

11 Grounding ‘globalisation from below’: ‘global citizens’ in local spaces

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We are doing the daily savings not only to collect money but to collect the lives of the people. We do this so that they can know what is happening next door, what is happening today and tomorrow, how can I help, how can we involve each other daily. (Member of the South African Homeless Peoples Federation (SAHPF), Phillipi, Cape Town, July 2002)

In India you learn a lot of things. Those people are very hard workers and they can look very well after their money. They are very trusting of each other... They are very united. There is no crime there, not like here where you can't leave your house for half an hour to go around the corner. (Member SAHPF, Phillipi, Cape Town, July 2002)

The language of the Federation is saturated with [social capital] imagery: ‘We build houses in order to build people’; ‘we don’t collect money, we collect people’. That is all over the show. (Joel Bolnick, director and founder of People’s Dialogue, the NGO partner of SAHPF, Observatory, Cape Town, July 2002).

Introduction

The cover of Zygmunt Bauman’s *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* consists of a photograph of seven free-falling parachutists holding hands as they plummet towards earth with the last traces of a blood red sun setting on the horizon (2001). For Bauman, the parachutists represent the

hyper-transience of the experimental communities of late modernity – communities built on the freedom to choose to belong and the freedom to terminate membership on short notice. This freedom to ‘bale out’ at will represents community without long-term commitments. The phenomenon of the hyper-transient community of late modernity is a far cry from the ‘traditional community’ built upon primordialist myths of ‘natural belonging’, characterised by involuntary membership and long-term, if not life-long, commitments and solidarities. While the latter relies on narratives of cultural and historical continuity and coherence, the transient community has no such requirements – anyone is free to sign up as long as you pay your membership fees! Maintaining these transitory communities requires enormous effort to avoid dissolution, whereas ‘traditional communities’ appear to take on a naturalised sense of permanence. But do these traditional communities still exist, and if so, where can they be found?

The perennial social science and public policy problem of how to create social cohesion in times of rapid social change seems to have come full circle from Emile Durkheim to Robert Putnam to Zygmunt Bauman. Writing primarily about northern countries, that is, ‘the West’, Bauman argues that under contemporary conditions of late modernity, the citizen’s identification and loyalty towards the nation-state has waned and, at the same time, the state is less concerned with the cultural/ideological mobilisation of its subject population through evocations of nationhood and patriotic duty. Neo-liberal states have surrendered control over economic and cultural processes and handed these functions over to ‘the market’. As a result, ‘identity stories’ and membership of community is rapidly becoming a matter of ‘personal choice’ – choosing your identity, life style and group membership can become much like shopping at Woolworths, Pick ‘n Pay or Sainsbury’s. So what kinds of solidarities and forms of social cohesion and ‘social capital’ are possible in this marketplace of identities and instant communities? For some self-sufficient and resourceful individuals – for example, the middle classes – belonging without commitments may be less of a burden than longer-term communal ties that could intrude upon their ‘freedom to choose’. For less self-reliant and resourceful individuals, however, there is likely to be more of a need and desire for the shelter and security of belonging in a community built on solid foundations, even if the price tag is an involuntary, lifelong belonging – one that one cannot simply terminate on demand.

'Trust' and 'social capital' have become fashionable keywords in current academic and public policy discourses that seek to understand how social cohesion, democracy and 'good governance' are possible under conditions of late modernity. Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* is the classic statement of the problem. According to Putnam's influential thesis, the higher the level of civic activity and associational life, the more likely it is that government will be both democratic and efficient. Drawing on his study of the political differences between Northern and Southern Italy, Putnam concluded that active citizen participation in bowling and football clubs, baseball leagues, chorus groups and bird watching societies created positive social capital, which is good for democracy (Putnam 1993; Koelble n.d.). Putnam's work has generated an enormous World Bank-sponsored research industry addressing the role of trust and social capital in creating the conditions for 'good governance' and democracy (Hardin 1998; Seligman 1997). Trust, networks and norms are also seen as the crucial ingredients for the creation of social capital and the maintenance of cooperative economic relationships.¹

This chapter focuses on two community-based organisations (CBOS) that consider the building of social capital and horizontal relations of trust and exchange to be at the heart of what they do. The discussion is part of a larger project that focuses on new post-apartheid conceptions of citizenship, 'community' and civic action promoted by Cape Town-based NGOs and CBOS involved in struggles over access to land, housing and AIDS treatment. The organisations discussed in this chapter are the People's Dialogue (PD), a Cape Town-based NGO that 'services' the South African Homeless Peoples Federation (SAHPF), a community based organisation connected to networks of slum dweller organisations based in 14 countries, including cities such as Mumbai (Bombay), Calcutta, Nairobi, Bangkok, Karachi and Bogota. SAHPF is a mostly women's organisation that is involved in a wide range of activities including savings clubs, housing and land issues, income-generation projects, community policing, AIDS intervention and so on.

The World Bank, NGOs, activists and anthropologists have become fascinated with these global networks, which are sometimes referred to as, Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANS). The savings groups in Cape Town and Mumbai are part of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a global network of homeless people's organisations that are connected through federation members visiting

each other's cities.² This form of 'horizontal exchange' assists poor people to exchange ideas through direct peer learning, a 'ritual' referred to in the SDI literature as 'the poor peoples' pedagogy'. These organisational networks, increasingly described in academic and donor discourse as 'grassroots globalisation', or 'globalisation from below', are recognised as playing a crucial role in the creation of an international civil society representing the needs of the poorer 80 per cent of the population of the world (now totalling six billion).

It is not entirely coincidental that this 'global civil society' is emerging at the same time as global capital is undermining the autonomy of nation states, and donors, with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank structural adjustment policies prescribing the contraction of the Development State. Poor people living under conditions of neo-liberal austerity and the 'downsizing' of the welfare state seem to have developed sophisticated survival strategies by simultaneously enlisting themselves as global citizens *and* citizens of cities, regions and nation-states. Through various ritualised practices – for instance daily savings, 'self-enumeration' and 'horizontal exchange' – women's savings collectives in Asia, Africa and Latin America are becoming increasingly successful in lobbying, pressuring and shaming the state into meeting its 'social contract' with the poor in terms of the provision of housing, healthcare, policing and so on. This chapter will critically evaluate whether these new associational forms and strategies are, in fact, viable alternatives for large numbers of poor citizens disillusioned with the limits of national liberation. To what degree are these developments signs of the emergence of a 'global civil society', and what are the implications of this global connectivity for democracy, community and citizenship? To what degree are these locally embedded but globally connected organisations and networks capable of creating new forms of social capital and new solidarities that span local, national and global spaces? (see Kothari 1996 and Leal & Opp 1998)

Social capital: from northern Italy to southern Africa

The concept of social capital features prominently in the SDI literature and in SAHPF slogans such as 'we do daily savings not only to collect money but to collect the lives of people', 'we build houses in order to build people' and 'we don't collect money, we collect people'. Whereas the dominant academic usages of social capital (based on networks, norms and trust) derive from rational

choice theory and economic conceptions of *homo economicus*, it will become clear this is not the case with SAHPF's deployment of the term.

Social capital and trust, like the concept of civil society, are very vague and elusive terms. Nonetheless, considerable effort has gone into trying to stabilise and 'fix' these protean social science concepts. The most influential and definitive statement of social capital theory can be found in the work of Robert Putnam. Despite the enormous influence of Putnam's work, especially within mainstream US political science, social capital and trust theory can be criticised on a number of fronts. For instance, it simply assumes that trust is the outcome of mutual calculations of interest, thereby revealing the pervasive influence of rational choice and game theory. However, as numerous critics have pointed out, decisions about whether to trust are not based only on calculations of interest (Lyon 2000). There are also non-calculative, habituated practices and social relations that are not reducible to economic or other forms of self-interest. For instance, extra-economic incentives to create co-operative and trusting relationships can draw on information about reputations, sanctions and moral norms. In other words, conventional understandings of trust fail to acknowledge the domain of cultural expectations, social pressure and community conceptions of reciprocity and obligation.

One of the most significant areas of social capital theory concerns the role of trust in creating and consolidating institutions of civil society – the professions, industry, associations, unions, self-regulatory organisations, business, schools, churches, families etc.

While trust and social capital are seen as self-evident virtue and 'good for democracy' in the writings of Putnam, there is no clear consensus on what this 'civic virtue' actually means and where it is located. As Thomas Koelble points out, 'social capital and horizontal associations can have their "dark side", for example, Timothy McVeigh (the Oklahoma City bomber) met his co-conspirators in a bowling club and many of Rwanda's genocidal killers were part of horizontal associations which, according to Putnam, are more likely to support democratic outcomes' (n. d.: 8). In addition, differentially situated citizens and members of diverse institutions within 'civil society' do not necessarily agree on what constitutes 'civility' and trust. Contestation is at the heart of political life, in all its dimensions, and there is no Archimedean vantage point from which to judge what constitutes civility, trust and virtuous citizenship. Civil

society organisations may be built upon the foundations of horizontal trust and civic engagement, but their actions may not be perceived as ‘civic virtue’ by government officials, for example, in the case of violent police action against anti-globalisation demonstrators from Genoa to Johannesburg. What constitutes ‘civic virtue’ or ‘positive social capital’ depends on which side of the barricades one stands! Similarly, assessing the benefits of decentralisation policies that are meant to promote local social capital formation depends whether you are situated in ‘civil society’ or ‘the state’.

Dominant conceptions of ‘civil society’ and social capital also tend to be of a highly normative, universalising and prescriptive nature. This not only fails to acknowledge the embeddedness of local hierarchies and patronage networks but it also ignores the possible political consequences of attempting to dislodge these local structures of power. While local age and gender hierarchies may certainly go against the grain of ‘Western’ liberal democratic notions of ‘good governance,’ there are difficulties involved in changing these ‘non-democratic’ and ‘non-liberal’ forms of internal organisation as is shown later in this chapter.

Despite these problems, the current interest in ‘social capital’ has led to a proliferation of studies, most of which rely on extremely vague definitions. Putnam’s normative interpretation of ‘real’ social capital as the associational ties built on horizontal norms of identity, trust and reciprocity continues to dominate contemporary academic, donor and World Bank discourses. Neither the solidarities of family, nor vertical and authoritarian patronage networks of trust and reciprocity are recognised as ‘proper social capital’ within this framework. Not surprisingly, donor and academic interest in ‘good governance’ and ‘deep democracy’ tends to valorise and romanticise horizontal association ties of trust within civil society. These celebrations of the benign ‘invisible hand’ of social capital need to be balanced by the recognition of undemocratic and hierarchical aspects of social capital formation. It also requires a sober assessment of the limited capacities of civil society to ‘scale up’ social capital under conditions of extreme poverty, unemployment, everyday violence and AIDS. Unless this is taken into account, the social capital paradigm could be deployed as an alibi for the downsizing post-development state to withdraw even further from meeting its obligations toward its citizens. This takes us to a discussion of the limits and possibilities of community-making in a global culture of neo-liberalism.

The quest for community in an age of globalisation

While the term ‘community’ continues to conjure up warm and ‘good’ feelings of comfort, safety and security, it is becoming a notoriously elusive ‘paradise’, especially for the poor who are in most need of its comforts, protection and security. For the poor, the ghetto has become a space that represents ‘the impossibility of community’, a place of ‘social disintegration, atomisation and anomie’ (Wacquant cited in Bauman 2001: 122); as a document on the SDI website puts it: ‘poverty is a relentless isolator’.³ According to Wacquant, ‘Whereas the ghetto in its classical form acted partly as a protective shield against the brutal racial exclusion, the hyperghetto has lost its positive role of collective buffer, making it a deadly machinery for naked social regulation’ and isolation (Wacquant cited in Bauman 2001: 122; see also Merry 2001). Meanwhile, the middle classes in the leafy suburbs retreat behind electrified fences, vicious dogs, private security companies and confine themselves to mass private spaces such as mega-shopping malls and entertainment centres. Mike Davis has written eloquently about ‘Fortress LA’ as the archetypal Northern American city – perhaps even the quintessential global city – characterised by middle class suburban enclaves and gated communities (1990); elsewhere I have written about post-apartheid Cape Town as ‘Fortress LA at the tip of Africa’ (Robins 2001). Ghettoes and gated *communities* in these divided cities are, clearly, very different kinds of communities but both draw attention to the difficulties of forging solidarities across fortified enclaves and racialised camps.

Given this scenario, how can relations of co-operation and exchange be forged amongst poor people, as well as between the urban poor and those beyond the walls of the ghetto – ‘the state’, ‘civil society’ and the gated communities of the urban middle classes? Are the middle classes interested in looking beyond their high walls and electrified barricades? Are the suburbs not attractive to the wealthy precisely because they appear to allow for disengagement from the urban problems of poverty, crime and violence? Community also offers comfort, hope and security to those ‘inside’ while specifically excluding others and creating new forms of oppression. It is clearly a Janus-faced phenomenon riddled with contradictions and paradoxes. So what kinds of new community solidarities and social commitments are possible in post-apartheid South Africa and what could ‘the globalisation of civil society’ look like from the tip of Africa?

Globalising citizenship, localising community

On 17 September 2002, about two hundred people from diverse race, class and ethnic backgrounds gathered at the Centre for the Book in Cape Town's city centre to hear the internationally known housing activist, Sheila Patel, talk about the work of an alliance of Mumbai-based slum dweller's federations. The audience included a large group of black African women and youth from the SAHPF, as well as other NGOs and development activists, Members of Parliament, judges, academics and ordinary citizens. This was Patel's twentieth visit to Cape Town, as part of a decade long exchange programme between housing and NGO activists and slum/shack dwellers from India, Thailand, South Africa and 11 other developing countries. Patel spoke of her organisation's strategies for empowering the urban poor in India – of the 'horizontal exchanges', savings schemes, 'toilet festivals', self-enumeration and self-census exercises – and various other empowerment rituals deployed by these Indian women's federations. Patel concluded by noting that houses, savings, 'good governance' and accountability were not the objectives of these slum dwellers organisations. Instead, the aim was to create poor people's networks and 'scale up' social capital in order to fight the isolation and disempowerment produced by conditions of poverty. SAHPF members, many of whom had visited India, spoke of their own experiences in establishing savings groups and building their houses in Cape Town's African townships. This 'town hall' meeting in the heart of a still hyper-segregated, post-apartheid city certainly provided a glimpse of what a global civil society could look like.

With the steady support of its NGO partner, PD, SAHPF has grown into a 100 000-strong post-apartheid CBO – perhaps even a social movement in the making – that is both locally-embedded and globally connected. The SAHPF-PD website reveals that some members of the organisation have engaged seriously with issues relating to the building of 'social capital' and understanding, and interrogating, the relationship between local knowledge and 'expert' power. The website literature also draws attention to debates on various strategies for negotiating and lobbying with officialdom to access state resources and shift the balance of power between poor people and hierarchical, technocratic and bureaucratic states. What all this suggests is that 'globalisation' is not only a source of structural disempowerment for the millions of poor people in developing countries but it also offers opportunities for creative financial, technical, cultural and social transactions, and interactions between profes-

sionals, activists, state officials, donors and hundreds of thousands of homeless people and shack dwellers from Cape Town to Calcutta and beyond. However, what kinds of communities and forms of social cohesion are emerging through these global exchanges?

These days, concepts such as 'global citizenship', 'global civil society', 'global governance' and 'grassroots globalisation' or 'globalisation from below' are common currency and in constant circulation in academic and policy discourses (Heater 1999; Falk 1998a; Held 1995 and 1997; Appadurai 2001). They have become keywords in a celebration of the emancipatory possibilities of globalisation in a context in which the nation-state is seen to be increasingly incapable of delivering resources in the form of enforceable rights, goods and services, political participation etc. In addition, the influence of multinational and intergovernmental institutions over people's lives calls for an acknowledgement of the need for accountability and rights to be enforceable across national borders (Jones & Gaventa 2002: 20). Even the World Bank has got in on the act with international conferences on 'connecting the local to the global'. Global connectivity has also been linked to calls from Third World leaders such as President Thabo Mbeki to 'narrow the digital divide'. Notions such as 'digital citizenship' are also bandied about despite the extremely limited distribution of cyber technology within developing countries.

Globally connected social movements have mushroomed, addressing a diverse array of issues including AIDS, medical technologies, biotechnology, the environment, indigenous land rights, Third World debt, trade liberalisation, housing, as well as struggles over abortion and gay rights, and the cultural politics of racial, linguistic and ethnic pride. This rise in 'global citizen action' has been described in a vast and burgeoning academic literature as cross-border activism, global social movements, global civil society, global governance and 'global citizenship'. However, relatively little reflection has gone into assessing exactly who belongs to this global citizenry and what this form of belonging could mean for different social classes. Highly mobile middle classes seem to be particularly drawn to the idea of global citizenship and the cosmopolitan lifestyle possibilities offered via the ceaseless flow of commodities, ideas and images across national borders. By contrast, working class Turkish migrants in Berlin are likely to have a very different experience and understanding of transnational culture. Similarly, many of those unable to purchase the cosmo-

politan fruits of the consumer capitalism of late modernity have opted instead for more defensive and parochial responses, including the deployment of discourses on autochthony and xenophobia, territorial citizenship and defensive patriotism (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2001 and Falk 1998b: 2). Clearly 'globalisation' means different things to different folks. It also produces a multiplicity of outcomes for differentially situated citizens. For instance, it may weaken, or strengthen, territorial ties between citizens and the state; it can also produce a variety of responses ranging from the construction of 'post-national' cosmopolitan identities to exclusivist forms of ethno-nationalism and chauvinistic communitarianism. It can also produce the isolation and alienation characteristic of the hyper-ghetto and the gated community.

Citizenship is meant to erode local and communitarian hierarchies, statuses and privileges in favour of national jurisdictions and contractual relations based, in principle, on equality of rights and the individual right-bearing citizen. In other words, the liberal individualist conception of citizenship implies 'self-interested', 'autonomous' citizens, a construct 'critiqued by communitarians who argue that an individual's sense of identity is produced only through relations with others in the community of which she or he is a part' (Gaventa 2002: 4). In other words, the communitarian conception of citizenship is that of the socially-embedded citizen. The notion of the communitarian citizen becomes particularly important in the South African context where, in certain social spaces, the liberal individualist conception of the autonomous citizen is often misplaced and inappropriate.

Alongside these communitarian identities and solidarities, new, globally-connected community-based organisations are emerging that appear to counter these parochial tendencies. For NGO activists, academics, donors and policymakers, this emergence of a burgeoning 'global civil society' is seen to offer the prospect of a renewal and deepening of the liberal democratic project. But what is all this talk of 'grassroots globalisation' and 'globalisation from below' really about? Do these new forms of grassroots participation really represent accountable and democratic practices, or do they not often simply reinforce local power asymmetries? While the rallying cry 'think globally, act locally' has been part of the activist's lexicon for at least two decades, the notion of 'thinking locally' about the impacts of global institutions and global forces, and 'acting globally' upon them, is perhaps a relatively new development. However, the questions arise: what does it actually mean to 'act

globally'? What new forms of citizenship and belonging are emerging as a result of these developments?

New communities after apartheid: local is not always lekker

During the anti-apartheid struggle, there was a palpable sense of 'community solidarity' in the townships and in what was then the mass democratic movement.⁴ A non-racial social imaginary of political struggle included working class communities, trade unions, black and white middle class professionals, university students and other sectors of South African society. The United Democratic Front (UDF) came to represent this multi-racial, multi-class political movement. During the 1980s, the term 'community' usually referred to black communities of resistance to apartheid; it was a keyword in political discourse (Boonzaaier & Sharp 1998). It was also appropriated by the state and business through community development projects and the creation of Community Councillors. Anti-apartheid activists and the liberal media represented black communities as being involved in heroic resistance to apartheid. Post-apartheid city managers, government officials, tourist entrepreneurs and big business currently represent some of these same communities as 'dysfunctional' and call for measures to re-establish governance in these 'unruly communities'. In other words, community is no longer perceived to be a space of unmitigated good. For example, youth activists, who were once lauded as courageous 'Young Lions', are now represented as the 'Lost Generation'. Similarly, working class communities on the Cape Flats, once celebrated as spaces of resistance to apartheid, are increasingly characterised by officials as places of social pathologies such as crime, violence, illegal drug trade, gangsterism, high incidences of diseases such as TB and AIDS, teenage pregnancies and substance abuse. Gang and neighbourhood solidarities are regarded as 'negative social capital', and obstacles to establishing liberal democratic modes of governance and citizenship. In addition, township residents who cannot afford to pay for electricity and water services, and who embark upon rent boycotts, once the defining features of the anti-apartheid struggle, are nowadays hounded and evicted from their homes. Anti-evictions movements are growing as increasing numbers of urban poor people find themselves targeted for evictions. These urban activists, as well as those belonging to the Landless People's Movement, have been identified by the state as a threat to good governance. Their social capital is clearly not viewed in a positive light.

What kinds of communities and forms of social capital and citizenship are possible in Cape Town's working class townships, given the chronic poverty and unemployment produced as a result of the shift from a traditional manufacturing to a service economy? Given these changed social and political realities, it is hardly surprising that it is becoming increasingly common practice to describe poor communities as 'dysfunctional', and to debunk heroic and romantic myths of 'community'. Similarly, direct community action is no longer always praised for being 'grassroots' and democratic. Anti-crime vigilante killings, macho, sexist and chauvinistic neighbourhood gangs and male solidarities, and the marginalisation of women through traditional land tenure, are nowadays seen as a threat to our constitutional democracy and the social fabric of our society. Local is clearly not always *lekker* and social capital is not always positive. However, is global civil society and liberal democracy the panacea? What kinds of 'local' ideas and communitarian practices do the globally connected organisations, discussed in this paper, have to deal with, and what does this tell us about social capital and the new forms of citizenship after apartheid?

Social capital and social cohesion from Calcutta to Cape Town

SAHPF was formed in 1991 and comprises over 100 000 mostly black African members, of whom more than 85 000 (85 per cent) are women. It is supported by PD, a Cape Town-based NGO, and is an affiliate of the SDI, a global network of poor peoples' organisations from 14 countries of the South. SDI affiliates range in size from a few hundred in Zambia to more than a 1.5 million in India. The network comprises federations of community organisations that are linked to NGOs and groupings of professionals who support SDI initiatives. Although SDI affiliates work primarily with women, it is the broad category of the urban poor that makes up the federations' membership. Federation activities include facilitating access to land, housing, infrastructure, finance, employment and income generation projects. The stated objective of the SDI federations is for members to assume 'ownership of problems and the identification of local solutions that are participatory and inclusive [and] by doing so they automatically create new nodal points of governance, in which organised communities of the urban poor assume their rightful place as development actors' (SDI 2002: 14).

The SAHPF slogan: ‘We do not collect money, we collect people’ captures the organisation’s concern with ‘social capital’. Drawing largely upon the Indian experience over the past two decades, the PD and SAHPF promote daily savings as a ‘ritual’ that produces high levels of participation and mutual interaction between federation members – these daily encounters are perceived to be the ‘social glue’ that binds communities. In addition, through investing limited funds, members have a material stake in their organisation and its decision-making. Not only do daily savings encourage regular interaction but they also create a space for the central participation of women in informal settlements that tend to be dominated by patriarchal local structures. It is also meant to shift the balance of power and expert knowledge from technocratic and hierarchical state structures to local, decentralised federations. Savings and loans also enable federations to develop capacity to manage and control finance, and to display this local competence to the outside world. Members learn housing design, construction and finance, brick making, toilet construction, crafts and a range of other competencies including bookkeeping, census enumeration and information gathering (for example, self-surveys), methods for identifying vacant land through physical mapping and visits to the deeds offices, and the development of negotiation skills in order to secure land from the state. These activities are consciously framed as public performances of local competence and innovation. This has a number of purposes including posing a challenge to existing class-based cultures and beliefs about where expertise lies. It is an expression of a politics of visibility and a public demonstration of ‘autogovernmentality’ or ‘governance from below’.⁵ Horizontal exchange is perhaps one of the most important of these rituals because of its ability to foster direct learning experiences from peers as opposed to the usual expert-driven methods of formal training. As will become clear in the pages that follow, these visits also facilitate the creation of new transnational solidarities and networks, as well as being a catalyst for cross-cultural reflection and analysis by federation members. The discussion below focuses on the following:

- The ‘official ideology’ and discourses of the SDI.
- The various ways in which SDI ideology finds expression in the documents, strategies and practices of the PD.
- The gaps and disjunctures between the discourses of SDI and PD, and the everyday practices and political cultures of Cape Town’s federations.

- Cross-cultural reflections by federation members on the gap between SDI ideology and 'local' practices, as well as reflections on cultural, religious and political differences between South African and Indian federations, and socio-cultural environments.

Surfing the Slum Dwellers International homepage

A scan of SDI publications, including its website, provides a clear indication of the 'official' ideological orientation of the SDI and its affiliates. The SDI literature reveals a deep scepticism of the state's capacity to eradicate poverty and comply with its social contract with its citizenry. It is equally sceptical of the ability of traditional trade unions, as well as left-wing political parties and rights-based social movements, to provide the kind of long-term capacity building that organisations of the poor require in order to strengthen themselves at the local level. The anonymous author of the document cited below calls for poor communities to engage in practices of 'active citizenship' rather than becoming passive recipients of state and party political patronage and largesse. Contrary to neo-liberal ideologues and free marketers, however, SDI ideology does not call for the dismantling or 'downsizing' of the development state but rather the empowerment of poor communities to enable them to pressure and lobby the state to meet their developmental needs.

[The SDI federations] see themselves as opponents of centralised state power, backed by these global agencies – the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank They all share a common vision: that the State on its own cannot solve problems of poverty and underdevelopment. While the State, especially in Southern countries, has a monopoly on power, its very relationship to this power, and to the local and global economy makes it a very weak instrument for the delivery of resources and services needed to eradicate poverty Since they question the capacity of these [State] agencies to deliver, they constantly seek situations that enable those who are affected by poverty to become organised and united in ever-expanding networks and to play a defining role in the way in which Governments and multilaterals discharge their obligations to the poor. This is in sharp contradiction to the rights-based social

movements or the micro-finance organisations, or even archaic social movements of the past, such as earlier rural and urban movements of the poor, including trade unions and left-wing political parties SDI is an attempt to *move away from sporadic impulses to sustained, long-term investments in local Federations of the Urban Poor*. SDI, as a network of these Federations, opens opportunities at the international level in order to strengthen its member organisations (emphasis added). (SDI 2002: 1)

SDI publications represent the federation affiliates, and their members, as belonging to a transnational citizenry of the urban poor – hence their use of the all too familiar slogan: ‘think global, act local’ (SDI 2002: 14). This ‘cosmopolitan’ perspective seeks solidarities and alliances of the urban poor across national, ethnic and religious lines. It appears to promote a sense of ‘global citizenship’ rather than being confined to local, regional or national spaces and identities. SDI also represents the work of the federations as providing a clear alternative to mainstream development thinking and modern state development ideas and practices. Although SDI publications are critical of centralised, top-down state-driven development interventions, they do not follow the adversarial logic of anti-globalisation social movements. Instead, these statements seem to imply that through the combination of pressure, persuasion and negotiation, the state can be convinced to comply with the ‘social contract’ of democracy, and develop more ‘poor-friendly’ policies and urban development strategies.

Although some of the language of SDI documents is reminiscent of radical underdevelopment theory and post-development thinking, SDI and its affiliates are not a militant social movement seeking to smash capitalism. Neither is it the voice of an embryonic political party waiting in the wings. Instead, SDI’s ideas and practices are concerned with enhancing the capacity of the urban poor in solving their own problems. This is to be done through various activities that promote experimentation and learning through face-to-face encounters rather than formal training methods (SDI 2000).

Various commentators on the nature of late modernity have referred to the isolation produced by conditions of poverty. SDI rituals and everyday practices aim specifically to overcome these obstacles to the realisation of community. The rituals of the savings schemes facilitate face-to-face encounters between

members on a daily basis. It is these interactions, along with the horizontal exchanges at the city, regional and international level, that are seen to create community networks and empower federations by building ‘social capital’ and strengthening the bargaining power in negotiations with officialdom, including the national, regional and local state.

These rituals are performed to inscribe and embody the SDI’s ideology of ‘building people not things’. Savings schemes are meant to contribute towards the creation of social capital rather than mere houses. SDI’s approach to social capital and community building revolves around the fact that about 90 per cent of members are women. The gendered composition of the federations is perceived as an advantage given that women are generally the *de facto* managers of poor households, the household being the primary sphere of social reproduction.

People’s Dialogue and post-apartheid visions

PD and SAHPF define their objectives and ideological commitments in similar terms to other SDI affiliates. They are also concerned with participation of ‘the urban poor’, women particularly, in decision-making processes that impact upon their communities. However, not surprisingly, there are certain specifically South African, and highly localised, dimensions to SAHPF savings schemes and the leadership styles of South African federations. Before discussing these localised practices, it is worthwhile drawing attention to the ideological orientation of PD, the NGO supporting SAHPF.

The PD Manifesto, presented at the launch of the SAHPF on 21 March 1994, presents a ‘radical’ critique of the state and technocratic development. The highly polemical and poetic language of this document represents a critique of the inevitable rise of the post-apartheid technocratic state. Barely a month after the tumultuous celebrations of the ANC’s landslide victory in the first democratic elections of April 1994, the PD message is one of profound scepticism and distrust of the intentions of the new political and bureaucratic elite. The anonymous author warns that:

Now that the Great Cause has been won, the average men and women in this land will witness the gross spectacle of politicians and other elites [using] the Cause to further their own personal

hunger for power The State will use an army of technocrats and planners, equipped with the Great Cause, to control the social life of its subjects Their primary concern will be the circulation of things, and of human beings trapped in a world of things: cars, trains, commodities, sewerage. Poor people have to try to tear these topological chains asunder.⁶

This anti-development language is suggestive of a radical alternative to 'development as usual'. Whereas these days PD works in close partnership with the ANC government, the PD's early manifestos represent a radical critique of state-led technocratic development reminiscent of recent post-development critiques (see Escobar 1995 and Sachs 1992).

Although current PD discourse can be characterised as 'critical engagement' with government, PD nonetheless remains critical of state and private-sector driven, low-income housing delivery that fails to build poor people's capacity. Beneficiaries of state subsidy housing are provided with a physical structure but not the means to survive under conditions of extreme poverty. As PD respondents noted, in many cases, unemployed recipients of the R16 500 government housing subsidies end up selling their subsidy houses for extremely low prices and moving back into informal settlements because the houses are too small and they cannot afford to extend using formal building materials, and/or they cannot afford to pay rates and service fees. In other words, these product-driven housing delivery schemes tend to reproduce relations of dependency and passivity amongst development beneficiaries: houses become 'projects' and 'products' rather than opportunities for the long-term income-generation and community building.

In addition to being critical of the product-driven character of state and private sector low-income housing schemes, the approach of PD also questions the hierarchical and project-based nature of conventional NGO-CBO relations. This means that NGOs need to 'scale up' and consolidate their partnerships with CBOS, and that 'horizontal partnerships' need to be strong before vertical links can work effectively. According to PD's director, Joel Bolnick, NGO/CBO relationships tend to end once projects are completed and the 'development objective' or 'product' has been delivered. There are generally no real ties between the organisations beyond the lifecycle of 'the project'. Neither is there autonomy for the CBOS in terms of defining the needs and objectives of communities. Effective NGO/CBO partnerships therefore, ought, to be built upon

the foundations of prior grassroots mobilisation and community organisation. From the perspective of the PD professionals, the delivery of a service or a 'project' is not an end in itself. Instead, it ought to be a means towards changing values in society, and building 'social capital' and participatory, democratic and accountable systems of governance in poor communities. This philosophy has contributed towards a division of labour within the NGO whereby technical issues such as financial management, loans and state housing subsidies are taken care of by the Utshani Fund, referred to as PD's 'ministry of finance'. This allows PD to focus on more generic developmental issues such as direct, experiential learning through 'rituals' of horizontal exchange. Although the focus was originally on land and housing, there has been a growing recognition of the need to build 'social capital' by addressing a range of other issues including health, income generation, education and youth development.

The PD proposal to begin a process of collecting statistics on HIV-AIDS prevalence within the federations reveals the influence of SDI theorising on the knowledge-power nexus, especially the role of censuses, statistics and surveys in the reproduction of bureaucratic state power. Instead of resisting these forms of state power, the SDI affiliated federations have sought to appropriate and recast these bureaucratic practices and use them as leverage for accessing state resources, for instance, health care resources and AIDS treatment. Self-enumeration and information gathering are also seen as crucial for engaging the state on more equal terms and holding it accountable to its citizens. These practices reflect a sophisticated understanding of the political and bureaucratic machinations of the modern state. By appropriating these rituals of bureaucratic state power, the federations acquire leverage in their negotiations with the state to secure resources such as housing and health.

PD's current thinking on how to approach the AIDS pandemic provides an insight into why 'social capital' is such a key component of SDI affiliates' *modus operandi*. Rather than attempting to treat HIV-AIDS by bringing in medical specialists and experts, PD sees its task as that of mobilising federation communities so that they can persuade the state to comply with its contract with its citizens and provide treatment to federation members. This is to be done by collecting AIDS-related data from federation members. By drawing on state rituals of enumeration, and the power of statistics and the survey, the federation will have strategic AIDS information not at the dispos-

al of the state. The federation can then use this statistical data to pressure the government to come up with concrete programmes to treat its members. As Joel Bolnick puts it:

Forget all this vague vacuous stuff: 10% of the population is HIV positive because of the anti-natal tests they do. *We want to actually test every ... Federation member – and then every community member.* And when they come and have a test, we will ask them a certain set of questions, and gather information. If the Federation does it effectively, within a year we will have data around HIV/AIDS that no other institution has. And then we can go to the city [administration] and say, 'you are spending 10 million on AIDS and 300 million on building a highway. These are the realities on the ground'. And [the statistics] go to community leaders and they say [to city officials] 'you are not dealing with the situation. Look, this is the situation.' (Bolnick 1996)

In an anonymous PD document circulated to the South African federations, the author draws attention to the potentially emancipatory logics of practices of enumeration, censuses and surveys traditionally associated with the state. What emerges is a sophisticated re-reading of Foucaultian notions of governmentality (see Comaroff 2002: 114–115). The document entitled, 'Some notes on enumeration', questions certain Foucaultian critiques of governmentality that suggest that these state technologies inevitably buttress bureaucratic state power (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1995), and are part of the surveillance apparatus of the modern state (Scott 1998). Whereas James Scott and Arturo Escobar portray these practices as bureaucratic forms of state domination and disciplinary power that render populations legible and susceptible to state processes of governmentality, PD 'rituals' of enumeration are precisely about rendering the federation members *more legible to the state* in order to lobby for state resources. In other words, unlike orthodox Foucaultian critiques that essentialise state-led development – which is portrayed as part of a monolithic and all-encompassing set of institutional practices – PD intellectuals, and their SDI partners, suggest that there is nothing inherent in such state practices that pre-determines the outcome of their application.

Mind the gap: global ideologies and local realities

While PD and the SDI ideology stress the importance of horizontal relations of trust and non-hierarchical, decentralised political structures and practices within and between federations, the SAHPF national leadership contributed towards the establishment of highly centralised decision-making structures. This was particularly evident in the Western Cape Province, where the leadership was unwilling to relinquish its control and authority over ‘junior’ federations. This resulted in the consolidation of local hierarchies, power cliques and patronage networks that allowed certain individuals to act as gatekeepers and powerbrokers. It also resulted in accusations of financial mismanagement and widespread grievances concerning the alleged undemocratic practices of the leadership. This culminated in general disillusionment with savings schemes and large-scale withdrawal of federation members from participation in these schemes. As PD’s Cathy Glover put it: ‘The Federation has still been very successful in securing land in the city and initiating housing developments’ but once people get these resources they often see no reason for continuing to belong to savings schemes and they tend to withdraw from federation activities.

The leadership style of the SAHPF, especially in Cape Town, contradicted the liberal democratic visions of SDI and PD. However, it proved to be extremely difficult to alter these hierarchical political styles and power dynamics. This was especially the case at showpiece federations that were regularly visited by dignitaries, donors and government officials. One strategy adopted by PD in order to decentralise and dismantle these concentrations of power has been to attempt to ‘reinvent’ and reorganise the organisational structure of the federations through a system of rotational leadership, and by resuscitating local savings schemes and devolving decision-making powers to these schemes. These initiatives, however, encountered fierce opposition from a powerful SAHPF leadership determined to hold onto power and to resist attempts to decentralise the decision-making structures. This contributed towards ongoing clashes between PD and the SAHPF.

There were numerous other divergences between the desires, agendas and objectives of the NGO and its CBO partner. For instance, PD, like SDI and its Indian affiliates, believes that long-term processes of creating and ‘scaling up’ of ‘social capital’ and community building is more important than product-

driven concerns such as housing construction. However, PD's commitment to building 'social capital' through savings was not always shared by SAHPF members who often 'disappear' once they receive the object of their desire – the house. Unlike their counterparts in India, many South African federation members did not seem to 'buy into' daily savings and other federation rituals.

Another key area of difference relates to the political culture of the federations. While these organisations are meant to be non-party political, a number of the leadership figures are seasoned ANC Women's League veterans who are deeply enmeshed in local, regional and national ANC networks. Further, whereas PD believes in 'critical engagement' with the government, many of the ANC-aligned SAHPF leadership were less inclined to criticise the ANC government and leadership. Instead, a number of SAHPF leaders were prepared to allow federation networks to be used as ANC political resources. In addition, unlike their Indian partners, South African federation members tended to view the ANC government as a powerful patronage machine that could be accessed through party political contacts and channels. This perception of a powerful state was reinforced by the reality of the R16 500 state housing subsidies. The state was not only perceived to be a powerful provider of material resources but also a repository of technical expertise and know-how. This SAHPF perception of the power of the technocratic state was very different to the anti-technocratic, anti-hierarchical, anti-project and anti-bureaucratic perspective of PD and SDI. Whereas PD and SDI produced eloquent anti-technocratic tracts that challenged the expert/client relationship, it seemed that rank-and-file federation members, as well as the leadership, were not always as committed to this anti-technocratic post-development agenda.

PD practitioners and SAHPF members openly acknowledged the gap between SDI's 'global ideology' and the complex social realities that federation members experienced on a daily basis. They were also all too aware that the SDI development paradigm was not necessarily shared and embraced by federation members. This was particularly evident when federation members withdrew from regular participation in savings schemes upon the completion of the construction of their houses.

These competing understandings of 'development' permeated many aspects of PD's involvement with the SAHPF. The website and publications of PD and SDI promote the long-term building of horizontal relations of trust and social

capital. By contrast, the SAHPF leadership at the Victoria Mxenge settlement at Phillipi, Cape Town, seemed more concerned with housing delivery and the consolidation of vertical relations of patronage and dependency. This political practice challenged the SDI's vision of an anti-elite, anti-hierarchical, anti-technocratic and decentralised development model. PD members acknowledge that federation members, especially the leadership, seemed more interested in land acquisition and building houses than investing in less tangible outcomes such as 'trust', 'networks', 'social capital', and democratic and accountable governance systems. This situation of competing development visions and agendas is graphically illustrated in the case of the Victoria Mxenge Scheme.

The Victoria Mxenge Scheme

As a result of the considerable successes of the federation savings and housing schemes developed at the Victoria Mxenge Scheme (VMX) in Phillipi, Cape Town, a leadership cluster established itself as the 'nerve centre' of all SAHPF activities in the Western Cape Province. This leadership then began to control and dominate the 450 other savings federations in the Western Cape. These centralising processes intensified with VMX's successes in attracting international media attention, donors and visiting dignitaries, including former President Bill Clinton and Hilary Clinton, and other high-level South African government and EU delegations.

Victoria Mxenge Federation tended to focus on housing delivery rather than recreational spaces, crèches and other built environments that could contribute towards building community networks and the social fabric. In addition, despite PD's attempts to 'restructure' and 'reinvent' organisational structures to counteract and subvert the centralisation and consolidation of local power around certain VMX leaders, these centralising tendencies and processes persisted. These attempts to decentralise and disperse these localised nodes of power were contested by the strong federation leadership. In addition, whereas the 'official' SDI line is non-party political, the federation leadership, many of whom are ANC Women's League stalwarts, worked closely with ANC party structures.

The federation leadership proved to be as hierarchical, centralised and intolerant of competition as the neo-traditional male leadership structures that

emerged in many urban and rural informal settlements throughout South Africa. For instance, a PD co-ordinator, made the comparison between the current federation leadership and the highly centralised (male-dominated) neo-traditional leadership structures that emerged in Western Cape Province informal settlements such as Crossroads during the 1980s. Dissatisfaction with this centralised federation leadership contributed towards a massive decline in participation in the federations in the Western Cape, culminating in the collapse of many savings schemes. PD's strategy for addressing this leadership crisis has been to revive savings schemes that had collapsed as a result of disillusionment with centralising leadership styles and grievances about alleged financial mismanagement. This resuscitation of the savings collectives also sought to decentralise decision-making power and control over financial resources to local-level structures.

Divergences between SDI/PD ideology and the everyday practices of federation members seem to lie in the very different historical experiences of the South Africans and their Indian counterparts. Whereas the Indian organisations, for instance the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), have been around since the mid-1970s, PD and the SAHPF were only established in the early 1990s. In addition, while the Indians have had five decades to come to terms with the limits of liberation and state-driven development, the South African Federations are relative newcomers to democracy and have far more faith in the capacity of the modern state to promote development and eradicate poverty. This faith is not entirely misplaced as the South African state does indeed have the capacity to hand out large development resources, for example, housing subsidies. As a result, South Africans tend to buy into the politics of state patronage and visions of development rather than setting their own agendas. This dependency has meant that South African federations are generally less self-sufficient and less committed to long-term investment in building social and financial capital through everyday savings rituals than their Indian counterparts. The following section discusses the ways in which 'horizontal exchange' has become a powerful methodology for reflecting upon these differences and creating spaces for cross-cultural reflection by both PD professionals and ordinary federation members.

'Horizontal exchange' as cross-cultural exchange

While it has been difficult to sustain SDI rituals such as daily savings, there has been more than a decade of exchanges between South African and Indian Federation members. These exchanges were perceived to create opportunities for the sharing of experiences of Federations through direct learning encounters. It also provided opportunities for cross-cultural reflection.

Publications by the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (January 2000) and various affiliates of the SDI, as well as interviews with SAHPF members who have visited India over the past decade, draw attention to the disbelief many black South Africans experience upon encountering – fifty years after independence – extreme levels of poverty and homelessness in cities such as Mumbai and Calcutta.⁷ These sobering encounters with the limits of the post-colonial Indian state, during visits in the early 1990s, served as a catalyst for the formation of self-help saving schemes in South Africa. As VM put it:

If you look at India, they are still struggling, even 50 years after independence That is why we started our work in 1992 That is why it was necessary to prepare ourselves before to make changes come about If the people are not helping themselves, there is only so much the government can do.

Another SAHPF member made similar observations and personal reflections concerning 'the culture of poverty' she encountered during her visit to India:

You learnt to be humble and to appreciate what you have got, what we have got here in Cape Town. We are a little better off in the sense that the houses are bigger, and our squatters are better because people in India are just staying on the street and things like that. So we are a little bit advanced... . But we can learn about daily savings from the Indians. You can be surprised by the amazing trust that people have amongst one another in India. It is street people going around collecting from street people For a street person just to give money to a collector and to have no guarantee that that person will come back tomorrow. That kind of trust is amazing. We got a lot of ideas from India – toilet festivals and enumeration – counting huts and families, walk on every path and observe all the structures in the settlement – draw

a map with houses, roads, places of worship, toilets etc. – survey produced – gather detailed information about the community.

Other comments from SAHPF interviewees referred to visits to savings collectives in Kenya where ‘we found that the people couldn’t hold [federation] meetings without first telling the tribal leader, even though the government and the country was now independent’. The idea that federation members had to defer to traditional leaders in order to hold meetings was strange and ‘backward’ from the perspective of many of these highly assertive urban African women. One of the most common reflections referred to the extraordinary levels of trust that existed amongst the urban poor they met in India. These observations were also made in relation to the high levels of distrust and crime experienced by the urban poor in South Africa.

TM, an ex-MK soldier working with the PD and the federation reflected on the many cultural and religious differences between Indians and black South Africans. Like many of the other SAHPF exchanges, these visits were a catalyst for critical self-reflection, and comparative social and cultural analysis. For instance, like many other South African exchange visitors to India, TM observed that India was much poorer than South Africa yet poor people in India seemed more determined to improve their situations and seldom resorted to crime. Whereas South Africans still expected formal employment and state patronage, the Indian poor expected neither wage income nor housing subsidies nor other forms of state assistance. According to TM, this meant that Indians were generally far more self-reliant and less dependent on state patronage. Neither were they captive to the myths of modernity and development. TM also attributed the high levels of mutual assistance, trust and self-motivation that he observed in India to the deep commitment of Indians to their Muslim and Hindu religious beliefs and practices. By contrast, he felt that black African Christianity was a relatively superficial affair, with Africans attending church because it was ‘a social gathering and a way of relieving you from your day-to-day stress’. According to TM, the serious religious commitments to Islam and Hinduism informed the everyday cultural beliefs and social practices of Indians. Such religious, cultural and social commitment, solidarity and trust did not, TM claimed, express itself amongst South Africans.

These cultural and religious differences have influenced the ways in which the global ideology of SDI gets re-interpreted and reconfigured ‘from below’ by

local federations. It also explains the disjunctures between the ideological positions of PD and SDI on citizenship and participation, and locally produced social and cultural practices and leadership styles. Yet, this cultural, religious and political diversity across federations can also be strategically deployed to draw attention to alternative organisational strategies. In an interview in July 2002, Bolnick notes that it is important to draw on cross-cultural comparison in order, for instance, to be ‘more effective in an environment where you have a hostile state’:

A million people in Jakarta [Indonesia] are facing evictions right now. There have already been about 20-30 000 evictions and the logical response from the communities is to resist and fight [rather than] collaborate with the enemy There is a lot of value in the international network [because we can say]: ‘Don’t send the Indians to interact with the Indonesians, because the Indians have no real experience in their living memory of dealing with that level of confrontation with the state. Send the South Africans, because the South Africans have that living memory, but they also have a history of pragmatic approaches.’ And that is how you see the value of these [international networks] and relationships. It is similar to an exchange programme where you send a group with a health issue to deal with another group with a health issue, or you link a group with a land issue with a group that has a land issue. The groups in Kenya need to develop stronger systems of savings and systems management Send the Indians or the Thais. If they have got to start negotiating with these corrupt bureaucrats who have been involved with evictions for the last 20 years, don’t send the Indians, because the Indians will say ‘It doesn’t matter, it is fine, you must negotiate’. Send the South Africans who will say: ‘Yes, we ... have also had to deal with [evictions]. How do we handle that?’

Conclusion: ‘globalisation from below’: transnational hype or deep democracy?

This chapter has attempted to show how a Cape Town-based NGO and CBO have attempted to reposition and reinvent themselves within a post-apartheid,

post-Cold War scenario characterised by the developmental constraints imposed by the 'lean and mean' neo-liberal state. In this changed political landscape, class-based mobilisation is no longer the only game in town. Instead, issue-based organisations and new social movements addressing AIDS, biotechnology, the environment, indigenous, feminist and gay rights, child labour, housing and landlessness have emerged alongside traditional trade unions and anti-globalisation movements.

An interesting innovation of some of these new issue-based organisations has been their deployment of the media and cyber-technology to forge global connections with similar organisations elsewhere in the world. Global networking has become a key feature of what some refer to as the new global civil society. Arjun Appadurai's work on Mumbai-based urban activist movements draws attention to the emancipatory possibilities that globalisation presents in terms of 'deepening democracy' and facilitating 'cross-border activism' through transnational advocacy networks or TANS. According to Appadurai, these transnational advocacy networks provide '*new horizontal modes for articulating the deep democratic politics of the locality*' (Appadurai 2002: emphasis added).

This chapter has attempted to understand the processes involved in building the horizontal relations of trust and social capital that underpin these innovative social forms. It has investigated what global civil society actually means in terms of the everyday practices and strategic priorities of globally connected organisations of the poor such as PD and SAHPF. It would seem that, despite numerous difficulties, the forms of social capital developed through SDI rituals of daily savings and 'horizontal exchange' can contribute towards the emergence of communities with longer shelf lives than the hyper-transient 'communities without commitments' referred to by Bauman (2000). The SAHPF example suggests, however, that despite SDI's commitments to the building of social capital, ordinary federation members in Cape Town do not necessarily share this long-term vision. For some federation members, the attainment of 'the product' (land or the house) results in a decision to 'bale out' of 'community'.

This chapter began with a discussion of the photograph on the cover of Bauman's book of seven free falling parachutists holding hands as they plum-

met towards earth. The discussion has shown that this striking image represents not only the transience of the experimental communities of late capitalism in 'the West' but also reflects the realities of the fragile and transitory communities found in many parts of the developing world. Despite the creative and sustained efforts by SDI federations – from Cape Town to Calcutta – to build social capital and communities with long-term commitments, the urban poor are often unable, for a variety of reasons, to make these binding commitments. Dissatisfaction with centralised and undemocratic leadership practices was a widely cited reason for decisions to exit federation savings schemes in Cape Town but this was not the case in many other parts of South Africa. Like the parachutists holding hands in a state of temporary communitas, many Cape Town-based federation members decided to 'bale out' of savings communities once they had built their houses on solid ground. Clearly social capital, like global capital under conditions of late capitalism, can be fluid and fickle; here today and gone tomorrow. However, the successes and longevity of many federations in other parts of South Africa, and the developing world, suggests that these innovative organisations can, indeed, meet many of the needs of poor people living under the harsh conditions of neo-liberalism and the global retreat of the development state.

Notes

- 1 Trust is seen as a crucial ingredient in societies where economic transactions and institutional practices are so complex that law cannot cover all contingencies, or where there is no formal system of contracts anyway. This situation requires the creation of trust relations both in terms of generalised norms of morality and more personalised sources embedded in social networks (see Lyon 2000: 664). Considerable empirical work on social capital in Africa has focused on the role of social networks, norms and trust in facilitating co-operation and co-ordination amongst traders and producers (see Widnery & Mundt 1998).
- 2 Arjun Appadurai's study of Mumbai-based urban housing organisations affiliated to the Slum Dwellers International (SDI) shows how, through participation in this urban activist movement, 'the global and the local can become reciprocal instruments of the deepening of democracy' (Appadurai 2002: 25).
- 3 See: <[http:// www.sdinet.org/face%20to%20face.htm](http://www.sdinet.org/face%20to%20face.htm)>
- 4 When intra-community conflicts erupted in places such as Crossroads, Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal and the Vaal Triangle, it was usually instigated by a state security establishment determined to use conservative elders to purge the townships of militant youth activists, *amaqabane* or 'comrades'.

- 5 Appadurai provides a fascinating account of SAHPF's SDI partners in Mumbai in which he analyses their rituals of 'toilet festivals' and 'the politics of shit'. He shows how a carnivalesque spirit of transgression and bawdiness prevails during toilet inspections in the presence of middle class government and World Bank officials. This is interpreted by Appadurai as an attempt to redefine the private act of humiliation and suffering - shitting in the open - into a scene of technical innovation and self-dignification. It is seen as a remarkably innovative 'politics of recognition from below'.
- 6 See *What ons Will Hê – A Message From People's Dialogue: May 1994, In The Early Hours of the New South Africa* <<http://www.dialogue.org.za/pd/index.htm>> This anti-elite, anti-nationalist and anti-technocratic polemic is worth quoting at some length in order to convey the degree to which early PD ideology challenged the new state's vision of nation building and development. The following excerpt represents a stridently militant and 'post-modern' voice railing against the grey and soulless surveillance city created by technocratic state planners – a foul modernist nightmare that would make Foucault's hair stand on end:

At last: oppression is no longer centralized because oppression is everywhere. One just has to look at the most recent examples of town-planning to see it. The reference point the planners propose is no longer the apartheid-structured city. Hooray! However, from the perspective of all communities, especially the poor, homeless communities, the reference point proposed by these revisionist town planners (soon to be endorsed by revisionist politicians) is always somewhere else, meaning always outside the daily lives of the inhabitants of these communities. What we see is a grid of roads linking vast expanses of toilets to gutless city centers, plate-glass shopping malls and dark streets surrounding industrial plants and factories. In the minds of some this may be satisfactory compensation for 350 years of slavery Here is the crux of development practice in the new South Africa. Who will be at the center? The people or the state? *The State will use an army of technocrats and planners, equipped with the Great Cause, to control the social life of its subjects.* And the vision of the post apartheid city is its masterstroke. The town planners are its shock troops. In a rapidly urbanizing society the development of the urban environment is one of the most profound political acts of all. Have we moved away from apartheid? Beware if the town planners, the architects, the bureaucrats try to point the way, *for their primary concern will be the circulation of things, and of human beings trapped in a world of things: cars, trains, commodities, sewerage. Poor people have to try to tear these topological chains asunder* He who thinks and plans for you, judges you, reduces you to his own norms, and whatever his intentions may be, he ends up making you stupid The formation of the SA Homeless People's Federation will go some way towards ensuring that the democratic right of

poor people to plan and manage their own developments is enforced in practice throughout the land. People's Dialogue commits itself to giving continued support to the initiatives of the Federation(emphasis added).

- 7 Quotations in this section are drawn from the author's interviews. While identifying PD spokespersons, I have maintained the anonymity of SAHPF members.

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