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# Cato Manor: Cruel Past, Pivotal Future

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*Iain Edwards*

**Sophiatown in Johannesburg, District Six in Cape Town, and Cato Manor in Durban have become political metaphors for urban dispossession and resistance. Cato Manor has the most complex and violently contested history of land ownership and occupation of any area in Durban. In the early 1960s, the Durban Corporation began to expropriate the land from Indian owners and cleared the area of African shack dwellers and of most Indian residents. Despite the development of some Indian housing during the mid-1980s, the land still remains largely vacant. Africans are re-establishing themselves in shack settlements in the area.**

**The future of Cato Manor is now a major political controversy. The entrenched segregation of South Africa cities makes it extremely difficult to redress the legacy of past policies: all require massive investment in urban infrastructural amenities and low-income housing. Cato Manor and District Six are the only two large areas of urban land available for planned development of new housing within any South African city. Planning for the best use of Cato Manor is highly complex and has to take account of competing and contradictory claims to the land. The current state of negotiations over the future of the land is hardly a promising beginning. Cato Manor remains a highly contested urban space.**

Durban originated as an imperial port, serving Natal and the Witwatersrand. It quickly developed into one of the most segregated of South African cities. By the early twentieth century, the Durban Corporation was an innovative proponent of racial residential segregation. Policies developed and applied in Durban were to become models for many other southern African towns and cities and to be cornerstones of the Union Government's national policy of urban segregation. Through numerous by-laws restricting Indian land occupation and ownership and the equally notorious 'Durban System' which aimed to prevent African land ownership and restrict Africans to municipal barracks and hostel accommodation, the Durban Corporation endeavoured to control the pace and shape the nature of urbanisation. The apartheid state's urban policies followed existing principles of urban segregation and applied them in a more systematic and wide ranging fashion (Swanson 1976 & Maylam 1989).

Cato Manor Farm is a huge area of land located within five miles of the centre of Durban. Cato Manor has the most complex history of settlement, in terms of its class and racial composition, patterns of legal and illegal ownership, residence and occupation of any area in the city. It has been fiercely and often violently contested. Until the 1960s, Cato Manor Farm was home to many thousands of Indians,

Coloureds and Africans, the latter within shackland sprawls eventually numbering approximately 120,000 people. White settlement in Durban centred around the Bay and its immediate coastal surrounds and extended along the main routes which linked Durban to its hinterland (King 1990). Cato Manor Farm straddles the route to Pietermaritzburg and the Rand. Apartheid legislation identified Cato Manor for white occupation in 1958. By 1964 all African landowners and residents in the area had been removed. Similarly the state expropriated Indian-owned land in the area until the early 1980s and removed most of the Indian residents. Yet white settlement never occurred and for over twenty years the land remained largely vacant. As a result Cato Manor and the neighbouring African township of Chesterville are now surrounded by the still largely white suburbs of Bellair, Manor Gardens, Sherwood and Westville. Since 1958, white ratepayer groups have been vociferous in their opposition to any forms of black housing in Cato Manor. And yet throughout this period, African and Indian residents of the greater Durban area have refused to forget either their past lives in Cato Manor or to surrender claims to this land.

During the mid-1980s the state began to develop Indian housing schemes on some of the land at Cato Manor, despite massive protests. As the shacklands on Durban's periphery became more crowded and more violent, Africans once again began to erect shacks in parts of Cato Manor Farm. Political parties became drawn into a quest for a new structure plan for the whole of the area. These attempts have proved largely unsuccessful, causing increased tensions. The future of Cato Manor is again the source of huge controversy. For many urban residents, the way in which the new state develops Cato Manor will provide a crucial perspective on its broader intentions. The state will have to adjudicate between competing claims to the land and meet the needs of different groups for housing and access to urban land.

## **Cato Manor and the City to 1949**

In 1843 Britain declared Natal a colony. A year later George Christopher Cato took the five and a half thousand acres which henceforth became known as Cato Manor Farm as compensation for land owned by him on the shores of Durban Bay which had been expropriated by the new colonial government for military purposes. Cato, a leading trader, customs official, local representative of, among others, the United States and Norwegian governments and in 1854 Durban's first Mayor, acquired full legal ownership of the land. 'King' Cato sold much of his land and on his death the remainder of the estate was sold off both to whites and to 'passenger' class Indians who acquired it for residence, capital investment and speculation. While some large white-owned mansions were erected in the area, by the early 1930s most of Cato Manor Farm was Indian-owned.

A complex and culturally rich Indian community developed in the area. Landowners came from both a growing middle class professional and trading stratum and from the Indian working class which had quickly understood the value of immovable property. Much of the land was also subdivided into long narrow strips rented out to market gardeners. Cato Manor Farm quickly became one of Durban's main sources of fresh fruit and vegetables. Recollections from both white and Indian residents during this time all give the images of lines of carefully tended vegetable patches, groves of sweetly smelling avocado, mango and pawpaw plantations and the daily early morning clatter of donkey carts carrying produce to the city market. It is impossible to find memories that do not evoke images of a nirvana of happiness, hard work and dreams of the future.

Within this community the vast majority of people were poor or very poor tenants. Whilst some market gardeners managed to purchase property, the majority did not. Likewise most Indian residents did not own their own land. Notions of community and identity were grounded on reciprocities based around moral conscience, awareness of and respect for material and social difference, and leadership through the power of loyal patrons. Wealth lay in the hands of the few: lawyers, traders, teachers, priests – categories which often overlapped with substantial land ownership. Cato Manor Farm, still beyond the city boundary, was of crucial importance within the local Indian community. They erected places of worship, founded schools and cultural and sporting institutions. With a local leadership, a wide politics from conservative to progressive came into being upon a bedrock concern for the preservation and development of Cato Manor as Indian. From the late nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth, racial restrictions over urban residence in Natal were more often directed against Indians than Africans.

Africans continued to live in the area, not only as labourers. After the 1906 Bhambatha uprising, the Durban Corporation developed the 'Durban System' to restrict African residence to officially approved locations. For many Africans, access to land on the periphery of the city was crucial. By the 1930s Africans, mainly from the kholwa, Christian, educated elite had purchased freehold title to property in the Chateau and Good Hope Estates which bordered on Cato Manor Farm. Up until the 1940s these areas retained a largely peri-urban character.

From the late 1930s and early 1940s three processes had a vital impact on life in Cato Manor Farm. First, in 1937 Cato Manor Farm became one of the 'Added Areas' incorporated into Durban. The municipality developed both an economic and sub-economic housing scheme for Indians in the area, but refused to provide any substantial urban infrastructure. Second, during the same period white anti-Indian agitation led to renewed legislation curbing Indian land ownership and commercial activity in the centre of Durban. For Indians, Cato Manor became something of a safe haven. Third, war-time economic expansion drew thousands of African male workers to the city. They came individually, with families or in large groups and some settled in Cato Manor. Some simply occupied land, then came to agreements with Indian landowners and built their own shacks. In other cases, landowners were also shacklords. However most Africans chose to live on state-owned land closer to the main areas of employment around the harbour. During the mid-1940s the municipality and central government harassed and evicted them from these shack areas and many moved into Cato Manor Farm.

In the highly charged political climate of the late 1940s, Cato Manor Farm became a volatile space. The Durban Corporation was intent upon developing large scale plans to both control and restrict African and Indian urban residence and economic activity and re-assert municipal authority, these attempts were resisted. The Natal Indian Congress had become rejuvenated and radicalised by support from trade unions and urban social movements in Indian residential areas actively struggling for increased urban amenities and rights. Its leadership sought closer links with African National Congress leaders. The ANC was badly organised with a pitiful membership in Durban. A. W. G. Champion, its Natal leader, treated the organisation as his private fiefdom, was anti-Indian and espoused a belligerent and conservative form of Zulu populism.

Power within African working class politics lay not in formal political movements but among localised community groups, squatter associations, consumer and co-

operative societies, women's associations, church groups and cultural and sporting bodies. Political leaders, including activists in the Congress Youth League, competed for influence. Mass meetings in hostels, townships and shacklands rang with speeches attacking the municipality and claims for full economic and political power in Durban. Specific demands emerged: state provision of schools and freehold urban housing, proper residential amenities and commercial trading licenses. A groundswell of political activity not only challenged African political leadership but also white municipal power, the Corporation's own African trading and beer hall operations, existing private commercial activities and the nature of property ownership in the city. These demands for urban citizenship also acquired a strong nationalist and racist dimension.

The developing shackland society in Cato Manor was drawn into these politics within which it became a leading force. The main African shacklands in Cato Manor Farm were located in the vast Mkhumbane and Wiggins areas. By 1948 few market gardeners remained in these areas. Indian land owners now rented sites out to Africans. As the authority of African shacklords and illegal traders grew, so the *de facto* authority of Indian owners grew less effective. Likewise, as the municipality became increasingly reluctant to enter the area, so Mkhumbane quickly became a vibrant area, home to a widening range of cultural and illegal commercial activities. Mkhumbane became a symbol of victory, or at least of the imminence of victory for African urban settlement over established urban interests and a lesson in the virtues of assertive struggle. In addition to conflicts between African tenants and shacklords, among the competing African shackshop traders and licensed Indian shop owners and between shacklords, Indian and African, the central issue was whether Cato Manor was Indian or African.

At the end of January 1949 a minor fracas involving an African youth and an Indian trader in an Indian trading locale in Durban quickly led to gangs of Africans attacking Indians and looting Indian shops. Violence soon spread to Cato Manor, where looting and assault turned into a pogrom. Instigated and led by African entrepreneurs, shack mobs and male migrant workers, Cato Manor Farm became a killing ground. African shacklands became consolidated in the Mkhumbane area and Africans proclaimed victory; Mkhumbane had been 'liberated from outsiders'. Mkhumbane was 'now ours by right of conquest'; Mkhumbane was 'home'. Each year, on the anniversary of the riots, shack residents commemorated the deaths of Africans who had died in the riots because 'it was through their sacrifice that we are where we are today'. These celebrations were organised by the Zulu Hlanganani, a leading cooperative association for shackshop traders and shacklords. Vigilante groups formed to protect the newly seized territory from unwanted outside interference. Mkhumbane's leaders, the self-styled 'Mayors', a significantly modern and non-chiefly term, called for the Durban City Council to recognise Africans' desire for full urban rights in Mkhumbane (Edwards and Nuttall 1990). These were claims which pitted African shack dwellers directly against both the City Council and Indian landowners and raised substantial problems for Durban's African political leadership.

### **Cato Manor and Apartheid Urban Planning**

The outcome of the riots in Cato Manor settled nothing. Under the National Party government, the South African state was to move decisively to restructure black urban life. By the late 1950s the essential elements for a new African urban labour and housing policy and new residential zoning plans for the whole of Durban had been

developed. Local and central state officials recognised that the success of these plans lay largely in their ability to clear Cato Manor Farm. This would depend upon coercive powers to back a vast array of statutory legislative enactments often dating back many decades.

Central to these plans was a desire to increase the capitalisation of inner city land by clearing it of blacks and allowing white ownership and residence (Mabin 1992). In terms of the Durban City Council Group Areas proclamations, the whole of Cato Manor Farm was zoned for exclusive white residential occupation and ownership. All Indian residents would be removed to Merebank or the new township of Chatsworth. African residents would either be evicted from Durban or resettled to two new townships: to the north the municipal township of KwaMashu, or to Umlazi, the Union Government scheme to the south. Landowners and residents in Chateau and Good Hope would also be removed as, eventually, all residents of Chesterville. KwaMashu and Umlazi would both include single male hostel accommodation and family housing. Some housing could be purchased but no freehold title would be granted. Chatsworth, KwaMashu and Umlazi would be planned according to British New Town planning principles. Cato Manor was to be the subject of a massive programme of social engineering.

These plans provoked resistance. Congress Youth Leaguers were impressed by the political militancy of the Mkhumbane shack residents. By 1952, having taken over the provincial ANC, now under the presidency of their candidate, Chief Albert Luthuli, they developed a two-pronged strategy for Mkhumbane. First, they focused on grassroots issues in order to acquire active support from shack dwellers. The main demand of the Mkhumbane shack dwellers was for permanent residential rights in Mkhumbane. Second, they aimed to structure and discipline that militant support base in ways which would provide the shacklands with the degree of proper leadership whose absence, it was widely believed, had led to the riots of 1949.

At the very time when the ANC and the N.I.C. embarked on the Defiance Campaign against discriminatory legislation like curfews, pass laws and urban segregation, neither organisation was able to embrace fully the demands of Mkhumbane shack dwellers. To accept them meant advocating taking land away from existing Indian owners. The issue produced tensions within and between the respective leadership of the N.I.C. and ANC and between such leaders and grassroots constituents in Cato Manor. During this exact period further attacks on Indian property in Cato Manor occurred. The political problems for both the ANC and N.I.C. did not go unnoticed by municipal officials who endeavoured to use these indications of political weakness to gain the initiative in the shacklands. In 1953-54, the municipality gained state approval for the development of the Cato Manor Emergency Camp as a temporary measure to exert control over the shacklands prior to their final destruction. The power of the Indian landowner and African shacklord was to be broken and shack life brought closer to the desired ideal of single nuclear family residence. In terms of the Slums Act, the municipality began to expropriate land occupied by shacks in the Mkhumbane area of Cato Manor. As the municipality acquired full ownership, the land would be re-allocated for individual shack sites. The existing housing warrens were to be destroyed, existing shacks re-built according to official standards or sites provided with municipally-built shacks using confiscated shack materials. Sub-tenancy was to be strictly curtailed. African tenants across the whole of Cato Manor Farm were to be relocated within the confines of the Emergency Camp. All those resettled would pay rent to the municipality.

As landowner the municipality was legally obliged to provide water and sanitation, roadworks and civic amenities: a beer hall, sports grounds and trading facilities for approved African traders. The costs of all these services were borne either by site rentals or subsidised from the Native Revenue Account. The services provided were totally inadequate to the number of people the municipality attempted to settle into the Mkhumbane area. Residents were to elect representatives to a Cato Manor Welfare and Development Board. This body would be the only officially recognised channel of communication between the local state and shack residents. In dividing the shacklands up into electoral wards, the municipality used the already existing differently named community areas within Mkhumbane. Because of the temporary nature of the scheme this body would not have even the highly limited powers given to Advisory Boards in legally constituted townships and hostels. In these ways control, decency and urban progress would come to come to Mkhumbane.

This never really happened. A host of legal problems and consequent delays surrounded attempts to expropriate land. Politically active lawyers jammed courtrooms with legally nuanced arguments against land expropriation (SPP 1983). Such moves supplemented the abilities of shacklords and illegal traders to maintain real power on the ground. The shacklords and traders gained near complete and uncontested election to the Cato Manor Welfare and Development Board (CMWDB) as ward members of areas they had long controlled. After some of their grouping had temporarily sought political affiliation in various conservative, racist and sometimes National Party-funded organisations, most shack leaders drew closer to the ANC. By 1958, when the ANC was to apply the 'M' Plan structures to Mkhumbane, the organisation took over the same community areas and electoral ward divisions devised by the municipality and used to great effect by the existing shack leadership. Up until the late 1950s, when the state began removing people from the shacklands, there was very little overt political activity within Mkhumbane. ANC branches were few and badly organised. Co-operatives, women's associations, church groups, trading societies and a range of community activities from creches to vigilante policing gangs continued. As some areas acquired improved facilities so community representatives demanded further improvements while other areas made strong demands for their own resources. Power relations between police, local state and shack leaders in Mkhumbane seemed to have been resolved into a maybe uneasy but mutually acceptable equilibrium.

This uneasy balance was quickly broken. The municipality forced more and more people into the Emergency Camp. Health conditions deteriorated and, by 1957, a typhoid epidemic swept through the shacklands. At the same time the municipality issued pass books, influx control raids and, in early 1959, shack demolition and mass removals. The Congress Alliance planned massive opposition to the state's policies. The first signs of increased tensions in Mkhumbane came from within the CMWDB. Faced with the offer of improved residential housing in KwaMashu and Umlazi, the CMWDB became rent with infighting and continually split, reformed and degenerated into fractious splinters; the structures of community power in Mkhumbane were being shattered.

Only men could be legal tenants or purchasers of formal residential housing. If they qualified for the privileges of urban residence in terms of 'Section 10' of the 1952 Amendments to the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1945, they could choose whether to live in hostel or family housing. If the latter, then they could choose their spouse. Such urban facilities would only be available to those who could afford the rentals or monthly purchasing payments.

The social divisions among Africans in Cato Manor were cruel. Some wanted and could afford to pay for both housing and freehold land; others wanted and could afford to rent state-provided housing while others could not afford to either purchase or rent housing without being able to sub-let or engage in commercial activities which would be restricted in any township development. However, the long standing key demand for such facilities to be allowed or created in Mkhumbane was clearly not on offer. Others faced more personal dilemmas: although cohabiting with women in Mkhumbane, they desired to bring their country wives into township housing; or to move singly into male hostel accommodation. Many were illegally in the city and could never afford nor be eligible for any formal housing. Others, such as shacklords, illegal traders and other entrepreneurs had absolutely no vested material interest or desire to see the essential structure of shackland society disturbed. Under this pressure, shackland society collapsed. Those very requirements for urban life which shacklands residents, and particularly women, had demanded during the 1940s were being granted, but under almost unendurable conditions. Outbreaks of violence increased dramatically.

The ANC seemed in no position to offer any immediate solution. Aside from some well organised and active workers' clubs comprising the South African Congress of Trade Union-affiliated trade union members, contacts between ANC leaders and Mkhumbane were most often via shacklords who supported the ANC. It was only the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) who had managed to sustain some considerable power in Mkhumbane. When in June 1959, Mkhumbane shebeen queens stormed the Cato Manor beer hall, the ANCWL was well placed to organise a massive beer hall boycott and raiding campaign through the whole of the city. Events quickly gathered pace as strikes, marches and meetings made the period from 1959 through 1962 the most sustained period of urban conflict Durban had yet experienced. The ANC-led campaigns in Durban during this period acquired very substantial support from people in Mkhumbane. However this support was often conditional upon ANC assistance in resolving their own dilemmas. Beneath the public displays of loyalty were clear signs of competing and conflicting interests. By this stage however, shack society in Mkhumbane was beyond saving and with the State of Emergency in March 1960, shack removals to KwaMashu and then later to Umlazi continued unabated (Edwards 1989). Developed as part of Durban, in April 1977, KwaMashu joined Umlazi as part of KwaZulu. Legally the African residents of Mkhumbane were now no longer part of the city of Durban.

Municipal policy against Indian landowners and residents was much less complicated than its plans to resettle Africans and certainly aroused a very different political response. The removal of Indians from Cato Manor Farm created deep opposition and resentment within the Indian community in the area and became an issue within the broader struggles of the later 1950s and early 1960s. The established community line was against any state interference in residential life in Cato Manor Farm. The prices paid for expropriation of Indian-owned property bordered on legalised theft (SPP 1983). Yet, the majority of Indian residents of Cato Manor Farm were tenants who were ultimately willing and eager to accept state developed freehold or rented accommodation. Some 40,000 Indians were removed from Cato Manor.

By the mid-1960s, the state had cleared away all vestiges of the African shacklands and many of the Indian residents. However, the state was never able fully to achieve its aims. As with the legacy of conflict in and over Cato Manor Farm, the reasons for this failure are significant. These provide important lessons for relations between the state and existing or prospective new residents of Cato Manor Farm.



For a while there were rumours about white insider deals of land purchase for speculation. Some parts of Mkhumbane were provided with essential water, drainage and electrical mains connections suitable for eventual white suburban residence. The capital costs of some of these developments were borne by the Native Revenue Account. Yet the state was never able to develop the land for whites. Cato Manor's lack of any clear white future effectively negated any substantial white property market interest in investment. This was the result of three negative forces, which in themselves reveal how much the failures of apartheid legislative and political capacity have often had as much impact as their numerous and brutal interventions. At the very moment when the state cleared Indian ownership and residence, the state created a distinct Indian 'race' group and sought to gain some legitimacy amongst Indians through establishing a co-optive body to represent Indian opinion. All the leading Indian politicians prepared to stand for this body made their continued loyalty almost totally conditional upon Cato Manor being eventually developed for Indian housing or, as Mr J. N. Reddy announced at the time, 'returned to the Indian community'. Yet the state was never able to accede to such requests. Political benefits which may have accrued from allowing this were continually counterbalanced by implacable opposition from neighbouring white ratepayer and local authority bodies. Finally, because of the continued shortage of African formal housing, the state was never able to clear Chesterville, which was to remain a 'black spot'.

By the late 1970s the state, who now owned most of the land in Cato Manor, was unable to develop a white future for the area. Whites did not want Indians in Cato Manor and yet, because of a lack of clear policy there always seemed to be more satisfactory areas for privately-owned white suburban residence. Cato Manor was thus never completely cleared of Indian residents. In November 1979 approximately one fifth of Cato Manor Farm was deproclaimed white and in May 1980 was gazetted for Indian residential ownership and occupation. At the heart of this area were around five hundred Indian families who had never been removed. The state, supported by certain Indian political and business interests believed that Indian housing in this area could only proceed through the eviction of these Indian residents and land-owners. The Cato Manor Residents Association (CMRA) was formed. The CMRA accepted an Indian future for Cato Manor, called for the suspension of all evictions, no public auction of sites, housing for all Indian income groups and for priority to be given to ex-Indian residents of Cato Manor. Amidst massive public campaigns and dead-locked meetings involving the Durban Corporation, the South African Indian Council and various central state departments, the CMRA and other progressive political bodies called for the state to subsidise the cost of low-income Indian housing. In the mid-1980s, the Indian House of Delegates began developing an Indian housing estate around this historically resilient core. It was through the impending development of this core area that the contemporary politically charged debate about the future of Cato Manor Farm developed.

## **Present Problems**

During the mid- to late 1980s the House of Delegates received state permission to open a small area of the 'Umkumbaan' region of Cato Manor Farm to private Indian land purchase. The House of Delegates also gained authority to develop an Indian housing estate in the Bonella and Cato Crest areas of Cato Manor Farm in order to alleviate the very real shortage of Indian middle income housing in Durban. At the same time the central state was engaged in planning a middle income black residential freehold housing scheme in the old areas of Chateau and Good Hope

Estates. Development of the African housing scheme, which was never publicly announced, has barely begun. The private Indian scheme has proved a failure. Although some very substantial houses have been built, the scheme never seemed viable, faltering partly amidst public allegations of bribery and political patronage but mainly because of the lack of a private property market in Cato Manor Farm. Cato Manor still lacked a secure Indian future. Such a future was dependent upon state development of the planned Indian housing estate. It was this very scheme that attracted the most criticism. Even after the repeal of the Group Areas Acts, the House of Delegates still attempted to use the shortage of Indian housing as a means to political patronage, maintaining an Indian-specific housing waiting list and allocating housing in a corrupt fashion. Political organisations, including the ANC and the NIC warned that development of the scheme was very dangerous and called for a politically acceptable structure plan for the whole of Cato Manor Farm. Neither party was prepared to publicly commit themselves to specific details. The House of Delegates development continued.

At the same time a private housing company put forward plans for a relatively elite non-freehold high density town house scheme in the Cato Crest area of Cato Manor Farm. This private market scheme would be open to any who could afford it. It attracted huge controversy and successful opposition from groupings across the political spectrum from neighbouring white ratepayer associations, town planners and progressive political and community groups like the CMRA.

In the early 1990s, the Built Environment Support Group (BESG) at the University of Natal formulated a dramatically new policy and structure plan for low-cost and middle-income housing to be developed in most of Cato Manor Farm. The scheme would be non-racial, but would ultimately cater largely for Africans. There would be no individual freehold land or housing ownership; rather the whole settlement would be run by a trust controlled directly by the residents. Intimately involved with low-cost housing schemes elsewhere in the Durban Functional Region, and working closely with various civic and community organisations, BESG endeavoured to gain approval from the various branches of the state. They failed, a victim of state infighting, cynical indifference to an innovative approach to urban housing and state unwillingness to consult with community groups. Yet a black residential future for Cato Manor Farm looked increasingly likely. The neighbouring white Westville municipality and other local white politicians suggested that vast areas of Cato Manor Farm should be left vacant and developed as a nature conservation area. In such ways 'green' issues often enter the politics of the new South Africa.

By 1987, with violence and shack overcrowding of the outskirts of the Durban Functional Region, Africans began to occupy and build shacks in Cato Manor, particularly in the Wiggins and Cato Crest area. Plot sizes differed; some houses were of brick and iron, others ramshackle. Some new residents justified their stake by claiming past history, either familial or a vaguer form of collective occupation. This was exactly the area intended for the elite private scheme. Instead of an upwardly mobile non-racial property scheme, came shacklands. Squatters often came in organised groups, often with encouragement from both the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Political organisations sought to control shack development, acquire support and provide housing and were growing impatient with the slow pace of decision-making over Cato Manor Farm.

By the early 1990s the pace of shack development quickened. What makes the land of Cato Manor Farm so attractive to shackland development is not simply that the area is

temporarily less violent than alternatives, close to the city or served by relatively efficient transport services. This land is socially unencumbered. The land has not yet acquired the welter of confusing claims of power, obligation, reciprocity and simple and brutal oppression that characterise life in more established but unstable shacklands. Because of its locality, Cato Manor Farm has no controlling chiefdom that can influence ways in which settlements develop and power is sustained. Spatially and socially vacant land creates an opportunity for freedom and social mobility furthering the process of shackland development.

Although many shack residents are unemployed, others are fully employed in the formal sector or active within informal sectors. Civic and community groups have developed ranging from women's clubs, traders' and self-help associations to vigilante groups and criminal gangs to local branches of the main political parties. The activities and functions of these inter-related groups encompass a spectrum running from development and residential planning, community policing, religious association to grassroots political mobilisation and control. Leadership is diverse and complex: from political activists to local strongmen to shacklords to criminals.

Increasing shack development and the faltering and controversial House of Delegates scheme made it apparent that the state not only lacked a broad structure plan for Cato Manor but was unable to address the scandalous shortage of housing in the Durban area. Yet again, the future of Cato Manor was inextricably inter-linked with the whole city. The Cato Manor Development Association (CMDA), incorporating representatives from state authorities, town planners and some political parties, including the ANC and IFP was formed. However, the CMDA was too divided to provide a clear overall policy, and became a focus of political conflict with shackland civic groupings claiming increased power within the CMDA.

Towards the end of 1993 the whole Cato Manor question acquired a new complexity. African residents from the overcrowded nearby Chesterville township and others from further afield took occupation of some four hundred houses which were completed and allocated but unoccupied in the House of Delegates' Bonella scheme. There was little actual violence and the police refused to intervene during the occupation. It soon became clear that the occupation had been organised. Street committees quickly appeared. They endeavoured to maintain control over the process of occupation and provided a public show of orderliness. Leaders emerged, refuting any notion of impending anarchy. Some of the leaders were identified as local gang leaders. Some claimed affiliation to the ANC. The ANC denied this but there were clear links between local ANC structures and some leaders of the occupation. Many of the new residents, when interviewed by the local press, complained of housing shortages, stressed their desire for non-racial housing allocations, tried to assure Indian residents that they would prevent any criminal activity and expressed a willingness to pay for their houses. On investigation it quickly became clear that entrepreneurs were often occupying more than one house, some were being sub-let, others taken by parties of youths and some by nuclear and extended nuclear families. Many occupants simply could never afford to pay the actual prices for the houses. The new occupants called for the state to provide these houses at prices which the new residents could afford.

Cato Manor Farm is now a major political issue, long beyond the capabilities of local planners and groups like the CMDA to control. It will not be easy to solve. Statements about Cato Manor being 'Indian' have become more muted as the dangers of racially exclusive housing schemes became clear. Yet Cato Manor's future still produces

tensions between major political parties and within neighbouring ratepayer groups with some white residents now rejecting any *carte blanche* resistance to low-cost black housing in the area. In November 1993 Nelson Mandela made the first of two visits to the Durban area and called for the illegal occupation of Indian houses in Cato Manor to end. A similar occupation of houses allocated to coloureds had also occurred at the same time in Cape Town. An outcry gathered into a national electoral issue. A week later Mandela re-visited Durban for a Peoples' Forum meeting and to visit the shacklands and housing schemes in Cato Manor; the African residents of Cato Manor Farm declined to meet with him and that part of an otherwise hugely successful campaigning tour was cancelled.

## Perspectives on Current Problems

The history of Cato Manor Farm does yield important lessons. Cato Manor Farm's history is too complex to yield up exclusive ethnic rights of occupation, either in terms of colonial and subsequent legal rights of land ownership or rights of legal or illegal residence. Such claims are historically partial and politically dangerous. The iniquities perpetrated against Indians under the Group Areas Acts should not take precedence over the statutory provisions of the Native Urban Areas Acts which prohibited Africans from owning any city land. A policy which seeks to restore land or offer material recompense to expropriated landowners is naive, highly selective, will prove unworkable and may well not be in the best interests of an effective long-term policy to provide housing for people without adequate housing.

In shantytowns, local community associations and the activities of political parties are highly intertwined and often assume the functions of a local state. Shacklands are not simply home to the most marginal within urbanising society. Patronage networks produce the 'self-made man', the shacklord and the political boss, often highly reliant on the coercive powers of loyal gang-type groupings. This is not the social order of middle class urban life, but nor is shack society anarchic (Cooper 1982). Shack society can be extremely volatile, and shack dwellers can often display considerable and even violent antipathy towards neighbouring formal housing suburbs. But shack residents are not urban political radicals (Portes 1972). Shack residents most often tend only to unite and become a political force during periods of initial settlement and in confrontation to any impending threat to their existence (Castells 1983). However, when faced with state attempts to improve housing facilities and thereby restructure shack life, shacklands can become highly turbulent places. Residents have very different material resources and urban aspirations. Shack leaders need not necessarily have any stake in the provision of formal housing.

The most typical relations between the state, political parties and shackland society are those of repression, clientilism and the co-optation of shack leaders. Clientilism has been most effective in both Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Even when promised for state improvements in urban infrastructure fail to materialise, clientilism seems to continue with political activity within shacklands being significantly low (Gay 1990). The incorporation of shack leaders within wider political and state structures gives political parties an important measure of grassroots control, encourages loyalty amongst shack leaders who may then compete for access to state developmental resources for their shackland. Whilst this might secure political peace it can easily arise through and result in violent competition between political parties and suppression within the shacklands. Furthermore, this process legitimates and strengthens existing, male dominated and oppressive

shackland power relations (Eskstein 1990), a status quo which has been recognised as developmentally counter-productive (Simon 1992).

## Conclusion

The structure of South African cities no longer has any basis in segregationist law. The Group Areas Acts have gone as have influx control, pass law statutes and the Natives Urban Areas Acts. A private freehold property market has come, as yet incompletely, to many of South African's black formal townships. Shacklands, for long both banished to and viewed as a problem of the urban periphery, now exist in the centre of all South African cities. The very notion of a city is being challenged, with vast socio-demographic changes giving rise to huge urban and urbanising settlements in and around the city core. The post-apartheid future of these urban and urbanising Functional Regions is far from clear.

The Durban area is now the fourth largest urban area in sub-Saharan Africa, with approximately 3.8 million inhabitants. The vast majority of African residents of this area live in shacklands; urban amenities in these areas are paltry. Residents in these areas are key political constituents within those urban and peri-urban areas of Natal where the vast majority of the region's citizens live. Questions of social, economic and political transformation cut deepest when the issue of land policy is involved. People need land if they are to provide, often through desperate struggle, the basic means of shelter and thereby gain some control over their daily lives. The reconstructing of South African cities requires massive investment in urban infrastructural amenities and low income housing. Whilst a new state formulates and applies such developmental policies it is highly likely that the class, although not the racial character of the old colonial core residential single site housing areas in cities like Durban will remain largely unaffected.

Cato Manor Farm sits right in the expanded core of the old white city – an historical legacy and contemporary problem. Because of its history, locality and uniquely contested emptiness, the land of Cato Manor Farm has given much to political debate on transition and reconstruction within a city where a white community imposed innovative, brutal and sustaining racial segregation. There is the very real possibility of a major state initiated residential development project to transform the nature of cities. The recent history of attempts to develop a structure plan for Cato Manor Farm is hardly promising. If this situation does not change very soon, the land will become occupied, any long term planning will become almost impossible and an enormous opportunity would have been lost forever. If unplanned shacklands or planned low-cost black housing does develop in the area, relationships between civil society, political parties, the local state, legal rights and obligations of ownership and occupation in Cato Manor, the relationship between residents and capitalist formal waged labour routines and the operation of the property market will be of a vastly more complex and different character to any yet seen as permanently part of the old colonial core area of Durban.

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