

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Linking the Macro and the Micro: The state, individuals in households and communities

8.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is on intra- and inter-household and community livelihood activities in Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study identifies and analyses individuals' and households' livelihood activities, as well as community-level responses to poverty, unemployment, and HIV/AIDS. The primary research question of this study is: what are the economic, social, and political livelihood activities that urban individuals in households and communities pursue in response to the socio-economic crisis in post-apartheid South Africa? A number of assumptions were made at the beginning of this study:

- The centrality of household and kinship networks
- The emergence of a representational gap with less dependence on certain community organisations such as political organisations and trade unions
- Wage employment continues to be the most important but there are increased expectations for the state to provide for the poor.
- The growing contradictory role of the state as both an agent of redistribution and cost recovery has altered state-citizen relations in both communities.
- The similarities of socio-political livelihoods pursued in Enhlalakahle and Mpumalanga Townships

This chapter revisits the assumptions, aims, questions, methodology and findings of this thesis. It concludes by looking at the successes and weaknesses of the thesis, and makes suggestions for further research.

8.2 Households as fragile sites of stability

The study confirms Burawoy, et al (2000:5) assertion that “on the one side the market has impelled the degeneration of the manufacturing sector while on the other hand it has driven the vast majority of the population back on to their own resources, intensifying household production.” This signals a shift away from the factory to the household in post-apartheid South Africa. Emerging in the study is the household as a site of stability for most people as they depend on it for survival. This is made possible through state grants. The study’s assumption of the importance of wage employment is questioned by research findings of households. Even though wage employment has the possibility and has historically protected households from the misery of poverty in both townships, the absence of wage employment in recent years has placed other sources of income at the centre for all households. Indeed, the majority of households in this study today do not depend on wage employment, but almost exclusively on state grants.

The household as a site of stability has become fragile as most households lack resources and are experiencing the effects of unequal power dynamics based on gender and age. Households are thus unable to effectively alleviate and cushion the effects of poverty. Instead, they are pushed further into poverty, undermining any hope that they may have of surviving. Of the twenty-nine households studied, fourteen face multiple vulnerabilities and risks such as ill health, lack of income and lack of food, and they have no access to essential services such as shelter, water and electricity. They are declining further into poverty. Nine of the twenty-nine households are coping, with few assets, just ‘making ends meet’ and still vulnerable. Five of the twenty-nine households are improving, less vulnerable and with more assets and access to resources.

As expected, the research findings reveal the centrality of older women in the livelihood activities of the households and communities, given their traditional role as caregivers and their income security from government pension grants. However, the research shows that the centrality of women in households has not resulted in a role reversal and an “end of patriarchy”, as Castells (1997), suggests or an elevation in their status as suggested in the Russian study of Burawoy, Krotov and Lytkina (2000). In the two townships, male domination and female subordination are changing because of their shifting class and economic positions. This has not led to a complete end of patriarchy, but has redefined it not based on the economic position of men but on traditional and cultural norms. The study reveals both the involution to households (Burawoy, Krotov & Lytkina, 2000) and an involution to traditional and cultural norms and values based on patriarchy that previously held households together. However, such a retreat to the old is being challenged by modernisation and gender awareness. This is by particularly so among young women. Hence, old forms of patriarchy are questioned while new ones are emerging.

8.3 Community Organisations: Social Resources beyond the Household

Community-level responses play an important role in the livelihoods of individuals and households. Some community organisations epitomised by both old and new organisations such as the Treatment Action Campaign and the church are strategic and effective social resources as tools for mobilisation of resources for the poor. The role that other organisations such as traditional trade unions, political organisations and short-lived new social movements play are less effective. Trade unions are moving back to factories to protect the rights of the minority while the retrenched majority return to the household, the informal economy and the factory as atypical workers who fall outside the scope of trade unions. Non-monetary and informal networks are replacing burial societies and stokvels. However, there are also individualised responses, such as private lawyers (where trade unions have failed), loan sharks (where credible money-

leading schemes have failed), and *stokvels* have become unaffordable. This research shows that individual and household livelihoods are significantly tied to community livelihood activities and to the local, provincial and national government. Therefore, this study did not look at individuals and households in isolation from the community and the state. Alternative livelihoods are being created at the community level through various organisations. The study critiques the concept of social capital; like many other capitals in the livelihoods approach, it limits the understanding of urban livelihoods. Indeed, while social capital has developmental potential, it does not guarantee pro-poor governance. The study adopts the concept of social resources to capture social life beyond the family or household. The necessity to disaggregate community organisations became central for a holistic understanding of people's livelihoods. Much as the poor cannot be treated as an undifferentiated mass, the same holds true for the social resources that they rely on to alleviate their poverty. As argued, there are indeed a number of community organisations that are assisting communities. At the same time, there are a number of older organisations that have not transformed to respond to the crises of unemployment, poverty and HIV/AIDS. Emerging are embryonic forms of "counter-movements" as argued by Polanyi (2000), led by an alliance of popular movements in civil society. As Mahon and Stokke (2000:338) correctly state, the activities of the counter-movement are often characterised by a

...growing complexity of alliances and conflicts between collective actors in civil society and actors within the state. The institutionalised political system constitutes a set of negative or positive political opportunity structures that can facilitate or hamper collective action rather than simply being a monolithic 'other' for collective actors.

However, Buhlungu (2004:29) contends that,

building a counter-hegemonic movement entails more than pointing out shortcomings of the existing order. It also implies that the merging movement (or set of movements) should be able to turn dissatisfaction with existing order into a more or less coherent programme for an alternative social order.

Therefore, at both Enhlalakahle and Mpumalanga Townships, state-citizen relations in post-apartheid era, have become adversarial with locals demanding service delivery and the state enforcing cost-recovery policies. This conflict over the commodification of basic services is also linked by locals in both townships to expectations of democracy and election promises by political organisations. The examples, presented in the thesis such as the Mpumalanga Concerned Citizens Group (MCCG), and Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), have been able to raise community issues.

The contradictory role of political organisations as agents of cost recovery and development in the community, and the history of political violence at both research sites, raises questions about their significance in the post-apartheid era. The shift to individual political leaders for information suggests a new trajectory in communities, but is also making space for corruption. Trade unions have also been found wanting for holding on to their traditional ways of organising and protecting only their constituencies. The most vulnerable – the unemployed and those working in the informal economy – lose their networks. They fall prey to individual arrangements and precarious organisations. Hence the notion of anti-social capital is useful to capture the opposing nature of community organisations. Other organisations are responding to the challenge and are assisting their members in fighting poverty and HIV/AIDS. Faith-based organisations are playing a leading role in addressing the needs of their communities. Unlike political organisations, churches are abandoning their traditional roles, particularly on issues of HIV/AIDS, and are beginning to talk openly about AIDS. Various church organisations, such as women's groups, continue caring for communities divided by the stigma attached to the AIDS pandemic.

New community organisations emerging in response to new crises often oppose the state. These have been significant in making way for new ideas of social citizenship and demands for new forms of governance. These organisations have also been central in consolidating South Africa's democracy by making both rights and needs claims. The Concerned Citizens Groups of both communities are

examples of communities challenging the state to fulfil its election promises and are thus demanding political accountability. The role of the Treatment Action Campaign is explored in the study to reveal the important role that organisations could play in the livelihood strategies of the poor. The gap filled by such an organisation is a crucial one, giving voice to those who cannot speak for themselves for fear of victimisation.

Even though civil society organisations are assisting the people of Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships, “either in terms of leveraging resources for self-help or by promoting and supporting advocacy” (Beall, 2001a), what emerges from the study is that “neither social capital nor civil society is a solution to deep-rooted problems of poverty and violence” (Edwards, 2000:232) that the people of both research sites are faced with daily. Therefore, as much as households should not be romanticised, neither should communities. Communities, similar to households, are filled with inequalities and the rules of entry vary from context to context; hence access to resources and assets vary.

The benefits of being part of a community are often not experienced by all in the community, mainly because of their different political affiliations. The two communities, which were studied, were, mainly ANC strongholds, thus IFP members and households were not fully accepted in the community. This phenomenon is related to the history of political violence and current power dynamics between the ANC and the IFP. In addition, factors such as crime, violence and corruption, as well as the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS, often undermine the idea of community.

Nevertheless, some community organisations such as the various FBOs, TAC and MCCG are linking and responding to communities’ immediate concerns. As possible agents of change, such organisations are opening up new possibilities of alternative political trajectories in both townships and optimism for the consolidation of democracy for the rest of the country. Specifically, the potential benefits for collective action in both communities are effective in their demands

for service delivery not only for members of these organisations but also for everyone. For example, demands and benefits achieved through the work done by TAC are benefiting members and non-members. Demands made for service delivery are also making the idea of accountability and good governance, at the local level, a reality. Indeed, the MCCG's R10 campaign for access to water is linked to election promises made by politicians. The success of such community campaigns has the added advantage of curbing corruption. Furthermore, the social resources in the form of various community organisations, serve as potential catalysts of change in an urban context.

8.4 The role of the state: Implications of the Macro-level policy framework

At the two studied communities, household and community livelihoods are directly connected to the state. In fact, most people's livelihoods depend on access to resources that are state controlled and distributed. There has also been a growing expectation on the state to solve the problem of unemployment, poverty and HIV/AIDS by increasing state expenditure on particularly basic needs such as water, education, and health. The post-apartheid state has made significant strides in creating livelihoods for the majority of South Africans. However, rising unemployment, poverty, and the AIDS pandemic overshadow these efforts. Specifically, the shifts in welfare and labour policies (see Chapter 2) have been significant, but precarious and limited in eradicating poverty and inequalities

First, welfare policies of South Africa have changed to include all citizens of the country, regardless of their race. The major change has been the introduction of social welfare grants for children. This is a significant step in addressing the needs of the poor children of the country. Most households depend almost exclusively on state grants for income as shown in table 5.4 in Chapter 5. Forty- five percent of households cited state grants as their main source of income. While most people criticise the state for creating dependence, the research suggests that the problem has not necessarily been the grant system. The shortcoming has been a welfare system that is not comprehensive enough to cover all poor households in

both communities. Most households are able to survive because of state grants but the situation is desperate in households where there is no one receiving such grants.

The fact that the majority of people who have access to state grants are women, especially through the child-support grants, has further strained gender relations between men and women in most households in both communities. As argued in Chapter 6, most men who are unemployed but do not receive state pension grants often feel emasculated in their households. They then tend to exert their power and authority through violence. Young unemployed men also tend to resort to crime, and alcohol and drug abuse. Similarly, young unemployed women, it has been argued in many interviews, resort to the sexual economy, and alcohol and drug abuse.

The current government welfare policy, like the livelihoods approach, assumes a consensual view within the household. It is assumed that government grants will be used for the benefit of all in the household and that unequal power relations in the household will not result in pensioners being victims of domestic violence because of their income. It is assumed that mothers will use their child support grants for the benefit of their children and not for maintaining their cell phones and hairstyles. However, Chapter 6 also reveals that most conflict in the households has been as a result of the allocation and sharing of this income. While older women receiving pension grants use their money for the benefit of all in the household, young women who receive child grants on behalf of their children, mostly use this income for their personal expenses such as maintaining their cellphones and hairstyles. Older men receiving state grants are also being accused of using most of their income on alcohol.

Even though the welfare system is seen as progressive and all-inclusive in terms of race, it has no significance in influencing the broader socio-economic context of South Africa. Poverty and income insecurity levels are not declining for the majority of poor people in both communities. Levels of income inequalities are

still significantly high. The R740 per month given to pensioners or R140 per month for mothers has proven to be insufficient source of income for most of the studied households. This income, I argue in Chapter 5, is mostly used for necessities such as food but is not enough to take children to school or pay for basic services such as water and electricity. The process of overcrowding identified in Chapter 5, has meant a growing household and “more mouths to feed” from a shrinking pool of income. Therefore, as Table 5.1 in Chapter 5, shows, fifty-two percent of households have fifteen household members and most (fifty-five percent) of these households have a monthly income of between R500 and R799. This means most studied households are barely making ends meet.

Second, South Africa’s progressive labour policies, outlined in Chapter 2 represent a shift away from adversarial relationships between the employer and employee. Various pieces of legislation protect employees against, for example, unfair dismissals and guarantee representation through trade unions. However, the growing unemployment in the country has meant that more and more people fall outside of the scope of the legislation and are not protected. There are far less people who are protected by the legislation because many economically active people are either unemployed, working in the informal economy or employed as casual labour. Therefore, regardless of how progressive South Africa’s labour legislation is today, it protects only a few, and the vulnerable majority are not protected. Those in the informal economy are not covered by the current labour policy.

As shown in Chapter 5, in terms of work and employment patterns in both townships, only thirty percent of those who are working are in the formal economy and the majority (seventy percent) are in the informal economy. In terms of income thirty-four percent of households’ main source of income in both townships comes from the informal economy. Informal economic activities in Enhlalakahle Township are in the form of street trading in the township and in the nearby Greytown City, while in Mpumalanga Townships it is mostly in the form of industrial homework. Such livelihood activities are pursued by mainly women

because of the traditional nature of the informal economy classified as a woman's sector.¹ The links between the informal and formal economy have not been entirely severed. The link between the two sectors has been formed and maintained through the process of workplace restructuring and outsourcing of parts of production in the clothing and textile industry, leading to the rise of homework² in places such as Mpumalanga Township. For those working in the informal economy their income is limited and working conditions are precarious. The informal economy is limited in mitigating the effects of poverty and unemployment in the two communities. These activities are merely survivalist for the majority of those who do not have access to other resources.

Third, government policies such as privatisation have meant that the burden of survival is shifting from the state to the household or the individual. The commodification of basic services such as water and electricity in communities already dealing with the crisis of unemployment, poverty and the AIDS pandemic, further compounds the challenge of survival. Indeed, the creation of livelihoods and sheer survival depends on access to these basic services. Most households (forty-eight percent) state that they are not spending any money on electricity. This either means that they have no access to electricity or are illegally connecting their electricity. Alternative sources of energy such as paraffin and coal are used regardless of people's safety reservations about these sources.

Access to both water and electricity is linked to the livelihood activities of some households. For example, those that depend on their vegetable gardens for food security depend on the availability of water. Industrial home-workers in Mpumalanga Township depend on the availability of electricity to use their machines. The water and electricity cut-offs in the two townships lead to food and income insecurity for people. Therefore, the contradictory role of especially the local state as agents of cost recovery and service delivery has led to conflict between the people and the state. Nevertheless, this conflict serves an important role in consolidating the country's democracy, encouraging accountability among

¹ Benton, L. (1989:255)

² Theron, J. (1996)

politicians and creating space for progressive governance.

Finally, “shock therapy” economic liberalisation through radical macro-economic policies that are aimed at an export-driven economy and global competition has led to the decline of sensitive and labour-intensive industries. This has resulted in massive job losses in industries such as the footwear and clothing industries. In the absence of employment as a key source of livelihood for the majority, communities are disintegrating and general household relations are fractured. The effects of apartheid industrial geography, which created townships in the middle of nowhere, and the effects of “shock treatment” economics, with reductions in tariffs to well below the World Trade Organisation agreement, has led to communities which are displaced and unable to create sustainable livelihoods. This is especially true in the case of Mpumalanga Township, which is not linked to any town or to an alternative industry. Mass unemployment in both Enhlalakahle and Mpumalanga Townships is linked to the restructuring of clothing and footwear industries as a result of South Africa’s change in macro-economic policies that aimed at trade liberalisation and international competition.

The findings of this study concur with Olivier (2000:8), that policy measures seeking to address the crisis of poverty and social exclusion should be multi-dimensional. That is, they should:

- Link together social rights and welfare arrangements;
- Intervene in the labour market by actively encouraging and regulating reintegration;
- Introduce measures which would strengthen the links between social security and labour market incentives such as job-seeking assistance, financial incentives to employ, and skills training;
- Focus on targeted involvement with particularly vulnerable groups such as women and youth;
- Ensure multi-actor involvement which include the state, non-governmental and community-based organisations, enterprises and other stakeholders;
- Manage market mechanisms in order to widen economic, social and political

access; and

- Balance passive and active policies, and introduce both reactive and proactive measures against exclusion.

Such a multidimensional policy has the potential of reducing poverty and the exclusion of the majority of South Africans in communities such as Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships. Therefore, instead of assuming that the poor have assets and that there should be less state intervention, the opposite is proposed. As shown in the study, in most households there are no assets to speak of, particularly in a context where there is growing unemployment and privatisation of basic services.

8.5 Livelihood Activities: Mpumalanga Township vs. Enhlalakahle Township

This study identifies diverse livelihood activities in the two townships (see Table 8.1). There are general similarities in the livelihood activities pursued in both townships. First, both townships share the experience of a national welfare policy that provides grants for children, the disabled and the elderly. It is not surprising, therefore, given their common unemployment crisis and income insecurity, that in both townships the most common source of income is state transfers.

Table 8.1: Summary of inter- and intra-household and community livelihood activities in Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships

Issue	Mpumalanga	Enhlalakahle
Work / Unemployment	Informal economy (homework). Retreat to household (social reproduction).	Informal economy (street trading). Retreat to household (social reproduction).
Income	state transfers, remittances, family networks, reciprocity, non-monetary contributions, hidden livelihoods (shebeens, crime, sexual economy).	state transfers, remittances, family networks, reciprocity, non-monetary contributions, hidden livelihoods (shebeens, crime, sexual economy).
Food	Vegetable garden, gifts, remittances, reduction of food consumption, process of clustering, diversification of food consumption.	Vegetable garden, gifts, remittances, reduction of food consumption, process of clustering, diversification of food consumption.
Education	Disinvestment in education because of income insecurity (taking children out of school).	Disinvestment in education because of income insecurity (taking children out of school).
Social resources	Community organisations, non-profit sector and NGOs – for example: TAC, MCCG, church, church-based women's groups, youth organisations, political organisations.	Community organisations, non-profit sector and NGOs – for example, CCG, church, church-based women's groups, youth organisations, political organisations.
Health	Use old prescriptions, use over-the-counter medication, and go to local clinic if there is money.	Use old prescriptions, use over-the-counter medication, and go to local clinic if there is money.
Other (electricity, water, space)	Use alternative sources of energy, heating and cooking such as paraffin, candles and batteries. Use less water. Build a shack outside the house for extra space.	Use alternative sources of energy, heating and cooking such as paraffin, candles and batteries. Use less water. Build a shack outside the house for extra space.

Source: Fieldwork (2001-2004)

Second, the retreat to the household and its expansion is a common response to poverty in both townships. This is informed by a common history and impact of shifting national government policies towards trade liberalisation, privatisation and cost recovery, which has led to high unemployment in both townships. In fact, as shown in Chapter 4, there has always been a historical and cultural prevalence of extended families, particularly in the African community. Hence, when defining households in South Africa, particularly in the African community, one cannot speak of a nuclear family. However, the prevalence of the increasing number of family members in households, or a “process of clustering” (Francis, 2001) can yield positive livelihood outcomes for many vulnerable people. This process is often not sustainable and should be interrogated. This is viewed in this study as a “process of overcrowding” which yields negative livelihood outcomes for the vulnerable. Lastly, because both townships share a common history of political violence, both rely less on political organisations than on faith-based organisations (FBOs) for support. This particular history has also led to the proliferation of a variety of faith-based organisations, which offer spiritual benefits to their members. A variety of formal and informal community organisations are also emerging in both townships because of the vacuum left by political organisations, particularly by trade unions. An exclusive focus on individuals and households will inevitably miss the social livelihoods that people pursue outside of the household.

Nonetheless, there are also different livelihood activities in both townships. These could also be explained through the history and current context of the two townships, as outlined in Chapter 4. While the two townships experience the same crises of unemployment and poverty due to a similar history of apartheid and post-apartheid policies, some of their responses are dissimilar. The most common response to unemployment in both townships is the growth of the informal economy, although the activities in the two townships are different. In Mpumalanga Township it is taking the form of industrial homework, with many women becoming dressmakers. This activity is directly linked to the township’s former industrial node, Hammarsdale, a clothing industrial zone adjacent to the

township. The majority of those who live in the township, and those interviewed, worked at the clothing factories and acquired dressmaking skills. Hence, when they lost their jobs, dressmaking became an alternative. The geographical location of Mpumalanga Township has also limited the emergence of alternative livelihoods.

The geographical location of Enhlalakahle Township – its close proximity to a town, Greytown, and other industries such as forestry and agriculture – has led to different livelihood outcomes. Even though most people relied on the footwear industry, and there is high unemployment since the industry collapsed, there are alternative employment opportunities. Many people are taking refuge in the informal economy as street traders in Greytown. While they have acquired skills to make shoes, they do not have the land or capital to buy the expensive machinery needed to use their skills. Therefore, street trading has become the most common income generating activity in Enhlalakahle Township. While this activity is prevalent in Mpumalanga Township, it is not as dominant as industrial homework.

In both townships, there is a declining dependence on political parties in the light of the emergence of alternative community organisations. However, the success and participation of the local community in these new community organisations is different. For example, even though both townships formed Concerned Citizens Groups, it is only in Mpumalanga Township that a protest march against the municipality was held. The level of engagement in the two townships is very different. Most community leaders in Enhlalakahle Township often said during the interviews that people in their township did not want to take the initiative but wanted to sit at home and wait for things to be done for them. The particular effects of past political violence and the current political context could explain this low level of engagement. The effect of the political violence is profound for both townships, but for Enhlalakahle Township it is especially so because it is still located in an IFP stronghold. The township is also relatively small compared to Mpumalanga Township, thus making mobilisation in an IFP stronghold very

difficult. This is compounded by the fact that the Enhlalakahle Township is geographically closer to rural areas and not to townships, particularly ANC-stronghold townships which are experiencing similar issues.

However, not all livelihoods pursued in both townships are sustainable. Indeed, some are risky and tend to undermine the sustainability of other livelihoods – for example, the use of loan sharks for money lending and increasing promiscuity to secure an income. The standard of living is also declining as many households have to reduce their food consumption, and are unable to invest in their own health and education, and that of their children. The informal economy is also failing to mitigate and fill the gap left by the formal economy.

8.6 Theoretical Considerations

There are various theoretical and policy implications that emanate from this research. At a theoretical level, the orthodox livelihoods approach is limited in its understanding of households and their livelihood creation. The research reveals the following limitations to the livelihoods approach. First, households do not necessarily have any assets at their disposal. Households assets in both Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships are depleted daily and new ones are not created because of the lack of alternative assets. Therefore, it is narrow to assume that the poor have assets to work with and are able to replicate new ones. As argued in previous chapters, most households lack even basic assets such as water and electricity. The study problematises the notions of “assets” and “capitals” as argued in the livelihoods approach literature. The two concepts are inadequate when talking about the poor majority of South Africa, where basic needs are not even addressed and where income does not easily add up to assets.

Second, the theoretical or empirical literature on households and resource allocation tends to be very limited, particularly in South Africa. It is presumed that everyone belongs to households that are working for the benefit of all, and there is an assumption that there are household livelihoods instead of individual

livelihoods. The research argues that while the household becomes the first place for those who want to hide their poverty and disease, not everyone has the advantage of belonging to a “working” household. In fact, the majority of people belong to households where individualistic livelihoods are pursued much to the detriment of the vulnerable such as women, the elderly and children. Indeed, the household dynamics are unpredictable and can combine a mixture of selfishness and altruism (Folbre, 1994). It is also for this reason that household entities still exist.

Third, households are complex entities in our society. They differ not only in size but their functions also change over time to respond to crises. Households in Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships do not fit into the nuclear family definition imposed by the West. Instead, poor people’s survival is linked to kinship networks that often transcend the urban-rural divide. They also shift given the structural and economic changes and changing livelihood opportunities. These changes have affected different household members differently, based not only on their gender but also on their age and income status.

Fourth, in most poor households there are “co-operative conflicts”, but with more conflict than co-operation. This conflict most often arises because of poverty and lack of income. Relations within households become strained, particularly as individualistic livelihoods increase. Hence, there is a need to disaggregate and question the use of total household income statistics because they often conceal how much of the total household income is used for all household members. The unequal power relations within households are intensifying between men and women, between the old and young, and between women and women. Inter-generational conflict often arises because of the scarcity of resources. Treating households as harmonious entities that work for the benefit of all misses the limited role that households play in livelihoods formation. The idea of welfare maximisation as proposed by the new-household economics (discussed in Chapter 1) is nullified in this research. Household relations are not always an asset for everyone, and for the majority such as women and children these relations are

often a disadvantage and hinder them from surviving.

Chapter 6, it shows that household members do not necessarily work together for the benefit of all. In most households gender relations are often unequal and based on power. The study reveals that a number of households experience domestic, inter-generational and child violence and abuse. Therefore, because households are not homogeneous entities, variables such as gender and age are used to disaggregate the data. Evidence has shown that such variables reveal the contribution or lack thereof of various members to the household. It has also shown the challenges facing household members in their struggle to survive, given their age and gender. Such a gendered and new focus shows the important role that women and older women in particular play, in promoting the survival of their households and communities. Their income, mainly from the state pension, and their role as caregivers remains for the most part the only source of income, emotional and social support in their households and communities.

Fifth, given these unequal power relations within households, resources are not shared equally among household members. Those with more power, the majority of whom are men (young and old), tend to use their income for their private needs and not for the needs of the entire household. There is a general shift to what Pahl (1989) sees as “independent management” of separate incomes, but as the research shows this is an option mostly for men and young women. The research concurs with Kabeer’s (1994) assertion of the correlation between the gender of the person owning wealth or earning income and patterns of resource allocation within the household.

In addition, the study also reveals the dynamic not just within but also between households that impact on the creation of livelihoods. One household’s livelihood might pose a threat to the community’s livelihood (see Chapter 6). Examples discussed in the study, which are being blamed for wrecking families, include crime by the youth, promiscuity among men and women, loan sharks and illegal shebeens. Lastly, in the absence of employment, the centrality of unpaid work is

clearly shown as it plays a major role in the survival of households and communities. The need to define work more broadly to include social reproduction, mainly done by women, is central to the full and better understanding of household and community livelihoods. Thus, acknowledging the important role played by women in alleviating, particularly food, insecurity in many households is vital. Their work in the community, based on reciprocity and non-monetary exchanges through various community organisations, extends their role as caregivers in communities ravaged by the AIDS pandemic.

8.7 Conclusion

This study locates micro-level and the local livelihoods within a macro-level policy context of South Africa. The diverse livelihood activities of individuals in households and communities in both Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships are understood in a specific macro-level economic, social, and political context of South Africa. The study has links the livelihoods literature with the literature on work and intra-household relations to achieve a holistic and new understanding of urban livelihoods. While most studies focuses on urban livelihoods or work and labour studies or inter-household relations, this study fuses the three literatures in a new context to capture diverse urban livelihoods and changing gender and age relations in households and communities.

Theoretically, the thesis uses several key concepts, all of which are potentially important in any study of urban survival in South Africa. These include the concept *livelihood resources* as oppose to livelihood strategies, assets and capitals, and *social resources* as opposed to social capital. A study that seeks to examine livelihood activities, and not strategies, inevitably alters its perception of poor people. In addition, the policy outcomes of such a study tend to be less conservative. A conceptualisation of household decision-making and actions in terms of strategies is misleading as it obscures the often-unequal power bargaining that take place in households. Furthermore, instead of considering poor households as “managers” of assets and/or capitals overt or covert, social scientists may consider exploring the context-specific rules of access governing

individual, household and community struggles for social, economic and political resources.

A context-specific definition of the household is necessary. In the context of South Africa such a definition should embrace the historical, economic and political context, which undermines a definition that assumes for example, co-residence and does not take into consideration the persistence of urban-rural linkages. The fluidity of South African households could be considered given the changing socio-political and economic context. The continued prevalence of extended families, particularly in African households, is yet another factor to consider.

However, methodologically, the sampling frame of this study is limited and broad generalisations might be tentative. While a sample of twenty-nine households is enough to give a possible picture of urban livelihoods in post-apartheid South Africa, more research of this kind is needed to enable broader generalisations. The chosen households in both townships are not totally representative of the townships themselves or South Africa as a whole. There were limitations in drawing urban-rural linkages, hence further research into these rural-urban linkages in relation to livelihood activities of the urban poor needs to be pursued. Nevertheless, this study has succeeded in revealing the diverse urban socio-political and economic livelihoods in Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships.