

ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP – A HISTORY, LESSONS FOR URBAN RENEWAL AND SOME CHALLENGES FOR PLANNERS

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This symposium offers us the opportunity for reflection on the experience of planning in South Africa over the past century, and enables us to explore the role of planning as a tool of reconstruction and transformation. It also offers planners the opportunity to challenge our definition of what constitutes planning.

Some reflections on the planning of Alexandra Township, proclaimed in 1905, will, I think, provide some interesting insights into these themes.

The development of Alexandra was and still is profoundly influenced by political ideologies, particularly apartheid, and resistance to this, and by other events such as the Second World War and state of the South African economy.

I will start by giving a brief overview of some conceptual or best practice themes relating to the upgrading of urban settlements. Then I intend tracing the planning of Alexandra within a number of phases, each of which reflects the prevailing ideological imperatives at the time especially as they related to the status of black South Africans in the former designated 'white' areas. I then hope to draw out some of the lessons that can be learnt both for the planning processes for urban renewal and the role of the planning profession in this process.

BEST PRACTICE IN URBAN RENEWAL

The experience of and changing approaches to urban renewal have been well documented and I am sure that you are well aware of these. I will sketch them very briefly. I must also emphasize at the outset that each upgrade or renewal programme is unique and must develop its own solutions appropriate to its own particular context and problems.

The American Experience

American policy and practice on urban renewal have changed drastically since the late 1940s. In terms of the 1949 Housing Act, slum clearance and the construction of public housing predominated all activity. The primary objectives of the programme launched by the Act were to eradicate 'blighted' or 'slum' areas. 'Blight' indicated the presence of a sub-standard physical environment and the term 'slum' related more to social characteristics such as overcrowding, disorganization and other social problems. The urban renewal programmes were intended to replace these areas with safe, decent and sanitary housing.

The process and solution were perceived to be primarily physical and driven by the urban planning professions which had its roots in architecture and design. Socio-economic problems were viewed in physical terms. Proponents of the physical renewal process held that such actions would stabilize a city's tax base and draw middle-income residents back into areas close to the inner city. Opponents to renewal drew attention to the social and economic consequences of such approaches. Lower income households, many of whom were from racial and ethnic minority groups and often characterized by female-headed families, were displaced, and the stock of low income-housing was reduced. Monthly rentals in new public housing were higher than in the houses and tenements they replaced.

Amendments to the Housing Act in 1954 made citizen's participation in renewal processes compulsory. But in most cases 'participation' was superficial, and there was no obligation to take account of people's views. Throughout the 1950s resistance grew and in New York, for instance, protest action prevented the implementation of renewal programmes in certain districts. The political costs of undertaking such projects were becoming evident.

This situation was reflected in changes in public renewal policies in the 1960s. Greater emphasis was placed on socially oriented approaches and income supplements to low income families. The improvement of the public environment and support for community facilities formed part of the new projects. More attention was given to the psychological impact of relocation – such as depression, the loss of spatial identity and the destruction of social networks. The urban development field which had formerly been dominated by architects and planners now attracted economists, sociologists and political scientists who gave more emphasis to the inter-relationships between poverty, poor physical and mental well-being, crime, low business activity, racism and the social and cultural fabric of society.

As a result urban redevelopment policies and programmes became broader and more far-reaching to incorporate and integrate social, political and economic factors into the more traditional approaches to physical development. It has shown that singular and highly focused strategies had inherent limitations and could not be expected to achieve sustained individual and community well being in poor urban neighbourhoods. (White, 1980).

Projects currently being undertaken include the comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs). Essentially these are neighbourhood-based efforts to improve the lives of individuals and families as well as the conditions of the neighbourhoods in which they live. Such programmes work across physical, economic and social sectors and are structured to promote 'community building', meaning individual and community empowerment and 'social capital'. CCIs seek to build capacity of individuals and community through education and training, social support and increased economic opportunity. (Kubisch 1997).

The Ismailia Case Study in Egypt

While the United States experience may have important lessons for upgrade in South Africa and for the upgrading of Alexandra, certain upgrade or reconstruction projects undertaken in more conflict-ridden or less well - resourced countries may enlarge and expand the upgrade options and the range of possible solutions.

Development proposals for Ismailia, located between Suez and Port Said in Egypt, give some interesting perspectives. This area was devastated during the war of October 1973. After the re-opening of the Suez Canal in June 1975 redevelopment of this area became a priority. In May 1977 the project was initiated as a joint venture between the Egyptian Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction and the British Ministry of Overseas Development (Davidson and Payne, eds, 1983).

El Hekr – later renamed 'Hai El Salam' or 'Peace District'- was selected as a pilot project aimed at upgrading the informal, low income housing on the northern perimeter of the city.

The demonstration project was written up in an Urban Projects Manual intended to guide new low income development projects. The manual provides a detailed framework which includes feasibility studies, project options and detailed proposals and implementation strategies. The authors add that the manual 'should be a guide and stimulus, but not a substitute for thinking'. The themes and philosophy emanating from the practical experience gained at Ismailia are relevant for this paper.

These themes apply to the nature of the housing system, the role of government, standards, the stimulation of economic activity and the monitoring and modification of the project.

Firstly housing must be understood as a system. Housing is more than shelter it is also a base from which families can make a social and economic life for themselves and a contribution to their communities. The housing system incorporates complex inter-relationships between the local economy, and formal and informal interest groups.

Secondly, it was concluded from the experience at Ismailia (as elsewhere) that government intervention should be limited but realistic. Minimal intervention allows people, within reason, to contribute to meeting their own housing needs. Intervention must be within the government's technical capability, administrative capacity and financial resources. Nothing beats success and projects, especially the first ones, should be 'doable'. Projects that are too ambitious raise expectations and are more susceptible to failure.

Thirdly, standards set out in central government laws, local by-laws, town planning schemes and government's ideals are often contentious. Whether they are of value depends on affordability, resource limitations and maintenance costs. Standards that are too high may constrain the provision of affordable plots and housing, particularly for the poor and may not be enforceable. Rules designed to control the rentals demanded by landlords in an attempt to save the poor from exploitation, may prevent these households from gaining access to accommodation. What is required is an incremental approach with as little demolition of existing houses and other facilities as possible. Utilities, water, sewerage, electricity and the servicing of roads should be upgraded over time as funds became available.

Fourthly, the stimulation of economic activity was a key theme in the Ismailia project. To achieve this, training programmes were initiated and formal and informal industries and commercial activities established and encouraged. Limited economic activities were permitted on all plots, including the renting of accommodation. Home-building systems were supported, including the provision of building materials at 'official' prices and in quantities to match the incremental building process. Credit was made available in the form of small loans to facilitate home improvement and progressive additions to basic infrastructure.

Fifthly, monitoring was implemented throughout the project and where applicable plans and procedures were modified as lessons were learnt and as internal and external circumstances

changed. The process included the monitoring of survey and civil engineering works as well as the analysis of plot applicants, allottees and those failing to get plots. Results were conveyed to the Project Agency through the Managing Board, their constituents and field workers. The Project Agency established to implement the demonstration project, was financially independent and had complete control over the planning and development of the area. The Management Board included representatives of the various agencies and departments concerned with the provision of basic services, representatives of the city council, local political party organizations, the Government and the project manager.

The lessons drawn from the American experience as well as the main themes that directed the El Hekr upgrade in Ismailia sets the background against which the various upgrade attempts in Alexandria may be gauged. It will be evident that little or no account was taken of the emerging or prevailing best practice on urban upgrading that was being applied by planning and other professionals from the early 1950s onwards.

ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP

This review of the history of Alexandra Township is divided into a number of time periods determined primarily by the prevailing political and socio-economic events, which had a profound influence on the planning and upgrading of the township.

EARLY HISTORY 1905 TO 1948

Alexandra located on the north-eastern outskirts of Johannesburg, originally a dairy farm owned by a Mr Papenfus and established as a township in 1905 was named after his wife Alexandra. Little demand existed for these stands among the white population and the township was reproclaimed as a 'non-white' township with some 2300 stands of approximately 1000m² each, which in the mid 1910's were sold to black South Africans and 'coloureds'.

After the introduction of the 1913 Land Act, no further freehold land could be proclaimed for black ownership. The resulting shortage of land and a large migration of persons into Johannesburg, particularly after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 when labour was needed for the expanding industrial and commercial sectors, meant that all existing areas designated for black occupation, such as Sophiatown and Western Native Location, became increasingly overcrowded.

Alexandra was particularly well located, being adjacent to Louis Botha Avenue, the main road link between Johannesburg and Pretoria.

The overcrowded conditions, high levels of unemployment and crime, and rapidly deteriorating basic services meant that Alexandra was perceived as a threat to the surrounding white middle-class property owners. As in the 1940s in America fears of deteriorating land values and social pathologies were widespread and, as will be noted later, to this day still inhibit the allocation of land for low income housing near to existing middle-income suburbs. This is popularly known as the NIMBY or 'not in my backyard' syndrome.

Organisations were formed to press for the abolition of Alexandra Township, among them the North Eastern Protection League founded in 1942. In 1943 a committee established by Johannesburg City Council – although Alexandra fell outside its area of jurisdiction – drew attention to the poor conditions which prevailed there. The Council initially approved in principle the committee's decision that properties be expropriated and residents moved and resettled. However the Council balked at the financial cost, and as an alternative, it was proposed that the township should be upgraded and incorporated into Johannesburg. When alternative accommodation was offered in Soweto some voluntary movement out of Alexandra took place. But Alexandra, unlike other freehold townships within or near Johannesburg was never completely removed. Despite its status as a 'sore spot' it was convenient as a labour pool serving the city's northern suburbs. The costs of implementing the full-scale or even partial clearance of Alexandra was and would remain a stumbling block to all future renewal attempts although this was never acknowledged or accepted by the planning authorities.

THE NATIONAL PARTY GOVERNMENT. ATTEMPTS TO REDUCE THE POPULATION AND REPLAN ALEXANDRA 1948-1961

In 1948 a new government, the National Party came into power. It was committed to the ideology of apartheid. The status of blacks as 'temporary sojourners' in the designated 'white' areas was reinforced. Black would not be entitled to any political, social or economic rights in these areas. These rights would have to be exercised in their traditional 'bantustans' or 'homelands'. The segregation of the races was intensified, the control of movement into the urban areas was made more effective and policies were implemented to reduce the financial burden of blacks in these areas on the state. White local authorities, responsible for the administration of most townships were subject to increasing central government control over the administration and financing of these areas.

Administratively, Alexandra fell under the Peri-Urban Health Board. After 1948 this Board functioned under the direction of the then Department of Native Affairs under Dr H F Verwoerd. The main strategies adopted for Alexandra were to reduce the population, to control movement into the area, and to expropriate freehold property.

Influx control was more strictly enforced and a system of permits for tenants was introduced. The police raided homes to check permits and passes and many residents were 'endorsed' out of the area.

As 'locations' on the Witwatersrand were systematically demolished many people sought accommodation in Alexandra rather than in newly established townships on the outskirts of the urban areas – such as Soweto, Daveyton, Tembisa and Vosloorus. The location of Alexandra near to places of work remained its main attraction. There was also less control over movement into Alexandra than in these newly established townships.

The new government was, nonetheless, determined to reduce the population of Alexandra. Population estimates differed. In 1948 it was estimated that the population was between 80 000 and 100 000. The intention was to reduce the population to some 30 000. In the late 1950s the resettlement of residents began in earnest. Between 1958 and 1973 nearly 56 000 people were forcibly relocated to Soweto in the new Resettlement Board townships of Meadowlands and Diepkloof, and some 15 000 to Tembisa in the north-east Rand.

The Peri-Urban Areas Health Board, acting on the instruction of the Minister, started purchasing properties. Some houses were demolished and others renovated for renting. It was envisaged that the state would eventually own all land and fixed properties in Alexandra. By 1972 about R4,5 million had been spent on purchasing some 2539 properties. Prices were often unreasonably low and many households whose properties were expropriated refused to accept compensation in protest against these actions. These actions, driven by central government planners, would prove to be highly contentious and would, in later attempts to upgrade Alexandra, make land tenure rights difficult to resolve.

The mass relocations from Alexandra and other areas throughout South Africa were in direct contradiction to the emerging best practice on urban renewal in Western countries.

Of significance in the case of Alexandra, was that not all residents were to be removed. Those who qualified for urban residence and worked in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg were to remain in

Alexandra. This, as has already been mentioned, was the usefulness of having a pool of labour in this sector of the city. But there were conditions, as will become apparent in the following phase of planning for Alexandra. The hostel plan was one of the most bizarre and costly examples of social engineering ever undertaken by the apartheid government.

THE HOSTELS 1961 – 1979

Following the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, the Prime Minister, Dr H F Verwoerd, resolved to implement the government's apartheid policy more resolutely. A State of Emergency was declared and most political parties banned. More control was necessary particularly in 'hot spots' like Alexandra. In 1961 a committee was appointed to reassess its future, and a decision was reached in 1963 to demolish all property in Alexandra and to rebuild the area as a hostel city. Family accommodation was to be eliminated and 25 hostels, each housing some 2500 'single' people were to be built. Men and women employed in areas to the north of Johannesburg, those living in 'servants quarters' at the top of blocks of flats and on the premises of their employees in the suburbs would, it was stated, also be moved to the hostels.

'Qualified' families living in Alexandra would have to move to other townships which served the area where the head of household was employed. Persons who still owned property would be given the opportunity to buy plots in the homelands. (Morris, 1981). Soon after the announcement Alexandra residents, the Johannesburg City Council and many other bodies protested against the proposals, pointing out the social ills arising out of relocation and hostel living, the destruction of many good quality houses and community facilities and the added time and cost that would have to be spent traveling from Soweto and other areas (Institute of Race Relations Survey 1963).

Despite this resistance the construction of hostels went ahead on a site of about 37ha in the western section of Alexandra. The first hostel M1 or Madala hostel was completed in 1971 and the second M2 or Nobuhie hostel in 1972. The women's hostel was completed in 1981 – after the hostel proposals had been abandoned.

In mid-1973 problems in implementing the hostel plan began to be officially acknowledged. These included the lack of finance, the lack of accommodation for displaced persons and the extent of the opposition by displaced residents to forced removals and the destruction of families. In Alexandra the Resident's Interim Committee established in 1974 by the Rev Sam Buti mobilized popular support for resistance to the removals and called for the development of family accommodation (Jochelsen,

1988). During 1974, the defiant West Rand Administration Board, which had taken over control as an agent of the central government of all urban black townships in the area, ordered standholders to vacate their properties or to pay rentals to the Board.

Following the Soweto riots that erupted in June 1976, social protest, violence and political violence increased. In the aftermath of world opposition and a declining economy a softer approach towards urban blacks was adopted, including some recognition of their permanence and the introduction of a 99 year lease-hold system of urban land tenure. A temporary cessation of evictions, removals and expropriations in Alexandra was announced in December 1977, and in May 1979, it was further stated that Alexandra was to be replanned for family housing. Leasehold would be introduced once the expropriation of all remaining freehold properties, - about 300, - had been completed.

By the end of the 1970s, the familiar problems associated with renewal projects in the rest of the world, political protest and the high cost of top-down, ambitious physical development orientated programmes was starkly evident in the hostel programme. Would these and other lessons emerging around renewal processes- such as an understanding of the complex social, economic and institutional fabric - be addressed and incorporated into the next round of renewal for Alexandra?

THE MASTER PLAN 1980 – 1986

The Master Plan for Alexandra was announced by the then Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof, in 1980. The basics of the plan were to acquire all properties and demolish all houses. 'Qualified' residents were to be moved into the shared houses, refurbished buses and a disused T.B. hospital. A housing contractor donated a temporary village. The vacating of old dwellings and the occupation of new houses was to follow a rigid schedule.

A Replanning Committee was established in 1980 comprising representatives of the West Rand Administration Board, The Department of Community Development and Co-operation and Development and the Alexandra Liaison Committee. From these groups a technical liaison committee was formed to plan for Alexandra. Socio-economic data were collected, and surveys undertaken to determine land use and conditions of buildings and services, (Hansard 3 Q Col 123 1980).

A Master Plan, drawn up by planners and engineers, was released at the end of 1980. This provided for the division of Alexandra into seven suburbs with a central business area, containing supermarkets, shops, offices and administrative buildings. Primary schools would be provided for

each area and three high schools as well as technical schools were planned. Provision was made for the establishment of a complex of light industries and community factories as well as sports complexes, parks and a dam in the valley of the Jukskei River. From artist's impressions of the proposal, it resembled a 'garden city'. The implementation period was envisaged as five years. It was intended that during each year 1300 houses accommodating about 9000 – 10000 people, as well as community facilities would be built. Annual expenditure would be R25 million at 1981 prices of which R15 million would be spent on new housing and R5 million on services, including water, stormwater, sewerage and streets. The redevelopment was to be financed primarily by the National Housing Commission (NHC), a statutory body falling under the Department of Development Planning, and the body responsible for black housing.

In March 1982 it was announced that the redevelopment of the township had been held up by lack of finance. Only 26 dwellings had been completed with seven occupied and 19 ready for occupation. The Minister stated that the cost of each unit was between R25 300 and R28 500. He stated further the Department of Community Development had approved phases one and two for the redevelopment of Alexandra. The first phase involved the construction of 94 houses and 194 flats at a cost of around R5 million; and the second phase 320 houses and 93 flats at a cost of over R8 million. (Hansard 1 Q col 22 1982). The sub-economic houses were to be completed by February 1983. These houses were to be occupied by people whose houses in another part of the township were to be demolished to make room for development. They would cost between R7000 and R9000 and the rent would be between R10 and R30 per month.

Between 1981 and 1984 only one small area in the Phase One area – now known as the East Bank – comprising about 5 percent of Alexandra and about 260 houses had been developed. By mid 1985 the implementation of plan had ground to a halt. Another 2200 houses had still to be built in terms of the original proposal. (Abbott, 1992).

It appears that few of the lessons that could have been learnt from previous attempts had been taken into account. By 1985 the cost of the redevelopment had increased to R25 million and the selling price of new dwellings was unaffordable for most residents. Many standholders resisted the expropriation of their stands and this caused delays and high legal costs.

Not surprisingly, too, the approach to redevelopment which relied on the demolition of buildings and removing people provoked widespread protest, disruption and conflict once again. People were moved out of their homes or rented rooms without satisfactory arrangements for the move or more

helpful or satisfactory treatment. The time they spent in temporary accommodation dragged on from months to years.

In the 1980s the political environment was extremely volatile. Residents' organizations were expected to assist in evicting and removing 'squatters' who were not *bona fide* Alexandra residents. They refused. The Alexandra local authority established under the Black Local Authorities Act of 1982 lacked legitimacy and by the mid-1980 most members had resigned. Various groups of residents' and civil organizations vied for political power. Conflicts were rife between organisations claiming to represent land holders, tenants' groups and newcomers to the area.

In 1986 a nation-wide State of Emergency was imposed by government in response to rising militancy, opposition and violence throughout South Africa. The strategy adopted and implemented by the State Security Council (SSC) headed by the then State President, Mr. P W Botha and supported by the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Law and Order, was a two-pronged approach which combined development within the townships – ostensibly to win the 'hearts and minds' of residents – and repression using security operations to suppress political opposition.

Military and security structures were established at regional and local levels. Joint Management Centres (JMC's) were the regional bodies so the local level structures were called mini – JMC's. Alexandra was identified as one of the pressure points or 'oil-spots' where political opposition was deep seated and well organized, and where judicious lubrication, it was hoped, would make things run more smoothly.

The Master Plan was failing again because it lacked finance for its implementation and met with resistance. It was in this context that the plan was revised in 1986. What could a total strategy by the military, in the dying days of apartheid, achieve in Alexandra?

THE URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME 1986

The urban renewal plan was a modification of the Master Plan. While it was still the intention to upgrade Alexandra as a middle-income black suburb, it was stated that the process was to be more incremental in nature. But the overriding imperative was to get the job done as quickly as possible – a stark contradiction in terms. The new plan, apparently to be read in conjunction with the Master Plan, was drawn up in a period of two months by an engineering and town planning consulting team. It was approved by the Minister of Co-operation and Development in November 1986.

The original plan contained some well meaning design philosophies and principles including minimizing disruption, construction of different sections of the township in phases and within each section a block by block approach was envisaged. The facilitation of cost-effective construction methods using local labour. In August 1987 certain other principles derived from the mini-JMC were incorporated into the project. (Friedman 1992). Many were in line with the emerging housing policy for black South Africans. The primary objective was a swift movement to private ownership on the basis of permanent title. This ownership, it was believed, would encourage owners to limit crime, prevent squatting and promote cleanliness. A form of sectional title ownership for shared accommodation was envisaged and it was stated that the participation of the local community both in the conceptualization and implementation of the proposals should be encouraged. These principles reflected the SSC's intended development approach. As will become apparent these principles were naïve in the extreme and based on unrealistic assumptions.

The plan proposed to divide up the renewal project into three phases. The consulting engineer's brief was to plan the first phase, produce engineering designs and advertise for tenders during 1987. Survey operations of main services were undertaken and an attempt made to define private property boundaries in accordance with the proposed core principle. Much of the survey work was done from the air, as it was impossible to use conventional survey methods.

In this densely populated area, with rooms built on to the outside of houses and standing free between them, it proved impossible to subdivide stands so as to make a separate stand available for each house as well as providing each with pedestrian and vehicle access. By the end of 1987 over 6000 small stands had been created – most for multi-household occupancy. Despite the original intention of providing private properties with their own boundaries, each stand was to accommodate between three and seven families. This, as can be imagined, was to cause substantial conflict between occupants. Many of those who were original stand owners believed they had full rights to their properties. However, tenants too, claimed they had rights as permanent tenants – many had been issued with permits during the late 1950s. This arrangement also raised the question of the responsibility for services charges. It was proposed that the 'owner' would have the responsibility of recovering a percentage of service charges from tenants. This clearly had the potential to create serious tensions and is an ongoing problem to this day.

After surveying of basic services and the attempt to identify stands, the next phase was to clear the way for service lines and roads and to classify structures in the first phase. Teams, consisting of the

employees of the contractors, council staff and the South African Defence Force, made a rapid survey of structures that were obstructing service lines or roadways.

The structures within designated stands were classified as either 'permanent' or 'temporary' according to the building material of the dwelling: brick and blocks versus tin or other temporary material. An attempt was made to avoid the demolition of permanent structures unless this was necessary for the redesign of boundaries or the provision of essential services.

The classification of structures was followed by the classification of occupants of these structures. As influx control had been abolished (in 1986), as residents were no longer accorded special rights under Section 10 of the Urban Area Act, a new system had to be adopted. Occupants of permanent structures could remain in these dwellings or, if demolition were required, would be temporarily housed in pre-fabricated huts built on vacant stands and then moved back into new permanent structures. Occupants of temporary structures, which were to be demolished, were subjected to screening by municipal police to determine their origins in or links to Alexandra. Those who 'passed the test' were allocated stands on the Far East Bank on which to re-erect their shacks. Those who failed the screening procedures were given seven day's notice following which their structures were to be demolished and materials moved to a depot. It was stated that a resettlement site was planned. This was not identified and those who were disqualified thought that they would be moved to Orange Farm, a new informal settlement being established some sixty kilometers to the south of Johannesburg.

The demolition of temporary structures and the relocation of disqualified persons was the responsibility of the municipal police. However few relocations took place and more and more shacks were erected, and increasing numbers of people moved into Alexandra. Not only had the original number of people living in Alexandra been underestimated, the planners did not make provision for the increasing numbers of people who would stream into the areas after the abolition of influx control in 1986. Furthermore no alternative, well located land was made available despite the fact that a vast area of vacant land was available to the east at Modderfontein and to the north at Mia's Farm.

Abbott (1992) commented on the increasing pressure on land and the construction of more and more shacks. He stated that in January 1986 there were few shacks outside of the formal 'yards' or groups of dwellings as most household's first choice was to get a shack inside of formal yards as a means of obtaining some form of security. The total number of shacks increased from 7352 in July 1987 to some 20 000 in October 1991. Of this total some 6000 to 7000 were in backyards and the rest, at

least 12 000, were in freestanding areas. It was apparent that as renewal attempts took place, starting with the first phase, shack dwellers moved into areas not yet planned or where implementation was not yet being undertaken. So desperate was the search for land and living space that shacks were erected overnight on roads being prepared for paving. Abbott (1992) noted, too, that in spite of evidence that pressure on land and services was increasing, the contractor and the various controlling authorities continued to act as if the 1985/1986 status quo was being maintained.

The Administrator of Alexandra, the consultants and contractors all claimed that they went to considerable lengths to involve the community in the implementation of the renewal programme. Regular newsletters were circulated, information points were set up and meetings held with community organisations and individuals to consult and negotiate with them on various issues. Cloete (1992) found that, despite this, the community was extremely critical of the upgrade. The response of the community he found, varied from apathy to active opposition. Most respondents to his survey wanted improved opportunities for participation and emphasized that they wanted to be involved in the planning stages of projects and not only the implementation stages.

Some of the specific bones of contention raised by the people of Alexandra have already been noted. The most significant one was the multi-occupancy of stands. There were also a number of blatant design errors. The provision of public ablution blocks, one for an average of nearly three households, led to serious health risks, inadequate maintenance and conflicts over ownership. Diamond mesh fences were erected to separate plots. The intention was to make it easier for the contractor to proceed and to prevent the unauthorized erection of shacks on identified stands. However in many cases the fences restricted customary and well frequented access routes and were frequently cut or removed by residents. The areas set aside for roads were reduced to half the original design as other use was made of the road reserves. Many small access roads were constructed on a piecemeal basis, despite increasing car ownership. (Abbott 1992).

Modern approaches to renewal, as has been noted, emphasise the particularly intricate social and economic fabric of low-income urban settlements. Research undertaken by Cloete (1992) highlighted the disruption that was caused to small business operations in Alexandra during the renewal. Those running businesses such as spaza shops complained that electricity was cut off without prior warning. Cold storage goods rotted and traders lost money. Closing the roads and the impassable condition of most roads damaged vehicles and harmed trade.

That the project was politically driven and the excessive haste insisted upon by the SSC caused serious tensions between parties and to poor administrative, fiscal and technical control. A serious defect was that at no time during the project was there any substantial monitoring or reassessment of options – essential given the changing political, economic, social and physical environment.

The project was initiated by the mini-JMC but this arm of the SSC did not have on-line authority and thus little or no interest in minimizing costs. The Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) which had *de facto* responsibility, effectively withdrew from the project during the second phase.. Some sort of cost recovery was anticipated, but how this was to occur was never discussed. Nor was there any clear idea as to whether the project was affordable or how costs would be recovered. Simkins (1992) noted that it appeared to be accepted that the renewal programme could not be viewed in financial terms, as it was a political decision. Cost implications of the renewal programme were not discussed with the community. The impression conveyed by the contractor was that there would be no recovery charges for the services. It was in any case quite clear that most of the community would never be able to afford the full costs of the improvements originally estimated to be some R28 000 per site. The programme was also designed and implemented without any thought being given to the long term or even short term operation and maintenance of services. Services deteriorated rapidly, with much of the new capital assets being lost within months of completion.

In December 1986 the cost of the renewal programme was estimated to be some R75 million, with two of the three phases to be funded by the National Housing Commission (NHC). Funds were exhausted before the end of the 1987/88 financial year. At the end of 1988 the Development Bank of Southern Africa (the DBSA) was directly approached by the government for finance to continue with the programme. A loan of some R56 million was granted to the Alexandra City Council.

By the end of 1990 funds had all but dried up and the renewal scheme abandoned. The South African economy was in serious crisis. The government was having difficulty in raising foreign loans and defence and police budgets were rocketing. Sanctions were on the increase and many US and other countries recalled their short term loans.

This stagnating economy as well as township resistance was some of the reasons that forced the National Party to negotiate the establishment of a joint transitional government with the ANC and other parties, and to unban all political parties within and outside South African, prior to this transition to a new democracy. At the dawn of South Africa's new democracy where had apartheid's legacy left

Alexandra? Had the series of upgrade or renewal attempts made any positive impact on its social, economic, physical and institutional status?

If we reflect on the core themes stated at the beginning, that is, an understanding of the complex nature of the housing system, limited government intervention, sustainable standards, the stimulation of economic activity and continuous monitoring and modification of proposals, the only conclusion that can be drawn that all the attempts to upgrade Alexandra had been a dismal failure and had incurred massive financial, economic and social costs to the country and to Alexandra's residents.

The planning and reconstruction attempts facing the new government would be no easy task. Would some of the lessons learnt from previous upgrade attempts be taken into account?

THE TRANSITION. THE NORTHERN NEGOTIATION FORUM, HOSTEL VIOLENCE AND AD HOC EMERGENCY UPGRADING.

After 1990 a number of local level negotiating forums were established to initiate a process of leading to non-racial local government with a common tax base. In November 1990 the Joint Negotiating Forum – later renamed the Northern Joint Negotiation Forum was established for the Sandton, Randburg and Alexandra sub-region. The ANC, Civic organizations in Alexandra, the TPA, the Central Witwatersrand Regional Services Council and the town councils of Randburg and Sandton had full membership of the Forum. Institutions such as the DBSA, Eskom and the Rand Water Board had observer status.

A number of committees and task teams were set up to deal with constitutional matters, finance, housing and technical issues. Throughout its existence the Forum was plagued by internal tensions between various members – the two former white councils and the Forum and between the two major civic groups in Alexandra; the Alexandra Land and Property Owner's Association and the Alexandra Civic Association. The Forum was accused of lacking credibility and leadership and being unrepresentative. In 1993 it was dissolved.

The progress of the Forum was also jeopardized by continued violence in Alexandra. In early 1992 unrest occurred between residents in the men's hostels and residents to the south of the hostels – an area known as 'Beirut'. Between March and April 1992 60 people had died and nearly 600 injured and about 10 000 persons displaced from their homes. Refugee families moved into community halls and

the former Alexandra Town Council Offices (SA Institute of Race Relations 1992). Political organizations in Alexandra urged the local police to end political violence in the area.

The renewal scheme was abandoned and ad hoc emergency services and maintenance was carried out by the Randburg and Alexandra Town Councils and various consulting engineers. Any improvements to bulk and internal reticulation services made during the previous upgrades were not sustainable. Responses to emergency upgrade and house repairs were undertaken on an ad hoc basis in response to individual household complaints. This was highly inefficient, costly and unsustainable. The multi-tenancy of stands continued to cause problems.

In 1992 a firm of town planners, civil engineers and social specialists were appointed by the Forum to draw up a Perspective Report for Greater Alexandra. It was envisaged that the exercise would be undertaken in three stages; the identification of key opportunities and constraints, the formulation of an accepted development focus for planning and the formulation of a series of development programmes. The plan was completed in May 1993 and the preliminary proposals put forward were more in line with current thinking on urban renewal. An integrated and less technocratic approach was suggested which included the preparation of local plans and self help initiatives for neighbourhood precincts. Attention was paid to the complex institutional, political and social environment. The team made it quite clear that the then municipality of Alexandra would be unable to raise sufficient funds from its own sources to address the daunting development needs in Alexandra given its existing economic base. Funds for development would have to come from the revenue generated in the greater metropolitan area. In late 1994 the team was advised that the plan had been rejected and that the next phases would not take place. (Van der Schyff, Baylis, Gericke & Druce Consortium, 1992).

THE GREATER ALEXANDRA DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

In 1998 a new development framework for Alexandra was drawn up. The consultants were appointed by the Eastern Metropolitan Council and the Greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan. The planning areas included the whole of Alexandra and surrounding suburbs.

The plan started with the premise that the population density of Alexandra should be reduced from about 770 per hectare to about 220 people per hectare. This it was stated would involve the removal of some 150 000 to 160 000 people. Some indication was given of those who would be earmarked for relocation out of Alexandra: Illegal immigrants, people living in hazardous areas such as the banks of the Jukskei River and those living on land zoned for use other than residential. It was further

proposed that the current permit system should be evaluated and cognizance would be taken of the land restitution claims and the existing housing waiting lists.

The process to be followed would be the division of Alexandra into development zones, the assessment of sites in each zone, the demolition of structures, the resettlement of 'authorised' occupants to temporary housing, the removal of unauthorized persons, the construction of new accommodation and the resettlement of authorized persons into this new accommodation.

The sites were intended to be assessed in terms of occupancy and the condition of existing structures. The occupancy assessment would entail the selection and registration of 'authorised occupants'. Existing structures would be assessed and it was suggested that households renovating their dwellings would be identified as the first to be moved to the temporary accommodation on the Far East Bank, to 'save the wastage of resources'. This classification of persons would determine who qualified to remain in Alexandra and who would be relocated out of the area. Following this the vacated structures would be demolished to prevent 'rehabitation' and to clear the land for redevelopment. After the approval of township and building designs – in accordance with the prescribed density of 220 people per hectare – the construction of superblocks containing 3000 people in three storey walk-ups would commence. Once completed those 'authorised' persons temporarily housed on the FEB would be resettled in the redeveloped Alexandra. No concrete proposals were made as to where or how 'disqualified' persons would be resettled. (Korplan, assisted by Ekhaya and in association with Stewart Scott, 1998).

Press reports on the proposed plan were optimistic. 'Alex Upgrade Brings end To Uncertainty' – The Star April 21 1998, 'Neglected Alex will get a Major Boost' – The Star 25 June 1998.

It is hard to conceive that in 1998 – nearly 10 years after the abandonment of the Renewal Scheme and following the numerous previous failed attempts to upgrade Alexandra that such a plan should have seen the light of day. Had no lessons been learnt? Such a plan could only lead to massive community disruption and the breakdown of delicate social and economic systems. Would it be at all possible to implement the plan given the human and financial resources required? Could any professional concerned with the development, sustainability and economic development support massive removals and the wholesale destruction of the urban fabric of old Alexandra? The financial cost of implementing the project was estimated at R3 billion. It was stated that it would be financed by the national and provincial governments, the Johannesburg Council and private sector donors.

A WATER FRONT PLAZA?

It appears that the plan was dropped and it has been overtaken by events. The East Bank is rapidly being developed thus precluding the temporary resettlement of 'authorised' persons from old Alexandra. Riverside Park next to Lombardy East has been built to house some of those refugee families displaced from the 'Beirut' area during the violence of 1992. A site adjoining N3 highway was identified for the construction of a village to house athletes taking part in the All Africa games in September 1999. Now named Tsutsumani - 'to run' in Shangaan – has been allocated to those on the waiting list who fulfilled certain criteria determined by the council. The cost of the development has been supplemented by national housing subsidy funds.

In January 2000 elaborate plans for a waterfront development on a site on the Jukskei River and adjoining Marlboro Gardens were put forward – named the Jukskei Waterfront Africana Plaza. According to press reports this plaza would comprise shops and entertainment areas and housing for about 100 families. It is envisaged that the development would serve as a major tourist attraction in Alexandra! The first phase of the project would entail the clearing of the west bank of the Jukskei which is densely populated by shack dwellers. It was envisaged that transitional accommodation would be built to house them. The waterfront would create more than 500 jobs for residents (The Star 25 January 2000). Although the plan has not been approved it reflects the thinking of those responsible for planning and development of Alexandra.

WHERE IS THE REALITY? WHERE LIES THE RESPONSIBILITY?

As we have seen the overriding imperative during the apartheid era was the control of people, the removal of those who were not 'qualified', and the restriction of the political, social and economic rights of residents. Group Areas legislation was strictly enforced and land allocated for urban South African blacks, was curtailed and, for most of the period, frozen. Planning and development was determined by central government departments, and towards the end of the 1980's, during the reign of the State Security Council, by the State President himself. Planning was thus top down, autocratic, repressive and technically driven.

We now have a democratic government. The new Constitution is a stark and dramatic break from the past. It entrenches socio-economic rights including the access to basic needs such as housing, water, food and health. The two recent plans proposed for Alexandra raise the question whether the new political authorities and officials responsible for the development of Alexandra and, indeed those giving

professional advice and guidance to them, have the commitment to the cornerstones of our new democracy and to the values expressed in the Constitution and the Local Government White Paper. The key characteristics of developmental local government are given as maximizing social development and economic growth, integrating and co-ordinating, democratizing development, empowering and redistributing, and leading and learning.

How is it, then, that the two major planning proposals put forward for Alexandra still envisage the relocation of 'disqualified' people and of poor people living in shacks? Both plans show little concern for the majority of people living in 'old Alex,' many of whom are poor, unemployed and marginalised. It appears that Alex is to become a town divided; by the 'haves' in the East Bank and Far East Bank and the 'have nots' in the original area. Are any attempts being made to understand the social, and economic dynamics in Old Alex, and to upgrade these areas in an incremental way, and in a way that retains and marshals the inherent energy and resources of residents? A prerequisite of course is still to identify and develop suitable alternate land to reduce overcrowding and to provide residents with suitable options.

It is not the purpose of this paper to give precise proposals for a more humane and sustainable upgrade programme. I can only refer back to the themes outlined earlier of the American experience and the Ismailia case study, and of course the lessons learnt from the earlier attempts to upgrade Alexandra.

But perhaps this is naïve. The transition from apartheid is neither easy nor quick. The new political and institutional structures lack capacity, and there will always be those with either vested interests or, who at best, are ill-informed. The NIMBY syndrome is universal – householders understandably want to protect their property values and live in a middle class environment which is safe and clean. This raises the question of the role and responsibility of the planning and architectural profession that presumably has acted as advisors to politicians and officials. This brings me to the key themes that we have been asked to address at this symposium.

The Performance and Direction of Planning

At the outset I should make it clear that what I am about to suggest refers specifically to the experience that comes out of this case study – so expect my comments to be somewhat harsh.

Looking at the Alexandra experience, planners get few brownie points. Admittedly during the apartheid years only those planners who could be relied upon to toe the party line had any chance of being appointed, and in any event, as has been indicated, the processes were dominated by technocrats, mainly from the engineering fraternity. What is more disconcerting is that the planners appointed after 1994 have shown so little sensitivity to the harsh realities facing Alexandra – the poverty, the need for sustainable development, and for community empowerment. This raises a number of questions. Did they not have the knowledge of what comprises best practice so necessary for the sustainable and equitable upgrade of projects or programmes? Were they content to dance to the tune of their new and often less experienced masters?

The Role of Planning as a Tool for Reconstruction and Transformation.

Planning is without doubt, a very important tool for reconstruction and transformation. The topics and quality of the papers presented at this symposium bear this out.

The environment in which we are operating in South Africa is particularly complex and dynamic. The profession is broad-based, holistic and integrative, and well placed to understand, articulate and put forward realistic and sustainable plans for reconstruction and transformation. Planners have the competency to lead multi-disciplinary teams and to conceptualise and integrate ideas and information, to formulate plans and drive the implementation process.

Many planners played an important role during the negotiation and transformation phases serving on task teams in various local government negotiating forums and gave valuable input into policy documents and into the formulation of new legislation.

Pioneering work has been done in many reconstruction projects – in inner cities, in areas like Cato Manor and in informal settlements like Klipspruit near Soweto. Valuable, but perhaps insufficient, research is being undertaken at universities and at development institutions such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa. (DBSA). Research findings and information on best practice in all fields of planning need to be disseminated and work shopped in clear language. Accessibility is the key.

The Challenge of What Constitutes Planning

It is tough out there for planning practitioners, researchers, academics and for those who work for government or other public institutions. The demands are many, the environment complex and changing, and the resources limited. Challenges abound.

Perhaps, most importantly, the profession must maintain and consolidate its integrity. Can we afford, for instance, to spend time and money on proposals for a waterfront in Alexandra? We must be clear as to what development entails: that it be sustainable and that it both addresses inequality and stimulates economic growth and job creation. This might mean challenging 'political correctness'.

At a time when capacity knowledge and experience is lacking we have a fundamental responsibility to transfer skills and knowledge not only in the teaching environment but also in our everyday work. But we must not forget to listen – to listen very carefully to individuals and communities, to politicians and officials. Learning and the gaining of knowledge is a two-way process. Unless we listen and engage with the beneficiaries of planning and development we will forever be off-track and will be unable to do justice to our profession, a major responsibility of which is to respond to community needs. The country does not have the resources for more 'white elephants'. In the artist's impression of the proposed Africana Plaza, if you look carefully, you might see the two rather miserable looking elephants lurking amongst the palm trees. Is this not a warning sign?

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