

CHAPTER SEVEN: SELF-HELP HOUSING NETWORKS, INSIGHTS THROUGH A NAIROBI-JOHANNESBURG COMPARISON

7.1. Introduction

Having looked at various resources and networks for self-help housing in the previous chapters, this concluding chapter draws overarching lessons through comparison of various network attributes in the Nairobi and Johannesburg case studies. On the whole, the study shows that networks of individuals are stronger than those of groups in both cities, implying a need to support existing and new local groups involved in various aspects of housing to attain a desirable balance between public and private consumption in housing. Through comparison, unique aspects of self-help housing networks in Nairobi and Johannesburg become more evident. Appreciation of this uniqueness can be used to optimise the potential of the networks in access to resources in the two cities. There are also lessons that each context provides for the other. Understanding the working of local networks is more useful in improving local practice than assuming transferability of lessons from one context to another. However, cross-cutting attributes of housing networks in Nairobi and Johannesburg give an indication of generalisable aspects of self-help housing networks.

Both egocentric networks and networks of collaborative action dominate access to resources for self-help housing in Nairobi. Although networks of individuals in Nairobi are useful in access to various resources, they have resulted in various problems, especially when they infringe on public consumption. Group networks tend to yield better housing results. However, both individual and group networks in Nairobi are not adequately understood and supported, especially by actors in the state and market sectors. In terms of resources, almost all, apart from infrastructure and services, are accessed, in Nairobi, predominantly through networks.

In Johannesburg, ego-centric networks are more for survival than for provision of housing. State and market hierarchies are the main means through which most resources towards self-help housing are accessed. The study shows that local groups involved in self-help housing in Johannesburg, though intended to function as

hierarchies, still depend on networks for their operations. The success of these local groups, in Johannesburg, depends on the links individual actors within them are able to develop to access resources for their groups, rather than funding from the government *per se*. The groups, in Johannesburg, are poorly embedded into their local context, compared to those in Nairobi. Most resources, in Johannesburg, are accessed through state and market hierarchies, apart from aspects of housing finance, labour, materials and technology.

This concluding chapter has eight sections including this introduction. Section 7.2 compares ego-centric networks in Nairobi and Johannesburg. Section 7.3 discusses insights from networks of collaborative action in the two cities. Section 7.4 engages with networks of exchange in the two cities. Section 7.5 outlines key lessons for housing policy. Section 7.6 summarises key contributions to network analysis and self-help housing methodologies. Section 7.7 outlines the study's contribution to theory and section 7.8 summarises the study's contribution to knowledge.

7.2. Comparing and contrasting ego-centric networks in Nairobi and Johannesburg

Individuals in Nairobi and Johannesburg have networks that bear on their potential to access various housing resources. These ego-centric networks are most instrumental in access to finance. However, they seem to cause some problems when employed to access land. They are also used to cut costs in access to labour, materials and technology. While networks of individuals who are not acting as a group may be difficult to use towards large housing initiatives, taking them into consideration gives insights into context specific factors that are likely to make a housing programme either succeed or fail. In the case of Nairobi, mapping these actors indicates the complexity of the context in which housing interventions have to take place. In the case of Johannesburg, assessing networks of individuals can ensure that future low-income housing initiatives by the government do not become a liability, as a result of loss of individuals' support networks.

In all the four case study areas, in Nairobi and Johannesburg, ego-centric networks were more dominant than networks for collaborative action. Ego-centric networks are stronger in Nairobi, because of limited state involvement in provision of housing for the low-income. They were also strong in parts of Ivory Park, Johannesburg, where residents had stayed for a long time. On the whole, ego-centric networks are weaker in Johannesburg, because the settlements are relatively younger and also because personal ties are broken by relocation of households, which is often necessitated by the state subsidised housing programmes. In addition, there were other barriers in building ego-centric networks in Johannesburg, the main one being grassroots political divisions, as reflected in the case of Ms Khoza (Chapter Six).

Kinship networks of the ego exhibited various patterns across the case study sites. While they were disappearing in Kawangware, rural kinship networks were being used, for example by Kairi Brothers Self-help Group to access land informally in Dandora (Chapter Five). Interviews in Ivory Park and Diepsloot indicated that rural kinship ties are used to get a foothold into the informal areas of both settlements. The scale of these networks in self-help housing in Nairobi and Johannesburg is still unclear, although they are used more for social support than housing.. The more useful ties seemed to have been location specific, and local political networks that were actively used to access resources and to protect the ego/individual from evictions from land. There are also cases in Johannesburg, particularly Diepsloot, where individuals still relied on networks from their previous settlements, for information on housing opportunities.

In many instances personal networks were used to access housing resources, e.g. land, at the expense of communal good. This was particularly rife in Nairobi, as illustrated in the cases of Ms Njoki and the Gateres (Chapter Five,). These contraventions were few in Johannesburg, mainly because of enforcement of development control. They are illustrated by the case of Mr. Mabizela discussed in Chapter Six. There is need for more vigilance to protect local communities from such negative outcomes of ego-centric networks as grabbing of public land or constructing rental houses on road and riparian way leaves (see Chapter Five). Political patronage has played a role in the overall laxity in enforcement of development control, in Nairobi, especially in areas

where space for social amenities is being lost to individual speculators. Most of the individuals who fall in this group use their ego-centric networks for protection.

7.3. Insights through comparing networks of collaborative action in Nairobi and Johannesburg

After discussing some issues relating to ego-centric networks in Nairobi and Johannesburg, in this section I focus on issues that are specific to networks for collaborative action in the two cities. In the subsequent paragraphs I discuss: weak links between collaborative networks to actors in the state and market sectors; well developed social entrepreneurship in Nairobi which is being used to improve delivery through self-help housing, and lessons for Johannesburg; and institutional thickness and collaboration amongst local groups.

Ties with state and private sector tended to be weak in Nairobi. Most linkages that were used by groups to access resources, particularly in Nairobi, were with various elements within civil society, including international donors. In Johannesburg, there were generally stronger ties with the state and to some extent actors within civil society, while ties with the private sector were generally weak. While in the Nairobi cases there was no major involvement of the government with local groups – Kabiro Human Development Programme (KHDP) being an exception rather than the rule – in Johannesburg there was very active engagement between the government and local groups involved in various aspects of self-help housing, for example, the government appointed a manager for the Ivory Park Eco-city Programme, when the founder was on leave. It also put in place a structure to ensure continuity of activities of *Masisizane*, including appointment of a manager. Groups like *Izwe Lethu* and *Inzimi Mpumelelo* in Johannesburg have been initiated by the local authority to participate in the People's Housing Process. There is need for the government, particularly in Kenya, to support local groups and their networks as they bring in resources that communities would otherwise not have access to; complementing government's limited effort to improve people's housing conditions.

There is a contradiction in the desire of the government, in Johannesburg, to decentralise housing production, and the result, which reflects reproduction of non-representative, ineffective hierarchies at local level. My interviews with City of Johannesburg officials showed that there were plans in place to replicate the Eco-city initiative in other settlements in Johannesburg¹. This same position is reflected in attempts to create cooperatives, such as *Masisizane* as vehicles for delivering housing through the People's Housing Process (PHP) in all the low-income settlements in Johannesburg. While replication may give answers to the issues of scale, it does not deal with the specificity that all the different organisations that have been looked at in this study reflect. From a network perspective, the uniqueness of ties that various groups use to access housing resources, the specificity of their operations, the groups' unique factors for strength and/or weaknesses, dependence on specific champions and the resources they are able to secure make it improper to attempt to replicate any of the organisations discussed in this study. There is also a tendency to ignore the networks that enable the local groups to function in the first place. This is clearly reflected in the transformation of *Masisizane*, from a local network to relatively ineffective hierarchy without dealing with the role of local mobilisation that it was fulfilling as a *stokvel* (Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2).

I now shift to discuss insights about social entrepreneurship and public consumption that are made manifest through analysis of self-help housing networks in Nairobi and Johannesburg. Nairobi cases reflected varied and stronger social entrepreneurs compared to the Johannesburg cases. Social entrepreneurship is important in self-help housing because it links social and economic aspects of development. Examples of social entrepreneurs found in Nairobi included priests, local and international individual philanthropists, the church and local community leaders. In many ways the local churches are the ones leading in social entrepreneurship in Dandora and Kawangware. They offer an enduring basis upon which to develop local economic programmes, compared to some CBOs and NGOs, which suffer from lack of legitimacy, credibility and capacity. The mainstream churches, in Nairobi, seem to offer more enduring links with other development agencies. An example is the Welfare Advisory Centre (WAC) discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.1, which has

¹ Interview with Solly Ramakgano, CEO, Eco-village Centre; at the Eco-city centre offices in Ivory Park, on 13th August 2004.

sustained many linkages for over 25 years through which various housing resources are accessed. However, the church in Nairobi is reacting to the failure of the state and market to provide housing for the poor, rather than engaging in this as its core mandate. On the whole, the large scale and the scope of the churches' interventions in Nairobi's low-income neighbourhoods make them natural development partners in self-help housing.

Social entrepreneurship is a lot weaker in Johannesburg. For example, involvement of religious organisations in development in Johannesburg was very limited compared to my case studies in Nairobi. Given their important contribution in Nairobi by providing infrastructure for collaborative action, e.g. mechanisms for savings, and encouragement of development of church-based groups, it would be relevant to explore the extent to which local churches and other religious groups in Johannesburg's low-income settlements could be involved in accessing resources for self-help housing. Caution would still need to be exercised when engaging with these groups in development, partly because of their potential to exclude. The bigger churches, like the Catholic Church in Dandora and Kawangware tended to operate beyond religious and denominational boundaries, even in their support of organisations like WAC. However smaller ones, e.g. Maranatha in Kawangware, are not only limited in capacity, but focus only on programmes that support small parts of its membership.

Strength of local groups, degrees of interactions amongst them and coalitions towards collective enterprises have been considered to be some of the issues that make the collaborative efforts of local groups effective (Amin and Thrift, 1994). These are attributes of institutional thickness (see also Chapter Five, Section 5.3.4). On the whole, the groups in Nairobi showed greater institutional thickness than their Johannesburg counterparts. This was clearly reflected in the extent to which K-Rep, the Welfare Advisory Centre (WAC) and the Kabiro Human Development Programme (KHDP) were connected to one another and also to other local groups (Chapter Five, Section 5.3). They are helping develop the smaller groups' capacities. Examples of these are the savings and book keeping facilities WAC is offering local groups in Dandora, support for local savings groups that K-Rep is doing through an NGO in Kawangware, and organising and training of local groups that KHDP has

been involved in as a core activity for many years in Kawangware (Chapter Five, Section 5.3). In Kawangware, local interaction and coalition was strengthened by having a local coordinating body. This was not the case in Dandora, where the groups hardly formed any coalition to serve collective interests.

There was very limited degree of interaction amongst groups in self-help housing in Johannesburg. In fact my interviews showed that there was hardly any interaction at all. As reflected in the case studies, most of the groups, e.g. *Inzimi Mpumelelo*, *Izwe Lethu*, *Masisizane*, were weak, in spite of state funding being availed to them. There was no evidence of any coalition towards a common goal amongst the Johannesburg groups. Thus, collective interests amongst groups involved in low-income housing in the Johannesburg cases are left unattended. This low institutional thickness results in lack of opportunities for cross-capacitation.

7.4. Insights from networks of exchange in Nairobi and Johannesburg

Self-help housing networks play a major role in the ability of individuals to save towards housing. After reviews of several groups (see Appendix 9.6 and 9.7 for detailed lists) involved in small-scale savings in the case study areas in Nairobi and Johannesburg, I noted the similarity in the amount of money that individuals were able to save, despite major economic differences in Kenya and South Africa. Except in a few cases, they did not save beyond R 20.00 (Kshs 200) per week. It would be interesting to explore the actual factors that limited the saving capacity of the poor in each context. These savings are inadequate to contribute meaningfully to housing development. In most of the credit members received from local savings groups went towards purchase of household items and only in very few cases were they used for home improvement. On the whole, there were very few local savings groups in the Johannesburg cases. This could be linked partly to existence of state subsidies and other welfare programmes in South Africa. It could also be a result of the relatively shorter periods that the case study areas in South Africa have been occupied by the current occupants.

Both networks and hierarchies play an important role in access to land in Nairobi and Johannesburg. The Nairobi case studies showed that most people are accessing land through ego-centric networks or networks of collaborative action. The mechanisms of access include: church based programmes, micro-finance, rotating savings and credit organisations (ROSCAs), corrupt allocation by the Provincial Administration, land grabbing - with protection from various individuals in state departments - and to a small degree, temporary land rental (in Kawangware). Access to land in the Nairobi cases is characterised by informality, clientelism and patronage. The chaotic nature of the networks of access to land in the Nairobi cases is re-enforced by the reluctance of the national government and the local authority (NCC) to intervene in areas where land has been acquired informally, emphasising them as illegal areas. The Nairobi networks enable access to land, but limit future planning potential of these areas. In Johannesburg land is predominantly accessed through state/market hierarchies without any spaces for local networks of individuals or groups to play a role, for example most of the groups in Diepsloot have accessed land almost exclusively through the state subsidized housing programme. While this helps with formal planning, it limits access and exchange, as there is no secondary market for land in the Johannesburg case study areas.

Networks of access to labour by the low-income hardly went beyond the settlement in Johannesburg, for example labourers in lower income areas of Ivory Park hardly worked in other parts of the city. They were generally limited to the citywide level in Nairobi, for example most of the workers building for individuals and groups in Dandora worked in many different parts of Nairobi and also across economic lines. Networks of access to labour are the densest networks of exchange observed in the four case studies. The Nairobi cases show almost self-contained local supply of labour, materials and technology. This has developed in an unregulated manner, through personal initiatives. There is construction technology transfer in self-help housing networks in Nairobi through labour, as semi-skilled and skilled workers shift from the biggest construction firms to informal local outfits working in the self-help housing arena. Most construction is based on masonry and reinforced concrete (see Photo 7.1). Local contractors and labourers make pre-cast building elements such as lintels and slabs. Two to six storey constructions are the norm, despite development control allowing only one-storey. Local groups, and in many cases individuals, are the

ones constructing most of the housing units. This mode of housing delivery, through many small-scale players and informal building systems, has been recognised previously in research (see Wells & Wall, 2001: 5 and Ngare, 1998). The linkages it enables are instrumental in technology transfer, from mainstream players in the construction sector, to individual builders.



Photo 7.1. Small-scale labourers constructing a multi-storey house in Dandora, Nairobi



Photo 7.2. .Material piling in Diepsloot, Johannesburg

The Johannesburg cases showed disconnection, and general lack of technology transfer between local groups and main contractors in the market. Organised local construction groups, in the two Johannesburg cases, are almost non-existent. Their relationship with the major players in the construction industry is very weak (see also Khan, 2003: 79) despite regulation, in South Africa, to enable backward linkages between mainstream and emerging contractors to happen. Local labourers seemed un-conversant with reinforcement and pre-casting of concrete in Ivory Park and Diepsloot (*Masisizane* had to sub-contract a specialist, Profond Contractor, to supply pre-cast slabs, see Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2), an evidence of weak technology transfer.



Photo 7.3. Construction of bond housing in Diepsloot, Johannesburg

In the Nairobi cases, local groups supply all the necessary materials and technology. There are more intense building activities, more hardware shops, and more local material suppliers, in the cases of Nairobi compared to Johannesburg. Local entrepreneurial activities in the Nairobi cases give an indication of the volume of local business, which can be sustained through construction in Johannesburg settlements. The case of Kawangware in Nairobi offers lessons on how local economic development could be encouraged in the government sponsored self-help housing programmes in Johannesburg. Further, local investments in the construction sector in Nairobi give an indication of the untapped potential of small and medium micro-enterprises (SMMEs) in the low-income housing sector in Johannesburg.

In the Johannesburg cases, private sector hierarchies dominate supply of materials and technology, even for low-income housing, as evident in the case of low income housing in Diepsloot (see Photo 7.3). In Ivory Park, several initiatives to pilot alternative construction materials and technologies, as discussed in Section 6.2.1, have been undertaken, but none of these have been taken up and practiced locally. This is also the case in Nairobi. Why? Materials and technologies sold by the mainstream private sector tend to be what is consumed in both settlements, however inappropriate. Market hierarchies dominate supply of materials and technologies,

thereby determining consumption patterns. One reason why private sector hierarchies dominate supply of materials and technology in Johannesburg is because of rigid building standards required by the local authorities, even for low-income housing.

One area, which is dominated by state/market hierarchies, both in Nairobi and Johannesburg, is the provision of infrastructure and services. In all the four case study settlements in Nairobi and Johannesburg, all significant development of infrastructure and services has been by the government. Broader partnerships involving the public sector, the private sector and civil society have had very limited success, where they have been tried, e.g. the case of Dandora Gitare Marigo area, where there was an initiative by the church and the private sector to supply toilet and water facilities to the informal area, and the case of Kawangware where the Nairobi City Council, Kabiro Human Development Programmes and two local universities, amongst others tried to develop access roads and storm water drainage. These efforts had very limited success mainly because of the level of funds available versus the level of funds needed to provide adequate infrastructure and services. Comparatively, the Nairobi settlements have had more networks for delivery of infrastructure and services than the Johannesburg settlements. However the output, in scale and scope, was negligible, in comparison to what the state-market hierarchies were delivering. The city of Johannesburg still maintains infrastructure and services, with a reasonable degree of success. In Nairobi, the council has failed to supply and maintain local infrastructure and services.

7.5. Key lessons for housing policy from a Nairobi-Johannesburg comparison of self-help housing networks

The comparison between self-help housing networks in Nairobi and Johannesburg show that housing networks develop faster in contexts where state/market hierarchies are not enabling adequate access to various resources needed for housing, as reflected in Nairobi case studies. We see quite clearly in Johannesburg (in the context of the People's Housing Process), and also in specific cases in Nairobi (e.g. K-Rep) that networks are also useful in ensuring proper functioning of state/market hierarchies put in place to solve housing problems. When it comes to individual initiatives,

mechanisms of support that enable these personal efforts to work are captured to a large degree by understanding the sorts of networks individuals have. In both instances, in Nairobi and Johannesburg, there are many practical lessons that one can derive from housing network analysis to improve provision of self-help housing. These lessons would contribute to refinement of policy. In this section I reflect on eight such lessons and end with some policy challenges.

First, networks are unique and context specific. This uniqueness and specificity ensures customised solution to housing problems, producing more responsive environment to owner's socio-economic contexts. This was strength even in classical self-help housing discourses (see Turner, 1976). In Johannesburg, it produces variety in a situation where mono-functionality of government housing programmes dominates. The unique housing solutions that are being generated by the Eco-city in Johannesburg and individual solutions to housing problems both in Diepsloot and Ivory Park are already contributing to softening of mono-functional environments associated with subsidised housing in South Africa.

Second, networks enable access to resources that may be difficult to map and define in policy. They help access resources that would otherwise be locked up in other areas or used for other things. A policy that recognises latent opportunities in communities and creates spaces for exploitation of these would optimise on the use of these networks. This would give opportunities to use existing capacities in communities towards specific projects. It would also give an opportunity to harness particular resources that a community might already be accessing through established links, prior to a project. It would help avoid the pitfall of lack of capacity that decentralised systems tend to suffer from. It would also help avoid the non-representative nature of centralised approach to housing development. In any event there are many relational attributes that might help a project succeed or create obstacles, which are often taken for granted. When these issues are ignored, one runs the risk of replicating local capacities, instead of building on them.

Third, finances flow both in ego-centric networks and in networks for collaborative action in ways that are largely unforeseen. In ego-centric networks, the fact that various individuals spread in the global space are able to inject 'invisible' funds into

housing is good in contributing to housing stock. Network analysis not only tells us where the funds would be coming from, but also shows that these ways of financing housing is totally overlooked in policy. The Gatere's in Dandora and Mabizela in Diepsloot show that lack of recognition of these sources of income can be counter productive in terms of the quality of housing produced, and also in infringement on collective goods. The case of the Eco-city and K-Rep shows that there are even international linkages in housing finance that helps improve local housing solutions. The challenge is to create an environment where various local players of various income levels, who are currently operating illegally can have legitimate investment in housing in the city.

Fourth, networks reduce costs of transactions. The case of Ms Wanyiri in Dandora illustrates this very well. Factoring in links that individuals have and may be able to use towards housing would enable the state and other agencies to provide housing at a much cheaper cost. This is a situation where recognition of and the use of existing social capital amongst the poor is used to reduce the actual costs incurred in housing development thereby availing housing to more people with limited resources. This is the same case with networks that groups have been able to develop; especially those that can be used for philanthropic purposes. This observation is different from the sweat equity discourses which focus more on what the individual's personal, non-financial, labour oriented contribution.

Fifth, there are lessons for policy about technology transfer amongst labourers in self-help housing enabled through informalisation of the labour market. This was evident in Nairobi, where free movement of individual labourers and local construction groups, between complicated up-market construction and work in local settlements has helped in technology transfer. This is reflected for example in the mastery of reinforced concrete construction and pre-casting of different building elements. In Nairobi, lack of enforcement of regulations, rather than lack of skill is the major contributing factor to poor construction of self-help housing. In the Johannesburg, there did not seem to be any meaningful transfers of technology between local individuals working in bigger companies and those working in local settlements. In fact there seemed to be a disconnection between the two groups. Development of robust SMEs in the construction sector would encourage this movement; this has to be

accompanied by enforcement of appropriate development control mechanisms to ensure optimum output from labourers working in the self-help market.

Sixth, the multiplexity of networks implies that they can be used for various purposes simultaneously, as opposed to organisations that are mono-functional. Investing in networks enhances the stock of social capital in communities, which can then be used for many other aspects of community development.

Seventh groups are weak for various reasons and strengthening them strengthens collective consumption in self-help housing which is threatened by uncontrolled individual consumption in Nairobi and Johannesburg. The study shows that better housing outcomes are dependent on activities of groups. These are now driven by Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in the two cities. CBOs provide the link to grassroots, but the former's efficacy depends on attachment to and support from NGOs and other actors. Currently, in both cities, CBOs and NGOs in housing are quite weak. There should be focused government policy to catalyse development of local groups. Once developed and exploiting opportunities enabled through local social capital, there is need to provide external links to enable these groups develop capacities and opportunities beyond what is internally available. In Johannesburg, interactions between state/market hierarchies and local groups should not weaken the latter. There is tension in the operation of state hierarchies and local networks, reflected in the government's attempts to transform local networks into hierarchies and insertion of managers into local groups. These well-intended efforts weaken local networks further. A more appropriate relationship with these local groups in Johannesburg should be explored.

Eighth, existing local groups need stronger coordination and networking to optimise on their institutional thickness. Kawangware, in Nairobi, was the only case that had some limited coordination of local groups. Coordination of local groups is critical if they are to contribute meaningfully in alleviating the housing problems. Otherwise their activities remain sporadic, without any focus, hence achieving little. This coordinating role can be done through NGOs, CBOs and individuals who are acting as bridges between local CBOs, enabling the former to access housing resources available amongst other players beyond the local networks. It could also be done by

the state through intermediary organizations. This would create synergies amongst local groups that would make them a lot more resourceful, instead of relying only on their own limited local and intra group ties.

The two key problems with use of networks in housing provision is the fact that they tend to be unique and context specific limiting opportunities for replicability and the fact that ego-centric networks tend to work contrary to common good in many instances. Housing networks are not uniform. They have many different variations even in the same context. This implies that using networks for delivery of housing at scale may not be viable for several reasons, ranging from difficulties of accountability, limits to volumes of housing delivered, vulnerability as a consequence of reliance on specific champions, to capacity issues and particularly the limited and sometimes simplistic ways in which the state/market bureaucracies are envisaged to operate. Infringement on collective goods by ego-centric networks is best reflected in access to land in both cities. Open spaces, playgrounds, and space for infrastructure and services are accessed by individuals for personal use at the expense of communities as reflected in the cases of Dandora and Diepsloot. These individuals use ego-centric networks to access such plots and also for protection.

In light of the foregoing, for large-scale housing programmes to succeed in Nairobi and Johannesburg, networks have to be considered as one amongst many means through which housing is delivered, in addition to (not instead of) state/market hierarchies and decentralised systems.

7.6. Towards appropriate methods for the study of self-help housing networks

My methodological starting point was structural analysis of networks (e.g. Scott, 1994). However, I had to extend this approach, as it was not conceived for housing studies. Consequently, I developed a method for analysis of actors, agents, resources and networks in self-help housing. Primary data on networks was collected around individuals and groups. I used an approach to data collection that links soft and hard issues, and also offers a basis for linking questionnaires and interviews. Exploration of hard outcomes of housing networks could be refined further, so that discussion

around ties can be linked with outcomes for better interpretation of housing networks. However, soft outcomes were captured by engagement with the ‘impact’ of the networks. My decision to use description of specific network attributes in addition to the network structural analysis diagrams was intended to capture as much information as possible about the attributes of the networks without having images that are too loaded with graphics to be read clearly. All these contribute to development of the method of network analysis. They also contribute to methodology in the realm of housing.

I used an analytical framework, which allows for movement from micro-level, ego-centric networks, through networks of collaborative action, based on groups and formalism, to networks of exchange, defined by content of ties. This allows for an increasing level of abstraction of the networks. I found this very useful as more concrete networks gave context to abstract networks - I focused my mapping on relatively concrete relational attributes, from where I abstracted general network patterns. However, there is still need to develop mapping mechanisms of housing networks for bigger databases. There is opportunity, especially when it comes to exploring the myriad of linkages that go across political economies, for tools for this sort of mapping. Such tools could also be used for specific decision-making processes. I did comparison across two political economies. The housing network study that inspired my study (Smith, 1999) focused on networks of groups in a single political economy. He was then able to develop his study as a single case study of housing networks; incorporating comparison of local groups. My study employs ‘nested case study within case study’ to enable this scaling up. There were also specific methodological insights relating to the various levels of abstraction of the networks that I discuss in the next four paragraphs.

Ego-centric networks were inadequate in explaining the general patterns of ties that were used to access resources in the case study areas. This is because individuals who were living in the same geographical areas, in Nairobi and Johannesburg, often had very few ties with each other towards access to housing resources. Ties of individuals were often not geographically bound.

Networks amongst groups were the most informative on how resources were accessed towards housing, particularly in Nairobi. Although these networks tended to be unique depending on the group, they provided a clear context in which individual ties towards housing could be analysed. Further, the ties that the groups used to access resources could easily be verified through triangulation. They also reflected local structural and political economy factors that determined access to resources, like lack of government support in Kenya and inappropriate government support in South Africa. The mechanisms for analysis used in this study to explore collaborative networks can be used to study any network organisation.

Networks of exchange required a lot of abstraction, on one hand, and verification on the other. While this approach allowed a lot of generalisation at the city level, most of the findings were initially difficult to verify scientifically. The findings made a lot more sense when interpreted in the context of broader literature review of the various resources available in Nairobi and Johannesburg, and also in the context of illustrative potential of ego-centric networks and networks for collaborative action. However networks for exchange are useful to the extent that they allow generalisation and later comparison across political economies.

Comparison across the two political economies of Kenya and South Africa, via a Nairobi-Johannesburg study yielded useful insights. The most useful outcome of this comparison was the clarity that it enabled of practices in each context. By looking at what was happening in Nairobi, unique strengths and weaknesses of networks in Johannesburg became more evident and suggestions for improvement could be made, and vice versa. However, the study shows that it is difficult, even unadvisable, to generalise lessons and recommendations across political economies. This is because of the nature of networks; they tend to be context specific.

7.7. Applications of network theories to self-help housing

In this section I highlight three contributions of this study from a theoretical perspective. Firstly, it introduces various network concepts and demonstrates their relevance in understanding many aspects of self-help housing. Secondly, it explores

concepts that help understand the operations of both formal and informal groups in self-help housing. Lastly, it engages with complexity in understanding of the self-help housing phenomena.

This study shows that network theories are not only relevant but can contribute substantially to understanding of self-help housing. While network theories are well developed in other areas of knowledge, e.g. Sociology, Anthropology and Economics, they do not have substantial presence in housing studies. This study develops and explores various network concepts and their applicability to self-help housing. The study specifically applied the following relational concepts, amongst others: intensity and density; value and strength; bridges and social entrepreneurship; thickness and structural positions; and spaces of prescription and spaces for negotiation. There are many other relational attributes that could be explored in housing networks, which future studies can engage with.

This study helps understand how institutions work in the realm of self-help housing. The concept of networks of collaborative action is useful in analysing the operations of formal and informal organisations; and organised and mobilised groups involved in self-help housing. This actually helps overcome the divide of networks versus hierarchies in early studies, like *Housing as a Verb* (Turner, 1972). Analysis of collaboration and non-collaboration of institutions in self-help housing has already been applied conceptually as institutional thickness by Smith (2003). My study just employs [is there a word missing here?] to understand empirical evidence in the case study areas. It is noteworthy that various dimensions of institutionalism are also being pursued by researchers situated in the social capital arena, e.g. Harrison (2004) who discusses its relevance in efficiency of service delivery and enablement of collaborative action; and Simone and Abouhane (2005) who focus on associational life and governance of spaces occupied by desperate actors pursuing independent agendas, as it is wont to happen in the urban space. My study is situated in discourses that recognise complexity in the African cities. It attempts not only to understand this complexity, but also to suggest ways in which complex systems could coexist and be enabled to function better. While most social capital studies focus only on personal relationships, this study shows that individuals also have complex relationships with

both formal and non-formal institutions, which has implications for the effectiveness of the activities of both parties.

7.8. Conclusion: summary of contribution to knowledge

This study develops and uses an alternative approach to understand self-help housing production, through network analysis. It analyses how resources towards housing are actually accessed by individuals and groups, in Nairobi and Johannesburg. An important finding is that in Nairobi self-help housing is accessed mainly through networks which need to be recognised and strengthened through policy, whereas in Johannesburg self-help housing is still dependent on state market hierarchies contributing to mono-functional low-income housing environments. The study analyses atomistic networks of individuals, concrete networks towards collaborative action, amongst groups and networks of exchange, abstracted at settlement level, in the two cities, thereby contributing to policy and analytical frameworks for self-help housing.

In analysing these self-help housing networks, the study explains factors contributing to success of individuals and groups in self-help housing. These factors include: ability to access hidden resources towards housing; reduction of transaction costs beyond the space of local social capital; technology transfer through informalisation of labour markets; multiplexity of local networks making them dynamic and enabling them undertake many functions simultaneously; existence of strong groups and champions; and thick institutional framework including coordination and collaboration amongst local groups. Dominance of ego-centric networks over networks for collaborative action, supported with ties of exploitation and patronage is the major factor contributing to negative results of self-help housing networks. All these are useful lessons for development and operationalisation of housing policy.

On methodology, the study develops a way through which housing networks can be studied, namely: development of structural network maps for self-help housing; description of key self-help housing network attributes; mapping out of the physical and non physical outcomes of self-help housing networks; and development of a basis

for data collection from individuals and groups. Further, it develops an analytical framework that starts with concrete networks of the individuals (ego-centric networks), through collaborative networks of groups, to exchange networks and comparison across political economies. The study explores the use of the 'case study within case study approach' to studying housing networks from local, micro-contexts to macro-contexts across political economies. Methodologically, this study hopes to have opened space for future studies of networks in various housing processes and across a range of contexts, giving justice to the poorly acknowledged complexity of interactions between society and housing.

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