



GLOBALISATION, MARGINALISATION & NEW SOCIAL  
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## **Building unity in diversity: Social movement activism in the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign**

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UNIVERSITY OF  
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# **Building unity in diversity: Social movement activism in the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign**

Sophie Oldfield & Kristian Stokke

## **1. Introduction**

The Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign<sup>1</sup> is a movement of community organisations from poor, marginalised areas of Cape Town that formed in February 2001 to fight against evictions and water cut-offs<sup>2</sup>. A diversity of issues lies behind the emergence of the Campaign, although the initial impetus was Cape Town City Council-led evictions of families from two areas of state-owned flats in former coloured group areas. Across the Campaign, activists and organisations share threats and experiences of water cut-offs and evictions, collective discontent with post-apartheid policies of cost-recovery on basic services, and dissatisfaction with local political representation (Leitch 2003). Through involvement in the Campaign, tactics and strategies have been shared and activists have been empowered in their everyday community-based activism. An important oppositional voice in local politics in Cape Town, they have joined together to intervene, and often disrupt, citywide policy and public discourse on equity and socio-economic rights. The Campaign has given force as well as shape to a discourse on justice and the imperative to challenge post-apartheid service delivery and cost-recovery policies.

This collective experiential and discursive unity builds, however, on real diversity. Rich relationships that have evolved between activists through involvement in the Campaign cross many differences, and provide the energy that in part has catalysed activists to build a united, citywide movement. Activists and organisations live in diverse conditions, work from different histories of struggle and relationships with the state, and ground their activism in often-divergent politics. The potential strength of the Campaign builds on its diversity and its common community-based identity. Yet, at the same time, a real tension exists between the diversity that constitutes the Campaign and the unity required to fight for socio-economic rights, and against state policies and actions. Only by accepting diversity could the Campaign's unity be built. Yet, paradoxically, the same diversity makes organising the Campaign challenging and produces tensions that at times have splintered and diffused its vision, and politicised its actions and constitution.

This report analyses the building of the Campaign's 'unity in diversity'. We first frame the Campaign and the South African experience in the international literature on globalisation and resistance and the political economy of neo-liberalisation (section two). This analysis highlights contemporary global processes of 'accumulation by

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to in the report as 'the Campaign'.

<sup>2</sup> Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign <http://www.antieviction.org.za/htm/02whatisAEC.htm>. In May 2000 the first organised community struggle against evictions occurred in Valhalla Park. In October 2000 Tafelsig residents and activists also resisted eviction and arrests. These incidences led to the launch of the Campaign in Tafelsig in February 2001.

dispossession' (Harvey 2003), and the structural relationship between these economic processes and the complex politics of diverse social movements organising in counter-hegemonic struggles (Chin and Mittleman 2000). These ideas are elaborated through introduction to a conceptual literature on social movements that proves useful in unpacking the politics and agency of social movements, not only as products of particular powerful economic processes, but as contextual and relational, embedded in dynamic political opportunity structures (Törnquist 1999). This literature provides a framework for analysing where in the political terrain the Campaign chooses to work, what issues and interests they promote and politicise, and how people are mobilised into it and its actions in particular political and social arenas. In section three, the conceptual debates are placed in the context of the South African transition and its mix of liberal democracy and economic liberalisation.

These analytical debates help us examine the specific ways in which activists, community organisations and the Campaign as a collective movement negotiate and build unity in diversity. The remainder of the report thus focuses first on the Campaign's diversity (sections four and five) and then on the various initiatives that generate its unity (sections six and seven). Section four investigates the centrality of the Campaign's identity as a community-based movement and the ways in which this identity defines the logics on which Campaign organising and politics build. Section five explores the ways in which diverse local contexts shape political practice as an outcome of neighbourhood logic and experience, while also coalescing as particular modes and repertoires of protest in the Campaign.

As a diverse community-based movement, the Campaign has faced leadership and organisational challenges. Section six, therefore, examines the dynamics in which Campaign leadership has emerged and attempted to negotiate and build from its diverse base. At times, its actions have been highly politicised. Establishing and sustaining a leadership that reflects the diverse organisations and activists the Campaign represents is challenging in a context with few individual and collective financial resources.

The seventh section considers initiatives at the Campaign rather than community-organisation scale – particularly legal strategies and research capacity building. With arrests and interdicts by banks for putting evicted families back into their homes and summonses for illegal occupation of land and state-built housing, Campaign activists have been forced into courts to defend themselves. Whereas criminal cases have placed activists and their families under extreme stress and have absorbed extensive resources, the Legal Coordinating Committee, a unit of the Campaign, has developed capacity to at least delay evictions through representation of families faced with losing their homes. Significant legal battles have also confirmed the City of Cape Town's constitutional and statutory obligation to provide housing to families in crisis contexts. These experiences have helped generate capacity and have better defined the potential and the limits of legal struggle. At the same time, the Campaign has started to build research capacity through the development of the Community Research Group in order to link research and activism more strategically in community organisations. Both the Legal Coordinating Committee and the Community Research Group operate across the city, and work towards building the Campaign's unity through its ability to defend itself and its constituents in courts, as well as proactively responding to and challenging policy through research.

The report's eighth section draws together and concludes the empirical analysis of the

Campaign, by reflecting on the symbolic power the Campaign has generated and the ways in which it challenges the state's hegemony in issues of cost-recovery and privatisation, despite its political fragmentation and weakness.

## **Methodology**

The research has been completed as a partnership with the Campaign's Community Research Group in 2003 and 2004. The partnership facilitated a sharing of resources to conduct research on the Campaign and its emerging movements. The collaboration on research also helped the Community Research Group establish itself organisationally. While commitment to the partnership is, in part, a broader project in breaking boundaries between university- and community-based research and researchers, it also facilitated access and richer relationships that we feel were critical to the type and depth of analysis possible.

The research methodology was designed to explore the history of the various organisations and areas that are part of the Campaign, focusing on the dynamics of each, the issues that they face and organise around, and the individuals that make up the organisations and that shape the campaign. In-depth interviews and focus groups with activists involved in the Campaign were conducted to discuss: histories and dynamics of community organising in the area and Campaign. These conversations helped unpack connections between individual activists, organisations, and the Campaign. Two case studies were conducted to focus on Campaign legal strategies and research capacity building through the development of the Legal Coordinating Committee and the Community Research Group respectively. These case studies complemented the more general and systematic analysis of Campaign diversity by assessing the processes and spaces through which the Campaign generated unity.

## **2. Conceptualising resistance to evictions and disconnections**

How do we understand the making and dynamics of movements like the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign? Although the community organisations within the WCAEC mobilise around concrete issues in local everyday life, their grievances and struggles are clearly rooted in and address structures and processes that extend far beyond this concrete local realm. This requires a relational and contextual approach that can capture both the structural determination of community struggles, as well as the contextuality of movement politics.

Chin and Mittelman's (2000) seminal paper on *Conceptualising Resistance to Globalization* draws attention to the lasting influence and relevance of Karl Polyani and Antonio Gramsci for critical studies of contemporary social movements. Karl Polyani's *The Great Transformation* (1944) traces the roots of the economic and social crises of the 1930s to the state-supported implementation of self-regulating markets in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and examines how this sparked a countermovement to protect workers and re-exert social control over the market. This movement-countermovement dialectic has, some argue, a contemporary expression in the drive to construct a global liberal economy and the resultant multitude of anti-globalisation struggles (Hardt and Negri 2000). Castells (1997), for instance, counterposes, on the one hand, globalisation and the rise of the network society and, on the other hand, expressions of collective identity that challenge globalisation on behalf of cultural

singularity and people's control over their lives and environment. According to Castells:

People all over the world resent loss of control over their lives, over their environment, over their jobs, and, ultimately, over the fate of the Earth. Thus, following an old law of social evolution, resistance confronts domination, empowerment reacts against powerlessness, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the new global order, increasingly sensed as disorder by people around the planet. (Castells 1997:69)

Harvey (2003) operates within the same overall movement-counter movement framework, but provides a more specific analysis of the causal links between contemporary capitalism and collective resistance. For him, modern capitalism is marked by the persistent importance of primitive accumulation as a strategy of overcoming crises of over-accumulation (the lack of opportunities for profitable investment) by releasing assets (including labour power) at very low cost. Primitive accumulation, as outlined by Marx, contains a wide range of processes:

These include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights; the suppression of rights to the commons; the commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial appropriation of assets (including natural resources); the monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade; and usury, the national debt, and ultimately the credit system as radical means of primitive accumulation. (Harvey 2003:145)

These mechanisms remain important, says Harvey, but new mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession have also appeared. Following the general crisis of over-accumulation in the 1970s, privatisation has become the cutting edge of accumulation by dispossession, displaying the same patterns of asset redistribution almost anywhere that it is being implemented. In the case of South Africa, Harvey draws on McDonald and Pape (2002) and observes that:

The World Bank treated post-apartheid South Africa as a showcase for the greater efficiencies that could be achieved through privatization and liberalization of the market. It promoted, for example, either the privatization of water or 'total cost recovery' by municipally owned utilities. Consumers paid for the water they used, rather than receiving it as a free good. With higher revenues the utilities would, the theory went, earn profits and extend services. But, unable to afford the charges, more and more people were cut out of the service, and with less revenue the companies raised rates, making water even less affordable to low-income populations. (Harvey 2003:159)

Contemporary processes of accumulation by dispossession, like historical rounds of primitive accumulation, provoke diverse political and social struggles. Whereas analysts like Hardt and Negri see these as a 'multitude' – a complex but nevertheless coherent counter movement – Harvey sees them as diverse and inchoate struggles, reflecting the fragmentary and contingent forms taken by accumulation by dispossession. For him, the theoretical and political challenge is to work from these

particularistic struggles towards a generalised political goal while acknowledging the significance of multiple identifications. Beyond this observation, however, he offers few guidelines regarding the politics of counterhegemonic struggles, illustrating the problems of structuralism and economism that characterise the political economic approach to resistance as countermovement. This draws the attention to the second source of inspiration discussed by Chin and Mittelman, namely Antonio Gramsci's conceptualisation of counterhegemonic strategies.

Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971) is commonly seen as an attempt to transcend the economism of orthodox Marxist and liberal theoretical frameworks. In place of economic conceptions of domination and resistance, Gramsci conceives of hegemony as dynamic and interrelated processes of economic, political and cultural domination and subordination. What is especially relevant to the present analysis, is that hegemony requires the active consent of subordinate groups, which means that it is always incomplete and open for contestation in civil and political society, as well as the state. Gramsci uses the notions of 'wars of movement' and 'wars of position' to denote different forms of counterhegemonic strategies against the state. Whereas wars of movement are militant assaults on the state, wars of position are non-violent resistance tactics to impede the everyday functions of the state. However, struggles for hegemony are not confined to questions of state power, but encompass struggles over cultural hegemony. This highlights the importance of consciousness and the formation of an 'alternative common sense' as an integral part of counterhegemonic projects. Whereas the Polyanian movement-countermovement approach draws attention to the political economic production of socio-economic grievances, the Gramscian approach points to the centrality, complexity and diversity of cultural and political strategies of counterhegemonic movements.

Beyond this general agenda, more specific analytical pointers may be derived from recent studies of movement politics (Della Porta and Diani 1999). Tarrow (1994) observes, for instance, that there are complex and dynamic political opportunity structures that social movements utilise to achieve their goals. It is common to highlight the importance of formal rights and institutions upholding these rights, as evident in the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution. While such rights and institutions provide a formal framework for participation, political channels and relationships may be equally important for actual access to and transformation of rights and institutions. Törnquist (1999; 2002) argues that it is especially important to examine how social movements understand and utilise these political opportunity structures. Towards this end, he identifies three questions that are seen as especially central to the analysis of movement politics: (a) where in the political terrain the movements choose to work; (b) what issues and interests they promote and politicise; and (c) how people are mobilised into political movements and the political sphere.

### **Törnquist's framework for movement politics**

#### *Location in political terrain*

Törnquist (2002) provides a general outline of the political terrain for movement politics. This approach revolves around three major ways in which societal activities are organised at different scales: state and local government; self-government units (e.g. neighbourhood associations, co-operatives, ethnic and religious communities, clans, and families); and business units. Popular actors form three main kinds of

association in regard to these: political societies (e.g. political parties, pressure groups, lobbying groups), which seek influence within the political arena; civil societies, which organise in regard to either business units (e.g. trade unions and peasant organisations) or to self-government units (e.g. religious movements that relate to various churches, or women's organisations against domestic violence); and civil-political societies that combine or link the activities of political and civil societies (e.g. labour movements with a political party in addition to popular unions, women groups, co-operatives, etc.; human-rights groups that both support victims of violence and seek to influence state policies; and peasant movements that mobilise against landlords but also campaign for public land reforms). Törnquist's argument is that reflexivity and strategic decisions regarding where and how to be active in this political terrain may be decisive for the political power of movements.

#### *Politicisation of issues and interests*

The second dimension in Törnquist's framework regards the content of movement politics, i.e. the issues and interests that actors choose to bring up to be included into politics. More specifically, Törnquist (2002) argues that the politicisation of issues and interests may be analysed in terms of whether it is based on *single issues* and specific interests; *ideologies* and collective interests; or *moral and spiritual values* and communal loyalties. Social movement scholars have emphasised that collective actors play a vital role in constructing and communicating identities, grievances and political alternatives. Social movements 'draw on the cultural stock for images of what is an injustice, for what is a violation of what ought to be' (Zald 1996: 266). This cultural framing is obviously located within a discursive field with a dynamic relationship between movement discourses and the populations they intend to mobilise, and between movement discourses and those of political authorities (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998). In this sense, successful construction of issues and interests constitutes both a precondition and an outcome of collective action.

#### *Political inclusion of people*

The third dimension regards the mobilisation of people into politics. Here Törnquist follows Mouzelis (1986) in his distinction between *integration* on the basis of broad popular movements generated by comprehensive economic development, and elitist *incorporation* of less solid organisations. In the latter case, Mouzelis makes a further distinction between *clientelism*, based on patrons and networks with capacity to deliver some concessions in return for services and votes, and the *populism* of charismatic leaders who are able to express popular feelings. Political inclusion of people also refers to the mobilising structures of collective movements, i.e. the organisational form within a movement and to networks and institutions in society that may serve as arenas for collective mobilisation. Such social infrastructure can facilitate communication, coordination and solidarity prior to and during collective actions. This means that a movement's ability to organise civil society and ensure a degree of political inclusion may be an important source of movement strength and political influence.

### 3. Liberal democracy and economic liberalisation in South Africa<sup>3</sup>

South Africa's democratic transition in the early 1990s produced a radical constitutional reform that granted extensive formal rights for all citizens and numerous institutional reforms, including national elections from 1994, to ensure their actual implementation. These changes at the national level have been followed by local elections, extensive local government reforms and political discourses endorsing local governance and popular participation (Atkinson and Reitzes 1998; Cameron 1999; Parnell, Pieterse, Swilling, and Wooldridge 2002). Democratic elections have placed the tripartite alliance from the anti-apartheid struggle – the African National Congress (ANC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) – in a hegemonic political position at the national level. These transformations mean that historically well-organised political and civic associations have been placed in a situation with radically transformed and widened local, regional and national political spaces (Neocosmos 1998; Smit 2001). This combination of a vibrant civil society and a conducive political environment should, it seems, provide an ideal case for substantial democratisation, i.e. a situation where ordinary citizens have both the possibility and the capacity to make use of democratic rights, institutions and discourses to address their instrumental and democratic aims (Törnquist 2002). Unfortunately, in practice, the post-apartheid political and socio-economic conditions have proven to be more complex and contradictory (Bond 2000; Daniel et al 2003; Desai 2003).

One major obstacle for political participation in South Africa remains the persistent and increasing problems of poverty and inequality. While the immediate post-1994 period was characterised by a remarkable political liberalisation, the ensuing post-apartheid period has been marked by a transition in macro-economic policy with important bearings on the realisation of socio-economic rights. In the early post-apartheid period, the state-led Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was designed, concomitant with other restructuring processes, to rectify socio-economic differentiation and discrimination. The macro-economic context on which the RDP built was, however, constrained and circumscribed by the structural imperatives of the domestic and global economy. Thus, state-led transformation battled with and, eventually, gave way to the neo-liberal government policy for Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) (Adelzadeh 1996; Marais 2001). Current macro-economic policies, while designed to attract private investments and thereby enhance economic competitiveness in the long run, have perpetuated and deepened unemployment, poverty and inequality in the short run (Adelzadeh 1996; Natrass 2003; Natrass and Seekings 2001).

Although South African citizens have been granted extensive *de jure* socio-economic rights, the translation of these rights into *de facto* socio-economic empowerment has proven to be extremely complicated. While the constitution, for example, guarantees a right to adequate shelter for all citizens, it remains a daunting task to translate this into

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<sup>3</sup> This section is an extract from Stokke, K. and S. Oldfield. (2004). Social Movements, Socio-Economic Rights and Substantial Democracy in South Africa. In: J. Harriss, K. Stokke and O. Törnquist (eds.) *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation in Developing Countries*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.



actual houses for marginalised groups. In this situation, new civil society organisations have emerged around issues of housing provisioning (e.g. the South African Homeless People's Federation) and state- and bank-led evictions and disconnections of services (e.g. Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign and Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee) (Millstein et al. 2003; Ngwane 2003; Oldfield and Stokke 2002). Effective political participation for these movements has turned out also to be complicated in practice. Civic associations and trade unions, which were instrumental in the struggle against apartheid, have been curtailed through co-option of civic leaders, declined popular support and the depoliticising effect of the neo-liberal and technocratic approach to development (Adler and Steinberg 2000; Adler and Webster 2000; Edigheji 2003)<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, the specificity of these struggles is bound up in broader politics about the role of civil society relative to the state and market, paralleling broader global development debates (see, for instance, Harriss, Stokke, and Törnquist 2004).

In popular and elite discourses on civil society in South Africa, a distinction is commonly made between two idealised types of civil society organisations – community-based organisation (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – each with a distinctive relationship with the state (Habib 2003). The general development discourse and the specific South African political discourse construct a binary opposition between adversarial politics and collaboration in governance. This conflates the diversity in actually existing civil society, and frames civil society organisations in monolithic and simplified ways (Habib and Kotzé 2003; Oldfield 2003). CBOs and NGOs choose, in reality, creative combinations of strategies of engagement and disengagement with the state. The prevalence of such combined political strategies means that there is a 'need to transcend the false divide that has emerged between opposition and engagement in South Africa' (Habib and Kotzé 2003: 266).

This brief discussion points to important challenges of substantial democratisation in the context of economic liberalisation. Although South Africa has made progress towards formal democratisation at the national, provincial and municipal levels, the experiences of 'everyday' South Africans and the diverse movements that represent them are mired in the complex ways in which the unequal legacies of the apartheid past are reinvented in the post-apartheid present (Reitzes 1998). Yet, in the variety of daily struggles occurring around the country, community organisations and social movements draw on extensive, yet differentiated, political capacity to utilise and transform democratic rights and institutions.

### **Social movements and anti-privatisation politics**

One of the most visible expressions of the tension between substantial democratisation and neo-liberalism is the contemporary shift in the relationship between the post-apartheid state and private sector developers in the building of infrastructure and delivery of services. The degree to which these trends can be understood as outright

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<sup>4</sup> The political and developmental roles of civics, especially the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), are the subject of heated debates (Seekings 1997). Theorists on the left write the organisation off as a puppet of the ANC and the tripartite alliance, hamstrung through its subordinated engagement with the state (Xali 2002). Equally often, SANCO has been used to account for community representation and the vibrancy of community-level input to state discussions at a national level. Heller (2003) argues that SANCO continues to play an important role at the community level, but not as an adversarial social movement.

privatisation is contested<sup>5</sup>, but the post-apartheid government has moved from statist service delivery to partnership with private sector actors. ‘In the latter model, the state acts as a service “ensurer” rather than a service “provider” . . .and municipal services are “run more like a business”, with financial cost recovery becoming the most important measure of performance’ (McDonald and Smith 2002: 1). To address the apartheid legacy of racially uneven service delivery and subsidies, the South African state has made repeated promises (especially through the RDP) about the delivery of basic services to the urban and rural poor (Bond 2000). Although there have certainly been important achievements with major expansion of service infrastructure since 1994, this impressive record is undermined by an increasingly aggressive cost recovery on public services by local governments, who are largely dependent on locally generated revenue (Jaglin 2002; Wooldridge 2002). Due to a limited ability to pay, a large and growing number of low-income families have experienced service cut-offs and evictions from their homes. This situation is more likely to be intensified than alleviated in the near future.

The process of cost recovery on municipal services is controversial and contested. Various anti-eviction and anti-cut-off organisations have emerged around community issues of housing and services. National and local labour unions have also challenged privatisation of public enterprises and associated restructuring of work. Anti-Privatisation Forum coalitions and community-based organisations have emerged and are seeking to coordinate joint struggles against state-initiated privatisation processes (Ngwane 2003). This has led one commentator to observe that: ‘Privatisation may yet provoke the most explosive political threat, post-1994 grassroots movements, ironically reminiscent of the anti-apartheid ‘civics’, organising to defend the same people against the ravages of a profit-driven democracy’ (Rostron 2002).

In the Cape Town context, confrontation over payment for services has characterised the relationship between local government and residents in poorer areas of the city in the post-apartheid period. The City has instituted cost-recovery policies to attempt to recover arrears on rates and service bills, with city policies stating, for instance, that:

Action will be taken against those who do not pay – the Council will not hesitate to cut off services and take legal action where necessary. Residents who do not pay will be without electricity or water and will have to pay the additional costs of reconnection fees, lawyers’ fees and legal costs. They could ultimately have their houses sold (if they are ratepayers) or be evicted (if they are tenants in a Council house). (City of Cape Town, in Xali, 2002:110)

The implementation of this policy has been piecemeal however, and has fluctuated with changing political party control of the municipality. In coalition with the NNP, the ANC presently has control over municipal government and has recently made some

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<sup>5</sup> The most recent expression, perhaps explosion, of this debate can be analysed in the letters and comment pieces following Ferial Hafferjee’s ‘Fact, fiction and the new left’ where she argues, among other things, that privatization is exaggerated in the South African case and illustrates the ways in which social movements try ‘to make South Africa a node on the map of anti-globalisation resistance’ (Mail & Guardian, June 18-24). A slew of letters and comment pieces contested her argument (for instance, by the Social Movement Indaba, Fatima Meer, academic and activist with the Concerned Residents, Roger Ronnie, General Secretary of the South African Municipal Workers’ Union, in the Mail & Guardian, June 25-July 1, p.30-34 and subsequent responses by Patrick Bond and others in the Mail & Guardian, July 2-9, 2004).

concessions for renters in state housing and for households in arrears. From 1 April 2004, rental arrears accumulated before July 1997 have been written off, and the City will match R1 for every R1 repayment on arrears accrued between July 1997 and June 2002 (*Cape Times*, March 2004). Nonetheless, these policies only address debts accumulated between 1997 and 2002 if residents can make payments, and they exclude debts accumulated after 2002. Families unable to meet agreements on arrears payments still face disconnections of water and electricity and repossessions of furniture in lieu of rental payment. Evictions, and arrests for protesting such actions have become commonplace again. In response, some residents live without water and electricity, even homes; many illegally reconnect themselves to services, and organise in their neighbourhoods and across the city (Smith and Hanson 2003). The Campaign's development reflects the crises that these policies generate in many areas of the City (Desai and Pithouse 2003; Oldfield and Stokke 2002).

Public service delivery was a key issue in the anti-apartheid struggle, and has been crucial to post-apartheid attempts to ensure actual socio-economic rights. The current tendency towards corporatisation and privatisation of public services calls into question the state's parallel commitments to social justice and substantial democratisation. Critics of neo-liberalism argue that these policies are part of a broader process of privatisation of state assets, and demonstrate a turn to the right in South African governance, and that this has come at the cost of socio-economic redistribution and justice (Bond 2000; McDonald and Pape 2002). They claim that policies of cost-recovery in service delivery jeopardise the post-apartheid project by disenfranchising and further alienating black communities and citizens already disadvantaged by the ravages of the apartheid system. Poor households and communities face an affordability crisis due to high unemployment levels and the real difficulties in eking out livelihoods in the post-apartheid period. Ironically, in the same way that community issues of housing and public services were contentious issues behind civic struggles against apartheid (Seekings 2000), similar issues are rallying points for new social movements striving for justice in the context of South Africa's new liberal democracy. This constitutes an immediate material basis for new social movements, such as the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (Ngwane 2003; Oldfield and Stokke 2002).

The report now turns to focus on the Campaign through an analysis in section four of the centrality of its identity as a community-based movement and the inherent diversity embedded in this identity. Section five then examines the ways in which this diversity manifests in politics grounded in neighbourhood contexts that at times challenge the Campaign's organisation and leadership in section six. While section six focuses on difficulties the Campaign has faced, section seven turns to legal and research Campaign-wide initiatives that have brought activists and organisations together under the Campaign's umbrella in strategic and creative ways. The empirical analysis of the Campaign is drawn together in the final section of the report that analyses the symbolic significance of the Campaign in the context of its unity and fragmenting diversity.

#### **4. The Campaign's community identity: Centrality and challenge**

Collective identity as a community-based movement defines the logic on which Campaign organising and politics build. This identity proves a source of strength, grounding the Campaign in dynamic, materially and politically important grassroots

struggles. The former chairperson of the Campaign, also a critical force in its present direction, explains this identity:

We made it clear from the start that when people come into the campaign they come in as a member of a community. . . Issues of the community are primary and come first. We look at their interests first before we think about anything else. . . That is the fundamental difference [between us and other social movements]: we are constituted by community organisations and we deliberately confined the Campaign to that. I think that gave it [the Campaign] a different character. . . I think it's a process that happened that also allowed the emergence of a community leadership. It allowed that kind of strength to be established at a community level despite all the problems and confusion sometimes. When you look at what is happening in every local area, then you see the kind of strength there and that is the thing that makes the campaign different from the other areas. (F.B. 27/2/04)<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, however, the Campaign's community-driven character also generates organisational and resource challenges that produce fragmentation and intense organisational politics, due to the diversity of organisations that constitute the Campaign. This section examines this diversity through an analysis of the approximately twenty-five community organisations active in the Campaign, and the four general neighbourhood contexts that shape their everyday activism: (1) state-built rental housing; (2) hire-purchase home-ownership schemes; (3) state-developed bank bonded houses; and (4) informal settlements and new developments with state-built housing subsidy schemes.

The Campaign grew initially in areas of state-built rental housing, particularly Valhalla Park and Tafelsig. Built in the 1970s-1980s, in these areas flats and maisonettes were designated for families formerly classified coloured. Ranging from one bedroom to three bedroom structures, housing that was designed for single families now houses multiple generations. Without sufficient state-built housing and without the economic means to enter into market-based housing rentals or ownership, overcrowding is a significant issue. At the same time, much of the employment that sustained families in working-class coloured areas – textile and food processing factories – has been lost with factory closures in the 1990s (Workers World News 2000, in Xali 2002:114). Any semblance of economic sustainability that had existed in factory work has been fractured in the past decade. Thus, arrears for rentals and water, and, in some instances, electricity, continue to accrue, while generating intense insecurity for residents and antagonism from the municipality (Oldfield 2003). Residents frequently face furniture repossessions to compensate for accounts in arrears, and evictions as well (Personal communications, Leonsdale Anti-Eviction Campaign Activists 6/02; Valhalla Park United Civic Front Activists 8/03).

Different forms of apartheid-period 'hire-purchase' homeownership schemes, where residents are both tenants of Council and homeowners, were built across coloured group areas in the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, in St. Montague Village, Lavender

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<sup>6</sup> In most instances throughout the report, interviewee's initials rather than full names have been used to protect their anonymity. In the chapter version of this material, the researchers will consult the individuals concerned for permission to use full names as in a number of cases activists are well-known public figures.

Hill and Lentegur. Families moved into these housing schemes towards the end of the apartheid period, when the state was trying to move out of a landlord role with responsibility for administration and maintenance. Administrative confusion reigns in these areas, raising questions about rental payments, access to government subsidies for converting renters to homeowners, and issues of administrative justice where departments have not maintained accurate records or where administrative duties have shifted between various state institutions over the past two decades.

Homeowners dominate some areas of the Campaign, for instance Mandela Park, Khayelitsha, an area whose struggle has come to symbolise the Campaign in Cape Town and beyond. Housing in these areas was built in the late 1980s and early 1990s by private developers in partnership with the apartheid state and banks. Residents moved directly from informal settlements into bonded homes with obligatory monthly bond payments. Thirteen years later, approximately 90 per cent of families in the area have fallen into arrears problems (McKune 2002). Banks holding bonds in the area have turned to Servcon, a joint venture between the Department of Housing and the Banking Council, to take over low-income bank owned properties that are over three months in arrears, by offering 'special rehabilitation programmes' to residents in this category that often involves 'right sizing' to an 'RDP' state-subsidy house elsewhere. The bank-owned house is then sold on the private market, thus enabling the bank to recoup its bond costs. These options have met with strident resistance in the Mandela Park Area and in other parts of the city facing similar processes (see section five for a more detailed case study of the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign).

Lastly, some organisations in the Campaign organise in informal settlements and new neighbourhoods where post-1996 subsidy-built housing has been constructed by the state, such as Delft South and Philippi. The poor quality of housing, inability to pay water bills and the threat of evictions due to non-payment of rates are the issues that have catalysed Campaign activities in these areas. Local groups started organising around issues connected to the quality of subsidy based housing, particularly around the problems with the use of asbestos in RDP houses in Delft South.

The diversity of community environments frames the organisations operating in each area and the daily issues activists organise around. The following section focuses on the variety of political strategies that community organisations combine in everyday activism and community work in these different contexts. Strategies include a locally appropriate mix of territorial control, oppositional resistance, engagement, and legal challenges.

## **5. Local context and political practice**

From legal battles to mass 'informal' reconnections of services and territorial control over neighborhoods, organisations in the Campaign undertake a wide range of activities. Strategies grow from the local context, representing neighbourhood logics, albeit articulated and mediated by citywide and regional processes and debates. The local is, however, heterogeneous, shaping the nature of organisations and the political, social and material contexts in which groups strategise and struggle. In this section we draw on a selection of organisations to demonstrate the ways in which local context and political practice define multiple positions along a continuum that spans engagement with and opposition to the state. We then examine political practice in Valhalla Park, Mandela Park and Tafelsig, to provide a more detailed and contextual analysis of community organising.

Some organisations in the Campaign engage with the state, its institutions, officials, politicians and its structures of governance on a daily basis. Activists in these contexts stress the imperative to engage. An Athlone Civic activist, for example, argues that:

The difference is, and that is part of the things that I preach with the other comrades is, get organised. You must know that we started off as concerned people and when we approached council politicians they said you people are only concerned you are not recognised. I think that is a little bit of the difference, like I said, get organised, register yourself, get a constitution. That's a first good step. Politics has changed today in South Africa. You know, when we were in the struggle, we were heard on the streets. But what I have noticed being an activist with the Anti-Eviction coming out of Athlone, to be heard today you've got to sit with these bastards in the boardroom. Sorry to say it. You've got to sit with them in the boardroom because we've got boardroom politics now here in South Africa. (ZH 06/02)

Registration as a community organisation with the city is not an unusual choice, but it does shape and reflect an organisation's strategies and politics. For instance, convinced that any name connected to the Anti-Eviction Campaign would inhibit their access to the municipality, a Delft organisation affiliated to the Campaign chose to adopt a neutral name in order to work more easily with the Municipality (Personal communication, AC 8/03).

In stark contrast, engagement comes with explicit constraints and great costs in other cases. In a neighbourhood with a mix of informal and new state-built low-income housing in the Philippi area, opposition to government policy on water cut-offs is read as opposition to the ANC. Government policy is read as African National Congress (ANC) policy. Two activists explain their logic and strategy of mobilising against water cut-offs in this context:

We [the youth] tried to form our own organisations in regard to social and environmental issues. Through these issues we can attack government but in a polite, indirect way. If you confront them directly about politics they won't listen. But by talking about environmental or social issues, you can address community issues. (LM and MM 4/6/02)

Organising against government policy is read as anti-ANC by local leaders and therefore as radical and disruptive. They continue to explain:

You can't say you object to the water policy, for instance. You will get marked; you will run the risk of being eliminated. Rather you keep your cover. People fear being killed. . . If you organise, mobilise other people, you are at risk of being killed, they see you as opposition. . . So we are a group here, not an organisation, that way we look neutral. (LM and MM 4/6/02)

Anecdotal evidence suggests that people in power in the area have vested interests in local government contracts, like the installation of water and electricity services and the building of state-subsidised houses. Threats to policies connected to service and infrastructure delivery are interpreted, therefore, as challenges to these interests, and more broadly to ANC-led governance in the area.

Although the Philippi and Athlone cases lie at two ends of a continuum between engagement and opposition, in all cases activism is defined in local contexts and

through particular sets of relationships between organisations and a range of state institutions and officials. At the same time, logic underpinning community organising is not only driven by contemporary crises and contexts, but also by the past and the particular experiences families and communities faced in the apartheid period.

In a discussion with the Lentegeur Community Forum in Mitchells Plain, activists contrasted their present living conditions and problems with District Six, the neighborhood in the centre of Cape Town from which they were removed in 1980. They argued that:

- PD: [T]hey [the state] have done nothing here [in Lentegeur] for 23 years. No building, no nothing came up here. . . For 23 years for the District 6 people? I think that is an insult.
- AH: A slap in the face.
- PD: . . . We were in District 6 and proud of it. . . People have suffered severely since they moved here and they are still suffering because we have been overlooked by Councilors, by the government, by everybody. They have chucked us here and they thought we are dead and they forgot about us. . .
- AM: Distict 6 is renowned around the world, synonymous with apartheid. The people of District 6 equates to the apartheid struggle. . . Look after us first, the rest can go to hell. They worked at this wrongly. (PD, AM and AH 7/17/03)

The Lentegeur Community Forum articulates the importance of their history – their status as ‘District Sixers’ in particular – to understand not only present problems, but also their expectations for justice and redress by the municipality and the post-apartheid state. Even if their demands to be treated differently from others are unrealistic and at a city and regional scale inequitable, past experiences of evictions from District Six inform the activists’ definitions of opposition, engagement and strategic action in their contemporary housing struggle.

### **Strategic engagement and opposition in Valhalla Park**

The Valhalla Park United Civic Front (the Civic) provides a useful case to examine the ways in which community activists and organisations engage with state officials and institutions and also, simultaneously, oppose it through overt and covert actions. The Civic is one of the more successful community organisations in the Campaign. They have made significant gains in working both within the system and outside of state-accepted norms of behaviour. Mixing engaging in the system and acting in protest reflects the organisation’s strategic choices and hard-won experiences in organising in Valhalla Park over the past two decades.

The Civic’s successes come from persistent engagement with officials in the police, the health and housing departments who work in the Valhalla Park area directly. By building up relationships with local officials over a long period of time, Civic leaders have found ways in which to make them more responsive. In the case of the police, for instance, leaders’ personal connections and direct contact provide an intermediary between residents and the local police station. An activist comments on her role in this process:

People come here – even before they go to the police station, they come to the Civic. . . I gotta pick the phone up, then I gotta dial them and say

I'm Mrs S. from the Street Committee, I'm from the United Civic Front and the people phoned two hours ago, three hours ago, and you never came. I want you to come out right now. . . When I raise my voice and I make my voice loud, only then they come. (GS 14/8/03)

Relationships with the police are nurtured through participation in the larger area's Community Policing Forum. A similar personal relationship has developed with the local Head of the Housing Office, who, unlike officials in many poor parts of Cape Town, has allowed unemployed residents unable to pay rentals to apply for indigent status to relieve them of some of the burden of their bills (personal communication GA 05/02).

Although Civic leaders engage with officials, they do not depend on these types of relationships to resist evictions or to improve conditions in the neighbourhood. It is the savvy mix of engagement and opposition that has generated a series of successes for the community. The first community-wide success occurred in response to the cut-off of the entire neighbourhood's electricity in the mid-1990s, despite many households paying their bills regularly. Through a series of persistent protests and negotiations, the Council agreed to reconnect electricity. Two activists remember the event:

People protested and we demanded, we actually demanded that they come reconnect the electricity. . . After a lot of ups and downs, they decided to come in, to put the people's electricity back on. We got onto that yellow van that rides from house to house to put the electricity on. We Civic members, we got onto the van and we rode with them till past midnight from street to street. We didn't let them go until everybody's light had been turned on. (GR and GS 14/8/03)

Since this period, residents and Civic activists have been vigilant about Council activities in the area. If residents see a Council vehicle enter the neighbourhood (there is only one entry road), they alert the Civic leaders who have a container-cum-office in the front yard of one of the leader's homes where office hours are kept. Residents and activists then respond immediately to ensure that Council does not cut off water or electricity without negotiating with the Civic structures. Their persistence and insistence that Council must consult the Civic has paid off from their perspective, as the Council rarely enters the area without consultation.

When negotiations with Council fail, the Civic finds it totally appropriate to take radical action. After a number of children were hit by cars on the main arterial road through the neighbourhood, the Civic spent two years trying to persuade Council to build speed bumps. After Council turned their request down consistently, Civic activists dug a four-meter wide and approximately one-meter deep hole across the main road in the middle of the night. The following morning, cars rushing off to work slammed into the hole. An activist recalls the official response:

When I came outside, the law enforcement was outside. . . The Bishop Lavis Police Station was in the road to come and see the cars that got damaged in that hole, the traffic cops, a whole fleet of cops on bikes and in cars, the street was dark with all the law enforcements, with everybody standing outside. The hole was fixed and speed bumps were built that day. (GS 14/8/03)



She cynically assesses that there was no money for speed bumps when children got hurt, but the same day the cars got ‘hurt’, the money was found and the bumps were built.

The United Civic Front’s latest victory is their most significant: they have won a High Court case against the City of Cape Town, which has been instructed by the High Court to provide services and legal rights to land to an informal settlement in Valhalla Park. ‘Homeless’ Valhalla Park residents – those families on the housing waiting list living in backyard shacks or sub-tenants in overcrowded flats – occupied state-owned land in the neighbourhood specifically to attempt to make the City Council move towards providing more housing in the area. When the Council applied for a court interdict to remove the families that also implicated the Civic in the so-called illegal land invasion, the United Civic Front filed a counter-claim that was heard in the High Court, to demand their constitutional right to emergency housing. The judgment, in favour of the residents of the informal settlement and the Civic, has the potential to impact on the City’s legal obligations in providing for informal settlement services, not only in Cape Town, but also regionally. This case is discussed in detail in the legal section of the report.

Committed and continuous leadership active in the area for twenty years has generated a group of activists with extensive capacity and determination to solve their neighbourhood problems. Personal experience of evictions drives many leaders to continue to work hard to protect and support neighbours and the community. The chairperson explains the relationship between her motivation as an activist and her own experience with evictions:

Many times the two of us [executive committee members] had to walk half way to the places we had to go then come home on our feet, hungry, we had nothing to eat for the whole day. . . But personally, I feel that is my calling since I moved to Valhalla Park. Up till today, there is a lot of people that hasn’t got a house, that’s been evicted with me. But, every time I fought back with the Council and I think that is why this is my calling. I know what it is to be evicted. . . I overcame it [evictions] seven times. . . I will fight the Council to the bitter end. I won’t see anybody being evicted or anybody’s water being cut. I am totally against this. This is why we as an organisation felt we should join the Anti-Eviction Campaign because we stand for the same thing; we fight the same thing. We say no to evictions, no to water cuts, and all that. (GS 14/8/03)

Leaders play multiple roles, but they are also supported by a structure of other community leaders operating at the street-level. A weekly meeting is held every Thursday night where street leaders and the executive committee report back to residents on progress on issues. It is in these forums where decisions are taken on appropriate responses and strategies – in particular, when to work in the system and when to disrupt and challenge it. Although leaders of the Civic continue to pursue goals through working with Council officials and politicians, in general they have little faith in the system. The chairperson comments:

Council don’t listen to us if we go through the right channels. They don’t listen. They make as if they listen if you go through the right channels. They don’t take notice of us. But, if we do what we do, then immediately they respond. . . If they make too long, then we do our own thing. (GS and GR 14/8/03)

From experience, they have found that Council responds only if they present a direct challenge to governance and the operation of Council in the area.

### **Resistance through public protest in Mandela Park and Tafelsig**

Whereas the Valhalla Park United Civic Front has successfully combined political engagement and mass mobilisation, the anti-eviction campaigns in Tafelsig and Mandela Park have gradually entered into a strategy of collective resistance and a confrontational relationship with local government, the banking sector, and the police.

The cornerstone of the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign (MPAEC) has been the weekly community meeting with large numbers of residents attending. The community meetings discuss the problems facing the community and make decisions about strategies and activities. Campaign activists also report back to the community about their communication with banks, councillors and state institutions. The Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign has sought an active dialogue with the banks and the Provincial Minister of Housing, inviting them to community meetings, but refusing to send delegates to meetings outside the community. The campaign has raised collective demands regarding the sub-standard quality of the houses, ownership of the land, housing subsidies and the handling of outstanding debts. These demands have not been addressed in any meaningful way by the relevant state institutions. Instead the campaign activists have been met with what they see as attempts at diffusing the issues and confusing the activists, since they are told to take their housing complaints to the developers, their economic problems to Servcon (a parastatal negotiating between banks and communities where the majority of residents fail to meet bond payments), and their land demands to politicians. All the invited banks, Servcon and the Provincial Minister of Housing, have failed to meet with the campaign in the community (MN and FG 06/02).

The explicit policy of the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign is to build alliances with those who support them in their struggle, but not spend time on talks that can take away the focus from the collective struggle. So far, no councillors, political parties, trade unions or NGOs have taken up this supportive role on terms that are acceptable to the community. This lack of meaningful political engagement, combined with the actual practices and threats of evictions have made the MPAEC resort to various forms of public protest, such as public demonstrations and occupations at banks and political institutions. The community has also mobilised against evictions and repossessions of property, and has put evicted families back into their homes. These various actions have been met with increasingly harsh measures, including a court interdict on behalf of the banks against community leaders, arrests and lengthy periods of incarceration of activists, and increased use of police violence during evictions and repossession of property. At the time of writing, one of the Campaign leaders is living under long-term bail conditions that prevent him from attending any public meetings, gatherings, marches, pickets of any nature, or communicating with any evicted person.

In general terms, the MPAEC has experienced a criminalisation of the campaign and its leaders. Community members and activists are spending time and energy in court and trying to raise funds for bail and lawyers. Despite a constant lack of funds, the Tafelsig and the Mandela Park campaigns insist on maintaining their autonomy in regard to all non-governmental organisations:

We don't accept money from anybody for a simple reason: we don't want

them to direct us. We are on the ground; we will direct our struggle. So we don't want NGOs to rule us or to act on our behalf, because they don't have our interests at heart. They have their own interests at heart. We understand that and I always make it clear that the NGOs they get paid to be in the struggle - we don't. We are forced to be in the struggle because of our circumstances at home. (AC 05/02)

With limited economic resources, organisational fragmentation in the absence of a coordinating ideological movement and no political allies, the collective resistance in Mandela Park and Tafelsig faces the danger of becoming 'isolated militant particularisms, unable to function in the face of sustained repression' (Desai and Pithouse 2003:23).

### **Common struggles across diverse contexts**

What these experiences from different communities demonstrate, is unity in facing common struggles, despite a diversity of contexts. Most groups seek to engage Council and other relevant stakeholders to some degree. However the experiences of accessibility are diverse<sup>7</sup>. The modes of protest and traditions of organising also vary considerably across former coloured and African group areas, as well as among organisations within neighbourhoods and sections of the city<sup>8</sup>.

In consequence, the present repertoire of protest ranges from strategies that are compatible with the rules and procedures of the formal political system (e.g. community meetings, petitions, negotiations, and legal demonstrations), to practices that are more confrontational and unlawful (e.g. illegal reconnections, occupations of houses, forceful blocking of evictions, and sit-ins). Many of the organisations combine diverse kinds of protests and only employ the more radical tactics to solve problems and to resist when negotiations and legal demonstrations fail to yield acceptable outcomes. Clearly, different political contexts also frame mobilisation issues in neighbourhoods. At Campaign level, the diverse community organisations under its ambit produce a complex mixture of political strategy and ideology that is both a strength and identity of the Campaign as well as, at times, a source of intense confrontation and contestation. The challenges that this tension produces at an organisational and leadership level are examined in the following section.

## **6. Unifying the Campaign: The politics of leadership**

The Campaign faces a huge challenge to manage and to merge diverse issues and political practice at the neighbourhood level into a coherent and effective citywide social movement. The ideological, place and racial differentiation that characterises the community organisations that make up the Campaign is not an absolute obstacle to the

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<sup>7</sup> Some groups have good access to, for instance, councilors (e.g. Athlone, Mfuleni, Delft in part) whereas most of the groups (e.g. Mandela Park, Tafelsig) have found it difficult to get councillors, the Provincial Minister of Housing or representatives from banks and Servcon to attend meetings and engage with the campaign in any meaningful way. This has led some groups to a strategy of resistance, or political disengagement.

<sup>8</sup> In some areas, many former coloured townships, activists tend to work one-on-one with residents and officials – for instance, in Elsies River and Lentegeur. In other areas, it is normal to have public meetings and mass protests, and residents expect to participate in these types of activities, e.g. Mandela Park and Mfuleni. In some communities, these two modes of organising are combined, for instance, in Athlone and Valhalla Park.

development of political strategy and practice in the Campaign, however. Instead, it has at times provided energy and an impetus for innovation through which organisations learn from each other, and generate more effective local and citywide strategies, as well as stronger and more durable networks that underpin the Campaign itself. Through participation in the Campaign and its actions at city level, activists and organisations have come together, sharing resources, strategies and generating collective energy to support each other in difficult and challenging circumstances. Reflecting on the relationship between neighbourhood work and the Campaign, the former chairperson remarks that:

Many [community workers] started seeing themselves as being activists within the campaign more on the Western Cape level instead of where they were in the past in their own geographical area. And so they started to organise – go out to other areas and help people and assist, pamphleteering and stuff like that. They started to work at that level and I think that was a qualitative growth, people weren't confined to their residential, geographical area anymore in terms of their organisation. It [activism in the Campaign] opened up the space for people now to go over geographical borders and limits. (FB 27/2/04)

At the same time, however, the development of the Campaign and the linking of activists and organisations across the city have generated organisational challenges. This section thus analyses the challenges of unifying the Campaign in the context of politicisation of Campaign leadership.

### **From a steering committee to organise a march, to an executive committee to organise a Campaign, to . . . something else**

In the campaign, the leadership has emerged from this grassroots level and that leadership is still being shaped, it's not something static or cast in stone. (FB 27/2/04)

The organisational challenges underlying the development of the Campaign are huge. The Campaign needs to encompass and to include groups from across the city with different ideologies, traditions of protest, expectations of leadership and organisation with few to no resources and in a context where crises (from evictions to arrests) arise frequently.

The Campaign came into existence as a response to the violence of state-led evictions; in particular in February 2001 activists in affected communities worked together to organise a march against evictions in the centre of Cape Town (Personal communication, FB 27/2/04)<sup>9</sup>. The march publicised the existence of the Campaign, alerting people facing increasing numbers of evictions in poor areas across the City.

People started getting their letters, getting their summons and were facing evictions and cut-offs, and all of these kinds of problems. They immediately started to contact us and phone us because it [the Campaign] was over the newspapers and over the radio. (FB 27/2/04)

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<sup>9</sup> A coordinating committee, including three delegates from each interested organisation, was established in Delft in February 2001. The following month in a meeting in Valhalla Park, a steering committee of five activists was formed to focus on organisation of the mass march.

Although the Campaign grew with the momentum of publicity, the work of activists, and the centralizing affect of the Uni-city's implementation of its threats of eviction, the Steering Committee ceased functioning because some activists did not come to meetings and others moved away. The shifting shape of the Campaign proved difficult to manage.

What was evident, however, was the political and organisational vacuum that the Campaign in embryonic form filled. An activist recalls the first march:

We marched to Peter Marais [then the City Mayor]. This was the first time the communities came together on the streets and marched to the city centre . . . that was the first indication that there was a basis to organise people and to take things forward. People realised that they have to work outside of the official structures or the traditional structures. I think it was partly that link and the memory of the 1980s. . . and the UDF [United Democratic Front] style of organising. There was also another factor: there was this vacuum; there was nothing to take up mass mobilisation and local issues. (FB 27/2/04)

After the first march, a loose group of activists with connections from the 1980s started to meet and discuss the possible formation of a network, something creative to challenge and move beyond traditional ways of organising. A variety of meetings happened in 2001, but it proved difficult to coordinate organisations to form a structure.

In 2002, the need to establish accountability in order to deal with finances, and to establish a way to ensure representation, made the formation of a more formal and structured Campaign an issue for debate. The issue of structure and leadership was hotly contested. Debates highlighted divisions in ideology and personality, but also in the direction that the Campaign should take. For instance, some argued that to proceed in legal and policy challenges – to challenge the state seriously – required the Campaign to constitute itself formally and legally as a body. Others argued the counterpoint: by establishing ourselves legally and publicly, we make ourselves a target and we diminish our strength, which is the Campaign's informality and flexibility, and our less visible power across the city (Campaign meeting June 2002). Despite some dissension, in winter 2002, a Constitution was drafted and voted from which an Executive Committee was formed with an elected chairperson, treasurer, secretary and so forth.

The Executive Committee operated in the 2002-3 period, establishing three units: the Legal Coordinating Committee, the Community Research Group, and a Media unit (the latter was later disbanded). Although conceived with the best of intentions and with extensive debate and consultation, the Committee found it difficult to function. Some leaders were arrested; others were on the run from the police; the Committee had no budget or resources. Frequently, even the costs to bring members together for meetings were prohibitive. The former chair reflects on these tensions:

A number of people stopped functioning because they were unable to and others because they were arrested or restricted from attending meetings. So once again you had three individuals who had to take responsibility for coordinating the structure. . . The lack of opportunity to really deal with these issues – the chance to really talk things through that was very much absent and problematic. The nature of the Campaign and its lack of

a resource base also emerged [as an issue]. These things bedevilled the Exco to a large extent. (FB 27/2/04)

The holding of regional councils and annual general meetings – prescribed as requirements by the Campaign’s Constitution – also proved extremely difficult. In the Annual General Meeting that was organised finally at the end of 2003, there was no consensus on a way forward. Elections could not be held and members weren’t willing to postpone them while maintaining the Executive Committee. At the same time, serious tensions over financial accountability arose. With increasing numbers of arrests for serious criminal charges, the Campaign needed to come up with large amounts of bail monies and to pay lawyer’s fees. In this complex, highly contested context, the Executive Committee disbanded and some activists left the Campaign (IP 9/3/04). The dissolution of the formal structures of the Campaign can be read, in part, as a resource issue because of the costs of meeting as a General Council, in part an issue of ideology, and in part an issue centrally connected to managing representation from the diverse communities constituting the Campaign.

Despite leadership and organisational problems, the Campaign has not ceased to exist. Unable to hold elections, the decision-making process has been devolved to community level, the place where it originated in 2001. The Campaign is in a process of revitalising itself. As yet, there is no new structure; instead, three members represent each community organisation. The chairing of meetings is circulated among organisations. Individuals are given specific tasks that arise from the meetings. The Campaign is dealing systematically with the conflicts that led to the splintering of the Executive Committee in 2003; activists have been called to account for the conflicts, particularly for financial transactions in 2003 (GS 25/06/04). Conflicts between activists have not been resolved entirely, but there is a systematic process that is intended to make the issues underpinning the conflict transparent. Once this difficult process of review and accounting has been completed, activists plan to focus on developing a new structure to take the Campaign forward.

## **7. Unifying activism at the Campaign level**

Despite a vacuum in its structures and leadership, the Campaign has not disintegrated. Several important initiatives have functioned to bring activists and organisations together to continue to protect families against evictions and cut-offs, and to build the Campaign through continued activism and longer-term research. These initiatives build participating organisations and the Campaign’s potential in the future.

The following discussion focuses on the Legal Coordinating Committee and significant legal struggles by Campaign-affiliated organisations, as well as the Community Research Group and their work in building research capacity to challenge policy.

### **The potential and limits of legal struggle**

Arrests and cases of police brutality in Tafelsig and Lavender Hill in late 2000 were the initial sparks that fuelled the development of the Anti-Eviction Campaign. Not solitary events, a continual string of arrests of Campaign members – activists and also community members – has peppered the Campaign’s existence, indicating the increasing criminalisation of Campaign activism (Murphy 21/6/04). The state’s crack-

down on activism, and activists' subsequent experience in the judicial system, has shaped the Campaign and activism in particular member organisations, in significant ways.

The starting point for the Campaign's engagement in legal struggles has been defensive, a response to summonses, interdicts and arrests. The most publicised instances have been criminal cases lodged against activists – Max Ntanyana in particular – in Mandela Park in 2002-2004 by the police, local and provincial officials, and banks in the area. Charges have had dire effects on activists individually and on organising (Legassick 2004). Bail has been refused at times, and, when granted, has included far-reaching apartheid-era-like conditions such as prohibition from leaving the magisterial district, prohibition from attending Anti-Eviction meetings or of meeting with more than two individuals<sup>10</sup>. Criminal and common law proceedings have targetted residents, activists, and organisations in Vrygrond in 2000, in Tafelsig and in St. Montague Village in 2001-2002, and in Valhalla Park in 2002-3.

Legal defence is costly in all cases, and the process of generating bail funds and payment of lawyer fees has consumed immense amounts of energy, and frequently caused internal friction in and between community organisations and the Campaign (Personal communication, GS 25/6/04). Rather than discussing the details of all the cases against various elements of the Campaign, the following discussion considers the Legal Coordinating Committee as the Campaign's systematic response to defending evictions and legal cases that have challenged service delivery policies, particularly housing cases in Valhalla Park and Vrygrond.

### **The Legal Coordinating Committee (LCC)**

With assistance from Michael Murphy, a lawyer frequently representing Campaign members and families facing evictions (as well as the Vrygrond Action Committee's case discussed below), Ashraf Cassiem (Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign) and five activists established the LCC in 2002, in response to the increasing numbers of evictions taking place on a daily basis across Cape Town and to the prohibitive costs of legal representation. Murphy recalls the context:

Every single day there would be another case. . . Every case involved experts giving evidence . . . it was just impossible to manage. I said to Ashraf then: look you guys must make up your minds. If we don't go the legal route, I agree but then stop phoning me . . . The alternative is that we have to find a way to use the law to help. . . If you looked at the courts, like Goodwood or Kuils River, so many people are being evicted everyday. It [the court] is being used as a debt collection system: just queues and queues of people and all that would happen is that, if they had a lawyer then they would negotiate their date to leave [the house]. More often than not they never had a lawyer – or the lawyer would never arrive – and they [families] were being evicted hand over fist. The very bulk of it gave me the idea for our sole aim [to be] to delay and frustrate, to clog the courts up [with cases]. . . So I tried to show

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<sup>10</sup> See Desai and Pithouse 2003, Legassick 2004, and manuscripts by Miraftab, and Miraftab and Wills for a fuller discussion of the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign.

them [LCC activists] how to delay and frustrate in ridiculous ways.  
(Murphy 21/6/04)

To set up the LCC, Murphy ran a five-month course on court procedures, legal arguments, and loopholes through which activists could represent families facing eviction. Through the course the LCC strategy and mission was developed.

The Attorneys Act (59 of 1979) stipulates who constitutes a legal practitioner and thus can speak or act in a court. Section 38e of Constitution (1996), however, allows for an association to act in the interest of its member in court. In order to access courts to represent families facing eviction, the LCC formed the *Campaign for the Recognition of the Fundamental Right to a Home*. People whom the LCC represent officially join the Campaign by filling in a legally recognised membership that substantiates the LCC's access to Magistrate and High Courts to represent families facing civil proceedings and evictions. The LCC prevent the negotiation of the eviction order outside of the courtroom. They initially facilitate the postponement of the case so that it will be heard in court, rather than negotiated through in camera hearings outside of the Magistrates Court. They then submit affidavits that deny the grounds of the eviction according to rights protected by other laws and the Constitution, for instance: on the basis that families have a right to a home, that evictions cause irreparable harm (to children, to the family's health), that there is little possibility that families will find alternative housing and thus they will have to squat<sup>11</sup>. The affidavits force parties (banks or the state) evicting to prove all contextual issues in court. This obligation increases the costs of the eviction process and the time it takes to evict a family. In the process, the LCC challenges evictions as arbitrary and the banks' and state's claims that evictions are the only option.

The LCC's goal is therefore threefold: in the short-term to stop the rubber-stamping of eviction orders in Magistrates Courts by representing families and thus delaying evictions; in the longer term, through the submission of affidavits and forcing cases to be heard in court in full, to generate a sufficient court record on the arbitrary and inequitable nature of evictions in order to oppose them in the Constitutional Court. The LCC's goal is not to win cases, but to 'f-up the system' and to buy time for families facing evictions (AC and PB 10/5/04).

Although the legal process is totally stacked against activists involved in the LCC, they play the game. They help people waiting for court cases for debts or other common law issues by telling them how to demand a postponement and by preventing attorneys from negotiating their cases outside of the courtroom. In response, lawyers get furious<sup>12</sup>. Cassiem recounts some of his court experiences to explain the context and the power of the LCC to disrupt the process:

Mr. Wilkinson – he's the guru on these cases who works for big banks like First Rand, First National, and Absa. He came up to me outside the court and asked me aggressively: are you a *lawyer*? Then again, in the

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<sup>11</sup> For an example, see Affidavit for Phakamile Dugmore Piedt Anne Smith and Family and People's Bank, Magistrates Court District of Stellenbosch, Case No. 2230/03, 24/11/03.

<sup>12</sup> Recounting how a lawyer officially charged her for 'violation of dress code and mannerisms', an activist explains how: 'lawyers and attorneys try to intimidate us but we talk really loud in response to them so that everybody can hear. It's really empowering for people who don't know anything about the law, because they think that you must totally respect attorneys and magistrates. We fight them, we *skell* them out. They're not allowed to be rude back because they're bound by the code of conduct in the Attorneys Act. We're not, so we make full use of that' (PB 10/5/04).



court the Magistrate asked: but *who are you?* They belittle you; make you feel like a nothing. I say: I am here to represent a poor family, to save these people from being evicted. . . Our goal is to tell these stories, to get these stories on the court record. Just by standing up there, I am a spanner in the works. In the High Court, I stood up in my Landless People's Movement t-shirt. We're not there to win. We know we'll lose (in most cases). So I laugh at the process – I laugh at them, they don't know how to deal with that. . . In the High Court you're not allowed to speak until you're recognised by the judge. To be recognised by the judge, to even be heard, you have to speak, you have to be rude and loud so they know that you are there. One time the Judge towered over me and shouted: *Who are you? What are you doing here?* I just talked until he stopped and saw that he must let me talk. So I talked really loud and really fast. The process is intimidating and lawyers, magistrates and judges intend to intimidate us. (10/5/04)

In general the legal system does not seem to know how to deal with the LCC.

At the same time, the LCC process also demands a lot from activists. In mid-2004 they had 40 cases with more families arriving every day. Officials at the Magistrates Court, and even lawyers in private practice, have advised families to turn to them for help. Activists involved describe the challenges they face in the process of defending families:

We do everything – not just activities in the courts. We forcibly keep people in their homes and put them back in their homes through force. It's really confusing though. We have to be so many things in so many different contexts. We have to be nice and kind and supportive to families – like counsellors – to keep them with us, to convince them that our system of operating isn't crazy. We have to call them almost every day. They often get upset if we don't, even though we don't have money for calls and we deal with so many cases. We have to be rude and loud in court, but not too beyond the bounds. In cases where we physically confront law enforcement to stop evictions, we have to be aggressive. It's really confusing and stressful [to juggle all these different demands]. (AC and PB 10/5/04)

Once they take on a case, the responsibility is immense. Although LCC intervention buys families facing evictions time, the process of building a Constitutional Court case requires resources and professional legal practitioners, as well as policy intervention and political debate that questions, not just the legality or constitutionality of evictions, but their humanity and morality as well (Murphy 21/6/04).

### **Legal cases challenging policy**

The LCC's activities constitute an important element of the Campaign's work and profile on the legal front, but at present they do not directly challenge policy. However, the Valhalla Park case, discussed in the next section, has challenged the City of Cape Town's housing policy, while raising the profile of the Campaign and, like the LCC, shaping the Campaign's strategies in using the legal system to challenge the state in areas of service delivery.

In July 2003, the United Civic Front won a landmark case (Case 8970/01, 7 July 2003, *Neville Rudolph and 49 others vs. the City of Cape Town*), in which the High Court rejected the City of Cape Town's application to evict and remove the 7 de Laan informal settlement in Valhalla Park from the ground on which it was located, and ruled that the City is responsible to give residents permanent tenure in the area and to provide services as well. Judge Selikowitz granted a 'structural interdict' against the City. Although the City has yet to implement the ruling (and appears to still be dodging and diving its responsibilities (Personal communication, GS 25/6/04), the Case represents the Valhalla Park United Civic Front's three years of hard campaigning with the assistance of an NGO, the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) (Personal communication, FB 18/11/03).

The City's application argued that the continued existence of the informal settlement on City land zoned as a park was a land invasion that set a dangerous precedent. They identified the United Civic Front as instigator of the so-called 'invasion', claiming that:

. . . there is a potential, if the situation is not restored, of massive invasions in numerous other areas particularly where invasions are driven by organisations using people as pawns in the process. United Front Civic [sic] Organisation's role in causing the park to be occupied cannot be ignored. Further invasions may have devastating consequences for proper town planning, health laws and management thereof and the maintenance of law and order. (Judgment 2003:21).

The LRC, on behalf of the Valhalla Park UCF, responded with a counter-application against the City that argued that the City had failed to deliver on its constitutional requirement to provide housing to families in desperate, immediate need of housing (see G. Rosenberg's witness statement, Judgment 2003: 46). Residents of the informal settlement previously resided in precarious conditions: in cars, under stairwells, sleeping in school buildings, in the bush, and moving around to avoid detection. The City's response to evidence of the families' housing problems is telling. They disputed that the families were in desperate need or that their need was any different from other families on the housing waiting list. They also claimed that the only fair form of administration was the City's housing list because if they met the 7 de Laan families' needs, they would have to meet all other desperate families' needs as well (2003:46).

The Valhalla Park case and others, such as the City of Cape Town's application to evict residents of Vrygrond from their homes, provide insight into the City of Cape Town's housing policy and its implementation, and the City's willingness to resolve housing conflicts in the courts. In the Valhalla Park case, Judge Selikowitz explicitly addresses what he calls the City's 'denial' of their constitutional and statutory obligations with regard to housing. He states:

In light of these facts, and the circumstances under which these people have been living, it is *astonishing* [authors' emphasis] to find that Applicant's [City of Cape Town] Head of Housing makes the assertion that none of the Respondents are 'persons in crisis' as contemplated in *Grootboom*. This statement is indicative of *a state of denial* [authors' emphasis] on Applicant's part and a failure to recognise and acknowledge that there is, in fact, any category of persons to which it has any obligation beyond the obligation to put them on the waiting-list for housing in the medium to long term, because they are people 'with

no access to land, no roof over their heads, and who were living in intolerable conditions or crisis situations'. It is in my view, precisely the same failure as was held, in *Grootboom*, to constitute a breach of the Constitution. (Judgment 2003: 44-45)

Selikowitz ruled that the City must provide emergency services and that the residents have the right to stay on the land where they have squatted<sup>13</sup>. Although the City has not yet met the Judge's ruling, the case is considered a qualified victory by the Valhalla Park United Civic Front and by the Campaign.

The Campaign's legal experiences with the City are problematic. In disputes, the City seems not hesitate to take activists, organisations and areas to court, which forces the Campaign to engage in costly defence exercises<sup>14</sup>. The City's court cases are also at times revealing of attitudes towards, not only activists, but also people living in poverty. For instance, in the City's case against residents of Vrygrond<sup>15</sup> whom they claim had invaded state-owned housing, the City attempted, not only to force residents out of the houses, but also to prohibit them from access to any state land. Murphy, who defended the residents, recalled and reflected on an exchange between himself and the Judge during the case that illustrates such attitudes:

The judge asked me: 'tell me if I'm wrong, does this mean that if I evict them (Vrygronders) and I grant the rest of the relief, they are not allowed on any public land in the City of Cape Town at all?' I replied: 'yes, this is what it means'. We're talking about people's fundamental rights in the middle of winter you know. They [the City] said we want you out and we are going to punish you because you've done this [allegedly invaded RDP housing]. . . They [City of Cape Town] said we want them evicted and we want an interdict against them being on any public land in the City of Cape Town. To me that attitude was incredible. If you genuinely wanted to have an orderly process, you would realise that this is incredibly serious. This is a person's house.

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<sup>13</sup> 'The Constitutional Court has pronounced upon the nature of Applicant's constitutional obligations [in the *Grootboom* case]. It declared that the housing programme in the area in question was inconsistent with the Constitution, for its failure to make reasonable provision for people with no access to land, no roof over their heads, and who are living in intolerable conditions or crisis situations. It held that the local authority is under a duty to implement a programme such as the AMLSP with due regard to the urgency of the situations it is intended to address. Applicant's response, more than a year later, is:

- o in effect to acknowledge that it has not implemented any such programme;
- o to give no indication that it has any intention of implementing such a programme;
- o to insist that it will continue to deal with applicants purely on the basis of when their name was placed on the waiting list; and to deny that people who live in cars; in the streets; under the stairs at a school; in the bushes; or at places outside wherever they can find shelter at night, and who have literally nowhere they may lawfully live, are living in intolerable conditions or that they are in a crisis situations [sic]' (2003: 47)

<sup>14</sup> For instance, the Provincial Government reportedly spent R120 000 for legal opinions on the Lentegour Community Forum's dispute over the administration of their housing bills. In this case, the Province has finally accepted that they are in the wrong, that their billing records only exist from 2000, and that approximately 400 families should have title deeds because they have paid their debts and approximately 40 families are actually owed money. In all these cases, families were previously told that they had high arrears and faced evictions (Personal communication, P. Debba 4/04 and 6/04).

<sup>15</sup> For details on the case see the High Court (Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division) Judgment, Case 9617/02, 20 May 2003, in the matter between City of Cape Town (applicant) and 'The Persons Who Are Presently Unlawfully Occupying Erf 1800, Capricorn: Vrygrond Development' (first respondent) and 'The Persons Intending To Unlawfully Occupy Erf 1800, Capricorn: Vrygrond Development' (second respondent).

No, they [the City of Cape Town] wanted to evict them off the city limits. Police assistance wasn't good enough; they wanted the army as well to help them. (Murphy 21/06/04)

The Campaign experience with legal struggles is mixed. Successes have required, not only external assistance (in the Valhalla Park case the Legal Resource Centre, in Lentegeur the intervention by the Public Prosecutor and the Auditor General), but extensive energy and human and financial resources. Even where cases have been won, the possibilities for appeals and continued delays are large. At the same time, legal cases are a form of struggle which state officials take seriously and where there is a potential for progressive policy change in conjunction with a range of other forms of direct action.

### **Linking activism and research to challenge policy**

At the same time that the LCC was formed, the Campaign also initiated the Community Research Group (CRG) as a unit to support the development of research by activists on the issues that drive community organisations and the Campaign at a citywide level. The CRG has evolved slowly but steadily since its formation early in 2003<sup>16</sup>. It works on two premises: first, that research is critical to substantiate and shape activism in order to challenge policy; and, second, that activists research in their existing activities, but lack the resources and often the skills necessary to make research strategically useful. The CRG's vision and shape has changed from working on one project with a team of activists from different areas in 2003, to supporting a range of projects based on neighbourhood scale activism in particular community organisations in 2004. This shift from a single project to multiple projects reflects the dialectic between unity and diversity that frames the Campaign, according to our analysis.

The first project was difficult to sustain because the research project focused on the Campaign and its constituent organisations, but at a scale removed from the daily demands, pressures and interests that structured activists' community work and immediate politics. The majority work from and define themselves, mainly although not exclusively, at a grounded, neighbourhood level. In the second project initiated in 2004, eight community organisations chose research projects that focus on an issue central to the community organisation's activism<sup>17</sup>. The CRG has supported the area-based research with a small grant and through workshops and teaming organisations up with the coordinating committee and UCT-based researchers.

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<sup>16</sup> The local author has been a partner in this process.

<sup>17</sup> For instance: Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign – unjustness of criteria for food parcel distribution; St. Montague Village Association – unjustness of housing rental and rates bills/question of ownership in area; Valhalla Park United Civic Front – identification of backyarders as homeless and thus constituting part of City's obligation for housing in area (re: Neville Rudolph and 49 others v City of Cape Town, High Court Case, July 2003; Concerned Residents of Delft – Skills for Jobs in Delft (CBO initiated LED project); Vrygrond Action Committee – problem of lack of title deeds in RDP Vrygrond housing; Silvertown Anti-Eviction Committee – documentation of arrears experiences/consequences as challenge to narrow definitions of indigence in area; Driftsands Anti-Eviction Committee – drug use and youth impacts in Driftsands.

Although the 2004 project is still in process<sup>18</sup>, the research demonstrates the potential to support activism at four scales: first, through building local organisations; second, by affirming activists identities and experiences; third, by substantiating claims in order to challenge policies effectively; and, fourth, by facilitating sharing and learning between activists and organisations, thus building unity.

First activists have found that research focused on an immediately relevant issue has helped them build their local organisations. A Valhalla Park participant explains how her organisation's research on families living in backyards has helped link activists with residents:

Often people don't want to speak up or attend meetings, but by doing door-to-door research people were reassured of the process, and that the research would stay by us. So people were willing and happy to talk. They know us; they trust us; they have seen what we have done; they believe in us. As activists you must make sure people believe in you and that they trust you. ...In this case, the research has involved the development of a door-to-door survey to document the numbers of families living in backyards and the conditions that they negotiate<sup>19</sup>.

She and others working on the project have found that the research process had also opened their eyes to the community. She adds that:

We thought we knew what was going on in our area but we found out that there are actually many things that we didn't know. Now, we feel like we really know what's going on in people's lives and that people are suffering. We found out also that people don't know their rights. They really don't. For many it's not necessary that they go through what they are going through. It's because they don't know their rights. (Valhalla Park United Civic Front activist 24/9/04)

Although the project has not been completed yet, the research has stimulated activists to start a weekly soup kitchen to address immediate insufficiencies in food, for instance.

Other activists articulate the research process in a personal way. In the Silvertown Anti-Eviction Campaign's project to document the effects of arrears on different groups such as pensioners, single parents, and the unemployed in their area, an activist has found recognition and affirmation of his own struggles. He testifies that:

The stories I wrote are all true; they happened to me. There's no lies in them. Before joining the Anti-Eviction Campaign, I was actually looking for sympathy first. Nobody gives you sympathy. The reason I wrote these stories is because this is how it happened to me. I thought I was the only one. ... now I know other people have the same problems. There's comradeship in that. (Silvertown Anti-Eviction Campaign activist 24/9/04).

His organisation plans to use their in-depth interviews and life histories to produce a booklet for the community to open up discussion about arrears and the immense

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<sup>18</sup> The pilot round of the project is almost complete: drafts of reports have been written and a public launch and discussion of the research work was held on 24 September 2004.

<sup>19</sup> The Civic activists have designed the survey through the CRG project and piloted it. Students in an urban geography class at the University of Cape Town have worked with activists to implement the survey in July – September 2004.

stresses they generate in families. This booklet will accompany a document on City policies that affect Silvertown residents directly and residents' corresponding rights.

Although at this stage in the project it is premature to draw a direct relation between research and policy challenges, the Lentegeur Community Forum's documentation of their housing struggle illustrates the potential. A Lentegeur activist articulates the power of the written documentation produced through the CRG project:

[The research document] gives a clear understanding where the community comes from. In order to speak out we need the proof to speak to officials. We have that proof here [in the document]. We have that proof in our community. . . The research did wonders. If we didn't have the research, I would never have compiled my facts into this book [she holds up her report]. . . I'm part of Lentegeur and I'm part of this entire document [that tells the experience of Lentegeur's fight for title deeds and for the scrapping of unjust arrears]. This is a true document. . . Everybody can look at it and see our issues. *'Fear not when the people are near'*. The only thing is first *do* your research so you can back yourself up. (Lentegeur Community Forum activist 24/9/04)

Although the Community Forum has had an array of documents and personal experiences to support their claim that their housing bills are too high and that many residents should already own their houses, the research project has helped them compile these materials into an accessible document.

Lastly, the CRG project has proved a forum through which activists can operate at a Campaign level. This space is especially important in a context in which Campaign structures are in flux and thus not totally operational. CRG workshops and meetings have facilitated a sharing of experiences, strategies, and support. At the same time, the 2003 and 2004 projects have enabled the CRG's own organisational development and articulation of its agenda to locate ownership of research within the Campaign, rather than with externally based researchers and institutions. The CRG represents an initiative through which Campaign organisations use research to support activism, to develop research capacity, and to contribute to the Campaign's activism in proactive ways.

## **8. Conclusion: Scaling-up – the Campaign's symbolic significance**

Our analysis traces the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign's negotiation and building of unity in its diversity. We demonstrate that the diverse activists, organisations, and their more-often-than-not parallel experiences and demands, constitute the energy, creativity and potential the Campaign holds as a progressive post-apartheid movement of and for poor people. At the same time, such diversity produces fragmenting and often conflicting tendencies that challenge attempts to generate unity and organisational coherence, especially in a context with scarce financial resources more often than not in opposition to powerful well-resourced state and private sector institutions. Yet the Campaign's voice lies in its flexibility and in its broad but diverse base, in its ability to negotiate and to build unity from diversity.

David Harvey argues that privatisation and municipal cost recovery are at the cutting edge of contemporary processes of accumulation by dispossession. This produces political and social struggles, but these are diverse and inchoate, reflecting the fragmentary and contingent forms taken by accumulation by dispossession. This

general interpretation resonates with the experiences of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign. As outlined above, the campaign faces a number of organisational and material challenges in their attempts to merge diverse issues and political practices into a coherent, effective and united citywide organisation. However, the absence of a well-functioning organisation with extensive capacity to utilise the political opportunities structures of the liberal democratic state, should not be used to write off the WCAEC, or other social movements like it, as nothing more than a set of insignificant particularistic struggles. Most significantly, the Campaign's multifaceted 'war of position' disrupts the hegemony of neo-liberalism and cost recovery policies at the symbolic level.

In simplified terms, contemporary South Africa is marked by a competition over the right to be the legitimate representatives of 'poor people in struggle'. On the one hand are the hegemonic forces of the tripartite alliance and its civil society affiliates, with extensive symbolic capital rooted in and maintained through representations of the anti-apartheid struggle and post-apartheid political achievements<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand are the new social movements that mobilise communities in a continued struggle for socio-economic justice and substantial democracy in the context of post-apartheid liberal democracy and neoliberalism. Whereas the hegemonic force (the tripartite alliance of ANC, SACP and COSATU) possesses extensive objectified political capital, the power of movements like WCAEC lies in their ability to mobilise communities for public acts of resistance and speak on behalf of the working poor. This symbolic capital holds the potential of being transformed into institutionalised political power through political negotiations or future electoral contestation.

The clash between policies for economic liberalisation and struggles for socio-economic justice is an ongoing, multi-faceted struggle. The local and national politics it generates are diverse and dynamic with everyday civil society characterised by balancing acts between political engagement and opposition. While political engagement may grant access to material resources for community development, it may also undermine the legitimacy of the movement as an independent representative of struggling people. On the other hand, community mobilisation may empower the movement in dealing with state institutions, but may also lead to branding, as disruptive forces are made into a target for state repression. ANC representatives increasingly distinguish between positive (collaborating) social forces and disruptive (adversarial) 'ultra-revolutionaries'. The Campaign is increasingly placed in the latter category in the hegemonic political discourse (Makinana 2003; Ntabazalila 2002).

The political discourses of the 'old anti-apartheid' and 'new post-apartheid' movements revolve around shared reference points, as both claim to be the legitimate representatives of poor people that struggle for social justice. This congruence creates a political space for constructive collaboration. The present period seems, however, to be marked by a growing mistrust between civil society organisations and actors from the state. On the one hand, state officials and politicians interpret activities by organisations like the Campaign as by definition adversarial. On the other hand,

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<sup>20</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1981) identifies politics as a symbolic struggle to define existing power relations as legitimate or illegitimate. Possession of political capital, which is a form of symbolic capital that is specific to the political field, gives 'the spokesperson' the legitimate right to speak on behalf of 'the people'. Such capital can be the personal capital of the spokesperson (based on fame and popularity). However, it can also reside as 'objectified political capital' within permanent institutions – accumulated in the course of previous struggles and institutionalised in positions and instruments for mobilisation – and be granted to individuals as political delegates.

activists and organisations interpret state actions as, by definition, neo-liberal and therefore counter to the interests of the poor and progressive politics. This indicates that the diverse and fragmented political practices of community organisations within the Campaign constitute a challenge to the present hegemony at the symbolic level. Through the development of counter-hegemonic discourses and consciousness regarding people, their rights, and public resistance, the Campaign contributes to an alternative ‘common sense.’

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