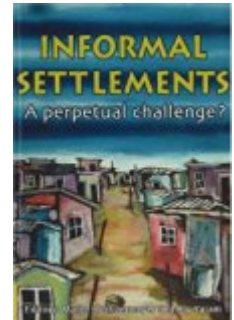**Marie Huchzermeyer, Aly Karam, eds.** *Informal Settlements: A Perpetual Challenge?.* Cape Town: Juta Academic, 2007. 336 pp $42.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-919713-94-6.

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Commissioned by Peter C. Limb (Michigan State University)

This volume, edited by two academics from the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Architecture and Planning, Marie Huchzermeyer and Aly Karam, provides an invaluable collection of case studies on the housing struggles faced by residents of informal settlements and recent policy initiatives on informal settlements in the Global South, with a strong focus on southern Africa. The fifteen chapters are based on papers prepared for workshops held in 2004, and as a result do not deal with some of the most recent developments in housing policy and practice in South Africa, the most significant of these being the Breaking New Grounds policy program launched in 2004, which was informed by the important "Grootboom case" judgment of 2000. While Breaking New Grounds is discussed briefly in some of the chapters, the case study material employed in the essays predates the implementation of the new policy.[1]

Contributors to the volume include academics, nongovernmental organization (NGO) practitioners, policymaking officials, and policy advocates. The stated aim of the volume as a whole is to provide readers with a more accurate understanding of the living conditions of the poor, and how local and national level policies and programs shape these living conditions. The volume is explicitly policy oriented, and, in several chapters, through the presentation of various case studies, authors demonstrate how policymaking at a national level and policy processes at a local level are experienced in and have an impact on specific locales and communities. As such, it neatly follows earlier publications by Huchzermeyer, such as *Unlawful Occupation: Informal Settlements and Urban Policy in South Africa and Brazil* (2004).

In the comprehensive introduction to the volume, Huchzermeyer and Karam highlight a number of important findings from the case studies. Some of these show, for example, that security of tenure may be a more effective tool in the alleviation of poverty than the provision of formal land

titles. This argument, made explicitly in reference to the influential writings of Hernando de Soto (*The Mystery of Capital* [2000]), is taken up in chapter 9. In the South African situation, in particular, it is argued that security of tenure is not the "silver bullet" solution to informal settlements as some contend. The precariousness of existing livelihoods and the unhealthy living conditions exacerbated by HIV/AIDS make it difficult, if not impossible, for the inhabitants of informal settlements to turn security of tenure to their advantage. Another point proffered by the editors is that improvements or developments made to informal settlements often benefit a better-off social class than the original poorer settlement dwellers, especially when these developments are allocated to residents through market mechanisms. The market in undeveloped countries, they argue, "not only perpetuates the need for informal settlements, but also directly intervenes, reducing the extent to which informality can respond to poverty" (p. 5). This point is arrived at not from an a priori antimarket position, but through detailing a number of case studies to show how "the market" is characterized by or may produce increased evictions and costlier freehold titles, and at times even deny further market access. Development, then, may displace the poor in informal settlements into conditions of even deeper marginalization as they have to resort to establishing new informal settlements on the periphery of cities.

Section 2 provides a range of discussions on policy initiatives from Africa and Brazil, with insights into the processes of policy formulation, and the ways in which global developmental goals are fractured into local policy processes and politics. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on informal settlement policies and programs. The chapter offers a typology of policy responses to informal settlements taking as primary criterion the level of influence exerted by civil society on the policy process, with civil society being defined as collective initiatives for the public good. The typology ranges from repressive policies where informal settlements are removed despite resistance, through tolerant and transitional policies, to transforming policies that provide for the upgrading of infrastructure and facilities, the formalization of land tenure, and the integration of informal settlements into the surrounding urban fabric. While the authors admit to existing differences in ethical political cultures of civil society across countries, the caveat of this typology is that the category of "civil society" is treated as an always benign black box, without showing how less progressive forces may cloak themselves under the category. However, such a typology helps to track and evaluate, for example, the progressive trajectory of South African housing policy from the 1980s to the first ten years of democracy. The authors applaud what they call transformative policies, policies that "work towards achieving conditions under which the entire population has access to adequate living conditions" (p. 33). Such transformative policies, however, would allow for soft or benign forms of informality to achieve, over time, a balance between the right to shelter and socioeconomic stability.

Chapter 3 examines the 2004 Programme for Informal Settlement Upgrading (ISU) that is part of the National Department of Housing's Breaking New Ground policy document. The ISU Programme is analyzed in relation to the Breaking New Ground policy directives and to its objectives of poverty alleviation, reduction of vulnerability, and augmentation of social inclusion. Huchzermeyer, who coordinated the research team that made substantial input into the formulation of this new policy, provides a short insider account of the policy formulation process (albeit prior to the publication of the final version) before evaluating the claimed "paradigm shift," which the new policy claims to represent. Some of the new and transformative aspects of the Breaking New Ground policy include: in situ upgrading rather

than relocation; making funding for land rehabilitation available; encouraging local municipalities to purchase well-located land that is occupied or unoccupied; encouraging the participation of informal settlement dwellers in identifying land that is well located; making provision for household support in the case of relocation; creating provision of social and economic facilities and infrastructure development; funding the provision of basic infrastructure; and encouraging permit/permission to occupy forms of tenure. The author is of the opinion that the new ISU Programme is a step in the right direction toward achieving these three pillars, while also moving away from the standard delivery model that is often associated with clientelist politics (housing delivery in return for votes).

The last two chapters of this section, chapters 4 and 5, deal with national policies and research advocacy on informal settlements in Brazil and Angola. In chapter 4, the author, the Brazilian director of Land Affairs of the Ministry of Cities, presents an analysis of the Brazilian National Policy to Support Sustainable Urban Land Regularisation. Following a brief discussion on the history of this pioneering national policy initiative, the author details the objectives of the policy and the debates that infused the implementation and institutional support of the policy. This author is the only contributor to this volume to touch on the question of environmental preservation, detailing how discussions in Brazil tended to pit policies that aim to protect the social right to housing against demands for environmental preservation. While the author suggests this is a false conflict, more work is needed on this question, also in the South African context.

In chapter 5, Paul Jenkins makes strong arguments for the use of action research as an appropriate methodology and means to influence policymaking through the use of a case study in Angola. He argues that a focus on formality in planning, land use legislation, and induced relocations

of informal settlements are unlikely to succeed. With no end in sight to rapid urbanization and the growth of informal settlements in urban Africa, these policies and programs should not necessarily try to "formalise the informal" but should instead focus on creating the conditions (social and economic) that would enhance inclusion rather than exclusion without the benefits being reaped by elite groups.

Chapters 6 through 8 deal with the complexities of social and economic life in informal settlements. In chapter 6, Warren Smit adopts a sustainable livelihoods framework to describe and analyze the heterogeneity of, and dynamics at play, in a number of informal settlements in Cape Town in which the NGO Development Action Group has worked. In this--one of the most empirically dense chapters of the volume--Smit focuses on the limitations and enablers of the physical landscape of informal settlements, the twin issues of poverty and vulnerability, social differentiation in such settlements, urban-rural linkages, and the ineligibility of many households needing to access state housing subsidies. Smit argues that the acceptance and embrace of the heterogeneity and diversity of informal settlements in policy formulation and program implementation requires: the participation of residents in decision making; integrated approaches to upgrading (physical, economic, and social/human) that work toward poverty alleviation; and ensuring that the regulations and procedures for tenure, land use, and construction be flexible and appropriate. A one-size-fits-all approach to informal settlement upgrading will not be successful--"the complexities of individual informal settlements need to be understood before development interventions are made" (p. 122).

In chapter 8, Cecile Ambert argues not only that HIV infections thrive in conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability and marginality that produce informality, but that the impact of AIDS also acts as a driver of informality. For this reason, pol-

icymakers can no longer treat HIV/AIDS as a mere public health issue. The challenge is to conceptualize and operationalize policy responses at the settlement level, which are aligned with the current and changing realities of HIV and AIDS. In her contribution, she points to a number of such responses, and, echoing Smit's earlier contribution, argues that interventions should accept that settlements are varied and heterogeneous, with no one-size-fits-all solution.

Part 3, consisting of chapters 9 through 11, deals with the relationship between security of tenure and "the market." Chapter 9 is an engagement with De Soto's argument that capitalism will work in less developed countries if and when such countries develop well-defined and stable systems of property law and records. Lauren Royston tackles the question of what it would mean to integrate the existing extralegal forms of titling and land tenure in South Africa into a legal framework. Evidence from case studies conducted in Ekuthuleni suggests that the poor do not necessarily think that moving into a legal system is in their best interests as this would mean giving up a functional informal system of tenure for a formal property system they are unlikely to be able to maintain.

Both chapters 10 and 11 deal with evictions. In Chapter 10, Jean du Plessis deals with the issue of forced evictions and causes, employing case study material from Johannesburg, India, Bangkok, and Accra. Du Plessis mentions a few positive examples of community-based alternatives to state-enforced evictions. With reference to South Africa, du Plessis points out the discrepancy between excellent laws and policies, on the one hand, and, on the other, state practice with regard to inner-city slum clearances and the continued practice of relocations rather than in situ upgrading. The last chapter of the third section deals with displacements that occur due to market-driven evictions, in turn a result of the current dynamics of worldwide liberalization of land mar-

kets in urban areas in the developing world. The author points out that market-driven displacements are often not counted as evictions because no "force" is used, and that they have taken over forced evictions that prevailed in the 1990s. Market-place evictions tend to result in the establishment of new informal settlements on the periphery of cities and they tend to increase the population pressure and density in as yet undeveloped informal inner-city settlements. Echoing several other contributors to the volume, the author argues that effective responses to market-driven displacement should focus on access to land or resettlement, compensation, and in situ upgrading.

Chapters 12 and 13 are essential readings for anyone interested in the contemporary housing question in the city of Cape Town. Nick Graham details the intentions and introduction of the Emergency Servicing of Informal Settlements (ESIS) program, noting the constraints under which city officials have to operate (which include lack of additional land, community politics, bureaucratic red tap, and difficulties in accessing finance and resources for maintenance as opposed to capital costs). Graham lucidly sketches the contradictions between policy on paper and policy in practice--the difficulty of implementing it. Despite the city's intention of doing in situ upgrading, the reality is that changing political imperatives, lack of genuine support for upgrading, and lack of strategic approach contradicts and undermines this intention of driving what is a highly politicized process.

Catherine Cross details in chapter 13 the recent development experiences in Crossroads and the N2 gateway pilot, paying attention to the often competing roles of local political actors, such as rural-born councilors and shacklord leaders, operating in a system of communal governance that is antibureaucratic and stands in direct competition with formal institutions. Cross's data suggests that "the present institutions linking the developmental local government and the grassroots are

not functioning well," partly because of the reluctance of officials to engage directly with grassroots politics and conflicts (p. 269). Given that Breaking New Ground promotes greater involvement of local authorities and communities in upgrading of informal settlements, the question of the good functioning of local/community governance institutions becomes of utmost importance. Cross suggests that there is a need to review local-level representative institutions, including greater involvement of youth, as well as regular and effective institutional oversight. Cross's chapter is an important contribution to understanding how local-level political actors, practices, and institutions may contribute to effectively displace service delivery.[2]

As a whole, this volume is structured in a friendly way, with a comprehensive introduction, and it provides important case studies for any course on informal settlement policy in the developing world. It should be an invaluable tool for policymakers and policy advocates. The strengths of the book include the varied levels on which the questions of the conditions of informal settlements and the challenges they pose is approached (local, national, and global), the range of case studies presented, and the consistent arguments and policy recommendations that flow from the chapters. While the more empirical chapters (by Smit, Graham, and Cross) make the important point that there is no one solution to informal settlements, the editors did not take this point further in their introductory discussion. What are the implications for national level policies when there is no one solution to the upgrading of informal settlements? What scope is there for local-level designed policy and programs, such as those promised by Breaking New Ground, to be designed with and for specific informal settlement communities? What sorts of non-state local-level representative institutions would form part of local-level designed programs? Taken together with other recent work on international slum dweller

movements and informal settlements, we look forward to a similar assessment of the unfolding of Breaking New Ground and other such recent policy developments in the Global South.

Notes

[1]. This does not take away from the importance of arguments contained in this volume, as ongoing discussions around relocation, in situ upgrading, and the politics of informal settlement development continue to be highly relevant. Several of the arguments contained in this volume were echoed by a February 2008 UN report, which noted that "the realization of the right to adequate housing in South Africa is hampered by the Government's fragmented approach to the implementation of housing law and policy, as well as market forces representing real estate speculation trends," and considered that "urgent action must be taken to improve access to adequate housing." See United Nations, Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in this Context," prepared by Miloon Kothari, A/HRC/7/16/Add.3, p. 2, February 29, 2008, http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G08/110/55/PDF/G0811055.pdf?OpenElement. The question of relocation of informal settlement dwellers continues to grab headlines, with the Cape High Court giving the go-ahead in March 2008 for the eviction of more than twenty thousand people from the informal settlement of Joe Slovo to make way for a new housing development in a city with a housing shortage of around five hundred thousand units.

[2]. The question of local/community governance institutions in informal settlements raised its head in analyses of the "xenophobic violence" or "May 2008 Pogroms." Richard Pithouse makes the claim that there was "not one attack in any of the more than 30 settlements where the largely Durban and Pietermaritzburg based shack

dwellers' movement *Abahlali baseMjondolo* is strong" and that similarly the Landless People's Movement in Johannesburg and the Anti-Eviction Campaign in the Western Cape mobilized opposition to acts of xenophobia within settlements. See Richard Pithouse, "'May 2008 Pogroms': Xenophobia, Evictions, Liberalism, and Democratic Grassroots Militancy in South Africa," *Sanhati* (June 16, 2008), http://sanhati.com/articles/843/.

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