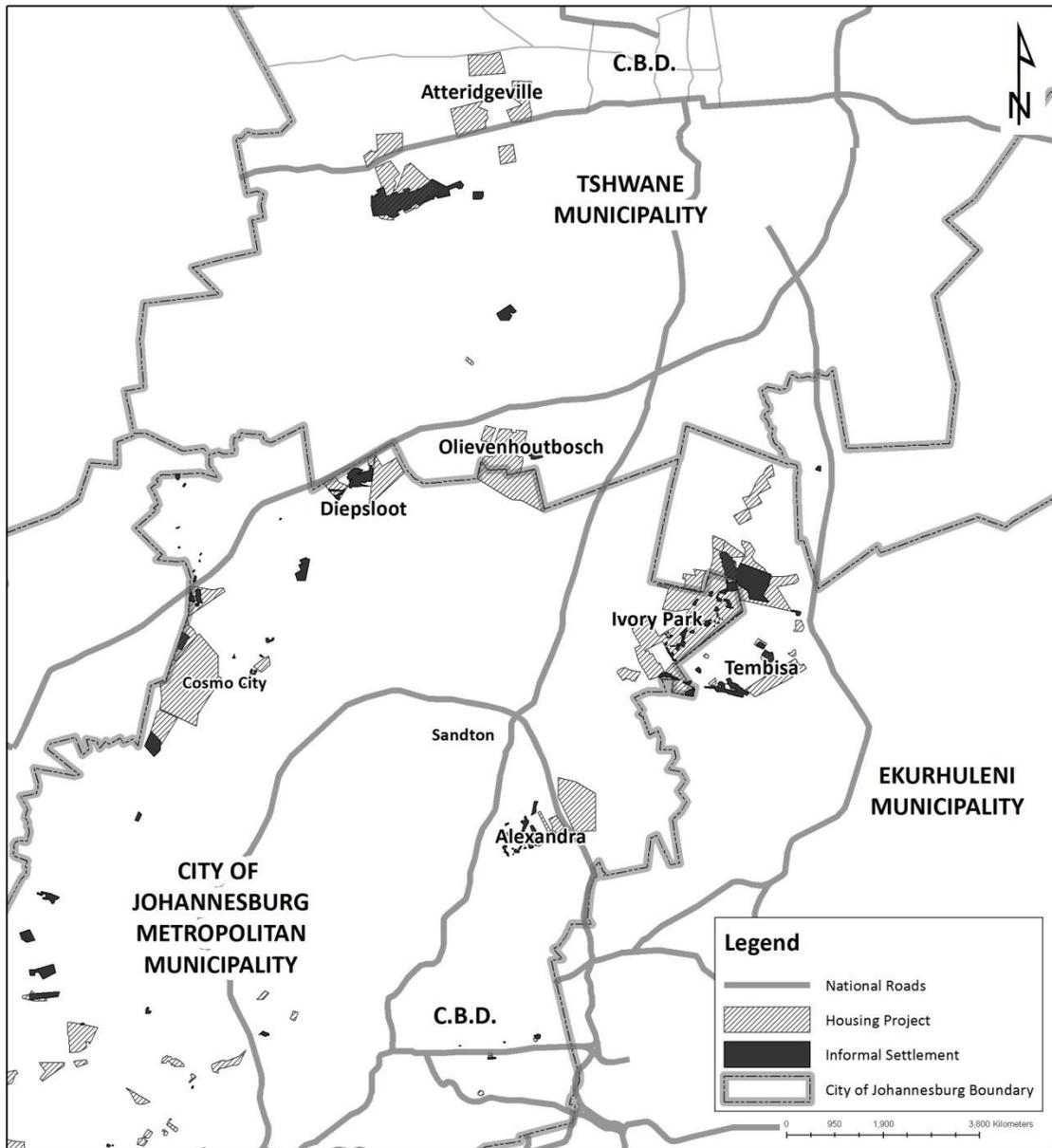
¹⁵⁶ Land which if developed would fill the gaps between land uses or racially distinct areas separated by buffer strips or other devices under apartheid.

¹⁵⁷ The housing programme is viewed as needing to intervene in the apartheid spatial legacy, to help create spatially and socially integrated settlements, with a focus on overcoming segregation, fragmentation and inequality in the city (NDoH, 2000, cited in Charlton 2010. See Todes (2006) for an overview of the

Johannesburg aims of providing 'well located, good quality, adequately serviced, safe and affordable accommodation opportunities' (CoJ 2006: 6).

In a further break from apartheid form, some areas that are indeed geographically on the edge of the metro - such as Ivory Park - are no longer marginal in terms of opportunity regionally. These places are close to the limit of Johannesburg's metropolitan area but can connect to places of economic activity in and beyond the city boundary in neighbouring municipalities, as the map of the greater Gauteng urban area demonstrates. (Map 5.2).

'restructuring, compaction and integration' ideas that were prevalent in the 1990s, as well as the decline in prominence of these ideas.



Derived from Gauteng Department of Housing and Local Government Data

Map 5-2: RDP projects and informal settlements where Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni meet (map produced by Miriam Maina 2013).

A 'public housing'¹⁵⁸ view of Johannesburg therefore shows both continuities and breaks with the apartheid spatial pattern of housing. Problems with the location of housing

¹⁵⁸ The term 'public housing' is used here to refer to state funded low income housing, and does not specify state-run rental accommodation, as the term might suggest in other contexts.

projects in Johannesburg and their contribution to spatial exclusion have been noted in the past (see for example Tomlinson et al 2003), and in some instances continue into the present. It is there important to investigate why some developments accord directly with the post-apartheid City's spatial objectives, whilst others continue to appear not to.

Explanations for poorly located projects span a variety of issues including pressures for rapid mass housing delivery, constraints in national housing policy, institutional priorities and relationships, and the interests of private property owners in resisting or luring low-income housing development. The existence of some well-located projects in this context can be explained by special interventions operating outside of the norm, by creativity and perseverance, or by fortuitous alignment with wider spatial trends.

Below I describe some of these issues and discuss their contribution to the spatial pattern of publicly funded housing in Johannesburg. In addition, I refer also to the private, non-state accommodation circumstances of many poor people in the city, arguing that these conditions are relevant to an understanding of housing issues and housing patterns in Johannesburg. A significant population in the income range targeted by public housing lives in backyard shacks, run-down buildings and informal settlements¹⁵⁹ in a variety of locations across the city.

In the past, attempts to deliver well located low income housing projects bumped up against a variety of obstacles, including resistance by established land owners. The Gauteng Rapid Land Release programme which was initiated in the 1990s paints a vivid picture of the objections raised by host communities to bold proposals to secure relatively well-located land, provide it with basic services, and settle qualifying beneficiaries in advance of full project implementation. Even with key involvement from

¹⁵⁹ Approximately a quarter of a million households (260 153 households) are identified as in need of housing in JHB, as they currently live in informal dwellings, in backyards, in traditional dwellings or worker's hostels (OECD 2011: 100, although those living in 'bad buildings' appear not to be included in this figure. Approximately 25% of Johannesburg's residents live in informal settlements, excluding backyard shacks (City of Johannesburg 2008a).

Johannesburg's (interim and transitional) local authority structures of the day, and better than usual cooperation between the Provincial and local government, the initiative stalled (see Bremner 2000).

Other examples, such as the Cosmo City mixed income development, show that attempts to develop relatively well located housing for the poor in Johannesburg (and other cities such as Durban) typically collided with a robust land market, where high prices, competing demands, and 'NIMBY' objections were complemented by a lack of clear strategies and political will to tackle the thorny issue of property rights and property values, as well as the strong private development sector (see Charlton 2003 for Durban examples).

Disjunctures between locational and spatial objectives within spatial plans and housing project realization continue to persist. The City ascribes this to land prices and the model of infrastructure financing 'which is in turn dictated through provincial government arrangements and the availability of cheap land' (CoJ 2011: 76). The City is clear that this pattern cannot continue into the future, as it places great demands on bulk infrastructure supply and people achieve 'home ownership, but with no easy access to livelihoods and the other resources that may be associated with the city' (CoJ 2011: 76).

These extracts hint that the relationship between the City of Johannesburg and Gauteng Provincial government is key. Rather than reflecting common purpose, attempts at alignment and coordination between Province and Municipality on the housing issue have been uneven, faltering and at times fraught with tension. For historical and institutional reasons the Province has been the dominant partner: as explained earlier in the 1990s planning and housing capacity in the City was relatively weak relative to national and provincial government, where the housing function is located constitutionally. For a number of years Gauteng provincial government took the lead in implementing housing projects within Johannesburg's municipal area. While the City has grown in capacity and has had a dedicated housing department for some years, the Province's grip on housing

subsidy money – a key funding mechanism - has tended to shape developments. Subsidy funding has not always been approved for City housing priorities, or has been channelled to projects which the City has supported only reluctantly or under pressure, as the interviews conducted for this research suggested:

he who owns the money...can...sway development in line with their priorities (XN interview).

Provincial-wide priorities for housing may not be the same as the priorities of a City within that region (XN interview). The province is an independent sphere of government, with a premier who does not report to the City's mayor:

they've got their own rules, they're governed by the constitution, so they don't have to ask permission from us [the City] as long as they're not doing something that is not lawful (XN interview).

Whilst spatial planning processes should be able to guide housing development within a geographic area, weaknesses in this tool have become apparent: there are confusing layers of spatial and housing planning and a lack of alignment between processes at provincial and municipal level (such as township establishment procedures), along with the unclear status of provincial spatial plans (QB interview).

The City's attempts to gain more autonomy in the housing sphere through accreditation¹⁶⁰ stalled for a number of years in the face of apparent reluctance from Provincial government. The level one accreditation finally awarded in April 2011 remains limited in power but is an important step for the City:

the reason why we went and asked and pushed for accreditation was solely so that you can have one responsible and accountable sphere of government for a particular service in one jurisdiction (XN interview).

¹⁶⁰ Accreditation of a local authority to take on additional housing functions is provided for in national housing policy.

Within this institutional morass it is difficult to identify which of the more peripheral housing projects were initiated by the Province and which by the City. Planners associated with the Province claim City of Johannesburg officials or politicians supported the development of these areas (BX interview; KM interview). Others suggest the City was overridden, coerced, or politically ordered by the Province to support certain projects, even if those did not accord with City plans (TO interview). Officials in the City claim politicians have their particular whims for projects – for example Lufhereng, a very large project of 24 000 sites currently underway west of Soweto.

Lufhereng was something that came out of the [provincial] MEC [Member of the Executive Committee for Housing] you know, and then you as a city must make that work (TO interview).

The Bramfischerville project, undertaken by the Gauteng provincial housing department illustrates the lack of a common vision between City and Province. Whilst not peripheral in metropolitan terms, the project is fraught with conflict over the level and quality of infrastructure developed, for which the City is reluctant to accept maintenance responsibility. While the Province tends to 'go by the book' of what housing policy requires as minimum service provision, City officials argue that this is insufficient:

Province will tell you it's [developed to that level] because housing subsidy only goes so far, and if the cities want to have metropolitan quality infrastructure, like roads with tarred surfaces, they must fund that [themselves]. And I'm saying is that really a mature approach to the question of urbanisation? Are we saying that gravel roads is perfectly acceptable in a higher density urban setting? I don't believe it is. Why is it even a debate? (QB interview).

But even given this complex institutional environment, why would peripheral projects receive support from any sphere of government? One key explanation is the 'pressure for delivery', which resulted in the Province favouring large-scale projects (QB interview). The Province promoted 'the big numbers' of houses, which require large, uncontested tracts of developable land.

I would go as far as to say, I think at a particular time with the [Gauteng] Provincial Housing Department, anything of less than 3,000 or 4,000 households that was a green fields project was probably put on the backburner...(QB interview).

In the drive to deliver at scale, the smaller, typically more socially and politically complex projects on infill land or more central pockets received little attention (apart from social housing, discussed below), both from the Province and the City (QB interview). The impact of delivery pressure in working against urban integration in the 1990s and early 2000s in many places in South Africa is well remarked on (see Todes 2006 for an overview). The City of Johannesburg arguably failed to establish a track record of examples of good housing developments which aligned with its own spatial objectives, beyond one or two key projects¹⁶¹, and failed to grapple with controversial or hard decisions associated with such development (QB interview). Even now, though work is underway in this regard,

not enough effort is going into project preparation in infill areas, in the smaller more difficult project areas and pieces of land...[it's beyond me] why we're not sitting with an inventory of projects you can pull off the shelf on infill land along what we say are strategic areas...(QB interview).

Further as an explanation for the contrary location of some housing projects are the interests of private property owners in luring development onto landholdings that they wished to dispose of on the edge of the city.

You see the problem was initially with the private sector driving the Projects. They use their land and...the money was allocated without thinking about the long-term consequences (XP interview).

A national official concurred: 'he who owned land directed development' (MX interview). Private property owners have also influenced the spatial pattern of low-income housing by resisting housing developments near their land, through NIMBY concerns. Conflict of

¹⁶¹ Such as Cosmo City, which whilst technically close to the edge of the metro area, is seen as a location offering access to opportunities in places such as the industrial and commercial area of Kaya Sands, and the Lanseria area.

this sort caused considerable delay to the Cosmo City project, for instance (though ultimately did not derail it).

Provincial and national officials argue that good land for low-income housing development is simply not available: 'how do you accommodate people [centrally] if there is no land? (BX interview). Others disagree, arguing that accessing the better land is merely more difficult, and slower, due to pressures working against using this land for low-income housing purposes. But these sorts of difficulties in a context of massive pressure for delivery result in housing projects being initiated wherever it is possible 'just to get going', usually on uncontested, uncontroversial and often peripheral land. Further, these projects tend to be characterized by low-density/ detached houses in order to get at least some housing yield as quickly as possible (QB interview):

I think we're defaulting [to this approach] now, whether it's us as City or in collaboration with Province, saying 'just get anything out of it'. It's like wringing a dry cloth and hoping you're going to get a couple of drops of moisture (QB interview).

Another explanatory factor flags the problem created by exceptionalising the housing function, and separating this from more general planning and implementation of projects at municipal level. This creates opportunities for housing developments to proceed without being embedded in spatial planning visions. A senior planner in the City of Johannesburg questioned the need for provincial involvement or even a specific housing department at local level:

There actually shouldn't be, in my mind, a housing department. Identify a site, do your own feasibilities, get it structured and implement, then manage it as you would any project, whether it's the Gautrain, whether it's the upgrading of OR Tambo [airport] or the development of Bramfischerville Ext 13. But we seem to be stuck in this [mode]; housing must plough their own field in terms of where the projects are, and to hell with it if it doesn't fit with the spatial plan of the city. We've had more fights internally than we have with Province around locations (QB interview).

Over and above issues specific to the Johannesburg and Gauteng context, the housing policy and funding framework is fundamental in understanding spatial patterns in housing implementation. The capital subsidy funding model for low-income housing, linked with an emphasis on land and housing ownership leads most commonly to a suburban neighbourhood model of detached houses on individual subdivisions. As noted earlier, in Johannesburg housing ownership has been embraced through the City's emphasis on the 'property ladder' as a tool in support of inclusion, and the 'pro-active absorption of the poor' (CoJ 2006). Ownership of a house is seen as an important step on the road to poverty alleviation and ultimately, modest prosperity. Delivering low-budget new housing stock to serve this vision most easily – though not inevitably – translates into a ground-related, low-density built form, least suited in planning terms to the intensive usage invited by high value, strategic well located land. There are important exceptions to this norm however, discussed later.

Higher density, multi-storey rental accommodation is also part of the low-income housing programme in Johannesburg and the GDS2040 notes that 'low-cost rental options are a priority, in the context of the economic conditions accompanying many who enter the city in search of work (CoJ 2011: 76). There are a number of examples of 'social housing' in the central business district, Alexandra and in housing projects such as Pennyville and Cosmo City – though as in the country as a whole this is numerically much smaller than the houses-for-ownership programme¹⁶². However, as discussed in Chapter Four much of this well-located rental accommodation is unaffordable to the very poor due in large part to the absence of a rental subsidy, and the need to cover running costs from the rentals charged in the units. Through cross-subsidisation and other mechanisms a few schemes manage to offer budget rooms for rent, with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities, but even these are not affordable to large numbers of poor people.

¹⁶² As indicated earlier less than 35 000 social housing units had been delivered by 2005 (SERI 2011).

Nevertheless, despite these pressures which tend to result in more peripheral projects, and the trend that strategically-located formal housing is often unaffordable to the very poor, Johannesburg does have key examples of well-located housing for the poor as indicated earlier. Some of these neighbourhoods showcase higher density built form and other innovations in addition to locational advantage. How did these developments come about, given the factors cited above in explanation of the counter trend?

Centrally located housing projects linked to the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP) can be explained by the township of Alexandra's rich political history and key strategic location, which has strengthened as the city has shifted northwards. The area's significance coupled with its persistently poor living conditions made it a site for focused political attention, resulting in a special institutional development vehicle and dedicated funding allocation since 2001. These factors, including some flexibility with respect to use of funds, has allowed for experimentation. Amongst the spectrum of project interventions have been a number of innovative housing projects¹⁶³, although the overall Alexandra initiative is also criticised for relocating vulnerable people to distant locations in its early years, and for the congested living conditions which remain in the old township.

Cosmo City is lauded as an example of mixed income development, one of the pioneers of the combination in one development (though in separate areas) of bonded (ie bank-financed) and state-funded housing, located on the north-western periphery of Johannesburg. Its innovations include a strong involvement from private sector developers and banks and the argument that its edge location is nevertheless desirable for its links to existing and forthcoming developments nearby. Its success is partly attributed to good project-level cooperation between the City and Province, its favourable timing in relation to market conditions for bonded housing, and the tenacity of

¹⁶³ such as the K206 project combining ownership and private rental, and the '520 rooms'/ Bothlabelo cheap rental scheme.

officials in persevering with the development proposals in the face of opposition from landowners in the area.

Pennyville demonstrates a mix of typologies and tenure on buffer strip land between the northern edge of Soweto and former Coloured, Indian and white areas of Johannesburg. It has good access to a commuter train station and a Bus Rapid Transit system route. Developed largely by the City of Johannesburg, its success is ascribed to dedicated and focused attention to getting key fundamentals right, such as location (in this case through an innovative land-swap with a private developer), as well as cross-subsidisation through market-driven rental development on a portion of the site.

[Pennyville] took a lot of time to plan but that is a model of how we would want to do our settlements. Not only build houses but create all other things. But that costs money, that takes time (XN interview).

Although social housing is generally criticised for largely missing the largest and poorest target group of state funded housing as noted earlier, there are some buildings where rental opportunities for poorer people have been secured¹⁶⁴. These have been undertaken by the City-supported social housing company JOSHCO, and by the Johannesburg Housing Company, at times with support from the social housing organisation Madulammoho¹⁶⁵.

These diverse examples of low-income housing which is supportive of spatial and other developmental objectives arise from various conditions. Some emerge from the focused attention, prioritisation and flexibility that 'special' initiatives allow – bending rules, pushing policy limits and bridging institutional divides and silos, for example. Others are the result of innovation and some experimentation between the private and public

¹⁶⁴ Such as in the BG Alexander and Rondebosch buildings in the CBD, and buildings in Pennyville.

¹⁶⁵ Madulammoho was set up to provide transitional and communal housing in Johannesburg's inner city, and also provides social support to residents. Madulammoho website, <http://www.mh.org.za/>.

sectors, or finding ways to streamline costs and cross-subsidise investment across the income levels of the target group.

5.5 Justifying more distant developments

Whilst these examples of well-located projects receive critical acclaim, at the same time justifications - not just explanations - are put forward for the spatially distant projects. Some of these areas are described as 'natural extensions of townships' (BX interview). From this perspective new developments on the outer edge of existing settled areas are necessary, acceptable and inevitable. Lufhereng/ Doornkop is thus seen by a Provincial planner as a natural extension of the Western part of Soweto – and in any event, he explained, '15 minutes and you're in Maponya Mall¹⁶⁶' (BX interview). But while on the one hand it is argued that it is 'natural' to extend existing development beyond the outer edge of townships, on the other hand the same planner laments unsustainable city growth and the lack of public transport: 'buses don't even reach some of these areas' (BX interview). Indeed, as a city official pointed out the weak transportation system is a fundamental contextual weakness: 'if we created easy access in terms of rail and improved public transport I don't think we would even notice that people are living in the periphery' (XN interview).

A second justification for recently-initiated large peripheral projects places high faith in the character of these areas as 'Breaking New Ground'(BNG)-style projects, conceptualised as mixed income (with both state- funded and bonded housing), mixed use and mixed tenure. The mixed use approach promotes planned economic activities within and around the settlement, and aims to counter the criticism that these peripheral areas are generally far from economic activity. In the case of Lufhereng, planned economic projects include agriculture and associated industries. But in the current context of massive unemployment questions remain about whether 'taking economic

¹⁶⁶ A shopping mall developed in Soweto post 2000.

activity to the settlement’ is an approach that can counter structural economic constraints or systemic problems such as lack of skills, education, good health, work experience.

A third justification for proceeding with seemingly peripheral development is that ‘poor locations today can become good locations tomorrow’ (BX interview), as the notion of peripheral is not a static condition. As has been demonstrated by favourable trends in some areas on the northern perimeter of the city, the functionality and desirability of an area shifts over time as cities grow and change shape. Therefore, a planner involved in the project asks, ‘who knows what might happen to somewhere like Lufhereng?’ (KM interview).

5.6 Poor living conditions

In the meantime, not only is there energy put into developing formal, decent accommodation to offer those in inadequate shelter, but poor living conditions are themselves the focus of attention. The table below shows the amount of RDP housing in Johannesburg and numbers of people in poor living conditions.

Table 5-1: Low-income accommodation types and estimated population in Johannesburg

Accommodation type	Estimated number of houses or households
RDP/ BNG/ IRDP housing	approx. 131 000 housing units delivered in JHB since 1994, calculated by extrapolation (Zunaid Khan, Deputy Director, CoJ, pers comm. 2013).
Low-income accommodation considered informal or inferior	260 153 households identified as in need of housing in JHB (in informal dwellings, in backyards, in traditional dwellings or worker’s hostels) (OECD 2011: 100) – Note: households living in ‘rooms’ ¹⁶⁷ , appears to be left out.

¹⁶⁷ Rooms or portions of rooms in flats, offices or warehouses appropriated for residential accommodation.

Informal settlements have become a key focus area of the state, and in-situ upgrading where possible is now promoted. In Johannesburg informal settlements often coincide with 'areas of deprivation' which have been mapped in the city, suggesting to the City that development and delivery must go to these areas (KL interview). However in some cases the settlement itself appears to have a weak economic basis (MT interview), and investing and consolidating in the current pattern of informal settlements might entrench poor location, reinforcing rather than transforming a geography that roughly conforms with poverty in the south of Johannesburg and prosperity, interspersed with pockets of poverty, in the north¹⁶⁸. At the very least, it urges careful attention to the current and future economic aspects of a particular settlement and its envisaged role in the city. In addition, some people in these settlements appear to be transient workers maximizing the cheap living that can come with an informal settlement, or people with a home they invest in elsewhere (OM interview), either within or outside of the Gauteng urban area.

In the 'vertical informal settlements' – formal buildings in developed parts of Johannesburg occupied in unplanned ways – the matter of poor peoples' accommodation is a fraught and contentious issue. Thousands live here in run-down conditions the City views as unacceptable. Evictions from these buildings have been condemned for the displacement of very poor people out of inadequate accommodation into *no* accommodation – for rendering people shelterless. Litigation by socio-economic rights organizations in support of displaced residents and against the City has been aimed 'getting the city to take responsibility for people' (LU interview). In the absence of a City strategy or policy to respond to this particular issue, court judgments have forced the city to provide alternative well-located rental accommodation (rather than offer a house in a distant new settlement), the implementation of which has been mired in problems. The alternative accommodation provided by the City as a result of the Olivia Road case is

¹⁶⁸ Tomlinson et al noted in 2003 that 'most new informal settlements and low income housing projects are located south of the inner city and almost all new jobs are being located along the M1 between the Johannesburg and Tshwane central business districts' (2003: 14).

argued to be poorly conceptualised and poorly managed, for example (Royston 2009). Relationships between City officials and public interest organizations have become very antagonistic, and considerable frustration has resulted. The impression from litigants is that the city 'does not take engagement and resolution of these issues seriously' (LU interview). A counter perspective identifies a key stumbling block as the lack of a financial model at national or local level – such as a rent subsidy – to make high density inner city accommodation affordable to occupants and acceptable to City regulations. This problem may have played into other interests of key decision-makers, who are unconvinced that strategic parts of the city, such as the CBD, are places for very poor residents, and that BNG housing offers the solution.

5.7 Conclusion

The discussion of informal settlements and inner city buildings above focuses on visible and high profile manifestations of poor living conditions in Johannesburg. These are inhabited by people considered by the state to be without adequate housing, and who would broadly form a key part of 'the backlog' the state's housing programme aims to address. These people and the conditions they live in stand as a proxy for a key dimension of Johannesburg discussed earlier in this chapter; the unemployment, poverty, and constrained economic prospects affecting significant numbers of city residents. At the same time the City is comparatively wealthy and resourced. In its housing response it takes considerable direction from the national housing programme. Concerns around poor living conditions and the prominence accorded to them in recent years (including through lobbying, advocacy and court cases), has fuelled the drive for rapid housing delivery. This stokes 'the numbers game' that has been critiqued in the past for mass production of houses on the edge of the city. Better-designed developments on well-located land are generally slower and more complex to achieve, and don't emerge quickly enough to meet real and perceived pressures.

In addition to better located projects which conform more closely to city spatial objectives, spatially peripheral housing developments have therefore persisted post-Apartheid, resulting from the need to build rapidly to fulfil housing delivery promises, to improve shelter and services circumstances, or to respond to existing deprivation. They also result from tensions and difficulties in the relationship between city and provincial government. Proposed economic interventions in and around new housing areas may be necessary to help overcome locational isolation; however they are unlikely to be sufficient to overcome systemic problems in society and economy that entrench poverty in the user group of publicly-funded housing. Nevertheless housing is conceptualized as an intervention into the poverty situation, and there are expectations in City strategy that property will assist people progress on the ladder of prosperity. In the interim, informal economic activity and informal settlements persist and expand, with little by the way of a clear position from the city on how to respond.

This is the context in which this research endeavours to assess how people are making use of their RDP housing benefit, and how the state reflects on this. In the next three chapters I discuss findings from the three groups of respondents, whilst reflecting on this context of poverty, joblessness, inequality and informal activity, which I argue is very different to that envisaged during the conception of the housing policy in the early 1990s.

6 CHAPTER 6 - STATE RESPONDENTS

Chapter Six establishes what state housing respondents know and understand about how beneficiary households interact with the housing benefit, and the state's position on this. Drawing predominantly on interview material from 22 state housing practitioners associated with national, provincial and local government as discussed in Chapter Three, the chapter establishes state narratives in order to compare them with the usage and attitudes of RDP users, discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

The chapter begins by describing how the state determines housing need. In section two I discuss the state's perspective on how the houses it allocates to poor people ought to be used and how people will benefit from them. I identify ways in which the state considers that practice accords with or differs from these expectations, and how it investigates this. I consider why differences in use of the houses are a problem and for whom, and explore how the state explains these differences and what actions it proposes in response.

I demonstrate that there are divergent responses and understandings amongst state housing practitioners, but I also identify at the end of the chapter clusters of positions or viewpoints, although I am not able to account for these according to the respondents' location in government, particular background or experience. In some cases respondents span more than one of my analytical categories, and I discuss this in the conclusion to the chapter.

6.1 Housing need, and responses to need

In this section I discuss how the state determines housing need, and how it identifies and addresses need for particular recipients. At national government level the state quantifies the extent of 'the backlog' in the country. As noted in Chapter Four the backlog refers to the estimated number of households living in inadequate housing conditions, a broad grouping for which definitions and terminology are often vague. For example, the state equates 'inadequately housed' people with 'homeless' people, although clearly significant

differences could prevail. In 2011 an advert placed in national Sunday newspapers pegged the housing backlog as '2.3 million' (households, presumably), and the number of 'homeless people' as 'more than 12 million' (Department of Human Settlements 2011). In the revised Housing Code of 2009 a single paragraph on housing demand notes how demand appears to have increased in recent times due to population growth, ongoing urbanisation, persistent joblessness and a notably 'large increase in the number of households'¹⁶⁹ (DHS 2009b: 17).

As might be expected, calculation of housing demand at a macro level is quantitatively focused, derived from statistics on household income levels, on numbers of people registering their desire for housing (on a waiting list or demand database), and on the extent of 'poor living conditions' such as backyard shacks, derived mainly from census data. Later in the chapter I discuss the national needs register introduced in 2010 and how this aims to better understand local housing needs.

This quantitative focus fuels a sense of the housing need being almost insurmountable. Tokyo Sexwale, Minister of Human Settlements, noted in 2010 that

the housing backlog has grown in leaps and bounds from 1.5 million in 1994...we have, therefore, hardly moved in just breaking the backlog, never mind the numbers associated with population growth...(cited in SACN 2011:70).

During this research provincial officials lamented the large number of people on the Gauteng provincial database¹⁷⁰ - 'about seven hundred and eighty thousand people' - which is itself not considered a comprehensive record of need¹⁷¹ (QU interview). Respondent MO referred to the backlog as 'a moving target' which will never be met (MO

¹⁶⁹ As noted earlier surveys including Census 2011 show that the growth in the number of households in South Africa considerably outstrips population growth, reflecting an apparent fragmentation of large households into smaller ones.

¹⁷⁰ A different way of collecting expressions of interest in housing, discussed below.

¹⁷¹ This excludes those in informal settlements, hostels and newly urbanizing families who have not applied for housing.

interview). Bearing in mind that housing projects take on average seven years from start to finish (DX interview), a senior provincial official suggested it might take ‘thirty to forty years’ to reach everyone in need: ‘who knows if we ever get there?’ (QU interview). There is thus a sense of huge numbers to deal with, and of overwhelming need.

Two processes are needed for individual households to access a state-funded house. First is the construction of new housing stock, to address the problem of there being too few housing units for the estimated number of households. Between 1994 and 2011 approximately three million¹⁷² new houses or flats were constructed on behalf of the state (Department of Human Settlements 2011). The second process is the system by which a household gets allocated a house, a process which in practice is considered opaque, contested, mysterious and fraught (Rubin 2011; Greyling 2012; SERI 2013). I briefly discuss these two processes below.

6.1.1 Delivering new housing stock

Estimates of the backlog are used by the national Department of Human Settlements to lobby for a budget allocation from the fiscus¹⁷³, and to set delivery targets for the year. The Department then allocates a budget for housing to each of the nine provinces, much of which is intended to fund ‘projects’: mainly the construction of new houses, some upgrading of informal settlements and some rental flats. Municipalities apply to provinces for funding for housing projects, or provinces initiate housing projects. Provincial funding should link to projects which emerge from carefully identified housing needs at municipal

¹⁷² As noted in Chapter One there are difficulties in counting the number of houses delivered: milestones such as number of subsidies paid out, number of houses constructed, numbers of houses occupied, numbers of title deeds issued, will each provide different figures, due to blockages and delays in some of these processes.

¹⁷³ A term commonly used in South Africa to refer to the total available government funds (income, revenue, loans, bonds, interest, reserves, etc.) or the ‘pot’ of money managed by national government from which the country’s budget is drawn, and funding commitments are made to departments and major projects. Between 2009 and 2013 the allocation to housing was 2.1% - 2.6% of national expenditure/budget (PPT and ULM 2012).

level (DX interview). But as I noted in Chapter Five contestations between spheres of government reveal flaws in this process.

In particular, the location of projects has been widely critiqued by observers of the housing programme. From the early 2000s onwards, the location of housing projects should align with a set of plans across a number of sectors and spheres of government such as planning, infrastructure, environmental and economic development departments¹⁷⁴. But plans are not always in harmony as the example of Johannesburg shows: City departments may be unaware of Provincial initiatives within the City boundary until a problem arises, for example the need for the City to provide bulk infrastructure¹⁷⁵ (TO interview).

This official argued the Province can play 'gatekeeper' to City-driven initiatives, at times striking deals around its funding or support to City projects to enable its own housing plans to advance:

the province will say 'we will help you with this [City initiated] project if you do this and this and this on another project' (TO interview).

These Provincial actions foster an impression in local government that the local sphere is not supported, and strategic spatial development and coherence is undermined by the other spheres¹⁷⁶.

No-one is saying the cities know everything...but...that's the place where you can try and manage your built environment properly in terms of spatial restructuring and in terms of economic growth...But...there is no support from either the

¹⁷⁴ Conceptually and spatially, projects are meant to comply with the housing sector plans of municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), which should in turn be in accord with municipal Spatial Development Framework (SDFs). At the same time, there are *provincial* level IDPs, SDFs and indeed housing sector plans.

¹⁷⁵ Large scale sewer, water, road, electricity infrastructure.

¹⁷⁶ Part of the problem as this official sees it is that national government talks to provinces but little to city government. – despite these having equal status as spheres of government, not hierarchical tiers of government.

province or national to municipalities to be able to implement and to do things (TO interview).

Tensions within the state are not confined to the local and provincial levels. At the other end of the housing delivery system a veteran senior official in national government complained of the bloated bureaucracy the national Department of Human Settlements had become. Now a department with 800 posts and 24 Chief Directors, he compared the national department to 'the Titanic' (MX interview): a bulky folly seemingly on a course to disaster. Complaining that the public service has become a huge employment basket this interviewee claimed it had become impossible to work at provincial or local government level because of lack of capacity and inexperience amongst officials. Whilst there is nothing wrong with the policy, he claimed, corruption is rife and 'the system is broken'¹⁷⁷.

Whilst an impressive quantity of new housing stock has been delivered across the country, the results of this delivery are mixed and, as has been shown for Johannesburg in Chapter Five, suspicion and frustration exists between spheres of government that others are not cooperating or fulfilling their part of the delivery chain. With this as a picture of RDP housing supply in Johannesburg, how do needy households connect with this delivery?

6.1.2 Subsidy application and allocation

For the first 10 years or so most provinces and municipalities worked with 'waiting lists' of one sort or another¹⁷⁸. Aspirant beneficiaries would register their details on a list administered by the provincial government, and 'wait their turn' to receive a house. When a project was initiated, applicants would be processed for individual subsidy

¹⁷⁷ Referring to the institutional and administrative system required to implement policy.

¹⁷⁸ eThekweni municipality was one of the exceptions, declaring waiting lists to be too historically imbalanced to work with (as they originated as separate, racially based lists under apartheid), and working rather with a project by project form of 'lottery system'.

approval¹⁷⁹ prior to being allocated a house, signing the so-called 'happy letter' indicating satisfaction with the house, and taking occupation. Simultaneously or soon thereafter, title deeds verifying freehold ownership were supposed to be handed over.

This system offered little scope for individual locational or house-design preferences to be considered¹⁸⁰. The replacement demand database system is argued to better link the geography of an applicant's present life to the location of their new house (MO interview), but practical difficulties persist: areas like Alexandra township in Johannesburg are argued to have insufficient land to accommodate all of the overcrowded residents in new housing (QU interview). This Provincial official noted that prospective beneficiaries prioritise getting any house above obtaining a house in a convenient location:

when you call them, they say, '[I'll take] anywhere...just give me a house, just anywhere, I really just want a house' (QU interview).

There are problems with accepting these wishes at face value, as a house far from beneficiaries' existing networks may not work for them and they may return to where they were living before (QU interview).

The allocation system has caused frustration, seeming at times to address more recent applicants over long-standing ones, and leaving some people on the list for as long as 15 years. Although the Housing Code stipulates a strict sequential date order - 'first come

¹⁷⁹ To qualify for an RDP house people should:

- be a South African citizen
 - over 21 years of age
 - must have a total household income of less than R3 500 per month
 - must be married or live with a partner or be single and have dependents (children you are responsible for)
 - must never have owned a house or a property anywhere in South Africa
- (Xolani Xundu, Department of Human Settlements, cited in Mahlangu, D 2012).

¹⁸⁰ However it is clear from the beneficiary interviews I discuss in Chapters Seven and Eight that some people did in fact manage to register for specific projects, mainly it seems through relationships with particular local politicians, though respondents provided little detail on these processes.

first served' (DX interview) - the system is widely seen as unsystematic, opaque and distorted, and open to corruption and manipulation (Rubin 2011; SERI 2013; Greyling 2012); although some deviations from the first-come-first-served principle can be explained by 'queue-jumping' by communities prioritized by the state (such as informal settlement dwellers relocating from an environmentally hazardous locality).

In 2010 the national department implemented the 'demand database' or the National Housing Needs Register, to attempt to coordinate housing demand and responses. This responds to problems with multiple lists at local level amongst politicians, community leadership and the municipality, and reacts to former Housing Minister Sisulu's suspicions of corruption in these situations (DX interview). Whilst the national needs register reflects national government's struggle to come to grips with local dynamics around housing need and beneficiary management, it establishes a complex centralized administrative system, which, however, creates its own problems.

Data in the new system is intended to be consistent and 'auditable', and is to be gathered through a detailed questionnaire administered to those in poor accommodation conditions (DX interview). This approach of gathering detailed data requires sensitive handling by municipalities, to avoid creating expectations¹⁸¹, to collect information accurately, update it and prevent inappropriate manipulation of it. The information collected is also intended to help local authorities plan appropriate housing responses according to the beneficiary needs revealed in the questionnaire¹⁸² (DX interview).

The process of capturing people's information is only phase one in the system. In the second phase, municipalities or provinces can verify people's details through an

¹⁸¹ Potential beneficiaries need to be aware that this questionnaire is not in itself a promise of a subsidy, or of a house and that a further application is required.

¹⁸² This assertion puzzled me somewhat, as my own experience of working in the housing department of a (admittedly well-capacitated) local authority is that there is already considerable careful and nuanced planning that goes in to conceptualising housing developments; this is informed by multiple considerations in addition to how beneficiary needs are understood.

electronic scanning process. Scrutiny includes whether the person's identity number is valid and whether they have previously applied for a subsidy, but also compares information against the personnel and salaries management system used for government employees (PERSAL) and the UIF [Unemployment Insurance Fund]. These investigations are intended to inform whether developers should include bonded housing and market-linked rental accommodation in the development (DX interview).

In phase three of the process, people are selected to benefit from the project according to project-specific criteria such as prioritising elderly people or women headed households (DX interview). The provisional list of beneficiaries so generated is supposed to be used by the project-specific allocation committee¹⁸³, first to get comment from the community, and second to get applicants to fill in subsidy application forms.

These steps respond to a delivery problem conceptualised at national level as a systems issue, a lack of adequate 'business processes' at local level. Respondent DX confesses the new approach 'came out of desperation, total desperation', in part because of the diversity of approaches and systems across the country to delivering and allocating housing:

[it's] currently a nightmare because you have nine provinces, nine different organogram structures, nine different interpretations of the Housing Code...I mean there is one Housing Code, there is one Housing Act, so you will assume that nine provinces will have the same structure to deliver housing on the ground. [But] they differ (DX interview).

The new system emphasises data gathering, planning, procedure and flows of information, but the national department recognises a fundamental problem with it:

¹⁸³ ...we give them guidelines...to say [the allocations committee] must consist of a role player from province, a role player from the municipality and whatever way they want to establish this committee (DX interview).

there is in fact very limited capacity and ability at other spheres of government¹⁸⁴ to manage this initiative, and there is high staff turnover which makes the system difficult to embed:

the system gets developed on the assumption that a whole lot of other things are in place, and then you find that they are not in place...(DX interview).

DX contends that as skills within the state are relatively low, a high level of control over actions and procedures is required, especially given the complexity of the housing sub-policies and guidelines. But this is not the case: 'we maybe have the policies but we do not have that high level of enforcement'. Although developed at national level, interviewee DX contends there is not a senior driver of the high level process of beneficiary management and what she sees as 'business process'; in contrast to the more technical and financial dimensions of 'contract management, claims and payments' where the hierarchy of authority and responsibility in the various housing departments is clear.

The impression gained in this research is of a concerted attempt to put in place a rational, verifiable management system to improve a murky and contested delivery and allocation situation that national government had no direct control over but was getting criticised for. This example echoes Scott (1998) and Li's (2007) critique of states' tendency to pursue activities such as counting, recording and checking, in the process simplifying complex situations. But in this case these efforts to centralize and control appear overly ambitious, impractical and out of sync with the capacity and systems available. The intricacies of the new approach and the administrative demands it makes seem likely to be frustrated and distorted by practices and realities within government itself. It seems uncertain what improvement to households' experience of applying for and accessing a house this will bring.

¹⁸⁴ The Kayamandi (2011: 9) report similarly notes high staff turnover in provincial and municipal departments.

6.2 Expected use, impact and economic context of the housing benefit

In this section I move from a consideration of process to outcomes. Embedded within the conceptualization and implementation of low income housing delivery are expectations of how the housing benefit will impact on the recipient household, as discussed in Chapter Four. Here I turn to state housing practitioners' views on this.

6.2.1 Expected usage

The house is primarily intended to provide essential decent accommodation to households who are income poor, without property, and without decent shelter¹⁸⁵. This was seen to be meeting a basic need, as a key assumption when the housing programme started was that people desperately wanted and needed a house (QU interview). More ambiguously this respondent then conflated the fact that a house is a significant gift from government with the fact that people want it (rather than necessarily need it):

it is your biggest asset that government gives to anyone. So of course, of course I think everyone desires a home, a proper home to live in (QU interview).

Second in terms of usage is the expectation that beneficiary households retain ownership of the house for a 'reasonable' period of time – up to eight years, as prescribed in the regulations¹⁸⁶. Provincial respondents appreciated that thereafter people might need to sell the house as circumstances change (AN interview). But some politicians apparently argue for the pre-emptive title deed clause (preventing sale of an RDP house) to be a

¹⁸⁵ As noted above the need for 'a house' eventually translates into receipt of a specific house in a specific area, but the need for *that specific house* is far less clearly defined in the housing delivery process.

¹⁸⁶ There are different perspectives on what period the restriction is for (contained as a pre-emptive clause in the individual title deeds). It seems it was reduced to five years with the introduction of BNG in 2004, but remains eight years legally because the Housing Act was never amended (Rust pers comm. 2013). Variations occur in practice: the restriction is typically two years in the Northern Cape in recognition of the predominance of labour migration here (pers comm., lecture at the School of Public and Development Management, University of the Witwatersrand 2011). In this research respondent MX noted that the state lawyer considers that the pre-emptive clause holds even if this has not specifically been included in the title deed, which appears to be the case in a number of projects. Before the restricted period expires, the house can be offered back to the provincial authority by the beneficiary if their circumstances change.

permanent prohibition (MX interview). This view might be linked to the emotional and psychological dimension of home-ownership in SA:

remember because of...apartheid people never owned a property, so that is why we are discouraging selling or people moving before the eight year period, because we want people to actually keep these houses...(MO interview).

The third intention is that the house be used primarily as a *place of residence*. Respondents noted that small businesses may be operated from the RDP home and may even be desirable, but that these must not be the dominant usage. Attempts to control these businesses differ: in the Alex Renewal Project in Johannesburg the area regulations enable other uses¹⁸⁷ (OM interview), but elsewhere Provincial officials emphasized that specific permission must be sought:

the [Gauteng] Department [of Housing] is not necessarily saying you cannot have this spaza shop¹⁸⁸ in your own house but we are saying there are by-laws, there are policies, there are guidelines, so if you want to operate as a business person you must re-zone, you must submit an application to the Municipality, they must give you the rights and your property must then be zoned or re-zoned properly. If it was a residential property now it must be[come] a business site so that you can operate as a business person (MO interview).

In terms of expected usage therefore, these state respondents contend that the RDP house is intended to provide essential shelter, be lived in by the beneficiary household, for at least a prescribed period of time, and whilst economic activities may be run from the RDP home, in most areas dwellers must apply for business approval, comply with regulations for the area and not allow this to become the dominant usage.

¹⁸⁷ The zoning scheme in the ARP reads: 'the occupants of a residential building may practice inter alia their social and religious activities and their occupations, professions or trades including retail trade, on the property on which the residential building is erected provided that the dominant use of the property shall remain residential. The occupation, trade or professional other activity shall not be noxious and the occupation, trade or profession shall not interfere with the amenities enabled.' (OM interview).

¹⁸⁸ A spaza is a small, informal (unregulated) trading stall often in a residential neighbourhood, usually selling foodstuff.

6.2.2 Expected impacts

How beneficiaries are envisaged to use the house is linked to the expected impacts the house might have in providing a safe, comfortable, healthy and financially sustainable place to live. Extrapolating from the indicators for assessing informal settlement upgrading (MM interview), the state expects to find, after the housing intervention, families who are healthier, less vulnerable to crime, and able to travel to work and other places. This suggests that the surrounding neighbourhood offers support to households, for example through access to schooling and health facilities and that they can connect to other places in the city. The house is intended to provide a platform for further development of the household – an improvement of their circumstances through increasing health, prosperity and education, by virtue of providing a stable, safe place to live:

there is so many unintended consequence positively with owning a home, you know; it's the security you get with it, it's the opportunity to study further, it's a improvement in your health, in most cases, and welfare, it's access to water, electricity, sanitation...(QU interview).

In addition, the house should also function as an 'asset'. A provincial interviewee interpreted this as something you hold onto as it grows in value over time, including through the investments you make in it:

if you want to improve it you can improve it and you can get a loan from the bank...It's supposed to be an asset, even if you die your children will stay there and their children's children will still stay there and will keep the house (NO interview).

This description resonates with the idea of housing as a social asset. Policy also anticipates that in time RDP housing can be legitimately traded, performing as a financial asset as discussed in Chapter Four. Respondent BW noted the multiple dimensions of the concept of 'an asset' that were discussed during the review which led to the 2004 BNG policy amendment:

we constantly played with [those] core concepts around livelihood and building assets...how does [the house] move from a social asset and how does it compliment other assets...in livelihood and poverty literature you say you stack those [assets] to...allow people passage out of poverty...so that's where this ...[notion of] asset comes from, and so it is not a kind of narrow...classic economic use of the word (AV interview).

State housing practitioners thus anticipate effects or impacts on the household such as stability, security, improved household circumstances, and also the ability of the house to perform as an asset. These interview comments reinforce the expected impacts suggested in the policy documents.

6.2.3 Contextual assumptions

As I argued in Chapter Four, the expected impacts rest on some assumptions: first, that both the state and private sector would deliver complementary and supporting infrastructure in RDP neighbourhoods such as schools, clinics, and police stations, as well as transport, retail facilities, and maintenance and operating services. In this way the neighbourhoods would be able to support daily life. Second was an assumption that people would access jobs or other ways of earning income. This was based on expectations of economic growth and efforts made to support employment creation (ANC 1994; Department of Finance 1996). Employment would assist households not just to survive but to thrive in these areas. A provincial interviewee explained:

you remember the key was to say that [the housing] must be closer to job opportunities, so the assumption was exactly that, if you build houses closer to working opportunities people will use their houses to commute from work to home, they don't need to leave their houses to stay somewhere else...(AN interview).

Overall thus respondents concur that the state anticipated that the house would provide a safe and decent place to live for a period of time, that this house and its neighbourhood would provide the basis for an improved life, in an area from which it would be possible to access ways of financially supporting the household. The household, therefore, would live in stable, rooted and steadily improving circumstances, and the house itself would

contribute to those improving circumstances. These ideas echo the expectations implicit in a fixed location benefit and attributed to home ownership, which were noted in earlier chapters.

6.3 How does practice differ from or accord with state expectations?

How do beneficiary practices in and around RDP housing challenge these state expectations? I discuss state interview respondents' perceptions about the usage of RDP housing, and what evidence they point to in this regard. Interestingly, what beneficiaries are doing with their RDP houses is not clear to the state. The state appears to have no systematic evaluations of the beneficiary experience of living in RDP or BNG housing, either at city, provincial (MO interview) or national level (TO interview).

Monitoring and evaluation of the housing programme focuses predominantly on audits of financial expenditure and physical delivery (TO interview). As explained by a project implementer,

some of those guys...come and do an audit and say, is the project complete? But they will never talk to the people and say, 'has it achieved its goals that were set in the beginning?' Not that part...You've got subsidies for 1,400 units, have you built 1,400 units? That's it (OM interview).

Whilst a few studies have explored the results of the housing programme for beneficiaries, such as a study in 2003 for the national Department of Housing (Zack and Charlton 2003), and the Public Service Commission study in the same year (PSC 2003), these are not part of a systematic focus by the state on the beneficiary experience. More recent 'occupancy audits' undertaken by the state are discussed below. But most of these focus little on 'RDP-life'¹⁸⁹, aiming primarily to ascertain whether original beneficiaries are still occupying their allocated houses.

¹⁸⁹ The Western Cape Occupancy Study (Vorster and Tolken 2008) does explore some of the impacts of RDP projects on residents' lives.

Without systematic evaluations or impact assessments it would seem hard for officials to assess whether expectations of the role of housing in the lives of households are being met, and hard to explain perceived deviations (in beneficiary behaviour) from that anticipated¹⁹⁰. Some respondents did not see much value in this information however. A senior official involved in key policy formulation at national departmental level was unable to say whether impact assessments exist, referring me instead to the research and other sections of the department, for clarity (MX interview). He noted that his own department doesn't have the budget for this sort of assessment and is also too busy to work on this. If impact assessments were being undertaken, he was not only unaware of these, but unconcerned about any link to policy formulation and review in his department. In a similar vein a provincial planning official viewed impact assessment as hindering her department's contribution to the delivery of housing units:

[a post-occupancy evaluation] is going to confuse and give us even more work and delay the process of then building houses for those who still need. So it should be done somewhere else [in the Department] (MO interview).

One respondent suggested a practical reason for the lack of focus on the beneficiary experience after occupation of the house: despite many projects having been implemented, and occupied, relatively few are technically complete. The focus for housing officials has therefore been on finishing legal and regulatory requirements of projects still 'on the books', rather than on post-occupancy evaluation (TO interview).

Whilst beneficiary practices around the housing benefit are not systematically explored by state housing practitioners and investigation is not valued by some, perceptions remain that a number of practices differ from that expected and authorised. This

¹⁹⁰ The Directorate: Evaluation in the Department of Humans Settlements has reviewed the impact of rural housing, social housing, and in 2011 was focusing on informal settlement upgrading, but at the time of conducting interviews the impact of RDP housing had not yet been considered. Impact (as opposed to performance) is hard to measure; ascribing improvements to housing interventions is difficult, and the department is exploring techniques and approaches, with the assistance of the World Bank (NN interview).

generates various responses from the state as noted in Chapter One. Below I discuss three practices which deviate from intentions: first, original beneficiaries vacating their houses; second unauthorized income generating activities in and around the houses; and third, adding to or supplementing the house with informal-looking structures. State housing practitioners have diverse positions and attitudes on the extent to which these are happening, and in what way they constitute a problem. I consider the evidence that interviewees refer to and their attitudes to them.

6.3.1 Departing from RDP housing

Interviewees described three signals which suggest beneficiaries are moving on from their RDP houses prematurely, and seemingly inappropriately: before they are legally entitled to, before they were expected to and to circumstances the state does not approve of. First, those involved in the implementation of projects (developers, project managers and city officials) note the difficulty in completing final paperwork (such as transferring title) because some people originally allocated a house are 'no longer' living there¹⁹¹ (TC interview; TO interview). Out of approximately 5000 units developed in the Olievenhoutbosch project in Southern Tshwane for example, between 400 and 500 can't be transferred for this reason:

the people are not opening the doors, they actually deliberately do not make themselves available and we think the reason...is because they [are] no longer the original person and they know that they are not supposed to be in that house... (TC interview).

This interviewee contended this occurs in 'most of the larger projects'¹⁹² (TC interview). He argued that it might be *less* of a phenomenon in the Olievenhoutbosch project referred to above as it is well located (relative to Midrand, Tshwane, and northern

¹⁹¹ Although this is described as 'no longer' there it is not clear if there is any evidence that beneficiaries ever were occupying the intended house.

¹⁹² Original beneficiaries are also not being found in some of the early site and service schemes constructed in the 1990s (TO interview; QU interview).

Johannesburg) and so people will not easily give up a valuable asset. He was reluctant to entertain the idea that in addition to transactions before transfer, sales and rental could also be occurring in houses *already* transferred – perhaps *because* the area is desirable.

The second signal that people might be leaving RDP houses prematurely emerges during registration of potential beneficiaries in informal settlements prior to development. Some residents appear on records as having already benefited from housing somewhere (TC interview; KM interview). The numbers of people in this situation are not clear, as reports generally cluster together a wider group of informal settlement dwellers who don't qualify for subsidy assistance – because their incomes are too high, or they are not South African citizens, for example.

Third amongst the signals that RDP beneficiaries may be 'moving on' are the results of state occupancy audits which showed that some original allocatees are not to be found in their houses. The national department's audit was conducted in seven out of nine provinces¹⁹³, across a 10% sample of all housing delivered up to June 2008, and in the process checking over 200 000 households¹⁹⁴ (NC interview). A physical on-site verification compared the identity of the occupant with details on the Housing Subsidy System and the Deeds Registry (JF interview; NC interview).

So, basically, what the consultants did is they went to the house, they talked to the beneficiary, they got the beneficiary's ID number, then they compared that with what is on the system so they could...identify whether the person actually in the house is the person that the house was...allocated to (NC interview).

The results are not publicly available. When I mentioned the audit a national Department of Human Settlements employee interjected 'nobody ever saw those results' (DX interview). Respondents who were closely involved differ on the findings. Respondent JF,

¹⁹³ Tenders for the work of the audit were not accepted in two of the provinces.

¹⁹⁴ A 10% sample of projects from all district municipalities across seven provinces was selected. The method of selection of projects is not very clear, nor is the range of projects included, and how this might have shaped results.

familiar with the Gauteng survey, estimated that overall results showed a maximum of 20% of original beneficiaries were *not* in occupation. In 80% of cases surveyed the occupant *was* the original beneficiary. JF did note regional variations though – in a few instances 30% were not in occupation, and in Messina in Limpopo province, for example, the figures were ‘more like 40% of original beneficiaries not in residence’ (JF interview). This claim was contradicted by national official NC, however, who contended that Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal have ‘the highest percentage of people living in the houses that were allocated to them’ (NC interview). NC was clear that

the percentage of selling and renting was very low. It differs from province to province but it was actually not a serious matter (NC interview).

Methods used in the occupancy survey were not very clear: for example how sampling was undertaken, and what happened when fieldworkers came across a house that was locked up. Respondents gave conflicting reports of how family members of the original beneficiary were viewed: JF said a family member occupying the house was ‘acceptable’, but counted as the beneficiary *not* in occupation. However NC contended that a family member in a house was the equivalent of a beneficiary:

for all practical purposes, that is also an approved beneficiary. It’s not a strange person that’s in the house (NC interview).

Other occupancy audits include that undertaken by the Gauteng Department of Housing in 2004. A more informal process was followed: at a get-together of housing staff from provincial and local government departments, the Provincial Head of the Department of Housing passed around a box from which each person was invited to pick a slip of paper. On the paper was written an erf number somewhere in Gauteng, a name and an identity number. Each official was asked to go to the house they had selected to see if the allocated person was still living there. This was a gentle enquiry out of interest, not an

official check-up¹⁹⁵. The official's recollection is that in 'most cases' the person was *not* living there (QB interview). QB himself followed up on a house in Vosloorus, to the south-east of Johannesburg, where the occupants told him the original beneficiary had moved to Krugersdorp¹⁹⁶ two years before (QB pers comm to Li Pernegger, 2013).

The evaluation of the rural housing programme undertaken by the National Department of Human Settlements reflected similar trends:

most of the houses were not occupied because their owners are either in urban areas or Gauteng looking for work opportunities, because there are no work opportunities in the rural areas (NN interview).

Some respondents sensed there are more departures from RDP houses in cases where beneficiaries have relocated from an informal settlement, with the Lehae RDP project being cited as an example (TO interview). National government official NN concurred from her experience of reviewing relocations from informal settlements, where as many as 60% of original beneficiaries were not to be found in the new area (NN interview).

Overall there were wide variations in respondents' sense of the scale of beneficiaries not occupying allocated houses, from the 10% - 20% 'typical range' reported by JF, to as high as 60% *not* in occupation in some instances (NN interview). In the Gauteng audit of 2004 another official estimated that fewer than 50% of people in the units were original allocatees (FQ interview). Whilst officials did not provide the quantitatively clear picture one might expect, many respondents were convinced 'moving on' is widespread:

[selling of houses] is happening in every settlement. We might not have the figures or the numbers, but it is happening (MO interview).

¹⁹⁵ As QB recalls 'you know, you're knocking on the door, thinking 'god, if someone came knocking on my door and asked me questions ... I would say 'fuck off!'' (QB pers comm to Li Pernegger, 2013).

¹⁹⁶ Some 35 kms to the west of Johannesburg CBD, in the neighbouring municipality.

The audits were prompted by impressions (anecdotes, rumours, and complaints from people living in RDP projects for example) that people other than the allocated beneficiaries are living in the houses. NC explained that the previous Minister of Housing, Lindiwe Sisulu, initiated the national audit in response to complaints about who was receiving housing in what beneficiaries saw as 'their area'. As MO described it 'communities' see occupancy of housing as 'a group issue', something people feel they have a right to monitor and get involved in:

take, for example, an old lady who is in an RDP house, suddenly that old lady is no longer there...[maybe] the old lady has sold the house...and the community will raise those things and say 'well then, where will this old lady go?', yes she would have accepted [the offer to purchase her house], there would have been an arrangement between the two of them, but it is [nevertheless] a community concern (MO interview).

Politicians it seems, respond to constituencies' concerns about what they see as fairness, justness, appropriateness, or other issues around housing allocations and residency¹⁹⁷.

Officials may share these perspectives, or at least understand the frustration of politicians. When former Gauteng Provincial Housing MEC Nomvula Mokonyane said publicly that people with houses who had gone to informal settlements should be forced back into their houses (OM interview), this respondent suggested that

the politicians are only reflecting what the policy says. The policy says the first six years you're not allowed to sell, the government has first right of refusal. So if you want to sell, you must get government's permission and that's also written into the title deeds of RDP units (OM interview).

Thus as evidence of people departing from RDP housing respondents cited three indications: not being able to find beneficiaries in new developments to complete final paperwork; coming across people in informal settlements who show up on records as having already received a house; and the results of various door-to-door occupancy

¹⁹⁷ Such as the flare up that occurred in Alexandra in October 2011, when residents accused 'foreigners' of being allocated RDP housing (SAPA 2011).

audits. Both the extent of the phenomenon and its geographical variations are quite unclear.

6.3.2 Activities around RDP housing

Apart from departures from RDP housing, a second concern to some sections of the state is the use of RDP houses for businesses. But specific concerns can be hard to identify, as the commentary on these practices often mixes issues of non-residential usage of the house with sale or rental of the house:

our MEC [Member of the Executive Committee for Housing] went to Freedom Park where there are people who have opened shops and there was an issue about foreign nationals that come in...houses are being sold to them and then they start putting spaza shops and what have you (MO interview).

In this quotation the concern about ‘foreigners’ occupying RDP houses is hard to separate from the concern about shops being run from houses, and the concern about houses being sold¹⁹⁸.

Whilst Gauteng provincial officials endorse home businesses within certain parameters as noted earlier, a few interviewees went further than explaining what the rules permit, recognizing the importance of local ways of earning a living, and explicitly referring to the intersection of these with housing initiatives. In the Alex Renewal Project, OM commented thus:

we’ve got this dilemma in the informal settlements that we move [to RDP developments]. We find businesses there... a lady’s running a crèche in a shack and now you [have to] move those people... the kids that she looks after...[are] coming from the immediate environs where she lives, so if you move the whole community, her customers move, so you’ve got to move her with [them]. So then she’s going to start running the crèche from the new facility ... So that’s a dilemma, you don’t want to kill those businesses (OM interview).

¹⁹⁸ A national department official pointed out in this research that despite statements suggesting the contrary, an MEC does not have the right to evict someone and take back his house (MX interview).

These business activities appear to be of particular concern if they spawn unsanctioned, additional structures around the houses, a third concern to the state. This overlaps with anxieties about backyard dwellings in the yards of some RDP houses, many of them shack-like in appearance. Backyard shacks are seen to be proliferating - 'some guys have got four, five, six of them in the backyard' (OM interview), changing the appearance and character of RDP developments:

if you drive past Golden Triangle Project...sometimes you wonder whether this is an informal settlement or a formal town as a result of the large number of backyard shacks (XP interview).

Elsewhere new RDP projects are being developed specifically to accommodate backyard shack dwellers, decanting them from existing conditions so that the backyard shacks can be demolished (KM interview).

State interviewees thus cited various indications of unexpected and largely unwelcome practices in respect to RDP housing. In support of the perception that some original beneficiaries have disposed of their house in one way or another, interviewees mention specific indications of this practice, although the scale varies dramatically between studies and across projects. In addition, non-residential use of the house is mentioned as a practice of concern, although at times it is difficult to untangle what exactly is considered undesirable in this, and some respondents articulate a dilemma in respect of how to view these activities. Informal construction in the form of backyard shacks or house additions also concerns some respondents.

6.3.3 Counter trends: encouraging practices

A number of officials emphasized the desirability of RDP housing. None of the respondents were aware of RDP houses in urban areas standing empty because they are not wanted. Interviewee JF argued that 'most people' are 'satisfied' with their RDP houses, and many desperate people want them. There is clearly a demand for housing in good locations (TC interview), with specific examples cited:

look at Pennyville; I mean people are fighting to get there...people from Riverlea were fighting to get in that project (QU interview).

Whilst several households trying to claim the same house indicates desirability, locational attraction is perhaps complex and personal: a location that doesn't work for one person may work for another (TO interview). Interviewee TC brought in the issue of tenure in reflecting on the demand for well-located accommodation, arguing that there is a big demand for *rental* accommodation in well located areas which the housing programme is not addressing (TC interview).

Some argued that there are clear indications of many people living in the housing as intended:

you can immediately pick up people who received the house and who are living there. You will see that the guys have put in burglar bars, they have made gardens, they have planted trees and flowers, you know they are improving [their house]. A lot of people have put in fences, garages and so forth. So I think people who really are staying there are using it as Government intended it to be, a starter home, and it is actually expanding and increasing the value over time by improvements and so forth (TC interview).

An interviewee from provincial government spoke of government being 'a victim of its own success':

we've delivered so much, so more and more people want that...also it is the only asset that you will ever get from anyone; and especially from Government...(QU interview).

These views concur with my own observations of the apparent desirability of RDP housing: in September 2010 for example I accessed a website showing people expressing an interest in purchasing RDP houses, in this case predominantly in the Tembisa and Ivory Park area of Gauteng. An extract from the many posts on the OLX website is included below:

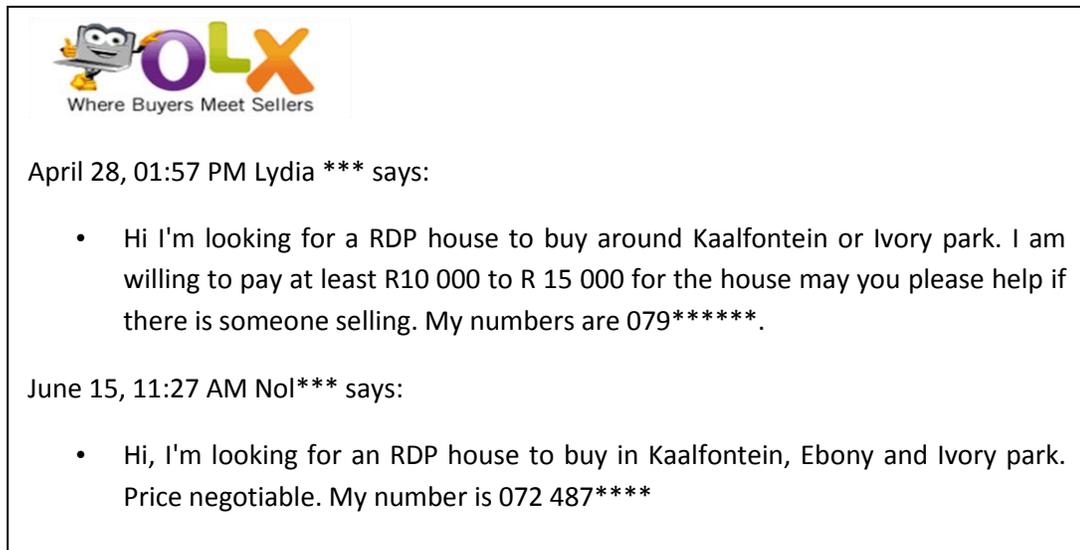


Figure 6-1: A few of the potential RDP house buyers on the OLX website (cell numbers obscured to protect identities). Accessed from <http://tembisa.olx.co.za/rdp-house-available-for-rental-iid-70629744> accessed 22 Sept 2010, since removed.

These observations highlight the ‘flip side’ of the selling or renting issue: if it is happening at any significant scale, there are also a considerable number of people ‘buying in’ to RDP housing. KL speculated that this indicates slightly better off people ‘using the informal market to reach down to access a benefit they wouldn’t qualify for’ (KL interview).

State housing practitioners are aware of a number of practices around RDP housing that run counter to expectations and which challenge conceptualisations in the housing programme – such as needing to relocate informal businesses to RDP houses along with shack dwellers - but some also argue that for many people the housing is both desirable and fulfils needs. In the next section I discuss in what way the differences in usage are a problem, and for whom.

6.4 Are different practices a problem?

I first discuss ways in which people leaving houses constitute a problem, before discussing how non-conformist practices on site or in the houses are seen to challenge the state.

6.4.1 Departures from RDP housing

Interviewees alluded to five ways in which people moving on from their RDP houses can be a problem for the state. Selling or renting out of RDP houses is frustrating first, if beneficiaries are subsequently re-emerging as a 'problem for the state' (in the state's eyes), by informalising or re-informalising their living circumstances. From this perspective there is no problem if people are 'trading up' (improving their housing conditions), only if people are going back to bad living conditions that put pressure on the state to 'do something' about them again:

I think what will be problematic is if that guy [leaving a house] just becomes another burden of Government if he goes back into an informal settlement, because he has actually been addressed by Government (TC interview).

This perspective accords with the view that the state helps you with your shelter circumstances once, and once only. From then onwards you are expected to remain in decent and preferably ever-improving circumstances:

it was not anticipated that a person would move from an RDP house and also want Government to assist again for a second house...with Government assistance you get it once. If you decide to leave it, it means you have forfeited your opportunity (AN interview).

A provincial interviewee explained that 'the community' must get involved to prevent someone becoming a burden to the state again. Using the example mentioned above of an elderly women selling a house, she states it is 'a community concern' to intervene, as otherwise 'maybe wherever she is going she will be putting a shack up again' requiring Government once again to provide support (MO interview).

Some of the frustration with practices such as selling or renting out an RDP house stems from, second, the concern that they interfere with a trajectory of progression and improvement that the state sees itself promoting for people in need. An interviewee paraphrased former housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu's perplexed criticism of beneficiaries who leave their houses:

why the hell are you doing that, you have got the biggest asset you've ever had, [and] you've sold it, you've rented it [out] for nothing...(BW interview).

Minister of Housing Minister Sisulu, had 'won space' for housing in government, gaining an increase in the size of the housing budget (BW interview). But to her and other politicians' exasperation, peoples' practices were interfering with government targets. Respondent BW continued with Minister Sisulu's line of thought:

...and worst, my targets are affected. I used to have a 1000 people in the informal settlement and now I have a 1000 people [still there] *after* I have built a 1000 new houses – how did that happen? (BW interview).

Not only were these practices derailing attempts to improve the lives of residents, they were also impacting on the reputation and image of the country. BW explained the pressure former housing Minister Sisulu was under with these unexpected outcomes:

it's not how many houses I have delivered [that counts]; the UN counts the number of people living in informal settlements and they told us 'your informal settlements have grown even through you have delivered the same number of houses'...she was tearing her hair out...saying [to beneficiaries] 'Please no, no don't go back to the informal settlement, I built you a house, stay in your house' (BW interview).

Third, selling or renting out of houses is seen as a problem if people are becoming poorer through trading their house, or losing their house through financial problems. Houses may end up being forfeited if they have been used as security for small loans that people default on. In this way people offering credit acquire property:

I mean in some of the areas you have fifteen, eighteen houses belonging to one person now...(QU interview).

Similarly former provincial employee FQ in referring to the 2004 Gauteng Provincial audit noted that

we found that there was one area in the East [Rand of Gauteng Province] where a funeral company owned the unit, because people couldn't afford to pay the family

funeral. And the funeral company said 'give us your house, we will rent it back to you and then we own the unit' (FQ interview).

Selling or renting out of houses is frustrating to politicians for a fourth and different reason: because South African beneficiaries were not seizing the opportunities offered to them through the house but ceding it to others with a more entrepreneurial orientation. Referring to Somali and Bangladeshi traders making strategic use of houses they buy or rent BW commented:

[Minister Sisulu]...looks at all of that and her battle is not with Somalians, her battle is that why are South Africans selling their properties and not behaving like the Somalians? Why aren't they setting up the shops...?...you wait in the queue for your subsidy – you get it and you think 'What shall I do with it? I got no skills, I got no job, why don't I let the Somali have it for R2000 a month...I go back to the shack' (BW interview).

Fifth, selling or renting out of houses is a problem if read as a rejection of an appropriate improvement intervention intended to be in poor peoples' best interests. One respondent talked about the puzzlement and sense of having been insulted experienced in the state:

people [in government] can't understand: as government you have given somebody something for free and they don't want it...it's like [the beneficiary is] going against government to some extent and against the good that we are trying to do for you... and so therefore in some ways you need to be punished...because of that (TO interview).

The notion that the beneficiary is at fault was echoed by a senior official from Gauteng provincial government:

you want to know that you are giving [a house to] someone who will benefit from the house, as shelter and if they don't, then there are questions around if they really needed it in the first place (QU interview).

Additionally, there is the sense of a quid pro quo, that once they have received the house the beneficiary has a part to play in the process:

to some extent the state sees the role that it's playing that it is taking care of its people but people are not reciprocating in the way they are supposed to, they are not acting in the way they should. You know, to be grateful for this (TO interview).

This view is echoed by a private sector developer referring to those who appear to be going back to shacks after selling or renting out their house:

Government has played its part, however, he [the beneficiary] is not taking the responsibility that [he] should (TC interview).

In these five ways departures from RDP housing vex the state. If departing beneficiaries are not 'trading up' but are re-informalising, this seems to undermine state efforts aimed at improvement as discussed by Scott (1998). Departures can be interpreted as a rejection of the state's efforts in translating the will to improve (Li 2007) into tangible actions; as beneficiaries not behaving as they should, and as therefore not deserving the benefit. Both of these issues ('worsening' of shelter conditions and the apparent rejection it seems to symbolise) are embarrassing to the state. Then, beneficiaries forfeiting this substantial asset through debt or naïve trade is a blow for a state concerned with land and wealth redistribution. By contrast better shelter conditions, building of assets and increasing prosperity are all dimension of the notion of 'improvement' that the state programme aims to foster.

Later I discuss the contention put forward by some state housing practitioners that the departure of people from RDP housing is a misconception arising from flawed administration and paperwork.

6.4.2 Activities around RDP housing

Moving from departures from RDP housing to activities happening in or around RDP houses, various problems are perceived to flow from these. Backyard rooms, additions or businesses from home are a problem for some respondents if these look messy or disordered. First, this lowers property values and affects the sale of bonded housing in

mixed income projects, developers argue. Referring to spaza shops or business out of garages in the Olievenhoutbosch project in southern Tshwane, TC noted

we don't like it because it creates the sense of informality in the development (TC interview).

Although home-businesses in fact represent a lot of 'added value to the assets' (TC interview), they should be confined to designated commercial sites. Backyard shacks are also frowned upon as they:

influence the look and the feel and the ability to sell more of your bonded component [of the development]. So it definitely has got a detrimental effect (TC interview).

Backyard rooms or businesses from home, if informal-looking or informal in nature, are second, seen to be bad for the image of the state. One respondent described government's concern with proper housing, which has a certain size and appearance. This respondent referred to the experiences of current politicians whilst in exile during the struggle years against apartheid, where they were exposed to the social housing- type accommodation of countries such as the Netherlands (NO interview). Housing in South Africa should be formal, orderly, and ideally as seen in these European contexts. Thus even if all the fundamentals of a good neighbourhood were in place (such as schools, shops, recreation facilities and so on) but things still *looked* informal this look of informality would be problematic to these politicians, the respondent contended (NO interview).

This explanation resonates with the concerns people express about backyard *shacks*, whilst supporting the notion of rooms for rent on RDP properties. In some instances formally built backyard rooms are in fact being promoted as part of new RDP/ BNG developments (KM interview) and the power of the model of private landlord-provided accommodation is recognized: 'the biggest industry in all our townships is the renting of space' (OM interview). However it seems additions such as rooms for rent are only

acceptable if adhering to formal construction norms. Shacks are also associated with poor thermal performance and fire hazard (KM interview).

Economic activities in an RDP house or its site are a problem when the alternative use becomes dominant, as noted earlier. OM gave the example of a tenant in the innovative K206 project in Alexandra, Johannesburg, where two backyard rooms for rental were constructed by the state along with the RDP house. Without seeking permission the tenant has knocked the front wall out:

he's put aluminium sliding doors, it's a shop front now and he's running a spaza from there, from the rental room. The rental room is only 14 square meters and apparently right at the back in the corner he's got a bed, but three quarters of that room is basically a shop (OM interview).

In another example OM noted that the entire living area of an RDP house in Extension Seven has become a spaza shop with family life confined to the two bedrooms (OM interview).

The practical or experiential problem these situations cause is not clearly explained by respondents, apart from being bureaucratically in contravention of the requirement that business activities should be 'non-dominant'. As alluded to earlier, one of the dilemmas for authorities posed by these situations is expressed by OM who reflected on how one could or should view these residents, even though they are breaking regulations. Reiterating that government should not destroy this activity, OM pondered

those are people that are entrepreneurs in the sense that they're self-sustained, they don't ride the government's back for support...They're self-employed, they're running businesses – should you now go and kill that? (OM interview).

Regulation and monitoring of these activities (and presumably judging the extent of their 'dominance') is a local government function, but several interviewees noted that this checking activity is largely absent in many areas. In the Olievenhoutbosch development, as soon as the developers spot a backyard shack being built amongst the bonded housing, the municipality is informed and 'they actually take action immediately' (TC interview). By

contrast in Alex the City 'isn't doing proper enforcement' (OM interview). Officials might feel conflicted about these problems: in Johannesburg's case it's not that planning officials *can't* do anything about it, but rather that an appropriate response is not clear to them and therefore they don't act on it:

because you know on one level this [economic activity] is what you want to promote but you are not able to...(TO interview).

Whilst the notion of the house as an economic asset is part of the state's approach, informal economic activities are 'not seen in context of that policy decision' (TO interview). The matter of home based businesses is thus completely unresolved in the state, noted a senior provincial policy specialist:

I think that debate hasn't really taken off [in government] in terms of what a house can or can't be used for (QU interview).

KL put it differently, arguing that housing thinking must address the question of 'what commercial space looks like in these kinds of areas' (KL interview).

Practices that deviate from that expected are thus seen as a problem for the state, and at times for the beneficiary household, in a number of ways, especially if these practices result in beneficiaries reverting to poor living conditions or otherwise worsening their circumstances. But there is also at times empathy for these practices and conflicted attitudes to them, in contrast with politicians' views as reported in the media, which appear to be more starkly critical and condemnatory. Explanations offered by some respondents for the critical positions by politicians include the pressures of external agencies such as UN, and the frustration of the state in not being able control practices which mar its image. There is ire at the apparent ungratefulness of beneficiaries, and with them not exhibiting entrepreneurial nous when selling a potentially valuable asset. Yet beneficiaries have limited support from the state in their use of the asset for informal income-generation. These dilemmas within the state (Li 2005; Corbridge 2008) about how

to manage non-compliant economic activity in new housing areas echo some of the tensions with modernity alluded to by Valverde (2011) and Bayat (2004).

6.5 Explanations for differences

What is the state's understanding of why differences in usage occur? A number of officials offer nuanced, insightful reasons why people might not be living in their houses, or using them differently, but there are also state respondents who provide another explanation for the trends that have been picked up, that does not involve people having left their houses, and I start with this discussion.

6.5.1 Administrative problems

Some respondents contended that occupancy audits which show original beneficiaries not in their houses reflect not departures from RDP houses but rather an administrative 'mix-up' which is apparently fairly widespread amongst a generation of housing projects: an initial site allocation/ person mismatch (JF, DX, NC, KM interviews). From this perspective, approved beneficiaries *are* in RDP houses, but not in the expected houses (NC interview). Interviewee NC's conviction was that 'the problem – if you can call it ...that' is an administrative one: RDP houses mostly contain approved beneficiaries, but they are occupying houses other than the ones shown in the administrative records (the national HSS, and the Deeds Registry).

There are variations of this problem: the first involves people occupying a different house in the project they were allocated to and approved for:

in many cases, what they found [in the occupancy audit] is that the person...was still an approved beneficiary that complies with all the criteria, the qualification criteria, in the house, but it was not the person that was, for instance, registered in house number 15, that person was maybe in house number 20 (NC interview).

The second variation of the problem involves people occupying houses in an entirely different project and location to the one they are approved against.

What we also found was we've got a bunch of people registered against a certain project but all of them are in another project. So they are approved beneficiaries, but just in another project (NC interview).

A third dimension of this problem involves people who are recorded on the system as having benefited from a house, but who never in fact did so. Alarming these people are 'frozen' in time and can't be allocated a house:

you have this situation in Gauteng where you have lots of people in approved status, [but] if you go and look and see if there was any payments against their names you see there was never a claim against their names. So...the deduction that I made is that they have never been assisted [with a house]...Yes, they are frozen there, nobody cares about them. This is a huge challenge (DX interview).

The extent of this three-faceted problem is not clear, but Gauteng province is mentioned as a particular area of concern, enough to prompt one official to exclaim in exasperation:

currently Gauteng has chaos with beneficiary management. Not small, [but] big chaos...we see them moving people between projects...That person has signed a Deed of Sale for a specific stand in a specific project in a specific area. Now the province makes a decision...for whatever reason...they decide to move that person from that project, to a project here (DX interview).

The occupancy audit undertaken in Gauteng by Servcon generated a confidential¹⁹⁹ 'scenario' document which was submitted to Gauteng Province in 2009, collating trends that were identified. The nine permutations each had associated recommended actions. Examples of permutations were:

X person is on the list but never benefited from a house
Y benefited from a house but illegally
Z was put into an RDP house by a councillor, Z was never approved on the HSS, but Z has been there occupying a house for 10 years now (JF interview).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Confidential because it exposes the government legally, as well as because of the embarrassment it will cause.

²⁰⁰ It should be noted that the Servcon audit focuses on who is in the house, but not necessarily on where the original allocated person is and why.

In these instances the relevant administrative records capturing peoples' circumstances are flawed and untrustworthy, concealing truths as Tarlo (2001) describes.

Interviewee JF notes that the data could be used to reconfigure the puzzle to make it 'look the way it should'. Somewhat cryptically she noted that

if you move pieces around you will get a different shape and form which will produce a desired picture, you will move from a picture you don't want to a reconfigured one (JF interview).

Resolving this problem was seen by these respondents as a bureaucratic matter, termed 'regularisation'. This approach would 'right the paperwork' – get the paperwork to match the de facto situation:

we've got the information, now we can regularise it on the HSS system now. So, it's not a serious concern at this point in time (NC interview).

However correcting the HSS system is easier than correcting title deeds, if they have been issued in the incorrect name. In addition, it seemed as though no action has been taken since 2009, and data might now be out of date if the situation on the ground has shifted.

Explanations for this administrative mess include a lack of coordination between municipal and provincial spheres of government around the beneficiary approval and administration process (NC interview). Further, developers (within or outside the state) may not have corrected and finalised provisional data:

they register a project and they register a dummy number against the beneficiary site number. And only after the housing project was constructed and put in place, then they allocate people and, in many cases, it's not according to the numbers on the system. And then sometimes [developers] don't update the system on a regular basis...[or] sometimes the beneficiaries that are approved for a specific project are more than the number of units that were delivered. So then they take that number of overflow and they put them in another project. But they didn't adjust the system accordingly (NC interview).

Blame is also ascribed to the pressures for rapid delivery, where a number of big projects are started, and efforts are made to get people pre-approved in these projects. However there might suddenly be a shift in priorities, and those earlier commitments don't get followed through.

Now there comes a change...there is a new Minister, there is a new MEC, they change focus and all of a sudden...they ignored this project, they scaled that project down...they cancel this one, they cancel that one, but you still sit with all the approved people in these projects and they are not going to get assisted (DX interview).

This official from national department explained that provinces go through cycles in terms of what drives them and their delivery activities:

[the provincial Department of Housing was] chasing approvals, or they got measured on the number of people that they approved for housing opportunities. So they keep on approving people even if they know they will not be able to assist them in the next 10 years. Then it changed from approvals, then they start chasing the numbers, the delivery on the ground, the number of houses being built, [and] you can see what is the outcome of chasing numbers to deliver; it's your bad quality houses that we struggling now with...(DX interview).

These descriptions of administrative problems indicate a more uncaring state, seemingly 'pushing' people around – not perhaps intentionally, but as a consequence of short term demands which override their human impacts, which no-one in the state seems to take responsibility for. Rather than the sorts of state control of people alluded to by Scott (1998) and Rigg (2007), this reflects rather a lack of control, with frightening consequences for individuals. It also reflects a concern with targets and ways of measuring them – numbers of houses built, for example – rather than substantive outcomes.

6.5.2 Mismatch between product and need

Other respondents are convinced that movement of beneficiaries from RDP houses *is* happening for a number of reasons. One explanation is that awarding a house for ownership is an inappropriate intervention for people whose poor living circumstances

are temporary and related to living cheaply close to a work opportunity. Several respondents thus argued that rural-urban temporary migration for work and mobility associated with work opportunities means that people are not looking for a permanent urban house to own (TC interview; XP interview; BX interview; QU interview). For these urban dwellers the priority is not decent accommodation but 'to work and send money home' (BX interview). Thus giving that person a 'house and title and ownership...is actually not addressing that person's need' (TC interview). From this perspective a national department official contended that 'you're targeting a group that does not necessarily need your product' (NN interview).

This need for mobility to respond to work opportunities is reflected in research by Catherine Cross and in a project in the Western Cape, respondent BW said:

the De Doorns study is showing...50% of the people have moved on and they have used De Doorn's as [a] stepping stone because De Doorn's is not where you are going to get the jobs. You want to get into other parts of Cape Town...People are moving within settlements all the time because they are looking for opportunities and there is low rentals...(BW interview).

A respondent from the national department of human settlements made a similar point, but from the perspective of the delivery of RDP housing in rural areas, which beneficiaries don't occupy 'because they are now in the informal settlements in the urban area' (NN interview). The notion that these work seekers are mobile within urban areas is supported by KM's account of the survey of informal settlements undertaken by the Gauteng province department of housing in about 2005:

I think it took six months to do [the survey] and we picked up [in the data] people moving from informal settlement to informal settlement. So we would pick up somebody in the West Rand²⁰¹ and a month later or two months later because we were moving to the East Rand we picked them up again (KM interview).

²⁰¹ The west of the Witwatersrand, the ridge or watershed which runs east-west through Gauteng.

This argument asserts that these beneficiaries are not truly shelterless, as many have a decent long term home. Photographs shown to the respondent OM by RDP housing applicants depict reasonable-looking homes elsewhere: 'the people that we house are not homeless people' (OM interview). However these dwellings don't register on formal systems as owned property (because they might be in a rural area under tribal control for example) so people still emerge as eligible for state housing. As noted in Chapter Four, rural, self-built or traditional housing is viewed as part of the backlog, whatever its physical condition; a confusing stance by the state, given the recent emphasis on supporting and upgrading informal or self-built settlements.

One respondent raised the problem of the housing benefit not being flexible enough physically or geographically to enable the most strategic reinforcing or consolidating of benefits and resources, and therefore by implication contributing to impoverishment. BW referred to recent research at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on the stacking of welfare entitlements: on how households strategically consolidate or distribute their conduits to grants. Some grants such as the housing subsidy are location-specific, and also facilitate access to free basic water and electricity (though this could shift with a change in location). But a particular location might offer access to other state benefits such as good schooling. So BW contended that the research suggests that:

people move to small towns not because there is economic opportunity but you can stack your welfare entitlements and then use that as passage to economic opportunities later on. So how you stack your entitlements including housing is quite important...(BW interview).

But accessing the housing subsidy in one location can limit a household's ability to take advantage of another location with better schooling, or health facilities (BW interview). Alternatively, people might deploy household 'assets' in other ways to gain a foothold in another locality. For example children could be 'distributed' as dependents to relatives in another town to allow them to meet one of the criterion for a housing subsidy. BW gave the example of a household accessing a subsidy in Lusikisiki, and sending a son or

daughter to high school in Umtata (both in the Eastern Cape province), where they live with a cousin who can then access a housing subsidy.

A senior housing official drew on her own personal experience to illustrate how household needs at particular times could temporarily render an individual's house not the best place for them to be for a period. She cited this example also as an illustration of the desirability and competition for RDP housing, and the 'trend' of temporary caretakers of RDP housing attempting to take over formal ownership of the house:

my own mom lives in a RDP house, in a settlement in Richards Bay...my mom was quite sick a while ago...and she came up to live with us here...so we... looked after her for a while. In December she gets a message that the people that [were looking after the house]; friends that we've known for many years...have gone to the municipality and told the municipality they want this house and [the municipality] started...the process to transfer the house...in to their name. Now, it wasn't that my mother didn't want the house...she was sick, that's why she came to stay with us, it wasn't that she was rejecting the RDP house (QU interview).

An official from the national department of Human Settlements provided a similar explanation for why a beneficiary may not have been found during the occupancy survey, arguing that beneficiaries might be working elsewhere and have a relative taking care of the house in their absence (NC interview).

These examples highlight individual needs at particular times, informal arrangements that are entered into, and competition that can then arise, as well as how difficult it is for the state to deal with this level of personal complexity as argued by Scott (1998) and others. Respondent QU's comments also reflected the blurriness between administrators of a programme and its recipients (Bawa 2011) – she, a senior official administering the housing programme, her mother a beneficiary of the programme. Respondents who argue the need for mobility in response to work opportunities echo the fluid and unsettled dimension of the African city flagged by Simone (2004), and pragmatic strategies in peoples' use of informal settlements which Bayat (2004) might term

everyday resistance. These interpretations arise from a perceived mismatch between product and need.

6.5.3 Financial stress

A further reason for people leaving their RDP houses is financial in nature. This can be because the cost of living in the formal house is too high: electricity and water costs, and rates and taxes raise peoples' expenses and reduce their incomes (NN interview). This explanation does not allow for the financial concessions afforded subsidized housing dwellers in many urban areas, such as rates write-offs, and free basic service grants²⁰². Nevertheless the sense that owning property is somehow incompatible with extreme poverty was echoed by another respondent:

of course South Africa's economy isn't very conducive to home ownership, we know what the unemployed rates are (QU interview).

Another explanation for beneficiaries leaving RDP houses characterises first time home owners as naïve about property ownership and its potential, thus disposing of a valuable item for short term cash windfalls in times of need. JF argued that houses are being used as collateral with informal money lenders when cash is needed for schooling, jail, bail, burial – 'when peoples' backs are to the wall'. Similarly shopkeepers and retail traders are picking up properties cheaply for use as businesses when beneficiaries are desperate for money:

So here's suddenly 2 million South Africans...[who] have shelter, but suddenly they are also into the low end of the property market...who do you think is trading on all of that? The entrepreneurs are, they are picking up properties for...R5 000 they are loving it; it's a party out there (BW interview)²⁰³.

²⁰² Although the adequacy of these amounts for survival of a household is disputed by some NGOs and CBOs.

²⁰³ This interviewee referred to 'the proverbial urban myth' of shebeen owners acquiring a house for payment of a crate of beer, a rumour similarly cited in PSC (2003).

6.5.4 Lack of beneficiary involvement

A further perspective on why experience on the ground may differ from that expected is poor implementation or execution of an essentially good policy (MX interview). Beneficiaries are not being consulted (as intended in the policy) about the planning, house design or construction of the specific project. The spirit and provisions of community participation, an early tenet of the programme, has largely disappeared. As a result people are unprepared for home ownership and unsatisfied with their particular product:

housing is not being done with people, rather than being done for people (MX interview).

Therefore some people will feel alienated from the house, and will return to informal settlements (MX interview), although this respondent did not think this is happening at scale.

There was disagreement with aspects of this position though from a senior official in Gauteng Department of Housing. She criticized the current emphasis on informal settlement upgrading, where – in theory at least – residents should be very much part of the development process and be invested in the area. Her argument was that in these situations people don't subsequently put effort into upgrading their own dwellings into an acceptable neighbourhood:

especially with Wits [University] there is a strong component of people who think the informal settlement program should be the way to go; we've tried it; we've tried it so many times and what we end up with is worse informal settlements. Yes you give people a piece of ground but it never becomes a housing unit, it stays within that informal domain and just more and more people move on and into it and you end up with much bigger problems in terms of the number of people there and the number of people who then need units (QU interview).

In these comments respondent QU supported temporary informal accommodation linked to an incremental process of improvement, but not if the state 'lost control' and the

resultant situation came to signify for it more intense, more complex, and inferior conditions which were the inverse of its intended trajectory.

6.5.5 Income generation and location

One area that has emerged in this research as a key gap is insight into how beneficiaries in housing projects source income, whether this is expressed as jobs, work, economic activity or income generation. Interviewees argued that some beneficiaries are highly mobile in response to work opportunities, but it is clear that there is limited understanding about how people bring in money and how this relates to having an RDP house.

As noted in Chapter Four, policy documents require housing projects to be 'well-located', suggesting that if housing was developed close to established parts of the city (where business, shops, facilities or industry was), people would be able to earn an income. Considerations of 'the economy' in low income housing projects has most strongly translated into this concern around 'good location', a term used almost as a proxy for economic prospects. However, even in well-located areas jobs are scarce and many people remain unemployed. A respondent described how in the prime location of Alexandra some people in shacks eagerly claim an RDP house but later appear to leave the house, prompting speculation that they have not found or sustained work in the area (OM interview). When prompted on the issue of jobs a provincial official lamented 'unfortunately, the job opportunities...did not come as fast as the houses were developed (AN interview). And, he continued, jobs that are available are not compatible with the skills of those qualifying for RDP housing:

industry has changed over time, the type of jobs that we had ten years ago we no longer have them. There are different type of sectors becoming stronger than the other ones. You know your big factories that we used to have, they are shrinking, people are using different type of economic or industrial development...so it has created a lot of problems for Government I think (AN interview).

In addition, a significant number of housing projects are not 'well located' by most definitions. Respondent BW also argued that housing gets delivered in places where the politicians are pushing for it from a local self-interested perspective:

we [complain] that RDP houses go on the edge of the townships; well where do you think the ward councillors come from for those townships? (BW interview).

Paraphrasing a councillor he continued:

we don't bring in any new money into the party coffers but we do bring in 500 new voters, and the way I keep the 500 voters is that I make sure they get their house (BW interview).

Little attention has been paid to economic activity in and around these areas. A respondent from the Gauteng Department of Housing noted that in the drive to deliver big numbers of houses there are some problematic settlements which are unlikely to attract private investment:

there is an area...on the other side of Orange Farm and that area is far away from everything, there are just RDP houses that are there. It is far away from everything and there is no way we can move it now, we can't move it and you can imagine [how difficult it would be] if we were to get business people to come in and put in shops and what have you. It is difficult because it is on the other side...on the urban edge of Johannesburg...(MO interview).

Other locations are defended as offering good opportunity. Respondent MX argued that 'poorly located' is not always a fair comment – 'otherwise one must say the rich and famous are also poorly located' in their edge-city developments. He did concede however that lack of transport is a big issue (MX interview). BX from Gauteng Province contended that job opportunities and economic activity *are* taken very seriously in Gauteng Department of Housing. He cited as an example a project being considered on greenfields land 12kms from the town centre of Boksburg and 15kms from Germiston, in Ekurhukeni, eastern Gauteng. These distances, he argued, mean that the land is relatively close to towns and cities, a reasonable travel time and distance away. He did not mention poor

transport linkages, high costs of transport and the lack of job opportunities in these towns.

Respondent KL made the point that some people are just too poor to travel anywhere. If they don't have an income they may not be able to access facilities in the city or seek work. Citing the Gauteng Housing Residential Survey he noted that

at a certain level of very low income you have no transportation costs at all...[because] you are not going anywhere, you are completely stuck...you feed yourself and you spend on almost nothing else (KL interview).

6.5.6 The economy of RDP areas

Little further thought is given to the economy of RDP areas beyond aiming for good location. An interviewee previously in national and city government noted that consideration of economic activity in the new housing areas was largely neglected, and little was done to integrate or make the links between RDP-living and means of earning:

for me that's been the biggest gap when you have been planning and even doing policy with regard to housing. We haven't been able to engage with the economic stuff, we have been very silent about it (TO interview).

This echoes a reflection made by a respondent during earlier research: 'We didn't focus on livelihoods in the past. Was that a failing? Maybe' (cited in Charlton and Kihato 2006: 275).

Thinking about and doing something about economic activity is seen to be some other department's responsibility, not a housing function (KM, TO interviews). Housing officials saw a limit to what the housing department is responsible for or indeed can control:

as a Department [of Housing] we are only responsible...for the subsidies for the top structures including the services, but then somebody somewhere in the Department of Economic Development has to come in, the Department of Education must come in in terms of the schools, Department of Health and Social Development they must come in (MO interview).

TO referred to the usefulness for her of the study commissioned by the City of Johannesburg in 2009 into the economic activities of the Kanana park settlement which illuminated ‘how short sighted we are when we do our planning that...[the economic aspect] is something that we haven’t taken thought of it all’ (TO interview).

Departures from RDP houses might be prompted by the dislocation from household-sustaining activities. NN noted that the department is sometimes told by occupants: ‘the person sold me the house, they couldn’t come [to live] here [themselves] because they say it’s too far from work...’ (NN interview).

As this Section 6.5 demonstrates, explanations from the state for why beneficiaries might move on from RDP housing sooner than intended range from a mismatch between migrant workers’ need for cheap, short-term accommodation and a fixed location house for ownership, to the cost of home owning for poverty-stricken occupants, to the dearth of income generating opportunities in reasonable proximity to the housing, to a lack of participation of end-users in the housing delivery process, leading to product dissatisfaction. Other reasons mentioned by respondents such as a couple separating or the death of an original beneficiary contribute to what respondent JF referred to as ‘a mixed bag of reasons’ why the original beneficiary is not there²⁰⁴.

It is clear that some of these explanations suggest a final departure by a household, but others could indicate a temporary loosening of ties or that an individual *within* the household has moved on, either temporarily or permanently. These dimensions were not elaborated by respondents but are significant in considering if and why these practices are of concern to the state.

²⁰⁴ Some of these reasons JF would see as ‘legitimate’ explanations – including that the beneficiary is working elsewhere.

6.6 What should be done about different practices

Respondents identify four themes with respect to what should be done about these practices which can be problematic in various ways.

6.6.1 Rental accommodation

First, respondents argued that rental accommodation is needed, including for those who do not qualify for the housing subsidy (TC, OM, BW interviews), although the specific shape and form this should take was often less clear. For some, very cheap rental is what is needed, offering just a place to sleep for workers:

maybe a person comes from Botswana but is working here as a security [guard], they just need a room; maybe they can share that room with their friend...one uses the room during the day, the other one uses it at night (AN interview).

But this sort of accommodation – sparse, very low cost rental rooms with shared facilities - is politically unpopular because it is reminiscent of apartheid hostels with their basic finishing and shared nature (OM interview)²⁰⁵. As a housing model it also has funding and administrative difficulties, demonstrated by some of the difficulties associated with the social housing programme.

6.6.2 Optimism for future BNG projects

Second there was considerable optimism amongst some officials that BNG type developments will overcome the problems of past projects, through mixing income groups and land uses in new developments. These new generation projects use cross subsidization in the form of bulk service and/ or land inputs from the local authority, in exchange for at least some RDP houses²⁰⁶ as part of the final housing mix of the

²⁰⁵ OM argues that there appears to be ability to pay rentals, (although some people may genuinely not be able to afford this), but experience from the ARP suggests a payment problem often seems to come in when the *state* is perceived to be a landlord or involved in the transaction in some way.

²⁰⁶ The example mentioned in the interview was 40% RDP houses of the total residential development yield.

development, along with mortgage housing (XN interview). They are accompanied by strategies for economic development in the vicinity of the project. The huge Lufhereng project on the west of Soweto is cited as an example:

we are talking about a project that will yield about 24,000 housing opportunities and there we are going to create the job opportunities...there are business sites...there is even going to be an agricultural hub...so we are saying we are going to create job opportunities within that settlement...you won't see any factories, industrial parks or whatever currently, but they are part of the development, there are going to be shopping centres, yes there are going to be vegetable markets and what have you, so people would be employed within the development (MO interview).

6.6.3 Pragmatism and recognizing strategic uses

Third is a pragmatic response to what needs to be done: that people must be helped to get housing, even if outcomes are not as expected:

must we worry about who is actually living in that house? What we must be worried about is that this person that was supposed to live in that house, that person got assisted: yes or no, if that person that was originally supposed to benefit from this was not assisted at the end we must try and find that person and try and assist them (DX interview).

Amongst some respondents there was a recognition that practices such as selling or renting out a house are strategic, sensible and rational (BW interview; DX interview).

Sub-letting for rental income is understandable:

how can you tell a person not do that, because all of a sudden you have an income to look after your family...(DX interview).

A variation on this theme of a strategic use of the house was mentioned by one respondent who commented that RDP houses are used as a base for children to access what is perceived as better schooling than might be available in rural areas:

the parents or whatever has gone back to rural [areas] or goes in search of jobs or contract work, but the kids remain behind [in RDP houses] so that they can get good schooling...(TC interview).

An inverse of this issue was mentioned by a former City of Johannesburg official who commented on the lack of facilities and amenities in new greenfield projects, and how this might make them difficult and undesirable places to live in. She cited Lehae as an example (TO interview).

6.6.4 Stronger economic focus

Fourth are a small minority of officials who advocated for greater emphasis on economic thinking in relation to RDP housing and settlements (TO, OM, KL interviews). OM noted that with relocations from informal settlements, the need to focus beyond housing becomes clear, and in the ARP at least they have had to consider these issues:

you're re-settling a whole human settlement with all the activities that goes with a human settlement. It's not just about people that live and sleep, it's everything that goes with that in a settlement, all the economic activity that goes with it. But because they're on a piece of land that's unacceptable for human settlement, you have to move it. But then you [must] move everything (OM interview).

There are thus diverse perspectives amongst respondents on what needs to be done. There was also the view that government has managed the complexity of the housing situation fairly well, and has adapted policy and product over the years (PT interview). KL offered a counter position, arguing that promises have been made, and a 'legacy of expectation' has been created that the product itself can't fulfil (KL interview).

6.7 Respondent clusters

I now consider how to make sense of the interviewees themselves. What does the state understand about the performance of the RDP housing benefit after it has been delivered to a recipient? Post-occupancy usage and practices are not clear to the state, and households' interactions with the housing are not a matter for examination. Implementation review currently prioritises delivery targets and expenditure²⁰⁷ – what

²⁰⁷ Although other forms of evaluation are proposed by the National Department of Human Settlements.

Barrett (1981 in Barrett 2004) describes as conformance rather than performance. An exception is the state's beneficiary occupancy audits, concerned with whether the person in possession of the house is authorized by the state to be so. This can be seen as a 'counting' and checking exercise typical of those state activities Scott (1998) and Li (2007) might see as a simplified response to a complex situation. Respondents' give varying accounts of the results of the national audit, and assumptions in the survey - about how occupants are connected to authorized beneficiaries for example - raise the possibility of distorted interpretations based on inaccurate notions, as warned by Spiegel (1999) and Wiesenthal (2011).

The lack of information about peoples' use of their houses post-occupation is surprising: the housing programme is politically significant, financially extensive and encapsulates multiple objectives, and one might expect systematic and regular assessment of all aspects of performance. Also, a number of 'retrofit'-type funding programmes²⁰⁸ have been initiated in government, elevating infrastructure delivery and economic performance in former township areas, amongst other things. Given these fix-up endeavours, one might expect a closer monitoring of RDP developments to pre-empt the entrenchment of similar problems. But from another perspective, the lack of evaluation of beneficiary experiences of their housing benefit is not surprising, given the scale and complexity of programme, and the on-going persistent demand for RDP housing – the clamour from those who have not yet received. Given these pressures it is unsurprising that the emphasis is on delivery rather than review.

²⁰⁸ Such as the 'Rectification Programme', which reconstructs houses considered to be defective, even years after delivery. This is controversial because the boundaries between state responsibility for delivery and beneficiary responsibility for maintenance are not clear, and because the obligations of construction companies appears not to have been enforced in many instances, with seemingly few consequences for developers.



Figure 6-2: People demanding RDP houses (Photograph: Austin Andrews, Alexandra during the elections on 22 April 2009 <http://multimedia.timeslive.co.za/photos/2009/04/no-house-no-vote/>)

Perceived deviations in housing usage which come to the attention of the state through flare-ups (such as xenophobic violence) or complaints, spark reactions which reflect a concern for the appropriate conduct of households similar to that described by Ghannam (2002), Li (2005) and Anand and Rademacher (2011). The state's aim is to 'correct' rather than understand this behaviour.

Nevertheless, some respondents in this research showed insight into beneficiary practices and reasons for them, mainly sourced from their own observations and (sometimes personal) experiences, including data they have collected. The diversity of responses confirms that amongst officials and practitioners there is no single view, nor even a dominant one. Below I cluster respondents into broad perspectives that emerged from this research, but I am not easily able to account for views according to respondents' position in government or backgrounds. Also, the clusters I identify are not mutually exclusive and some respondents span more than one grouping.

6.7.1 Seeing the frustrations of the state

The first grouping of respondents expressed exasperation with beneficiary practices, or understood why others might take this view (KM; TC; OM; MO; TO, BW interviews). Some interviewees expressed discomfort with the informal 'look' that has emerged in some housing developments (TC, XP interviews) or lamented how beneficiaries forfeit formal housing for cheap informal living, in these ways echoing authorities' concerns with the look and practice of informality identified by Scott (1998), Tipple (2000), Schlyter (2003), and Ghertner (2011). Attempts by the state to control beneficiary practices (Scott 1998, Tarlo 2001, Deacon 2004, Rigg 2007) are apparent in interventions such as the pre-emptive clause in the title deeds and in the house to house audits, though the state is frustrated by its limited ability to manage behaviour.

6.7.2 Understanding beneficiary practices

A second grouping of respondents showed insight and empathy for the practices of residents (OM, TO interviews). Several respondents were critical of the housing programme, or critical of the state's concern with who ends up occupying RDP housing. These respondents reflected on the merits and limits of state plans (Li 2005); and as implementers were at times in conflict with the visions of policy-makers (Corbridge 2008).

Some of the critique from within the state echoes Wiesenthal's (2011) comment on the futility of the housing programme's attempts to 'stabilise space', with a number of respondents arguing that peoples' need to be mobile for work requires a policy response that delivers cheap rental accommodation (TC, NN, BW, XP, BX, AN interviews). There was limited recognition of the irony that this accommodation is currently offered in places such as backyard rooms in RDP projects and informal settlements, where the physical structure might, however, look informal.

A few respondents reflected sensitively on the economic difficulties of residents and their resultant practices (TO, OM interviews, AN interviewee when prompted). For some respondents this is integral to the notion of housing as an asset incorporated into the

2004 policy amendments, and they have adapted their practices accordingly. These respondents noted the difficulty – and undesirability - of censuring non-compliant income generating practices in a situation of massive poverty and unemployment. Both this point and the related one above to do with backyard rooms is an example of a tension or contradiction (Bayat 2010; Valverde 2011) in the modernity of the housing programme: the programme itself sparks practices which contest its formal and modernist intention, but which at the same time address some of its own limitations (by offering an alternative to home ownership through backyard rental, or an alternative to formal employment away from home).

Respondents that seemed to me to show most nuanced analysis of actual practices were those who had worked in implementing projects at local government level, perhaps analogous to those in ‘the trenches’ described by Migdal (1994) – but not all in local government showed similar insight. Also, some officials in each level of government were insightful: for example they noted that work might take beneficiaries far from their houses, one reflected on temporary departures from houses, and a national official involved in evaluation of informal settlement intervention showed considered reflection. One national government employee reflected deep theoretical and conceptual thinking in his discussion, citing recent work by David Harvey (BW interview). Although I did not specifically investigate this issue, the healthy tension between central and local government (and civil society) described by Tandler (1997) did not become apparent.

6.7.3 Believing in the potential of systems

A third grouping emphasised the importance of systems and procedures, such as the steps that beneficiaries must follow to get approval for running businesses (MO interview). There were policy optimists amongst these (BX interview) but also those that were convinced by the current policy but disillusioned with what they saw as institutional system failure (MX interview). Others work on developing systems of government, but in the end were not optimistic that these could overcome the state’s own constraints (DX interview). Some respondents ascribed difficulties with the housing programme to

problems within the state: divergent actions and agendas between spheres of government; or poor performance of officials at provincial and local level (MX; QB; TO interviews); resonating with descriptions of the fractured state (Smith 2011). For several officials, administrative record keeping problems explain much of what might appear to be 'poor performance' of the housing post-occupancy. Some interviewees imply that this bureaucratic tangle is a 'better' or more palatable situation than that of people actually renting out or selling. Whilst these interviewees also play down the severity of this administrative bungling, others decry the scale of it and the negative impact on peoples' lives. But as with Tarlo (2001) and Li (2005), official state records are revealed in some instance to be simply inaccurate, with severe consequences for people. Frustration at national level with what is seen as local government weakness or incompetence prompts the development of ever more complex and intricate bureaucratic systems to provide tools to try to overcome these shortcomings.

6.7.4 Detached

A fourth group of respondents were those I saw as 'detached', who saw their own responsibility fairly narrowly around a 'pure' housing focus (MO interview) – and who were therefore not concerned with economic development issues and did not consider evaluating the outcomes for beneficiaries as key to their work (MX; MO interviews). Striking in the discussions was the lack of an overall analysis of socio economic and urban context, and of how RDP housing relates to this. When probed, a number of respondents discussed the very poor integration to date between economic activity and housing projects. Several agreed that there had been an assumption that the wider economic context of the country over the last sixteen years would offer income opportunity and jobs to poor households, but that this has not materialized. Some argued that the location of forthcoming new projects will be an improvement on past situations, and that existing projects should also not be judged prematurely as city geographies shift and less favourable areas can become more favourable over time. These perspectives I interpreted as a reflection of what the state chooses to 'see', and how it narrows its focus

to only that which it has the tools to respond to (Scott 1998; Li 2007) – in the case of housing departments, housing as shelter, services and property, rather than the much more complex conceptualization of housing as a platform for improved circumstances in a broader sense. This group contrasts with the officials described by Tandler (1997) who went beyond the narrow limits of their job to consider beneficiaries' needs more holistically.

6.7.5 Denialists

Fifth were those I would see as 'denialists', recognizing only some of the story: who argued that apparent departures from houses merely reflect an administrative bungle (NC interview). At the same time this particular interviewee noted that beneficiaries might not be in their houses as they are working elsewhere – but presumably only temporarily, as their houses are cared for by family members. In this way potential contradictions in her position – there are no departures but are temporary absences - are resolved and both positions can be simultaneously held.

6.7.6 Defenders

Sixth were those that argued for, or recognized, the value of the programme. Some interviewees defended the programme, or aspects of it, citing as evidence of its success the pride and investment by beneficiaries in the houses, and the desperate pleas to access a house by those without one. A few respondents were clear that RDP housing has a lot to offer beneficiaries, and represents a vast improvement in peoples' lives. Here interviewees' comments about the housing programme appeared to reflect it a genuine and straightforward 'will to improve' along the lines described by Li (2007), and a belief in its ability to do so. A number of interviewees simultaneously defended aspects of the programme whilst being critical of parts of it.

6.8 Conclusion

Confirming similar points made in the literature by Fuller and Harriss (2001), Corbridge et al (2007), Li (2005), Bawa (2011), and Hossain (2012), the view from this bureaucracy thus reflects variety in the perspectives of state housing practitioners, tensions, contradictions and in some cases, the clear influence of personal experiences. In at least one case the intersection between a respondent's official role and her family circumstance showed the sort of blurring of apparent distinctions between state and society described by Bawa (2011). But despite the lack of systematic evaluation of the use made of RDP housing by the state, and the 'tunnel vision' reflected in the state's concerns (Scott 1998), the situation revealed here is more complex. Respondents spanned more than one of my conceptual groupings: Respondent OM for example understood the state's frustration, arguing that beneficiaries must follow land use rules and procedures, yet at the same time showed most insight into household-level poverty and income generation, and the consequences of this for housing interventions. In response, he practiced nuanced and sensitive adaptations of policy at local implementation level, providing an example of a more discerning and nuanced state practice alluded to by Wong (1999) and demonstrated in Tendler's (1997) examples, resisting the tendency only to simplify and standardize suggested by Scott (1998). This has some resonance with the notion of 'accommodation' (Migdal 1994) in which state practice is modified through navigation between interest groups; a key difference here however is that the encounter is between individuals rather than the social organisation and state interaction and bargaining described by Migdal (1994).

As with that described by Tendler (1997) some respondents thus revealed deep, thoughtful and nuanced insights into practices and reasons for these. Their awareness comes from a variety of different means (anecdote, personal experience, innovative research – such as the drawing of lots of erf numbers and searching out the beneficiaries on the ground). At the same time they have constrained agency to act or to influence action – constrained by policy, political aspirations and expectations, the structure of the

state, and more prosaic daily demands and pressures. But this also does not reflect a situation of paralysis, as some respondents are using their and colleagues' on-the-ground-learning to modify and adapt practice.

In subsequent chapters where I explore beneficiary practices (Chapters Seven and Eight) I consider a set of issues raised by this chapter: how beneficiaries view informal structures and practices; how housing contributes to the improved circumstances of beneficiaries; to what extent peoples' practices around their housing – selling, leaving – reflect the motivations and pressures understood by the state; and how people's practices contrast and conform to state views and expectations.

7 CHAPTER 7 - LOVING AND LEAVING: INTERSECTIONS WITH RDP HOUSING ACROSS TIME AND SPACE (FINDINGS FROM NON-RESIDENT BENEFICIARIES)

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I move from a consideration of the state to a focus on one group of users of RDP housing: those that have acquired a government funded house but who do not live in it. In exploring what reasons there are for a different usage of the housing to that expected, I discuss findings from 16 in-depth interviews held in Johannesburg between January and June 2010 as discussed in Chapter Three. In line with anecdotal reports, I had assumed that discussions with those not living in their housing would centre on how and why they had become physically dislocated from the house in some way: by selling it or renting it out for example. In other words I expected a focus on reasons for leaving RDP housing, the phenomenon referred to in literature and media reports on the subject. What emerged however was a more complex and diverse range of interactions with RDP housing.

The interviews reveal various strategies by which people manage the geographies of their work and living circumstances, and some complex relationships with their RDP houses. This shifted my understanding and prompted the title for this chapter: 'loving and leaving: intersections with RDP housing across time and space'. Active search for housing, and on-going attachment to it, constitutes the 'loving' of the title. For example, in three cases interviewees sought out and bought their houses, rather than being allocated a house. Like other interviewees, these purchasers do not live in their house on a daily basis. The effort involved in acquiring the house that does not serve a daily shelter purpose is intriguing. With respect to 'leaving', a few of my respondents have left their houses permanently, but most leave their houses only temporarily or intermittently. A temporal and spatial perspective on how peoples' lives intersect with their state-funded housing is thus illuminating.

I first describe and categorise the diversity of living circumstances I encountered (section two). In section three I discuss why respondents have these relationships with their housing. In section four I describe the alternative accommodation occupied by interviewees when not in their RDP houses: the nature of it and reasons for occupying it. I then consider the significance for the state of these situations (section five). Lastly I discuss the consequences of these living circumstances and the significance of this for the household and for the state (section six).

7.2 Categorising respondents

Those interviewed can be organized into five categories according to the relationship they have with the house. I summarise this in the table below before explaining my categorisation.

Table 7-1 Non-resident beneficiary interviewees and my categorisation of them

PSEUDONYM	CATEGORISATION	LOCATION OF RDP HOUSE	CURRENT ACCOMMODATION	OCCUPATION
Theresa	Former owner	Formerly Barberton, Mpumalanga province	House in Soweto	Unemployed
Nandi	Frequent commuter	Palmridge, JHB	Domestic worker quarters	Domestic worker
Bernice	Frequent commuter	Motla, Tshwane	The floor of a garage of a private home	Mobile hawker of vegetables
Pam	Frequent commuter	Vosloorus Extension 28, Ekurhuleni	Domestic worker quarters	Domestic worker
Evelyn	Frequent commuter	Orange Farm, JHB	Domestic worker quarters	Domestic worker
Danny	Frequent commuter	Evaton West	Public space under a freeway bridge	Informal reclamer
Sizwe	Frequent commuter	Evaton West	Public space under a freeway bridge	Informal reclamer
Val	Frequent commuter	Devland Ext 27	Domestic worker quarters	Domestic worker

Dumisani	Future hopeful	Hammanskraal, Tshwane	Backyard shack in Alexandra	Golf caddy
Andile	Future hopeful	Houtkop, Emfuleni	Pavement in the inner city	Street trader
Amy	Infrequent commuter	Protea South, Soweto	Bonded house	
Lyn	Infrequent commuter	Tweeling, Free State	Domestic worker quarters	Domestic worker
Priscilla	Infrequent commuter	Cathcart, Eastern Cape province	Domestic worker quarters	Domestic worker
Adele	Landlord	Thembisa, Ekurhuleni	Domestic worker quarters	Domestic worker
Christine	Landlord	Snake Park, Soweto	Shared house in Meadowlands, Soweto	Unemployed

Frequent commuters

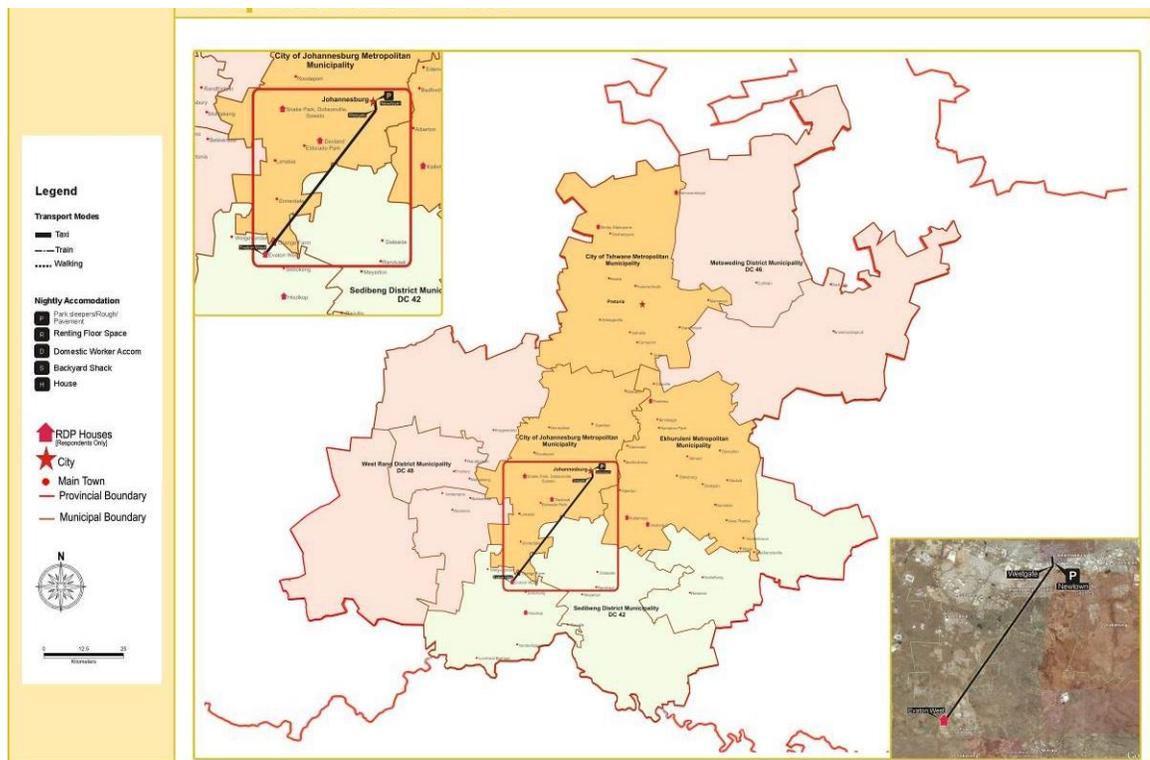
The most common situation I encountered is that of people with frequent, regular, commuting-type contact with their RDP house. Six of these seven ‘frequent commuters’ have family members living in the RDP house on a permanent basis, with the interviewee sleeping at the house regularly: in one case several times per week and in another every second weekend. Most typically, however, this interviewee is a weekly commuter from an RDP house located in the province of Gauteng, with the house serving as their home at weekends and holidays. Three profiles illustrate these interactions.

Profile 1A

Pam¹ is a domestic worker in a wealthy suburb of Johannesburg, living most of the time at her place of employment. She has an RDP house in Vosloorus Extension 28 to the south-east of Johannesburg, in Ekurhuleni, occupied on a nightly basis by her eldest son who works in Germiston. Pam’s husband, who works at Langlaagte, lives with her at her place of work. Her three younger children live during the week with her mother in another part of Vosloorus. Pam, her husband and all the children re-unite at the RDP house every weekend.

Profile 1B

Sizwe is a reclaimer or informal recycler who collects waste from the bins that households and businesses put out for municipal collection. He has an RDP house in the south western area of Evaton West in Emfuleni municipality. His wife and four children live in the house permanently, and Sizwe sleeps there on Saturday and Sunday nights. All other nights of the week he sleeps rough on public land in Newtown in the inner city of Johannesburg, near one of the depots where he sells his reclaimed material.



Map 7-1: Location of Sizwe's RDP house relative to his inner city sleeping place (map produced by Eugene Ndaba 2010).

Profile 1C

Bernice sells vegetables from a trolley she pushes round the suburbs. On Saturdays she travels to her home in Motla, near Mapobane, in Tshwane where she joins her husband, three children and five grandchildren. On Mondays she returns to Johannesburg for the rest of the week, during which time she rents floor space in a car garage to sleep on, in the Johannesburg suburb of Melville.

One interviewee, Val, has a variation of this kind of interaction in that she does not have anyone staying in the RDP house whilst she is not there. She visits her house regularly (often on a Thursday for a few hours during the day, and frequently overnight on a Saturday evening) but the house is otherwise unoccupied. Val's family members – her two children – live with her at her place of work. She remains an active, though intermittent, resident of the house.

Infrequent commuters

A second housing relationship takes the form of infrequent contact with the RDP house, as a result of being a long-distance migrant worker in Johannesburg. In this example the house remains an important feature for the interviewee and is a home for family members. These two 'infrequent commuter' interviewees visit their houses a few times a year – at Easter and Christmas festivals, for example.

Profile 2

Priscilla's RDP house is in Cathcart, a small town in the Eastern Cape some 700kms from Johannesburg. Her children live at her elderly mother's house in Cathcart, while her brother lives in the RDP house. Priscilla travels to Cathcart for two weeks over Easter, and again at Christmas, when she, her children and her brother all live in the RDP house. In the winter school holidays her two sons visit her in Johannesburg in her domestic quarters.

Landlords

A third situation, encountered with three respondents, is characterised by those who maintain regular contact with the house but not with a view to living there, or to housing family members. Rather, their interaction is in order to collect rental from rooms in the back yard, or from the house itself. Their own housing priorities now lie elsewhere, but these 'landlords' use the RDP house to improve their economic circumstances.

Profile 3a

Adele, a domestic worker, looks forward to her retirement at the end of the year. Then she will go to live with her husband in their house in Polokwane, Limpopo Province. In addition to this they also have an RDP house in Thembisa, Gauteng, that they used to live in. Currently Adele travels from a wealthy suburb in JHB to her RDP house in Thembisa on Saturdays, and stays there one night. This is mainly to oversee the three tenants she has living in backyard rooms, and to collect rental. The rest of the time she lives in domestic quarters at her place of employment, visiting her other home in Polokwane once a month.

Profile 3b

Christine is unemployed and lives with her three children, her three siblings and their children in a four-room house in Meadowlands, Soweto. She and her children used to live in her RDP house in Snake Park, Dobsonville (also in Soweto). Christine used to sell sweets and cigarettes from her RDP house, which she acquired in 1998. She struggled financially in this house however, and now she no longer lives there but rents out the house to a friend instead.

Former owners

Fourth is the respondent who previously lived in her RDP house, but who has since sold the house. The former owner described here exited RDP living largely as a result of lack of affordability, and has no further contact with the house.

Profile 4

Theresa lived with her husband and children in an RDP house in Barberton, Mpumalanga. They applied for the house in 1998 and moved out of their shack into the house in 2002. Theresa's husband died and things became more difficult for her. She sold the RDP house for R13 000 and moved back to Johannesburg (her place of birth). Since February 2010 she and her children have been living in her father's house in Chiawelo, Soweto.

Future hopefuls

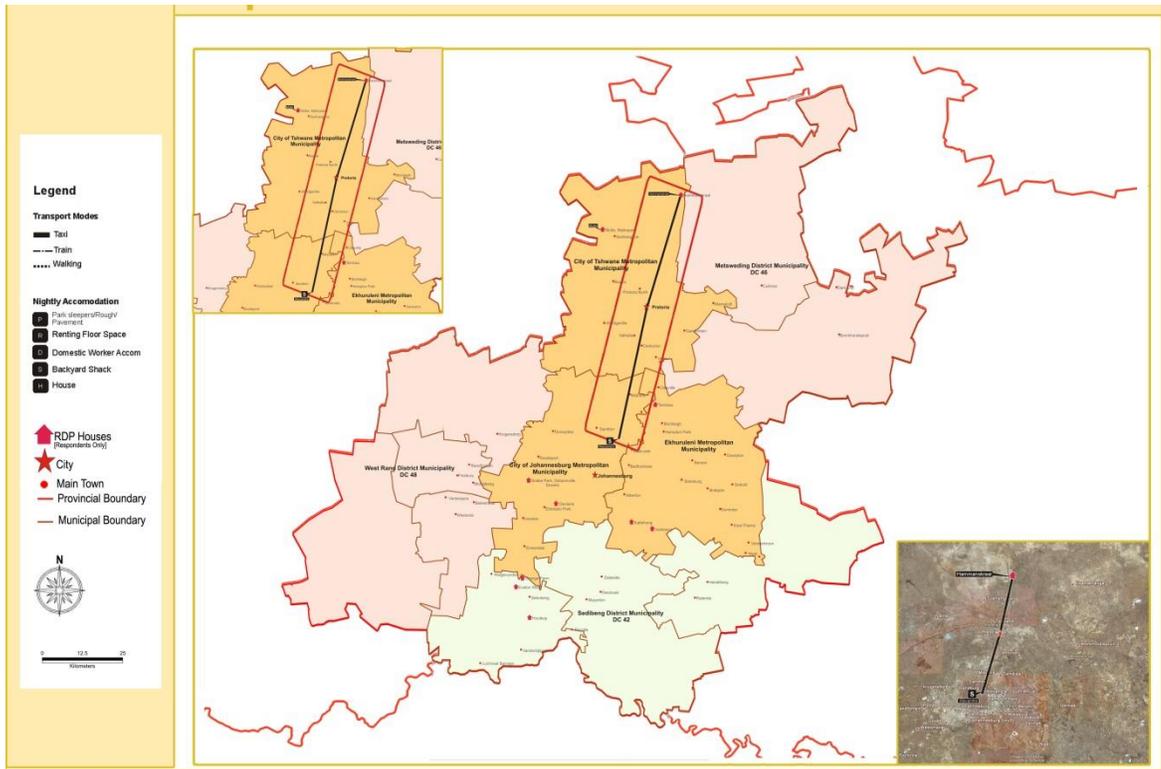
Fifth are those who sustain an ongoing relationship with an RDP house in Gauteng, through fairly irregular or infrequent visits to a house that is otherwise empty. The house does not provide shelter for family on an ongoing basis and is locked and vacant most of the time. These two respondents I have dubbed the 'future hopefuls', where the current utility of the house is limited but its existence in their lives nevertheless remains important.

Profile 5a

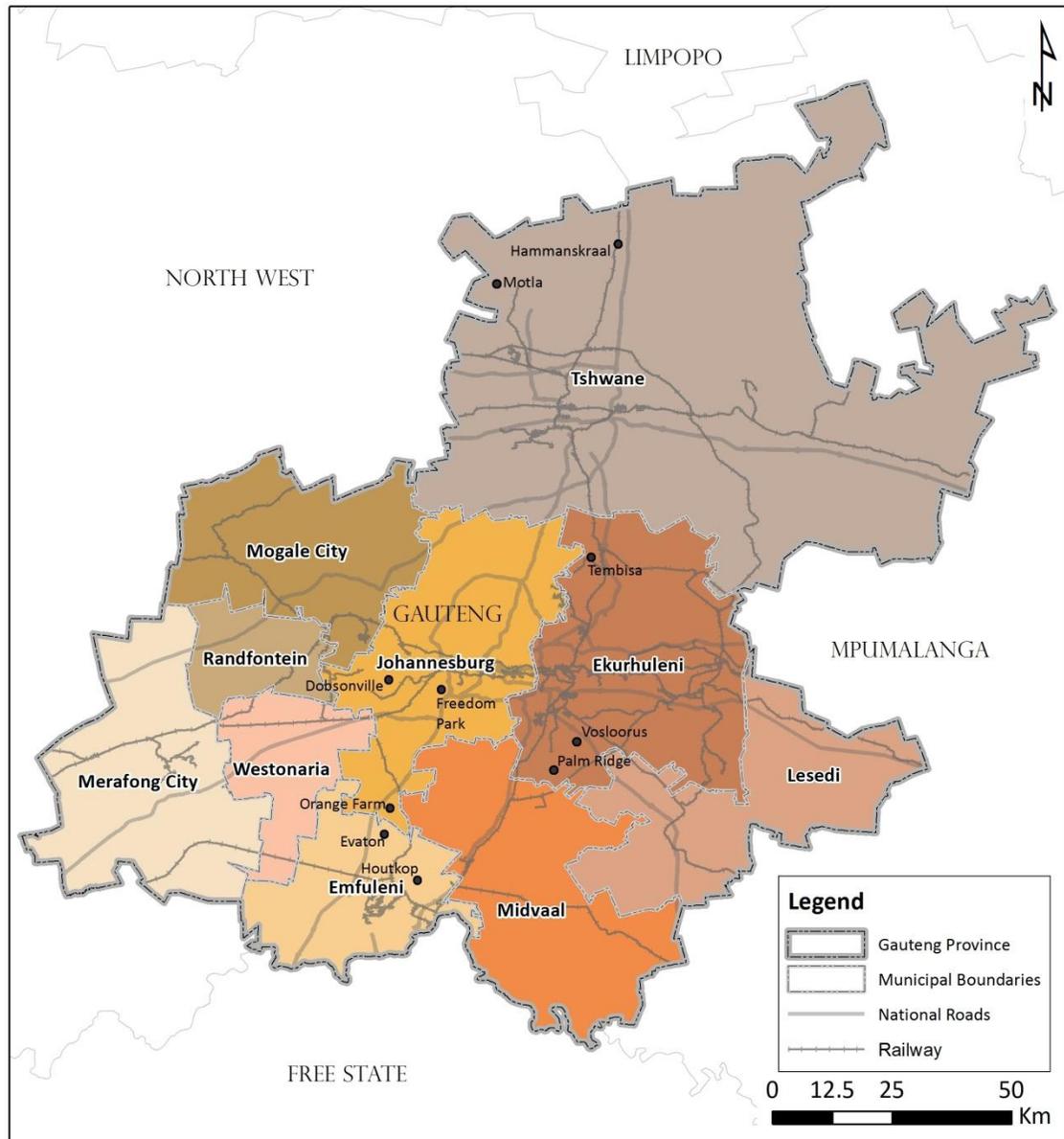
Andile runs a small pavement trading stall near Park Station in central Johannesburg. He has acquired an RDP house in Houtkop to the far south of Johannesburg in neighbouring Emfuleni municipality. He visits this intermittently, when he can afford to. The rest of the time he and his wife sleep at their trading table. His two children live with his wife's mother in Soweto, sometimes visiting their parents at the stall and occasionally staying over with them.

Profile 5b

Dumisani lives with his wife and four children in a backyard room in Alexandra, northern Johannesburg. His wife has bought an RDP house in Hammanskraal, outside Pretoria, where her sister also has a house. They visit this house about once a month. Dumisani is looking for another RDP house for the family, closer to where they currently live and work.



Map 7-2: Location of Dumisan's RDP house in Hammanskraal and his shack in Alexandra (map produced by Eugene Ndaba 2010).



Map 7-3: Locations of interviewees' RDP houses across Gauteng (map produced by Miriam Maina 2013).

7.3 Explaining interactions with housing

The descriptions above illuminate the diverse relationships with RDP housing of respondents who are unified only by their having an RDP house that they do not live in on a nightly basis. I turn now to clarifying why interviewees do not live in their RDP houses,

either permanently or for much of the time, as well as why they nevertheless maintain contact with the house, for those that do so.

7.3.1 Reasons for not living in the RDP house

Four main reasons were identified for why respondents did not live in their RDP house. First is the cost of travel.

Cost of travel

Low income is significant in explaining why many of the interviewees are not living in their RDP houses on a nightly basis. For many, the cost of travel to work is too expensive relative to low earnings, and the principal motivation in securing alternative accommodation is to save money. Adele explained:

it was too much money to travel [every day]...I [have to] take the taxi here, Zoo Lake to Berea. In Berea I walk to Newtown to get the taxi there. And then sometimes I'm not getting the straight taxi to put me near...the house. I have to get the taxi to put me somewhere to get the local taxi. Three taxis I have to use. That's why I can't travel every day (Adele interview).

Particularly striking is how strongly this reason of the cost of travel was put forward by those engaged in domestic work and living in staff quarters on their employer's properties: almost all domestic workers claimed their use of domestic worker accommodation was at their own instigation because of the cost of travel.

It was my choice...I begged them to [let me] stay here because of the transport...I'm staying because I don't have a choice...If I was having the money I will travel everyday (Pam interview).

In probing this journey between house and work, several interviewees noted that they acquired an RDP house before securing a job – the house preceded the work. Subsequently they found a job that was some distance from the house. Some interviewees specifically noted the limited income earning potential in the area where their house is, requiring them to range far afield to seek work. For others, the RDP house

was acquired at a later stage to their job, but similarly the house is not near their existing work and commuting is unaffordable.

Interviewees who sought out an RDP house or applied for one explained they felt they had no choice of where, in which location to get a house: an opportunity arose in a particular area and they seized it. Street trader Andile was one of those who actively sought out a house. He asked his customers if they knew where one could get RDP houses. Whenever he was able to, he left his business in his wife's hands and travelled to different areas to follow up leads. After trying various places, including Alexandra in the north-east of the city, he was successful in finally getting a house in Houtkop. This is some 30kms to the south west of central Johannesburg in a neighbouring municipality. He secured this 'from the street committee', presumably a reference to a local development committee, or an informal manifestation of the local ANC or another party, which has informally taken control of housing allocations. Andile worked in the central business area of Johannesburg, selling sweets, cigarettes and chips from his stall to commuters who pass through the City's central train station. He was not a fellow daily commuter though, as he can often not afford the R7 train fare to the station closest to his house.

Working hours

In contrast to the many interviewees who cited transport costs, one domestic worker interviewee was clear that the early starting time of her work was the sole reason for her not being able to commute from her RDP house. She referred to her RDP house as being close to her work – 'just 10 minutes' drive by car²⁰⁹. She was adamant that the two taxis she had to take from Devland Extension 27 in the South West of Johannesburg CBD to get to work in the north-central suburb of Emmarentia were convenient, and would also be

²⁰⁹ At the beginning of the interview at her place of employment she suggested we visit her house right then, which we did – a journey of about 25 minutes by car on the freeway to the south eastern edge of Soweto, near Eldorado Park.

affordable: if she chose to commute, she would negotiate with her employer to add transport costs to her salary. However the daily requirement to start work at 6.00am would mean she would have to leave home at 4.30am every day, and this would be dark at some times of the year, potentially unsafe and inconvenient.

Cost of services

For two 'ex-resident' interviewees the prime motivation for not living in their RDP house was the cost of services associated with the house. Christine spoke of illegally connecting to the electricity supply, being disconnected by the municipality and the difficulties associated with being without water and power in the RDP house.

Mostly what made me struggle was the fact that I had electricity cut off because I had bridged it [made an illegal connection]...They came to take the electricity box. I ended up with a big problem because I stay with four children...I just saw that it's better [to rent out the RDP house], because I was struggling to pay [service charges] and there is no electricity, sometimes I would be short of money to buy paraffin, there was nothing to use for cooking. I just saw that life was very difficult for me...I just chose to rent out there, and then I was not working so I saw that I should rent out...So that I can get some cents.

And then again another thing ne, this, we had a water problem. Sometimes when you don't have money to buy water you will stay like 2 days, 3 days without water, so I used to get it next door (Christine interview).

Another interviewee, Theresa, defaulted in her service payments to the municipality. After getting into debt she then had money retained by the local authority whenever she subsequently bought pre-paid electricity. The translator in this interview explained:

they go buy electricity, maybe for example R50 electricity, but [the municipality] just give them R10 [worth], 'cause they take the full R40 [toward the debt] (Theresa interview).

Both of these women battling with service payments were single parents supporting children. Theresa earned an income through intermittent domestic 'piece work'²¹⁰ in

²¹⁰ Casual employment for a few hours here and there.

Barberton, Mpumalanga after the death of her husband, whilst Christine sold sweets and cigarettes from her house in the RDP settlement of Snake Park, Soweto.

Although for these interviewees the cost of services was a reason to leave their RDP houses, as noted above most respondents cited the cost of transport between home and work as the reason for not living at the house on a daily basis.

7.3.2 Ways of maintaining contact with the RDP house

Despite not living in the house on a day to day basis, all but one of those interviewed maintained contact with their government-provided house. For those with family members currently living in the house, the house seemed to serve not only as daily shelter but as a long-term prospect for future residence for the family. In some cases, like that of street-vendor Bernice, the house was currently a place of active daily living for several generations of family members, with the breadwinner out on a weekly foray to earn an income.

For respondents Pam and Priscilla, the house was rendered secure by a single male family member, but in each case these interviewees' children lived on a daily basis with a female relative in another house. In these examples the family gathered at the RDP house when the breadwinner returned, at weekends or on holidays.

In one case, the house was secured through the occupation of a friend's son, with the owner moving in at month-end to handle 'business': Adele visited her house monthly in order to collect rental from the three backyard rooms she let out. In the near future when she retires from her job and moves to the family house in the town of Polokwane, Adele intends to rent out the RDP house as well as the back rooms, to supplement her pension. She anticipates selling the property outright in about three years' time.

Unlike other interviewees, in three cases the RDP house was locked and empty for much of the time. Val visited her house frequently however (once or twice per week), and in between times her neighbour (a community leader) looked out for it. Dumisani and his

wife visited their house in Hammanskraal monthly as a kind of outing/ weekend away and at other times, Dumisani's wife's sister keeps an eye on it from her house nearby. By contrast Andile was unable to afford the cost of train fare to visit his house regularly, and he and or his wife went there 'when there is money'. There appeared to be no on-going oversight of this house.

7.4 Significance of the RDP house

Respondents suggested that the RDP house is important for interviewees in several ways. For some interviewees the RDP house provided a place of residence for family members. Sizwe and Danny had children and partners living in their houses. This is an active shelter purpose, different to those such as Pam who had put family members into the house to look after it (i.e. to safeguard the house in the first instance, rather than to shelter family members in the first instance).

For several interviewees the house was highly significant in having improved their living circumstances when they were in occupation, and in providing a sense of security, or hope for the future. Priscilla talks of 'staying free there' referring to living without worries in the RDP house in comparison to renting somewhere. Her contentment was reinforced by having title deeds:

[at] the time they gave me the key, they gave me the title deed and they said to me this house is yours. [The Title Deed] is written in my name and this is my signature there... So I am staying free in that house...I was very happy that I have got a house of my own. I am not renting with someone, am not staying in someone's house. It's what makes me happy because it's my house (Priscilla).

In contrast to this sense of security Dumisani, whose wife purchased an RDP house, was a little worried: a formally recognized transfer process has not been completed so legal paperwork proving ownership was lacking:

they make affidavit at the police station saying 'I am *giving* a house' - because if you say you are *selling*...[the authorities] won't listen. But the house is still...[in the

name of] the lady there because we never go to the Department of Housing and change the name (Dumisani interview).

Andile's house appeared to offer hope for the future and it was important to him to hold on to the house²¹¹. Although he could only afford to go there very infrequently, he rejected the idea of selling the house without having another house to replace it with:

you can [only] sell the house when you got another house [to go to]. You can't just sell the house...The way I'm struggling I can't sell my house. No I can't sell my house (Andile interview).

Working far away from his house is not a reason to sell it:

I can't sell my house because...I stay far [away]...I would sell when I see that I will go [to live] next to my work, you see? Ja, but just I can't sell the house. I must always survive with that house (Andile interview).

Whilst Christine was mocked by family members for not having made a success of living in her RDP house, at least both she and Theresa were able to shed themselves of the houses when they became burdensome – in other words, it was a disposable benefit. Christine managed to derive some income from renting out the house, whilst Theresa derived a one-off payment of R13 000 from selling the house, which she was able to do easily. The translator in her interview explained that

really, it wasn't difficult for her to sell the house... she put out the word out there ...They [the RDP houses] always are in demand anywhere, so it wasn't hard to find [a buyer]. ..The person who [bought it] worked at Barberton Hospital ... (Theresa interview).

²¹¹ This may connect to notions of 'manhood', or adulthood. Referring to the house in Soweto he moved into in 1946 with his first wife, Nelson Mandela states...*'It was the opposite of grand, but it was my first true home of my own and I was mightily proud. A man is not a man until he has a house of his own.'* Nelson Mandela, *The Long Walk to Freedom*. Cited in <http://www.mandelahouse.com/history.asp> accessed 6/10/2010.

For Adele, the house was a clear income-earner both for now and in the future. Her emotional investment however, was in a family home elsewhere (in Polokwane). However, most other interviewees were very cautious of using the house to generate income through rental if they were not in full time residence there to supervise and maintain order:

it's nice [to earn income from tenants] when you stay there but it's not nice when you are not there....because everything is going to be messed up in the yard because you are not there [to look after it] (Priscilla interview).

In 1998...my house...[had a] break in. I was still with somebody who was staying in my yard and then the suspicion were to that person who was staying in my yard. So since from then I didn't want anybody [living in my yard]...(Pam interview).

Overall, maintaining contact with the RDP house was important to interviewees in various different ways.

7.5 Alternative accommodation

In this section on the alternative accommodation I discuss in four sub-sections the circumstances respondents lived in when not in their RDP houses, the reasons they lived there, the significance for them and the significance for the state of these alternative situations.

7.5.1 Nature and quality

Largely as a consequence of not being able to afford the commute, all of those with regular jobs or income earning activities occupied alternative accommodation near to their work. The nature and quality of this accommodation varied considerably across the interviewees.

Three of the interviewees slept rough, literally on the pavements of Johannesburg on a nightly basis. Two of these rough sleepers were 'frequent commuters', returning to their RDP houses at weekends but on weeknights sleeping on unused land under a freeway in the central CBD. They earned an income as informal recyclers, and slept with their hand-

pulled carts and the waste goods they collect for resale. The discussion of their sleeping circumstances went thus:

[Interviewer]:...at the beginning, I said to you, 'where are you going to sleep tonight?' and you said 'over there', meaning under the bridge, there? Can you describe, can you tell me, how are you going to sleep?

Sizwe: Oh well, no it's a difficult question. There's just...we just sleep.

Danny: What we do, then we get some cardboard, ne? Then maybe...big cardboard, then we make it...something like a wall, yeah, just to...you know, just to keep the wind...and then, you'll make a bed, and then you put your blanket.

Sizwe: Before you write, before you write [your interview notes]...he has got that box, he is alone,...I don't have a box and I will sleep over on top of the trolley. So he's one that has got that box...He found it on Friday last week, so he say...yeah, we are just sleeping right there, on top of our trolleys, yeah (Sizwe and Danny interviews).



Figure 7-1: Bridge that Sizwe and Danny slept under during week nights (author's own, 2010).

These informal recycler interviewees were vulnerable to raids from the City of Johannesburg's Metro Police Department (JMPD), presumably for breaking by-laws by sleeping in public spaces. Raids which had taken place shortly before the interview meant the recyclers could no longer leave possessions under the bridge whilst going out on their waste collection activities, impeding their daily work:

there is a bag of mine where there is my clothes, everything, ID and everything, they [the JMPD] just burned everything. So you see, the place is clean...when you sleep there, you must sleep there then [wake] early in the morning and take everything out. So you can imagine if you got some blankets and everything in your trolley and [are] going to collect some other stuffs again, together with [all your belongings]...Yeah, 'cause leaving them there, they are going to burn it...It's happened many times. Many times, many times (Sizwe and Danny interviews).

These comments indicated the vulnerable, precarious and uncomfortable circumstances in which these respondents slept, whilst being home-owners, a point I discuss further below. A third rough sleeper interviewed slept on pieces of cardboard under or next to his trading stall on the pavement outside Johannesburg's main train station, as he has done for many years.

A considerable improvement from rough sleeping, Bernice paid R200 per month for floor space in a cluttered domestic garage in the middle income suburb of Melville. She had no furniture or cooking utensils and shares the space with one other person, a motorbike and other stored items. The translator in this discussion reported her description of her accommodation thus:

There is no bed...there's a mat [on the floor] that's like a mattress, a very thin mattress that they sleep on...they don't have a stove. They don't cook at all. What she does is, she only has a kettle...most of the time she eats bread and tea. And during the day she only buys from shops. And okay, the other one that stays with her, the other lady – well, she has a relative close by, so, she, she – that's where she goes and cooks her meals and sometimes she shares with her [Bernice] (discussion with Bernice through translator).

Just outside the garage Bernice stores the goods that she sells from a cart she pushes through the suburbs. On Saturdays she goes home to the family house in Motla, Tshwane, returning to Melville, Johannesburg on a Monday morning.

Like Bernice, Andile also speaks of how his living conditions, in this case on the pavement, shape his diet: meat is the easiest to cook in a little oil over a paraffin stove, whilst vegetables take too much water and preparation time.

I can't buy the [pre-cooked] food to the street. It cost a lot of money. R30 a take-away. We are two [people]. That is why I buy my small stove, primus stove to cook here...at night. During the day I eat bread...[At night] I can cook some meat. But you know veggie, you can't cook vegetables to the street...Vegetables got lot of work you know? They like water like this, you see? We must clean it, make it. Meat, you know, you just buy and you put it inside the pot, cook fast. You eat (Andile interview).

In Dumisani's case, he had an RDP house in Hammanskraal, Pretoria but remained living in a crowded one-room backyard shack in Alexandra, Johannesburg that he shared with his wife and four children. The time and cost of the commute from Alexandra to the upmarket golf course Dumisani works at in Riverclub was manageable. Despite acquiring a house (that he purchased for R15 000) its location was such that Dumisani was unable to use it to improve his daily living conditions. He was actively seeking another RDP house in a location he can live permanently in.

The domestic workers interviewed occupy staff quarters that they generally described as comfortable, with a room or rooms supplemented by a bathroom and cooking facilities. Interviewees live there at no (known)²¹² rental cost.

An exception to those who characterized their accommodation as comfortable was Evelyn, who described her room in a block of flats, with shared ablutions and kitchen, as small and 'not good'. Her employer bore the cost of the rental of this room from the

²¹² One interviewee wondered whether her employer was deducting an amount upfront from her salary but this had never been discussed.

complex at R800 per month. Evelyn's trajectory into this accommodation is noteworthy: she rented a backyard shack in Orlando, Soweto with her son, but she was required to move when the provincial government implemented an upgrading programme. This upgrading initiative recognized and sought to improve the quality of backyard rooms, but reduced the number of them per site, thereby displacing some residents.

Evelyn managed to claim a plot in a project in Orange Farm in the far south of Johannesburg, on which she built a shack whilst waiting for the state's housing programme to reach her site. But whereas from the backyard shack in Orlando she was able to commute to her job in upmarket Hyde Park in the north of the city, from Orange Farm this daily commute is too costly. She requested her employer's assistance in finding somewhere to stay because she was 'tired to pay rent' for a backyard shack or room. At the time of the interview she lived in the domestic worker room and every second weekend she went to Orange Farm to join her son who looked after the house.

Two interviewees who were ex-residents of RDP houses had moved to live with relatives. Neither person was working, so this accommodation was not linked to an income earning opportunity as with the other interviewees, but was linked to economic support. Christine lived in crowded circumstances in a house in Meadowlands, Soweto with 12 other family members and two tenants who rented rooms. She found her situation painful and suggested she was mocked by family members for having 'failed' with her RDP house. By contrast Theresa had happily sold her house and moved back to the family home she grew up in in Chiawelo, Soweto after changes in family circumstances created space there for her. She was pleased to have the support of family, where she said it 'feels like home'.

7.5.2 Reasons for the choice of alternative accommodation

All of the people interviewed lived elsewhere to their RDP house, for most or all of the time. There were specific reasons for the particular kind of alternative accommodation interviewees occupy. The 'ex-RDP-residents' described above occupied their specific

accommodation because of they have moved into family houses. Similarly 'future hopeful' Dumisani's backyard shack was in the yard of his brother.

As might be expected, domestic workers were in their staff accommodation because of the opportunity for this offered by their employment.

I asked [my employer]...to find a place for me to stay here...I am tired to pay the rent (Evelyn interview).

Some employees such as Nandi made use of this domestic worker accommodation very much at their convenience, and the arrangement was flexible:

on some nights [Nandi] sleeps over at work [in Linmeyer]. During the working week she goes twice to [the RDP house in] Palmridge, on Mondays and Wednesdays. Then she goes there again on Saturday. She stays at Linmeyer the other nights. This is because of transport, not because her employer requires her to stay over. There is transport available when she finishes work but it is very expensive. It would cost her [more than] R30 per day if she had to commute every day (translator for Nandi interview).

Informal recyclers Sizwe and Danny slept rough with their carts for several reasons: first the 'no-cost' accommodation saves them money, but, second, they also needed to have their carts and one-ton hessian collecting bags safely secured overnight (which they did by sleeping on or next to them). Further, it was convenient to for them to sleep where they sorted their bulky waste goods and stockpiled items for re-sale (cardboard, plastics, metal, white paper and so on). Finally, the space where they slept was close to the buy-back centre where they sold their goods.

Andile needed to sleep at his trading stall to get whatever business was going at all times of the day and night. Although he had a storeroom close by, he didn't use it for sleeping in as he would lose out on business:

now when you sleep to the storeroom [rather than on the pavement at the stall], money pass you here on the outside...Money pass you [by], that's why I always, I'm trying to stay here...24 hours (Andile interview).

As Andile's stall was close to his storeroom he could also keep an eye on his stored stock, noting that when he was not present in the area his goods got stolen by fellow traders in the vicinity.

Bernice's very basic accommodation on the garage floor was in the area where she sells her goods. It was thus convenient for storing her stock, and for her daily vending in the surrounding suburbs on foot. She had access to the accommodation through historical connections with the person who owns the house (Bernice used to know the current landlord's father in the 1970s). Bernice was uncomplaining about her barren living circumstances, valuing its contribution in making her business possible. She suggested it would be very difficult to find other accommodation in the area as people in the suburbs are suspicious of hiring out rooms to people. She was resigned to her circumstances, as the translator explained:

She's just saying that there's nothing that she – she doesn't like about the place [she sleeps in]. For her it's just enough that at least she has shelter and it's the cheapest place for her currently...[Bernice and her roommate] feel that they have no other way or plan. But it's just to accept their circumstances and at least there's an income and they are able to take food home...As long as they have shelter (translator for Bernice interview).

7.6 Significance of the alternative accommodation for respondents

The alternative accommodation was significant in peoples' lives in various ways. Interviewees such as Christine and Theresa had gained financial support from family members through being able to share their accommodation. Christine had also gained regular access to water and electricity through the sharing of service costs and payments.

However Christine felt taunted about her situation and felt her current living conditions were worse than where she was staying before:

'cause leaving there [the RDP house] was painful...because [now] we are fighting with my sisters, and there are plenty of us in the house with cousins, we fight and say words that are not right. You see, "Hey, you rented your house, see that you leave," you see, things like that, so...(Christine interview).

Most interviewees who made use of domestic worker accommodation could save money, avoiding daily travel costs without incurring additional rental costs. Most of the domestic workers' financial situations were further improved by having food, electricity and water at their work accommodation provided by their employers.

[living here] it's fine, it saves the money. Because I have to send the money home so to stay here saves the money (Priscilla interview).

With her changed circumstances from backyard shack to domestic quarters Evelyn saved the previous costs of commuting and monthly rental. A form of accommodation historically associated with long working hours and fairly exploitative conditions²¹³, for the interviewees in this study who all worked in wealthy areas, alternative accommodation offered a cost-effective, and for most, a reasonably comfortable part-time accommodation option.

Two domestic worker interviewees had family members living with them who benefited from the location of the alternative accommodation. Val was the only domestic worker with children living with her, accessing schooling and university close by her work, paid for by her employer. Pam's husband lived with her and saved about R900 per month he would have had to spend if he commuted from the RDP house in Vosloorus to his job:

in Vosloorus we don't have a railway station. So [my husband] has to take the taxi to...Katlehong...And then from Katlehong...he's taking the train to here in Joburg and then from here to work, he's taking the train again to Langlaagte. And then from Langlaagte he's taking the taxi again...to where he works (Pam interview).

As noted, for Bernice, her alternative accommodation was highly significant in facilitating her vending work. Likewise for rough sleepers Sizwe, Danny and Andile their nightly living conditions were crucial to their businesses, despite the level of discomfort and vulnerability.

²¹³ Under apartheid 'live-in' domestic workers were common; generally accommodated in a poor quality outside room which had rules and restrictions governing usage, and having very long working hours for low pay.

7.6.1 Social consequences

However there were social consequences of these living arrangements. The fragmentation of households over time and space was striking, with several families split over three locations. Pam and Andile for example had children living with a mother or mother-in-law, separate from both their nightly accommodation and their RDP house. In Pam's case this was not only because of the need for a responsible adult carer, but also because of where schooling was available: in the RDP suburb of Vosloorus Extension 28 Phase 6a, there were no schools, and transport out of the area for her three children would amount to a significant monthly cost. Her mother's house in old Vosloorus had the advantage of being within walking distance of school for two of her children.

Andile's children sometimes stayed with him and his wife on the street at their trading stall:

when I remember the children I tell...my wife 'Go and fetch the children. You will come and stay with me'. They spend the whole day here. Later they go back...Yes, they sleep here. They know, they know everything about here [the vending stall at the railway station] (Andile interview).

Eight interviewees saw their children on a weekly basis, while long-distance commuter and single parent Priscilla only saw her children a few times a year. Her loneliness at this separation was evident. Various discipline and relationship consequences could presumably arise from one or both parents not being with their children on a daily basis. There is also a child-raising responsibility placed on older family members: Priscilla's mother who looked after her child in Cathcart in the Eastern Cape was approaching 90 years old.

Other interviewees did live with their children. Christine and Theresa, who moved out of their RDP houses, lived in relative's houses with their children, and Dumisani lived permanently with his four children and wife in their one-room backyard shack.

7.7 Significance for the state of these living circumstances

7.7.1 Persistence of inadequate living conditions after acquisition of housing

It was sobering to note that inadequate living circumstances can develop *after* receipt of an RDP house, or can persist despite receipt of a formal house. This was the case for six of the interviewees: the three rough sleepers interviewed, as well as Dumisani who continued to live in a backyard shack, Bernice's accommodation on the floor of a garage, and Christine, who moved to a formal house in a former black township where conditions appeared very overcrowded, with twelve family members in residence and two rooms on the property rented out to other people.

On the face of it, acquisition of a formal house should signify the end of poor living conditions, with the formal house providing vastly improved shelter in its own right, and a financial means to better accommodation over time. This is not the case for these respondents for much of the week, and in fact much of their lives. Their alternative accommodation consisted of poor conditions of the kind which the state's housing programme seeks to address.

The findings also demonstrate the direct relationship between income earning activities and accommodation for several of the respondents. For the four self-employed interviewees, space for storage, secure oversight over their goods, access to markets and sources of stock, and their low earnings compelled them into a cheap form of accommodation that met these needs, at or near to their work.

The possibility of the simultaneous co-existence of poor living circumstances along with formal housing, and with productive activity, seemed largely unrecognized by organizations of the state. The activities of the City of Johannesburg's Metro Police Department (JMPD) targeting rough sleepers reflected an assumption that these poor living circumstances were linked to undesirable activities and 'down and out' people.

So [the JMPD] don't...regard us as human beings...When they see us, they just think maybe you are just the hobos, somebody just kicked out...They don't give you any chance (Sizwe and Danny interviews).

The recyclers described how their activities of collecting domestic and commercial waste for goods to sell brought them into conflict with authorities. Whilst their occupation of public space for sorting and sleeping probably infringed various by-laws, the impression gained by the recyclers was less one of technical contraventions than being unwanted in the city. The activity of collecting waste goods, coupled with rough living appeared anathema to authorities and against the image the City wished to project. The interviews were conducted a few months before the soccer World Cup in 2010, which the respondents commented on:

[the JMPD] say we are making a mess...we are not needed here because 2010 [Soccer World Cup] is coming...tourists they are coming here, they are going to see us suffering, so...[the JMPD] don't want us to be seen...So they have to chase us away. It's a pity they don't have...big walls, then we'll go inside there...so the people mustn't see us. Even now, you [interviewer] are sitting with us like this knowing that we are pulling the trolley...People are going to say 'why you are here [with these people]' you see, that is what they mean. They don't want us to be seen (Sizwe and Danny interviews).

At times the recyclers' camp on public land in the downtown area was raided and the goods they stockpiled for re-sale burnt by municipal police.

[if the JMPD] found the boxes and everything, they just take it...And they know exactly that that is the [equivalent of] money. They know exactly, some of them they are still even selling [the goods]...So they act as if they don't know, but they know exactly, that what they are burning is the money...they just chase... when they come, we have to run away and then we disperse and then they...They bring that pepper spray...To disperse us (Sizwe & Danny interviews).

The interviewees described the impact on their lives of these police raids, with people in their camp having valuable possessions including identity documents confiscated or stolen. The disruption to lives was profound. For example Danny described how his careful budgeting strategy was overturned in this process.

I promised my child...I would buy him clothes for winter. So from March, ...beginning [of the month], ne, I used to make plenty stock, because I make budget, because end of March, I wanna buy clothes for my child...I used to put too much [a lot of] stock outside, no I don't want to sell it, because if I sell me like that...that money I can use, you know, for food. Now, that 22 [of March] they [the JMPD] came, they just burn everything...All my stock. I think it was R1500 they took down. Money. If I sell that stock I can get that money...I've got 4 children, that I can buy everything, if I've got R2000 I can buy shoes, jackets, even now, I never reach that money, because I can't work. If I work, I must work little bit and hurry to come to the recycling and I must sell quickly because that people [JMPD] they can burn. I can't make that money like this (Sizwe and Danny interviews).

The state, represented here by the municipal police, did not see how very poor living conditions and hard and dirty work shunned by others could be part of the productive activity of a household. Not only is this productive activity, but it is directly linked to on-going residence in a state-provided house: these housing beneficiaries were unable to find work near their houses and their continued occupation and maintenance of family life in the house depended on earning income elsewhere to support those resident in the house. Their particular form of income generation as recyclers was on the face of it laudable: manual, labour-intensive, non-carbon emitting, environmentally friendly and productive, but these dimensions were unrecognized by the state, and the links to its own housing programme were unseen.

7.7.2 Cost of housing

Further on the matter of the significance to the state, for those living in alternative accommodation because they were not able to cope with the RDP house, there was considerable frustration associated with the state house. Theresa was discouraged because

she couldn't pay for the services, the municipal services...two hundred and something [rand] per month (translator for Theresa interview).

Christine was more stark in her commentary:

hey, that place makes me poor...I struggled there [in the RDP house] with the kids (Christine interview).

These examples of single parents unable to live in an RDP house are arresting. That living in the houses attracts costs is unsurprising; less clear is exactly why RDP living was unaffordable. Other state benefits such as the child support grant and free quotas and discounts for municipal services (offered by the City of Johannesburg in recent years for example) are aimed at increasing household incomes and affordability. It is unclear whether these benefits were accessed by interviewees Christine and Theresa. However these examples of a housing benefit aimed at the poorest of the poor itself becoming a burden warrant hard examination by the state.

With respect to the overall issue of income and affordability, several interviewees retained their formal houses, but remained poor with no ability to invest in the house or to use the house to improve their financial circumstances. Bernice reported through the translator that

she'd really love to extend the house and have back rooms [to rent out] but then she doesn't have the strength to, because even from the little [money] that she gets from selling [her goods] it's not enough to cover the material costs of cement and all the other construction material. So as it is she can't even build rooms for her children that are staying with her. So they just share the little space that they have (Bernice interview).

This situation contrasts with the conventional view that a house should ultimately be a route to more prosperous circumstances. Other interviewees who were not resident in their house were discouraged from using the property for rental income as they were absent landlords. Adele was an exception, successfully earning income from her RDP house.

With regard to goods associated with housing, some interviewees had bought appliances and furniture since acquiring the RDP house. Priscilla had bought a fridge, a TV, a bedroom suite, and a two- burner electric stove. By contrast Sizwe and Dumisani both

indicated they had bought very little as they didn't have enough money to buy these sorts of goods.

7.7.3 Problems with billing and payment for services

The matter of service charges and payments has further dimensions of concern. In Christine's case, non-payment resulted in service cut-offs which eventually prompted her to give up living in the house. In several other cases however it was clear that payment for services was not being enforced by authorities, or were in disarray. Nandi moved to her RDP site in 1999 and in her interview explained that:

at Palmridge there were no costs at first. 1999 – 2007 [she] did not pay anything for water. After 2007 people have been issued with letters to pay water. But people are not paying – they don't want to. [Nandi] hasn't received a letter yet to pay (translator for Nandi interview).

In situations such as this there are likely to be future impacts on interviewees of having to pay for services at some point – services which are now being consumed free of charge. Other interviewees spoke freely about disconnections taking place in their areas due to non-payment for services, but they reported the ease with which illegal re-connections were being done. Pam explained that the same people who are contracted by the municipality to install water and electricity are hired by residents to reinstate services when they are disconnected:

oh shame, they [the municipality] are trying [to collect service payments] but you know there's this thing that we are [saying] – if they switch off the electricity, we switch on in another way...(Pam interview).

On the matter of service charge payments the interviews contained three circumstances of concern for authorities: first, in instances where charges were being levied, households were unable to pay, disconnections ensued and living conditions in the RDP house worsened or became unbearable. Second, in instances where disconnections had occurred, they were by-passed through illegal re-connections. Third, there were cases where it appears no billing or service charge collections were being done at all.

7.7.4 Accessing housing through unconventional means

Noteworthy for the state were the different ways in which interviewees acquired their houses. These included conventional application processes as well as allocation or purchase by other means. Some interviewees perceived corruption in the process. Evelyn described how she had to pay to get access to a site:

somebody tell me that the people give the poor people the stands there [in Orange Farm] so I...go to check. Then I find...[those] people there and I ask to keep me a stand...Then she asked me to pay. I said: "No, I haven't got money." She said "no, we didn't keep you the stand". After that I'm running to my madam [employer]...to help me with about R1 000 and I go to pay and they give me the stand, like that...I think the councillor asked the people [for money]. I think a lot of mans, maybe six or seven, they help to give the people the stands because we are a lot, it's a big place. So these people are making crook for us because the council doesn't ask the people to charge. They give the stands free, but we pay. We pay, some...pays R200, R500, R2 000. I pay one point five [R1 500]. The other people R3 000, R5 000, like that (Evelyn interview).

The interviews also indicated that trade in houses was active through a range of practices, some of which seemed corrupt or at best opaque. Dumisani described trying to buy an RDP house in Alexandra:

there is a guy called Jacob. He did promise me a house but he never tell me [he had got one]. One month...people they tell me 'that guy can get you a house but you have to give him money'. So I did try to ask him how much he wants but he told me 'don't worry I will get you one at Bramfischer', I said I don't want in Bramfischer, it's too far. He said 'no, they are going to build Extension 7 there [in Alex] so you must come and check me'. When I go there to check him, they did arrest him so [now] he is not working at the houses anymore...(Dumisani interview).

Several other interviewees had been involved in trade in some way, or were aware of active trade. Andile searched all over for a house and got one in Houtkop, allocated through a local street committee. It's unclear whether money changed hands in this case. Theresa was easily able to sell her house in Barberton. Val described how basic RDP houses in her area Devland Ext 27 were sold for R75 000, whilst Pam talked of the resale of houses that have been improved and extended:

the people are selling the RDP houses. We're having a lot of people who were buying the RDP houses and then somebody who have managed to build houses, building the houses very nicely and then when they sell the houses they're selling the houses [for] about R400 000 (Pam interview).

It is clear that RDP houses are actively bought and sold. However it is also clear that many of these transactions are not processed through the Deeds Office. Trade of this sort therefore doesn't conform to formal property transaction processes and the associated assumed benefits (enabling potential connections to formal loan finance for example).

7.7.5 Attraction of RDP housing

The active trade in housing was a clear indication of its desirability, at least in some areas for some people. In addition, a number of interviewees expressed pride in their houses, satisfaction with their homes, and gratitude to government. For several interviewees the combination of not having to pay rent and having the security of their own place was striking:

now [although] we are not there [living in the house every day] ... we are free because we have got our own house. That is the most important thing: if you have got a roof over your head...I know my kids are under the roof...[in comparison with before at] that time when you are just renting, not staying free. So I am very happy for that because it's the one important thing the government made for us: to build up the houses...It is the very most important thing (Priscilla interview).

So we are happy, you know. Because we are poor and we haven't got money to build the house for ourself (Evelyn interview).

Several interviewees saw a long-term future for themselves in the RDP house. Nandi said she would stay for many more years in Palmridge, Johannesburg in her RDP house. Rather than ever sell it or rent it out, she would leave the house to her children or to a family member. Although her mother was still in the Eastern Cape and she visited a few times per year, she wouldn't go back there to live there permanently, as her house was now in Johannesburg (translator for Nandi interview).

Andile who actively sought out an RDP house was sure that he would keep his house, as indicated earlier, but he was less clear when asked about the benefits of the state's housing programme. He remained sleeping on the street despite possessing an RDP house, two hours' train ride away:

I am not sure [about government's RDP housing programme]...for a long time I want[ed] some place to stay. Hey, I was staying to the street, Madam. I'm suffering too much. Now, I don't know... whether it's bad or whether it's right... even now you see, I'm suffering. I say I've got the house, but I still go the streets...I sleep on the street – it's bad, too bad (Andile interview).

Interestingly very few interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the location of the house. An example was Evelyn: although she could only manage to visit her house once every two weeks she did not complain about the location:

it's good in Orange Farm... it's a little bit far but it's fine for me (Evelyn interview).

7.7.6 What government could do differently

Government was not blamed for interviewees' inability to commute. Even when asked explicitly what government could do to improve the housing programme, or more generally, few interviewees suggested anything to do with transport to and from RDP housing areas, or the location of these areas. Whilst many respondents referred to the cost of transport during their interviews, this cost was not a problem they laid at the door of the state: running affordable public transport was not identified as a government responsibility. This may be because of peoples' historically limited experience with efficient, affordable public transport.

Nandi for example declared she was 'satisfied' even though the transport between her house and her job was difficult. She noted that taxis were available, just very expensive, but she stated 'there's nothing government could do'. As an afterthought she suggested that perhaps if there was a train that might be better because the train is cheaper than taxis. However she mentioned that having a choice of where to get a house would be helpful:

what government should do differently is build a settlement, don't force you to go there but you choose, and when you go there you find it works OK. But it is correct that government is helping, and that you get ownership so you don't have to rent (translator for Nandi interview).

Christine was one of very few interviewees to mention transport as an area that government could assist with, seeing transport for school children as an area of potential intervention:

what the government can do...[for] people who live in RDP houses, because people who stay there are not working mostly, they have children, you find that the children come from the RDP house and go to schools in the townships. They [the children] should be provided with transport (Christine interview).

One interviewee identified school transportation as an opportunity and was planning to get a driver's licence, buy a car, and set up a business ferrying children to and from school in her area (Pam interview).

For Christine assistance with paying for services was another important area of intervention:

and [government can help with] the issue of water, the fact that people should buy water and [if they can't] people will stay 2 days without water. And the issue of electricity, this prepaid, because most of the time people are not working. The government can help with things like that (Christine interview).

In general, despite the problems in peoples' lives most interviewees did not make a link between their difficult circumstances and state actions or inactions. Several interviewees came across as sympathetic to government and uncritical of it. Andile had a very low, precarious income and slept rough on the streets most of the time, yet his comments on the state's performance reflected his sympathy with its attempts to help so many in need:

I can't say [what government could do better] just because we are many, Madam, you know? People are many and the way we are many, Government can't help all of us (Andile interview).

The strongest suggestion for how government could improve its approach centred on work creation. The importance of jobs, or a form of income, was stressed by several interviewees, who noted the limitations of housing in the absence of income:

ja, you know the RDP houses are fine for those people – but what I'm thinking now [what] if the government keeps on building the RDP houses, you know? Those people who are buying those RDP or who are getting those RDP, where are they going to work? You know, because there's no work? So these people is forced to go and steal because he's hungry now and what's the government say: now we have to pay the electricity; we have to pay the water; we have to pay for the municipality. If I don't have money for bread, where I'm going to get this money, to pay, to maintain this house, you know?...Ja he must at least create job for people. If I've got money I can buy my own house, you know – ja. But if I've got a house, no money to maintain, no job to do...To do anything you know, so, so it's like – no it's not working you know (Pam interview).

Following from her concern with the need for jobs, Pam ascribed the selling of RDP houses that she observed to poverty and the predominance of short term imperatives:

Yes for me, it was, it was a big thing [getting] the RDP house, but now the [number of] RDP's too much now. You know, the people don't afford because now they are selling the RDP house because of some, some are hungry you know. He said 'if I'm selling this house for R15 000 I will [be] having R15 000, maybe I will manage to carry on with the life'...only to find out when you're having R15 000 in your hands it's nothing. You see, so, some others they're taken [from] the squatter camp to RDP houses and then from – they're selling all RDP houses, they're going back to squatter camp again, see? (Pam interview).

Pam also recognized, however, that some people don't want to live permanently in Johannesburg but may still need a place to rent in the short term. In describing the area where her RDP house is she observed that

others [living in the area] they are not staying actually in Vosloorus. They have a [home] place, like Transkei, Zimbabwe, whatever. So they just want to rent, not to build, you know? (Pam interview).

Long distance commuter Priscilla's job was very far away from where she would like to be. She expresses her desire thus:

if [only] the government can create jobs because I want to go home now and stay with my kids. If he can create the job there [in Cathcart where my house is], I can pack my bags and go. [A job there is] the one thing I want from government...I don't like Jo'burg. I don't like it here. I like it because I have a job, I don't have a choice. I have to work here...(Priscilla interview).

Priscilla was equally clear that the alternative possibility of acquiring a new house closer to her current job is not what she wants.

7.8 Conclusion

What do these interviews reveal about state-funded housing and peoples' use of it? In one sense the findings discussed here confirm the orthodoxy in the literature of 'the poor location' of RDP housing. However this characterization is given detail and dimension: in these findings the locational issue pertains mainly to travel between house and work, and in some cases travel between house and school. The findings stress the cost of transport and in some cases its cumbersome nature, rather than its unavailability, lack of safety, or long journey time. Mini-bus taxis are the predominant form of transport used by interviewees, with train services more limited in their availability but markedly cheaper for the passenger. An alternative way of expressing this location issue is the absence of work or income generation opportunities near where RDP houses are, an issue noted in much of the literature.

A further dimension of the location issue is the problem of schools. Whilst few interviewees raised problems with the location of other facilities and amenities, several noted that there aren't appropriate schools near their RDP houses.

Interviewees seldom make clear links between transportation and any responsibility or role on the part of the state. Indeed, one observation made at a presentation of this material is the apparent *absence* of the state in much of what is described; for interviewees, acquiring the house, accessing alternative accommodation, or connecting

to services is often occurring outside of the state²¹⁴. The one clear demand made to the state is for jobs, however.

Apart from transport costs, the cost of living in RDP housing is most acutely felt in the cost of water and electricity services. Where billing systems are operational, and payment defaults attract penalties, RDP homeowners are vulnerable to disconnections or indebtedness which puts life in the house under severe strain. Many interviewees have not experienced this strain however, either because they are not yet being billed for services, or are not experiencing sanction for non-payment, or are in an environment where illegal reconnections are easy to organize²¹⁵. This suggests that the impact of service consumption and charges on the cost of living in RDP housing may grow in importance as municipal systems become more functional.

Whilst the interviewees were selected because they don't live in their RDP house, the variety and complexity of connections to the house became apparent. This is revealed in the type of links, the temporal and spatial nature of travel between work and living locations, and the impacts of these on families. Alternative accommodation existing in parallel to RDP housing is a feature of the lives of many interviewees. However a number of these alternative arrangements would not comply with what the state sees as 'reasonable' conditions.

For some this alternative accommodation is essential in order to support life in the RDP house for others, and for themselves: these interviewees claim that viable work opportunities in the vicinity of their houses are not to be found. Significant compromises in personal comfort and security made by several interviewees enable them to continue

²¹⁴ Comment by respondent Melinda Silverman, seminar presentation, Wits, 11 August 2010.

²¹⁵ The principle is 'user pays' for water and electricity consumption. 'Free basic services' have been introduced in many areas, providing a minimum consumption amount to all consumers, and a payment requirement above this consumption level. In many low-income areas electricity usage is controlled through a 'pre-paid' metering system where credits are bought in advance. The extent and efficiency of metered billing over and above this varies considerably across localities.

with essential, albeit low level income generation. The reasons for this very basic accommodation are largely financial, but are not confined to the cost of travel or lack of work near home mentioned earlier: in one case there is the need to be able to respond to customers at all hours of the night – the business is dependent on large numbers of very low value but frequent sales. Also significant in work/ sleep arrangements for some interviewees is oversight of work equipment and a place to store goods.

Trade in RDP housing is clearly active. People wanting to buy are as evident as sellers. This, along with the pride and degree of contentment expressed by a number of interviewees, indicates a greater desirability of RDP housing than I had expected. Indeed, the findings from these interviews have shifted the focus in this discussion from *leaving* RDP housing, to *retaining* or *acquiring* RDP housing. Most interviewees in this group have not abandoned, rejected or disposed of their housing but have rather found ways to acquire it and to keep it, despite its limitations. In different ways their actions resonate more with notions of clinging to state infrastructure (Bank 2011) than with deferring their commitment to it or disengaging from it (Simone 2002; Roy 2007). This suggests the intertwined nature of the aspirations of both state and beneficiary, resonating with that discussed by Mosse (2004).

The array of interactions with RDP housing reflected in this Johannesburg work spans a spectrum of responses as described in Chapter Two. As discussed the spectrum of interactions by people ranges widely: , at the one end is strategic *distancing* from the housing product, in these interviews demonstrated by former owner Theresa who has sold her house; then there are various conceptualizations of *resistance* to the object (an interpretation which can be applied to Christine's actions in moving out of her house and letting it to someone else); further along the spectrum are actions which *adapt, appropriate or transform* the product or people's lives in relation to the product, exemplified by the 'frequent commuter' interviewees who use alternative accommodation whilst also retaining their use of the house; then there are actions which more actively *seek out* or *cling* to the state's products, such as the intriguing example of

Andile and the RDP house he purchased but can't live in; and those which strive and *aspire to* 'live up' to the house, or which *embrace* the object and its environment (as indicated by interviewees Pam and Nandi, in their commitments to their houses and neighbourhoods). This spectrum does not necessarily correspond with physical distance or intimacy in occupation of the housing product, nor does it correspond with how closely usage of the house accords with state intentions. Rather it seems to align with the extent to which the house fulfils a personal rather than an instrumental role for the user.

The Johannesburg case study shows that several interviewees retain their RDP houses in the face of considerable obstacles, and can be considered be 'defending a gain' – defending the gain or acquisition of the RDP house. But strategies involved in this defence include activities which echo Bayat's (2004) notion of the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary': individual and low-key contraventions of authorised and formally accepted city usage. Ironically, these contraventions are required *in order to* hold on to the official improvement intervention. The informal recycler Sizwe is an example of this. He falls into the category of interviewees I labelled 'frequent commuters', with family members living in his house permanently and the house serving as an important anchor for them and him. He can't afford the daily cost of transport from his house to the areas he collects materials in, but he also needs to start outbound journeys to suburbs very early in the mornings. Further he needs space to gather and sort material near the buy-back depots. These activities of stockpiling, sorting and sleeping on disused municipal land during the week attract censure from the City's metropolitan police force, for the by-law infringements involved. Sizwe is assumed by officials to be a homeless vagrant, and not a property owner whose needs and legitimacy have been recognised by another arm of the state.

In the Johannesburg fieldwork a number of interviewees reported not paying for water and electricity services supplied to their RDP house. There were different reasons for this and different consequences, but several interviewees report that the result of running up debt to the municipal service provider in their area was that beneficiaries were

disconnected from the system. Disconnections were ineffective, however, as they were by-passed through illegal re-connections – by the same workers that had disconnected, this time moonlighting as service-restorers rather than service-terminators. As with Bayat's (2004) examples from Cairo and Teheran cited in Chapter Two, beneficiaries who confessed to not paying did not express 'defiance' but rather a resigned pragmatism.

From a livelihoods and an asset/ vulnerability perspective a household's 'letting go' of a house and property is a strategic choice. It is a relinquishing of something – an asset - that is not useful *enough as a place of residence* in a particular place and time, relative to other demands and opportunities. Theresa previously lived in her RDP house but after her husband died she was unable to provide for herself and her children in the small town of Barberton and so sold the house and has no further contact with it. Her prospects are better living with her extended family back in Johannesburg. Christine no longer lives in her RDP house in Snake Park, Dobsonville as she couldn't afford the electricity payments and kept getting disconnected from the power. By moving in with her three siblings and their children Christine and her children have incurred cramped conditions and loss of independence, but reduced monthly costs and gained some income from renting out the RDP house. These cases illustrate that key reasons for having to leave can be because of an inability to afford the direct costs of the house, or its longer indirect future costs. Bayat (2004) argues that poor and marginalised people gravitate towards independence from bureaucracy and authority, not from an 'essentially non- or anti-modern' stance, but because of the expense and difficulty of conforming: 'because modernity is a costly existence, not everyone can afford to be modern' (Bayat 2004: 94). Alternatively, or at the same time, a household might 'dis-encumber' itself from the physical structure whilst maintaining a relationship with the house for rental income, or for a future use, for example. What can be labelled as distancing, 'strategic disposal' or unburdening could also be viewed by some as 'rejection': however this term suggests a more active refusal or denunciation than was present in many of my interviews, which reflected rather a considered disposal at a particular moment.

In arguing for this conceptual spectrum I thus note that a polarised view – such as seeing beneficiary actions as ‘resistance’ - might seem initially applicable, but proves unhelpful in viewing RDP housing users’ interactions with their housing. The conceptualisation of a spectrum offers more range with which to tease out diversity and complexity of responses. But the notion of a spectrum does not suggest that ‘everything goes’, that there is no clear pattern, that the diversity of responses is too scattered to be useful. Rather it offers an interpretation of this housing benefit in the lives of users as both flawed and limited, but simultaneously fulfilling in some ways – ways which can vary between households. It draws attention to the agency of users in modifying the structure, or the use of it, across time and space, whilst flagging the limits of these efforts in overcoming major economic constraints. It concurs with similar observations in other contexts (Ghannam 2002; Dierwechter 2004) that the spaces of RDP settlements, and spaces elsewhere in the city are adapted and modified – co-constituted – by multiple actors which include RDP dwellers who are not merely passive recipients of a state hand-out.

8 CHAPTER 8 - RESIDENT BENEFICIARY RESPONDENTS

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the perceptions and experiences of eighteen interviewees who have received an RDP house and who are living in it. I discuss how the RDP house and its neighbourhood is used by the respondent, and consider how it supports respondents' lives, offers a platform for daily activities and contributes to a trajectory of improving life experience. I start by briefly describing the respondents and the RDP areas they live in, categorising them into three groupings which I return to discuss at the end of the chapter.

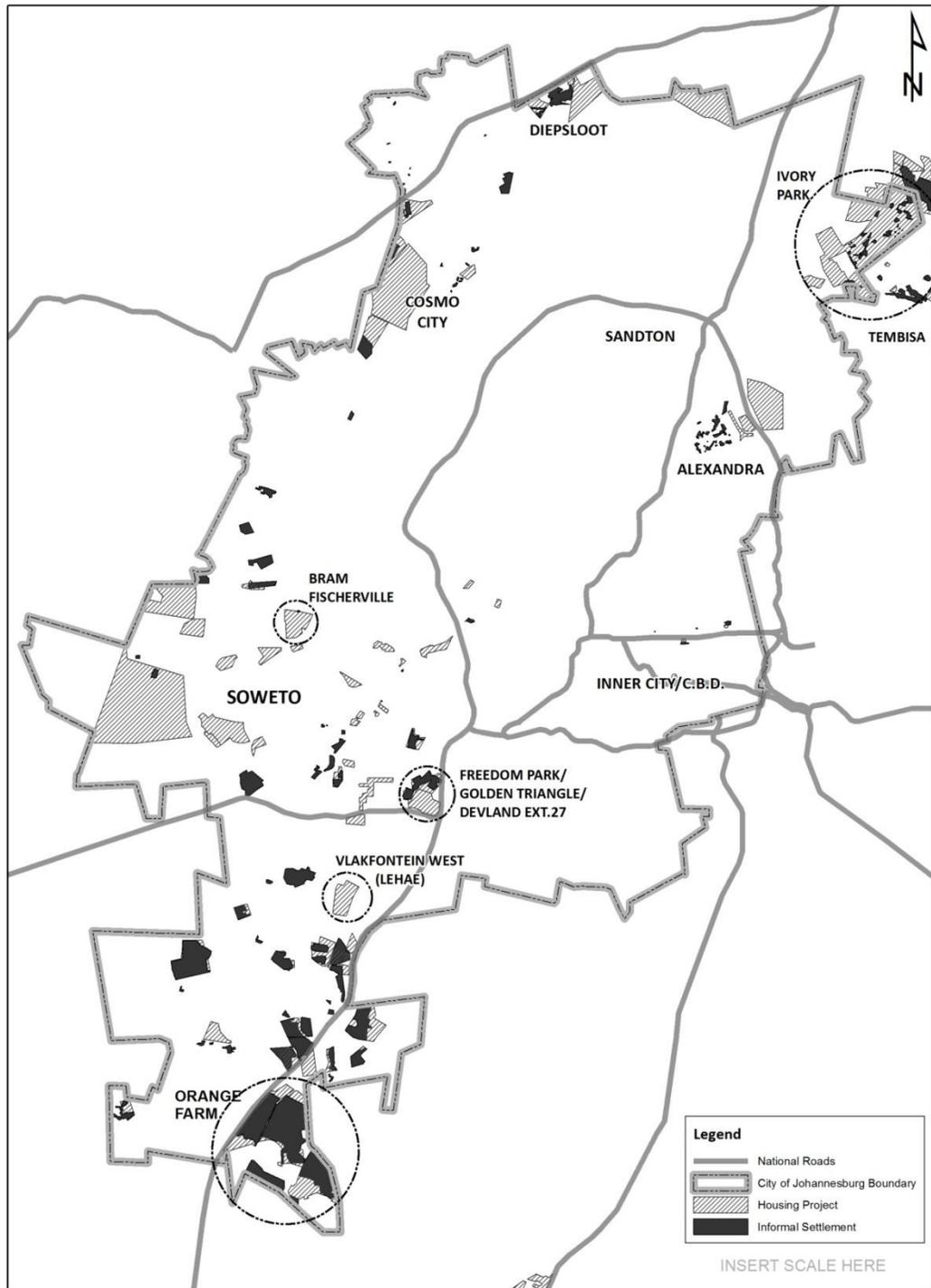
The findings demonstrate that in general, respondents have an attachment to their house, are very grateful to the state for having received it, and are largely satisfied with most aspects of their benefit. Most of the difficulties people raise are to do with the cost of transport and the lack of jobs. I reflect on the extent to which respondents have a different or conforming interaction with their houses to that envisaged by the state, and conclude that most broadly reflect conventional usage, attachment to the house and gratitude to the state. However this situation can simultaneously encompass usage and interactions which are controversial, challenging or discomfiting for the state. In these beneficiary practices I do not read distancing, rejection or resistance to state ideals but more typically people hooking on to state infrastructure, often conforming to or aspiring to conform to the norms promoted by the state, and pragmatic strategies driven by peoples' personal circumstances.

8.2 Categorising respondents

Interviewees live in one of the five RDP neighbourhoods of 1) Tembisa and Ivory Park (adjacent areas), 2) Orange Farm, 3) Freedom Park (and Devland Extension 27 within Freedom Park)²¹⁶, 4) Braamfischerville and 5) Lehae (Map 8-1). As noted in Chapter Three

²¹⁶ Also known as Golden Triangle.

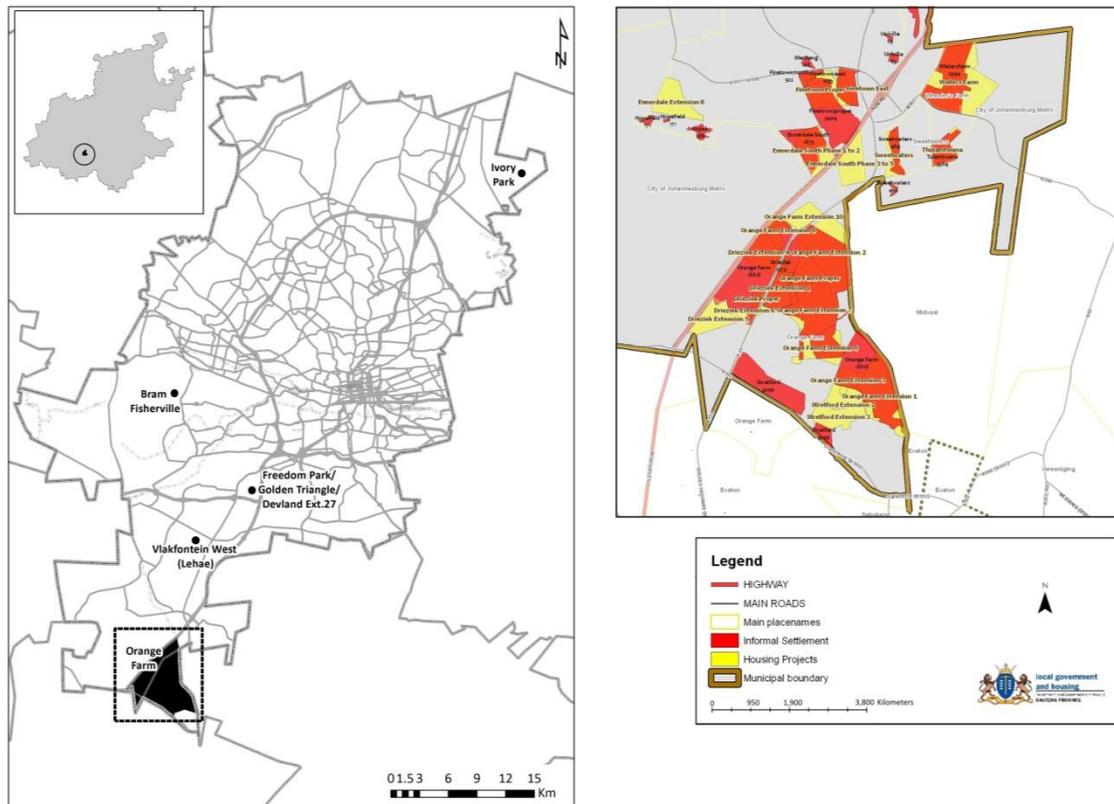
in fourteen instances I was able to visit and view the respondents' RDP house and neighbourhood during the interviews, which took place between August and October 2011. In one further case I visited the neighbourhood but not the respondent's house, and in three cases I interviewed the respondent at his or her place of work and did not see the neighbourhood or the house.



Derived from Gauteng Department of Housing and Local Government Data

Map 8-1: Circles depict the RDP settlements where resident beneficiary respondents live (map produced by Miriam Maina 2013).

The five areas differ in history and character. The Southern-most settlement, Orange Farm, is some 45kms south of the Johannesburg CBD (Murray 2008) and originated in 1988 (Habitat for Humanity not dated) or 1990 (Murray 2008) as an informal settlement on farmland. It is classified as a marginalised area by the City of Johannesburg, with Ward 3 in Orange Farm identified as ‘the most deprived area in the City of Johannesburg’ (University of Johannesburg 2008: 9).



Map 8-2: Orange Farm in context (map produced by Miriam Maina 2013 sourced from City and Provincial map data)

Orange Farm is described by Murray (2008: 108, 109) as a ‘virtually treeless, barren expanse of land’ which ‘was from the outset a dismal place with few social amenities’. Confoundingly perhaps he goes on to say that ‘despite the great distances to places of work and the virtual absence of basic infrastructure and social services, Orange Farm....has become one of the fastest-growing residential areas in South Africa’. It has been referred to as ‘something of a migrant staging-area’, having a high proportion of

internal and cross-border migrants, because it is argued, it has very little policing infrastructure or ‘meaningful policing’: it is a ‘below the radar’ place²¹⁷ (KL interview). My own impressions of Orange Farm were that it exhibited considerable evidence of visible investment and management by the state – such as clinics and community buildings, and maintenance vehicles. Other areas look more neglected: the roads in Bramfischerville for example are in a particularly poor condition.



Figure 8-1: Poorly maintained roads in Bramfischerville (author’s own 2011).

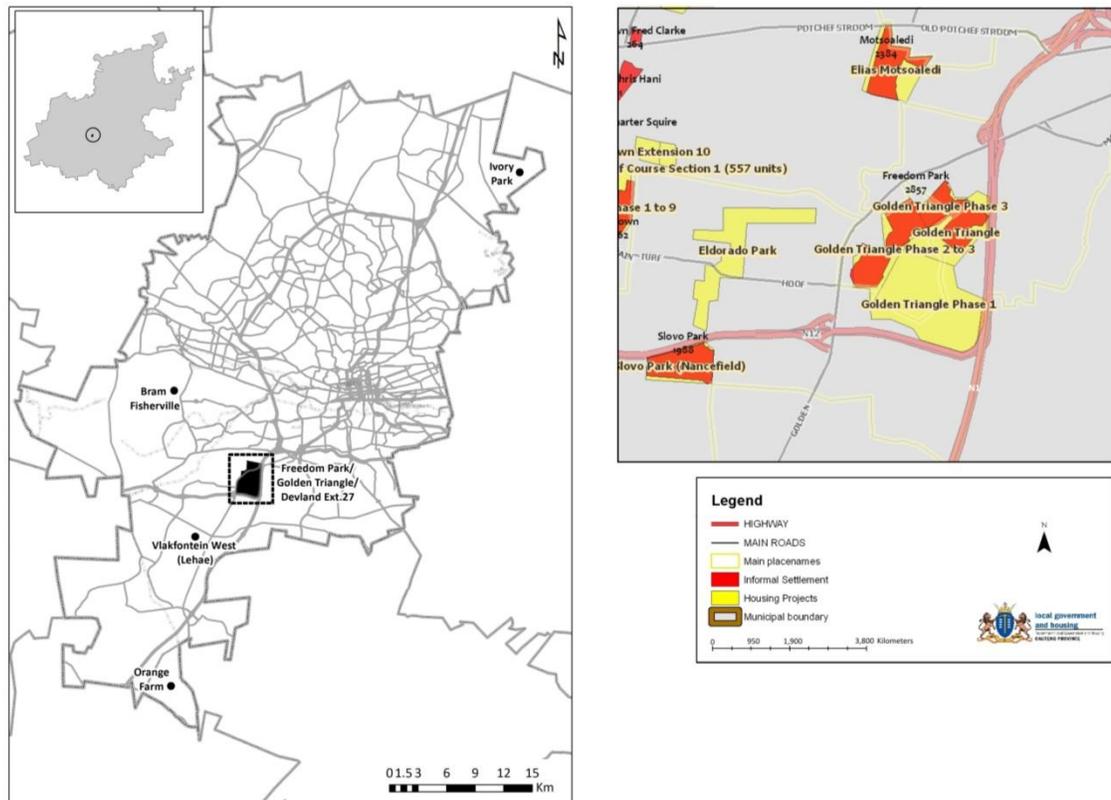
²¹⁷ Though it has a high density of schools.



Figure 8-2: Multi-purpose community facility in Orange Farm (author's own 2011).

Lehae is a new greenfields RDP and mixed income housing settlement ultimately planned to accommodate approximately 10 000 sites (CoJ 2008b). It is some 25kms to the south of the CBD, in the vicinity of the apartheid-era townships of Eldorado Park (formerly a Coloured residential area) and Lenasia (formerly an Indian residential area). Construction of the settlement was started in 2005 and a number of informal settlement residents were allocated housing at Lehae.

Further north is Freedom Park (encompassing Devland Extension 27 and also known as Golden Triangle), close to a number of major roads and to parts of Soweto. This started out as an informal settlement (CoJ 2009).



Map 8-3: Golden Triangle/ Freedom Park/ Devland Ext 27 in context (map produced by Miriam Maina 2013 sourced from City and Provincial map data)

To the west of Dobsonville, Soweto is Bramfisherville, in the now-redundant gold mining belt and some 15kms from Johannesburg’s CBD (Urban Dynamics not dated). Construction of the greenfield housing development started in 1998 under the auspices of the Gauteng Provincial Department of Housing.

Tembisa and Ivory Park are much further north in the metropolitan area, on either side of the boundary between Johannesburg and neighbouring Ekurhuleni Metro, some 32kms north of Johannesburg’s CBD. Tembisa is an older township, established in 1957, whilst adjacent Ivory Park was begun in 1990, growing from a few shacks established on farmland (Habitat for Humanity not dated). Along with the Diepsloot neighbourhood to the north-west, Ivory Park is identified as one of the poorest and fastest growing parts of the Johannesburg’s northern Region A (University of Johannesburg 2008).

receiving one – in the case of interviewee L1 for example, this was 13 years. A number of the interviewees did not have a job, but in a third of the cases the interviewee or another member of the household earned an income or supplemented their income locally in their neighbourhood as discussed below.

Table 8-1: Summary of resident beneficiary interviewees

	Area	Categorisation	M/F	Interview Date	Source of income	External house appearance	Yard	Other notes
Temb 2	Tembisa	Conforming	M, elderly	17 Sept 2011	Unemployed, wife is an informal trader	Unaltered	Fenced, vegetable garden, outside rooms	Applied in 1996, acquired house in 2004
Temb 1	Tembisa	Conforming?	F, middle aged	17 Sept 2011	Part time office cleaner 3 times / week	Large, transformed		
IP1	Ivory Park	Conforming	F, fairly young	17 Sept 2011	Irregular domestic work ('piece work')	Immaculate, decorated	Backyard shack	
FP1	Freedom Park	Clinging	M, middle aged	1 Oct 2011	Shebeen on site, rental income from a shop	Unaltered but with 2 businesses on site	Shop on site	
FP2	Freedom Park	Conforming/ Ambiguous	F, middle aged	1 Oct 2011	General worker at a clinic in Eldorado Park	Fundamentally transformed	Neat, grassed and walled	
FP3	Freedom Park	Ambiguous	F, elderly	2 Oct 2011	Supported by lawyer son	Transformed, unfinished	House occupies most of yard	Has received title deeds
FP4	Devland Ext 27	Conforming	M, middle aged	3 Oct 2011	'Piece jobs' – tiling, ceilings etc	Large, immaculate, completely transformed	2 cars in driveway	
FP5	Devland Ext 27	Conforming	M, elderly	5 Oct 2011	Shop assistant, mans a fruit and veg counter outside a grocery store	Interviewed at place of work (shop in a transformed RDP house),	Not known	

						he described some modification to his house		
FP6	Devland Ext 27	Conforming	M, middle aged	11 Oct 2011	Unemployed carpenter, wife employed in admin in an office	Some alterations and additions	Unremarkable	
OF1	Orange Farm	Clinging	M, older middle age	24 Sept 2011	Self –employed mechanic, works from home	Basic, unaltered	Open air car repair business in front, shack behind	
OF2	Orange Farm	Conforming/ Ambiguous	M + F (middle aged couple)	25 Sept 2011	Self employed satellite tv dish installer, F unemployed, child support grant	Close to original but spruced up, modification, immaculate	Fenced, lawned, immaculate	
OF3	Orange Farm	Conforming	M, middle aged	25 Sept 2011	Self employed gardener	A few basic modifications	Outside rooms, beautiful gardens	
B1	Bramfischerville Phase 1	Conforming	F, elderly	8 Oct 2011	Supported by children	Some internal wall divisions added	Outside rooms added, vegetables in front yard	
B2	Bramfischerville	Clinging	M, middle aged	8 Oct 2011	Fridge repair, mowing lawns	Basic, unaltered	Outside rooms	Still waiting for title deeds
B3	Bramfischerville	Ambiguous	F, middle aged	11 Oct 2011	Internet, business card service; rental income from	A few basic modifications	Outside room, shop on site, walled	

					shop			
L1	Lehae	Conforming/ ambiguous	F, middle aged	3 March 2010	Office cleaner		Not known	Applied in 1996, acquired in 2009, still waiting for title deeds
L2	Lehae	Conforming	M, middle aged	21 Oct 2010	Office cleaner, after hours electrical repair from home		Vegetables and fruit trees	Applied in 1996, 1999, but problems with the house so had to wait again for another one acquired in. Still waiting for title deeds
L3	Lehae	?	F, middle aged	5 March 2010	Admin assistant at private clinic	Described as unaltered	Growing vegetables	

Below I categorise interviewees into three broad groupings according to how closely their use of their housing seems to me to align with state expectations.

Conforming, or fulfilling state expectations

The first grouping were those whose relationship with their houses was reflected in its physical condition, including financial investment, 'respectable' improvements and changes, or concerted care of the house in its original state, and in the occupants' adherence to neighbourhood 'rules'. This group thus spanned those who have made few improvements to those who have radically transformed their houses: in some cases from a basic RDP dwelling to a sizable middle-class house, covering a large portion of the site.

Profile 1a

L2 describes very few improvements to his house in Lehae, except the vegetable and fruit trees planted in his yard. But he concurs with, and helps enforce, a 'no backyard shack' policy in his area.

Profile 1b

Temb 2 lives in an RDP house that seems to have no improvements at all, unplastered, unpainted, and the interior with very minimal goods and furnishings, the single room interior roughly partitioned with curtains. The house sits at the back of a fairly large flat fenced plot with a neat vegetable garden. Temb 2 has two trim outside rooms alongside his RDP house, one built for his adult son, and one occupied by two nephews. The rooms are built out of blocks (though unplastered) with a corrugated iron roof (the same materials as his RDP house), and on the surface, appear to conform to conventional building practice.

Profile 1c

OF2's house in Orange Farm resembles the RDP units of his neighbours in basic form but has had a number of improvements which distinguish it. The house has a new wooden front door, immaculately plastered walls, a raised plinth along the front aspect, a garden fence and lawn, and a reconfigured interior in which the bathroom has been moved outside to create more kitchen space. OF2 does not only invest care and energy into his house, but into the neighbourhood as well, actively cleaning the public space near his house (the pavement and length of street).



Figure 8-3: OF2's house in Orange Farm (author's own, 2011).

Profile 1d

FP4 lives in a house in Devland Ext 27 in which any evidence of the original RDP house is indiscernible though he confirms that from 1998 – 2002 he lived in the one-roomed RDP house originally built on the site. His substantially remodelled house reflects a smart middle class suburban style, with plastered walls, a tiled roof, and aluminium window frames.

Clinging, or hanging on

My second cluster of respondents were those who appear impoverished and are using their houses to survive, but through practices in the house or yard that would not be welcomed by the state, because respondents had not been through the necessary processes for permission, and had unsanctioned structures or activities on site.

Profile 2A

OF1 lives in a basic RDP house on a main road in Orange Farm. He uses the bare, dusty yard and pavement outside his house for fixing cars, his only source of income. Behind his house he has a rusty corrugated iron shack. Both the look and impact of the car repair business and the look of the shack I see as chafing against the state's desired outcomes for RDP neighbourhoods.

Profile 2B

FP1 runs two businesses on his site on a main road in Freedom Park. Adjacent to his house and positioned in the front of the yard is a plastered and painted mini supermarket, owned and managed by Ethiopian shopkeepers, from which FP1 derives some rental income. FP1 also runs an unauthorised liquor tavern at the back of his premises, out of sight of authorities who fine him for contravening by-laws.



Figure 8-4: Mini supermarket in the yard of an RDP house, Freedom Park (author's own, 2011).

Profile 2c

B2 has a basic, unimproved RDP house in Bramfischerville. At the back of his yard are some corrugated iron shacks. He was the only interviewee amongst all the resident beneficiaries I interviewed who indicated he earns a rental income from one of his backyard rooms.

Ambiguous practices

A third category of interviewees reflected practices which seemed to me to be more ambiguous with respect to how the state might view these.

Profile 3a

B3 explicitly takes advantage of her strategic location on the corner of a major crossroad in Bramfischerville. B3 has izozo panels leaning against her boundary wall, advertised for sale. These panels belong to someone else, but B3 administers the sales of panels for a commission of R50 each. B3 runs her own business inside her (unimproved) house, designing and printing business cards, offering a photocopying service and an internet service¹. In addition to these two businesses, B3 also has a mini supermarket on her site, run by its Bangladeshi operators. They have also built a backyard room in B3's yard, close to a back entrance to the shop, where they sleep. These owners pay B3 a rental amount every month, minus the capital cost of the materials they have invested on her site. Currently therefore, B3 obtains income from her own printing business, the izozo panels, and the shop rental. A fourth income stream is imminent: B3 intends dividing the long blank face of the shop into metre-long sections which can be hired for advertising space. In the meantime, as a favour to the youth in the area, she has allowed them to paint a graphic with an HIV/Aids message: B3 admits that this serves the additional purpose of flagging for people in the area the visual and display potential of her wall.

B3 exemplified a strategic use of her RDP house to generate multiple forms of income, in ways that do not seem to have negative impacts on neighbours. But several dimensions of the uses had not received authorisation, or did not have explicit permission. For this reason I see these as ambiguous: B3 was improving her circumstances by directly maximising her RDP asset, showing skill, creativity and business acumen in the process,

but the portfolio of activities included materials for corrugated iron back yard rooms, and her own backyard room made out of these materials.

The boundaries between these three categories I have identified above, although distinguishable, are also not mutually exclusive. For example, respondent OF2 seemed to exemplify many dimensions the state would value: financial investment in conventional improvements to his house, care and concern within his yard, neighbourliness and effort beyond his boundary, which is why I placed him in category one. However this yard also contained a corrugated iron shack at the back, behind the house, something frowned upon by the state. FP2 reflected very similar situation. These interviewees are thus both exemplifying expectations and transgressing them.

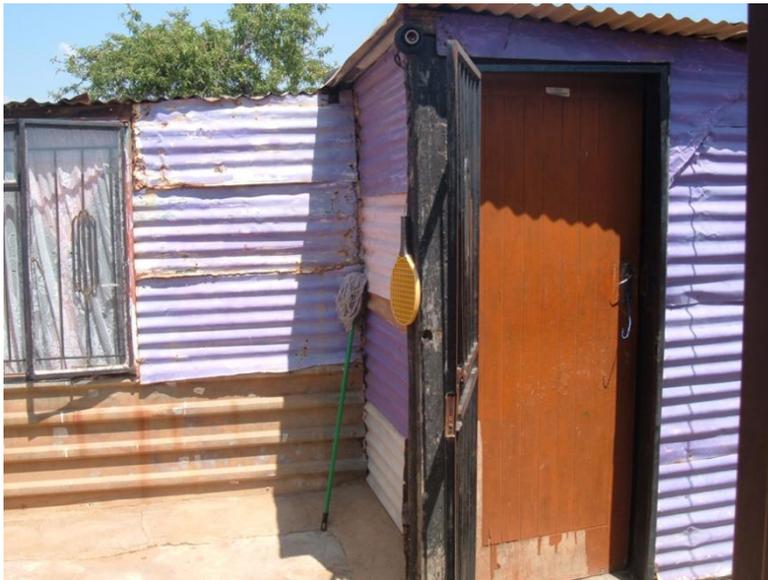


Figure 8-5: The shack behind OF2's immaculate house (author's own 2011).

In the next section I elaborate on peoples' interactions with their houses, yards and neighbourhoods. Whilst the discussion that follows in the remaining part of the chapter cuts across the three broad categories I have identified above, I return to these groupings in the conclusion.

8.3 Interaction with house, site and neighbourhood

I turn to how respondents made use of the house, site and neighbourhood, considering physical alterations to the house or yard, and ways in which respondents earned an income from their house. I reflect also on neighbourhood activities and impacts, and local management of the area.

8.3.1 Physical alterations

As noted above a significant number of people in RDP settlements have invested heavily in their houses. Some changes were so dramatic that my fieldwork assistant and I had to check whether we were in fact observing an 'RDP-dweller'. My notes record that

We saw FP4 working in his yard and stopped to ask him for an interview. We guessed there had once been an RDP house on his plot as we understood the entire neighbourhood of Devland Ext 27 to have been an RDP development. In this section of the neighbourhood RDP houses were hard to identify though, as extensive alterations, additions and re-modelling has occurred with many of the houses...

In discussion FP4 revealed that after living in his RDP house for four years he started improvements on his site, beginning with the construction of outdoor rooms which he then lived in whilst the main house was rebuilt. He drew on his skills in tiling and fitting ceilings to attend to the finishes in his house, but got builders from the neighbourhood to do most of the basic construction. He did his improvement work slowly, explaining that

I had the time but not the money ...I am still building it today. It is not finished yet (FP4 interview).



Figure 8-6: FP4's transformed house in Devland Ext 27 (author's own, 2011).

Similarly, respondents FP2, Temb 1 and FP3 have improved their houses to the extent that the original dwelling is almost unrecognisable. Not only were the physical transformations dramatic, but the household goods and furnishings we saw in and around some homes were at times surprising: the interior of FP4s house for example had slick furnishings, a TV, and a large sound system. FP4 confirmed that he also has a hot water geyser, and that the cars parked in the yard are his.

I was confused by what these transformed dwellings and lifestyles represented and how they related to the RDP housing benefit: was I encountering new residents who had bought into RDP areas; or had people met the income criterion for RDP housing at the time of accessing it but had subsequently improved their circumstances; or had they not been honest about their personal circumstances at the time of application? All respondents claimed to be original beneficiaries, and some seemed extremely grateful for the small donation I offered at the end of the interview. Whilst FP4's house did not conform to my image of 'what poverty looks like', he was delighted by my contribution towards a cool drink, claiming to be short of money to buy food at the time of the interview. This presented for me a confusing picture in which house transformation, and

consumer goods were prioritised in a context of low, insecure and uncertain income. By contrast, other interviewees such as OF1 were clearly very poor and had few goods or possessions.



Figure 8-7: The bare furnishing in OF1's house (author's own, 2011).

In placing FP4 and others with similar characteristics in Category One above, 'conforming, or fulfilling state expectations' I am assuming these extensive re-workings of the RDP house would meet with state approval – indicating pride, investment, commitment to the house, and on the face of it, suggesting improving circumstances. Nevertheless they might prompt questions of how some state beneficiaries (by definition income-poor) were able to find the resources to do this in relatively short periods of time.

Improvements to houses apart from the four mentioned above were generally more modest.



Figure 8-8: IP1's house in Ivory Park, with heart on the front wall (author's own 2011).

Some houses appear easier to extend than others. FP5 drew our attention to two different kinds of RDP houses in the Devland Ext 27 area, built at different stages of project development. The one-room house is easier to extend than the four-room, he noted because it has more space in the yard, whereas extending the other requires demolishing the whole house first (FP5 interview). FP5 described his own improvements, in shifting what he found to be inconvenient in the original configuration, and adding a room:

I moved the toilet a little bit, and then I got enough space; I got a person to draw a plan for me. And then they started building...my toilet was facing this direction, it was next to the door, I then moved it to the other direction so that here can become a kitchen...I have built another room on the other side so that the toilet can be in the middle (FP5 interview).

Like others he has done his improvements over time, buying material 'little by little' (FP5 interview).

Others have struggled to afford any house alterations but have bought some household goods, such as kitchen cupboards and a fridge, although in the case of L1 from Lehae, this

latter is not operational. Others, such as B2, have intentions to make the house bigger, divide it with internal walls and add more rooms on the outside, but have not made any improvements yet.

A number of interviewees have an outside dwelling on their property. In five cases these appear to be reasonably well constructed and make use of formal materials such as concrete blocks or bricks (B1, FP2, FP3, FP4, Temb 2). In five other cases the backyard rooms are corrugated iron shacks (IP1, OF1, OF2, OF3, B2). One interviewee had a room built out of izozo panels²¹⁸ (B3). B3 explained that using izozo panels is a quick option for those who need more space (B3 interview), and payment negotiation is possible:

maybe you can pay half and [the seller] can put [up] the zozo and on the other month you pay till you finish [what you owe] (B3 interview).

Temb 2 'extended the house' by building an outside room for his son and allowing his two nephews to build another one²¹⁹. FP4 has his daughter, son and grandchild living in the outside room, the same room FP4 lived in whilst he was rebuilding his house. These various forms of outside rooms are thus mainly used by family members or house guests. In only one instance was an interviewee earning rental income from his backyard rooms, in this case a shack at R270 a month. B2 would like to build 'proper rooms' (brick or block construction) to replace the shack, as these generate much more rental (R550 – R700 per month).

²¹⁸ Pre-fabricated wooden panels

²¹⁹ He estimates the cost of building such a room at about R1700.



Figure 8-9: Temb 2's outside rooms (author's own 2011).

IP1 had in her backyard the old shack she and her children used to live in when they moved over from the informal settlement, before her house was built. The shack is damaged however and not habitable. IP1 would like to fix it up and rent it out but can't yet afford to: 'I am still budgeting for it' (IP1 interview).

Whilst FP5 saw value in an outside room for extra space for storage or visitors, he was very wary of having a paying tenant, seeing them as a threat to the property as they get to know too much about the landlord's circumstances and can eventually oust the owner:

[if] you let a person rent a room in your house...when you die...They will...kick your children out of the house and say it's theirs, and say they have signed papers (FP5 interview).

Some interviewees noted that backyard *shacks* - outside rooms built out of temporary or informal materials - are not permitted in their area (FP4 interview, L2 interview, OF3 interview). These restrictions seem to be largely imposed by local community groups or leaders. In Lehae, L2 indicated that shacks were not in line with government thinking, or had no place next to formal houses because the house comes from the government and 'we don't want the backyard rooms'. He noted too that his plot is too small for backyard

rooms. L1 concurred that she is not allowed to erect back rooms in Lehae. She was a bit resentful about this because 'other RDP communities are allowed to have backyard shacks' (translator for L1 interview), but revealingly, she also said that as time goes on, people will just start building rooms anyway (translator for L1 interview).

In Orange Farm Extension 6 people were in the process of dismantling corrugated shacks in accordance with a community agreement (OF3 interview). Shacks are discouraged, but more formal backyard dwellings are permitted. OF3 had a shack in his back garden which he planned to demolish because, he said, '[former President] Thabo Mbeki wants the shacks [taken] down' - perhaps a proxy for saying 'government', or the ANC, wants the shacks demolished. OF3 will however keep his *wooden* outbuilding for his son to live in, arguing this is a better form of construction than a corrugated iron shack, and that he needed space for his older male child to move into.

Thus whilst several of the respondents had substantially altered their houses, others have made cosmetic or smaller construction alterations and improvements. Only in a few cases was the original RDP house seemingly untouched. More than half the respondents had a backyard room of some kind, mostly to accommodate family members with only one interviewee accommodating paying tenants in a back room. In several areas there is pressure, and an 'agreement' in the community, not to have informally constructed rooms in the back yard. With these latter sentiments respondents, and their peers, seem to agree with the views of the state when it expresses disapproval for the 'look' of informality. In the care and attention given to many houses respondents appear to cherish their accommodation, and reflect aspirations to conform, and to measure up similar to those noted by Ross (2005) and Salcedo (2010).

8.3.2 Earning an income from home or surrounds

A number of interviewees ran businesses from home. Some were explicitly taking advantage of a strategic location in the neighbourhood, which has passing trade or high visibility, such as the example of B3 described above. During the interview, she sat cutting

business cards on a guillotine, with a computer on either side of her,²²⁰ describing her ideas to expand her business activities and use her strategic corner site for an internet facility and a laundry that she will run: 'this is a business place...because of this corner' she said (B3 interview). At the same time B3 was concerned with how to reconcile the family home with economic activities: for example wary of the safety risk of letting a stranger have access to her site for his or her business: '...you don't know how he's going to behave...' (B3 interview). She was also reluctant to include on her site further activities that might attract robberies, such as a cash machine in the mini-superette.

The following images illustrate B3's existing business activities:



Figure 8-10: B3's business signage for the izozo rooms (author's own 2011).

²²⁰ No faxing service though she complained, as Telkom hasn't got round to putting in a telephone line, although she has applied and mobilised others in the area in order to gather the requisite ten applicants before Telkom responds.



Figure 8-11: B3's signage for the business cards, Bramfischerville (author's own 2011).



Figure 8-12: Advertising wall outside B3's site (author's own 2011).

B3's corner site at an important crossroads is particularly strategic, but other interviewees on busy roads also benefit from their location. As noted above FP1 had two businesses running on his site on a main road in Freedom Park. FP6 oversaw the table of fresh fruit and vegetables outside the mini-supeRette of his employer, on a corner site of

the main access route through Devland Ext 27. Respondent OF1 selected his site because it was on a busy road which gave good exposure to his car repair business.



Figure 8-13: OF1's car repair equipment in Orange Farm (author's own 2011).

B1, on a quiet side road in Bramfischerville, did not run any business from her home, but her neighbour in the adjoining semi-detached RDP house ran a crèche from her premises. Apparently from the proceeds of the crèche the neighbour has transformed her modest, plain house into a grand double storey mansion with Tuscan references, dwarfing her neighbour.



Figure 8-14: B1's original RDP semi-detached house in the front left of the picture with neighbouring transformed house overlooking it (author's own 2011).

B2 is also on a fairly quiet side road. B2 told of a struggle for money, and not enough income. Yet puzzlingly B2 had a red BMW parked in his yard. This turned out to be his neighbour's vehicle, whose own yard was occupied by three large trucks he owns. B2 commented on his neighbour's space shortage:

now, he doesn't have the space; if he wants to do some washing, he come[s] hanging his washing in my yard (B2 interview).

B2 didn't charge his neighbour for the use of his yard space, but in return for his cooperation B2's neighbour provided B2 with occasional work in his trucking business. B2's neighbour wanted to buy B2's house and yard, but B2 refused.



Figure 8-15: B2 Braamfischerville with red BMW in yard, and backyard shacks behind (author's own 2011).

Temb 2's wife was an informal trader at the Tembisa train station nearby, selling low-value items: 'she is only selling things like Simba chips...sweets, cigarette...I think its 50c or R1.00 [each]' (Temb 2 interview).

Like Temb 2's wife, some respondents tried to generate income locally, through self-employment. In addition to his cleaning job L2 did occasional repair of electronic equipment for people in the Lehae area. Since OF2 was dismissed from his job he has been trying to work on his own doing satellite dish installation in Orange Farm. B2 cut peoples' lawns in Braamfischerville²²¹. He wanted to use his technical skills to do air conditioner and refrigeration repairs but was battling to get the tools and equipment. FP4 worked freelance all over Soweto doing ceilings and tiling. OF3 was a self-taught gardener and used his skills in Orange Farm: in fact we noticed his house because of the lovely garden he had made outside and within his corner site.

²²¹ (for R40 or R20 depending on size of lawn).



Figure 8-16: OF3 pavement garden (author's own 2011).

FP5 had not had a job since 2006 when the factory he worked for in Langlaagte in Johannesburg closed down²²². He helped out at the vegetable stall outside the superette, working Monday to Saturday, in exchange for payment in kind (goods from the shop).

Thus in four instances respondents earned an income directly from their house or site, and another five respondents brought in income from their neighbourhood. Two more interviewees were supported by relatives that they accommodated in their house or yard. In 11 out of the 18 interviews conducted therefore, beneficiaries had found a way to earn some money from their RDP house, yard or neighbourhood. This resonates with the contention that housing is important as a basis for bringing in earnings in low income areas (Tipple 2000; Kellet and Tipple 2003; Schlyter 2003) – not just in providing physical space for work but in its function as a secure base for the worker.

²²² Whilst FP5's wife had a permanent job he claimed this had its difficulties: '...we as black people we don't rely on women, a man has to work. When she brings in her money I tell her it's hers and it doesn't concern me' (FP5 interview).

8.3.3 Neighbourhood activities and their impacts

Several interviewees mentioned the nuisance caused by neighbouring business activities. FP4 felt impacted on by various goings-on around his house (an unauthorised car-wash and a shebeen), referring to this state of affairs in which unregulated activities proliferate as 'township life':

you can't sleep. They are making noise. See, there is a car-wash there, [with people] making noise, drinking beers. As you can see, I am trying to build a wall here, because they urinate all over. But that is township life (FP4 interview).

FP2 was also directly affected by the activities of her neighbours. She has a smart- looking suburban house in which the original RDP dwelling was indiscernible. Her fitted kitchen, smart bathroom, light fittings and furniture, speak of considerable investment into the house and its goods. Right across the street from FP2 is a 'buy and braai' eating establishment. FP2 complained of the impact of this on her property, as the cooking at Buy and Braai is done with coals, not gas:

so every morning we must smell the smoke and...that is bad for me...you can't hang [up] your washing, you must wait for them [to finish cooking]...(FP2 interview).

One house away from the 'buy and braai' is an informal drinking establishment: on the Saturday of our interview a group of young men were spilling from the garden onto the pavement enjoying themselves. Immediately next door to FP2 a new structure has recently been built, in the front yard of an RDP owner. This serves as the offices of a funeral parlour. FP2 was apprehensive: 'I hope...it's not going to be a mortuary'. The RDP owners still live in their house behind the funeral parlour, deriving rental income from the premises. FP2's residential life was therefore affected in different ways by the funeral business next door, the informal tavern, and the restaurant across the road.



Figure 8-17: FP2 Freedom Park: funeral parlour next door (author's own 2011).



Figure 8-18: FP2: casual drinking establishment across the road (author's own 2011).

This then is the flip-side of the home-based enterprise story: the externalities or impacts on those living in the vicinity. In some instances the nuisance factor appears high: noise from people who are drinking, or music playing, or tools such as cutting machines; the stench and health hazards of people urinating nearby; smoke or fumes. In other instances

the impact is contained and un-invasive, such as the photocopying and business card enterprise. In their frustration and annoyance, respondents such as FP2 and B3 echo the concerns of some state interviewees, of the need for regulation of non-residential uses. These and other interviewees' aspiration appears to be for order, predictability and regulation of formal suburban life, echoing Schlyter's (2003) findings from Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. They form part of the group I see as by and large 'conforming' to the state's expectations around RDP housing.

8.3.4 Community management of the area

Several interviewees gave a glimpse into different forms of localised community management of their area. L2 mentioned that people in his part of Lehae are told to turn down radios or music systems: this regulation of noise and disturbance is done by 'the Street Committee'. It is not clear if this is an ANC political structure or a development committee but L2 explains:

at Lehae we don't like people who are making noise...after 6.30 if you are still playing the music we will go to your house, we just tell you no we don't like noise during the time because [there are] some others who want to rest...(L2 interview).

FP5 noted that local residents in Devland Extension 27 are active in crime prevention, patrolling at night especially looking for drug users and dealers (FP5 interview). FP4 referred to community meetings in Devland Ext 27 which discussed what practices are acceptable in the area. In this forum it has been agreed by residents that backyard shacks (as opposed to rooms) are not allowed. FP4 commented approvingly:

at least the people here are disciplined. You can't even see a single shack here...we just said that we don't want shacks here, because it is going to make our place very horrible (FP4 interview).

OF3 also reported that his community has ordered that shacks must be taken down. He explained community concerns with shacks: first, boys or youth are reported to do drugs

there, second, tsotsies²²³ hang out in the shack and ambush residents, and third, the landlord thinks she or he is renting a room to one person but then it becomes overcrowded, for example with ‘foreigners’ who are let in by the tenant (OF3 interview). These neighbourhood issues were discussed with representatives of the ANC, OF3 commented.

In a different form of community management OF2 actively cleans the public space near his house (the pavement and his length of street), as part of contributing to making the neighbourhood more child-friendly. He said he does it for the children because there are ‘dangerous things, stones [in the street] so we try to protect them’ (OF2 male interview). A few houses away in the same street OF3 indicated he also helps with getting rid of broken bottles on the road, for the same reason (OF3 interview).

These insights into local area management raise questions as to where some initiatives stem from and how particular attitudes and approaches arise. With respect to positions such as the need to prevent backyard-shack formation, respondents mentioned ‘the community’, or specific local structures as directing or cohering a common response. But are these stances reflecting central government, or ANC party ideas, which have filtered down to ground level, or are these in fact articulations of community desires for the look of respectability and formality? Earlier points made about residents’ attitudes to unwelcome neighbourhood activities suggest the latter – perhaps relating to Salcedo’s (2010) description of people wanting to be accepted as regular suburbanites, or Ross’ (2005) discussion of aspirations for respectability. But neighbourhoods differ in practices and attitudes, and in several areas backyard shack construction appears to be controlled neither by residents, local structures nor city management.

²²³ Thugs, criminals.

8.4 Household configurations

Amongst interviewees there were some families divided across space because of lack of facilities in the RDP neighbourhood. In Lehae, interviewees' children were living with relatives elsewhere because of the lack of schooling at Lehae (interviews L1, L2). L2, himself one of 16 siblings, had his own four children living with his mother in Lakeside '...because there's no secondary [school] here'. So the children stay with their grandmother in a bonded house, bought by L2's older brother when he had a job. L2 lived with his girlfriend in Lehae; her son also did not live with them but with her mother in Eldorado Park nearby. Similarly L1's child lived with her mother in Lakeside because there are no schools in Lehae. 'They are still being built', L1 noted, and commented that it would be too costly to send her child to nearby Lenasia as schools are expensive there. Visiting her child involves a two-stage trip: L1 takes a taxi for R5.50 from Lehae to Lenasia, then a train to Lakeside (using her monthly ticket).

B2's children were with his mother in Pretoria (Tshwane Municipality) as he felt his house does not have enough space, seemingly a reference to the un-partitioned nature of the interior:

I have decided to take my children along to my mother there in Pretoria because the house is too small as you can see. I've got four kids (B2 interview).

B2 takes a train to visit them, costing R8 each way (much cheaper than a mini-bus taxi which is R30.00 each way).

In contrast to these divided households, Temb 2's RDP house and yard has served as a foothold for his two sons and his two nephews: a cheap place for them to live whilst they work or look for work in Johannesburg. This is similar to the notion of the 'reliable urban perch' described by Cross (2006) as providing an essential foothold in urban life. The occupants of Temb 2's property functioned as a household in the sense that they all ate together (those in the main house, Temb 2 and his wife, and those in the outside rooms, 4 'boys' and one wife). The sons and nephews also contributed money for electricity. At

the same time Temb 2 retained strong links with his family home in rural Venda, Limpopo Province. At the time of the interview his son and his nephew's pregnant wife were both visiting 'home' in Venda, whilst his sister, mother of his nephews, was also 'at home' in Venda. Temb 2 commented that his own wife should also be living 'at home', just visiting him in Johannesburg, but because he does not have a job, she is required to help earn money and live in Joburg.

if I was working I would like [my wife] to stay there with my mother and she would [just] come here to visit me. [But] I don't have money. That is why my wife is here to try and sell so that we can get food (Temb 2 interview).

Respondents thus showed that RDP housing can provide a place of consolidation and coming together of a family or household, and can be used in this way by choice. But it can also, for some, precipitate a splitting of household unit because of the dearth of neighbourhood facilities such as schooling, or limitations with the house itself and with beneficiaries' ability to adapt it to suit their requirements. This latter point resonates with Spiegel et al (1996), Watson (2003) and Oldfield and Boulton (2007) in their observations about households spread across quite wide geographies – and in this study can be seen as an example of households adapting their composition to the constraints of their physical circumstances. By contrast other respondents were able to adapt their physical space to respond to household needs.

8.5 Employment and getting work

Only four of the eighteen people interviewed had permanent full time jobs²²⁴. The three people living in Lehae were all employed in central Johannesburg, as cleaners and one as an administrative assistant. The fourth employed respondent, FP2, worked as a general worker in a clinic.

²²⁴ As my research assistant visited areas on weekdays to find people willing to be interviewed, this may have biased the respondents towards those without jobs – although in the end about half the interviews were secured on a weekend because of failed appointments.

In three other instances another household member apart from the respondent was in full time employment. B3's husband worked as a security guard; FP3 had a son who is a lawyer in a prestigious law firm in Sandton²²⁵; FP6's wife worked at a mental health clinic. In seven cases out of the eighteen respondents therefore there was someone in the household with a full time job. In three further cases either the interviewee or their partners had part time work, some of it irregular²²⁶.

Interviewees described the difficulties of securing decent work. L2 was jobless for almost three years before getting his current job at a cleaning company. Temb 2 quit his job after nine years because of the low salary and poor working conditions. He subsequently acquired training as a security guard but could not find work. Temb 2 used previous retrenchment money to send his son to train as a traffic cop. His other son had training as a panel beater, but neither could find work in these trades. Temb 2 was despondent:

we are just sitting here and there are no jobs, when will this change? It looks like South Africa is sinking (Temb 2 interview).

But Temb 2's household had found some work at least, if not in their in trades, with his youngest son working in a bakery and his nephew driving a metered taxi based at the airport.

These indications of the difficulty of securing work emphasise the importance of the wider economic context in impacting on peoples' experience of their housing, and ultimately on their ability to realise its potential as intended by the state.

²²⁵ He owns a car, and supports a family of nine.

²²⁶ Temb 1 has a job three times a week in an office in Midrand. OF3's wife works once a week as a domestic worker in Ennerdale, for R100 a day. IP1 does irregular domestic 'piece work' locally or in Midrand.

So far in this chapter I have described respondents' interactions with their house and their neighbourhood, their household configuration and their employment situation. The nature of their interactions led me to the three categories described earlier; that of households broadly conforming to state expectations, that of households clinging or hanging on to what the state has provided, and the third category of more ambiguous interactions. I now turn to discussing interviewees' level of contentment with their area.

8.6 Satisfaction or criticism with the area

Before describing respondents' attitudes to their houses and neighbourhoods I discuss the trajectory of peoples' housing circumstances.

8.6.1 Trajectory

For almost all interviewees their RDP house represents an improvement on their previous housing conditions. For example IP1 lived for seven years in the Kaalfontein squatter camp (her term) and appreciated the services in the new house:

I like the fact that we have water and toilets here...We used to get water far [away] and we did not have toilets (IP1 interview).

A number of respondents were tenants renting rooms before receiving their houses. Temb 2 previously lived in what he referred to as the 'ghosts', rented outside rooms in Tembisa, for 9 years²²⁷. FP2 rented a room at the back of a house in Lonehill for R500. L2 occupied a backyard room in Lakeside, Orange Farm for R250 a month but was not satisfied with this accommodation:

the owner complained a lot and the rent was too high. He was someone who didn't care and neglected things but he [still] wanted rent upfront (L2 interview).

²²⁷ His rent was R350 per month 'it was still cheap ...then...now you pay around R500...[or] R700 when you rent' (Temb 2 interview).

FP5 talked about the contrast between his RDP living and his previous life as a tenant where he was not in control of his circumstances:

it makes me feel good [to have my own house]...when you have your own house you stay freely and you don't have worries about what other people do...if you don't have a house, you don't know [whether] when you come back the owner is angry or not, or have locked the gates, and when you knock they will tell you they own the place not you, then [say] 'pack your things and go' (FP5 interview).

Some respondents indicated that they had lived on their current site in shacks before the house was built (IP1, OF1, OF2, FP2 interviews). IP1 lived on her site for 5 years in a shack, and had had her RDP house for 2 years at the time of the interview. OF1 lived for approximately 16 years in a shack on the site before the house was built. Several interviewees bought their plots before there was any RDP project and subsequently benefited from an RDP upgrading programme. In these purchases three beneficiaries expressed some preference for an area, albeit in a context of limited choices. For example OF2 bought a site in Orange Farm along with a two-room shack on the site, to which the family added a further two rooms. She bought a site in Orange Farm rather than in Evaton where she lived with her mother because in Evaton there was nothing available to purchase, '[there] was only the places to rent from the owners. So I needed my [own] place, not to rent'. A friend introduced her to the seller of the shack and site in Orange Farm, who ironically was selling as she herself had been allocated an RDP house in Evaton West. The two therefore swapped areas of residence.

Explaining her move from Lonehill in the north of Johannesburg where she was renting, to Freedom Park near Soweto, FP2 was clear that she 'wanted to come [here], my aim was to get an RDP house'. She initially had no site but bought a shack²²⁸ to erect in the backyard of her friend's plot in Freedom Park, then later moved to another backyard. In 2002 she got allocated her own site after applying for an RDP house. Her house was built in 2004/5. This trajectory reflects the kind of project where sites were developed,

²²⁸ R1 300 for two rooms.

occupied provisionally by owners in temporary structures, and then upgraded with houses at a later stage. In these interviews delays ranged from two years to sixteen years before a house was built. FP2's story suggests that people already living in the area in backyard dwellings were prioritised for allocation of new sites (over people external to the area), which vindicated her strategy of moving into the area as a backyarder first.

In these interviews even those relocated by the state to an RDP project speak positively of their new areas. IP1 was relocated to Ivory Park from the Kaalfontein informal settlement close by. She said she did not mind the move, and mentioned approvingly that '[government] helped us with transporting our stuff and they brought us here' (IP1 interview). B2 experienced a bigger physical relocation, being moved from Alexandra near Sandton to Braamfischerville near Soweto some 37kms away and generally considered to be a less advantageous location in the city. He also said he didn't mind this occurrence, believing that government knew best and that the circumstances in which he lived in his place of origin on the banks of the Jukskei River in Alexandra was not habitable: in a room with no windows. He commented that although he was required to move to Soweto, it was because government thought it would be safer for people in his circumstances and he was 'so happy because the place there [in Alex] I saw was not fit for a human being...I was just suffering so I had to [move]' (B2 interview). B2 notes that he was ready to go anywhere, suggesting the state had the right to effect this sort of action: 'because it was the government's decision [about where to go], it was not mine' (B2 interview). At the time of the move B2 was working in Wynberg near Alex, but he didn't see it as a problem to travel there from Bramfischerville. The company he worked for then moved to an area closer to Bramfischerville, but later it closed down.

A few respondents indicated that they had a choice either of the house design on the site (OF1 interview), or a choice of which project to relocate to. L1 selected Lehae from a choice of Lehae, Sebokeng or Vereeniging. FP4 chose to apply for a site at Freedom Park. B3 took over her brother's house in Bramfischerville. Other respondents did not have a choice. How people applied for a house and were allocated seemed to vary amongst

respondents. Temb 2 says that people encouraged by the state to apply for houses through a public campaign: 'they were calling people with a car and they said we have to come and register'.

One respondent's experiences were less positive. L2's new RDP house in Lakeside proved to have severe drainage problems, so he had to be reallocated to Lehae. But he only received a replacement house ten years later.

For almost all respondents RDP housing provided improved physical circumstances, and for those who were tenants before, improved access and independence. There appeared to be a wide variety of routes and processes to acquiring the housing, which included people positioning themselves in an area to achieve visibility to the state and be included in an initiative. The two respondents relocated by the state from an informal settlement to an RDP house, in one instance close by and in another across the city, both spoke positively about this experience. Below I discuss how interviewees feel about their RDP neighbourhood.

8.6.2 Attitudes towards the neighbourhoods

Many respondents made positive comments about the area they lived in. Remarks at times referred to a neighbourhood being familiar, and peoples' feeling of comfort with knowing a place. A series of positive comments were offered by those living in Orange Farm, classified by the City of Johannesburg as a marginalised area and often cited as a badly located, far-away place: 'I am comfortable with Orange Farm' said OF2, explaining that shopping, a clinic, and schools are all available in Orange Farm. She continued: 'I think Orange Farm is better, I don't see [an] other place [in my future]' (OF2 interview). She compared Orange Farm favourably to Evaton in the neighbouring municipality, where her mother lives, complaining that the management of Evaton by the local authority is poor by comparison to management by the City of Johannesburg (OF2 female interview). OF1's opinion was that '[Orange Farm] is a good place because I am used to it'.

Some observations also suggested that respondents see their area as well located. Freedom Park particularly elicited these sorts of comments:

[Freedom Park] is good because it's convenient to anywhere like if you want to go to Bara [hospital]...Schools, Shoprite, Spar are all in the area, within walking distance (FP4 interview).

FP3 commented that Freedom Park is 'good because it's next to town...next to town you can get the job...' (FP3 interview), - although only one of her children has been able to get work.

Negative comments made about neighbourhoods often related to lack of facilities and amenities, or poor maintenance. L2 noted that Lehae is not like Lakeside (where he lived before) because it lacks shops. He also complained that he has no water meter, no dustbin, and no fence at the back of his plot (where there is some open space) (L2 interview). He had a more favourable impression of Lakeside which is further away from his work in central Johannesburg – but better serviced by facilities, and by transport because of the railway line. In fact two of the Lehae interviewees came from Lakeside in Orange Farm: with the move to Lehae they moved considerably closer to Johannesburg, but with worse access to facilities, at least in the beginning. But L1 was reasonably satisfied with Lehae, and even considered it conveniently located. She was grateful for the fact that she has a house she could call her own (L1 interview).

About Bramfischerville Phase 2 B3 had mixed comments:

for me it's a good place [to live], but at least government...[should] upgrade...the street and the police station to put the things normal for use (B3 interview).

She complained about the huge rats in the area and a low-voltage electricity current (B3 interview). Streets have many potholes, which when fixed, she complained, soon developed the same problems again. My own observations of Bramfischerville were that roads were in a shocking condition, especially minor roads and panhandles, as shown in the earlier figure.

B3 had some favourable comments about the mini-superettes opened by foreign entrepreneurs. Bramfischerville didn't used to have shops:

it was [just] small small businesses whereby [for] other things we had to go to Roodepoort or where[ever]. Then when these people, the Somalis and whatever, they come then at least there were a little bit bigger things they come with (B3 interview).

Crime was a problem for FP4, L1 and B2. B2 has contacted a friend to stay in his home when B2 works night shifts so the house is not left empty:

[there] must be someone in the house, you see. Because sometimes [the criminals] knock, they want to hear if maybe there'll be a response. If there is no response they know you are not in (B2 interview).

L1 commented that she has not experienced crime yet but has learnt from people in other areas that you can't leave your house unattended even for two days. She reasoned that crime was bad because the people in the area don't know each other as they come from different areas (L1 interview). This might be indicative of broader transition and establishment costs associated with setting up new large neighbourhoods populated by beneficiaries from a variety of different areas of origin. Over time community and social cohesion may develop but the state's housing programme provides little support to help this happen, leaving post-occupancy consolidation to emerge spontaneously, if at all.

8.6.3 Travel and transport

Those settlements on a train line (Tembisa and Orange Farm) appeared to have a distinct advantage in offering very cheap travel to beneficiaries. Temb 2 commented that the cost of train transport is manageable 'even if you don't earn that much...' (Temb 2). Night workers suffered from not being able to use the train: when Temb 2's son worked night shift 'if he doesn't have money [for transport], he sleeps there at the airport' (Temb 2 interview).

In other areas people used a taxi to get to a train line, if possible. For example those interviewees from Lehae commuted each day by a combination of taxi and train. L2 described his daily commute:

I wake up at 4.00am, every day Monday to Friday. Then I catch [a] taxi...to Kliptown and from Kliptown I catch the train to Braamfontein, Park station. Then again the same when I'm going back home...(L2 interview).

L2 had tried walking from Kliptown station back to Lehae when he had no money for the taxi but it's a 'long long distance' – a two hour walk. When he does have taxi money L2 walked from home to get to where the taxis pass by, as '...with Lehae there is no taxi rank. You just stand behind the main road then you catch the taxi there' (L2 interview). He concluded that 'Lehae is a nice place...[except] for the transport [which] is difficult' (L2 interview).

Also from Lehae L1 took a taxi to Lenasia, then a train to Braamfontein for a total of R342 per month return. Whilst she felt she paid a lot for transport she did not see any other option. She dismissed the idea of finding a place closer to work to sleep in during some nights of the week because she feared leaving her RDP house unattended 'You find at times that if you don't leave anyone to guard the house while you're gone, they manage to break in' (L1 interview). This suggested attachment to the house or prioritising it, despite its inconvenience and limitations.

Other respondents such as B3 complained of the cost of taxis, '...that is why sometimes you have to walk...' she said (B3 interview).

Beneficiaries' perceptions of location are influenced by the convenience or inconvenience of living there, which is not a straightforward function of how far the area is from key places in the city but has more to do with the availability of cheap transport and neighbourhood facilities and schools.

In the next section I discuss respondents' sense of gratitude to the state, what the house seems to signify for people, their criticisms and suggestions for the housing programme, and their service payment practices, as a way of exploring their relationship with the state.

8.7 Relationship with the state

8.7.1 Gratitude to the state

When asked what they would say to government about the housing programme, a number of interviewees expressed deep gratitude (IP1, Temb 2, FP5 interviews). Several said they would thank those responsible:

[if human settlements Minister Sexwale was here] I would thank him...I would only thank him because he gave me the RDP house (IP1 interview).

if [the minister of human settlements] can visit me, I will tell him something. I can tell Tokyo Sexwale you really help[ed] me a lot, just keep up and do for other people, not for me only, just help other people...because there are so many black people which are poor...and those who don't have a job please do something... (FP5 interview).

OF2 said his household could not afford to replace their shack with a house and thus were very pleased to get help from the government:

we wanted to build our own house, but the money was a problem. So when we heard about the RDPs, that we were going to have the RDP we were happy (OF2 interview).

Temb 2 said he would thank government for helping him, and his children:

because they have helped us. We wouldn't have a place to stay [otherwise]. They have really helped us. Even my children wouldn't be here [without the house], they would be roaming around the streets at home [in Venda] (Temb 2 interview).

A number of interviewees expressed satisfaction with what they had received. Some focused on the material conditions: 'I am happy because the house is not like the shack'

(OF1 interview). FP3 explained she no longer has to move things aside from a dripping roof:

when it's raining, I'm sleeping comfortable. It's not like when I was in the shack, [where] you know when it's raining (FP3 interview).

Others emphasised the fact that they now had something of their own, and this seemed to be the most important thing:

the Lehae house is fine...because that house is mine now...I see the Government was doing the right thing to – to build the RDP houses, because like myself, I didn't have the money to buy the stands or to buy the houses. Now I'm happy because I've got my own property now' (L2 interview).

L1 was satisfied that the R250 per month rental money she was paying as a tenant is now going towards improving her own house.

In these sorts of comments respondents express the sense of security, comfort and betterment anticipated of the housing intervention by the state. Other respondents noted imperfections but were still appreciative:

I will say thanks for what they did, you see. Even though it's small but half a bread is better than nothing (B2 interview).

OF2 particularly felt the government had played its part in providing him with a house, and that he must in turn take up the opportunity provided:

I am happy [with the RDP house] that is why I did this house so nicely, I met the government half way. In fact our street...can you see it is clean? I did it myself, I did not call some worker [to] come do it, I want to show him [government], he must cope and then we do it [too] (OF2 male interview).

FP4 expressed a similar sentiment, in terms of appreciating what he was given and working with it. Commenting on how he has water, electricity and access to taxi transport if he needs it, FP4 reiterated

we can't always complain about government not doing this or not doing that...I am happy. I can't complain...What else do I want?...I was just grateful to get a house. That is all...They gave me a yard and that one room. I was happy...I have even extended the house (FP4 interview).

FP5 noted that even though he didn't know the area of Devland he didn't mind moving there. He described how thrilled he was to learn his house was ready, and how it inspired him for the future:

ja, hey...for the first time I was crazy, crazy. I didn't believe...Jesus! My heart was happy, but I said 'now I've got my own property you know I'll see what to do' [for the future] (FP5 interview).

FP3 was also overcome with emotion: 'the day we opened this house she even cried ...[that's] how happy she is' said FP3's grandson.

The importance of getting the house is underscored by those interviewees who spontaneously mention the exact date they moved in such as FP5. 'I moved here in 1996 on 18 June' (FP5 interview). Whilst some respondents noted the unevenness between government housing projects, which meant that some people have received bigger and better quality houses than others (FP4 interview), there was widespread gratitude expressed for the houses respondents have received. These sentiments cut across all three categories identified earlier, such as those 'conforming' (such as L2, Temb 2, IP1), those 'clinging' (such as OF1 and B2), and those with more ambiguous interactions with their housing such as OF2.

8.7.2 What does this house mean to you?

For several interviewees, the house was deeply significant in relation to their children and their families. When asked what the house meant to her B3 answered immediately that it means 'a house to me and a home to my children' (B3 interview). Temb 1 retained her house even though it was not very convenient for her to live there on her own because of her ill health. She hung on to it in order to provide a place for her son in the future.

Others concurred that the house was important not just for them but for their children, indicating it represented stability:

I'm going to stay here. That's my house there, I'm not going to take chances and go this side and this side. It's a home for my child now (OF3 interview).

Similarly FP3 appreciated the stability and security the house represented.

I know now when I [am] dead my kids are in the house. Like before, I was staying there and sometimes they chase me there, I'm going there, there all over. You see. Now I know I've got my own house. Nobody's going to chase my kids [from] here (FP3 interview).

IP1's response noted that the house offered the security of a rightful place for her children, where her children can be with her. This was highly significant for her even though her financial situation is poor:

I see this as my home because the government gave me a house so that I can be with my children...I have my children here and [they] are able to go to school. They are close to me. Never mind the fact that I don't have a permanent job. ...(IP1 interview).

For IP1, the house offered autonomy, and the responsibility that comes with that.

I am in control...I am able to do things myself. I am no longer relying on my parents for things. I decide what should be eaten and I have to make a plan to get money to buy food...as a parent I know that the children have the right to go to school. Ever since I had my own house, I told myself that I am a parent and I don't have to rely on my parents anymore. I have to take care of everything now (IP1 interview).

Others expressed similarly heartfelt sentiments. FP5 said when he dreams it is about his house and how it is *his* house. FP3 said: 'it means everything...because now, I'm not sleeping on the street...' (FP3 interview). B2's concern that his house is small doesn't detract from its importance: 'the point is as long as I got the shelter, that's fine' (B2 interview).

For these respondents the house signified security both for them and, into the future, for other family members. It also represented independence and self-sufficiency. These sentiments were expressed both by those I see as clinging onto their property as well as those more closely conforming to state expectations, and recalls Varley's caution to not deny or ignore 'residents' aspirations to permanence' (Varley nd).

8.7.3 Criticism, suggestions and sympathy

Criticism of the housing and of peoples' situations, when it was offered, related to poor quality of construction, transport, lack of maintenance of the area, and jobs. Several interviewees said the houses were shoddily built (Temb 2; L1 interviews). Temb 2 commented:

it is better than nothing. But we are crying because [the houses] are not well built ...they had enough bricks but they were in a hurry when they built them (Temb 2 interview).

Awkward, expensive public transport was an issue particularly in Lehae. L2 also wanted government to do something about the crime. In Bramfischerville, poor maintenance of infrastructure was a concern: 'sewerage, sewerage always in the streets, hey there's a problem there. Then they take three months to come and fix, you see' (B2 interview).

But for a number of respondents their main concern was a lack of jobs (Temb 2, L1 IP1, FP4, FP2 interviews):

there are no jobs. I am telling you the gospel truth (FP4 interview)

what is the use if ...the government... builds big houses and then there's no money, there's no job? There are no jobs for the children (FP2 interview).

One interviewee expressed the need for support with business, arguing that government should assist people in getting small loans, advice and training, as some people have skills but 'the jobs are not there...' (B3 interview). In contrast to some of the negative sentiments expressed by some state and beneficiary respondents about informal trade in

RDP settlements, this interviewee argued that government should assist the people selling informally at the crossroads where her house is. Rather than raiding these people and confiscating their goods, B3 suggested government should provide support, because at least 'they are trying' to earn an income (B3 interview).

Overall many people are sympathetic to government's efforts to provide housing and suggest that government is 'trying'. Others appreciated that there are many people still looking for or waiting for RDP houses (L2 interview). L1 waited 13 years between applying for her house and receiving it, and knows of others who have still not got their house. But she said people understand that there are a lot of people waiting for their houses and that maybe government has limited resources, especially money, to build houses for everyone (translator for L1). In these views respondents echo the sense of enormity of the housing task expressed by state respondents. Many interviewees' criticisms of their circumstances relate to local government operational and maintenance issues, transport and jobs, rather than the housing programme itself, although the quality of the house is a concern for several people.

8.7.4 Payment obligations

Whilst all interviewees were receiving municipal services, very few were paying for water. Some were not being billed yet (such as OF2, L1 and B3). Others were receiving invoices but were not paying (such as FP2, FP4). FP4 described how sometimes he pays and sometimes not: 'if we have money, we pay. If we don't have money, we don't pay' (FP4 interview). In these instances their water was not cut off if it was not paid:

No, they are not [cutting off]. I don't want to lie. They are not, but they send us summonses and all of that, but they are not cutting the water (FP4 interview).

Some respondents were paying a charge for refuse collection: OF1 paid R5 per month. Others have applied for the City's social package and so were not paying for water. OF3 said he was not paying for water or refuse 'because the government is make [it] free'

(OF3 interview). Most interviewees were paying for electricity via the pre-paid system²²⁹. FP3 paid electricity at R400 + a month, but was not paying for water and refuse: 'they said I must pay them [but] I told them that I've got no money. I'm owing them' (FP3 interview).

FP6 saw it as 'a sign from God' that his electricity supply works but not his meter, after being struck by lightning – and that he could therefore use electricity without the consumption being monitored.

If part of the expectation of RDP housing is that it will link citizens with the state by ensuring that service delivery is paid for, or in terms of embedding service payment as part of the 'formal behaviour' expected of citizens who are housing beneficiaries, then these ambitions are not being realised: 'can't pay, won't pay' attitudes seem to be fairly endemic. This applies not only to those seeming to struggle with their daily life, but also to those conforming to state expectations in other ways, and investing heavily in their houses, such as FP4 and FP2. The housing benefit has thus not formalised relationships with service providers to the degree that it might have done, even for those who might otherwise have 'bought in' to the state's vision of the role housing should play in consolidating people's lives. But indications from some respondents that the local authority is not efficiently billing residents or following up on default payments suggests an issue beyond the responsibility of the housing programme: that of how another sphere of the state chooses to implement or enforce the transactional relationship around service delivery.

8.8 Future

As reflected in the earlier discussion on how houses represent security over time, some interviewees see a future for themselves and their children where they currently live, and

²²⁹ Estimates amongst interviewees of electricity costs range from R150 – R400 per month.

exhibit an attachment to their house and their neighbourhood. FP5 talked about being familiar with the Devland Extension 27, knowing the people, their mood and being able to read the environment. Therefore he said:

my dream is I want to stay here for life until I die...because I already know this place...even if I can get money, I will not move to the suburbs. I can be a billionaire, [but] I will stay here (FP5 interview).

B3 planned to remain in her house long term, and quoted her teenage son expressing similar attachment to the area. Using the colloquial word 'location' to refer to township life, he has said to her

even [although] I can be educated and have the money, I don't think I can leave the location. I like the life of the location (B3 interview).

IP1 was clear she is staying put: 'I will be staying with [my children] until they grow up. We will visit Mpumalanga but we'll still be staying here' (IP1 interview). In other cases interviewees expressed the desire to move elsewhere. L2 cited the lack of facilities in his area as a reason to move:

if I can get [an]other job, the right job for me, I think I'll leave Lehae because at Lehae there no proper things like shopping centre. We don't have clinic. We don't have secondary [school]. We don't have police station. We don't have halls, like now we are using the schools for meetings (L2 interview)²³⁰.

But he also confessed to liking Pretoria and preferring to live there, so that it is not only his neighbourhood that is 'pushing' him. He has no thought of selling his house but magnanimously imagined giving it away to those who don't have a house: 'the homeless people, I can give it [to them]' (L2 interview). At the same time as expressing these sentiments he paradoxically referred to Lehae as 'a nice place'.

²³⁰ In other ways the future looks brighter for L2, as his child in matric has got a bursary to study engineering at Wits.

Others dreamed of going to 'the suburbs' if they could afford to and contrast the quietness and order found there with 'township life' (FP2, FP4 interviews).

If I had money I would move somewhere...If I had money. I'm tired of township life. I was born and brought up in the township, attended school in the township...[but] I can't stand it...(FP4 interview).

Despite the fact that 'several people' had enquired about buying his house and that he thought he could sell it for around R450 000, he would not be able to get a similar quality house in a suburb for this price and would not get a loan as he is unemployed (FP4 interview).

Despite the few who dreamt of the suburbs, most respondents did not contemplate selling their houses, and like OF1 saw it as a step that would undo the progress they have made in their lives (OF1 interview). L1 noted that she respected the law that, as she saw it, meant that beneficiaries can't sell their RDP houses (L1 interview). But respondents knew of people buying and selling houses:

there are a lot of people who came [in] and are buying the house from others...especially on this street. There's maybe 3 or 4 of the people who bought houses from others... (FP3 interview).

8.9 Conclusion

It is evident from particular respondents and from observation that there is considerable household investment going into these RDP neighbourhoods, including those that seem geographically peripheral. Investment is both in alterations and finishing of the basic RDP house, and in improvements in the yard in the form of backyard rooms, as well as gardens. Three respondents also spontaneously discussed their involvement in maintaining public infrastructure in their neighbourhood – exhibiting their positioning as active, contributing citizens rather than passive 'beneficiaries' only able to receive, as is sometimes alleged in discourse around the housing programme (FFC 2012). Several respondents mentioned community agreements about backyard shacks, typically aimed

at preventing shacks from being erected in their area. Respondents' opinions on this seemed to range from strong agreement, echoing similar aspirations and values to that of the state, to a more ambivalent position, concerned about restrictions applying in *some* areas of the city but not others.

Many people living in RDP houses thus show attachment to the house and the area they are in. Even those dissatisfied and frustrated with the neighbourhood are fearful of losing or letting go their house. People express pride and satisfaction with owning their own home, wanting to protect, defend the house against someone taking it away. In these ways respondents such as FP1 and OF1 in the main appeared to be clinging to the product the state has delivered (Bank 2011), adapting and transforming it (Tippie 2000), as with respondents B3 and FP3, and in many cases, such as interviewees OF2 and FP4, embracing or aspiring to the conventions of home ownership and suburban living (Ross 2005; Anand and Rademacher 2011). The house particularly represents security in relation to children, and their future, recalling Varley's (nd) observations of some people's 'aspirations to permanence' in contrast to scholarly writing which valorises 'mobility and transience'. I would position almost all respondents somewhere towards the right of the spectrum of peoples' interactions depicted in Chapter Two. In sentiment and in intention, most of those interviewed align with the grouping that at the start of the chapter I termed 'conforming and fulfilling state expectations', although this group has a narrower membership when their actual practices are considered, as I discuss below.

Houses are used for and offer a variety of benefits more or less as anticipated, with a number of them reflecting home based businesses. But at the same time these houses are used for income generation in more diverse, complex and confounding ways than the state anticipated. The group I classified at the beginning of the chapter as 'hanging on' use their property to earn income from unsanctioned activities that state respondents or politicians may not approve of. These and other practices described in this chapter are also not always welcomed by neighbouring residents, evidenced by the complaints about shebeens, braai facilities, car washes and funeral parlours. Diverse attitudes emerge from

respondents about the way in which new RDP areas are becoming 'like townships' in the mix of activities and 'vibrancy' that is developing (through largely unregulated home based businesses): a sense of nostalgia and comfortable familiarity competes with a sense of the new, pristine neighbourhood being 'spoilt', being sullied by these activities, suggesting a yearning for the norms and standards of 'orderly society' and for 'protection against disorder' (Schlyter 2003: 21). The impression gained from both the state and some respondents is that the emergence of these activities in a newly developed neighbourhood was not anticipated: perhaps these sorts of activities were vaguely assumed to result from the congestion, overcrowding, and apartheid-era economic restrictions in townships, and would not be a feature of the new era. In this sense I suggest that it was not so much the case that the state assumed that formality (of RDP settlements) represented functionality (Scott 1998), as the state not thinking through what *does* signify functionality and what does not, in the current context. Whilst some correlation might drawn between 'look' and 'performance' in fact this represents an absence or vacuum in the debate, and an absence in considering the economic dimension of functionality.

For most people the house is an improvement on previous living conditions. People are grateful to the state for supplying houses for ownership, although critical of some aspects of execution, such as the small size and poor quality of some of the housing. But many people are sympathetic to the state for the difficult task it has. Evident in most of the neighbourhoods is the partial/ uneven or incomplete presence or daily face of the state, where there is evidence of an active state, but only within limits. The state is present in some services, facilities, and in the regulation of hawkers (commented on in Bramfischerville); but it appears largely absent in land use management, for example. There are also complaints about limited facilities and amenities in some areas. Respondents raised the issue of unemployment and the future: a number mentioned the issue of jobs, and the state needing to 'do something about this situation'. In the interim, some respondents have themselves have made a plan to manage or improve their situation; in some cases to 'fill in the gaps' left by the state. Examples would be families

'dividing', living elsewhere to their children, mainly due to the dearth of schooling in their area (particularly evident in Lehae). Another example would be households trying to earn an income in the vicinity of their house. Some of these constitute the 'ambiguous' practices I identified at the start of the chapter, those which exhibit entrepreneurialism, ingenuity and pragmatism, and which do not appear to impinge on neighbours but which are nevertheless unsanctioned or unintended by the state. Conceptually these beneficiary practices might parallel Ghannam's (2002) characterisation of practices she studied in Cairo as neither resisting nor conforming; Robins's (2003) notion of 'hybrid', 'selective' and 'situational' responses, and Watson's (2009) sense of unanticipated appropriations. They also echo Mosse's (2004) claim that people might act in unintended ways but nevertheless also contribute to endorsing the approach of authorities, in this case through practices which whilst unsanctioned, could be seen as a strategic use of an asset as implicitly advocated by policy documents.

9 CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter I review the purpose and orientation of the research I have conducted, outlining its theoretical location and research design. I articulate the key arguments of this research and the contributions it makes to the field, identifying also some areas for further research.

9.1 Purpose and orientation of the research

'RDP' housing, the dominant component of South Africa's massive low income housing programme confers to millions of impoverished households ownership of a house and serviced land. The strategy has wide geographical coverage across the country, and has reached large numbers of very poor households. It has attracted a range of commentary, both criticism and praise. But one aspect which has received remarkably little attention is how recipient households are interacting with the housing benefit: the extent to which this usage accords with what the state expected in conferring the benefit to households, and the consequences and significance for the state and for households of changes between policy intentions and implementation outcomes. This then has been the focus of this research, concentrating on the interaction between the household and the house itself. By this I refer not to the micro practices within the confines of the house or yard, but to the spatial relationships between the house and the city, the functioning of the house in supporting household survival – and the state's interpretation of this.

In the introduction to this research therefore I argued that in this respect the results of this housing programme are not clear, and in particular the results for targeted households are not well understood. This gap in knowledge reflects a wider trend: it is relatively hard to find research that explores how households interact with allocated housing (as explored in Ghannam 2002 and Salcedo 2010). Related research considers the effects of interventions into existing living conditions (for example Perlman 2005; Fernandes 2011), dimensions of housing performance such as its functioning as an asset (for instance in Baumann 2003; Lemanski 2010; Shisaka 2011) or recipient satisfaction

levels (such as Moolla et al 2011). Of particular relevance to this study is research on how people in developing countries make use of their housing: in respect of the interplay between dweller activities and physical conditions (Tamés 2004); with respect to economic practices (Kellet and Tipple 2003; Schlyter 2003), and often related to this, physical transformations of housing (Tipple 2000; Schlyter 2003). There is relatively little exploration in these studies of how the state sees these practices and what it makes of them. This has been a key dimension of this research, which explores how people interact with the RDP housing benefit, how this differs from or accords with the expectations of the state, and how the state assesses and responds to this interaction.

This research is relevant for several reasons, I argued. With respect to the particular case study of the South African programme as manifested in urban Johannesburg, the research contributes to understanding how the housing intervention supports - or possibly undermines – households' material well-being; how the house, with its relative spatial fixity as an owned benefit, relates to peoples' use of the city; how the state sees this interaction between people and their houses, and what it makes of this in practical and in policy terms. These are not just matters of curiosity but connect to the policy intentions of the housing programme itself and how these are assessed, as well as providing detailed knowledge of the lived experiences of policy implementation.

As discussed in the introduction, the research was triggered by public expressions of consternation by senior figures in the South African state about what they interpret as signals of undesirable practices around the housing. The strength of these statements seemed at odds with my own perspective on potential reasons for such practices, and my sense of the diversity of views within the state on these. At the same time, the potential consequences for affected households of state censure are severe: limiting choices; curtailing agency; or 'criminalising' behaviour. Finally, the lack of detailed research contributes to an ill-informed reading of the situation, which may reproduce inappropriate public policy.

Whilst these motivations for the research are specific to the South African housing programme, this study has relevance for wider debates. RDP housing can be categorized as a 'state improvement programme', with similarities to forms of state interventions in various contexts across the world. Improvement programmes set out to deliberately improve the physical, economic or social situation of a defined target population. These interventions by governments, and funding agencies, and their impacts on identified groups have been the subject of development and post-development critiques and theorizing for decades, and are a topic around which there is some contention (see for example Scott 1998; Escobar 1997; Li 2005, 2007). This South African example of an improvement programme, applied across the country, across a wide population and with a strong physical and spatial outcome, relates to these broader debates. Its contribution to them is elaborated later in this chapter.

While empirical material and theorizing from the South often focuses on subaltern practices of 'the marginalised', the state's understanding of these practices has received less focus. In this case of the RDP housing programme in South Africa, state practice aimed to benefit people (an improvement intervention) is the catalyst for a range of beneficiary practices, which in turn attract attention from the state. In this research therefore I advocated for not only exploring beneficiary practices around the improvement programme but also the state's view on these. I argued that the meeting point between policy-realisation, its usage by those targeted by the policy, and interpretations of this usage by housing policy formulators and implementers is important: this nexus offers insight into what seems to be the co-production or co-constituting of complex urban situations; environments which may be shaped by physical elements and usage patterns of several actors (Ghannam 2003; Bayat and Biekart 2009). It is the interface between the housing programme and its users that can advance understanding of the extent to which expectations are realized, behaviours and their motivations are accurately interpreted, and most importantly, how the relationship between the housing and socio-economic, spatial environment into which it is inserted is understood. The research project as a whole therefore aligns with those who call for a

'bifurcated view' (Harrison 2007: 5) of state and city users, a focus on 'the interface' (Watson 2009) between them, and for exploration of the 'messy, contradictory, conjunctural effects' of 'improvements' (Li 2005: 383). This recalls the 'zone of encounter' that Watson (2009) refers to, and as mentioned in Chapter One, is where Li contends that

attempts to achieve the "right disposition of things" encounter – and produce – a witches' brew of processes, practices, and struggles that exceed their scope (Li 2007: 28).

It is thus the circuit of 'improvement' conceptualization, physical intervention, impact and appropriation, and reflection on this that is the object of study. This is captured in the research question: if beneficiaries of RDP housing engage with it differently from the state's expectations, what is the nature of this difference, how can it be explained, and what is the significance of this?

9.2 Theoretical location

Theoretical tools to inform the empirical investigation were discussed in Chapter Two, where the research was located within the study of relations between state and society (Corbridge 2008). I drew on analyses which discuss the varied, diverse and potentially contradictory nature of the state, and its sometimes porous character. From this perspective relationships between people inside the institution and those outside of it, or personal relationships with the benefit under distribution, can shape attitudes and insights, in this case how the results and the usage of the housing programme are viewed. I argued that as the housing programme constitutes a form of improvement intervention, notions of modernization, modernity and development were also relevant. These concepts inform what sorts of issues might come into view for the state when it considers the outcomes of the programme. Three matters stood out in the pronouncements of South African politicians on the housing programme, and in key literature that inspired me (such as Ghannam 2002; Tipple 2003; Schlyter 2003; Li 2005; Corbridge et al 2005) as of concern to the state and of relevance to this context. First, indications of informal

practice emerging in a newly ordered development; second, the extent to which people behave 'appropriately' in relation to their benefit, and third, what control the state is able to exert in relation to the intervention it has made. But whilst a state may have certain objectives, it also grapples with difficulties with its agendas and its abilities to invoke these. These difficulties relate to the complexity of the environment and context in which the state is intervening and 'improving', and the limitations of its tools, procedures and machinery to cope with such complexity.

In Chapter Two I also discussed literature from 'the everyday' which considers what ordinary people do outside of, or despite, their interactions with the state. I noted that much of this literature refers to people considered marginalised; often excluded from benefits dispensed by the state; whilst in the context of the RDP housing programme people are recognized by the state, included, and ostensibly uplifted. I drew where possible on work which reflects on people's responses *after* a state intervention. Some of this material uses the notion of resistance to a state intervention or practice (Bayat 2004), whether this 'resistance' is consciously invoked or not. Other material (Ross 2005; Bank 2011) is oriented more to the idea of attachment to the state intervention. Both of these perspectives had some resonance but revealed limitations for this research: not fully capturing what I saw as a more complex and far less clear-cut set of interactions. As a contribution to this relative vacuum I developed the device of a spectrum, along which I organized the material on 'the everyday' according to the extent to which people are seen to reject, resist, appropriate, or embrace the intervention by the state. This spectrum was able to capture the gradations of responses which emerged in this research, which occupied a range of positions along the continuum.

9.3 Research design

This research has aligned with calls for context specific, context aware case study research, focusing in this instance on how modernization and improvement programmes actually transpire. This kind of research advocates for depth of investigation to allow

complexity, subtlety, particularity and new ways of seeing to surface. The particular form the case study takes here is not the same as neighbourhood or project-based research found in some of the work of authors I have drawn on, such as Ross (2005) and Ghannam (2002), and does not take the form of detailed case histories such as Schlyter (2003). Although my research concentrates on a geographic area in the form of Johannesburg, this is a relatively large city, with many different manifestations of RDP housing, and this as an object of study can't be compared with ethnographic in-depth studies. Instead the city offers a scale at which to consider the realisations of housing policy as experienced by a range of recipients; this diversity is appropriate, I argue, to a policy implemented in many different ways since 1994. This form of case study also meets the objectives of understanding the intersections between state and recipient, much of which happens within but also 'above' the local scale.

For insights into beneficiary practices related to RDP housing I drew on in-depth interviews with 34 people who live and work in Johannesburg and who have or had an RDP house, as well as direct observations of five of the RDP neighbourhoods. I explored how people interacted with their housing, what role it played in their lives, and why this was the case. This exploration of people occupying different parts of the city has allowed multiple views: glimpses, through beneficiary descriptions and reflections on them, into more than ten localities of RDP housing in Johannesburg or beyond it in Gauteng. Whilst my understanding of the nature of these places is largely limited to these mediated views, the approach has had the advantage of revealing complex beneficiary spatial practices, outside of the RDP neighbourhood, that might otherwise be hidden in a geographically bound, project-specific focus of a particular locality.

The Johannesburg horizontal spread of investigation has been complemented by considering how a national policy and programme is translated to the local sphere of government, and how the results of this are in turn viewed. A broad view at city level is thus matched by a 'vertical' view which includes national, provincial and local housing considerations. The vertical lens focused on uncovering how the state sees the results of

its housing programme and what it makes of this view; including aspects of the macro level of national policy making, budgeting, subsidy administration and monitoring; and the provincial and local government spatial decision making, project implementation, administration and allocation. The focus has been on what the state understands about the individual lives of beneficiaries of housing intervention. This exploration has enabled the intimate and complex ties between spheres of government to come into focus, and the intricacies and contradictions of processes and results to become evident. Here I drew on interviews with 22 people involved in conceptualising, implementing and reflecting on the housing programme, a group I labelled 'state housing practitioners'. I investigated what they knew of the ways in which people made use of their housing benefit, how they knew this, and what they made of this information.

Later in this concluding chapter I consider what these two sets of information – from beneficiaries, and from the state - show when juxtaposed with one another. I note that whilst case study research such as this cannot underpin generalisations, it can provide reflections on theory, and I discuss what is illuminated by this particular case.

I note here that this approach could be further extended by follow-on studies; in particular to explore the views of local political leaders and activists in RDP settlements on the origins of attitudes to backyard shacks and other settlement issues. A further important area of investigation would be into the views of senior politicians, which appear in media statements to be more strongly held and polarised than those of officials interviewed for this research.

9.4 Discussion of the RDP housing programme and of Johannesburg

Prior to discussing findings from these interviews I detailed in Chapter Four the specific approach to low income housing in South Africa and how and why it has evolved. This was followed in Chapter Five by an analysis of Johannesburg as a site of housing policy realization. Chapter Four emphasised that whilst the post-1994 housing strategy has many components to it, one aspect has dominated in terms of state budget spent and

numbers of houses delivered. The RDP programme of delivering houses for ownership in new neighbourhoods has become almost synonymous with the housing programme.

South Africa's history helps explain the particular significance of a home-ownership emphasis in the post-apartheid context. But the approach was contested at the time of its formation in the early 1990s, and some argue that the negotiated origins of the programme led to compromises and distortions that have plagued its realization. One particular aspect, that of providing a starter house to be completed by the beneficiary partner, had by the early 2000s morphed into provision of a complete house by the state, overshadowing a complex package of other intentions and expectations of the programme. Some of these further goals – of restructuring the apartheid city for example - have become increasingly difficult to reconcile with the dominant house-building agenda. Ambitious delivery targets publicized by the state, and the political profile given to the programme, have raised the pressure for the delivery and handover of stock to households. Numbers of houses built, and still needing to be built as suggested by people remaining in poor living conditions, are key drivers of state activity.

I argued that with respect to impact on beneficiaries, the low income housing programme shows expectations of betterment, to 'improve the human condition' (with reference to Li 2005). Explicitly or by implication anticipated outcomes include the rooting of the households within a secure, comfortable place to stay, providing a base for daily life. I contended that the housing programme was part of a 1990s vision for the future in which poor urban South Africans marginalized by apartheid were to progress towards becoming stable, employed and educated urban citizens. They were to benefit from increasing prosperity, enjoying land ownership, shelter, services and security from the initial platform of their subsidized house. This notion, I argued, was premised on an assumption that integral to the urban future would be an increasing number of jobs or other means of generating income, in reasonable proximity to housing. I noted that a number of jobs were indeed created by the house-building programme itself, though not necessarily directly for beneficiaries.

The chapter on Johannesburg provided a depiction of the spatial and the socio-economic context into which housing delivery is inserted in this particular city. A key point discussed concerned the related issues of wealth, poverty, unemployment and informal economic activity. Despite Johannesburg's relative prosperity, jobs for low and unskilled workers are scarce and many of those meeting the income-level criterion for RDP housing are not able to get formal employment. Informal economic activity abounds. At the same time there are expectations of state housing as a poverty intervention, mainly linked to the notion of housing as an asset. The City's 2006 strategy documentation discusses the 'ladder of prosperity' envisaged for poor households and links this to progress up the housing ladder through property ownership, facilitated in the first instance by the national housing programme (City of Johannesburg 2006).

In Johannesburg there are also unresolved official City attitudes to informality, both informal economic activity and informal living, and how this intersects with a pro-poor agenda. Some municipal actions are aimed at improvement and upliftment (such as the City's informal settlement regularization programme), others include repressive responses to some daily practices which don't conform to standard regulations (such as hawking). These tensions are reflected in City strategy documents I alluded to, which reflect 'pro-poor' aims such as promoting equity and spatial integration but have also over the last decade invoked a 'world class city' discourse reflecting aspirations to a modern, ordered, efficient, and slick city, sometimes at odds with a pro poor agenda. At a practical level City activities reflect multiple demands²³¹ and at times inadequate, confused or contradictory responses.

²³¹ Such as infrastructure backlogs often spatially concentrated in former apartheid era townships, new pressures of market-led commercial, financial and residential growth, poverty relief for households unable to pay for services, managing a large migrant population, protecting existing infrastructure from multiple new pressures, and so on.

Chapter Five also discussed the layout of the city and what patterns of RDP housing are discernible in this layout. I argued that the spatial pattern of Johannesburg's low income housing is complex. There are a number of large peripherally-sited state funded projects (as is often the critique of RDP projects), yet some of these are not locationally peripheral in city *region* terms. In addition there are examples of well-located state-funded housing which conform quite well to City spatial aims of compaction and integration. Newer 'BNG'-type developments aim to be mixed income and mixed land use to overcome various critiques, though I argue the strategies around this do not clearly solve the income-deficit problem of many beneficiary households. In the inner city and other 'hotspots', poor people are occupying buildings in ways unintended by their designers or City managers, who have no clear strategies for dealing with the subsequent tensions arising from the clash between health and safety concerns in densely occupied structures, businesses wishing to gentrify run down areas of the city, and the Constitutional Court interpretations of the right to housing. This complex spatial pattern of state funded and other low income housing is partly explained by the fraught relationship between city and provincial government, where visions and agendas are often not aligned and funding, spatial and delivery pressures jostle for attention, resulting in a fragmented housing approach. It is also partly explained, I argued, by the poor economic environment and diverse means in which people are trying to bring in an income. A further explanation is the transport system which remains awkward, expensive and time consuming for many people despite recent innovations such as the bus rapid transit system and the Gautrain: the latter primarily aimed at middle class car users rather than mass transport of poor people.

Chapter Five therefore highlighted the socio economic and spatial context of Johannesburg into which the state's low income housing programme is inserted, flagging its complexity: City management is not only grappling with the apartheid legacy of social segregation, large housing backlogs and huge underinvestment in key infrastructure such as transport, but also a strong, dynamic private sector shaping the post-apartheid land market, very high unemployment, poverty and migration. This is a different context to

that predicted in the early 1990s. Making sense of the implications of this context for poor households is challenging: the geography and living circumstances of low income housing (formal and improvised) is diverse, and the social and economic situation is such that income generation activities are not only linked to obvious areas of opportunity but also influenced by the expensive and cumbersome transport system, and the lack of formal jobs. Overall, authorities and analysts appear to have a relatively weak understanding of the functioning of alternative economic practices and spatial strategies: Johannesburg's key inner city area, seat of metropolitan government, is an example of unauthorised, unacknowledged and largely unseen economic practices.

These chapters on the RDP housing programme and on Johannesburg complemented my interrogation of the primary research question in the subsequent three chapters, in which I drew substantially on interview material from state housing practitioners, non-resident beneficiaries, and resident beneficiaries. In the next section I articulate the key arguments which have emerged from this research.

9.5 Key arguments

9.5.1 Varied interactions with RDP housing

Beneficiaries demonstrate various interactions with RDP housing which do not support an interpretation of rejection or abandonment of it; which elevate dimensions of the housing benefit valued by beneficiaries despite its limitations; and which reflect an altered, transformed environment to that delivered by the state. Efforts people make to retain these houses can stimulate a range of informal or unsanctioned practices which are necessary for their preservation.

Despite the variety in interviewees' actions relative to RDP housing discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight, there are also some predominant trends. This thesis argues that attachment to RDP housing is evident. Respondents express pride in and satisfaction with owning their own home, and for most people the house is an improvement on their previous living conditions. The house is particularly important as a secure place for

children, and for some respondents it represents adulthood, responsibility, and independence. Respondents want to protect and defend the house, even those dissatisfied with the area the house is located in. Despite complaints such as the small size and poor quality of some of the housing, people express gratitude to the state. For some though, the key thing that government could be doing better is to create more jobs.

My arguments here support related findings from past studies such as Zack and Charlton (2003), PSC (2003), Vorster and Tolken (2008), and Shisaka (2011), which similarly reflect positive sentiments of beneficiaries towards their housing. But a number of unexpected issues also emerged. In Chapter Seven I discussed the surprising finding that many of those *not* living in their housing deployed complex attachments and spatial practices to maintain their connections. Surfacing more strongly than I had anticipated were these efforts aimed at retaining, or even before this, actively acquiring, an RDP house, even if it could not provide the basis for daily life. Many of these non-resident beneficiaries were using their RDP houses at certain times of the week or the month, but in between times were staying elsewhere, close to where they earned an income. This finding may reflect to some extent the method I used to source respondents: did this inadvertently delimit a particular sub-group of those not living in their RDP houses? I was expecting to find a greater number of interviewees who have sold or let out their houses. Clearly, these people exist, confirmed *inter alia* by the trade in RDP housing experienced or observed by my interviewees. These stories deserve further investigation. My findings do not negate this phenomenon, although it did not appear strongly within the activities of my interviewees. Instead the findings shed light on an unexpected set of circumstances: that of non-resident RDP users who remained attached to their housing. The efforts they made to maintain these links are significant, and were often necessary to 'fill in' gaps of the state: an allocation system which is not very responsive to people's existing spatial practices; settlement development and service delivery which is partial and incomplete; an expensive transport system; and a broader failure to tackle high levels of unemployment. Yet despite these gaps, people are still grateful and largely do not question these shortcomings.

In respect of the respondents who do live in their RDP houses on an on-going basis I argued that the active improvements and extensions of houses was evidence of respondents' efforts or desires to mould the houses in ways that suited them. In this I saw signs of active, engaged contributors to the state's efforts to improve their lives, not passive recipients as at times suggested (by the state and others). There is also evidence that efforts by beneficiaries went beyond their own site to neighbourhood improvement or safety initiatives, which they saw as matching the efforts of the state.

This thesis makes a key conceptual contribution to literature on the relationship between the state and its citizens through the organizing device of a spectrum from 'disengagement' or 'rejection' of the state improvement intervention at one end to 'embracing' to it at the other. I used this device to reflect on beneficiaries' various relationships with their housing, identifying beneficiary practices which intersect at different points along this spectrum, with some clustered more closely in particular regions of the spectrum than others. But whilst the spectrum was illuminating, its true value was achieved in recognising that respondents' engagement can simultaneously embrace different positions within. An example was respondent Andile, both a rough sleeper and an RDP-owner, whose situation can be read as simultaneously 'encroaching' (on public space), thereby as some would see it, 'resisting', yet at the same time also 'aspiring to conform' (by purchasing an RDP house), thus occupying concurrent positions on the spectrum. I therefore propose a spectrum which is multi-dimensional and able to capture this complexity: of range and diversity in relationships between people and the state, but also of simultaneous and seemingly contradictory situations. The spread of responses, and the multiple dimensions of some of them (with actions of some respondents intersecting with the spectrum at several points), serve to highlight the complex and nuanced interaction with the state-provided housing benefit in South Africa. As Ghannam (2002) argues in her research in Cairo, this cannot usefully be described simply as either 'rejecting' or 'conforming to' the accommodation. The conceptual contribution, encompassing the initial spectrum and its critique and refinement as described above, based on the evidence presented in this research, addresses my

concerns about what seemed to be missing in the literature I engaged with, particularly that which discussed the notion of everyday resistance.

The spectrum thus offered tools to interpret RDP housing in the lives of users as potentially both flawed and limited, but simultaneously fulfilling in some ways – ways which can vary between households. It drew attention to the possibility of agency of users in modifying the structure, or the use of it, across time and space, whilst flagging the limits of this in overcoming major economic constraints. I argue that the spaces of RDP settlements, and spaces elsewhere in the city, reflect a process of being adapted and modified – co-constituted – by multiple actors including RDP dwellers who are not merely passive recipients of a state hand-out.

A further key finding is that spatially split households can be precipitated by RDP housing. Several interviews revealed that family members who might be expected to constitute a single household are spatially divided across more than one location. This is mainly evident in children living separate from parents, largely to do with access to schools elsewhere and difficulties with this in proximity to the RDP house.

These various dimensions of the relationship between peoples' lives and the housing benefit helps illuminate that, whilst RDP housing can have important limitations, it can also fulfil a variety of roles and functions which are not easily dismissed. People intersect with the housing in various ways that suggests that it is neither wholly suited nor wholly unsuited to their needs. For some people, the housing does not assist with or actively overcome poverty and difficulties in earning income. Under constrained circumstances, people might prioritise cheap living or lower monthly costs over what the state might see as decent living. This does not mean that people don't want a house of their own, or that acquiring a house is not important and significant for most people. But few people express any connection between their on-going financial situation and the house itself. People can positively embrace the product despite its limitations or its unfulfilled dimensions in some aspects. For some people, their house is able to act as a base, as a

secure and stable place to locate themselves, but the housing environment could enhance well-being/ improve livelihoods/ reduce poverty better. On-site economic activities have consequences which need to be far better understood in order for the state to develop responses supportive of income generation²³² but respectful of amenity. Further, in a range of different individual cases, informal living/working/use of housing is necessary for the retention of the state-provided asset: state efforts to get people to buy-in to 'formalised' housing and lifestyles can only be supported by some people (in the absence of massive formal job provision) through informal or unsanctioned uses of the asset. This finding resonates with Lemanski's (2009) contention that the rental income from backyard shacks in Westlake is necessary to offset the cost of home ownership, but extends this insight into a far broader range of practices – from multiple dwelling places to spatial reconstitution of the household – linked to retaining the house.

9.5.2 Limited understanding by the state

The second major finding is that these practices are only partially seen and understood by the state, which nevertheless reacts to perceived problematic engagements. Investigation by the state into beneficiary practices largely centres on whether people are playing by state rules in relation to their houses (rather than what they are doing and why).

In Chapter Six I used findings from interviews with the state housing practitioners to argue that comparatively little attention is given to outcomes for households of RDP/BNG housing²³³. Despite its large scale and high profile, the state has not examined outcomes for households systematically, nor has it a framework for thinking about or

²³² In some respects this study accords with one of the conclusions from the CAHF study that 'subsidy houses, as a result of their use as a social and economic asset, have a significant and beneficial impact on beneficiaries' (Shisaka 2011).

²³³ The government has however started assessing outcomes of other of its housing interventions, such as informal settlement upgrade.

measuring outcomes. Related studies have been done, most notably the various beneficiary audits specifically undertaken to check whether the original beneficiary is still in occupation of the house. Much of this information is not in the public domain, and findings are reported by respondents in this study in highly varied ways, suggesting that these have not provided a clear view within the state of extent or importance of this issue. There are examples of locally focused, state supported studies of RDP projects that orient towards outcomes for beneficiary households (a key example being Vorster and Tolken 2008). Nevertheless, the point remains that a methodical examination of the issues relevant to this research - the effects on beneficiaries of investing a significant amount of public expenditure in RDP housing projects - is not available²³⁴. This thesis contributes to this gap by demonstrating the value of examining outcomes for beneficiary households (by revealing surprising, unseen, and unacknowledged daily practices which are relevant to policy and practice).

Whilst using the term 'the state' throughout this research, I am nevertheless aware of the difficulties of ring-fencing the notion of the state and, as some would argue, the futility of trying to do so (Mitchell 2006). Taking a lead from Mitchell (2006) and Migdal (1994; 2006) I have looked rather at the nature of the encounter between state and society; but I have conceptualised the state in this instance as being primarily the development intervention – the housing benefit - and society as the individual household beneficiary. I have looked at the encounter between them not to reveal the differences that serve to define or characterise each body or being, but rather what this interface shows about circumstances, aspirations, ideals and motivations of the parties, and how these are understood. The point is not primarily to carve out the boundaries between organisations, to define what makes the distinction, but to understand why there is contestation, divergence, friction around an intervention conceptualised – and by and large accepted by its targets - as beneficial and supportive. In Mitchell's (2006) terms the

²³⁴ Though important studies have been done of other aspects of state expenditure on housing, such as Kayamandi's (2011) Economic Impact study and FFC (2012).

contestation and divergence of practices illuminate the edges of the state and the edge of the beneficiary grouping²³⁵; in this research the objective is not about unpicking the interconnections but about surfacing the reasons for, motivations behind, a more jagged and less seamless interface than might be expected or adequately accounted for to date.

This research focus does not account for gaps between policy and outcomes in the sense that Migdal (1988) discusses. He focuses on the distortions and accommodations that are made along the path to implementation through the transformations made between state and societal organisations encountered. Instead, this research helps account for unexpected and altered outcomes in the period after implementation, how these are viewed and what the implications of these are. A further stage of research would be required to consider what transformative effects there are over time on the state as a result.

On the matter of state views on the outcomes, I argue in this research that those involved in conceptualizing and implementing the housing programme display awareness of some user practices with respect to their RDP housing, but reveal sketchy knowledge of what trends or patterns are happening, and what is driving these. Officials are in some instances considered and insightful in their judgements of beneficiary practices. Some have personal (such as family) experience of ways in which RDP housing plays out in daily life. A few interviewees drew on empirical material from audits or surveys to back up their views. But in the main, personal experience, observation or anecdote is relied on by those interviewed for this research. These were engaged, experienced and in many cases critically reflective state housing practitioners, and their understanding of the results of the RDP programme relative to its beneficiaries, is shown by this research to be partial and fairly speculative.

²³⁵ Though as noted earlier they are not a self-constituting group of any sort.

Divisions amongst interviewees accord with a state that is not uniform in outlook. Some contend that indications of people not living in their houses as expected can for the most part be explained by administrative muddles. These mess-ups have been caused by developers and others involved in the development process and the administration of it – in other words, the state²³⁶ itself. Respondents have some concern with how to get this paperwork right but few practical strategies in this regard. Severe consequences for beneficiaries, such as being held in paperwork limbo without a house, and being prevented from accessing one, was lamented by one interviewee, but with a sense of frustration and helplessness with respect to rectifying the situation.

But I also argued that there are contradictory positions within the state, with some respondents contending that there *are* widespread indications of people not living in their houses, not because of mismatched paperwork but because they live elsewhere. But they differ on the extent to which this occurs, and why it does. Interpretations, based largely on anecdotes and personal observations, are not necessarily inaccurate, but they do not clearly provide a convincing, sound assessment of the situation. Not only is there a lack of good information, but an apparent inertia to fully explore this issue. Whilst individuals show reflection, insight and analytical assessment, recalling Tandler's (1997) discussion of officials in Brazil, the state as an institution has not applied energy and emphasis to this issue of the beneficiary interaction with their housing, despite expressed concerns about it. Nevertheless many respondents advocated a stronger emphasis on rental tenure as a policy response to their observations.

The state is thus operating with imperfect information and 'guesses'. Some of the suppositions by state housing practitioners do in fact align with findings from this empirical research, but even then, they are not acted on or used by the state. Care and concern are shown by a number of state-aligned actors, but this is at an individual level rather than an institutional concern. In fact an institutional pattern in state responses was

²³⁶ I include here those who act on behalf of the state.

not clearly evident: whilst Migdal (1994) suggests 'distinct structural environments' in the state might shape outlooks, a correlation between respondent's views and their location within the organisation did not surface in this research. In this research thus the institutional imperative primarily remains with the notion of compliance with or deviation from systems and procedures of record-keeping: the systematic evaluation undertaken by the state is predominantly about the accuracy of lists and records²³⁷. It is not that this is not important: the accuracy of title deed information is vital in securing the legitimate right to a formal house, for example. But other concerns also deserve attention. In particular, an approach to housing which privileges home ownership, as many contemporary approaches in developing countries do, would seem especially required to articulate with how people survive materially, due to the strategy's inclination towards place-situatedness. The limited engagement by state housing practitioners with the income generation issue, whether home-based or elsewhere, seems a key oversight in a country with massive unemployment²³⁸. And whilst people concerned with housing delivery might see their mandate more narrowly around 'housing', the connection to the wider socio-economic environment has not been more clearly emphasised.

I argue that a number of key issues identified in this research are largely unseen or unacknowledged by state housing practitioners: how people adapt, make use of, modify the housing, what the consequences and implications are – for households, for neighbourhoods, for wider city practices. In part the lack of focus on peoples' interactions with their houses is part of a bigger blind spot about land and urban management – the 'operations' of a human settlement. A lack of engagement with this issue may lead to misrepresentation of the situation, and misdiagnosis of problems, therefore resulting in inappropriate or limited solutions or interventions – such as a shift in policy and

²³⁷ The state has also supported several studies into the performance of housing as an asset.

²³⁸ 'By any measure, South Africa has extraordinarily high rates of unemployment. Just 41% of adults work, including in informal economic activity. In other developing countries generally about 60% of adults work, and the ratio is higher in developed countries' (NPC 2011 online document, no page number).

programme towards rental accommodation, which might assist with certain issues but will not contribute to overcoming limitations around income generation. Further, the lack of information and concern with outcomes for households overlooks the need for and options for better articulation between the housing benefit and economic platform for improvement. It might miss small concrete adjustments which could be implemented to make delivery work better. Perhaps however the state *cannot* look too hard at what I see as the key issue with RDP housing, its performance in the household economy, because the ability to impact substantially on these objectives is largely outside of DHS capability.

9.5.3 Limits and failings in state control

A key finding is that, in contrast to an efficient and controlling state as is sometimes assumed in the literature, the evidence from part of this thesis shows a strange and disconcerting situation of self-entanglement in some situations, notably in parts of Gauteng. Here the state's own rules and procedures (such as recording ID numbers of recipients on databases) have paralysed it, and some innocent would-be beneficiaries. As with Tarlo (2001) some official records at least 'lie', are incomplete, and unreliable. Whilst bureaucratic systems and procedures might have started with the intention of streamlining, simplifying and categorizing a complex situation, the system proves inadequate to manage its own procedures. The vertical chain between local project level and national record keeping and administration is a broken and tangled one. At the same time the state sets out to control beneficiary practices (through the pre-emptive clause in the title deeds) but is unable to maintain control of its own records and oversight. These insights assist in understanding the pressures on the state and the limits of its abilities in controlling a large scale, complex and multi-faceted programme. Although implicating predominantly the national and provincial spheres of government, the matter of weak systems, records and procedures also surfaced in this research through beneficiary

reports on City billing systems²³⁹; in this way challenging some elements of Johannesburg's projected self-image as a World Class African City.

In these ways the state can be seen to be vigorous, resourced, delivery-active, and simultaneously confounded by complexities in the process (accessing good land, managing the administration of the delivery cycle), and by peoples' adaption to a harsh context that the state does not confront. The state is wrestling with the frustration and disappointment that 'what is' does not equate with 'what ought to be', despite a programme massively crafted, engineered and orchestrated by it. Yet, recalling Mosse (2004), recipients' transgressions around the housing programme do not necessarily contradict their desire for it, and might contribute to validating the programme through making it work for them. Set against a broader chorus of demand from those who have not yet benefitted, this reinforces for the state the sense of a legitimate and desired policy approach.

9.5.4 Mixed views on informal practices

This thesis supports literature referred to in Chapter Two around the existence within the state of both negative as well as more ambivalent views towards informal practices (Bayat 2004; Valverde 2011). Indeed I argue that empathy for practices of informal economic activity, informally constructed structures in RDP developments, and informal trade of houses was evident in some interviewee attitudes, whilst others were procedural and rule-oriented in their responses, and several noted the lack of clear tools to deal with this issue. For some this was an arms-length problem for other branches of the local state to contend with (the 'detached' state housing practitioners). Actions in response to informality cited by interviewees or reported in the media seem largely reactive, triggered by complaints, rumours, judgements of those in and around settlements, and

²³⁹ An issue for further exploration is whether the two sets of problems are connected in some way: is cost recovery in one of the richest and best resourced metros in South Africa compromised by problems in housing administration at other spheres of government?

initiated by politicians rather than motivated by a desire to explore the intersection between daily life practices and RDP housing. There were a few counter-trends evident, such as the Alexandra Renewal Project's more proactive interaction with home based enterprises.

Some respondents – amongst both housing practitioners and beneficiaries - were concerned with the look of the neighbourhood and with agreed protocols for the materials used in backyard dwellings in particular, and what deviations from this represented for everyone concerned. In some settlements there seemed to be shared understandings amongst residents that informal materials were not to be used, either 'agreed' to by 'communities' or instructed by local political structures. The views of local residents, the ANC political party and government were not easy to disentangle and also, were not necessarily in conflict: in other words the issue of opposition to informal structures is not simply an imposition from the state 'above' but also appeared to be a 'bottom-up concern'. In addition, beneficiaries have mixed views about the appropriate 'look and feel' of a neighbourhood. There is also some affection for 'the location'²⁴⁰, by some, reflecting perhaps nostalgia for places familiar, vibrant and normal. But in line with the notion that they are now living in an 'improved', decent area, some respondents expressed some contempt for the 'townshipisation'²⁴¹ of housing stock, and of neighbourhoods, through the impacts of ancillary activities that have sprung up (such as drinking taverns, restaurants, car washes and funeral parlours being run from homes). Aspirations from several respondents for order, regulation and respectability seemed similar to views from some state respondents. This finding supports related points made in Schlyter (2003) and Ghannam (2002), which seem to be relatively isolated observations in a more dominant narrative that asserts that anti-informality sentiments are an

²⁴⁰ A reference to apartheid-era black residential areas known as townships or locations.

²⁴¹ A term also used by Wits architecture students in 2011 in reflecting on activities which have emerged in former industrial buildings appropriated for residential use in the inner city of JHB.

inappropriate imposition by a state which is out of kilter with both practices and attitudes 'on the ground'.

I argued too that that state housing practitioners expressed frustration because of what they saw as reversion to poor living circumstances by those forfeiting their houses, and in one specific instance, as a failure of beneficiaries to maximize the economic opportunity of the new benefit but rather to let it to foreign entrepreneurs. But they also see many positive aspects about the housing programme: that it 'works' for some people, that it is really needed and appreciated by some people, that there is continued, seemingly insatiable demand for it.

9.5.5 Neglect of income generation

This thesis argues that there is a lack of a conceptual and practical link between the housing strategy and household economies. This relates to a weakness critiqued in approaches to housing interventions more generally, in their relative conceptual disconnect from the wider political and economic context (Jenkins et al 2007). Although in this research some state housing practitioners made brief reference to poverty, income generation strategies, and difficulties of travelling to work, findings confirmed the housing/ income relationship remains a neglected and indeed, largely unseen, concern for the state. Information on people leaving housing, at least at national level, is often interpreted to be a sign that people aren't poor, or aren't in need of housing. However at the same time, some explanations for people leaving housing provided by respondents in Chapter Six invoke poverty as an explanation. Poverty is therefore variously cited as a reason for people needing housing, and a reason for people to leave RDP housing. This suggests different understandings of poverty, its manifestation, its dimensions and responses to it.

As argued earlier, the nature of the programme, and the way in which some practices or usage of the housing attracts state censure, seems to assume implicitly that the decent and dignified shelter delivered through the programme will support breadwinners in their

commutes to work. For most of those associated with the delivery of housing the actual nature and location of this work is vague, hazily conceptualized and not even identified as a key issue of debate on the housing agenda, although all concurred on its importance when asked. Several respondents felt the revised BNG approach to housing development offered the solution ('policy optimists'). For other respondents, income generation surfaced as an issue to the extent that emergent home based activity articulates awkwardly with the housing environments and the planning and management rules intended to operate within them.

In housing circles some recognition of disconnects that may exist between house and work tends to be discussed in terms of location (proximity to work opportunities) and/or tenure (accommodation oriented towards less spatially-committed workers), leading to an argument that more/diverse forms of rental tenure is needed. Whilst this may well be part of the issue and part of the response to it, I argue in this research that it is the cheap living dimension of the situation that needs to be elevated, along with how that links (physically or not) with a more permanent home base. Not unexpectedly many respondents in this research were making calculated and strategic decisions about how to minimize daily living costs and how to maximize income: through using the cheapest form of transport; or the cheapest form of shelter; or the most cost-effective ways of eating; or circumventing payments and charges where possible; or finding ways in the local neighbourhood to bring in some income. This is a likely finding, given the income group and the socio-economic context under consideration. However this key aspect of peoples' daily lives is not directly shaping housing thinking – as evidenced in this research by the lack of attention paid to income generation, or to transport costs and systems, by state housing practitioners. Aspects of the issue enter the discourse and conceptualization of strategy, such as through the rental and tenure dimensions mentioned above; but I argue here that giving primacy to the imperative of 'cheap living' would provide a different orientation to housing discussions and interventions.

9.5.6 There is not evidence of a conflict of rationalities, but there are other conflicts

Chapters Seven and Eight confirm that in many aspects the RDP benefit and peoples' attitudes to it seem to be very similar to the notion of improvement to those expected and desired by the state. But differences are apparent, and some similar themes reveal more complex dimensions: first, peoples' attachments and positive sentiment about the RDP house can be for additional reasons to that anticipated by the state. Attachment can relate primarily to issues such as stability, future prospects, a secure place to be, security from dispossession, a place for the family to live, or congregate at particular times. This attachment can survive despite limitations such as the house being unable to provide a daily basis for steadily improving circumstances. Second, in some cases the alternative living place invoked by some interviewees constitutes poor, informal or otherwise inferior accommodation, functioning and being occupied simultaneously to RDP housing. This co-existence is a major finding of this research, and is one not recognised by the state. It is also hardly mentioned in literature²⁴² where the particular dimension of formal state provided housing co-existing simultaneously with poor living conditions is almost unrecognised. Instead much of this alternative accommodation is categorised by the state as part of the backlog needing to be addressed by a housing policy response; thus feeding at a policy level into an unhelpful cycle of policy intervention which at times provokes a parallel shelter which itself provokes a policy intervention.

There is little evidence from this research of a conflict in rationalities, as I understand the phrase (c.f. Watson 2003). World views, or paradigms, seem largely in accord. However there are real restrictions on peoples' ability to realize housing dreams on a daily basis. The constraints on this ability are not well acknowledged by state housing practitioners nor, I argue by analysts of housing in South Africa, where debate tends to focus more narrowly on issues of 'location' and 'tenure'. In the meantime the ways in which people are taking up the housing benefit, for all its inadequacies or shortcomings, embracing it,

²⁴² Du Toit (2010) makes very brief reference to rough sleepers having houses elsewhere.

cherishing it, and working around, with or alongside it, is also only partially acknowledged. This suggests a strange mixture of a powerful, resourced, controlling state able to deliver a vast housing programme, but which is simultaneously comparatively powerless to see, and to solve hugely complex problems; a state choosing to, or only able, perhaps, to deal with a narrow scope of issues for which it has a particular view of, and instruments for.

This resonates with Li's observations in a very different context, rural Indonesia, about what she terms 'constitutive exclusions', where problems were known but were not able to be dealt with:

The [World] bank's social development experts were fully aware of the problems presented by unruly officials, transnational corporations, and ethnicized militias that dispossess villagers and wreak havoc with impunity. They knew something about capitalism's contradictions, and the role of the bank in setting the conditions under which some would prosper while others lost out. But they devised no programs to act on them. What they did, rather, was attempt to improve the conduct of villagers, a task they set about on a massive scale through minutely calibrated calculations (Li 2007).

9.5.7 Improvement, adaptation and the co-constitution of space

In the South African context, the aspirations of state implementers and the targets of their improvement programme appear quite similar. But, at the same time, an improvement intervention is experienced, appropriated, and functions in quite complex ways (which include off-site consequences), that are only very partially and imperfectly understood by those in power. Reasons for this modification are related to the wider context in which the programme unfolds but few connections are (explicitly) made by state housing practitioners between this and how the outcomes are understood. The situation is often misread or differently conceptualised and acted on by the state, with quite negative consequences for 'the improved'. However, overall, housing beneficiaries largely judge the state positively for this significant intervention.

The picture painted here flags how RDP neighbourhoods, and other housing situations spatially beyond but intimately connected to these projects, are in fact being co-constituted, both by the state's vision and physical infrastructure, and by peoples' embrace and modification of that vision and infrastructure in ways unanticipated. This recalls related observations such as Dierwechter's (2004) reference to 'co-creating' and Robins' (2003) notion of hybridity.

That the on-going activities and results are poorly understood, unevenly and uneasily engaged with by the state suggests some confusion and fear: of the unpredictable outcomes that sit uncomfortably between, on the one hand, the imperfect results of enormous effort and expenditure by the state, and on the other hand, pragmatic solutions by people in response to current inadequacies. This research shows the limits of state capacity and strategy in fully meeting needs, but also catalytic value of a state intervention in sparking adaptations to unforeseen circumstances.

This somewhat awkward and largely unacknowledged process of co-production has relevance for low-income housing debates beyond South Africa. The discussion here resonates with housing literature that calls attention to the importance of understanding and factoring in, socio-economic context (Jenkins et al 2007; Watson 2009) and how this plays out at a practical level. It also fuels a much deeper questioning of a home ownership strategy that spatially fixes a particular housing product without first exploring how and in what way this assists with household-level well-being in that particular context. It also underscores how the relative autonomy conferred to households through freehold titling in contexts of poverty can be in tension with the managerial, supervisory and oversight concerns of the state, both within and beyond plot boundaries. My conclusions suggest that in big cities such as Johannesburg, attention should be paid to poor peoples' economic and spatial strategies both at the locality of the house itself and also off-site. But this study also questions a view of these sorts of housing developments, initially low density and relatively "marginal" in location, that sees them in predominantly negative terms, without acknowledging what role they do play for households, despite

their limitations. Conclusions highlight the importance of paying attention to the ways in which these developments, and other sites of household activity, are appropriated, adapted and transformed, with various consequences and impacts for the household, other residents and city management. This emphasises both the limits of state (or related institutional) capacity and strategy in intervening and addressing a situation, but also the catalytic value and potential a state intervention can trigger. Finally, it underlines the value in research such as this of exploring both state practices and peoples' practices and the relationship between them. A focus on this interface has enabled a contribution to housing and planning literature concerned with a gap apparent in some scholarly work in the South: a gap between bodies of work focused on the subaltern on the one hand, and formally constituted authority on the other. This work tends to highlight the clashes, conflicts and misalignment between the two, leaving unexplored or neglected the complex intersections and mutual shapings of space created between them.

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GLOSSARY

Bad buildings - a nickname given to buildings in Johannesburg which were once sound in physical structure, management, use and occupancy, but which have become dysfunctional in one or more ways. They are often overcrowded, physically run down, and operate without formal supplies of water and electricity (derived from Zack, Bertoldi, Charlton, Kihato and Silverman 2010: 9, 10).

BNG – Breaking New Ground, the colloquial name for the policy amendment introduced by the Department of Housing in 2004, which amongst other things emphasised the creation of sustainable human settlements rather than new housing developments.

Erf – a legally demarcated subdivision or plot of land.

Fiscus - total available government funds (income, revenue, loans, bonds, interest, reserves, etc.) or the 'pot' of money managed by national government from which the country's budget is drawn, and funding commitments are made to departments and major projects

Gap market – a term used to refer to the group of people with incomes between R3 500 and R12 500 a month, who struggle to purchase housing as prices are too high, affordable products not available or loan finance not easily available.

Izozo – a hut made of prefabricated lightweight materials, used as an outside room in the backyard of a property.

Joburg, Jozi, Egoli - nicknames for Johannesburg

Mielie – maize or corn on the cob

Mine dumps – the large heaps of excavated and refined material extracted during gold mining which have been a feature of Johannesburg's landscape.

Piece work – casual employment, generally domestic labour.

Pre-emptive clause – the clause in title deeds of RDP housing which prevents sale of the house for a period of time, usually eight years.

RDP housing – state funded housing for ownership delivered to qualifying beneficiaries since the advent of democracy in 1994.

Shebeen/ tavern – drinking establishment, often unregulated, often run from a house.

Spaza shop - a small, informal (unregulated) trading stall often in a residential neighbourhood, usually selling foodstuff.

Tsotsies – thugs, criminals.

CHARLTON MAY 2013

Veld – open grassland.

ANNEXURES

APPENDIX ONE: GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

City of Johannesburg. (2005). *Human Development Strategy. Joburg's Commitment to the Poor.*

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