A LONG WAY HOME

Following 26 years of core housing consolidation
and the struggle to achieve a sense of dignity

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Abstract

This article analyses the provision of core housing in Khayelitsha, specifically taking into account the residents' response to the state's delivery of core housing. It aims to explore to what extent the South African government's approach to providing large-scale housing addresses the relevant demands in the context of rapid urbanisation. The core housing concept originated in the 1950s, and has once again become part of the housing debate. Typically, core houses are built with the intention that residents will subsequently extend and improve their homes. However, not much is known about how people responded to this type of housing delivery over the long term, and how it impacts on their lives, particularly on the future of 'adult descendants'.

The article covers the perspectives of families who have inhabited core housing plots for over two decades. The focal point is therefore on the main households living on these plots, with careful attention to household composition and both constraints and opportunities in the use of the plot from the point of view of the people themselves. Since the initial super-structure provided is so small, it almost certainly implies housing stress. Therefore extension of the core house is inherent to this concept. Several strategies of how people have been able to realise the consolidation of their homes are discussed, including ingenuity in response to internal densification on the site.

As interest in the concept of core housing intensifies, it is crucial to integrate the lessons learnt in the past and engage in a quest for more effective implementation. The findings in this article are discussed to determine their implications for core housing programmes at scale. Highlighting several challenges, it is argued that the core housing concept has the potential to be further shaped into an effective tool with which governments can guide urbanisation.

Keywords: core housing, housing stress, incremental housing, consolidation, urbanisation, state delivery, South Africa

Introduction

Recently in the field of urban development there has been renewed and growing interest in the potential for core housing to perform an enabling role in incremental shelter production[1]. The rationale is to re-establish planned incremental housing as a proactive strategy to meet the housing demand in rapidly

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[1] The establishment of a platform to combine expertise on provided incremental housing is possibly the best proof of this renewed attention. The Global University Consortium Exploring Incremental Housing was presented first at the UN World Urban Forum in Rio de Janeiro in 2010 and is based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), US. Thus far the revival in interest appears to be mainly architectural.

urbanising cities to complement slum upgrading – some even see it as an alternative to the supposed inefficiencies of slum upgrading (e.g. Beattie et al. 2010). Typically, core houses are structures built with the intention that residents or their direct agents will subsequently extend and improve their homes. The core housing concept originated from a series of philosophical debates and piloted interventions around self-help between 1940s and 1960s[2], and has returned to prominence in the housing debate.

As interest in the concept intensifies, it is crucial to integrate the lessons learnt in the past. To avoid a sense of *déjà-vu* in relation to the classic pilots of the 1970s (such as described in Wakely 2010, UN Human Settlements Programme 2005, Pugh 2001), it is important to seek more effective implementation and to link the concept to contemporary debates on urban development.

Since 1994 South Africa adopted a policy of building state-funded mass housing which residents are expected to extend. The effects of this policy have been reviewed by several critics (Smit 1999, Gilbert 2004, Tomlinson 2011). However, not much is known about how people respond to this type of housing delivery over the long term, and how it impacts on people at a household level.

Combining a broad array of data, resources and fieldwork material, this article analyses the provision of core housing in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, specifically taking into account what the stories and trends reveal about people's responses to the state's delivery of the designed environment. Working from the evidence from this housing project originally built in the early 1980s, it moves to the present policy era aiming to explore in what respects the South African large-scale core housing approach offers an example of how to address housing demand in the context of rapid urbanisation.

The article does not deal directly with issues of tenure, which are discussed extensively elsewhere (see UN-Habitat 2005), nor does it debate architectural design of the initial house, in which case the focus would remain on densities of the planned environment and housing conditions directly after occupation (see Gren 2006, Harber 2010). Instead, the scope of this article takes the plot – the piece of land on which the core house is built - as a starting point for the analysis, following it over a time span of more than two and a half decades. It is only after selection of the plots, that careful attention is given to household composition and the use of these plots from the point of view of the people themselves. Tenure comes in only indirectly, when a distinction is made between people who own the plot and those who rent a place on the same plot from these owners.

One form of consolidation of core housing, namely extending by adding usable space, is particularly central to the intention of core housing. This is because the initial superstructure provided is so small that in many cases it means the occupants experience housing stress from the time of occupation or within the first few years. Disproportionate attention in literature is focused on the physical extension of core housing in the analysis of the consolidation process but little emphasis on the lived experience of the occupants (other than as self-builders). It is hoped that several indicators, which have been developed throughout this case study, may inspire further, broader detailed studies.

The article comprises two sections. The first presents highlights from the case study analysis. It starts with an outline of the case study and the methodology used in the 2011 fieldwork, followed by a broad impression of the people living on these plots, with particular attention given to 'adult descendants'. The focus then moves to the extension process of the main household, which is analysed to determine any identifiable trends in the use of material and the spatial organisation of buildings on the plot. The pace of consolidation is addressed, which in this context seems to be especially slow. This part of the article closes with a discussion of several strategies that people have devised to be able to realise extensions to their homes. An insider's light is shed on the considerable effort put in by families to ensure they have reasonable shelter and a sense of dignity. It is a process which the families refer to as their 'struggle'.

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[2] For an extensive discussion, see Napier (2002). The very first land and utilities as well as core housing pilots took place in Puerto Rico and are discussed by Harris (1998).

In the second section of the article, findings from the case study are discussed to determine their implications for core housing programmes at scale. Highlighting several challenges, it is argued that the core housing concept, i.e. the serviced plot and the core, has the potential to be further shaped into one of a number of effective tools with which governments can guide rapid urbanisation and accommodate new household formation.

The case study and methodology

The establishment of the township of Khayelitsha - Xhosa for 'new home' - was announced in 1983. A 3,200 hectares site was levelled to prepare the way for the project that was intended to exist of 'towns' and within them 'villages' (resulting in neighbourhood names such as T1V2) for the prospected eventual 250,000 to 300,000 people. Provincial and central government established the project along with a team of professionals who designed and managed the building of the neighbourhood (Napier 2002:88).

Housing is always interwoven with politics, but in this particular housing project perhaps even more so. The Flats (see Figure 1) are described by some as 'Apartheid's dumping ground' since from the 1950s race-based legislation either forced non-white people out of more central urban areas designated for white people and into government-built townships in the Flats, or made living in the central area illegal, forcing many people designated as 'Black' and 'Coloured' into informal settlements elsewhere in the Flats. Khayelitsha was deliberately located beyond the urban edge of Cape Town at the time, at a distance of 35 km from the centre; east of Mitchell's Plan and South of the N2 freeway (Napier 2002). Clearly this is less marketable land for development; the site's geography is typical of the Cape Flats and has problems of wind-blown sand, a high water table, flooding, and lack of vegetation (Napier 2002; Dewar & Uytenbogaardt 1991).

Figure 1 Cape Flats. The oval (long axis about 25km) roughly encompasses the Cape Flats.

Source: land stat in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Flats [Accessed: August 30, 2011].

The case study presented here focuses on what apartheid planners at the time labelled 'site T1V2'[3] – a rather soulless reference that has no significance for either residents or planners today. Its remnants still exist today in the use of T1V2 as the postal code for the area. After the demise of apartheid, the site was officially renamed Eyethu. The neighbourhood is known by the residents as part of the 'original' Khayelitsha.

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[3] Town 1, Village 2.

T1V2 included 5 000 houses on plots covering 160 m^2 to 180 m^2, on which cores of between 26 m^2 and 32 m^2 in size were built (Cook, 1992, see also figure 2). This was a significantly higher residential density than that of typical township developments at the time. Although the plot sizes in Khayelitsha were slightly smaller than current state-funded housing projects (where plots are typically up to 250 m^2 (Landman and Napier, 2011), the project is similar in many respects to the post-1994 type of housing delivery, but with the benefit of having been built over two and a half decades ago. It can therefore be used as an example to project the long-term effects of this type of housing provision.

Two years after their construction in 1983/4, the core houses were still standing empty due to the resistance to the initial relocation scheme[4]. Finally, in February 1985 the idea of moving all Africans in Cape Town to Khayelitsha was dropped as well. Eventually, towards the end of 1985, the core houses were occupied by people from backyard shacks in the nearby townships of Guguletu, Langa, Nyanga and some from informal settlements of Crossroads (Napier 2002:115, 120). These people had no say whatsoever in the houses assigned to them. Napier (2002:115) concludes on the basis of his historical analysis and fieldwork that 'many of the factors which appear to have initially limited the potential of the incremental growth process, can be traced back to the development rationale applied and the ideology which informed it [the project]'.
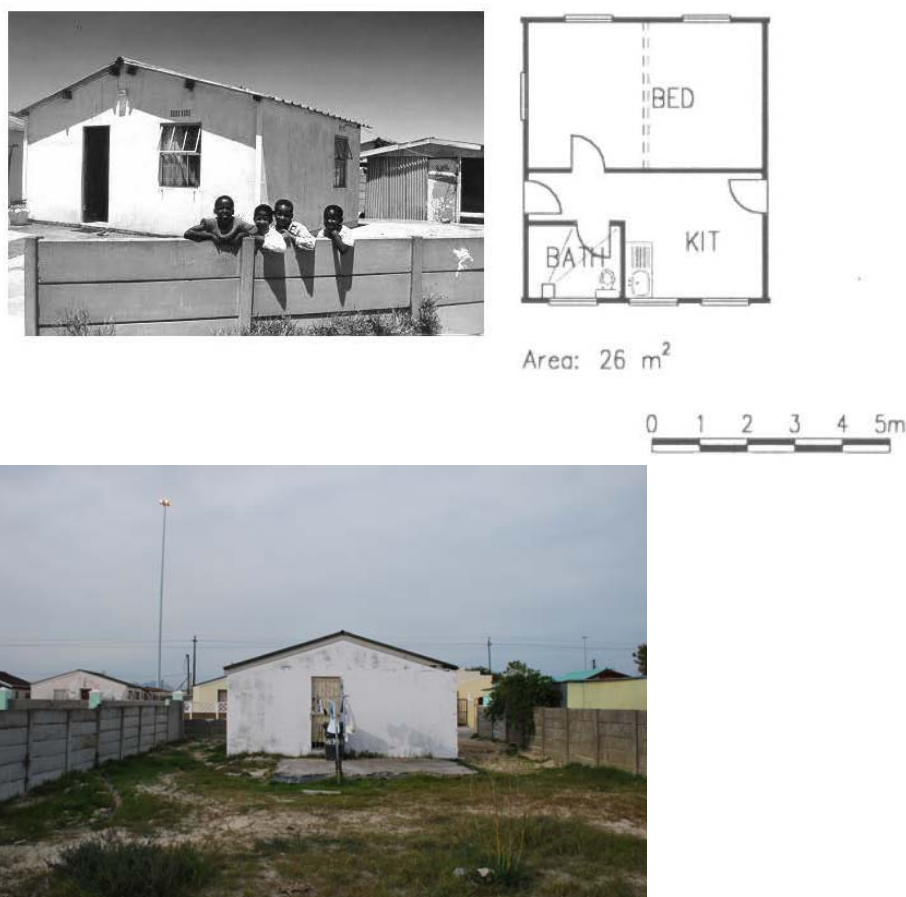

Figure 2: Core house type in Eyethu (T1V2) upon implementation, and a non-extended core-house in 2011. Source: Division of Building Technologic CSIR (Napier 2002:118) and picture by Breimer (2011).

Project-related support after the provision of the initial core house was almost completely absent. The project planners had recognised from the beginning that 'some kind of ongoing support was essential if people were to be enabled to consolidate the core houses' (Napier 2002:119). Thus, the establishment of a 'resource centre' and a 'technical advisory service' was proposed from the

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[4] For more historical background see Ellis 1984 and Cook 1992 in Napier 2002.

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inception of the project (ABWC 1982 in Napier 2002:119). Despite initial attempts however, little thought had been given to the equipping, staffing and running of the centre and the whole initiative collapsed (Napier 2002:119). In effect then, the occupants of the core-housing in Khayelitsha were not directly supported in their efforts to consolidate their housing, concludes Napier (2002:119). Moreover, lines of communication between residents and the local authority did not appear to have been open, and as Napier (2002:188) sees it, the small proportion of households who applied for permission to build is evidence of this lack of communication. Thus it came to be that, contrary to classical elemental housing projects in the 1970s (see UN Habitat 2005) the early collapse of the support initiative in Khayelitsha meant that 'residents were left to achieve their consolidation projects in isolation from almost all institutional assistance' (Napier 2002:220).

Plots included in the 2011 fieldwork and methodology used

The fieldwork in 2011 was exploratory in nature and intentionally took the plot as a starting point for the analysis, for purposes of revealing new insights into the consolidation process. Notice that the selection took place before anything specific was known about the households. The selection of the 25 plots was primarily based on the level of physical consolidation visible on the plot to allow for the analysis of the extensions done over time. The assumption was that the more rooms a household was able to add – albeit small in most cases – the more likely it was that the main household had been able to make choices in accordance with culturally specific household situations (see also Tipple 2000) and aspirations. The sample is thus obviously biased towards successful extenders, although one non-extender has also been intentionally included. In one instance, household composition did influence the selection: to allow for further qualitative analysis, five of the plots were selected on the basis that their households were known in the community to accommodate renters. Contrasting the situation of renters with that of the homeowners proved quite helpful in relation to physical and spatial organisation on the plot[5].

Several visits to each plot, including semi-structured interviews with the heads of the households (the primary respondents) and informal conversations with other members of the main household were used as a basis to identify trends in the consolidation process over time. Triangulation with aerial photography by Napier in 1996 and expert validation was used to verify findings and interpretations. A focus group discussion also took place with key informants and there was close cooperation with a local community-based organisation (CBO), the Human Settlement Department of the Khayelitsha Development Forum (KDF).

With regards to the income levels of the households in the sample, the overall picture is that of impoverished families with a struggle to make a living. Occupying the 25 plots of the 2011 sample are 7 nuclear main households with an average of 3.4 people, 3 single-person main households and 15 extended family main households with an average of 5.8 people. Looking at the gender of the heads of the main households, the picture of Eyethu as a whole – KPRU (2005:41) speaks of a "pronounced gender-gap" with the ward population made up of some 67% for females - is reflected in the finding that a disproportionally large amount of the households is headed by single women (14 out of 25 main households). It is particularly striking that 21 out of the 25 main households included in the sample have lived on the same plot for at least 24 years, which in turn echoes the low mobility found through the 2005 enumeration (see KPRU 2005). With regards to the income levels of the households in the sample, the overall picture is that of impoverished families with a struggle to make a living.

History does not repeat itself, but some situations do resonate with the past. It is interesting and important to notice that over 26 years similar problems keep on reappearing at the plot level. While this paper reviews the situation at plot level, it is worth noting that many of the issues that households face are closely tied in to the overall housing and land system.

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[5] For an analysis of the housing situation of renters see Breimer (2011).

An example of a resonating situation is how household life cycles play out in the physical housing context. Of the first residents who occupied the core houses in 1983, 85% were young families moving out from crowded backyard shacks in nearby townships (the remainder coming from informal settlements and rural areas) (Napier 2002:125). Amongst the most revealing findings of the 2011 fieldwork in relation to the children of the residents of the core housing, is that adult children once again continue to reside with their parents in extensions to the original core house. The phenomenon first came to the surface during a meeting with the CBO. The Chief of Housing opened the meeting by saying:

> "Our government promised a lot, and when we came into Khayelitsha our children were very, very young. But now, our children are adults and they have nowhere to go, and they live in backyard shacks[6]. Our children!" [7]

Alerted by this distinction between young and adult children within main households, as well as the hierarchy of (more and less permanent, attached and detached) buildings on the plots, a detailed analysis was made of the household composition of people living on the plot in question. The space each of them was occupying was then considered based on the meaning and logic as assigned by members of the main household itself.

Operational terms

An additional indicator for analysing the consolidation process over time was added to the analysis, i.e. the presence of adult descendants. The term 'descendant' is used purposefully to allow for a broader interpretation of the concept of 'family' – particularly amongst extended families. The concept of 'family' among these households is quite fluid and does not necessarily refer to blood relatives. The term 'adult descendant' in the analysis accordingly refers to any person over the age of 21[8] who has been raised as part of the main household from childhood onwards or throughout a considerable part of his/her teenage years and, more importantly, who still lives on the plot.

The consolidation process was analysed using several physical and spatial indicators. The following operational categorisation was made for material use: impermanent (denoted by "I") and conventional (denoted by "C") – material that is commonly used in the city for permanent structures (see Table 1). The categorisation follows Napier (2002) for the specific material qualities in the context of Khayelitsha, thus allowing for comparison with findings from the 1996 aerial photography[9]. In reality, a mix of conventional and impermanent materials may also be found, yet it is considered sufficient here to refer to the dominant material used for a specific extension.

I = Impermanent	Extension using materials such as earth, corrugated iron, plywood etc.
	Note: not necessarily sourced from informal contractors.
C = Conventional	Extension using permanent material such as brick or block.
	Note: not necessarily sourced from formal contractors.

Table 1: Operational terms and coding of material use

The term 'contiguity' refers to whether extensions were built next to the original, state-built, core house (i.e. attached), or separate from it (i.e. detached) (Napier 2002). The positioning of extensions can also be related to the street side and to the back of the plot. A superstructure may for instance be positioned close to the street side, stemming from a desire to ensure its visibility. Likewise, the back

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[6] 'Shack' is a local term for extensions made of corrugated metal and wood – either attached or detached from the core. Backyard shacks refer to detached extensions constructed behind the core house.

[7] Meeting with the Human Settlement Department of KDF, 15 July 2011.

[8] This age was established on the basis of conversations with respondents and confirmed by a CBO to be the age young adults (males in particular) are culturally considered independent and able to start their own life elsewhere. Validation of research outcomes, meeting with the Human Settlement Forum of KDF, 8 August 2011.

[9] Covering an almost full census of 4 961 core houses, as a 'snapshot' of the types of extensions achieved 11 years into consolidation.

of the plot (i.e. farthest away from the street side) may also have its own unique functions, as discussed further below.

These four indicators – attached, detached, streetside, back – together with material use, allow for a distinction between types of extensions, as can be seen in Table 2. The 2011 fieldwork was based on the operational categorisation first made by Napier (2002) for the sake of analysing 1996 aerial photography, with the addition of three types of extensions (6-8) that had not yet been observed in Khayelitsha at the time.

Type	Description, contiguity and material use	Size
0	UNIMPROVED CORE HOUSE With no other structure of any kind on the plot.	n/a
1	DETACHED, IMPERMANENT STRUCTURE This may be a bedroom (locally known as 'backyard shack' or sometimes 'bungalow') or another use (e.g. storage, garage, commercial).	Any size
2	SMALL, ATTACHED IMPERMANENT EXTENSION In the form of a lean-to.	Smaller than or equal in size to original
3	LARGE, ATTACHED IMPERMANENT EXTENSION In the form of a lean-to.	Larger than original
4	SMALL, ATTACHED CONVENTIONAL EXTENSION	Smaller than or equal in size to original
5	LARGE, ATTACHED CONVENTIONAL EXTENSION	Larger than original
6	REMODELLED HOUSE Where the original starter house has been substantially remodelled so that the original is no longer distinguishable, or has been demolished.	Any size
7	DETACHED, CONVENTIONAL STRUCTURE Locally known as a 'flat'. Must include at least one habitable space.	Smaller than original
8	CONVENTIONAL SECOND STOREY Locally known as an 'upstairs'.	Any size

Table 2: Operational terms and coding of the type of extension

Using this typology, the 2011 sample included:
- three plots with a *detached*, impermanent structure (type 1)
- four plots with a large *attached* impermanent extension (type 3)
- two plots with a *small* attached conventional extension (type 4)
- six plots with a *large*, attached conventional extension (type 5)
- three plots with a *detached*, conventional structure (type 7). On one of these plots the original core house had been demolished and a new house constructed (type 6).
- six plots with an "upstairs" – a second storey of conventional material (type 8).

The implication of this operational typology is that there is no distinction in the *use* of space (e.g. bedroom, rental, commercial, etc.). The reason is that the typology is primarily designed to help analyse aerial photography, and from the type of aerial photography used in 1996 it is impossible to establish how a structure is put to use. Identifying use, significance and dynamics over a period of time requires follow up qualitative fieldwork on the ground.

Figure 3: Map illustrating plot identification on the 1996 aerial photography, and the assessment of the type of extension 11 and 26 years into consolidation. Source of original map: CSIR in Napier (2002)

Plot layout, example from T1V2 (Eyethu, I section)
The map is based on aerial photography and is used as a 'snapshot' of the level of extension in 1996. The numbers refer to various categories as reflected in the table below. The two plots highlighted here illustrates how every plot included in the sample was identified for the fieldwork in 2011, and its level of was determined anew based on site observations. The maps do not include street names, as none were assigned at the time in 1996.

For the 2011 fieldwork careful attention was given to the *use* of added space. It proved particularly interesting to focus on extensions used as bedrooms, analysing for each person living on the plot, the material use, contiguity and positioning of his or her bedroom, in relation to their age, gender and relationship to the main household.

The term 'trend' is introduced to indicate a possible direction in which the consolidation process of the core housing and their plots is developing. The term is an expression of the impact of the temporal dimension, but the patterns observed can by no means be simplified into a general tendency, bearing in mind the small sample and the fact that it was not randomly selected. Rather, trends identified may serve as a starting point for further detailed studies.

Main households occupying these plots
As a working definition, 'main household' refers to a single person or a number of people who pool their incomes and inhabit the main structure on the plot – commonly the original core house or what is still left of it. Included in this research are:

- seven nuclear-family main households with an average of three to four people per household
- three single-person main households
- fifteen extended-family main households with an average of 5.8 people.

A total of 19 male adult descendants were identified on the 25 plots included in the sample, as well as 17 female adult descendants. A total of 13 children also reside on the plots with these descendants – the grandchildren of the heads of the household.

Secondary households on the plots

It is important to note that other people not belonging to the main household may also live on the plot (i.e. they do not pool their income with that of the main household). On the 20 plots in the sample not purposefully included for having renters, a total of six *separate* households were identified comprising relatives of the main household. On the five plots where households were known to have renters, a total of 13 non-relatives[10] were identified, including seven singles and three couples.

Stringent affordability criteria and income-generating activities on the plots

The overall profile of households on the plots is that of low-income families, some of which are struggling to make ends meet. Income is irregular and often pooled together to cover expenses, yet it is unpredictable. Only 13 main households have one member bringing in a regular income from a formal wage. Indeed, in Khayelitsha there are few formal job opportunities. The fieldwork identified that households often depend on a 'social wage'[11], i.e. income derived from government grants, which is then usually pooled to cover overall costs of living. An adult descendant (age 45), still living in the backyard of his mother's house after 26 years of occupation, explains that they even survive on his mother's pension: "If she dies, we also die of hunger with her… because we live on it (her pension)."

Ten main households use their plot for commercial purposes, since they have either established a business on it (i.e. barbershop, crèche) or sublet rooms to renters. Some even sublet plot space to others to enable them to start a business. However, the level of success of these businesses varies greatly. One plot has an exceptionally successful tavern, which allows the owners to extend an 'upstairs'. For most, however, the informal economy is not a good source of income since the local market is saturated with existing small-scale activities. Due to much duplication in Eyethu, i.e. people offering the same services or products, it is difficult to make a living from retail, and little value-adding activity is evident (Brown 2009:6). Having renters on the plot seems to be one of the few areas catering to growing market demand, since Eyethu is now considered a relatively good location within Khayelitsha. Nevertheless, since this neighbourhood provides housing for mostly impoverished people, renting too can be 'bad business'. To illustrate this point: the same adult descendant (age 45), rented a backyard shack on his mother's plot to a young man to generate a rental income. However, this rural migrant, who has already taken occupation of the premises, can only pay rent once he finds a job. Moreover, such possibilities to sublet plot space are limited since, as the discussion below shows, there is already a great amount of pressure on space stemming from internal densification.

The impact of adult descendants inhabiting the plots

In order to understand the true value of plot usage over the past 26 years, it is vital to consider the plots from the position of the inhabitants within a rapidly urbanising context. It is particularly striking that 21 out of the 25 main households included in the sample have lived on the same plot for at least 24 years. The low level of residential mobility is confirmed in a census conducted in Eyethu by the Western Cape Population Unit (2006). Clearly, the presence of adult descendants on core housing plots, with the accompanying issues of ageing household members (i.e. housing stress triggers) and the birth of grandchildren (i.e. housing stress shocks), raises issues of space and privacy. It begs the question as to why adult descendants in Eyethu still stay on the plots?

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[10] The figure is somewhat distorted (i.e. relatively high) due to one exceptional case where the owners had inherited the plot from their deceased parent, and now used it for commercial renting, whilst not living on the plot themselves. These adult descendants were incrementally constructing multiple rental apartments on the plot included in the sample. At the time of the fieldwork, whilst the apartments were not finalised yet, the plot already housed four single female renters and a couple (i.e. five separate households).

[11] Examples include old age pensions, the disability grant, child support, foster child grant, care dependency grant, etc. See Hart (2002) for a discussion of the origin and role of the social wage.

It is unlikely that adult descendants continue to stay on their parents' plot due to lack of aspiration to start a life of their own on their own plot or in their own house. Indeed, the rapid development of a diverse socio-economic situation in South Africa has led to a shift in aspirations and a surge in the establishment of 'small households' (Tissington 2011:34). As Urban LandMark and the Social Housing Foundation (2010:14) report, the trend is so prevalent that it has had an impact on the housing backlog at a national level: "on average about a third of all households generally considered to fall into the 'housing backlog' statistics comprise single-person households and one-third comprise two-member households." In other words, adult descendants generally do aspire to have a house of their own. Interestingly, the situation of the adult descendants identified in the 2011 fieldwork of staying with their family on the plot as opposed to moving out, was seen by the respondents as both a matter of accepting the inevitability of fate in the absence of other alternatives, and also as a source of some relief at having a roof over one's head.

It is the unfortunate fate of this generation of adult descendants to be caught up in a land and housing supply crisis. In a context where housing demand and aspirations are constantly shifting, the supply of housing has not been able to keep pace with the demand, resulting in the "non-availability and high cost of housing units in the affordable market" (Sikhakhane 2010 in Tissington 2011:41). With very limited access to the city's housing and land markets (Rust 2006, Shisaka 2011), main households have had to put their plots to optimal use[12] and find inventive ways to accommodate adult descendants. Brown (2009:8) confirms the constrained access to land, housing and services in Eyethu, reporting that, "young people overcrowd with their own families in their parents' houses in T1V2 [Eyethu] or live in a backyard structure or extensions". This is the fate of most of the adult descendants in the 2011 sample.

From a different angle, staying on their parents' plot is also a rational trade-off for many adult descendants. It provides some relief in their personal situation. It is not seen as an ideal situation, yet there are worse alternatives. The adult descendants obtain financial relief by staying where they are as opposed to moving out to a separate single household, which would worsen their living conditions. Particularly for those with a small or irregular income, or those who have no work whatsoever, it would be very difficult to make a reasonable living if they were completely disconnected from others with at least some form of regular income. Furthermore, the relief is not merely financial, but also relates to the housing alternatives open to them locally. If the adult descendant were able to pay at least some rent (even if irregularly), a common housing alternative would be to move into a backyard shack on another plot as a renter. This is, however, quite a precarious state to be in, since the renter is more vulnerable to unhealthy conditions (e.g. damp penetration and wide seasonal temperature variations), lack of privacy and potential exploitation by landlords. An illustration of this dire situation comes from one of the adult descendants who had to buy a modular shack for installation on a nearby plot so that he had a place to sleep at night. There is no longer enough space on his parents' plot to accommodate all the adult descendants of the extended family. The young man still uses services on the plot-of-origin, going back and forth to his bedroom in the modular shack where he has no access to services except for electricity[13]. Clearly if possible, staying with the family on the same plot, bearing such cases in mind, becomes the best choice amongst a host of other unpleasant options.

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[12] Many of the assumptions about mobility that have been developed in cities of Western Europe and the USA are not transferable to cities in rapidly urbanising contexts in developing and upcoming economies. For a theoretical discussion of the motivations to consolidate in these contexts see Napier (2002) and Breimer (2011, 172-181).

[13] This type of strict separation of use of servicing between the main household and some young male backyard renters was also observed on another plot. It may either reflect a wish for privacy on behalf of the main household hosting the renter, or the complexities of payment for the servicing in situations where both the main household and the renters have a lot of trouble to make ends meet.

The physical, spatial and inter-personal dynamics of extending

To really understand plot usage and the dynamics of the consolidation process, a snapshot – be it a photograph, a drawing showing the layout of the superstructures, or statistics – of the physical appearance of the plot at a certain moment in time will not suffice. Instead, one must bear in mind that there may be a lack of correlation between built form and physical appearance, activity and use (Schoonraad 2000). The reason, as Schoonraad (2000:223) argues, is that "building density and house type (…) have little to do with occupational density and activity because of the informal and temporary character of many of the structures and activities". What then are the physical and spatial dynamics of extending which user-occupants experience?

A snapshot fails to capture plot usage

The only non-extender included in the 2011 fieldwork proves to be an interesting illustration of how a snapshot in time can fail to capture the dynamics of plot usage and the consolidation process. At first glance, the core house appears to be unextended and the plot under-utilised, despite the fact that it has been 26 years since occupation. However, aerial photography conducted 15 years earlier proves that extension had taken place – a small, attached, impermanent extension had been added to the core house. Using these two snapshots along with information from the consolidation process helped to make more specific enquiries as to plot usage over time. The original occupant, who owns the plot, moved back to a rural area, and is now sub-letting the core house to a young couple with a baby. The inhabitant explains that the owner removed the impermanent extension before they arrived. If the couple decides to stay and they can afford to do so, they will extend the house by adding an extra room for the child, thus starting the cycle over again.

Figure 4 Grandmother, the original owner of the plot and initial core-house, her daughter now coordinates the priorities and preferences of extending so that new generations can live in it.
Picture by Breimer (2011).

Another plot from the sample illustrates the changing roles of the different generations living on one plot (see Figure 4). A grandmother living in one of the main households in Eyethu (since 1985) finds herself in the middle of the consolidation of her family house driven by the growing needs of her

household over the years. Being an elderly woman, it is mostly her eldest daughter who coordinates the buying of the material and negotiates with the contractors in the construction process. As the grandmother explains: "We old people only did bedrooms and toilets because we didn't get that much pay before. Now it's their turn, of my daughters; they have different priorities." Here, what is seen as the fate of the adult descendants in this household (because of limited options in the land and housing market), as well as the relief offered by slotting into the main household, are played out at the micro level of the plot and beyond – at the city level. Both her daughters still live in an informal settlement with their boyfriends and children – in backyard shacks. Now, they are gradually moving into the grandmother's family house, as the construction of an 'upstairs' proceeds. The once separate households are already starting to pool their incomes, forming one main household. An additional benefit is that the grandchildren and the grandmother receive benefits including a pension and child grants, so a pooled effort will allow sharing the security of at least some regular income to cover the cost of living. And the dependants in turn are being taken care of. It is noteworthy that statistics on density in this case would fail to highlight that three, once separate, households merged into one.

Hierarchy of the structures on the plot in relation to secondary households with relatives
Whenever the core is still unextended, or when most of its walls are still intact, it becomes clear that the core housing built in the 1980s was of relatively more sound structural quality than the later 'RDP housing'[14] (Dewar 2009). This fact seems to be common knowledge in the community, and people count themselves lucky to be occupying the older housing. Nevertheless, at this stage, 26 years and another generation later, some houses do need urgent upgrading and repair. Other core houses are barely recognisable after an ongoing consolidation process that extends over the 26 years. This is particularly true for the most successful extenders included in the fieldwork. The inventive use of space offered by the plot dimensions leads to the conclusion that the physical enabling factor of core housing does not merely comprise the services initially provided along with the superstructure, but also the plot size[15].

If this sample is any indication to go by, the main households occupy the lion's share of the habitable space in their houses, while secondary households with relatives of the main household[16] are commonly accommodated in a detached extension on the plot. The *empty* space between super-structures is used here as a demarcation of privacy, intimacy and dignity between households. There are strong suggestions from the 2011 fieldwork that if these households had the choice, they would avoid this kind of intrusion on the privacy of the main household and crowding the plot. The intrusion of privacy for the main household is particularly true in cases where separate households must use the services provided to the initial core house.

The hierarchy of the core house in relation to other structures does not only relate to services provided here, but also to inter-personal hierarchy. For example, the 2011 fieldwork revealed a generational hierarchy related to the positioning of bedrooms. When the female head of a household passed away on one of the plots (i.e. a first-generation occupant in the core house), the secondary household comprising her children, who had been living in the backyard, moved into the core house. These new heads of the household may continue the family project to consolidate the house, whilst also directing their efforts towards their own housing aspirations.

Spatially organising the members of the main household
It proved relevant to analyse accurately where household members have positioned or were assigned their bedrooms and to make inquiries as to the reasoning behind the trade-offs between alternatives they make in their decisions.

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[14] 'RDP housing' is the common term used to refer to housing built under the state's Reconstruction and Development Programme since 1994.

[15] For a detailed analysis of the organisation of the core house and extensions on the plot, as well as a discussion on plot size/densities in the light of the debate on compact cities, see Breimer (2011).

[16] For the physical and spatial organisation of non-relative separate (paying) households, see Breimer (2011).

The 2011 fieldwork indicated that detached extensions, regardless of the material used, were always occupied by males and never by females - unless the woman was living with a husband or boyfriend. The practice of accommodating women inside the core house or in attached extensions, i.e. where the heads of the family sleep, is further reinforced by cultural gender rules related to the honour of a (young) female and the family. From a cultural perspective, it is not advisable to have a housing situation where a woman is not sheltered and protected. Such a situation would bring the family and the woman into disrepute. Although residents stipulated that a young male is not supposed to "mess around" either, there is a more strongly felt need to "keep an eye" on the young woman.

Most importantly, families try to protect the most vulnerable members first. Accordingly, underage and female members of the household were identified to be the first priority to move into the bedrooms created in an 'upstairs' – built with conventional material, attached to the core and regarded as a safer place in relation to perceived and real crime from the street. The fact that all 13 grandchildren included in this sample stay in attached extensions further proves the point that detached impermanent extensions are considered unsuitable for the most vulnerable members of the family.

Young male adults may stay in an attached conventional extension (including the upstairs), yet families also seem to be faced with a difficult trade-off between culturally acceptable levels of privacy and the harsh reality of sleeping in a detached structure. As residents explained, a young man needs "his own privacy," to be able to welcome friends and come and go as he pleases. The outcome of the trade-off explains why backyard shacks – the local name for a detached one-bedroom unit of (predominantly) impermanent material, constructed behind the core – are, as a general rule, inhabited by a young male. As the discussion below will show, this finding also implies that it is particularly young males who find themselves in significantly more vulnerable and unhealthy housing conditions.

A strong intrinsic motivation for conventional extensions

Incremental 'housing by people' (after Turner 1972, 1976) should not be romanticised, since it best resembles an emergency situation, particularly in the early phases of consolidation. In Khayelitsha, the rather extreme housing stress of the small core houses (26 m^2) in terms of adequate space and privacy has led to a strong urge to extend by any means possible. Outdoor climatic conditions further increased the imperative to extend usable indoor space.

The high price of conventional material meant that most households opted for impermanent material for a first extension. The availability of impermanent material and the services of informal builders made it possible for people to relieve their most urgent housing stress, which in Khayelitsha clearly was space (Napier 2002). The speed of constructing such impermanent extensions surely adds to their attraction as a type of solution to space constraints. The (limited) 2011 sample showed that it may take between one day and two months to build an impermanent extension[17] (such as a bedroom) - as opposed to conventional extensions, which were likely to take much longer to finalize.

Households nevertheless expressed strong concerns about impermanent extensions in terms of climatic resilience. The strongest motivation to aspire to the use of conventional material for extensions is no doubt because of the adverse indoor climatic conditions of many impermanent extensions, particularly the backyard shacks. When constructed with corrugated iron roofs, the extensions are very hot indoors in summer and freezing in winter. Most households do not use air-conditioners or heaters due to the high cost of electricity. For the most part, impermanent extensions

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[17] The most rapid building method involves the delivery of a ready-made backyard module to the site, purchased from a local informal businessman who sells standardised shacks. Choice starts with a one-door-one-window module and goes up to larger modules. The materials used are zinc, corrugated iron and wood. The finishing depends on a buyer's budget. Sizes vary from 3x2.4 m to 6x3 m. The modules are delivered to the plot within a day and include everything but servicing or insulation, "It is a shelter", explains a well-known local dealer. Expert interview, 6 August 2011.

include salvaged material, i.e. material that has been cast aside. This means greater need for ongoing maintenance starting immediately after occupation. Sealing and insulating the unit against the strong Cape winds is particularly difficult. Because of heavy rains and storms, many residents complained about leaking and were very worried about the health of those who had to sleep in these 'backyards'.

Added to this is the strong concern (perceived and real) about the vulnerability of living in impermanent structures. Security issues in Khayelitsha are related to crime and tensions over scarce resources (Brown 2009:9, SJC 2011). Most impermanent walling material is easy to break into, making a person sleeping in these structures exceptionally vulnerable to physical violence. Moreover, living in shacks of wood and corrugated metal poses a serious fire hazard. In the case of a fire breaking out, casualties are often high, particularly as an area densifies and neighbours build close to each other (Aboobaker 2011, Steyn 2011, BBC 2011).

Interestingly, the fieldwork revealed that powerful socio-political dichotomies are set up by the selection of material used for extensions in Khayelitsha. Conventional materials are not only associated with security against the elements, crime and violence, but also with status and appearance within the community (Price 1974 in Tipple 2000:61 and Devpruth 2011). A house consolidated with conventional materials is acknowledged for its status through the way people speak about it: with awe, admiration and respect. The value of a house's appearance can also be observed in the careful attention given to the façade of a house (see e.g. Bronchart 2000), and the relative investments – compared to the total cost of the extension – made to that part of the building along the street view. Holston (1991 in Tipple 2000:41), studying the Brazilian context in which people build their houses, sees "the expression of different levels of relative affluence in the design and construction of the dwelling as a means of creating differences among the poor". Yet merely referring to how people differentiate themselves within the community does not do justice to the deeper longing that is revealed in the discourse respondents use to talk about the material and level of consolidation of their core houses.

Possibly deeper even than status and appearance is the long-held desire and struggle to be integrated into society as a full citizen and to thus achieve a sense of dignity. In South Africa, this longing has a particular painful socio-political history in the segregation of African, Asian and coloured people with its implied and real exclusions from the fabric of society, the economy and political life during apartheid. As a consequence, the term 'dignity' now seems almost interchangeable with 'adequacy' in relation to housing for low-income households. Its use abounds in governmental resolutions and public expressions alike. The terms 'adequate housing' and 'dignity' are both enshrined in the South African Constitution: "Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing" (section 26) and "everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected" (section 10) (Tissington 2011:12-13). Not surprisingly, there is considerable political pressure to offer the poor what are referred to by professionals and residents alike as 'decent' houses.

Indeed, it seems that to residents themselves, a house constructed from conventional permanent material is proof of inclusion of its inhabitants as full citizens. In the light of the causes of poverty inherited from the past, the use of conventional material becomes, after Holston (1991:462 cited in Tipple 2000:41) a "representation of a *passage* from disrespect and denigration to competence and knowledge…" through "…the production and consumption of what modern society considers important". In South Africa, such a rite of passage can be observed in the emergence of the new black South African middle and upper classes, as epitomised by the so-called 'Black Diamonds'[18]. The lifestyles of the newly wealthy appeal to the public imagination and create a frame of reference for aspirations in Khayelitsha, particularly for the younger generations who were born and raised in the

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[18] One of the first larger (and private) channels to use the term was the University of Cape Town's Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing, in its 2006 Black Diamond research. Source: http://www.unileverinstitute.co.za/index.php?Itemid=34&id=72&option=com_content&task=view [Accessed 28 November 2010]. See also http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/blackdiamonds-230507.htm [Accessed: 28 November 2010].

city. Conventional extensions are visible to residents in daily in the media, or in occasional travels through the better-off 'suburbs' of the same city.

It is through the stark contrast with the status of conventional material, that the use of *im*permanent materials beget powerful negative connotations for the residents in areas such as Khayelitsha. The physical positioning of the extensions, depending on the use of material, reflects that contrast, when households either show off or hide the structures. Even among the most successful extenders in the 2011 sample, careful consideration was given to hiding impermanent material or construction chaos from the street side. A shack would rarely be placed in full street view (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Contiguity, positioning of extension of impermanent material. Not the only one hiding the shack…
Pictures by Breimer (2011).

For some, this type of structure on their plot stresses their temporary status and separateness. Most painful was the situation of those who themselves individually felt a deep sense of shame because they were living in backyard shacks. As one teenager exclaimed, referring to the two detached bedrooms he and his brother had built quite skilfully out of salvaged material they had collected: "Are you kidding? Only when I'm drunk do I think it is beautiful."[19] Their makeshift structures, which even include an attempt to start up a business in the form of a barbershop, are hidden from the street view. In this community's context, the act of extending a core house is not perceived as a "housing victory", as Turner (1972, 1976) might have seen it. Neither do the people in the township see their efforts as an example of the inventiveness of the informal sector, as contemporary architects might describe it (see e.g. Brillembourg et al. 2005).

The perceived state of deep shame is striking, especially when contrasted with the legacy revolutionary writings and grassroots organisations' activism left in certain parts of Central and Latin America[20]. Their politicised discourse can still be traced, for instance, amongst CBOs and (leftist) thinkers. It is a discourse that engrains a sense of dignity in a poor *man's* way of making a living with what is at hand, and is very critical of middle-class appearances and lifestyles.

The deep sense of *in*dignity experienced by residents in makeshift dwellings in Khayelitsha is also in stark contrast with the concept of the "autoconstructed man" (i.e. the self-made man through the act of construction and consolidation of his own house), which Holston (2008) identifies in today's peripheries of São Paulo, Brazil. During his ethnographic fieldwork, Holston (2008:158) observed "a cacophony of individual expressions" in the way people consolidated their own houses "with a *grand narrative* of segregation and insurgence" [author's italics]. Analysing the urban land market and urbanisation over several decades, Holston proves how this shared experience of the "autoconstructed periphery" has politicised people:

"During the last thirty years, these struggles [of building up housing from scratch] have produced a broad expansion among the urban poor of the expectation that as citizens they not only have a right to legal rights but also that their problems can be redressed in terms of the rights and dignity of democratic citizenship rather than by other means, such as patronage, favour or revolution" (Holston 2008:230).

Whereas a similar political discourse of rights was found to be present in the local CBO, the Khayelitsha Development Forum, an essential difference is that there was little reference to a grand narrative of dignity stemming from *autoconstruction* (in Brazilian Portuguese): that as a community a neighbourhood was built up with their own hands and joint efforts, and that this achievement – at least in Holston's analysis of reality on the ground – reflects positively on each individual's identity.

The situation in Khayelitsha raises an important issue. Government's approach to impermanent structures has been burdened by modernist concepts on urbanisation. Often the consolidation process of core housing is perceived as 'slummification', by government and the public alike, since the focus is so much on snapshots in time and not on the achievement of better housing as an incremental process. In the South African context, "modernist visions" and "anti-slum state discourses" (Robins 2008) were especially clear in the advent of the "beautification" (after Davis 2006) undertaken during the Soccer World Cup in 2010. The slum status accorded to these settlements has a negative impact on people's self-esteem and the integration of residents who currently use impermanent material and/or live informally in the wider society.

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[19] Youngest male member of the household, age 19, semi-structured interview, 27 July 2011.

[20] Such as the impact of liberation theology in the 1940s-70s. For further reading, refer to several of its most influential thinkers, amongst which are the Brazilian Dom Hélder Câmara (e.g. 2009), the Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal (e.g. 2002) and the Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez (e.g. 1996).

Unsurprisingly then, pushed and pulled by all these factors, respondents themselves express strong aspirations towards the achievement of what they sometimes refer to as "permanent extensions". Their use of impermanent material for extensions has held the hope of being merely transitory structures. What then has been the pace at which they have been able to realise the ultimate house to which they aspire?

The temporal dimension of extending

Long-term studies, such as this case study extending over 26 years, reveal a trend towards developing a more permanent product over time. As explained, this can in part be related to a strong *intrinsic* motivation for people to continue their struggle towards achieving more permanent extensions. What follows is a more detailed analysis of the order and timing of extending and the manner in which households are able to afford these extensions.

Trend identified in material use over time

When household members do manage to extend their home over the years of occupation, there is an identifiable trend toward the use of conventional material. The extension experiences of the 24 extenders included in the 2011 sample have been analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The graph below (see Figure 6) gives a broad impression of the material used by each of the 24 extenders. The starting point of the analysis is occupation by the current main households and not the initial occupation of the core house in 1985. The reason for this is that only households currently living on the plot can be visited and interviewed to recount their own consolidation efforts. Therefore, the graph may indicate a shorter period than 26 years.

This visual summary of the extension process appears to reveal a trend in which there is a steady shift towards the use of conventional material, and a gradual move away from impermanent material.
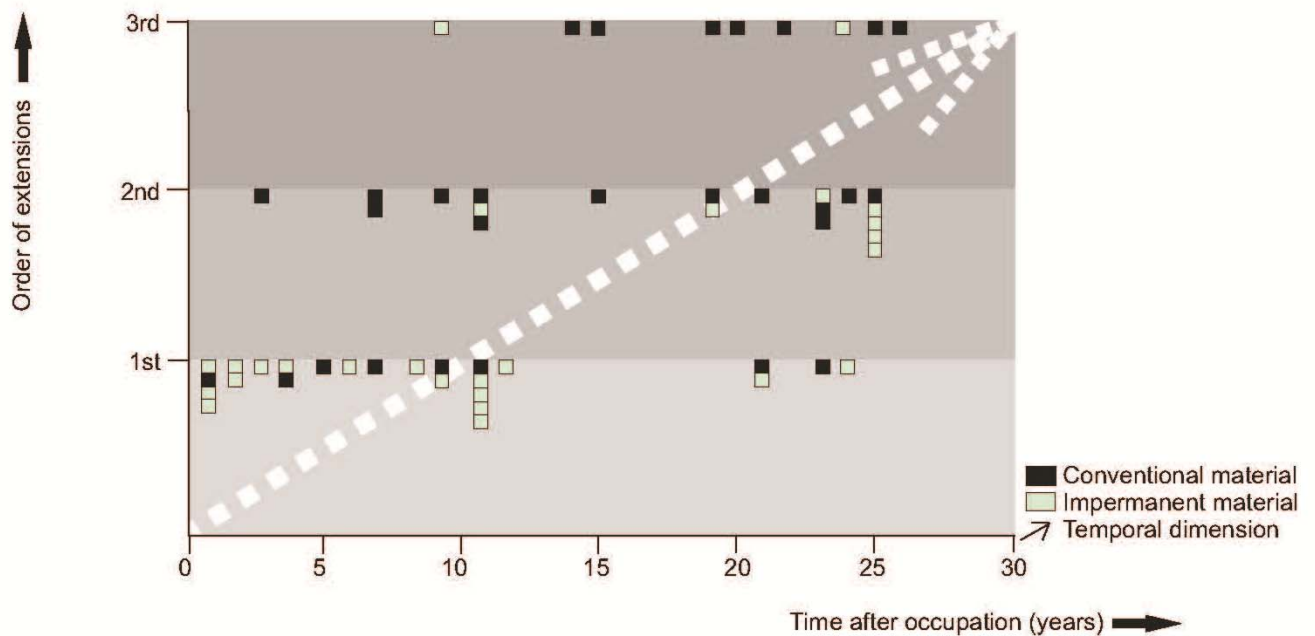

Figure 6: Broad impression of the materials used for extensions by the 24 extenders included in the 2011 sample
Explanation: the conventional material used in each extension is indicated in black and impermanent material is shown in grey. The vertical line follows the order of the extensions, i.e. first, second and third. The horizontal line follows the current main household's timeline since occupation of the plot. The diagonal line aids the direction of interpretation along the temporal dimension.

A quick glance at the extension process of the households included in the 2011 sample (see Figure 3) shows that residents are still in the midst of their consolidation process. Most extreme is the situation of a woman who aspires to build what is locally referred to as a 'family house': a permanent and solid structure "to which the children can always come back".[21] The now grandmother has worked for 22 years on the construction of an 'upstairs' to the initial core. During the focus group discussion she described the past 22 years of extending as "a real struggle"[22].

Figure7 Highest level of extension among plots included in 2011 sample.
Pictures by Breimer (2011).

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[21] In the words of a female respondent and head of an extended family, semi-structured interview, Khayelitsha, Cape Town (South Africa), 26 July 2011.
[22] Focus group discussion, 5 August 2011. Boardroom KDF, Khayelitsha, Cape Town (South Africa).

Analysing time intervals in adding indoor living space

It is easy to overlook just how long it has taken even successful extenders to add more space to the initial core until a more reasonable level of housing adequacy[23] is reached. Earlier aerial photography provides a snapshot 11 years into consolidation, which shows that 23% of all households, almost a quarter, had not managed to add space[24]. For them, as Napier (2002:219) concluded, "coping with housing stress" possibly best described their situation, and it was clear that "their quality of life was impacted as a result of non-extension" mainly because of overcrowding.

Obviously, all 24 extenders included in the 2011 fieldwork undertook a first extension, which followed on average 8.8 years after occupation, and was predominantly of impermanent material. This corresponds with Napier's findings (2002) that 11 years into consolidation, impermanent extensions prevailed among extenders.

A second extension was undertaken on average 18.8 years after occupation. The order of first extending with impermanent material and then moving to conventional material seems to be confirmed further. Most second extensions, 12 out of 20, are of conventional material; of these, four even replaced an impermanent extension[25]. Only on three plots did the reverse happen: after a first extension of conventional material, the second was of impermanent material.

Eight of the main households had managed to construct a third extension, while a fourth extension was only identified once and therefore left out of the graph. As an indication: the third extension was undertaken on average 19.3 years after occupation. Six of these third extensions were constructed with conventional material, of which five main households had already been using conventional material for the second extension (see Figure 7 for the highest level of extensions achieved).

An exceptionally slow pace of consolidation

All but four households included in the 2011 sample have been living on the same plot for at least 24 years. As discussed, there is a strong intrinsic motivation for these residents to use conventional material in extensions. The pace at which the "permanent house" is realised is nevertheless very slow - why is this the case?

Consolidation does not happen in a vacuum and the time lapses identified cannot be simply considered as representative for every core housing project. Moreover, the pace at which extensions occur in Khayelitsha may be regarded as *exceptionally* slow. Apart from unpredictable incomes, there are other more complex factors that can be attributed to the slowness of consolidation. In Eyethu several impeding factors were observed: limited access to building skills within the community or extended household (Napier 2002), lack of options for upfront financing and little return on investment. With this in mind, it makes more sense to invest in other items rather than extensions to the house. Khayelitsha – regarded by residents themselves as "a country in itself" – has been jeopardised by its legacy: it was planned deliberately beyond the urban edge of Cape Town, and is even referred to by professionals as "apartheid's human dumping ground" (e.g. Smith 2010). Since there is limited diversity in income groups, there is a lack of potential opportunities for employment generation and there is little interest from outsiders in investing in the area. Considering the options of either moving or improving (Seek 1983 in Tipple 2000:24-25), structural and market factors operating at the city-level generally make it almost impossible for people to realise their aspirations for better housing in another location, thus only leaving open the typically slower process of extending.

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[23] Adequacy here is an operational term referring to the perception and considerations of the professional (e.g. architect, provider, building supervisor) on the quality of the house (e.g. technical, functional and aesthetic) and its minimum performance requirements. Adequacy is moreover understood as an inherently political issue, referring to relative perceptions of decent housing. For a more fundamental discussion, see Breimer (2011).

[24] Source: CSIR mapping and analysis by Napier (2002).

[25] Furthermore, in six cases the material use remained impermanent, and three other households continued to use conventional material after a first extension of conventional material.

Moreover, core housing cannot be isolated from cultural dynamics. The choice to invest in the core house (e.g. as opposed to moving) may also be a conscious one in a cultural setting where people grow attached to the 'family house'[26]. A house is not perceived merely as a commodity, which is bought and sold without considering the significance of the property and location to the household (Shisaka 2004).

Core housing consolidation cannot be isolated from socio-economic and political dynamics either. With this particular project, the regulatory environment historically has been unsupportive of people's efforts to extend their homes. Residents occupying core houses were not properly introduced to the concept, neither were they given the opportunity to participate in the design of the housing. In fact, they were not the originally intended beneficiaries of the project, most of whom had resisted forced removal from Crossroads (Cook, 1992). This has led to a situation where there is little literal and psychological ownership of the concept. There is still an expectation that the government will return to extend the houses for the people (Napier 2002:221), or that some kind of government support in the form of a subsidy for consolidation or repairs to the dilapidated core house, would follow (Breimer 2011:110). The professional team involved in the design of the core houses effectively had no say in the political and social dimensions of the project, and so "the rhetoric of self-help in this case is revealed to have been empty" (Napier 2002:220). The original occupants most likely saw the concept for what it was at the time of implementation during apartheid: a way of coercing residents to 'participate' in an undemocratic system[27].

Possibly the most remarkable development documented during the 2011 fieldwork was the recent establishment of the Building Development Department in Khayelitsha designed to support and guide consolidation. It may lead to important changes in the consolidation process of core houses in Eyethu. It is yet to be seen whether this initiative will be more supportive of people's efforts, or if it will cause further frustration. Current Department activities include providing advice on safety issues in relation to fire outbreak, positioning of extensions and introducing the need for a building permit before allowing the construction of an impermanent extension[28]. The question arises as to how local government intends to enforce such a measure with minimal capacity in a sea of impermanent extensions.

Despite complicating factors at the meso and macro level, the qualitative nature of the 2011 fieldwork indicates that the most fundamental factor influencing the slow pace of adding more conventional or permanent extensions is that households have very stringent affordability criteria and must make conscious budget decisions. There is a logic to the pace of building extensions, stemming from the way households inventively use the temporal dimension to their advantage, as explained in the following analogy.

Spreading investment over time: the mortgage analogy for elementary housing
There is a strong analogy between consolidating elementary housing and the principle behind a mortgage loan[29], i.e. spreading the investment over time. To buy a complete house (as opposed to a mere core), the head of a household would have to apply for a loan since s/he most likely would not

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[26] To illustrate, it was established that some of the elderly heads of the households who were born in rural areas still invested in the family home in the Eastern Cape to which they hoped to return some day. Visits to the rural areas nevertheless are relatively rare due to transportation costs. For most people, and certainly for the younger generation born in the city, the house in which they live in Khayelitsha is the only home they have ever known and therefore it makes sense to them to invest in it.

[27] For an extensive discussion see Napier 2002.

[28] For an extensive discussion see Breimer 2011.

[29] We are indebted to Carlos Morales-Schechinger, MPhil, for the mortgage analogy in all its details related to location, transport and incremental construction. Here the analogy is extended further to core housing, and incremental strategies are illustrated with the experiences of the households included in the 2011 sample in Eyethu. Interview 3 May 2011, Rotterdam.

have the equity to pay the full cost of the house at once. But the majority of low income households do not have access to viable mortgage sources (Tipple 2000), either because they do not have access to such loans, or because the economy does not have a well developed formal financial system for this group. In both cases – unless a household turns to an informal loan supplier for upfront money – housing will have to be *self-financed* or *directly financed* (Lea 2009:29-30; Tipple 2000:114). According to Lea (2009:29-30), self-finance can be provided "either by equity acquired through many years of prior savings – in most countries the majority of real estate transactions remain financed by cash – *or through incremental construction*" [authors' italics].

In situations where the core house is not first built by the state and given to residents, acquiring the plot is, in essence, equivalent to making a down-payment. As is the case with the down-payment usually required by the bank before a mortgage loan is given, the household will have to save for a considerable period of time before being able to access the plot. Whilst people can be mobile, the plot is fixed. Ideally therefore, the plot should be in a relatively good location with easy access to the economic activities undertaken by the household to ensure that transportation time and costs are still viable vis-à-vis income accrued from these activities. The plot possibly also includes services. High demand in the market for serviced land in good locations with secure tenure will require a higher down-payment.

People can either choose to save up for more equity over time, or in the case of public housing they can choose to stay on a government waiting list for a longer period of time. As a household may become desperate to access housing, it is most likely that the household may need to make considerable trade-offs in location, services and tenure and start to prioritise. The household may be forced to accept the piece of land that is immediately accessible. For example, currently it takes an average of 1 173 days to access a government house through the state-regulated system of allocation in South Africa. In contrast, it takes an average of 34 days to access a shack in a backyard and some 69 days to access a shack on its own plot in a squatter settlement (Urban LandMark 2007:95 in Napier 2010:3).

The trade-off may be such that the household in essence takes another mortgage, namely on the utility costs of the plot location. Since the members of the household have to pay the daily cost of transport to get to work, they are in fact spreading costs through time since they are unable to access money upfront with which they could purchase a plot closer to work opportunities (in the theoretical model). Such a 'double mortgage' explains the situation of the households living in Eyethu. Since their plot is as far as 35 km from the city centre of Cape Town, the cost of daily use of the provided core house is relatively high.

Once the plot is acquired, the instalments on the house can commence through consolidation towards the complete house to which the household aspires. Only four extenders who built with conventional material were able to access upfront finance through a formal loan and thus ensure speedy completion. An interesting bottom-up strategy that enables a few other households to realise an informal type of upfront finance to construct an extension, comes in the form of the 'circle of ladies', as the Eyethu savings group calls itself[30]. Every month the group of women contribute a fixed sum to save for (mostly) conventional extensions. Thus, once a year it is one of the women's turn to receive all of the money contributed by the group. This strategy gives people the means to access a large amount of cash upfront to add an extension to their house, although some women opted to wait another round to be able to build a better quality (or 'fancier') extension. The consequences are severe should any of the ladies let down the other members of the group by not paying or by withdrawing: the 'circle of ladies' will claim all the furniture and electronics inside the house of the woman who has let the group down. This is an essential measure to make the informal strategy work in the absence of official channels to enforce payment. The women, however, understand all too well 'the struggle'

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[30] Several semi-structured interviews with heads of households participating in this savings group and the secretary of the 'Circle of Ladies'; focus group discussion, 5 August 2011. Boardroom KDF, Khayelitsha, Cape Town (South Africa).

these households face, and it is morally wrong in their eyes to put the most elemental shelter of a household at stake as collateral for any financial commitment. Several women who had joined such a group to save up for a specific extension would be in and out of the group once the extension was realised as it required a considerable long-term commitment, and inter-personal complexities caused them a lot of stress at times.

The 2011 sample of households showed that for many households even joining such a savings group was not possible because their income was simply too unpredictable. It is for this very reason that acquiring loans for extensions is so tricky for these households. Outstanding loans can create tragic - even inter-generational - consequences. For example, a resident on one of the plots completely remodelled her core house. She had taken a loan to demolish the initially provided core and construct a spacious, conventional material house. The woman passed away at a young age, leaving the daughter the core house with an enormous debt. Unable to pay the monthly instalments with her unpredictable income as a single mother with children, the loan was handed over by the bank to what is locally referred to as a 'loan shark'. The daughter has already lost the title deed of the house, and now if she fails to pay even one instalment, she will be evicted from the plot.

Among those who did not have access to upfront finance, nor the ability or willingness to participate in a savings group, residents would start construction, followed by long pauses. For the majority of conventional extenders, significant sections of the house resembled a permanent 'construction site'. With reference to Khayelitsha in 1996, Napier (2002:181) argues that stockpiling materials "as a form of stored asset prior to construction" is an informal building habit observed among residents in many parts of the world. But what is the logic of already *commencing* construction – not only buying material but also starting the building activity – when the extender knows that construction cannot be finalised? The pattern was found to be so prevalent that it was taken to a focus group for discussion[31].

Stored asset

Participants in the focus group discussion explained that as heads of the household they commence construction despite the unpredictability of follow-up income, should it ever materialise, as a strategy to literally materialise spare resources at a given moment or even anticipate the 'evaporation' of this money. The 2011 fieldwork revealed that the heads of households have so many trade-offs to make with their income that little is left after the primary needs have been met (e.g. food and services such as water, electricity for heating, transportation costs if applicable, and education when children are included in the household). Setting aside any disposable income for extensions is particularly difficult. Several participants in the discussion related that the above strategy is part of the reality of living with an extended family where "money evaporates as soon as it comes in"[32]. For some, it is a cultural obligation as soon as someone earns some money or has otherwise been able to 'make it' in life to help relatives and broader networks.

The dynamic of construction that "often finds itself at a stand-still for shorter or longer periods, waiting for new revenues which will make it possible to continue the construction" (Bronchart 2000:3)[33] starts to make sense. Instead of 'evaporating', money can be earmarked in the form of a stored asset in both material and construction. The strategy of at least commencing construction despite a shortfall of capital makes even more sense in the light of the 2011 observations that as soon as an extension had walls, some windows and a roof, it could already be put to use – if not as extra bedrooms, then at least as a storage space. Although there were long pauses between the extension activity, the half-finished space was put to good use, thus relieving some of the housing stress. The motto of extenders seems to be that one can never know whether the extension will ever be finished, so it is better to put it to good use as soon as possible.

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[31] Focus group discussion, 5 August 2011. Boardroom KDF, Khayelitsha, Cape Town (South Africa).

[32] Focus group discussion, 5 August 2011. Boardroom KDF, Khayelitsha, Cape Town (South Africa).

[33] Translation from French by Breimer (2011).

As the 2011 fieldwork showed for these households, the bottom line is affordability on a daily basis, not whether they have the option of choosing in what housing typology they wish to live - but there is an important catch here for core-housing. When Kumar (2000:163) argues for the poor in Delhi, that "[poor] people want to live in a house at an affordable cost, no matter whether it is a detached or semi-detached house, or an apartment in a high-rise residential block", this may not necessarily be true for core-housing in every context, even as targeted beneficiaries are impoverished. "The dynamics of national policy and politics since the end of apartheid have made housing conditions – and the stark contrasts between the living conditions of the affluent minority and the impoverished majority – a highly visible public issue and a high priority for the national government", as Malach (2010:330) analyses. One of the first documents the newly democratically elected government at the end of Apartheid in 1994 published, was a white paper on housing. This White Paper "recognised the central importance of housing to the nation's transition to a majority rule" (Malach 2010:330). In this White Paper (South African government Information 1994, Sec. 4.2, emphasis added) the government commits itself to the goal that:

> [all South Africans] will have access to a *permanent residential structure* with secure tenure, *ensuring privacy* and providing *adequate protection against the elements*; potable water; and sanitary facilities including waste disposal, and domestic electricity supply.

It becomes clear then that access to adequate housing here is central to what democracy is expected to deliver to the people, especially the poor masses[34]. In such a context of democratisation and with a (state)government providing at scale to other low-income households what more resembles full housing, there is a major challenge here for the implementation of the core-housing concept. How will people perceive it? Will they see it as a good start, or will they see it as a failure of democracy to deliver to them? How will they perceive living in impermanent structures - inherent to the principle of core-housing - along their struggle to consolidate? In our case study time and again we encountered a lasting expectation that the government would either still come and extend the houses for the people (Napier 2002:221) – or that they ought to come and do so for the majority of households here, since they are too poor to afford consolidation (Breimer 2011, 110-112). It would be relevant to study whether core-housing faces the same challenge in its rhetoric of self-help in other contexts of upcoming economies in the process of democratisation, where the (state) government engages in mass provision of low-income (full) housing. If anything the case study in Khayelitsha proves how important meaningful participation of targeted beneficiaries is in core-housing provision, whereby it is approached in the light of the tight affordability levels of the households. Equally, the case study shows how important the presence of government is in the settlements after occupation, just like in any other conventional neighbourhood in the city.

What does this mean for core housing programmes at scale?

The households interviewed in this research represent a small number of the total living in Khayelitsha, but the findings resonate with other research done across broader samples (Shisaka 2011). Families improve the quality of the extensions over time, but in the absence of upfront finance and/or the possibility of entering into a credible financial arrangement towards acquiring such upfront finance, and considering the need to ensure day-to-day affordability, the improvement or consolidation of core housing is a slow, painstaking process. While people extend their homes, the family grows and the need for additional space and income means that people occupy outside rooms and also rent out parts of their plot. While this is the intention of core housing design, there are concomitant layers of meaning attached to each household's experiences, which perhaps the professionals and officials overseeing housing delivery in the South African context do not always fully appreciate. While people make available just enough space to relieve overcrowding, the quality of that space is not always ideal. The more secure parts of the house are reserved for more vulnerable

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[34] In South Africa this expectation is even stronger, as in the light of the nations' history of Apartheid, the "current housing policy is not only a matter of objectively addressing inadequate housing conditions, but also a means of vindicating principles of racial justice" (Mallach 2010:331), considering that the poor population is still overwhelmingly black.

members of the household, while young men live in corrugated iron and timber rooms hidden in backyards, a shameful and vulnerable situation for them. Several family generations now live on individual plots. The market in formal housing is still not easily accessible (Shisaka 2004, Marx and Royston 2007), which would allow parts of the extended household to move out.

As mentioned above, the vast majority of newly settled households in 1996 were young families moving out of overcrowded conditions in the old townships. Twenty six years after moving in, the pattern of mounting housing stress is repeating itself, with young families who are living with their parents aspiring to move out, but with limited alternatives.

Almost three million households in South Africa live in small government-funded core houses (Shisaka 2011). Although the realities and significance of this living space will vary for households in different parts of the country, there are some patterns that will be repeated for as long as these households do not find ways to increase their incomes and younger generations are not able to move on to new housing.

There is little doubt that a housing programme of this scale in a context of rapid urbanisation serves to address the need for serviced land and shelter at a fundamental level. How the accommodation works for each family and what it means to them is much more unique and varied.

The delivery of core housing at such scale involves taking the experimental pilots of the 1970s and 1980s (Pugh 2011, Landman and Napier 2010, UN Habitat 2005) into new territory. In countries where sites and services, and core housing have been built as demonstration projects, a common finding has been that the housing was occupied by people who were not the intended target beneficiaries (i.e. the households were often too well-off, or the housing was downraided soon after being built) (Gilbert 1999:1075, Harth Deneke and Silva 1982). Such projects were also islands of relative luxury when seen against the backdrop of the poor quality of the majority of housing in the vicinity or country. Attempts at cost recovery from residents often failed. These housing pilot projects targeted at the poor did not always have the desired outcomes due to a lack of state investment in services and housing rather than due to a limitation in the delivery of core housing. Relatively well-resourced demonstration projects in the context of great need are inevitably exceptional, and also cause distortions. The resultant move away from housing construction for the poor, and towards sites and service projects, was therefore premature in international praxis. During the negotiations in the National Housing Forum in the early 1990s in South Africa, sites and service projects were specifically avoided for being inadequate to address the shelter backlog (Bond 2000).

In implementing the mass housing programme from 1994 onwards, based on basic shelter provision (core houses of various sizes) on serviced land at relatively low densities, the South African government did not follow conventional world best practice, sometimes intentionally, but other times due to the hard realities of the mass roll-out of the programme (Gilbert 2002, 2004). Cost recovery from beneficiaries was virtually non-existent. The houses were allocated to qualifying households based on a means test, household composition and citizenship, and then transferred, in most cases, without a loan mechanism. Despite initial good intentions, prospective residents did not participate to any great degree in the production phase, and household choices were limited. The idea of a social compact between local authorities, developers and resident communities (which was required between 1996 and 1998) was eroded in the drive for rapid delivery (Napier 2003). There was an almost total absence of 'after-care' where residents would be assisted to extend their houses, such as the establishment of building centres where building materials, skills training and advice would be available.

The political imperative was delivery at scale, and even the design of the core housing was neglected, with houses being placed in the centre of plots, which meant they could not be extended very easily. Projects have also been located mostly on urban peripheries (much like Khayelitsha was in 1983) where land is vacant and cheap (Napier, 2009). And when large new settlements planned with only

low-income households as targeted beneficiaries, there are few positive spin-offs from proximity and integration with other income groups.

Despite ignoring international best practice derived mainly from small isolated pilots of core housing supported by multilateral donor agencies some decades before, or perhaps because of this, the South African programme has gone to scale, and 'RDP housing' is now very much part of the urban landscape. Inevitably, it has also become entrenched politically, with the promise of access to 'free' housing becoming a powerful political currency (Mangcu 2009).

The 'pilot effect' has disappeared, and in many areas core houses are fairly plentiful (but still much sought after) with currently low household sizes, and mostly low re-sale values (Shisaka 2011, Marx and Royston 2007).

However, as the years go by, as this research has shown, it is likely that population density will increase and that the three million households will face the same challenges of trying to produce adequate quality space to accommodate the family and to earn an income from using the space for renting and for small enterprises (Gough et al 2003).

The initial core house, which is in current production in South Africa, has become larger over time rather than smaller (Landman and Napier 2010). It remains a very important base for the first occupants on the plot as a secure place to sleep – a vulnerable human state. But the research in Khayelitsha has also shown that core housing as an enabling environment is as much about the plot as it is about the house. Because of the slow pace of consolidation, the initial core house and plot space are very important to enable a reasonable quality of life until households are able to realise a more adequate house to fit their needs (and aspirations). While in international terms the plot sizes in South African townships are regarded as very large (currently around 250 m^2) (Landman and Napier 2010), this size does allow households to use the space to produce low-cost structures until they can afford more permanent building materials and possibly even realise second storey accommodation. In the meantime, empty space can be used as a demarcation of privacy between structures, a space on which to start a business, or even to sublet for others to use – provided there is a market for businesses and renters. And, importantly, as shown in this case study, the larger plot sizes makes it possible for the household to accommodate additional generations on the plot with slightly less overcrowding. Even adults who have great difficulty in finding affordable alternatives in a city where the land and housing supply system is dysfunctional.

It is not possible to assess the effectiveness of core housing in isolation from its context of implementation, as users' perceptions are embedded in and relative to the surrounding views of home, space and community. Individual and household aspirations are compared to those of peers and role models within the community or city. Possibly frustrating to planners is that aspirations are continuously shifting, especially in rapidly urbanising and diverse socio-economic contexts. In fact, aspirations are unique at the household level and cannot be fully predicted – not even by the people themselves. The aspirations people attempt to realise also take place within the economy and the regulatory framework, which either make them easier or more difficult to attain. The shacks built away from the street in backyards may also be tied up with people's wishes to keep their extension projects hidden from authorities because of real by-laws or perceived official attitudes against temporary building methods, as much as they are about feelings of shame regarding unattained aspirations towards permanence.

Each house and each community builds and extends its own reality in different ways. Because of a disconnect between professional understanding of development and lived reality on the ground, the evidence shows that residents are hardly even aware of the design intention of a core house. The delivery of these core houses in the current context therefore often fails to achieve the objective of empowering residents to take building control of their homes in order to progressively attain more adequate housing. This poses a serious challenge for future delivery of core housing, but there is also a lesson to be learnt here. Not only does early involvement of targeted beneficiaries have an essential

positive impact on the consolidation process in the long term, constraining regulations may seriously frustrate the consolidation process if administration fails to see and understand the people's struggle along the way.

Conclusion: beyond a déjà-vu and taking it to scale

The last quarter century of core housing delivery in Khayelitsha has revealed that plot space and services are key enabling factors. Consolidation projects are slow drawn-out processes that inch forward as resources permit. As soon as surplus capital is available, it is invested in building materials which are used to build extensions to existing core houses. Conventional mortgage finance can rarely accommodate this kind of stop-start process, which factors in the exigencies of the lives of poor households. Therefore people have found their own means of banking their savings to build for a literal rainy day.

In this situation, slightly contrary to common planning advice, people need plot space and time to match their accommodation to their needs, even if the full achievement of aspirations has to be postponed until a later date. The needs of households develop over time and aspirations change within a diverse urban society, shaped by the regulatory framework.

While officials and professionals seek to achieve delivery of services and housing at scale, households see their lives unfolding, build relationships and networks for survival, and continue with their ongoing efforts to create a place they can call home.

This requires housing professionals to adopt an approach to housing delivery that provides maximum flexibility at household and plot level, while at the same time developing institutional and other capacity to support people in achieving their aims. Based on this research project, which has allowed a more long-term view of consolidation, combining quantitative data along with anthropological interpretation, it is apparent that core housing on serviced land does provide a good base on which to start. When delivered at scale, this type of housing supplies adequate shelter and land in the context of ongoing urbanisation. It can and has provided the enabling framework in which households can gradually but meaningfully build towards their individual and household aspirations. The question is then also to us, outsiders, whether we can learn to see impermanent extending not as slummification per se, but as a snapshot along the way of the struggle of people to achieve an adequate house and a sense of dignity.

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