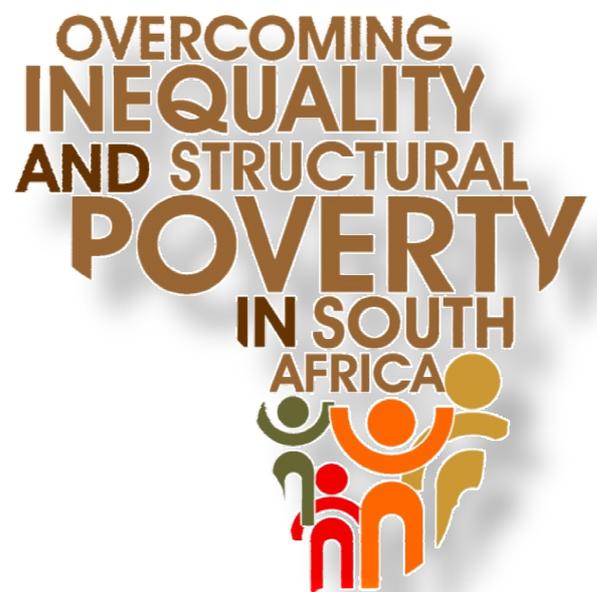


**Apartheid space and fractured power:  
Vicious cycles of poverty in Cornfields, KwaZulu-Natal**

*Lisa Del Grande<sup>1</sup> and Donna Hornby<sup>2</sup>*

1. Constructive Interventions cc, 2. University of the Western Cape

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Lisa Del Grande: Planning consultant. Constructive Interventions cc, Pietermaritzburg;

PO Box 13755

Cascades

3202

0834611426

[constructive@wol.co.za](mailto:constructive@wol.co.za)

Donna Hornby: PhD student. PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, Belville

P.O. Box 779,

Hilton

3245

072 538 1707

dannah@icon.co.za

## **Apartheid space and fractured power: vicious cycles of poverty in Cornfields, KwaZulu-Natal**

*A neglected area in the literature on structural poverty is changing land tenure relations and the disconnect with planning frameworks, which lock particular areas into 'vicious' cycles of poverty. These areas include some tribal authority, "black freehold" and land reform areas. In this paper, we focus on the case study of Cornfields, a black freehold area and an early land reform project. We argue that under apartheid black freehold areas became 'special purpose places', which, while facing forced removals, played the role of re-incorporating 'surplus people', and in the process created bases for localized authority that were not derived exclusively from either formal or tribal property systems. Land reform and the introduction of developmental local government further multiplied the sources of localized power, increasing conflict and eroding the community's ability to act collectively to access national development plans, thus consolidating trajectories into deeper poverty.*

*Key Words: planning, tenure, power*

### **1. Introduction**

*'The team.... asked them what would be different if the structural problems in Cornfields did not exist....The response was: "it would be beautiful and we would have everything we want".....' (Afra, 2004).*

The concepts of income inequality, social marginalisation and exclusion, adverse incorporation and uneven development each draws attention to the multi-faceted nature of poverty and its dispersion across households and place but none explain fully why post-1994 development is so elusive for areas with particular tenure histories.

We suggest that the explanation lies partially in the close and contradictory relationship between planning and land tenure. Planning was an important tool in establishing the spatial and political arrangements for a racialised capitalist economy in South Africa. While spatial planning was key to structuring the spaces for (white) capital accumulation and the commodification of (black) labour, development planning was key to attempts to produce consent (or the absence of dissent) by embedding social identity in cultural discourses, of which tribalism, with its association of land as a source of power, and community as an undifferentiated populace, are the most important.

These changes in landscape and social relations were accompanied by (and effected through) changes in tenure regimes, with land held in titled ownership gradually becoming the terrain of whites and its commodification the base for accumulation, while tribal patronage became the key mechanism for blacks to access land and (limited) political capital. Between these extremes fell a

range of increasingly hybridised tenures expressing the contradictions of apartheid's spatial policies along with the multiplication of sources of localised power. These legacies continue into the present, dynamically shaping social relationships and the spaces in which they are reproduced, and often constituting the source and stimulus for the conflicts inherent in them. In this paper, we look at the history of these dynamics in a particular context, namely, densely settled black freehold areas outside of any major cities.

We argue that under apartheid these black freehold areas became 'special purpose places', which, while facing forced removals themselves, played the role of re-incorporating the 'surplus people' displaced by group areas and farm evictions. As these areas adapted to the pressures of new social relationships while simultaneously resisting forced removal, multiple bases for localized authority were created that were derived exclusively from neither formal nor tribal property systems, creating fractured centres of localized power. Since 1994 black freehold areas no longer serve this "special purpose" and yet the ambiguity and tensions in these localised systems of authority remain intractable. This situation would perhaps be viewed as no more than an expression of the complexity of human relations if it were not for the force field it presents to latter day planners. The result is an uneven mix of either extremely long delays as technical concerns around ownership and development elicit latent tenure conflicts, or rapidly produced plans that fail to engage the underlying dynamics of the social relationships that constitute the space being reshaped, leaving behind a passive and often bewildered local citizenry.

In the freehold area of Cornfields, authority issues have been further compounded by the land reform programme, the active and long-term involvement of the land NGO, the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA), and the introduction of developmental local government. Rather than reincorporating people into the new national governance frameworks, these interventions have unintentionally multiplied the centres of localized power, increasing conflict and eroding the community's ability to act collectively to access development opportunities.

## **2. Causes of poverty**

The persistence of poverty across Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Africa eludes easy analysis. Different accounts of poverty are therefore useful in drawing attention to the range of mechanisms and processes that have locked particular groups and communities in poverty in South Africa.

## 2.1. The Second Economy Strategy

The Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) Second Economy Strategy (2009) is a fascinating document not just for the succinctness of its analysis of structural inequality and recommendations for addressing these but also for the way it describes inequality. The idea of a second economy presumes a distinct and disconnected first economy, an idea contradicted by an equally dominant concept in the document, life on the 'margins', which suggests a single economy with a centre radiating outwards, its concentration stretched as it reaches the edges, where opportunities are fewer and the risk of slipping right out of its reach hovers over the meaning of the words. The core is a 'developed modern economy' (TIPS. 2009:1). The margins are areas where people 'struggle to access even the most basic services' (TIPS. 2009:1). They are also populated with poor, black, (semi) rural, under-educated, young people, mainly women.

*The differences in conditions between the two are so stark they appear to be worlds apart – giving the notion of 'two economies' resonance...[and useful to describe] the two different ends of this spectrum: with wealth and resources concentrated at one end – and poverty and disadvantage at the other. (TIPS, 2009:1)*

The idea of two economies is meant to highlight the extremes and the experience of these extremes rather than reflect the reality, which is of interconnections and dependencies, and to suggest a discursive foundation on which to base the primary intervention of increasing access and opportunity of the margins to the core economy.

Cornfields doesn't belong easily in this description. At the level of experience, geography and population profile, it fits the margins. But the tenure system is freehold and therefore (at least in theory) doesn't fit the profile of the 'Bantustans' with their 'chronic development deficit' and 'coercive and patronage-based governance structures, including customary systems' (TIPS, 2009:5). Furthermore, Cornfields has benefited from post-apartheid development initiatives including land reform, household water infrastructure, road upgrade and construction of a clinic and school. The problem is that these interventions do not seem either to have dented the deficit or to have moved Cornfields out of the margins, which raises the question of how these 'margins' came into existence in the first place.

## 2.2 Income distribution

Nattrass and Seekings' (Seekings et al., 2006) analysis of South Africa's 'distributional regime' offers some ideas about the history and persistence of these margins in post-apartheid South Africa. The authors focus primarily on labour markets and how these changed over the 20th century to explain how the state has influenced income distribution. They observe that the distributional importance of

race diminished slightly prior to the Nationalist Party taking control in 1948 at a time of labour shortage, but that under the forced removals of apartheid and increasingly limited access of blacks to education, racially determined income inequality became highly visible once again. Changes in the labour market thus change relationships between race and class. In the years immediately preceding and following 1994, race gave way to class differences with high levels of inequality being maintained.

This picture corresponds broadly with what we know about Cornfields' history, with asset accumulation and threats to it corresponding to the fluctuations in income distribution. Du Toit (2004:5) draws attention to an added dimension of Nattrass and Seekings' work, namely the concentration of poverty in two groups, both of which are unable to participate fully in the core economy. These are the 'marginal working class' making up 12% of the total population and the 'dispossessed jobless' (2004:6), which makes up 29% of the population. Together these two groups secure only 10% of total income. These are people at the margins, and a drive through Cornfields suggests that this statistical picture holds true there too. Du Toit argues that while the term social exclusion resonates with the depth and extent of the marginalisation of these groups, it doesn't follow that policies aiming to increase 'inclusion' are necessarily the solution, which is the thrust of the TIPS' recommendations.

### **2.3. Social exclusion and adverse incorporation**

Tracing the concept of social exclusion to its European routes where it means the exclusion of people from the 'normal activities of modern society', Du Toit (2004:29) asks 'Whose 'normal' are we talking about here? And what values and practices count as 'modern'?'

These are the questions that plague the planning profession when confronted with property relations, like those at Cornfields that do not conform to their 'normal' expectations of ownership. Du Toit's conclusions are also pertinent. Policies designed to include or integrate the poor are not straight-forwardly beneficial but depend on what poor households are being integrated into and what the actual social and economic relations are. Indeed, the 'simplistic assumption that development entails broadening access for the marginalised poor to the infrastructures and systems that serve the wealthy urban elite has lately been recognised to be profoundly damaging'. (2004:29)

Du Toit (2004: 30) therefore suggests that it is the terms and conditions of incorporation rather than exclusion that defines marginality. This 'adverse incorporation' is locally specific and dependent on 'negotiation and contestation' (2004:30) but includes a set of related factors such as land dispossession and asset stripping, monetisation, unequal power relations of patronage and

clientelism, spatial remoteness and the technocratic discourse of development that shifts control to experts.

In Cornfields, dispossession was more complex. The community successfully resisted removals under apartheid but relationships based on property changed fundamentally as labour tenants and other black land owners in the area who lost possession sought refuge as tenants, contributing to the partial displacement of agricultural livelihoods by 'shack' farming. However, like other African groups, apartheid asset stripping at Cornfields also applied to other forms of capital, particularly social and financial with respect to health, education, social welfare and employment. This raises questions about the specific historical conditions that have shaped the social relations that underlie marginality in the present, and which confront development interventions as a force field of dispersed nodes of local power.

#### **2.4 The uneven development of capitalism**

Bernstein's description of the effects of uneven capitalist development resonates strongly with the idea of adverse incorporation while providing an analysis of how these conditions arose. Arguing that the uneven development of capitalism constantly generates new social ways of organising economic life without necessarily destroying earlier forms, Bernstein says these earlier forms 'may represent the exclusion or marginalisation of whole groups of the labouring poor as the effect of certain types of capitalist development, or how those groups are incorporated in particular forms of capitalist accumulation'. (Bernstein, 2007:10)

From the beginning, the development of capitalism had global dimensions in that imperialism solved both the industrial need for raw materials and the social effects of peasant dispossession in Europe that accompanied the commodification of agriculture and land (Weiss, 2007:50-54). These colonial relations of plunder and conquest fundamentally changed the conditions for capitalist development in the colonies and continue to shape the 'social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power' (Bernstein, 2007:1) that account for changes in the contemporary world.

A defining characteristic of today's world is the general commodification of production which means that 'reproduction can not take place outside the circuits and disciplines of commodity relations'. (Bernstein, 2007:4) However, the conditions for this reproduction in parts of the world, such as in the former 'labour reserves' in South Africa, are exceedingly constrained by the 'scissors crisis' of reproduction (2007:7), in which non-farm income becomes critical for the survival of households that still have some base in land at the same time as opportunities for secure labour or self-employment elsewhere have declined. These processes of 'de-agrarianisation' (Bryceson, 1999), in

which African peasant agriculture is unable to compete in today's global markets signify, in some cases, 'vicious cycles of poverty'. (Bernstein, 2007:7)

The uneven development of capitalist social relations of production explains how the dynamics, processes and distribution of poverty in South Africa today links to historical and contemporary global changes in the production and reproduction of capital and labour, particularly in agriculture. We now turn to the case study of Cornfields to see whether these explanations of persistent poverty are sufficient to explain the dynamics in this community.

### **3. The case of Cornfields**

#### **3.1. Cornfields from yesterday to now**

The rural and remotely located settlement of Cornfields lies 27 km northwest of the town of Estcourt in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands. It is surrounded by commercial agriculture, primarily beef with some maize and soy production, and has unpredictable summer rainfall with high temperatures, poor quality soils and limited water for irrigation. The settlement area sprawls substantially, with an unclear peripheral pattern moving out from a fairly dense centre.

The 4600 hectare area is currently made up of 155 freehold title plots on 600 hectares varying in size from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 27 hectares, while the remainder is farm land owned by the Cornfields Community Land Trust on behalf of 442 households made up of the tenants and land owners who were resident at the time of transfer in 1995. Cornfields' was originally established in 1912 to promote small holder agriculture, probably much like many mission stations of that time. The initial sales of plots quickly became subject to increasing legal restrictions on black South Africans purchasing freehold land outside of the reserve areas, resulting in the planned freehold settlement being only partially established (AFRA, 1991). Transfer of title to individual owners was also prevented in many cases resulting in various land holding agreements and a combination of state and privately owned plots (AFRA, 1991). These tenure arrangements have been further complicated by the transfer of the farm land to the trust.

The 2009 Spatial Development Framework of the Umtshezi Local Municipality (LM) describes Cornfields as requiring urgent support to be developed into a 'sustainable human settlement' as it is in danger of developing into an 'expansive isolated settlement'. (SDF Umtshezi, 2009:36). The number of residents continues to grow unchecked with in excess of 600 new households settled and the area now deviates from 'the approved' land reform plan, which was for a mixed use area including residential development, grazing land, crop production areas and sites for social facilities (SDF Umtshezi, 2009:36). The LM's development strategy now suggests the area would benefit from

the establishment of 'educational facilities such as schools, community centres including a community hall, health facilities such as a clinic or mobile clinic, sports facilities, limited commercial facilities, pension pay point'. (SDF Umtshezi 2009:61).

In 2006 Cornfields was '... not very different from what it was ten years ago'. (CSAP, 2006:4) A socio-economic profile undertaken in 1989 during threatened removal described housing as 'self provided', the use of pit latrines, water collection from natural sources, a primary school based in a local church building with poor facilities, intermittent access to a mobile clinic, irregularly cultivated food gardens and the use of firewood, thatching, weaving grasses, medicinal plants and wild fruit for fuel, building and food supplementation. Only one in ten households had fields and about 60% owned cattle. Very low formal education levels were the norm, exacerbated by the large influx of mainly of labour tenants from farms. (AFRA, 1991, AFRA, 2003:15) AFRA (1991:12) concludes that 'by the late 1980's, Cornfields and its population had characteristics typical of settlements within the 'peri-urban' areas of Natal/KwaZulu' but still shared some features with rural settlements.

By 2006, the access road to the settlement was still pot-holed gravel with pockets of old tar, which residents say is the reason public transport in and out of the area is sporadic, unreliable and expensive. Housing is still primarily mud, with residents stating that high levels of poverty and unemployment prohibit the improvements they desire. Utility infrastructure and services consist of pit latrines, access to electricity for longer term residents although many struggle to afford the card system (and few new residents are connected to the grid), water for those who can afford the household installation otherwise water tanks supply this service.

At the level of human and financial capital, the poor quality of education offered at a primary and secondary school contributes to high matric failure rates and school dropouts. The resulting poor educational and skill levels exacerbate the already low levels of employment caused by Cornfields' distance from places of employment, which are mainly Estcourt and Ladysmith with a few people migrating annually to Johannesburg. Local business includes a tavern, public phones at various residents homes and a tuckshop selling basic goods. Residents attribute the absence of gardens and field cropping to a lack of water, although there is some livestock ownership. Social benefits remain a critical source of income. The area has a clinic, which provides free services and is well attended although it is dealing with an increasing number of TB patients. (CSAP, 2006)

This is clearly a community on the margins although residents in 2003 acknowledged the improvements and, significantly, said they were now able to 'put down roots' and could assert their land rights in a manner that ensured that 'the farmers (have) never come to close to us again'. (AFRA, 2003: 13,15).

### 3.2. Fragmenting community governance and development

In 2003, some trustees requested AFRA return to the area to assist with resolving a debt to the receiver of revenue and facilitating the re-election of the trust (which was viewed as defunct). It quickly became apparent that Cornfields was facing a far more complex set of problems. The re-election of the trust and resolution of the debt required certain agreements and shared perspectives amongst leaders of different groups, which did not exist. Instead, these leaders were using their institutional bases to challenge each other's authority and power, particularly over control of development resources.

The community governance institutions include the Residents' Association of freehold land owners, the Cornfields Land Trust made up of freehold owners and tenants, an induna from a traditional authority and an elected municipal councillor. (AFRA, 2008). An interesting aspect of the request for AFRA's assistance was that the trustees did not draw on any of the sources of authority that manifest in these institutions, an early suggestion of the power struggles between and within the groups. This, and the presenting issues, created the link to development, or the lack thereof that would allow it to become a field of contestation.

This 'development deficit' had its roots in the apartheid government's deliberate withholding of all support to settlements like Cornfields in order to force relocation, combined with threatened removal that the settlement had lived under for decades and the overcrowding as a result of the influx of tenants from neighbouring farms during forced removals. Cornfields' key development problems should have been at least partially addressed through the state's land reform intervention in 1994 and yet this intervention appears to have muddied the waters rather than put Cornfields on a new development path.

The reasons for this are complex and appear to relate partly to how land reform played itself out in the area. The apartheid government had successfully removed and relocated about 620 households but the households that had resisted removals refused to consider the return of these families to the area during the land reform negotiations. Furthermore, land reform failed to unravel the complex tenure arrangements that had existed prior to forced removal and that were complicated by forced removals, including what had happened to the expropriated plots of those removed. The motivation behind those who planned the land reform was thus not 'restoration' but the increasingly 'unsustainable' land use, which was causing conflicts with neighbouring farmers over access to grazing lands and water. The purchase of the additional 4000 hectares of neighbouring farm lands was thus the apparent solution. While it seemed pioneering at the time, the programme in fact left Cornfields residents 'embedded far more firmly than ever before in a complex web of relationships

with powerful external agencies' in addition to the new relationships required between the growing number of internal bodies of authority. (Walker, 1994:6)

Simon Mchunu, an original trustee representing tenants, confirmed this institutional complexity:

*Maybe some of the problems ... started when the trust was elected and some people were left out. There was definitely tension between the trust and the residents' association because the trust was responsible for the new land and the residents' association ... for the whole of Cornfields. It made decisions about how to spend money ... for development difficult because it wasn't always clear who was responsible for making decisions. (AFRA, 2003:13)*

As a consequence, outside development interventions could not be governed internally, like the supply of fencing for cropping fields, which was not allocated resulting in diminishing use of the fields (AFRA, 2003). The 2004 request to AFRA to return to Cornfields was to highlight that neither the freehold property system nor the new communal property system seemed to provide Cornfields with the base it required to access the new developmental state's programmes.

### **3.3 AFRA's final intervention**

The final intervention entailed a field work process designed to respond adaptively to the issues as they arose through each participatory step. It was acknowledged at the outset that AFRA did not have the authority to resolve internal conflicts or institutional matters but could only support the community and local institutions to make better local collaborative decisions. AFRA also believed that re-electing the trust would not resolve problems unless the reasons for the trust's collapse in the first place were clear.

The first engagement in 2004 involved the governance groups (which now also included youth committees and two development committees) discussing their relationships to one another and their respective roles and responsibilities. Disagreement was immediately revealed relating to what had once been the overarching governing role of the Residents' Committee and which had now eroded to the point that all structures could convene community meetings on any issues at any time (AFRA, 2004b). The leaders agreed that establishing a clear relationship between the structures was necessary.

AFRA focussed the facilitation on identifying the de facto roles the various structures were playing as a concrete base for discussion on future roles. (AFRA, 2004c) These processes confirmed the unclear and overlapping roles in practice, which raised questions about the different bases for authority and legitimacy. The structures identified these bases as the property system, which gave legal force to different groups of residents, the ability of groups and individuals to deliver successfully on

infrastructure and services, and age (older people were seen as more legitimate decision makers than the young). (AFRA, 2004a)

Two alternate but related strategies for intervention then emerged. The first was to get the community to find unity through focussing on what they sought to achieve, based on reflection of the failure of past planning processes (many of which AFRA had facilitated in the late 80's and early 90's). The second strategy was to assist the leadership to clarify how authority is derived and to recognise the link between authority and decision-making as the basis of successful planning and implementation. (AFRA, 2004a). AFRA believed that these strategies would result in a clear set of tenure relationships, which would make transparent (amongst other things) how the ongoing influx of people into the area was occurring, thus establishing a land use system for development planning and implementation.

Although the leadership agreed to revisit the old plan, the process began to unravel. AFRA had expected the possibility that the conclusion of this process would require the existing groups to relinquish their authority in order to build a clearer system of unified governance. Almost in recognition of this, the group suggested that certain key individuals, namely, the councillor, the induna and the chair of the residents association meet to address underlying tensions between them in order to avoid their expression within the group process. This was to prove to be an irreconcilable tension in the four-year process. By September 2004 the councillor and his supporters were deliberately sabotaging meetings by arriving late and refusing to eat lunch with the larger group (Trench, 2004).

The leadership group and AFRA nevertheless agreed to proceed to review previous plans. The group declared they had found no benefit in the 1995-1996 Department of Local Government and Housing plan, which had addressed, amongst other things, the layout of the settlement and tenure rights because the layout plan 'didn't fit the way they were living and the [planners] simply did their own thing'. (Trench, 2004:2) Given this critical assessment of the previous plan, AFRA suggested a community process to discuss the how people actually lived and to identify their livelihoods in order to inform the revision of the plan as well as to neutralise the existing power bases in favour of community wide legitimation. (Trench, 2004)

The leadership requested that this community process be as open and transparent as possible to prevent it from being derailed by the unresolved conflicts. At the workshop, AFRA discovered that distinct local wards had developed to accommodate the expanding settlement, and that these emphasised local differences in rights and access based on historical relationships to the community and place. No previous plans reflected this local organisation of space. Although well attended with

high levels of participation, the workshop revealed again the fragmentation and erosion of the existing committees' authority when residents requested that the leadership group incorporate elected representatives from each of the wards (Trench, 2005). This idea was firmly crushed by the councillor and his development committee. When AFRA tried to put the matter to a vote, residents simply refused to state their preferences (Trench, 2005).

The underlying tensions erupted after this meeting and members of the leadership organisations began to withdraw putting an end to the planning (Ndlovu, 2008). Allegations of financial mismanagement by trustees resurfaced, which AFRA attempted to mediate without success owing to the absence of records and unwillingness of all leaders to provide any information. It did, however, exposing increasing levels of political intolerance and intimidation. (Ndlovu, 2008). These appeared to relate to the Inkatha Freedom Party's loss of support to the African National Congress between 1994 and 2004, creating another layer of competing authority.

A key figure in the political contests was the local municipality ward councillor. This individual, who was also elected a trustee, had played a powerful role in resisting forced removals and in the subsequent planning to access additional land and the establishment of the trust. His family's historical tenure in the area, however, was not freehold but tenancy. With the introduction of wall to wall municipalities, he was elected a ward councillor, giving him vastly increased power to make local decisions about development, access to land and land uses, which threw him up against older bases of land-derived authority in the area, particularly the freehold owners and the traditional authority. As his political party lost favour, new politically aligned groups emerged to challenge his authority further.

By 2008, with mediation failing to resolve the leadership conflicts, the financial allegations unaddressed and AFRA's unwillingness to be drawn into the emerging political conflicts, AFRA felt that its mandate to work in Cornfields had effectively been withdrawn. As an NGO, its authority to work in an area derives solely from the willingness of a community's leadership to engage. When power struggles fragment this leadership to the extent that had occurred in Cornfields, then the leadership itself has no capacity to engage collectively with external organisations. AFRA acknowledged it had failed to assist Cornfields leadership to resolve their differences and soon afterwards withdrew from the area.

#### **4. Conclusion**

##### **4.1 Property as power**

The idea of private property as both an individual right and a key tool in extracting the poor from poverty has many proponents in the democratic government. This view, however, is not uncontested. Macpherson (1978:3) argues that the idea of property as a thing to be possessed rather than an enforceable claim to benefit from or use emerged with the rise of market capitalism and aided the commodification of land access and use while neutralising the political nature of property rights. Concepts of property are not naturally given but are ‘products of particular historical circumstances’ and, as social constructions, are both dynamic and purposeful because they are required to serve ‘the dominant classes in society’. (Macpherson, 1978: 1, von Benda-Beckmann et al., 2006).

**The purpose of private ownership by Africans in South Africa began to change as freehold areas, like Cornfields, gave refuge to evicted labour tenants and owners unable to resist forced removals. With this change came a whole new set of relationships around land, with elements of formal rental tenancy combined with the African land ethic that privileges social needs over accumulation. While the removals created new bases of power in resistance, as land owner and tenant found common purpose, they also muddled the freehold tenure that existed when communities fragmented and some people left and others remained.**

**With the collapse of apartheid and the emergence of the new democratic state, private property retained its preferred status along with the market as an important (and inviolate) mechanism for redistributing wealth. However, the conditions for land as commodity no longer exist in any simple form in areas like Cornfields, and neither has the new state provided the resources (or will) to recreate these conditions. The compromise of communal freehold has not only not provided the launch pad into economic growth in Cornfields, it has created new bases of local power that are used to contest the battlegrounds of development.**

#### **4.2. Planning: a situated discourse**

Planning is frequently viewed as a technical and rational tool that is politically neutral in its use to administer development in the public good. The National Party often justified its segregation strategy in these terms:

*‘Most, if not all, of the so called ‘black spots’ are overcrowded, have no proper sanitary conveniences, water supplies or adequate roads. They are tiny islands in a white sea ....’*  
(Alan Paton PC 14/5/2/1).

In the build up to the change of government in 1994 those families that had submitted to forced removals had the opportunity to seek restoration of their land and dignity through the land restitution programme, representing an important programme in rebuilding the nation state.

However, as Cheryl Walker succinctly points out, such a 'master narrative' of restitution also served to prevent state policies from coming 'to terms with the profound changes that have taken place not only among the dispossessed but also on the land and in society more broadly in the years since the devastation of the population removals'. (Walker, 2008)

The establishment of a National Planning Commission in 2009 is currently seen as a key response to the failure of South Africa's planning system to overcome structural poverty, with its key rationale being a return to the development of a nation-state through unity in purpose (Green paper National Strategic planning, 2009).

This more normative, strategic and participatory approach to planning, as opposed to the traditional rational planning approaches, is self-critically aware of the assumed homogeneity of communities, the neutrality of planners as facilitators and the ability to create processes that truly level the playing field among diverse interests and classes at any level (Fainstein, 2000). The questions remain, however, whether planning through the state or private sector can achieve and manage the public good in advancing the development of nation states given the ever increasing interplay between states at a global level. (Yiftachel, 1998) We believe that, if it is to address poverty, planning needs to give much more prominence and analysis to the historical specificities underlying the dynamics of local power that affect existing social relationships and the collective agency of rural settlements.

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

It is clear that places like Cornfields are the product of waves of contradictory and often violent state policies over an extended period. These waves have left their traces in property relationships that continue to shape local struggles. Along the way, new leaders have emerged using land, social networks and political connections, singly and together, as a base for the assertion of local power. Exactly how land and property, planning and development, power and livelihoods relate to one another to account for the why Cornfields remains a conflict-ridden and destitute community is not clear to us. That they do each have an impact on the local power dynamics and social relationships and that these pose serious challenges to a profession unable to stand away from its technical roots is, however, certain. What we hope we have shown is that, while it may be difficult, it is necessary to consider this complex range of factors when deciding how to address poverty in so-called 'black freehold areas'.

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