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Towards an understanding of the limitations of the Alexandra renewal project: the ALPOA court interdict and its impact.

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Abstract

Alexandra Township located north of Johannesburg was established in 1912. It has an infrastructural capacity of 70 000 people and is now populated by an estimated 400 000 residents. It covers 800 hectares including Alexandra Proper (Old Alexandra) and the East Bank. The Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP) was initiated in 2001 with an initial budget of R1.3 billion to be used over 7 years in furtherance of a programme that would improve infrastructural shortcomings in housing, roads, water supply and sanitation. It would also facilitate the upgrade of housing and create new housing opportunities.

Arising from discussions held between the City and two organizations representing the residents, Alexandra Land and Property Owners' Association (ALPOA) and the Alexandra Property Owners' Rights Organization (APOR), an amount of R50 000 was paid to some of the residents. A dispute then arose and ALPOA and APOR obtained an interdict against the City of Johannesburg to prevent the expropriation of their land without appropriate compensation. This court order has had the effect of restricting redevelopment in Old Alexandra thus preventing high density and mixed-use development, *in situ* upgrading and the roll out of rental stock. Despite an arbitration forum being set up and various proposals being considered by both sides, no solution has yet been reached.

The purpose of the study is to examine through a qualitative approach, the underlying causes leading to the dispute between the city and the residents, the basis for the granting of the court order, the impact this court order has had on the property owners, and the underlying reasons as to why the dispute has not been resolved. This study also seeks possible solutions to the dispute and makes certain recommendations in this regard.

The main research question will be 'What underlying factors created the environment that compelled ALPOA and others to seek a court interdict?' The research method will involve interviews with several stakeholders including City and Provincial officials, ALPOA and APOR executives as well as property owners and residents affected by the court interdict. The expected finding will be that government has failed to deal with the problem, has failed to effectively bring the private sector on

board, has systemic governmental problems and is beset with incompetence and corruption.

The research is underpinned by the inhumane and unacceptable living conditions in Alexandra and the motivation for the ARP project and its challenges. Key concepts of the research will be to pose the main research questions, to identify the problem and examine its underlying causes, to follow a systematic and organized procedure in collecting information, to analyze the information gathered and to determine whether the findings tie in with the hypothesis set out above.