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Emergency Housing Programme in South Africa

- The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation
Area in Delft

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The Minor Field Study Scholarship Programme gives Swedish university students the opportunity to carry out fieldwork in low- and middle income countries, or more specifically in the countries included on the DAC List of ODA Recipients, in relation to their Bachelor's or Master's thesis.

Sida's main purpose with the scholarships is to stimulate the students' interest in, as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of development issues. The Minor Field Studies provide the students with practical experience of fieldwork in developing settings. A further aim of Sida is to strengthen the cooperation between Swedish university departments, institutes and organisations in these countries.

Abstract

The City of Cape Town has used and continues to use the Temporary Relocation Areas as a tool to tackle homelessness and poor housing conditions. Relocation is nothing new in South Africa, but the use of Temporary Relocation Areas represents a shift in how the state attempts to fulfil their constitutional obligations to realize the right to adequate housing for all, with unclear long-term implications. Temporary Relocation Areas are not planned or built to house individuals for an extensive period of time. This has however proven to be inconsistent with the existing on the ground experience and has caused prominently poor social conditions for the people living there. Therefore, the aim of the study is to explore and clarify how power and planning rationality form tensions between planning intentions and reality, between vision and real life by studying the social effects of living in the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area in Delft. This is based on a qualitative field research conducted in the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area. The analysis has displayed that relocations are very complex as it has a wide range of adverse, unintended consequences, such as disruption of livelihoods and social networks.

Key words: South Africa, the right to adequate housing, power and rationality, Emergency Housing Programmes, Temporary Relocation Areas.

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1 Introduction

The world is undergoing the largest wave of urban growth in history. In 2014, the urban population accounted for 54% of the total population. To put the numbers in perspective; it has risen up from 30% since 1950 and still continues to grow steadily (United Nations, 2014). The urban population growth, in absolute numbers, is concentrated in the less developed regions (Cohen, 2006). The urbanisation has the potential to bring both new challenges and opportunities for states but it is undeniably also a contemporary issue for governments around the world on how to handle where people are to reside, work and prosper. Urban areas are generally presented as the problem of today as well as the solution to it. The intense urbanisation puts the urban areas at the heart of the developmental agenda of the twenty-first century.

The urban populations in Africa are expected to triple within the coming 50 years (Freire, Lall and Leiziger, 2014). This will change the profile of the region, as policy makers will have to work towards harnessing urbanisation in order to attain sustainable and inclusive growth. To this point of time, urban growth in Africa has failed to generate inclusive growth. This has in turn resulted in the proliferation of informal settlements, the increase of urban poverty and a rising inequality (Turok, 2012). The lotus of world poverty is shifting from the rural to the urban context. Nowhere is the rise of inequality more eye-catching and graphic than in urban areas where wealthy communities coexist alongside, but are separated from, slums and informal settlements. Urban management and planning is central as it can help cities plan ahead and avoid congestion, pollution and the emergence of urban slums. However, the past performance of most African countries in this area has so far been poor. Making the provision of housing for the poor is therefore a key priority in the politics of urban planning. For this reason, the issue of urban planning and management is at the core of the continent's development challenges.

To address poor housing and homelessness, the South African government has implemented Temporary Relocation Areas as a tool to facilitate upgrading of informal settlement and/or to aid individuals in emergency situations. With this thesis I will analyse the tension between planning intentions and reality, between vision and real life by studying the social effects of living in the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area. The following section will give an introduction to this complex housing issue by presenting urban planning in South Africa.

1.1 Urban planning in South Africa

It is widely acknowledged within urban planning that urban space can both reflect and reinforce social and spatial inequality. This is nowhere more true and trenchant than in South Africa due to the racially based financial and institutional framework inherited from the apartheid government, which was also spatially constructed (Schensul and Heller, 2010). Insufficient and inadequate housing for the urban poor has a long history from the urban containment. Naturally, the urban population in the country has accelerated following the removal of the apartheid influx controls. The urban periphery townships and informal settlements were overcrowded and underserviced during apartheid and up-to-today a pressing developmental issue for the post-apartheid government. The country is currently one of the most populous and urbanised countries in Africa, but with a housing crisis on its hands.

1.1.1 The post-apartheid South Africa

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) is renowned worldwide for having a broad range of judicially enforceable socio-economic rights. South Africa is one of around thirty countries that have included the right to housing in its Constitution. The right of access to adequate housing, enshrined in Section 26 of the Constitution in South Africa, is by all means the most contested socio-economic right in South Africa (Clark, 2013). The Constitution, Section 26(1) recognises the right of access to adequate housing while Section 26(2) requires the state to take reasonable legislative or other measures to achieve the progressive realisation of this right. Section 26(3) prohibits that no one may be evicted from their home, or has their home demolished, without a court order.

The right to housing as articulated in the Constitution has had a legislative impact in South Africa on national, provincial and local level. Housing delivery programmes and subsidy mechanisms to provide houses to its citizens have been initiated and implemented by the post-apartheid governments. It has however proven to be very problematic to realise the right in practice. It is central to highlight that it is not just access to housing but also access to *adequate* housing that the Constitution states. The South African government has encountered several problems with housing development ever since apartheid was abolished (Björkman, 2013; Graham, 2006). The urban housing backlog has both increased and continues to grow due to factors such as changing household structures, rapid urbanisation and increasing unemployment (Tissington, 2010). Many poor households still remain unable to access some form of adequate housing, often having to live in the harsh conditions linked to informal settlements (Graham 2006; Huchzermeyer and Karam 2006; Massey, 2014) The increase of informal settlements in South Africa will further be discussed in the literature review in chapter 3.

1.1.2 Emergency Housing Programmes

Eliminating the existence of informal housing has been and is still highly prioritised in urban planning and management in South Africa, as it is linked with urban poverty. Essentially, half of the population in South Africa live in urban areas and a quarter of these urban dwellers reside in informal settlements (Landman and Napier, 2010). Subsequently, on a regular basis households and communities throughout South Africa experience emergencies that render them homeless due to “settlement patterns (such as fire-prone informal settlements); harsh weather conditions (floods and storms) and emerging social welfare concerns including spatial concentrations of infectious diseases and unsafe or illegal building occupation” (HDA, 2012). The Emergency Housing Programme (EHP) is a vital subsidy tool in South Africa as it was designed with the dual purpose of both realising the right to housing and to ensure that municipalities would rapidly respond to emergency housing situations. This was intended to be achieved by providing temporary relief through the provision of secure access to land, engineering services and shelter (Cirolia, 2014). However, the programmes implementation has been harshly critiqued in the last five years, as problematic emergency housing responses have attracted increased political and scholarly attention (Lemanski and Oldfield, 2009; DAG, 2007; Björkman, 2011). The EHP is most notorious for its use of the contentious Temporary Relocation Areas (TRA).

1.1.3 Temporary Relocation Areas

Temporary housing settlements pepper the urban landscapes in South Africa but exist under various names depending on geographic location namely “Temporary Relocation Areas” in Cape Town, “transit camps” in Durban and “decant camps” in Johannesburg. These temporary housing areas intend to facilitate informal settlement upgrading or to aid citizens in emergency situations. Built and managed largely by municipal governments, these structures have antecedents and analogues around South Africa (Ranslem, 2015). The City of Cape Town (CCT) has constructed TRAs at the outskirts of the city, which are used to fulfil the obligation of providing temporary relief in emergencies.

The implementation of TRA has encountered contestation and conflict on a variety of fronts as occupants, human rights organisations; national and international media have disputed the reason behind the increase of TRAs. This has made it highly politically controversial. Occupants of TRAs have stated that the area has basically become a dumping ground for unwanted marginalised people. Yet, the relocation areas are increasingly used in housing emergencies and as a mechanism in upgrading informal settlements in South African cities. Relocation is nothing new in South Africa, but the use of TRAs represents a shift in how the state tries to fulfil their constitutional obligations to realise the right to adequate housing for all, with unclear long-term implications.

1.2 Aim and significance

Many books and articles have been published on the subject of urban planning and management in South Africa. Nonetheless, urban studies have generally overlooked Emergency Housing Programmes such as the Temporary Relocation Areas in South African cities. Research tends to stop at the point when houses and service have been planned and delivered. The aftermath and effects of those housing development programmes runs the high risk of being overlooked (Oldfield, 2002). The aim of the study is to explore how power and planning rationality create tensions between planning intentions and reality, between vision and real life by studying the social effects of living in the Symphony Way TRA. There is a clear knowledge gap due to the limited research that has been done on this subject. This study consequently sheds light on issues that will add value to the debate on housing and human settlements in South Africa by examining the social effects of this specific TRA.

1.2.1 Research question

- What social effects do Emergency Housing Planning give rise to for the occupants of the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area in Delft, South Africa?

1.3 Delimitations

Research on urban planning, management and policy in South Africa is extensive and delimitations had to be decided in order to narrow this study down and carry out a more focused research. South Africa's housing landscape is profoundly influenced by the legacy of apartheid, and thus the present cannot be fully understood without comprehending the past. The historical legacy as well as the current political system will not have an explicit part of the discussion but will rather serve as a foundation for the discussion and analysis. Moreover, TRAs are consequences of the national crisis of the housing backlog in South Africa. The housing crisis as such will not be extensively discussed. For further research on this subject see Tissington (2011).

Another delimitation is that the formal decision-making process on TRA will not be analysed as the focus is on an already existing relocations area. The last delimitation is that I will not enter the debate about which urban policy, planning or management is "better" or "worse" but will rather display the actors' different views on the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area by studying the long-term social issues.

1.4 Outline of the study

I have divided the thesis into seven chapters. In the following chapter, the methodology will be described together with reflections upon the ethical concerns of the field study. The third chapter will provide a literature review of what has been written on housing opportunities for the urban poor in South Africa. In the fourth chapter, the theoretical framework will be outlined together with the context of developing countries. In the fifth chapter, the empirical material will be presented and analysed in light of the theoretical framework. The sixth chapter will provide the conclusions of the study. Lastly, the references of the study will be displayed.

2 Methodology

In this chapter, the methodological aspects of this qualitative case study will be discussed. This includes a discussion on research design and data collection methods as well as the analytical framework and ethical considerations for this field study. In addition, strengths and limitations of these techniques are reflected upon.

The 10-weeks field study in Delft, South Africa between January and March 2015 was carried out within a qualitative research framework. Bryman (2012) states that qualitative research design is suitable when the purpose of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. This has been very suitable as the research was executed in an exploratory manor due to the fact that Emergency Housing Programmes (EHP) in general represent an under researched area of urban planning in South Africa, let alone Temporary Relocation Areas (TRA). Equally, the research question is directly connected with the interviewees understanding of the area. Yet, the qualitative framework may not generate the generalizable and replicable knowledge, which can be achieved by quantitative methods. However, it was of greater importance to "understand the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by participants" both from the planners of the area and the occupants' point of view which equals with the interpretivist qualitative approach of conducting research (Bryman, 2012). I opted to use the Symphony Way TRA as a single case study to understand the area "in depth, and in its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context" (Punch, 2007:144).

2.1 The case study

The Symphony Way TRA will be used as an instrumental case study as the available information on the area is limited (Punch, 2007:144-145). Therefore, I wanted to carry out a detailed and intensive analysis of this instrumental case study with the aim of gaining new insight to social issues associated with this specific relocation area. Temporary Relocation Areas are not planned or built to house individuals for an extensive period of time. This has however proven to be inconsistent with the existing on the ground experience, which has caused poor social conditions for the people living there.

I also argue that this is an exemplifying case as the similarities between the relocation areas are more predominant than the differences. This is due to the fact that whilst some have been constructed or designed slightly differently, the purpose and implementation is more or less the same. Nonetheless, the Symphony Way TRA has unique features such as being the most populous relocation area in

the Western Cape Province and having being the most contested because of its construction, layout design and the poorest social conditions. Built and managed largely by municipal governments, the structures of TRAs have antecedents and analogues around South Africa. The common ground is the inadequacy of Temporary Relocation Areas as a solution to the housing crisis, which will be discussed by examining the social effects.

2.1.1 Sampling

The Symphony Way TRA is identified as a high-risk area associated with poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, strong gang presence and high crime rates (Ranslem, 2015). This has resulted in the access to the area being problematic. Furthermore, the municipality merely relies on population estimations of the area, which has made it impossible to identify how many people and who exactly is living in the relocation area. These reasons mentioned above made it highly problematic to develop the sampling frame needed to obtain a randomised or a representative sample. Thus, I decided to use “snowball” and purposive sampling approaches because of the nature of the field study.

I contacted different organisations in Delft that were familiar with the area and who assisted me in identifying potential interviewees in the area. I established an initial core group of people that were interviewed and I asked them to name others who might be willing to be interviewed, and thus the snowball sample was built. This was done with great caution due to the high risk of producing a biased sample. I contacted different organisations in order to decrease the risk of having informants from a particular segment of the community by sharing a social network.

Close to the end of the field study, I was assigned by the Development Action Group in South Africa to write the community profile on Symphony Way TRA. I was responsible for mapping the area, as well as analysing and identifying environmental risks in the area. Once again I had to identify key stakeholders within the context of urban planning and management of the area, with whom I also set up interviews with.

2.1.2 Participatory observations

Entering an emergency setting without sufficient safety planning and understanding of internal tensions is unethical and violates the principle of “do no harm”. Therefore I started by relying solely on conducting participatory observations and informal interviews in the Symphony Way TRA in order to gain a preliminary contextual understanding of the living conditions and power structures at the beginning of the field study.

After the initial observations, I attended several meetings organised by both the municipality and local organisations in order to understand the political, cultural, social and economic dynamics of the area. Moreover, I observed Neil Wellman,

the Senior Field Manager of the Symphony Way TRA, during his daily work routine in the area. On another occasion I observed Charles Esau and Rosemary Rau, the Councillors of the ward, were in the relocation area. This was highly valuable in order to gain an enhanced understanding of the work by the government officials on site but also to better grasp the power dynamics between city officials and occupants in the area.

The observations above reflect what has been identified as central for enhancing the understanding of the case with different stakeholders in the focus by conducting observations in strategic settings. The observation was documented as field notes.

2.1.3 Semi-structured interviews

The method I identified as most suitable for this case study was to use semi-structured interviews that use open-ended questions. Having open-ended questions enables wide-ranging discussions and allows the informants to present their insights. This resulted in the answers given by the interviewees not being limited by my preconceptions of the subject. Thus, this is a powerful method to obtain in-depth insights and generate new knowledge (Nunkoosing, 2005). Moreover, it was central to have a semi-structured approach in order to have the flexibility whilst maintaining the possibility to focus the interviews within the given subject and timeframe. This method proved to be a suitable middle way for my research as it is in-between closed questions that are limited by preconceptions and the time-consuming unstructured interviews (Leech, 2002). This flexibility allowed exploration, but at the same time this resulted in some of the analytical precisions being lost since none of the interviews were exactly the same.

My intended sample size of respondents was 10-15 informants. The sampling strategy was arguably successful as 25 interviews with occupants from the area, local and provincial government officials and representatives from several non-governmental sectors were conducted. All the interviews will unfortunately not be presented in the thesis due to the limitation of 10.000 words. However, all the interviews have formed the foundation for the departing analysis in chapter 5. The lengths of my interviews varied, with the shortest one being thirty minutes and the longest being over two and half-hour. The most time-consuming interviews were with government officials. Moreover, I did not have to rely on a translator during any of the interviews as they were carried out in English. The respondents were informed of their rights of confidentiality, anonymity and the option not to answer and/or terminate the interview. They also gave consent to be part of this thesis. The interviews have been recorded, transcribed and analysed.

During the final weeks of the field study, I was practically only recommended to interview people that I had already interviewed, which displays that the use of multiple sources of sampling had been fruitful.

2.2 Material analysis

I have applied a thematic analysis approach to the material, where I followed the step-by-step routine by Braun and Clarke (2006). This type of analytical framework is an important method as it is possible to inductively extract, analyse and report pattern from the material. The analytical process initiated with having to familiarise with the material in order to be able to generate initial codes. From this, themes started to be produced and it was a constant process of reviewing them. The thematic analysis revealed that participants connected the main social issues with personal safety and security. From the coding four subthemes under safety and security were identified: relocation site, social networks and the community, corruption in housing programmes and the permanent temporariness of the relocation area.

The theoretical framework has been based on what the interviewees raised as central. This allowed me to be flexible and responsive to the participants' priorities and avoided being limited to the scarce previous literature or theoretical framework. Yet, it is central to be aware that the researcher who carries out the process affects the collection of knowledge. Thus, "knowledge cannot be separated from the knower" (Steedman, 1991). The results of the research will be influenced by the researcher, which means that it can never be completely "neutral" or "objective" knowledge (Ritchie et al 2014:23). Accordingly, it is essential that the researchers think reflexively throughout the entire research process, including the design phase and the way in which data is interpreted and prioritised (Ritchie et al, 2014). Constant reflexivity was prioritised throughout the process to reflect on my own positionality as a researcher within the specific context, in order to have an enhanced understanding of how it may impact the collected material (May, 2011: 140).

2.3 Ethical considerations

To understand the dynamics of TRA it is essential to apprehend that many of the occupants move there with a trauma as a result of being evicted or having to move from their previous home. Moving to an Emergency Housing Programme (EHP) also means that most of the occupants focus exclusively on surviving due to the social-economic status of those being relocated. Relocation is recurrently linked with losses of income, lack of social network and limited transportation possibilities. People living in the area often fend for themselves and the family. As a consequence neighbours can easily be seen as a threat rather than a social security or network. This consequently leads me to one of the prevalent ethical considerations in this study: "do not harm".

Ethically, to use the snowballing sampling increases the risk of revealing critical and potentially damaging information to members of a network or subgroup. It is central to note that when entering the area, I inevitably became part of the power

structures. Simply by informing a respondent on how I obtained a name or contact information demonstrates a particular kind of link. It has been fundamental to avoid intensifying tensions in the community by not revealing information retrieved from other informants. This information could include sensitive subjects such as economic and sexual status as well as gang affiliation. I decided to use semi-structured and open-ended interviews for the informants, so that they would be in control over the process and avoid an invasion of privacy. As mentioned previously, I have had a reflexive account on positionality but also on the ethical concerns throughout the process of research in order to decrease the risk of biases.

3 Literature review

The attitudes towards urbanisation in South Africa are especially complex and equivocal due to the daunting legacy of institutionalised racism and urban exclusion from the apartheid governments still hanging over the nation. Unsurprisingly, the urban population in the country has accelerated following the removal of the apartheid influx controls. The profound social inequalities and shortages of land and housing have remained and hampered urban integration (NPC, 2012). This has resulted in the current urban planning debate often revolving around housing opportunities for the urban poor. The purpose of this section is to outline key themes within the existing research and literature on low-income housing development opportunities for the urban poor in South Africa.

3.1 Housing opportunities for urban poor

Notably, there is a rapidly growing literature regarding the increase of informal settlements that suggests it can be understood, at least in part, as a consequence of the government's problems with involvement in the housing sector (Lemanski 2009; Landman and Napier, 2009). Local, provincial and national government have committed to progressively realising the right to adequate housing by implementing a wide-range of state-subsidised housing opportunities. However, one of the main problems has been that these houses are reproducing isolated dormitory settlements patterns on the periphery (Harrison et al, 2008; Bradlow et al, 2011; SACN, 2011.). Other scholars have also raised the issue that urban poor often continue to be unable to access some form of adequate housing (Lemanski, 2009; Massey, 2014). Consequently, a large concentration of urban poor have to live in difficult conditions in informal settlements.

In recent decades several publications have stressed that the attribute of the widespread informality in the housing sector is due to market failure (Huchzermeyer, 2004; Landman and Napier 2009; Boudreaux 2008). On the one hand, informal housing markets deliver huge numbers of housing for the poor but it is 'unauthorised' housing. On the other hand, Boudreaux (2008) presents the argument 'that "formal" markets fail to provide sufficient housing options for the very poor, forcing them into poor quality, potentially dangerous, informal housing'.

It has been highlighted that housing opportunities are not just structured by wealth and power but also mirror these differences (Watson, 2009). This is reflected in urban planning as the city does not signify an unified interest equally as little as the market works for a unified goal. Countless studies have stressed the conflicting and unequal interests in urban policy, planning and management and

these will always have different social and economic consequences depending on the group of people (Hannan and Sutherland, 2014; Turok, 2012). Neither cities nor markets are neutral or unified entities as they are areas of conflict and tension. This will be further discussed in the following chapter on the theoretical framework.

Quite recently, considerable attention has been paid to South Africa's approach regarding upgrading informal settlements and redressing the daunting legacy of apartheid. This has given the country a prominent place in settlement formalisation and upgrading literature (Massey, 2014; Okpala, 2011; Huchzermeyer and Karam, 2006). The literature tend to focus on the informal settlement upgrading in Cape Town and centres on the relationship between local government and communities at project level (Graham, 2006; Massey, 2014; Lier, 2011). However, the research tends to stop at the point when houses and service have been delivered. The concern is that this often ignores to explore the social effects of housing programmes (Oldfield, 2002). This has also been the case with the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Areas (TRA). With this thesis I will analyse some of the long-term social issues from living in Symphony Way TRA, by applying the theoretical framework of power and planning rationality. The theoretical framework will be presented and discussed in the following chapter.

4 Theoretical framework

The growing status of cities as political and economic centres often makes them the hub of struggles on resources and access to power. Yet, issues concerning power are seldom discussed within urban planning. Unlike political science, the field of planning research still lacks a regular body of central books and articles that place power relations at the core. The impact of power towards the outcome of planning is even less discussed openly. Depending on how urban areas are planned and managed could reinforce or undermine polarisations in people's everyday life. Urban planning is accountable for the allocation of space and resources. The allocation in itself can be decided and agreed-upon for a variety of reasons and purposes. It can be framed within the classical definition of politics, as a question of "who gets what, when, where, why and how" (Davidoff, 1973:292). The complexity of the urban setting illustrates why power can be a matter of wide-ranging debate.

The theoretical framework for the thesis will mainly be based on the book "Rationality and Power" by Flyvbjerg (1998). In the book the reader is taken behind the scenes where real politics and real rationality of public administration and planning in a project for environmental sustainability in the Danish city of Aalborg is revealed. There are originally four core objectives for Aalborg. As the project unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that the original intentions diverge towards more biased goals through struggles between power and rationality. The focus of the book is the dynamic relationship between rationality and power. First section will present definitions of rationality and power. In the following section, rationality and power will be discussed within a developing country's context.

4.1 Definitions

Rationality is defined as the quality or state of being rational. To be rational means having or exercising the ability to reason (Flyvbjerg, 2009).

Power is defined as the ability or capacity to perform or act effectively, including the situation where not to act is most effective (Flyvbjerg, 2009).

In urban policy, planning and management, rationality and power are interconnected. The overlapping relationship between the two makes it difficult to separate where one begins and the other ends. In reality, this means that an individual may be rational but has no power or has power but is not rational. However, having power means that the person has the advantage of rationalisation. Therefore, rationality may become rationalisation as a consequence of power influence. This will further be discussed in the next section.

4.2 Rationality, power and participation

Flyvbjerg (1998) develops and identifies ten propositions on rationality and power that can be used as guidelines when conducting research. Due to time and space constraints I have chosen to narrow it down to apply the first four propositions, which are:

- Proposition 1: Power defines reality
- Proposition 2: Rationality is context-dependent; the context of rationality is power; and power blurs the dividing line between rationality and rationalisation
- Proposition 3: Rationalisation presented as rationality is a principal strategy in the exercise of power
- Proposition 4: The greater the power, the less the rationality

It is widely acknowledged that the context-dependent interpretation of a social phenomenon makes it difficult to generalise. Even though the case study of Flyvbjerg's (2009) book is the Aalborg Project, the power struggle described can happen, will happen and is happening everywhere. The book helps to narrow the gap between planning and policy academia with its actual practice.

Still, to adapt Flyvbjerg's framework even more for my study, I have decided to add the context of developing countries by using Watson's (2009) article "The planned city sweeps the poor away...": Urban planning and 21st century urbanisation" which discusses the clash of rationalities. Within urban planning there is an existing conflict of rationalities between the planning practice and those the projects are being planned for. Watson (2009; 2003) argues that there can be a conflict of rationalities between the state and the urban poor.

I will also draw on international research on the theme of participation by urban poor in urban planning to illustrate the context of developing countries. This will be problematized with the previously mentioned clash of rationalities as well as within the four propositions of Flyvbjerg (1998).

4.2.1 Power, rationality and reality

"Rationality is penetrated by power and it becomes meaningless, or misleading – for politicians, administrators, and researchers alike – to operate with a concept of rationality in which power is absent."
(Flyvbjerg, 1998:227)

This is a consequence of rationality being a discourse of power. Hence, it is also context-dependent since the crucial context is determined by decision-makers' power. The freedom to define reality is a privilege of power. Flyvbjerg (1998) states that power concerns itself with defining reality rather than with discovering what reality "really" is. There are constraints on how far power can go in its attempts to define reality. These constraints are however quite loose.

The general engagement of governments around the world with impoverished neighbourhoods is often negligible at the local and national level. When governments do engage with urban poor, they are seldom situated in the context of broader plans for the urban region. Rather, the struggle for the urban poor is often centred on gaining an official recognition of the informal settlement or getting access to basic urban services. The grim reality often associated with urban poverty presents a fundamental tension between conflicting rationalities on the logic of governing and the logic of survival (Watson, 2003). This is according to Watson (2003; 2009) a consequence of having a fundamental different worldview and value-systems. These fundamental tensions are still often treated as superficial in urban planning (Watson, 2003). The core problem is often that planners are still unable to comprehend the clashes of rationalities that frequently occur when projects touch the lives and livelihoods of households and communities. Undoubtedly, these types of logics are competing as well as overlapping, which reflect different economic and political interests, which may not be easy to reconcile in participation processes (Watson, 2009).

4.2.2 Power, rationality and knowledge

Power likewise defines what counts as rationality and knowledge, and thereby what counts as reality. Thus, it also has the possibility to decide what knowledge matters in policy, planning and management. Not only is knowledge power but also power is knowledge. In the context of urban poverty low-income groups in informal settlements often have deficits in the provision of schools (Satterthwaite and Mitlin, 2014:22). This does not equal limited insight on what is required from the urban policy, planning or management. However, up-to-date political discourse has often equated informality with inferiority (Marx, 2003). This is a consequence of power deciding what knowledge is considered to be useless or marginal. This can be seen as a form of reciprocal legitimation as knowledge legitimates power and, conversely, knowledge is legitimated by power. The combination of a lack of power and influence as well as the lack of education have a negative effect on the way urban poor are perceived as rational actors. This highlights another dimension of the struggles for urban poor to participate in urban planning.

Notably, existing good practice literature on urban planning stresses that community participation is vital for long-term projects success. The world is increasingly urbanised and there is an increase in the number of urban poor (United Nations, 2014). Yet, “the urban poor have less access and representation in the political system than the urban non-poor” (Desai, 2010). This is a consequence of what has already been established that urban poor have fewer opportunities to shape and influence urban planning.

4.2.3 Rationality and rationalisation

“To utilise both rationality and rationalisation for the reasons of power is an imperative element in enabling power to define reality.”

(Flyvbjerg, 1998:98)

This is an essential feature of the rationality of power. Yet, rationalisations are frequently complex and very difficult to identify and penetrate. This is often a result of them being presented as rationality. It may be that the unwillingness of an actor to give a rational argument or documentation may just indicate its ability to define reality. Practically, there can be so much power behind it that to critique or trying to unmask it can be difficult. In fact, the unwillingness of an actor to unveil rationalisation may be connected to risks. The person who is trying to unmask or reveal rationality as rationalisation may face negative sanctions. This can be a result from corruption such as clientelism, which is particularly prevalent among the poor. Thus, rationalisation presented as rationality is a principal strategy in the exercise of power.

4.3 Conclusion

The complexity of the urban setting illustrates why power can be a central matter of wide-ranging debates. Urban planning is accountable for the allocation of space and resources. There is a pressing issue within urban planning and management to recognise the context of conflicting rationalities where power is accepted to shape and maintain (Watson, 2003). The foregoing discussion implies that it is clear that allocation in itself can be decided and agreed-upon for a variety of reasons and purposes. It comes down to the questions of “who gets what, when, where, why and how” (Davidoff, 1973, p. 292).

From the discussion in this chapter, it is clear that the relationship between planners and politicians and between planners and political power have become increasingly blurred. From the theoretical framework it is apparent that allocation in itself can be decided and agreed-upon for a variety of reasons and purposes. This can be used by for instance rationalising a claim. Thus, it is crucial to analyse the tension between planning intentions and reality, between vision and real life. This will be done in the following chapter by studying the social effects of living in the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area.

5 The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area

The City of Cape Town (CCT) has used and, continues to use, the Temporary Relocation Areas (TRA) as a tool to address homelessness and poor housing. Despite its formal structure, as it was planned and built largely by the municipality, it remains referred to as an informal settlement. On one hand, the area has been identified as the safest informal settlement in Cape Town, by City Officials (Millstein, 2014). On the other hand, the occupants¹ describe the area as a high-risk area marked by poverty, alcohol and drug abuse as well as high unemployment and crime rates (Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 5, Interview 7; Interview 8).

“Blikkiesdorp² could be the best example of a Temporary Relocation Area that has been established by the city.”

(Interview 17)

“Politicians have to get down from their pedestal and come and see what is happening on grassroots level. I wonder what would happen if they would fall victim to their own decisions”

(Interview 2)

These parallel experiences are worth highlighting since they demonstrate a clash of rationalities between the people that the projects have been planned for and the planners of the project. The above statements clearly display a different view regarding the on-the-ground experience of the TRA. TRAs are not planned or built to accommodate people for long a period of time (Ciroli, 2014). This generates severe risks of even poorer social conditions (Johnson, 2007; Branco and Feio, 2013). In fact, the resilience of vulnerable communities relocated is dependent on the location, as well as the duration of the period of relocation (HDA, 2009).

From the thematic analysis, key themes linked to social issues were identified and the overarching theme was personal safety and security. The four sub-themes identified under the main-theme were: the relocation site, community and social networks, corruption in housing programmes and the permanent temporariness of the relocation area. These themes will be analysed in the following sections.

¹ Several government officials have stated that the people living in the TRA are occupying the structures (City of Cape Town, 2012). These individuals are not considered residents but occupants since they do not own the structure that they live in. Thus, the people who live in

² The relocation area is generally more known by the residents as Blikkiesdorp. Blikkiesdorp is Afrikaans for “Tin Can Town”. The nickname will be used by some occupants in the interviews and refers to the Symphony Way TRA.

However, before entering the discussion regarding this, a short historical background to the Symphony Way TRA will follow.

5.1 The historical background

The Symphony Way TRA was established in early 2008 to administrate the illegal occupation of N2 Gateway houses in Delft. Frank Martin the Councillor for the 19th Ward in Cape Town was found guilty of writing and distributing over 300 letters authorising members of the ward to occupy N2 Gateway houses in Delft (Symphony Way Pavement Dwellers, 2011:66; City Of Cape Town, 2009). The CCT built the TRA as an emergency response to accommodate these occupants after they were evicted in 2008. Most of the evictees accepted the relocation, but a group of more than 100 occupants, members of the social movement named Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, refused to be relocated and built a squatter camp in Delft. The struggle against the relocation received a lot of national and international media attention as it symbolises the urban challenges and struggles for the poor in Cape Town. Eventually, after two years of protesting on the road named Symphony Way, pavement dwellers were relocated to a relocation area after a final eviction order in 2009.

Nowadays, the Symphony Way TRA has been extended to provide housing for people in various emergency situations and consists of 1742 one-room structures. These include, according to CCT, amongst several others “victims of xenophobic attacks, former occupants of an unsafe building that collapsed in Salt River, evicted people for which the City has been named respondent, people living on the streets, in atrocious conditions in backyards, in road reserves, in pipes, on pavements or those living in condemned buildings” (Western Cape Government, 2010). In all of these instances, the common denominator was that the alternative accommodation offered was The Symphony Way TRA. The future is unsure regarding how long people will be staying there. Up to now only 8 families have received adequate housing since the inception in 2008 (Ranslem, 2015). The following sections in this chapter are devoted to the four sub-themes identified through the thematic analysis.

5.2 The relocation site

The first sub-theme identified from the thematic analyse was that many problems with safety and security were linked to the relocation site itself. The location of the relocation site is critical to the success of the intervention (HDA, 2009). Still, Delft, where the relocation area is located, is situated 30 km from the city centre and is characterised by low levels of social and economic facilities and amenities, no accessible train stations, and low densities. Based on the interviews with the occupants it is clear that the majority of relocated areas were situated closer to the city centre. For a significant number of the interviewees the relocation resulted in loss of income and even employments, both formally and informally (Interview 6;

Interview 7; Interview 8; Interview 9; Interview 10). This was predominantly a consequence of the distance to the city centre and high transport costs. This has practically resulted in people having to look for alternative revenues within the relocation area. Consequently, criminal activities such as adult and child prostitution, robbing and stealing from neighbours in the area, producing and selling drugs as well as illegally selling or renting out structures from the relocation area – are being normalised as they are part of the everyday life for so many people (Interview 5; Interview 13; Interview 12)

The high crime rates in the relocation site go hand-in-hand with the solid drug and criminal gang presence. This is an unintended outcome of the disorganised removals by the CCT where fractions of rival prison gangs have been located in extremely close proximity to each other (Interview 17; Interview 18; Interview 19). Simultaneously the Symphony Way TRA is located in Delft South, which has one of the highest absolute numbers of murders of any percentage in the country (Interview 19). Altogether, the existing gang clashes with the pre-existing and newly established gangs in Delft and has resulted in the relocation area having quickly gained a strong reputation among Cape Flat residents as a site symbolising both violence and criminal activities.

“Blikkiesdorp comes with a lot of stigmatisation. You are nothing when you are from Blikkiesdorp”.

(Interview 13)

This has also contributed to the stigmatisation regarding occupants stating that they live in the TRA. Each and every person interviewed that lives in the relocation area stressed that it was clear that the children do take after the criminal leaders, as they are being idolised and seen as a role model (Interview, 1; Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 5; Interview 8; Interview 9). Less than two weeks before I first visited the relocation area, a petrol bomb was thrown into one of the structures. This was a direct consequence of defying one gang in the area. The man who lived in the structure attempted to get his son out from the gang, which was answered with threats and violence. The government officials admitted to feeling threatened by gangs and let them to a certain extent control the relocation site (Interview 17; Interview 18; Interview 19). Notably, the police officers of Delft have over and over again been linked with criminal activities in the Ward (Interview 18; Interview 19).

“You cannot build a life regardless of how committed you are to getting an education or to be safe. It is just an environment that destroys regardless of how you try to fight against it”.

(Interview 12)

“Most of the risks that are in Blikkiesdorp are actually caused by themselves. I’m not saying that the structure that they are living in is perfect but it has not been built to be there forever so it is difficult to say”

(Interview 18)

The two interview quotes illustrate once again a clash of rationalities regarding the reality on the ground. The occupants identify the risks to be mainly a consequence of the location of the area whilst the interview with the government official stated that it is largely a consequence of the people staying in the area. All of the interviews conducted with the occupants identified personal security and safety as a leading social issue. Yet, in the introduction of this chapter it was stated that the Symphony Way TRA was the safest informal settlement. A direct consequence of the violence and criminal activities is that even ambulances refuse to enter the relocation site. This is a great hazard for personal security and safety for the people living there.

5.3 Social networks and the community

The second sub-theme extracted from the empirical material was that many social issues on personal safety and security were interconnected to the loss of social network and community. Those who live in the Symphony Way TRA have all been relocated from diverse areas around the Western Cape Province. The social network that generally exists in informal settlements is not the fact in a TRA. This is an outcome of the destruction of and strain on a range of social networks, which is normally accompanied with TRAs. This is problematic for several reasons. The networks that allow individuals with a low economic and social status to survive are often linked to informal markets and employment that are connected to strong and intricate social networks. In resource-poor situations such as in TRAs “the marginalisation in all its forms requires individuals to operate within and through a dense web of personal networks, or sets of reciprocal relationships” (Watson, 2003). This has been argued by occupants from the area to not be taken into account by the government when deciding upon a choice of intervention (Interview 2; Interview 9; Interview 8; Interview 7; Interview 6) In the same way, repetitively moving people from one site to another site can result in the destruction of a range of social networks.

Linked to social networks, the majority of those who have been interviewed stated that the issues of the Symphony Way TRA are the lack of community organisation and common identity. People identify themselves with where they used to live previously to the relocation area. This generates tension among the different blocks and phases of the TRA. To understand the dynamics of the relocation area it is important to acknowledge that many of the occupants move in to TRAs with a social trauma as a result from having to be evicted from their previous home. In interviews many present the problems as originating from people coming from different areas but having all qualified for emergency housing. Thus, many are focused on exclusively surviving. This has meant that everybody fend for themselves and the family. The consequence of this mind-set is that neighbours can easily be seen as a threat rather than a social security or network.

”Instead of engaging, the people attack. They do not know how to engage without threatening”.

(Interview 20)

During the interview government officials stressed that those staying in the relocation area turn to protest too quickly, which is considered to be less conducive (Interview, 20; Interview, 19; Interview, 17). The behaviour described in the citation damages the good interventions due to the divisive nature of the politics. It appeared as though the government official referred to that the occupants do not behave as good democratic citizens that should wait for their turn but rather often are ungrateful instead. This is connected to one of the dominant discourses around housing delivery, the queue system. This system constitutes of rational and equitable processes where people must wait patiently until their name is chosen. Nevertheless, in the next section corruption and the housing list will be discussed further. The reality for many occupants of TRAs is that the unfulfilled promises are now repeated again and again (Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 6, Interview 7; Interview 8; Interview 9). From the theoretical framework and the empirical evidence it is obvious that the urban poor relationship with institution of urban law and order is often linked with mistrust and conflict. The political and civic inclusions of the urban poor are often accompanied with disappointments. This can be a result of the low correspondence between participation and pro-poor policymaking outcomes.

5.4 Corruption within housing programmes

The third sub-theme is corruption within the housing programmes. The diverse statements on corruption were entirely spontaneous, given unbidden during interviews. The majority of the occupants stated that corruption within the South African housing programmes are widespread (Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 7; Interview 8; Interview 9). The housing programmes were stated to be corrupt in almost all aspects, from the application process to the actual delivery and handing over the title deeds.

Politicians and officials responsible for housing policy have stressed that the housing allocation and delivery is part of a rational equitable system. Thus, those in the greatest need, and those who have been waiting for a subsidised house the longest are being prioritised first. This is not the actual case according to Tissington, et al. (2013).

“The government has a way of putting things so that they look good but it is not the reality”

(Interview, 13)

The above statement reflects how the government is rationalizing the queue-system. This is a principle strategy in the exercise of power put in to practice. The majority of interviewees claim that they had lost their lot in housing queues or had not received a subsidy house due to corruption. One government official (Interview 16) confirmed that the housing delivery has become politicised and subject to politicking and protest. The allocation of state-subsidised houses is very

opaque as it is strongly influenced by myths, misinformation and confusion. The practical implication of this is that people ‘illegally’ occupy subsidy houses.

The open definition of what counts as an emergency and the contested nature of the housing waiting list makes the decision making process of who qualifies highly subjective. In fact, the definition in the Housing Code (2009) makes the majority of the urban poor in South Africa qualified to be living in emergency conditions. This also contributes to the normalisation of urban development issues encountered by the urban poor but also raises questions of equity – whose emergency should be addressed first? The local implementers are thus under pressure as they are responsible for the delivery and explanations regarding housing allocations (Interview with Government Official, 2015). After the person has rented or sold the subsidy house, people frequently move back to informal housing in order to be closer to economic and social opportunities. From the interviews with residents and government officials, it was evident that structures in the TRA are being sold as well as subsidy houses. There is very little monitoring and oversight of the process, and corruption around allocation is often reported (Tissington, et al. 2013).

5.5 The permanent temporariness

In interviews with the occupants a majority claimed that they were promised, before moving to the TRA, that it would simply be temporary for a couple of months or maximum a year (Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 5, Interview 7; Interview 8). However, the reality is that countless families have been living in a relocation area for several years by now.

“Ever since the very first tenants moved to Blikkiesdorp no or extremely few people have been moved to any new houses. So I do think it is a dumping place.”

(Interview 15)

Statistically, the Symphony Way TRA has been accommodating roughly the same people since the inception in 2008. Out of the tens of thousands of occupants approximately eight families of the Symphony Way TRAs have been allotted permanent housing during the time that the area has been operational (Ranslem, 2015). This generates an environment jam-packed with insecurity and fear, as the instability of the situation is so prominent. The resilience of relocated communities depends heavily on the duration of the period of the relocation. Furthermore, so far there does not appear to be anything temporary about many of the TRAs in the Western Cape Province, let alone the Symphony Way TRA. To have people waiting in this uncertainty and arbitrariness is one way the state can exercise political domination.

“You have to remember, in this country there is nothing called temporary. When the government says temporary it means permanent”.

(Interview 3)

“We had a lady here sort of saying: ‘Are we going to be there forever?’ Saying it like a real victim and the answer to that is: ‘Do you qualify for subsidy housing?’. If you do, you won’t be there forever, but it is a process and it will take time. But they are working through that list. If you don’t qualify for housing you might be there, if you don’t manage an opportunity for yourself”

(Interview 20)

TRAs cater for people irrespectively of how long they have been registered on the housing waiting list or if they are in fact registered at all. From the interviews it is evident that TRA emerge as ‘grey spaces’ in which occupants live in a state of ‘permanent temporariness’ and are expected to patiently wait for housing (Millstein, 2014).

“I will never call this my home!”

(Interview 1; Interview 4)

No one in the Symphony Way TRA owns the structure that they occupy. This further breeds into the temporary feeling of the area and does not offer any security of tenure. The logic behind this reasoning is that the structures in TRAs allow extensive delivery, meaning that more people can be helped at a faster speed. However, relocation areas are long-term costly and attract bad press due to being a form of semi-permanent housing alternative for those who do not qualify for subsidy housing. Despite these previously mentioned disputes, the City gradually expanded the relocation area to accommodate citizens from all over Cape Town in response to emergency situations, including many state-initiated evictions.

TRAs were once up on a time imagined to be temporary relocation sites. However, with their on-going use, they have become permanent fixtures in many cities. The de-facto of the permanent nature of such areas is cause for concern. The 5.1 and 5.0 TRA in Delft were relocations directly linked to a planned project (DAG, 2007). In contrast to The Symphony Way TRA there was never a planned solution except for those people that are entitled to subsidy houses through the housing list, which as stated before is associated with corruption. From the analysis so far, it can be established that the Symphony Way TRA is showing signs of functioning as a temporary trap.

“We are all guilty for just focusing on the negative side of the area, whilst it has in essence saved many lives”

(Interview 21)

“The argument people use is that you dumped us here but I always find that statement hilarious: you invaded, you entered something illegally and you were dealt with and the city came to your rescue and now you are telling me that I dumped you. This is not really the case. We rather rescued you from the road and placed you somewhere temporary and safe. It is up to you if you want to stay there or not. Nobody is forced to live there. People of Blikkiesdorp, have the mind-set. This is how ungrateful people become”

(Interview 18)

However, in reality is it that simple that people can just move from the TRA whenever they want to? From this analysis of social issues associated with moving to a TRA it is clear that they are not by law bound to be there. However, it has also been established that the relocation site is marked by poverty, alcohol and drug abuse as well as high unemployment and crime rates. The question is rather if the people staying in Symphony Way TRA have any other option. If you have no other reasonable options, is it then a choice?

“People in Blikkiesdorp are not given any choice due to the fact that there are no other possibilities”

(Interview 15)

6 Discussion and conclusion

With this thesis I have explored how power and planning rationality create tension between planning intentions and reality, between vision and real life by studying the social effects of living in the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area (TRA). From the analysis it can be established that TRAs are not planned or built to accommodate people for a long period of time, which has given rise to many social problems such as issues concerning personal security and safety. The analysis has displayed that relocations are very complex and have a wide range of adverse, unintended consequences, such as disruption of livelihoods and social networks. It was also displayed that the relocation site has to be suitably located. The relocation site is linked to costly and limited public transportation; employment opportunities are scarce and there are no schools and clinics in the area. The Symphony Way TRA illustrates many signs of being a permanent fixture and affected households become ‘trapped’ in inadequate housing. Subsequently, it was established that clashes of rationalities had occurred.

“I think for one thing, the real truth is that if it was not for Blikkiesdorp, people would have been on the street”

(Interview 17)

“I would rather live on the street than to live here in Blikkiesdorp. I would give anything to go back to living on the street.”

(Interview 9)

Remarkably, a majority of the occupants that were interviewed stated that they were more satisfied in their original dwellings, which should not be discarded. The analysis highlights the pitfalls and the underlying discourse of housing programme, which rely on having a solitary focus on physical development such as the provision of shelter, electricity, water and sanitation. The longer the Symphony Way TRA has been operating it has become clear that the original intentions have diverged towards more biased goals through struggles between power and rationality. This can be seen in the way, which the analysis has displayed how the state tries to fulfil their constitutional obligations to realise the right to adequate housing by using TRA. The construction of a government sanctioned and controlled informal settlement to respond to the emergencies raises many ethical questions. Ultimately, development necessities have to be beyond the provision of shelter and basic infrastructure. It should also be about understanding the existing circumstances for urban poor as well as contributing towards improving the lives in a meaningful way. Housing delivery has to be regarded as part of broader integrated development interventions, which include well-defined economic and social development goals.

6.1 Further research

Unlike residents of several slums and informal settlements, who have developed community strength and capacity by disputing against the state for the right to remain on site, receive services and ultimately formalize, the Temporary Relocation Areas have virtually non-existent community capacity. Thus, it would be very fruitful to study the reasons behind the lack of community capacity in relocation areas.

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7.1 Interview list

- Interview 1: Cynthia Peders, Occupant, Interview 20/1-2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
- Interview 2: Miranda Groepe, Occupant of the TRA and member of R2K and, Interview 22 January 2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
- Interview 3: Charles George, Pastor of the Ministers of Compassion, Interview 20/1-2015, Delft
- Interview 4: Bernadette de Kock, Community leader and funder of Bread 4 life, Interview 22 /1-2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
- Interview 5: Maureen Foulenda, Occupant and responsible for the Night Watch of Blikkiesdorp, Interview 5/1, 2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
- Interview 6: Jonathan Johns, Occupant, Interview 9/4-2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
- Interview 7: Anonymous, I., Occupant and community leader, Interview 9/4-2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
- Interview 8: Anonymous II, Occupant, Interview 9/4-2015 The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
- Interview 9: Anonyms III, Occupant, Interview 9/4-2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area.
- Interview 10: Jared Sacks, Compiler and supporting editor of the anthology No Land! No House! No Vote! Voices from Symphony Way, Interview, 15/1-2015 Cape Town.
- Interview 11: Michael Blake, Programme Coordinator for Housing Assembly Interview 22/1-2015, Cape Town.
- Interview 12: Andrew Gasnolar, Co-founder of the Boundless Heart Foundation Trust and a State Law Advisor working in the public sector for the Western Cape Provincial Government, Interview 13/4-2015, Cape Town.

Interview 13: Chris, Franciscus, Founder of 180-Hands On and Pastor in the TRA,
Interview 12/4-2015, The Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
Interview 14: Helen Rourke, Programme Coordinator for Development Action
Group, Interview 22/2-2015, Observatory.
Interview 15: Zama Mgwatyu, Programme Coordinator for Development Action
Group, Interview 13/4-2015, Observatory.
Interview 16: Dr. Laurine Platzky, Deputy Director-General: Strategic
Programmes Western Cape Province, Interview 3/2-2015, Cape Town.
Interview 17: City of Cape Town Official I, Interview 25/3-2015, Cape Town.
Interview 18: City of Cape Town Official II, Interview 25/3-2015, Cape Town.
Interview 19: City of Cape Town Official I, Interview 9/4-2015, Cape Town
Interview 20: City of Cape Town Official I, Interview 14/4-2015, City of Cape
Town.
Interview 21: City of Cape Town Official II, Interview 14/4-2015, City of Cape
Town.