Analysing the application of “Reblocking” of informal settlements in the City of Ekurhuleni

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Declaration

I, Annelien Basson, I know the meaning of plagiarism and declare that all the work in the document, save for that which is properly acknowledged, is my own. This thesis/ dissertation has been submitted to the Turnitin module and I confirm that my supervisor has seen my report and any concerns revealed by such have been resolved with my supervisor.

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Date

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my dearest late mom. Thank you for always always believing in me and supporting me; for being a pillar of strength and unconditional love. Love you always.

Acknowledgement

I am thankful to several people for their continued support and for making this dissertation possible.

To my God and Saviour, for this opportunity, and for His surpassing grace and mercy tangibly carrying me through.

Special thanks to my supervisor, Warren Smit. Thank you ever so much for your guidance and patience throughout the preparation of this dissertation. I will be forever grateful.

To my dad and siblings and friends who endlessly supported and encouraged me, there are no words to match my gratitude.

To my current employer, for the support.

To my past employer, Theo Pretorius, without whom I would not be the town planner that I am or have taken on this challenge to begin with. How could I ever thank you? This is your legacy.

To all the interviewees who graciously offered their time and were willing to share their views and experiences frankly, I thank you and wish you well on future endeavours in this field.

It is my hope that this dissertation will add meaningfully to the body of research on informal settlement upgrading approaches in the global south, as well as inform and influence practitioners involved in the reblocking and upgrading of informal settlements. The approach has proven exceedingly useful as collaborative planning tool, and it is exciting to know that organisations and approaches are available to slowly but surely build the South Africa of tomorrow.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dealing with the challenge of informal settlements is one of the biggest issues facing South Africa and other countries of the global South. There is an urgent need to document and reflect on attempts to intervene in informal settlements. This dissertation investigates and analyses the application of 'reblocking', a particular approach to informal settlement upgrading, in the City of Ekurhuleni in Gauteng Province, South Africa, and assess the extent to which it complies with the accepted principles of good informal settlement upgrading. Reblocking essentially involves the realignment of structures in an informal settlement to enable basic services to be delivered, and can also result in reduced fire risk and more usable communal spaces. The process of reblocking is also valuable as collaborative planning tool to build grassroots capacity.

First of all, based on a review of the literature and interviews with practitioners and scholars, the principles of what can be regarded as 'good' informal settlement upgrading were collated. The policy context of upgrading in South Africa (particularly the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme) is reviewed, and the history of the reblocking approach in South Africa (first implemented by Slum Dwellers International with the City of Cape Town, and subsequently adopted by the City of Ekurhuleni) is examined. The case study of reblocking in Ekurhuleni Municipality is then discussed in detail. Finally, the dissertation compares the experiences of reblocking in Ekurhuleni with the principles of 'good' informal settlement upgrading and with the other South African approaches to reblocking, and makes recommendations for how informal settlements could be better addressed in Ekurhuleni (and elsewhere).

The key findings of the dissertation are that, while reblocking can be very beneficial in terms of providing services and empowering communities, the approach used in Ekurhuleni is less participatory and thus has fewer social benefits than its counterpart in the City of Cape Town. In addition, all South African reblocking initiatives avoid providing *de jure* security of tenure, and can even decrease *de facto* security of tenure (as many reblocked settlements are still at risk of relocation), which negates one of the major advantages of initial public investment. The dissertation highlights that there is a need for transformed mindsets, policies and bureaucratic systems that are better aligned with the complex and dynamic nature of informal settlements, in view of the growing housing backlog in the CoE, South Africa and the global south.

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List of Acronyms

BEPP	:	Built Environment Performance Plan
CBO	:	Community Based Organisation
CCA	:	Customer Care Area
CCC	:	Customer Care Centre
CoCT	:	City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality
CODI	:	Community Organizations Development Institute
CoE	:	City of Ekurhuleni
CoJ	:	City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality
CORC	:	Community Organisation Resource Centre
CS&RM	:	Customer Services and Relationships Management
DHS	:	Department of Human Settlements
EHP	:	Emergency Housing Programme
EMPD	:	Ekurhuleni Metro Police Department
FEDUP	:	Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor
HDA	:	Housing Development Agency
HLO	:	Housing Liaison Officer
HOD	:	Head of Department
HSDG	:	Human Settlements Development Grant
HSS	:	Housing Subsidy System
IDP	:	Integrated Development Plan
IPW	:	Instruction to perform work
ISN	:	Informal Settlements Network
IUDF	:	Integrated Urban Development Framework
IRDP	:	Integrated Residential Development Programme
KPI	:	Key Performance Indicator
LM	:	Local Municipality
LUMS	:	Land Use Management System
MEC	:	Member of the Executive Council
MM	:	Metropolitan Municipality
MOU	:	Memorandum of Understanding
MSDF	:	Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework
NGO	:	Non-governmental organisation
NUSP	:	National Upgrading Support Programme
PFMA	:	Public Finance Management Act
PHP	:	People's Housing Process
RAY	:	Rajiv Awas Yojana
REM	:	Regional Executive Manager
RSA	:	Republic of South Africa
SDF	:	Spatial Development Framework
SDI	:	Slum Dwellers International
UCT	:	University of Cape Town
UISP	:	Upgrading Informal Settlements Programme
USDG	:	Urban Settlements Development Grant

1 Introduction

"Nowadays the ambition to change the world meets with cynicism… Yet all this does not alter the *necessity* to 'change the world' "

Khan and Pieterse, 2004:187 [*emphasis added*]

There is a need to find the balance between eradication and *laissez-faire* as far as informal settlements are concerned (Cirolia et al, 2016). This leads to the question of *how* informal settlements should and could be addressed in a developing country with a growing housing backlog, limited state resources, and where the expectation of a free house persists – contemporary South Africa.

The purpose of this dissertation is to add to the body of "critical reflection on local practices" of informal settlement upgrading, highlighted as a need by Cirolia et al, 2016:3. More specifically, it investigates and analyses the application of 'reblocking' in City of Ekurhuleni, Gauteng, South Africa. Reblocking emerged fairly recently in South Africa as a form of intervening in informal settlements, by realigning structures according to a community-developed and -approved layout and installing basic services. The approach first emerged from an NGO in the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality and has since been adopted by the City of Ekurhuleni. The need for reblocking (or some kind of related intervention) in Ekurhuleni emerged from Eskom's electrification roll-out in informal settlements.

1.1 The challenge of informal settlements

The South African population was measured at 57.73 million mid-year in 2018 (www.statssa.gov.za). Just over a quarter of the national population, 14.7 million people, reside in Gauteng Province. A significant number of these residents live in informal settlements without adequate access to basic services. The Housing Development Agency reports that 590 447 (nearly half) of the 1.2 million informal households in South Africa are in Gauteng, living without "adequate shelter, adequate services or secure tenure" (Cirolia et al, 2016:3; HDA, 2013).

It is anticipated that there will be an additional 7.8 million people living in South African cities by the year 2030, and a further 6 million people by 2050 (Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016). The migration and population growth trends will result in ever-increasing demand for services and housing in our cities, and Gauteng Province continues to experience the largest share of influx and growth of all South African provinces (Todes et al, 2010).

Informal settlements are therefore most likely here to stay, and may even be argued to play a crucial role in the fabric of South African cities, at least in the interim, if not long term (Groenewald et al, 2013; Tomlinson, 2017). This role is not only with regards to shelter/ accommodation, but also about access to social networks and livelihood opportunities (Brown-Luthango et al, 2016; Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014).

It is widely recognised that, despite large-scale delivery of low income housing, the number of informal settlements had grown since 1994 (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018), from 300 to 2,700 settlements (DHS, 2009). In recognition of the need to address informal settlements in South Africa, the national Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (DHS, 2009) was adopted in 2004.

Despite the UISP having been around since 2004 and partially contributing to a realisation that informal settlement upgrading is important (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018) there is a general, though not official, opinion that existing housing policies, including UISP, and the current quantum of the national housing budget will never resolve the South African housing backlog (Fieuw, 2015; Gugulethu and Mainza, 2016; Graham, 2003; Huchzermeyer, 2010; Tomlinson, 2017). The contemporary broad opinion therefore remains that there is a need for a more *relevant* and *strategic* alternative (Fieuw, 2015; Frediani et al, 2016; Graham, 2003; Huchzermeyer, 2001; Human Sciences Research Council, 2018; Perold and Devisch, 2014; Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016; Pieterse and Van Donk, 2014; Smit et al, 2016; Todes et al, 2010; Watson, 2014).

At the same time there is a focus on the urgent need for more *sustainable* 'forms of urbanism' in view of finite natural resources (Perold and Devisch, 2014; Pieterse, 2001; Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014). This agenda is supported by a social call to urgently stem the loss of 'human potential' through continued marginalisation of informality (Perold and Devisch, 2014). An even stronger view is that promises of housing to the urban poor have been abused for political gain, despite non-/ slow delivery by the ruling national party (Kornienko, 2017).

There is a moderate view that the UISP is a good policy but that the gap lies between its intent and rhetoric on the one hand, and limited or poor implementation (for various reasons) on the other (Cirolia et al, 2016; Frediani et al, 2016; Groenewald et al, 2013; Huchzermeyer, 1999; Huchzermeyer, 2008; Huchzermeyer, 2010; Pieterse, 2001; Tomlinson, 2017; Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014).

The increasing number of service delivery protests and the ongoing polemic around land expropriation without compensation warns of a "foreboding dissatisfaction among the poor" (Perold and Devisch, 2014:4). Fieuw warns of the "socially erosive impact of unresponsive government to basic community needs" (2015:70), while Kornienko (2017) theorises about the building and erosion of hope, fuelled by the continual promise of a house ("state-sponsored pacification" (Kornienko, 2017:36)). The provision of housing and services is complex, and speaks to inclusion and democratic citizenship as much as it addresses physical needs of the urban poor (Kornienko, 2017).

All of this points to the urgent need for viable and sustainable solutions for informal settlements. The starting point of this paper is therefore, firstly, that informal settlements are most likely a permanent feature of the South African urban landscape, at least in the short to medium term. Secondly, although the benefits that informal settlements may hold for residents are recognised, "the conditions in most (albeit not all) of them are not tolerable or sustainable" (Cirolia et al, 2016:18). The author therefore, with Cirolia et al (2016) and Graham (2003), takes as a starting point 'the need to upgrade'.

1.2 Research objectives

Cirolia et al noted a need to "capture and reflect on the current successes and challenges of informal settlement upgrading initiatives" (Cirolia et al, 2016:10) due to the lack of literature on informal settlements in African and South African contexts, and the fact that much of the existing literature "overlooks the messy, political and conflicted nature of upgrading practice" (2016:10). In addition, Watson writes that "urban planning…reflects an increasing gap between current approaches and growing problems of poverty, inequality, informality, rapid urbanisation and spatial fragmentation, particularly (but not only) in cities of the global South" (2009:259).

For this reason, this paper is aimed at contributing to the body of literature on South African informal settlements and related practises, as well as documenting some of the 'messy disjunctures' between policy and practice, including the challenge of scaling up successful pilot projects and transferring these to other regions.

More specifically under discussion is reblocking, an emerging practice of in-situ informal settlement upgrading developed predominantly by Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and its transfer from the City of Cape Town (CoCT) Metropolitan Municipality to City of Ekurhuleni (CoE). In light of the need for alternatives, the main intention of this dissertation is to investigate the potential of reblocking, as implemented in Ekhurhuleni, as an approach to in-situ informal settlement upgrading as well as its relation to the national Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (DHS, 2009).

To this end, this dissertation addresses the following research objectives:

1. To examine what is generally considered as 'good' informal settlement upgrading by contemporary academics, government officials and housing practitioners.
2. To trace the history of reblocking in South Africa and compare it with the Ekurhuleni approach.
3. To locate the ideal place for reblocking, if any, in informal settlement upgrading policy and practice by analysing the value, impact, scalability and transferability thereof.
4. To propose an alternative to addressing informal settlements in City of Ekurhuleni, based on lessons learnt from the study.

1.3 Positionality

The author works as a town and regional planner for a private multi-disciplinary consultancy firm in Gauteng, South Africa. The National Department of Human Settlements (NDoHS) appointed the author's consultancy firm in January 2016 to provide Participatory Based Planning Support for Informal Settlement Upgrading in City of Ekurhuleni (CoE). This project, under the banner of the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP), aimed to provide technical assistance in developing settlement level Analysis, Categorisation, Upgrading Plans, and Sustainable Livelihood Programmes (SLP) for a selected thirty-three informal settlements in Ekurhuleni. This was followed by a review of CoE's Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy.

Having been personally involved in the above project, the writing of this dissertation deeply challenged me to reflect on my role as (African) town planner and consultant in the upgrading of informal settlements. Osman and Bennet write how the architecture profession has been transforming over recent decades, and how contemporary training and education takes place "at a time of intense debates on relevance, justice and new professional values" (2013:1). I would argue that there is also a need to rethink the role of not just architects, but of all built environment professionals, including urban planners. This dissertation presents a snapshot of the complexities faced in the realms of housing, governance and politics in our cities. The need for planners to reinvent themselves, their role and the profession cannot be denied.

1.4 Report structure

This chapter commenced with an overview of the challenges that give rise to the need for informal settlement upgrading, as well as challenges with upgrading itself, particularly the gap between policy intent and implementation. The case study analysed is reblocking as implemented in City of Ekurhuleni (CoE), Gauteng, South Africa. The case study was compared to the literature review, the original methodology of reblocking, and to the national informal settlement upgrading programme. The problem statement and framing led to the identified research objectives, as noted in the preceding section.

Chapter 2 describes the research methodology followed to analyse the chosen case study in order to answer the research objectives. A mixed method was used including a case study, literature review (including case studies from elsewhere), and qualitative interviews with government officials, housing practitioners and academics. The reasons for this approach are discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 presents the summarised findings from the comprehensive literature review, case studies and qualitative interviews. The chapter concludes with a summary of the most relevant aspects and approaches of what is generally considered 'good upgrading'. The chapter focuses on principles and approaches of the global south and its relevance to South Africa and in-situ upgrading. The purpose of the chapter was to develop a consolidated and nuanced backdrop against which to analyse the CoE reblocking approach.

A concise overview of current informal settlement upgrading policy in South Africa introduces Chapter 4, followed by an overview of the history and approach of reblocking as developed by Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in the City of Cape Town (CoCT). This formed the second baseline against which the CoE case study was analysed.

Chapter 5 discusses in some detail the reblocking approach taken in Ekurhuleni. This represents, to the best of the author's knowledge, the first attempt at documenting the Ekurhuleni reblocking approach, and thereby fulfils one of the objectives of this dissertation.

The literature review which was aimed at defining 'good upgrading', combined with the overview of the contemporary South African legal and policy framework for informal settlement upgrading and

the original reblocking approach from CoCT provided the basis for a three-part analysis of the CoE case study in Chapter 6.

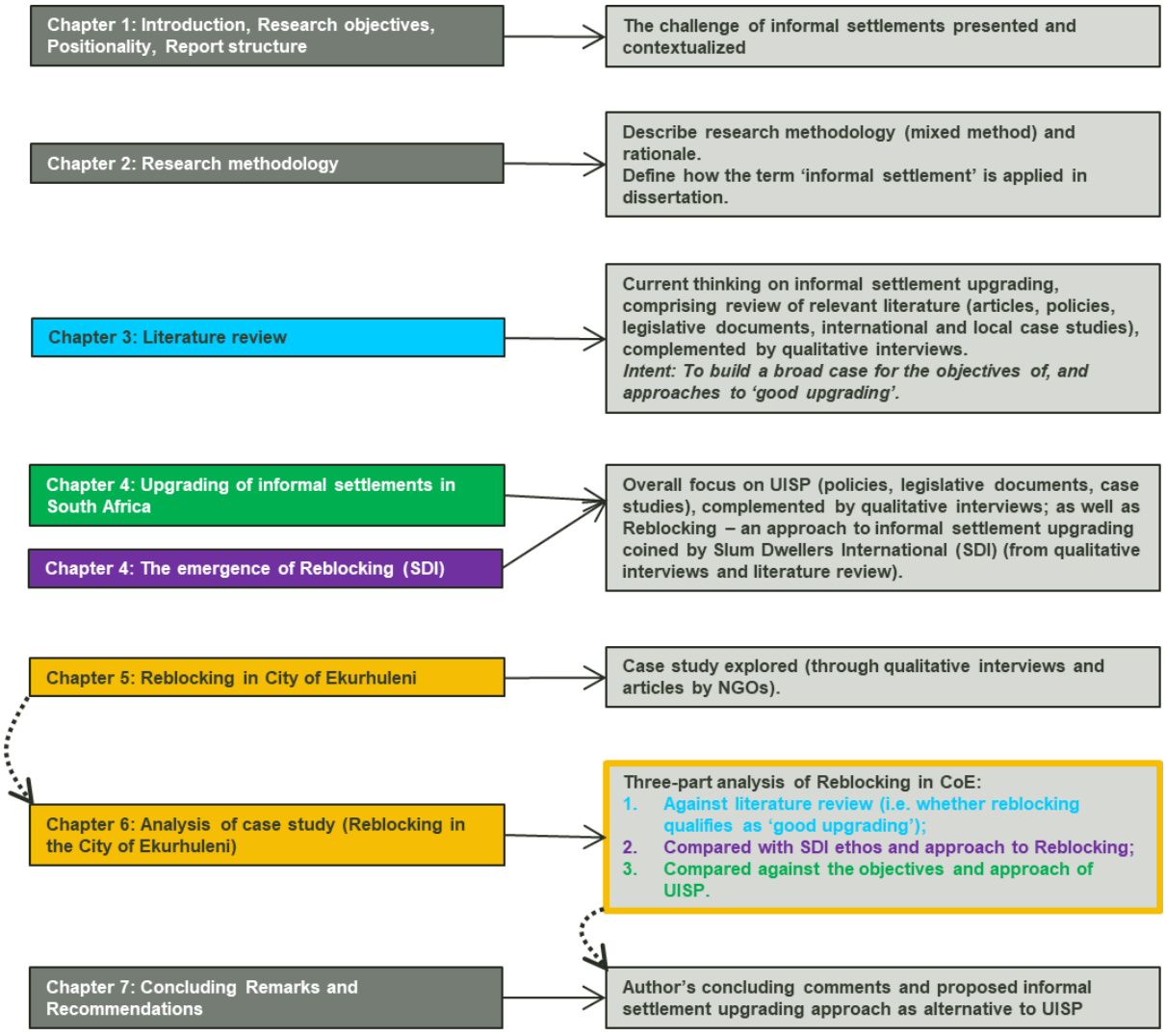
Chapter 7 offers a summary of the key findings from the literature review and three-part analysis of the CoE approach to reblocking. This is followed by a recommended approach to informal settlement upgrading in CoE, including the proposed role of reblocking. The chapter closes with some recommendations for further research.

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Smit's view is that: "South Africa needs to learn from the lessons of informal settlement upgrading elsewhere, but we also need to learn from our own experiences as we work towards programmes and projects that improve the lives of informal settlement residents in a holistic and sustainable way" (2016:44). Following from this support for reflecting on and learning from local examples, this paper comprises a reflection and analysis of a particular approach to informal settlement upgrading, namely reblocking, and specifically as it is implemented in City of Ekurhuleni. This chapter discusses the methods used to document and reflect on the CoE reblocking approach. The methodology is visually depicted in the below diagram.

Figure 1: Summary of Methodology



2.2 Literature review and interviews

The first component of the study was a review of relevant literature complemented by qualitative interviews, as documented in Chapter 3. More than eighty articles, policies and legislative documents were interrogated. The literature review included a range of international and local case studies, with a focus on the global South. The reason for this focus is because South Africa forms part of the global south, and faces challenges of informality similar to the global south.

The literature review was supported by eight semi-structured interviews with academics, housing practitioners and government officials, and the former SDI member who played a key role in the development of the concept of 'reblocking'. Government officials interviewed were from the national Housing Development Agency, the City of Ekurhuleni, and the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. Interviewees were selected due to their involvement in informal settlement upgrading, past or present, through either research or implementation. The author knew some of the interviewees or their organisations from previous engagements but has no personal or professional affiliation to any of them.

The intention of this research paper was to present a constructively critical analysis of the case study, and by implication, the national upgrading programme. This required multi-dimensional and frank engagement with individuals that actively engage and grapple with informal settlement upgrading. To this end, interviewees were assured of their anonymity at the beginning of each interview.

All interviews, except one, were conducted in person. One interview was conducted over Skype due to the interviewee being based in another province. The open-ended qualitative interviews were broadly guided by a list of questions prepared by the author. Where possible, the questions were shared electronically beforehand.

The need for upgrading was taken as starting point. From this baseline, it was recognised that there is little consensus on the goal of upgrading and that there exists a wide (and valid) range of possible approaches or combinations of approaches (Smit et al, 2016; Brown-Luthango et al, 2016). The combined review of literature and interviews revealed many of the challenges often experienced in upgrading both locally and internationally, alluding to the need for responsive approaches to upgrading. It was the intention to build a broad case for the objectives of, and approaches to 'good upgrading', intended as frame of reference against which the CoE case study could be analysed.

The evidence from Chapter 3 was strongly in favour of incremental in-situ upgrading. Accordingly, reblocking was evaluated as an approach (in part or wholly) to in-situ upgrading.

A summary was provided in Chapter 4.2 of the historic and current national legal and policy framework, focusing on the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (DHS, 2009), as well as information sourced from the qualitative interviews. After considering whether reblocking qualifies as 'good upgrading', it was analysed against the objectives and approach prescribed by the UISP (DHS, 2009) (refer to Chapter 6). The comparison revealed important points of friction, and even contradictions between 'good upgrading' and the UISP approach.

The study revealed that reblocking had its origin in South Africa, birthed by Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in the City of Cape Town, as documented in Chapter 4.3. The 'SDI approach' was reconstructed from an interview with the former SDI member who was instrumental in coining the approach, combined with published case studies and reviews of the process and/or outcomes. The purpose of this section was to provide a third and final baseline against which the CoE case study could be analysed, specifically with regards to the scalability and transferability of the ethos and approach.

2.2.1 Clarifying the definition of an informal settlement

The definition of a slum/ informal settlement/ favela/ compound is not universal. It is therefore useful to clarify the application of the term 'informal settlement' as used in South Africa and in this dissertation.

South African legislation, policy and rhetoric has widely adopted the term 'informal settlements', moving away from terms like squatter camp and location as used before 1994 (Researcher 2, personal communication, 21.06.2018).

The purpose of this paper is not to challenge the definition of informal settlements, but for ease of reference and to make the findings of this paper relevant to the broader body of research on South African informal settlement upgrading, the following definition of the United Nations as in Cirolia et al for informal settlements shall apply: "places 'where groups of housing units have been constructed on land that the occupants have no legal claim to, or occupy illegally' and/or 'where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulations' " (2016:14).

2.3 The City of Ekurhuleni case

The study follows a case study approach. The focus of case study research is "the collection and study of multiple forms of evidence, in sufficient detail to achieve understanding" (Gillham, 2000:19). Scholars have argued that case study research is necessary for the development of knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Walton, 1992). In particular, there have been many calls for the increased use of the case study approach in research on urban policy-making and planning. For example, Watson (2003:396) says that planning research "needs to return to the concrete, to the empirical and to case research", so that research can better inform policy and practice.

Within the case study approach, "a number of methods may be used — either qualitative, quantitative or both" (Hartley, 2004:323-324). The validity of qualitative research can be improved by "triangulation", i.e. using different sources of information, different methods, different theories and different types of data, for example, interviews with different stakeholders and the review of different type of documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The CoE case study is analysed from different angles, including against academic opinion, opinions from practice (government officials) as well as policy directives to offer a multi-dimensional perspective.

Chapter 5 comprises the case study. The introduction provides a description of the general treatment of informal settlements in CoE, before focusing in on their approach to reblocking. Throughout the discussion, examples are provided of "the messy, political and conflicted" challenges faced by both officials and informal settlement communities (Cirolia et al, 2016:10). At the same time, the intention of the paper was not to document in detail one or more cases of reblocking in Ekurhuleni, but rather to document the approach as a whole, taking cognisance that it is dynamic and needs-based (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017).

Since there are no documented cases of reblocking in Ekurhuleni (partly the reason for this dissertation), the information for this chapter was predominantly sourced through an interview with one of the officials responsible for implementing reblocking in the City of Ekurhuleni. Supporting information was collected from an interview with a lecturer who has long been involved in, and researched informal settlement upgrading in Ekurhuleni and the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) Metropolitan Municipalities. Reference is also made to blogposts by NGOs and human rights activists about selected cases of perceived mistreatment during upgrading implementation in CoE. Journal articles on Harry Gwala and Makause informal settlements helped provide some contextual detail on informal settlements in CoE (although these two particular settlements did not undergo reblocking).

2.4 Analysis

According to Watson (2009) there is a need to close the gap between current approaches and reality on the ground. This dissertation further investigated the gap between policy and implementation identified by Bafo (2016) in a study about compliance with the UISP in CoE and CoJ. The case study analysis was conducted against the backdrop of the national Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (DHS, 2009), as well as the literature review and qualitative interviews.
As mentioned, one of the research objectives of this dissertation was to propose an alternative to addressing informal settlements in CoE. Fieuw and Mitlin (2017:15) wrote on the level of success of civil society to influence policy and programme reform. They note that successful measures to impact state policy and programmes may be through one of the following three approaches:

1. To work within current models of delivery and, through willing engagement with the state, produce 'spaces for innovation';
2. To prove the potential of 'community-driven alternatives' and thereby attract political support;
3. To expose and constructively critique the lack of progress in upgrading and housing delivery, and offer viable alternatives.

This dissertation reflects a combination of the second and third approaches of Fieuw and Mitlin (2017) by focusing on reblocking that was introduced in both the City of Cape Town and the City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipalities, in spite of, or parallel to the UISP (DHS, 2009).

The mixed method was useful to illustrate similarities between the challenges experienced in the City of Ekurhuleni and elsewhere, and to analyse the value of reblocking as 'good upgrading' (as defined from the literature review and qualitative interviews) before considering reblocking within the ambit of current legal and policy guidelines.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Application was made and granted for ethics approval from the University of Cape Town (UCT) on 20 March 2018. The ethics approval was granted on the basis that all interviewees will remain anonymous.

The research for this research report was self-funded and conducted in my personal capacity. I am not connected in any way with either the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP), the National Department of Human Settlements (DHS), Slum Dwellers International (SDI), City of Ekurhuleni (CoE), or the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality (CoCT). I also confirm that my employer is not currently involved with any work related to reblocking in CoE.

2.6 Limitations of the study

The initial intention of the dissertation was to compare the implementation of reblocking in South Africa with international cases of reblocking. It was, however, found that reblocking is in fact a South African phenomenon. The research methodology was adapted accordingly.

This dissertation was completed while working full-time, which introduced time constraints. Due to non-responses, no one from the National Department of Human Settlements could be interviewed which would likely have provided a good counter-argument for the UISP in its current form.

Due to the scope of this dissertation and associated ethics clearance, no interviews were conducted with community members of reblocked settlements. It would, admittedly, have added great value to understanding the Ekurhuleni case in more depth.

Not all interviewees had in-depth knowledge of the concept and approach of reblocking. In these cases, the scope of the interview was broadened to a discussion of in-situ upgrading in general, rather than reblocking specifically.

3 Current thinking on informal settlement upgrading

3.1 Introduction

It is recognised that there are different views on why informal settlements exist and persist. The view of informality translates into ways of intervening (or not intervening) in them. Cirolia (2017) unpacks and compares four different discourses that frame the challenge of informal settlements in South Africa. These are technology and design discourses, institutional discourses, rights-based discourses, and structural discourses (Cirolia, 2017). The historic view of informal settlements as a "transitional phenomenon associated with modernization" has been convincingly disproved by Fox (2014). The dominant contemporary scholarly view is that informal settlements are the result of 'disjointed modernization' (whereby population growth in urban areas exceeds economic growth and institutional development) and/or structural exclusion through inequitable planning systems and exploitation (Fox, 2014).

The purpose of this section is to establish, from first principles, key components of what is currently considered 'good' informal settlement upgrading internationally and in South Africa. Insights from academic literature, qualitative interviews, and popular blogs are combined with examples of upgrading in the global south, resulting in a comprehensive overview. The resulting findings – components of 'good upgrading' – are later used as conceptual frame against which to measure the application of reblocking in selected South African cities.

The dynamic and rich nature of the ongoing debate about how upgrading should be done is fully recognised, both internationally and locally. As mentioned, Cirolia (2017) identified four competing discourses around the matter of informal settlements in South Africa. She found that "each discourse is useful but not sufficient" (Cirolia, 2017:455). It is therefore essential to consider and mediate between multiple perspectives. This complexity indicates a need for practitioners and academics to remain vigilantly critical and flexible when engaging with informal settlement upgrading.

The first section of this chapter addresses the different aspects of incremental in-situ upgrading. The two matters are discussed separately, in other words firstly the notion of non-eviction/ upgrading in its current location (or 'in-situ'), and secondly the arguments around incremental upgrading (of services and top structures).

The aspect of tenure upgrading is linked very closely to the principle of 'incrementalism' but is discussed separately to address the broad set of arguments and approaches in this regard. Tenure upgrading is seen either as part of an upgrading programme, or as a programme in and of itself. It is followed by a section on the need for a holistic and strategic approach, that challenges structural imbalances while simultaneously addressing short term needs such as services and tenure.

All of the above aspects are subject to the need for renewed paradigms that support upgrading. A renewed paradigm would include 'accepting informality' which, it was found, could be achieved through (and would also result in) increased engagement. A renewed paradigm is also subject to, and will also lead to, different forms of governance including partnerships. A key missing aspect to catalyse

change is social capital. The need to establish grassroots capacity came to the fore. This section also touched on the role of the judiciary who, within the ambit of the national legal and policy framework, shape and enforce (or not) the rights of informal settlement residents.

The final section discussed finances, roles and responsibilities with regards to informal settlement upgrading. It was found that this aspect is especially strongly affected by the ruling politics and social dynamics of a particular country which play a crucial role in the ruling paradigm as well as shaping the expectations of informal settlement residents.

3.2 Incremental in-situ upgrading

The literature review revealed that incremental in-situ upgrading is largely supported as the predominant contemporary intervention in informal settlements in the global south, although strict definitions, policies, and funding mechanisms differ. Be that as it may, there is general agreement that relocation of informal settlements should be a last resort.

Smit's definition of in-situ upgrading is helpful, namely "upgrading projects in which only a minority of households are required to relocate (usually to make way for roads or other infrastructure) and infrastructure is installed around existing dwellings…This is in contrast to 'rollover upgrading' [or formalisation], in which all households are required to temporarily relocate while the site is redeveloped (and a significant proportion is typically permanently relocated away from the original settlement)" (2016:27).

The literature is nearly solely focused on upgrading of the public realm, together with the provision of basic services. The delivery of standardised top structures is discouraged, and even criticised. These elements, combined with an emphasis on affordability, combine to form the supporting argument for incremental upgrading. Reblocking is aligned with all of these aspects, and is therefore relevant to be considered as an alternative approach to in-situ upgrading.

3.2.1 Non-eviction/ Minimal or no relocation

The argument for in-situ upgrading is, in essence, two-fold. The first aspect considers the value of location and, by extension, proximity to urban services and amenities. The second premise is linked to making efficient use of land, including density (Simpson, 2013). These matters are discussed in more detail below.

For a few decades now in-situ upgrading has been recognised amongst academics as a preferred approach to informal settlements (Abbott, 2001). However, although there has been a slight shift and greater acceptance of informality in Southern Africa since the 1980's evictions, formalisation and relocations continue to be the most prevalent practice (Huchzermeyer, 2008; Groenewald et al, 2013).

"We just need to understand why people settle where they are, then it becomes apparent that it must be in-situ" said a City of Joburg official (COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018). This view is supported by Tshabalala and Mxobo, who explain the willingness of informal settlement

residents to endure hardship and discomfort in return for "better access to employment, livelihood opportunities, education, health care and other amenities" (2014:242).

It is argued that in-situ upgrading supports integration of the 'urban uses and users' (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014) and that it has the potential to change the apartheid structure of South African cities (Groenewald et al, 2013; Researcher 1, personal communication, 19.06.2016).

On the contrary, it has become widely acknowledged that relocation to housing on the urban periphery negatively affects livelihoods, access, and social networks which are linked to survival (Bhan, 2017; Fieuw and Maitlin, 2017; Groenewald et al, 2013, Huchzermeyer, 2009; Huchzermeyer, 2004; HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018). Having said this, it must be cautioned that upgrading is reactive and that it is acknowledged that land invasion and subsequent upgrading is neither sustainable nor desirable in the long term.

The South African UISP (DHS, 2009) emphasises the importance of upgrading in-situ where relevant and possible. However, it is felt by some (COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018; Housing Development Agency Official, 13.07.2018; Lecturer, 16.08.2018; Researcher 2, 21.06.2018) that relocation is proposed far too easily, before alternatives to upgrade in-situ have been attempted or even explored thoroughly (Fieuw, 2015; COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018). Reasons typically cited include risk of flooding and dangerous geological conditions.

With regards to environmental factors, the health of biophysical systems are vital to 'urban sustainability' and should not be compromised in favour of the informal settlement upgrading agenda (Pieterse in Turok, 2016). However, a balance has to be struck between ensuring residents' safety from flooding or sinkholes and what Braathen et al termed the "paternalist middle-class concern for the environment" (2013:4).

In view of the need for well-located land and to counter market forces, a number of academics and practitioners have made a case for proactive and rapid release of well-located urban land to the poor (Bhan, 2017; Greyling and Berrisford, 2016; HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; Huchzermeyer, 2004; Smit, 2016). This has been termed "managed land settlement" (Smit, 2016:35). This is particularly supported from a financial viability point of view. Case studies in Columbia and Latin America proved that it is two to three times cheaper to invest in affordable serviced land than to retrospectively upgrade informal settlements (Braathen et al, 2014; Fernandes, 2011). The land question is particularly relevant in contemporary South Africa, with activist groups (such as Abahlali baseMjondolo) often mobilising around land-related matters.

3.2.2 Focus on the public realm, not on providing top structures

Huchzermeyer identifies two different types of in-situ upgrading (1999:iv). The first is the comprehensive upgrading approach introduced by the World Bank, which included the provision of top structures. Examples hereof include the Slum Improvement Programme in Madras, India; the

George upgrade in Lusaka; and the Alvorada Programme in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Huchzermeyer, 1999:iv).

The second type of in-situ upgrading is termed support-based approaches which "seek to gradually transform the social and physical environment" (Huchzermeyer, 1999:iv). Examples include the Million Houses Programme in Sri Lanka; PT Municipalities in Brazil; and South Africa's People's Housing Process (Huchzermeyer, 1999:iv). The People's Housing Process (PHP) was adopted by the South African government based on recognition of "the need to support community-driven, self-build activities", but the PHP comprises only a small percentage of housing interventions (Fieuw and Maitlin, 2017:4).

In a review of several projects that form part of World Bank low-cost shelter projects in the global South, Bamberger concluded that "most households have the necessary construction and organisational skills to ensure the production of good quality housing through the use of self-help" (2017:106). Not to mention, they have proven to be far more efficient at the provision of top structures than the public sector in most developing countries (Bolnick and Bradlow, 2010), with structures ranging from temporary shelters to multi-room brick structures (Bolnick and Bradlow, 2010).

Bamberger (2017) further noted that the self-help strategy is, in fact, essential for affordability while new houses frequently prove to be unaffordable for beneficiaries (Huchzermeyer, 2008). "Progressive development, through which households can build at their own pace and according to their own design, is an important component in ensuring that families with low and fluctuating income are able to construct reasonably adequate housing" (Bamberger, 2017:106).

From the cases investigated, Bamberger concluded that "[i]f government is able to provide the basic services and provide security of tenure, families are prepared to generate most of the investment to finance the upgrading of the house" (Bamberger, 2017:106). COJMM Official 2 feels that the provision of top structures is "handicapping our people – [as a result] they are just waiting for government" (personal communication, 02.08.2018).

The Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2016) – South Africa's guideline for urban development – strongly encourages the prioritisation of investment in public areas, social infrastructure and social development above the provision of top structures to individual households in informal settlements (Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016). The transformation of Medellín, Colombia, is a remarkable example of the potential impact of "a relentless and large-scale public space upgrading programme focusing on the poorest parts of the city" (Pieterse and Van Donk, 2003:9).

Apart from the massive and unsustainable cost implication of state-provided top structures, other negatives include the tendency for monotony, thereby only serving the needs of a portion of households in informal settlements. India's Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) programme is one of a few programmes that have been critiqued for its one-size-fits-all-approach (Khosla, 2013). Large-scale state-provided low-cost housing has also proven to be small and of sub-standard quality (Braathen et al, 2014).

3.2.3 Upgrade incrementally

Incrementalism is widely regarded as an essential characteristic of successful informal settlement upgrading (e.g. Cirolia et al., 2016). An incremental upgrading approach starts with what exists and works towards 'a legally acceptable end-state' (Van Horen, 2000). This ties into the argument for affordability. An innovative example of this is in Chile where owner-residents are provided with platform housing that they can develop and improve in line with personal needs (Human Sciences Research Council, 2018).

"Incrementalism stands in contrast to approaches that are linear (i.e. plan, build, occupy), product-focused and fixated on formalisation" (Cirolia et al, 2016:20) such as the South African individual-linked capital subsidy housing delivery programme (Human Sciences Research Council, 2018). Incrementalism "embraces small changes, made by many actors, over a long time" (Cirolia et al, 2016:20). This is directly opposed to traditional forms of governance and financing, though it is ideal for the dynamic and complex realm of informal settlement upgrading (Seeliger and Turok, 2013).

Cirolia et al (2016) are of the opinion that an incremental approach offers many benefits, including:

- It is flexible and more responsive to the "needs, demands and aspirations of affected households and communities" (Cirolia et al, 2016:20);
- It is less disruptive than a 'full' upgrading approach, which allows for the retention of social networks and other positive attributes of settlements;
- It allows for experimentation and adaption, decreasing the likelihood that interventions will have negative consequences in the long term; and
- It allows for "multi-stakeholder participation and decision-making" and can therefore mediate between "contested visions" (Cirolia et al, 2016:20).

However, an incremental approach also carries some risks, such as that the lack of a coherent vision and implementation strategy could result in uncoordinated investments (Turok, 2016) or a lack of state-investment due to an assumption that the informal settlement community will/ should be responsible for 'driving the upgrading process' (Cirolia et al, 2016:21). Nevertheless, the value of incrementalism cannot be disputed which should be sufficient motivation to find ways of mitigating these risks.

3.2.4 Provision of basic services

The South African government has a constitutional mandate "to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner" (RSA, 1996:74). And while it is recognised that informal settlement upgrading is "a very complex negotiation of social, economic, cultural, political, spatial, technical and environmental factors" and not primarily a technical issue (Graham, 2003:12), the provision of basic services is central to reducing vulnerability and risk in these settlements , and therefore is considered a priority 'first wave' intervention (Abbott, 2002; Brown-Luthango et al, 2016; Smit, 2016).

However, there is broad opinion that the current standards for service delivery are “modernist, idealistic, and irrelevant” (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014:342) and do not make provision for in-situ upgrading or even incremental upgrading (Fieuw and Mwau, 2016). According to the Housing Code, (DHS, 2009) the national norms and standards do not apply when upgrading informal settlements and they are only to be used as a guideline. Similarly, stand sizes are to be negotiated with the beneficiaries. However, despite this, “standards and technologies used for formal developments” continue to be applied to informal settlements (Graham, 2003:2) resulting in “unsustainable and inappropriate systems” (Graham, 2003:3).

Infrastructure should not drive the upgrading process, it should support it (Graham, 2003). There is a need for viable alternatives, including relaxed standards, greater flexibility within the regulatory norms and standards (COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018; Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014; Turok, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017;), as well as greater support for alternatives (Abbott, 2002; Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016; Researcher 2, personal communication, 21.06.2018).

Off-grid alternatives, for example, are particularly useful in areas that lack available bulk infrastructure or capacity (Researcher 2, personal communication, 21.06.2018). This and other differentiated models of service provision and management, such as the decoupling of infrastructure types (Graham, 2003), speaks to the need for resource-efficiency (Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016). Lastly, a flexible and/or incremental model will also assist low income communities (Berrisford, 2016; Turok, 2016) and government (Graham, 2003) with affordability.

Furthermore, there is a need for clarity and innovation around incremental infrastructure delivery, for example communal taps and chemical toilets do not lend themselves to full upgrading and therefore the initial investment is mostly lost (Lecturer, personal communication, 16.08.2018).

The provision of basic services could send signals of *de facto* tenure security to informal settlement communities (Fernandes, 2011; Gulyani, 2017). In South Africa, this reality is seemingly accepted by housing practitioners (COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018; COJMM Official 2, personal communication, 02.08.2018; HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; Researcher 1, personal communication, 19.06.2016). Unfortunately, the provision of basic services could also attract further invasion in the informal settlement, leading to a vicious cycle of invasion (Fernandes, 2011). This could create a challenge in that municipalities expressly do not provide basic services to avoid ‘recognising’ or ‘legitimising’ a particular informal settlement (COJMM Official 2, personal communication, 02.08.2018). Note that the above is relevant to the provision of basic interim services, and not to temporary/ emergency services which should be provided to all informal settlements (DHS, 2009).

Pieterse and Van Donk propose that “cultural, social and solidarity economies [be built] around the establishment and maintenance of public infrastructures and the various backward and forward linkages associated with slum improvement and consolidation” (2014:11). In this way, informal settlement communities take part in implementing and maintaining upgrading interventions.

3.3 Address tenure security

Addressing tenure security is considered a central aspect of informal settlement upgrading (Van Horen, 2000). *De facto* or *de jure* tenure security addresses, to a lesser or greater degree respectively, the element of 'illegality' that forms part of most definitions of informal settlements, slums etc. As COJMM Official 1 (personal communication, 02.08.2018) noted of informal settlements in Ekurhuleni, "Many residents stay in fear. If they have secure tenure they can *plan*, for example school for their kids, they can look for work".

Although the need for tenure security is widely acknowledged, opinions are divided between the need for and relevance of *de jure* tenure security compared to *de facto* tenure security. "A vogue of legalisation programmes" are in existence (Van Horen, 2000:389), such as the regularisation programmes implemented in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Fernandes, 2011). Regularization programmes that grant *de jure* tenure security stem from De Soto's hypothesis that land ownership affords households the opportunity to access finance which should lead to them to incrementally improve their own living conditions (Turner, 1969).

Yet, this 'western capitalist worldview' (Abbott, 2002) has been strongly critiqued for being irrelevant (Huchzermeyer, 2001; Fox, 2014), having no theoretical grounding (Abbott, 2002), and imposing many dimensions of commodification (Huchzermeyer, 2008). Case study results have also shown little or limited livelihood improvements (Berrisford, 2016; Fernandes, 2011; Marx et al, 2013) or 'intergenerational socioeconomic mobility' (Fox, 2014) from titling.

In fact, it was found that titling is a "lesser trigger for private investment" than what the provision of engineering infrastructure proved to be (Gulyani, 2017:486). It is further reported that the formal system of house purchases is effectively bypassed in subsequent transactions due to the associated high cost (Huchzermeyer, 2008; Human Sciences Research Council, 2018; Minnery et al, 2013; Researcher 1, personal communication, 19.06.2016), questioning the relevance thereof in informal settlement upgrading. Furthermore, the mechanisms of titling used to grant *de jure* tenure could, ironically, increase the new land owners' vulnerability to market forces if and when the urban economy grows and land values increase (Groenewald et al, 2013; Huchzermeyer, 2008; Minnery et al, 2013).

In addition, titling has been found to "undermine social cohesion" in some instances by differentiating between 'qualifying' and 'non-qualifying' beneficiaries (Groenewald et al, 2013:105; Huchzermeyer, 2001). In this view, titling represents a failed attempt to "stabilise a highly fluid and dynamic system" (Groenewald et al, 2013:105).

In an analysis of the impact of a titling project in South Africa, Marx et al found that "residents in most informal settlements…already enjoy *de facto* tenure security" (2013:205). This may be attributed to findings that the provision of basic services as well as the passing of time seem to transmit *de facto* tenure security (Gulyani, 2017; Fernandes, 2011) – two factors often present in informal settlements in South Africa. For this reason, the authors are sceptical as to the impact of, and need for granting *de jure* tenure (Marx et al, 2013).

Importantly, despite strong criticisms, Abbott (2002), Van Horen (2000) and Fernandes (2011) are in favour of conferring *de jure* tenure and see it as the beginning of the upgrading process, but not upgrading in and of itself. The granting of full individual ownership is subject to township establishment procedures which are lengthy and expensive. Considering the relatively high cost of conferring *de jure* tenure (Researcher 1, personal communication, 19.06.2016), and the mentioned risks and disadvantages and limited impact (when compared to *de facto* tenure), one has to question the relevance and benefit of *de jure* tenure security in the form of individual full title.

3.4 The need for a holistic and strategic approach

Having noted the importance of provided basic services to informal settlements during upgrading, it must be balanced with the acknowledgement that "a household with access to basic services that remains isolated from economic opportunities, safety, affordable public transport and ecosystem services will be incapable of finding pathways out of poverty and social dysfunction" (Pieterse and Van Donk, 2014:14). This statement followed from a study of Latin American examples and suggest that "the public realm and economic activation should take precedence over shack upgrading, except for the provision of essential basic services" (Pieterse and Van Donk, 2014:17).

Others agree and state that countries that have reportedly successfully curbed the growth of informal settlements have employed a *combination* of instruments to address the informal settlement challenge (Huchzermeyer, 1999; Marx et al, 2013). The Favela-Bairro programme and Morar Carioca programme implemented by Brazilian municipalities are examples of programmes that not only address physical infrastructure but also socio-economic and livelihood challenges (Fernandes, 2011).

A second balance that has to be struck is between short-term, visible interventions and much needed long-term, social and structural reform (as discussed in chapter 3.5) (Amis, 1995; Huchzermeyer, 2004; Smit, 2016; Turok, 2001; Turok, 2016). In other words, upgrading programmes must be embedded in "wider structures of democratisation of urban governance", and the underlying drivers of injustice must also be addressed (Frediani e al, 2016:450).

For these reasons, it is argued that there is a need for a holistic and strategic approach when it comes to informal settlement upgrading. Several authors support this view. The emphases and framings differ somewhat, but the broad message is that there is a need for the below:

- Upgrading existing, as well as mitigating against, the formation of new informal settlements (Turok, 2016).
- Intervention at multiple scales (Smit et al, 2016), including a city-wide programmatic approach (Smit, 2016; Turok, 2016) as well as settlements/ projects that take a differentiated approach (Huchzermeyer, 1999).
- Increased political support for more democratic approaches through a (new) policy framework that is less prescriptive (Fieuw, 2015; Huchzermeyer, 1999; Pieterse, 2001; Smit, 2016; Turok, 2016; Van Horen, 2000).

- A holistic approach to socio-economic development, including measures that improve safety, increase resilience and socio-economic integration but do not negatively impact livelihoods or the environment (Amis, 1995; Pieterse, 2001; Smit, 2016; Turok, 2016).
- Investment in people, e.g. livelihoods and other forms of support, as well as investment in places, by means of infrastructure, social amenities etc (Amis, 1995; Turok, 2016).
- Increased, better coordinated and better integrated resources for planning and implementation (Smit, 2016; Turok, 2016).
- More communal-focused intervention, such as in public spaces, and less individual-focused intervention, such as top structures (Huchzermeyer, 1999).

It is important to note that some see these factors as steps of progressive upgrading (not in order), and not an 'all or nothing' approach (Minnery et al, 2013; Turok, 2016). In other words, not all the steps have to necessarily be implemented at the same time. This echoes the notion of incremental upgrading discussed in Chapter 3.2.

At the same time, the proposed holistic view should take cognisance of the impact of informal settlements on formal parts of a city, including investor attractiveness and crime, while recognising how the roll-out of 'urban fantasies' (Watson, 2014) are leading to relocations of informal settlements and/or gentrification (Fernandes, 2011; Watson, 2014).

3.5 Politics and a new paradigm

The lack of implementation of the UISP discussed in Chapter 1 shows that the necessary paradigm shift that supports upgrading has likely not yet taken place and that there may be a need for institutions to 'catch up' and/or, more radically, that there is a need for structural reform of oppressive and exploitative governance structures and systems (Fox, 2014). An incremental approach would imply that there must exist a high degree of tolerance for informality. It is therefore important that informality is tolerated politically (discussed in this chapter) and better accommodated in laws and policies (discussed in Chapter 3.6).

Greater acceptance of informality would also result in greater degrees of engagement and participation which, in turn, requires strong grassroots capacity. The need for and results of engagement is discussed in the second section of this chapter.

3.5.1 Accepting informality

In order to support the shift towards wider adoption of incremental upgrading, it is argued that there will first have to be a paradigm shift for both government and society – one that accepts informality (Groenewald et al, 2013; National Planning Commission, 2012). International campaigns like #StopFavelaStigma (http://catcomm.org/pac/) in Rio de Janeiro illustrate that this need for a paradigm shift is not unique to South Africa.

The road to the acceptance of informality is, arguably, through better understanding (Huchzermeyer, 2006; Minnery et al, 2013), greater empathy (Pieterse, 2010), a new paradigm/ changed mindset (Bhan, 2017; Groenewald et al, 2013; Huchzermeyer, 2005; Huchzermeyer, 2009). Groenewald et al (2013), Mandani (2005) and Pieterse (2011) support Bhan's view that the policies, cities and government of Post-colonial Africa needs to let go of the "yearning…for a controlled and orderly city free of the messiness of democratic politics" (2014:223). These views range from a call for deep personal and collective introspection, to more in-depth research, to political and social reform.

There is a challenge that the changed paradigm being lobbied for is at odds with the 'world city'/ neo-liberal agenda including the 'aesthetic' agenda, as well as 'smart cities' and 'eco-cities' (Bhan, 2014; Braathen et al, 2014; Kornienko, 2017; Huchzermeyer, 2006; Simpson, 2013; Watson, 2014). Huchzermeyer (2009) notes that these inconsistencies are especially worrying in a neo-liberal context where national government is concerned with investor attractiveness, while local government is responsible for poor people and service delivery, leading to competing mandates.

3.5.2 Engagement and participation as tools

There is widespread support and encouragement for community engagement, participation and even co-design of upgrading in policy documents from academics and practitioners (Abbott, 2002; Fieuw, 2015; Minnery et al, 2013; Pieterse, 2010; Researcher 1, personal communication, 19.06.2016; Researcher 2, personal communication, 21.06.2018; Smit, 2016). This stems from a need to truly recognise, not only through legally required 'public consultation' but as an essential new paradigm, the value of residents' opinion and contribution. Kornienko pointed out the psychological power of participation when "formerly oppressed people…find their own vernaculars and practices for realising themselves as creator of life in their process of change" (2017:36).

There is another benefit to engagement and participation. This is namely its value in developing strong citizens and establishing the capacity to engage (Bolnick and Bradlow, 2010), as well as to establish much needed trust and credibility between local government and communities (Turok, 2016). The lack of engagement or participation can, in turn, have a very negative impact (Braathen et al, 2014). It is generally agreed that participation during all phases of the process is more likely to lead to cooperation and successful upgrading than limited or no participation (Khosla et al, 2013; Pieterse and Van Donk, 2014).

It is strange then that examples of successful community participation are limited (Braathen et al, 2014; Turok, 2016). It could be because there is a need for strong grassroots (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; Pieterse, 2010; Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016; Pieterse and Van Donk, 2014), and that we are failing to build it (Pieterse, 2010; Watson in Heyer, 2015).

Research by Braathen et al (2014) of informal settlements in six cities across four developing countries revealed the 'agency of the poor' is fluid, complex, and localised and must be treated as such. The findings suggest that the sharing of knowledge (what, when and with whom) is a key starting point in the transformation to a paradigm whereby residents are active contributors to, and agents of, the informal settlement upgrading agenda.

A warning is issued that participation processes could potentially be hijacked (Van Horen ,2000) since there are multiple actors with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, such as shacklords (Researcher 2, personal communication, 21.06.2018). There is evidence in one particularly challenging reblocking project in Ekurhuleni, where the greatest reason for miscommunication was due to the Ward Councillor deliberately withholding information from the community (COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018). The project is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.4.

Capacity with regards to resources and skills, as well as limited political will are also noted as major challenges to community engagement (Braathen et al, 2014; Patel et al, 2014; Pieterse, 2010; Pieterse and Van Donk, 2014).

With regards to the requisite paradigm reform, Greyling and Berrisford (2016) as well as Van Horen (2000) are of the opinion that informal settlement upgrading offers a method of achieving changed mindsets. In other words, a changed mindset towards informal settlement upgrading will likely lead to more engagement; while more engagement will increasingly lead to a changed mindset, creating a virtuous cycle.

Pieterse and Van Donk (2014) proposed that design thinking offers a useful framework of engagement and negotiation. Groenewald, 2013 and Huchzermeyer (2008) remind us that residents of informal settlements is often organised, such as through women's groups or business forums, which offer useful entry points for participation.

3.6 Governance and Partnerships

As mentioned, a new paradigm will both proceed from and lead to new forms of governance. For this reason, this chapter advocates for political reform in support of the upgrading agenda. It was identified in the literature review that governance, including institutions, leaders, legislation and policies, play a key role in the success of upgrading programmes and projects. Governance, in this sense, also includes the state's relationship with the private sector and informal settlement residents – sometimes through a third party such as NGO's or consultants. The last section of this chapter addresses the strategic role of the judiciary in changing mindsets around informality.

3.6.1 Governance

Apart from the need for community engagement, governance in the broader sense has been identified by many scholars as crucial to the upgrading of informal settlements (Pieterse, 2010). With regards to the regulatory framework, national urban policies should create enabling environments for local authorities (Pieterse and Cirolia, 2016:454). At the same time, frameworks, policies and programmes are important but not enough; it must be backed by commitment from local government (Frediani et al, 2016:449). Furthermore, it is important that governance structures and mechanisms are aligned with policy intent (Minnery et al, 2013). This is both subject to, and will lead to systematic structural and political reform. The example of incremental upgrading is Bester's Camp, Durban, South Africa

illustrated that incremental upgrading necessitates a level of autonomy but cannot happen without any government involvement (Van Horen, 2000; Heyer, 2015).

Formal structures and relationships, such as Ward Councillors and Ward Committees, do have a role to play but informal settlement interventions should recognise the existence of informal/ *de facto* governance structures (Van Horen, 2000). Lastly, government officials are under pressure to meet targets and performance indicators (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; Researcher 2, personal communication, 21.06.2018). This could lead to competing agendas in that it tends to relegate incremental, enabling programmes in favour of greenfields projects (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; Pieterse, 2010).

3.6.2 Partnerships

In informal settlement upgrading, local government must be accessible and available to make decisions often and quickly – a key success factor according to Pieterse (2010). A lack of capacity at local government housing departments means that this is mostly not possible. The lack of municipal capacity was highlighted as a major constraint to participation (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; National Treasury Official, 25.08.2018; Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017). This necessitates some form of partnership if a participatory upgrading model is to be pursued.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) offer a potential solution to the lack of municipal capacity for engagement, planning and implementation (Frediani e al, 2016). One challenge of this arrangement, as has been experienced by Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in the City of Cape Town, is that the local municipality inevitably assumes the role of 'client' instead of it being the informal settlement community (Tomlinson, 2017). The NGO or CBO, in turn, is treated as consultant to the City, having to adhere to fixed timeframes and project milestones (Tomlinson, 2017). While this offers a solution to the challenge of capacity, the relationship should be carefully managed to ensure that the informal settlement community as the ultimate beneficiary are kept front of mind.

Another potential partner for informal settlement upgrading is tertiary institutions, specifically town planning, architecture or civil engineering schools (Perold and Devisch, 2014). Apart from the benefit of free supplementary capacity and the possibility of innovative approaches, such as in Vygeskaal in Cape Town (Perold and Devisch, 2014), this partnership has the potential to influence a new generation of practitioners who recognise the value of community engagement and involvement.

Pieterse (2010) notes that there are success factors for partnerships. These include informal relationships, or social capital, and a need to build in institutional learning. To this end, we need to accept the time and cost implication of building relationships and engaging communities, and we must become willing to experiment (and to fail) (Pieterse, 2010). This framework ties in well with the incremental approach promoted by international literature (refer to chapter 3.3.3).

3.6.3 Role of the judiciary

One approach to informal settlement upgrading is through litigation, tying in with Cirolia's (2017) 'rights-based discourses' mentioned earlier. Increasingly the role of the judiciary is deliberated and elevated in informal settlement upgrading literature (Huchzermeyer, 2004). "The avenue of the courts proves to be a critical link between housing and democracy", says Kornienko (2017:47). This includes condemning and criminalising exploitative practices, as well as developing appropriate laws and regulations to protect constitutional rights (Huchzermeyer, 2004; Frediani et al, 2016; Kornienko, 2017).

According to Kornienko the poor believe in the Court as "a tool for social justice" (2017:43), and indeed it has been in the past. In a few recent examples, it is feared that this role is being undermined in situations of unfavourable rulings, or lack of enforcement of favourable ones (Kornienko, 2017:43). In the South African context, there is still a disjuncture between the pro-poor agenda promoted by policy frameworks and the prevalence of the market-driven development agenda (Kornienko, 2017). She found that the lack of tangible outcomes threatens the legal system's power and carries a risk of manifesting as loss of hope for informal settlement residents (Kornienko, 2017).

3.7 Financing upgrading

Contemporary international informal settlement upgrading programmes tend to have a greater focus on financing initiatives than on physical upgrading (Bhatkal and Lucci, 2015). In the 1970s, when the World Bank began promoting the provision of serviced sites, together with the incremental upgrading of informal settlements, it was envisaged that the costs of land and infrastructures would largely be recovered from residents themselves. However, during the 1990s, based on learnings from Chile, the World Bank initiated 'targeted once-off capital subsidies' to cover these costs (World Bank, 1993). This marked the roll-out of capital housing subsidies in South Africa, amongst other middle-income countries at the time (Gilbert, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). The housing subsidy scheme has remained the main source of financing for informal settlement upgrading.

Parallel experimentation has been underway with microfinance, households savings, and community loan funds for assistance with upgrading. Examples include the Slum Dwellers International (SDI) savings schemes, lending organisations such as the Kuyasa Fund (Freire, 2013), the Mortgage Community Programme in the Philippines and the Community Mortgage Programme Institute in Thailand (Fieuw and Maitlin, 2017). Such programmes recognise the collective nature of shelter development. An alternative to direct capital contributions could also be in the form of general worker skills and sweat equity from informal settlement residents.

Patel et al (2014) describe savings schemes as used by Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP), Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in India, Pakistan and Thailand. Although government still contributes the bulk of resources, the 'soft' benefits of co-financing according to the authors include mobilising and organising communities, building trust and cohesion, accumulating community resources, and leveraging external contributors (Patel et al, 2014).

Savings contributions are seen as proving an informal settlement community's willingness to 'take ownership' of an upgrading project (Patel et al, 2014). Correspondingly, Tomlinson found that the potential for successful reblocking decreases if communities are "disinclined to organise and form savings groups" (2017:2).

When asked who is responsible for financing informal settlement upgrading, government officials and academics interviewed were all of the view that the state is responsible, in full or in part (COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018; Patel et al, 2014; HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018; Researcher 1, personal communication, 19.06.2016). It is then perhaps not surprising that informal settlement communities share this view.

This view is balanced by Huchzermeyer's view that the South African constitutional right of access to adequate housing, though progressive, is also qualified by the statement 'within the available resources of the State', of which freehold title and top structures are arguably not achievable at the scale required (2004). A balance has to be struck.

3.8 Conclusive Summary: What is good upgrading?

The complexity and dynamic nature of informal settlement upgrading indicates a need for practitioners and academics to remain vigilantly critical and flexible when engaging with informal settlement upgrading. The purpose of this section was to establish, from first principles, key components of what is currently considered principles and aspects of 'good upgrading'. These components for 'good upgrading' will be used as a qualitative framework against which to measure the application of reblocking in selected South African cities, discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Firstly, the need for government support to alleviate poor households' need for shelter is widely recognised (Fieuw and Mitlin, 2017). However, the non-implementation of progressive policies in the global south is often mentioned, with varying opinions on the reasons therefore.

One of the key reasons is a lack of changed mindsets, or rather a continuation of the paradigm (and practices) that led to imbalances in the first place. A new paradigm should be adopted, namely that informal settlements are neither to be feared nor ignored. This will likely only come about through better understanding and greater empathy of the middle class with low income households.

Following from this is a new mindset about upgrading – that it is not merely a temporary solution but, in view of the growing backlog for affordable shelter, the only one possible.

Not surprisingly, it was found that the academic community are largely in favour of in-situ upgrading as an intervention. The benefits are multiple, but not as many as the disadvantages of relocation in most instances.

It is not clear what the goal of upgrading should be, but most agree that it should include the provision of basic services and some form of secure tenure. This addresses the vital needs of health and security. Interestingly, it was felt that the majority of South African informal settlements already enjoy *de facto*

tenure security. The need for more holistic and strategic interventions is also discussed, in that parallel measures should be introduced to address underlying structural injustices.
There is also large-scale agreement on the need for community engagement/ participatory planning/ community-led upgrading. A large gap was identified, namely that there is a desperate need to actively build grassroots capacity. To this end, the community's input and participation should be non-negotiable, simply because their 'agency' should be recognised, but also because it can lead to self-actualisation which is critical in building citizenry. On the other hand, a lack of or poor engagement could very well lead to an erosion of trust (social capital) and even project failure.

The limited capacity of local government was often noted as a challenge. Options for supplementary capacity include NGOs and CBOs, academic institutions, consultants, and other spheres of government. There is also a need for a new kind of technocrat and official, one that values community engagement and has the necessary skills to do so in a meaningful way. Informal settlement upgrading is politically-charged, and this must be understood and borne in mind in designing and implementing upgrading.

Although there are different programmes with varying emphases, there is broad consensus that residents have the skills and resources to construct their own shelters. The option to incrementally develop is seen as supporting residents at their level of affordability.

Institutional structures and funding mechanisms should be, and generally are not supportive of incremental in-situ upgrading. The judiciary is vital in mediating between government and civic society, particularly with regards to the interpretation and implementation of upgrading policy and in initiating the much-needed new paradigm as encouraged in policy rhetoric.

Lastly, there is general consensus that the South African state should be responsible for financing informal settlement upgrading in full or in part. Innovative financing schemes, including community savings and sweat equity, were noted as alternatives being implemented elsewhere. It is important that the cost of 'upgrading' not be transferred to informal settlement residents through short-sighted and narrow interventions.

4 Upgrading of informal settlements in South Africa and the emergence of Reblocking

4.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with a summary of the history of housing delivery in South Africa aimed at addressing the challenge of informal settlements. The summary provides the backdrop to introducing the current national informal settlement upgrading programme, the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (DHS, 2009). The purpose of this section is to contextualise the emergence of reblocking in the national legal and policy framework, and to examine its value as a form of in-situ upgrading.

4.2 History and Current Housing Policy

The following is a brief summary of South Africa's post-1994 housing policy history. It is assumed that the reader is familiar with South Africa's history of spatial segregation along racial lines under the apartheid dispensation.

Although the pre-1994 national government was also involved in housing delivery (Cirolia et al, 2017) in 1994 the newly elected democratic government made a substantive commitment to addressing the demand for housing with a large-scale capital subsidy housing programme, popularly known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing programme (Fieuw and Mitlin, 2017). The Project Linked Subsidy, one of a few subsidy instruments at the time, dominated the delivery of low income housing units in contemporary South Africa (Ibid.).

In 2004, in response to the weaknesses of housing delivery to date (previously the focus had been on housing only, generally in locations on urban peripheries) a new policy was introduced, namely Breaking New Ground (BNG) (DHS, 2004), which was a shift from housing provision to the development of human settlements. BNG recognised the need for informal settlement upgrading and introduced new programmes such as the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), the Emergency Housing Programme (EHP), and the Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP) (Cirolia et al, 2017). However, "despite the progressive and flexible policy instruments, implementation has largely followed earlier RDP logics" (Cirolia et al, 2017:8).

The National Housing Code sets out the Guidelines, Norms and Standards which apply to government's various Housing Assistance Programmes (DHS, 2009). The fourteen National Housing Programmes currently available and contained in Part 3 of the Code are divided into four intervention categories i.e. Financial, Incremental Housing, Social and Rental Housing and Rural Housing. The Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) forms part of the Incremental Housing interventions and emphasises preference for in-situ upgrading over relocation.

Informal settlement upgrading in South Africa has generally taken a very specific approach that is quite different to that taken elsewhere. "Firstly, it has focused on physical upgrading (the provision of

houses and infrastructure) as opposed to more integrated approaches, on individual title deeds as the only form of tenure, and on a rollover upgrading approach (in which the majority of residents are usually displaced) as opposed to an in-situ upgrading approach" (Smit 2016:36). From studying informal settlement upgrading practice in three developing countries, Braathen et al (2014) agree that eviction and resettlement ('roll-over upgrading') tends to lead to the relocation of some, if not all, residents of an informal settlement. However, 'upgrading' in the UISP refers to in-situ upgrading, distinguished from 'formalisation' or 'roll-over upgrading'.

With the UISP the intention is that Municipalities identify informal settlements to be upgraded within their area of jurisdiction and apply to the respective Provincial Department for funding under the Programme. The UISP only finances the creation of serviced stands, excluding pre-feasibility studies and top structures. It can also fund certain social and economic amenities. It is envisioned as an incremental process that culminates in the full upgrading of informal settlements over time. Up to Phase 3, it can benefit all persons living in the settlement.

The Housing Code suggests that the UISP be undertaken in four phases (refer to Table 1 below) with specified activities and milestones, with funding ringfenced for each of the phases including for project management and community participation.

Table 1: UISP phases

	UISP Phase	Activities
1.	Application	Submission of interim business plan
2.	Project Initiation (land acquisition, planning and design of engineering services)	Land acquisition Socio-economic and demographic profiling Installation of interim basic services Conduct pre-planning studies e.g. geotechnical investigation and environmental impact assessment
3.	Project Implementation (detailed planning, land rehabilitation and provision of permanent services)	Final business plan Establish project management capacity Establish housing support services Initiate planning processes Formalise land occupation rights Provide relocation assistance Land rehabilitation Install permanent municipal engineering infrastructure Construct social amenities and economic facilities
4.	Housing Consolidation	Construction of top structures. During Phase 4, beneficiaries may apply for housing construction assistance through the other National Housing Programmes (such as Individual Subsidies, Enhanced People's Housing Process etc.)

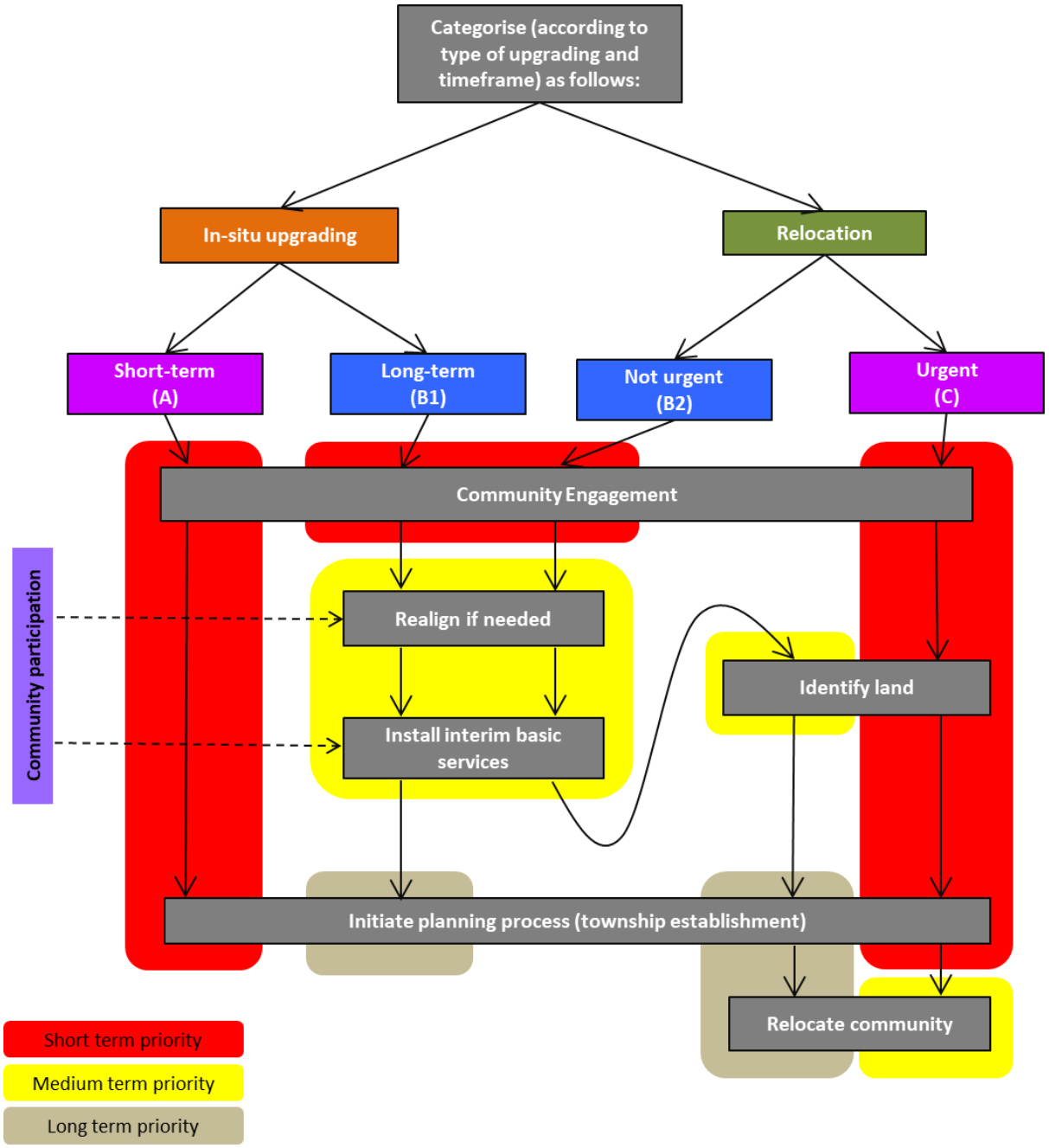
Source: DHS, 2009

Through the introduction of the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) and other mechanisms, financial instruments and targets in 2009 the state renewed its efforts – introduced through BNG – to institutionalise the 'upgrading agenda' (Cirolia et al, 2017). Despite this, as illustrated

in the introduction to this paper, many are of the opinion that there are still major discrepancies between the intention of the UISP and implementation on the ground.

Through NUSP, informal settlements are classified into one of four categories, based on a technical assessment of the land, settlement, and surrounds. The author's understanding of the UISP process is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: UISP process (author's interpretation)



Source: Author

The challenge is that there is currently no mechanism to bypass the traditional township establishment procedure, without which full permanent services or title deeds cannot be issued. However, the traditional procedure is subject to expensive technical investigations as well as to

traditional layout principles, norms and standards including minimum stand sizes, limited accesses (favouring vehicular traffic), parking requirements and more. These traditional norms and standards are very conservative and arguably irrelevant to the context of low income households. It also mostly necessitates dedensification, resulting in relocation. This is contrary to the ethos of in-situ upgrading, and a particular challenge in Ekurhuleni where well-located developable land is scarce (Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017).

The UISP process assumes linear progression from Stage 1 to 4, with limited time intervals between the phases of settlement categorisation and commencement of interventions, including the installation of interim services, full upgrading or relocation. In reality, this would very seldom be the case due to challenges such as land ownership matters that have to be resolved, a lack of available land for relocation, or a lack of spare bulk engineering capacity. With a settlement not meeting the requirements for township establishment, it cannot progress beyond a state of interim service provision. At the same time, there is a challenge of providing social services on land that has not been subdivided, and investment in general is not ideal since the layout will most likely have to change to meet traditional norms and standards. Even though the UISP does make provision for higher densities in upgraded informal settlements, if needed (DHS, 2009:33), the road design, engineering service standards and town planning layout requirements used by other provincial and local departments have not been updated accordingly.

The UISP Upgrading Toolkit proposed a number of 'optimisation' measures that would assist the UISP to better accommodate incremental upgrading (Misselhorn, 2017). The proposal is that Phases 1 and 2 for Category B1 (incremental upgrade) and Category B2 (deferred relocation) settlements are collapsed into a single phase and that partnerships be formed for social facilitation during this first phase. Importantly, the proposed revised phasing does not necessarily assume the standard linear progression to full upgrading and housing consolidation. However, it is unknown whether these measures have been officially adopted as yet.

4.3 Reblocking emerges

This section introduces the concept of reblocking, and its emergence as an approach to informal settlement upgrading in the City of Cape Town (CoCT), South Africa. It is not a national programme but emerged through Slum Dwellers International's involvement in a particular informal settlement.

4.3.1 Slum Dwellers International (SDI)

Reblocking in South Africa emerged fairly recently as one of the approaches to informal settlement upgrading. Although it is applied differently in various metropolitan municipalities, the City of Cape Town (CoCT) approach and case studies are primarily investigated. This is because the approach was invented in CoCT as mentioned above, and furthermore, the application of reblocking in Ekurhuleni is a direct result of site visits to reblocking projects in CoCT by officials from the City of Ekurhuleni Department of Human Settlements (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication,

07.12.2017). The delegation visited Flamingo Heights, Mtshini Wam, and Langrug informal settlements in CoCT on invitation from South African Slum Dwellers International (SDI) (Ibid.).

As noted in the introduction, the lack of literature on the application of reblocking in other parts of the country is part of the 'raison d'être' for this dissertation. This overview of reblocking in CoCT sets the scene for a comparative assessment with reblocking as applied in CoE.

"Shack/ Slum Dwellers International was created by the Indian Alliance and South African partners" (Tomlinson, 2017:1). Shack/ Slum Dwellers International (SDI), according to Tomlinson, "has become probably the world's biggest and most effective network for south-south exchange among poor people" (2017:3). The SDI, headquartered in Cape Town, "provides administrative and financial support to a network of community-based organisation (CBO) affiliates in 33 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America" (Tomlinson, 2017:2). The South African affiliate of SDI is referred to as the 'South African Alliance' (Tomlinson, 2017).

The members of the South African Alliance are FEDUP (Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor), ISN (Informal Settlement Network), CORC (Community Organisation Resource Centre), and uTshani Fund ('grassroots fund') (Tomlinson, 2017). iKhayalami ('my home') used to be a member of the South African Alliance (Tomlinson, 2017). iKhayalami focused on designing and sourcing alternative (affordable) infrastructure technologies to improve living conditions in informal settlements (Tomlinson, 2017). According to the former director of Slum Dwellers International (25.08.2018) the model for SDI came about after a CORC visit to Thailand. It is not specified but the model is likely influenced by Thailand's Baan Mankong programme (see Box 1 below). which describes the Baan Mankong programme in short.

Box 1: Thailand's Baan Mankong programmes

Baan Mankong is managed and funded by CODI (Community Organizations Development Institute). The programme offers a variety of intervention options ranging from in-situ upgrading (as per the definition provided) to relocation (Bhatkal and Lucci, 2015). The programme's key focus is tenure security. Through CODI, financing is made available for a selection of activities from site- and home improvement to the development of community facilities such as "meeting rooms, learning centres, libraries and nurseries" (Bhatkal and Lucci, 2015:2).

The SDI approach hinges on "a commitment to community organisation and community-led upgrading that is undertaken in partnership with local government" (Tomlinson, 2017:1), with an emphasis on positioning the urban poor "at the centre of strategies for urban development" (Tomlinson, 2017:2). At the heart of SDI mobilisation and community organisation tools ('rituals') are women-centred savings groups (Tomlinson, 2017).

The SDI reblocking or blocking out methodology evolved through action-learning and experimentation in Joe Slovo informal settlement in Langa, Cape Town, in partnership with iKhayalami, ISN, the Joe Slovo community, and the City of Cape Town (Tomlinson, 2017:4).

The definition of reblocking/ blocking out as used by the South African SDI Alliance is as follows: "Reconfiguration and repositioning of shacks in very dense informal settlements in accordance to a

community-drafted development plan" (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014:240). The same key elements are noted in the definition given by Perold and Devisch (2014) and National Treasury Official (personal communication, 25.08.2018) affirmed that the approach is targeted at dense informal settlements. In Tomlinson, reblocking is described as "a design and implementation process that is driven by the community and involves the reconfiguration of a settlement layout into one that is more rationalised allowing for the creation of demarcated pathways or roads, public and semi-public spaces all of which opens access for emergency vehicles, the provision of infrastructure and basic services which were not previously taken into account. Shacks get dismantled and upgraded…in-situ" (2017:4). The purpose of reblocking, according to its proponents, is to make provision for the installation of services, as well as to improve fire safety in informal settlements (Tomlinson, 2017; National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018).

The second reblocking project was Sheffield Road informal settlement in Philippi. The Informal Settlements Network (ISN) then started engaging CoCT in 2010 with regards to somehow formalising an agreement that ISN would assist the City with the reblocking of selected informal settlements (Bolnick and Bradlow, 2010). It took two years to formulate all the legal aspects of the agreement and in 2012 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed for the "participatory incremental upgrading of 21 informal settlements in Cape Town" (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014:245).

4.3.2 The building blocks of an ideal process

The former director of SDI (forthwith referred to as 'National Treasury Official') who was instrumental in developing and coining the approach, was interviewed to develop a deeper understanding of the origin and methodology of reblocking. This chapter is largely based on his comments and an assessment conducted by Heyer (2015) of reblocking in CoCT.

In explaining the emergence, intention and original model of reblocking, the interviewee emphasised that the process is flexible and one cannot be too rigid in applying it. Instead he noted the following four core building blocks of the SDI reblocking approach:

The **first** and most important **building block** is that reblocking is "grounded in community organisation/ mobilisation" (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018). The need for strong grassroots organisations and civil society was discussed in Chapter 3. Although reblocking is critiqued for its inability to scale up due to "cost, time and space limitations" (Heyer, 2015:73) it was concluded that its major strength lies in the process itself, and specifically the mobilisation tools (Heyer, 2015). These include savings groups, enumeration, surveys and mapping. It was found that the mobilisation tools have immense potential to establish social capital and build citizenry (Heyer, 2015). "Re-blocking demonstrates that collaborative planning is possible even with poor and marginalized groups, as long as these are strong and mobilized" (Heyer, 2015:75). For this reason, she claims that the reblocking "*process* is more important than the *product*" (Heyer, 2015:73, emphasis added).

The National Treasury Official emphasised that there is a need to agree the following before moving ahead with reblocking: that the particular settlement will be reblocked, and on the proposed layout

including the opening up of service roads for the provision of emergency services. Last but not least, the community is intended to participate in implementation (Perold and Devisch, 2014).

The **second building block** is participatory planning. The role of planners, NGO's and the City must shift "from top-down planning and creating solutions *for* communities to creating them *with* communities" (Heyer, 2015:77) and layout planning should be undertaken by working with the community. Reblocking of a settlement is typically undertaken in clusters, as identified by the community (Perold and Devisch, 2014).

"By letting communities decide on layouts, the project goals, and also labour distribution the micro dynamics are in focus yet also acknowledging the communities' need to be mobilized and economically stabilized in order to change their marginalized position in the long term" (Heyer, 2015:71).

The SDI model recommends for realignment to be such that courtyards are created (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018). In very dense settlements there may be a need to reduce plot and house sizes to allow for roads, a process that will require negotiation of trade-offs (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018). Heyer's second great praise for reblocking is with regard to the "creation of open space which can be overviewed and shared" (2015:74).

It was found that the basis of community mobilisation, together with a more 'communal' layout and collaborative implementation, fosters cohesion and self-awareness (Heyer, 2015). This, in turn, makes communities more critical towards their environment (Heyer, 2015) and they are more likely to start holding leadership accountable.

The **third building block** is the contribution of community savings to the project. In the SDI model, the Alliance usually finances the initial improvements. According to Fieuw and Mitlin (2017), there have been informal settlement communities in the past that contributed between ten and twenty per cent of project funds. In this way, community savings have been used to leverage government investment, equal to up to four times the Alliance's initial investment (Fieuw and Mitlin, 2017).

Heyer's (2015) research revealed that the savings-based model advocated by SDI is met with much resistance. She says it can be difficult for an informal settlement community suffering from poverty and hunger and a lack of education to "understand and especially except the requirements and time-cost intensiveness reblocking takes for them" (Heyer, 2015:72).

The ethos of savings groups originated from the Indian SDI alliance, born in the absence of housing rights in the Indian Constitution (India, 2017). Tomlinson found that "few communities in South Africa perceive the need to organise due to government's free housing", their rights as enshrined in the Constitution, "and the location of informal settlements not attracting the attention of…property developers" (2017:12). Despite the non-delivery of housing, this sense of entitlement coupled with *de facto* tenure security makes him question the relevance of savings groups in the South African context (Tomlinson, 2017).

The **fourth** and final vital **building block** is education. The SDI model emphasises the importance of educating councillors with regards to the intention and approach of reblocking (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018). It was mentioned during the interview that councillors were particularly opposed to the idea of reblocking when it was first introduced and that their buy-in is critical lest it becomes a stumbling block later on (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018).

The SDI equally emphasises the need to educate the informal settlement community so that they understand that it is an incremental approach intended as an interim measure, with a focus on improving safety. This assists to manage their expectations with regards to formalisation (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018). With the original model, this education was undertaken by CORC and SDI in the form of knowledge exchange ('a roadshow') since intensive engagement and education is something for which CoCT lacks the requisite capacity (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018).

When stronger citizenry and collaborative planning are combined, and coupled with education about upgrading policies Heyer (2015) found that residents become enabled to motivate other communities toward similar outcomes. In this way, reblocking "creates opportunities to include the urban poor into the city", not only physically but, more importantly, psychologically (Heyer, 2015:74).

4.3.2.1 Challenges

Not surprisingly, there are several challenges related to reblocking, illustrating the complexity and 'messiness' of incremental in-situ upgrading in practice. Heyer's primary conclusions were that, "cost, time and space limitations" means that reblocking is not necessarily an ideal solution for all communities (2015:73).

The interviewee (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018), as co-founder of the approach, noted the following key challenges experienced with reblocking, many of which align with Heyer's finding above:

- It is time-consuming and resource-intensive, particularly with regards to facilitation.
- Political buy-in is challenging since an informal approach is taken, which contradicts the technocratic view of most politicians.
- There is strong competition with the formal housing process.
- The phased development approach, also advocated for by the UISP, stands in contrast to the need and demand for urgent improvement in all informal settlements.
- The UISP is not flexible enough with regards to the informal provision of services, for example NGOs and CBOs struggle to access funding for social infrastructure without being able to provide a formal stand number.
- There is an obsession with formal title registration and not enough consideration of workable alternatives or incremental models of tenure.
- Reblocking on land owned privately or under custodianship of a tribal authority is seen as 'fruitless expenditure'.

- The capacity of many local government officials is limited.
- The traditional mindset of many local government officials is a challenge.
- Although the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) (RSA, 2013) allows for an area to be designated for incremental upgrading and for more speedy processes, these provisions have not yet been taken up by many metropolitan municipalities.
- Without meaningful participation, there is a risk that the community will not take ownership of interventions and it may even lead to vandalism which is wasted investment.
- If upgrading is just about 'taps and pipes' (i.e. basic services provision) and is not accompanied by the provision of social infrastructure or by community building it is likely to have negative consequences. The potential of infrastructure provision to have a social impact must be recognised and maximised.
- Settlement-based projects are less effective than a City-wide programmatic approach that is linked to social and economic interventions, as well as the spatial transformation agenda.

Heyer adds that, "since re-blocking is a practise of collaborative planning, no clear rules can be defined for successful re-blocking as actors have to adjust to varying project environments and…the 'human factor'" (2015:73).

4.3.3 Reblocking in the City of Cape Town

The MOU signed in 2012 evolved into the City of Cape Town's Reblocking Policy, adopted in 2013, signalling that reblocking had been formally adopted as one of the City's informal settlement upgrading strategies (City of Cape Town, 2013).

The positioning of the Reblocking Policy is somewhat ambiguous, however. It is noted in the Policy that reblocking "is not the commencement of the formal in-situ upgrading of the settlement by either the City or the local community through the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) or any other national housing programme" (City of Cape Town, 2013:4). On the other hand, reblocking is defined as "The formal upgrading of an informal settlement in its current location, with or without the need for de-densification as part of the national UISP" (City of Cape Town, 2013:3).

Tshabalala and Mxobo are of the opinion that reblocking, as an infrastructure-led intervention/ programme, can be both an 'incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading' as well as an "interim intervention to ameliorate the living conditions in informal settlements" (2014:243). According to National Treasury Official (personal communication, 25.08.2018) it was originally intended as an interim measure, either as the first step to upgrading, or while the settlement awaits relocation or some other intervention.

The Reblocking Policy specifies that reblocking is undertaken as a partnership between the City and an NGO or CBO as implementing partner. Reblocking projects are included in the City's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and funded through the Urban Settlement Development Grant (USDG) (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014).

Only five reblocking projects are reported on, and the City's Housing Strategy pipeline included 2,814 reblocking units in 2014 (Tomlinson, 2017) indicating that reblocking actually plays a very small role in informal settlement upgrading in the City.

The most detailed account of a reblocking project in CoCT was found in Tshabalala and Mxobo (2014) discussing the reblocking of Mtshini Wam. The success of the Mtshini Wam case, a settlement of 250 shacks (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014) hinged on extremely intensive support from the ISN organisations and regular interfacing with CoCT. Even though the intensive engagement greatly assisted to build the settlement leaders' capacity, it does raise questions around sustainability and the potential of scaling up.

A number of NGOs and academic institutions were involved during the upgrading process (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014). Learning exchanges assisted that residents, who were at first resistant, became open to the concept of collective savings. This demonstrates what Tomlinson's (2017) wrote about precedent setting and partnerships being crucial to success.

Visible improvements included basic water and sanitation, grading of roads and soil compaction to improve stormwater drainage, and fire safety through dedensification (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014). However, SDI and Heyer (2015) argue that the greatest value of reblocking lies in the soft improvements, including improved citizenry as noted above, improved safety due to increased social capital (even beyond settlement boundaries) and the courtyard-layout concept (Brown-Luthango et al, 2016), and improved sense of security due to high municipal investment (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014).

The centrality of participation of community members (community-driven upgrading) in the planning, design and implementation phases is central to the ethos of reblocking. Reblocking is designed to promote 'self-reliance', and makes use of tools such as enumeration and mapping to determine which "assets" are present and have potential to be further developed (Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014).

4.3.4 Reblocking in the City of Johannesburg

Reblocking attempts in the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) had similar challenges to that of the CoE, not least of which is the continued mindset and practices of relocation and roll-over upgrading (Bafo, 2016). The City also experiences it as a challenge that reblocking is leading to housing consolidation (COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018), supporting Gulyani's (2017) finding that public investment triggers private investment.

Other challenges (in Bafo, 2016 and from COJMM Official 1, personal communication, 02.08.2018) include a lack of staff capacity for in-situ upgrading projects, a lack of inter-government and interdepartmental alignment, high density settlements with land often being undevelopable or privately owned, a lack of well-located land for relocation, reinvasion of cleared land, under-provision of basic services coupled with vandalism of available services, no recourse for illegal behaviour, and pressure from surrounding formal areas to upgrade.

CoJ does not have a reblocking policy. It follows the provisions of emergency accommodation when reblocking. All engagement is done by government officials. The City does not work with NGOs on reblocking projects, despite a lack of capacity. The settlement layout is based on creating rows of stands, not a courtyard-layout such as the SDI model. The layout is prepared by a consultant after which the community provides comments and input through a settlement committee. CoJ is in the process of establishing an interdepartmental committee to integrate informal settlement upgrading interventions. Upgrading is funded through the Urban Settlement Development Grant (USDG). According to COJMM Official 1 (personal communication, 02.08.2018), CoJ prefers using USDG funding and not UISP, since USDG funding is given directly to the Metropolitan Municipality, whereas UISP funding is channelled through the Gauteng Province and therefore more cumbersome to unlock, particularly since the phasing of UISP is very specific and does not necessarily align with project needs.

4.4 Concluding comments

The evolving approach to informal settlements in South African rhetoric and legislation favours upgrading. The emergence of reblocking in the City of Cape Town, outside of the ambit of UISP, is most notable. The implementation of reblocking (in a hybrid form) in the City of Johannesburg is further evidence of the need for a workable alternative.

With regards to reblocking itself, in her assessment, Heyer (2015) found that the SDI process in the City of Cape Town adheres to good in-situ upgrading practice. It was also appraised as a successful example of 'collaborative planning' by virtue of the in-depth involvement of local communities and their high level of decision-making power (Heyer, 2015).

Due to the intensity of engagement required, both upfront and during planning and implementation, the approach's greatest limitation is its limited impact compared to the level of time and effort required (Heyer, 2015). The larger an informal settlement, the less homogenous are the needs. It also becomes more difficult to organise general meetings and for information to reach the settlement at large; and it was found that the leadership are unlikely to be representative of the entire community. For these reasons, reblocking was found to be most suitable to small informal settlements (Heyer, 2015). The poor 'impact' vs 'effort' ratio also presents a challenge to NGOs, such as CORC, who have to illustrate impact to funders (Heyer, 2015).

Nevertheless, the reblocking approach has proven to be immensely valuable to build citizenry and establish social cohesion in informal settlements in CoCT. This is vital in a context deprived of citizenship and, Heyer argues, even more valuable than the physical outcomes. For this reason, Heyer recommends that reblocking be one of a suite of upgrading approaches in a region, and that mobilisation tools for collaborative planning be adopted more widely. Therefore, despite having a poor 'impact' vs 'effort' ratio, reblocking has potential to persuade government officials and the South African society that community-driven upgrading is both possible and positive, subject to strong grassroots capacity (Heyer, 2015).

In summary, there are many positive aspects to the SDI reblocking approach, most notably that at its core it is participatory, and community-led from planning to implementation. According to available

evidence, this has psychological benefits such as promoting self-reliance. In the South African context, this is vital to counter what Kornienko (2017) terms the 'erosion of hope' caused by state housing programmes and the lingering ghost promises of a free house. Reblocking's focus on in situ and incremental upgrading is also noteworthy, which is aligned with international best practice, as well as with the UISP objectives. Lastly, the inherent adaptability of the SDI approach is advantageous in view of the dynamic nature of informal settlements and the complex nature of upgrading.

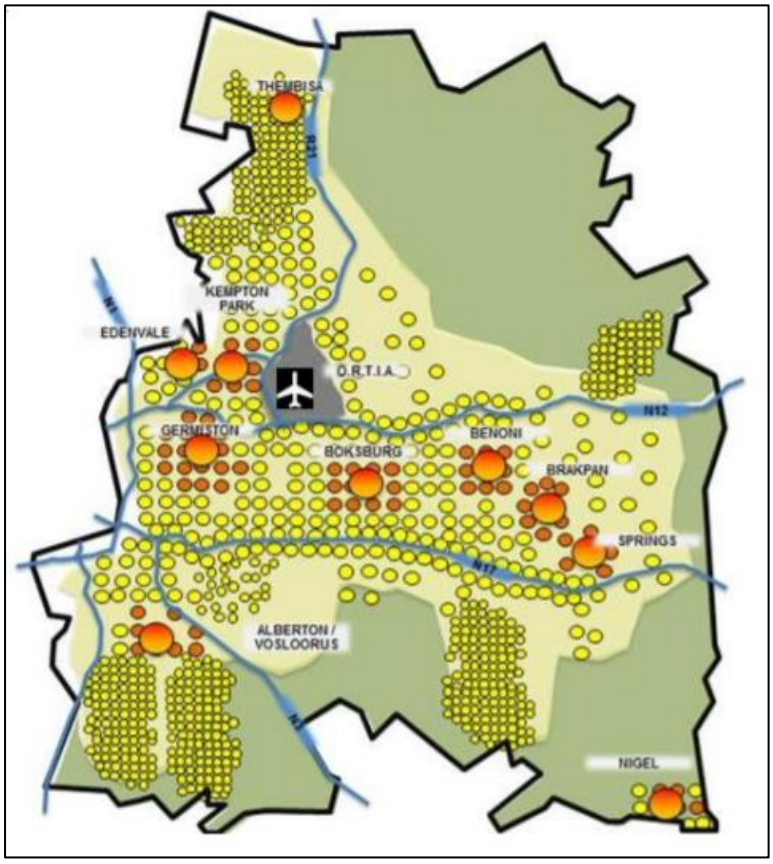
5 Reblocking in City of Ekurhuleni

5.1 An introduction to City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

The City of Ekurhuleni (CoE) comprises the eastern central part of Gauteng Province in South Africa. It is home to O.R. Tambo International Airport, the busiest airport in Africa and a freight hub. Together with the City of Johannesburg and City of Tshwane metropolitan areas, CoE forms the economic heartland of Gauteng as well as South Africa. The CoE's contribution to the provincial GDP is 18% (CoE, 2015a).

The population of the CoE was 3 358 474 in 2015 (CoE, 2015a), comprising 6% of the national population. About 30% of Gauteng Province's population growth is attributed to in-migration (Todes et al, 2010). Reasons for migration to the Province include the availability of social networks (42%), access to secure tenure (30%), followed by access to employment (28%) (Todes et al, 2010:338). The CoE's spatial structure is polycentric, as illustrated in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Ekurhuleni Urban Core and Marginalised Areas



Source: CoE, 2015a: Section C, p5

The CoE 'urban core' – represented above by large orange circles – comprises Kempton Park, Boksburg, Germiston, Benoni, Edenvale and Bedfordview. The yellow circles indicate level of income

and population density. The larger yellow circles are higher income earners, predominantly clustered around the urban core cities. The well-developed urban complex is surrounded by four concentrations of low income residential areas, indicated by the concentrations of small yellow circles. These low income high density residential complexes are collectively home to nearly two thirds (64%) of the metropolitan population (CoE, 2015a), a typical characteristic of post-apartheid South African cities.

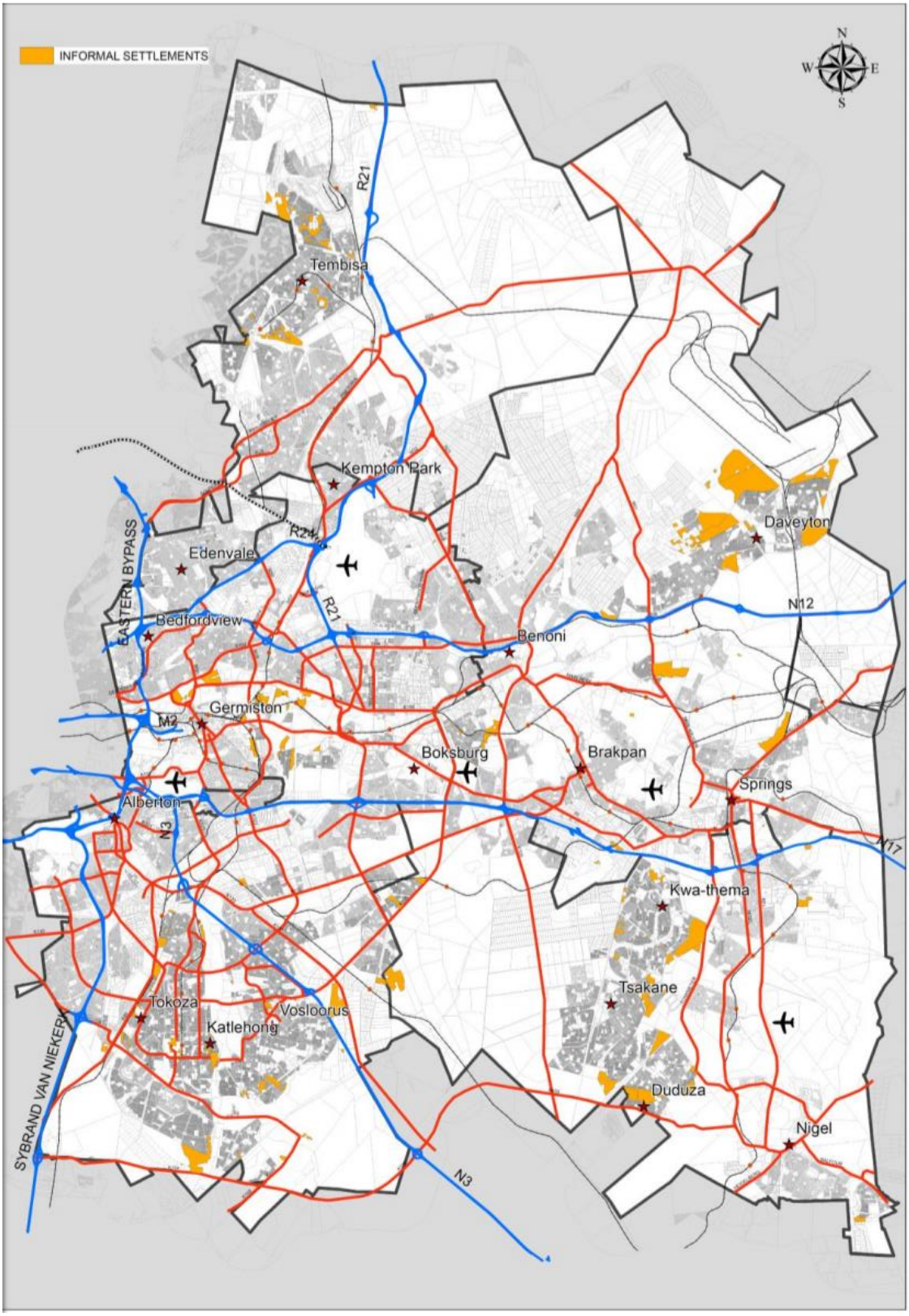
With regards to development, the municipal context is rather challenging for the following reasons:

- There is limited available land within the urban core and dolomite and geotechnically unstable conditions render large tracts of land undevelopable (unless mitigating measures are implemented);
- The urban footprint is dispersed, already putting pressure on engineering services and transport systems. The majority of bulk infrastructure is in need of expansion and upgrading, leaving very little spare capacity;
- Land invasion is a regular occurrence and the only mechanism to address it is the Ekurhuleni Metro Police Department (EMPD). There have also been reports of police violence towards invaders (refer to section 5.4).

It is estimated that there are approximately 156,594 informal dwellings in 114 informal settlements in CoE (6% of the municipal population) (www.csp.treasury.gov.za, 2017). The location of informal settlements is illustrated in **Figure 4** overleaf (informal settlements are reflected as orange polygons). The blue lines indicate national freeways traversing the metropolitan area, while the red lines indicate main roads. It is evident that informal settlements predominantly occur within and around the previously disadvantaged residential areas.

The Municipality is divided into a number of different departments, one of which is the Ekurhuleni Department of Human Settlements, responsible for housing delivery and the management (including upgrading) of informal settlements.

Figure 4: Informal settlements in the City of Ekurhuleni

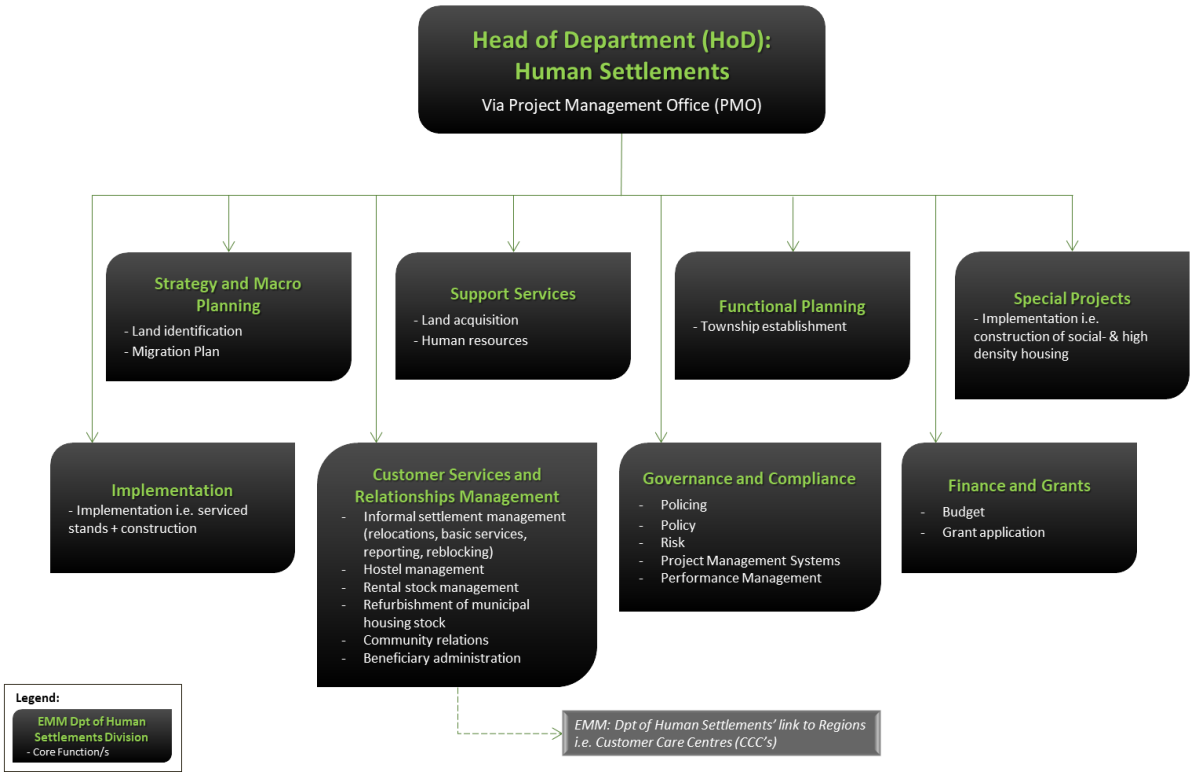


Source: CoE, 2015a, Section B:31

5.2 Informal Settlement Interventions

The mandate for informal settlement management and upgrading vests with the City of Ekurhuleni Department of Human Settlements. The Departmental Head Office comprises eight (8) divisions as illustrated in **Figure 5**. The core function of each division of Human Settlements Head Office is noted in the diagram.

Figure 5: City of Ekurhuleni: Department of Human Settlements - Corporate



Source: Aurecon South Africa, 2016:18

Due to the City's polycentric spatial structure, the Human Settlements Head Office is supported by 20 regional Customer Care Centres (CCCs) and Customer Care Areas (CCAs). The link between the Head Office and the CCAs is established through the placement of Regional Executive Managers (REMs) and Housing Liaison Officers (HLOs) at CCAs in every region, who report in to the Customer Services and Relationships Management (CS&RM) division at Corporate level.

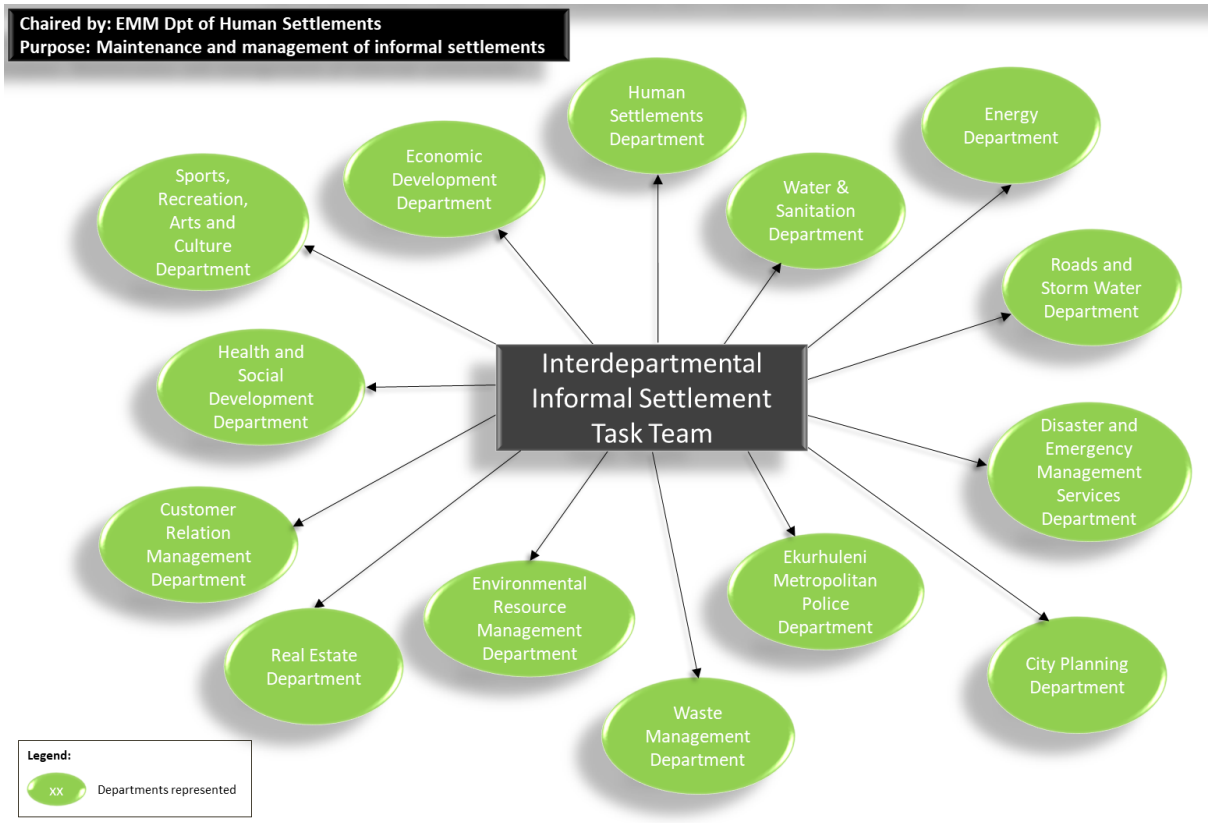
The CS&RM division is responsible for Informal settlement management, including relocations, installing basic services, reporting, as well as reblocking. The Strategy and Macro Planning division is responsible for the City's Migration Plan.

The Migration Plan is a dynamic document comprising a consolidated record of all known informal settlements, their status, and future planning as currently envisaged. It is continuously updated by the CoE upon receipt of new information such as feasibility studies and outcomes from land negotiations or court cases (where relevant). The National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) in CoE is also

overseen by the Functional Planning division. It is evident that coordinated planning and delivery across divisions are critical for informal settlement upgrading.

When CoE finds out about a new informal settlement, the settlement is added to the Migration Plan, and provided with basic services as an interim measure as soon as possible (Aurecon South Africa, 2016). Servicing takes place through the Interdepartmental Informal Settlement Task Team (refer to representatives on **Figure 6**). The Task Team is responsible for the installation and maintenance of services in existing and new informal settlements.

Figure 6: Interdepartmental Informal Settlement Task Team



Aurecon South Africa, 2016:20

The Task Team do not play a role in planning for, or executing informal settlement upgrading. They are only responsible for interim/ basic service delivery (Aurecon South Africa, 2016). Bafo (2016) praises the CoE's foresight and dedication to have established such a Task Team, noting that it proves their commitment to informal settlement upgrading.

The NUSP is one of the vehicles through which informal settlements in the City are assessed for their potential for in-situ upgrading, and then categorised. Two rounds of NUSP studies have been commissioned by the Department of Human Settlements in the CoE, namely for fifteen informal settlements in 2014, and for thirty-three settlements in 2016.

A review of the implementation of UISP in CoJ and CoE undertaken by a Master's student in 2016 found that only 20% of CoE informal settlements can be upgraded; the remaining 80% have to be relocated (Bafo, 2016). Bafo concluded that, "despite the existence of the [NUSP] support structure,

minimal implementation of the UISP has been actualised in…EMM" (2016:111) and that the predominant interventions in CoE were still 'relocation and eradication' and/or 'roll-over upgrading'. Fieuw and Mitlin found that, in general, "there has been no substantive modification of programming, in either housing construction or informal settlement upgrading" (2017:15).

It was, however, noted that the CoE Human Settlements team had recently undergone UISP training through NUSP, and were well aware that their informal settlement 'upgrading' approach was not in line with the NUSP approach (Bafo, 2016).

According to one of the members of the CoE Reblocking team, it was since then that the CS&RM division commenced experimenting with reblocking in select cases. The forthcoming electrification of informal settlements, triggered by an announcement by the Gauteng Premier that informal settlements will henceforth be electrified, gave rise to the need for reblocking in Ekurhuleni (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017). As discussed above, CoE's approach to informal settlements up until this time was predominantly based on housing delivery including both in-situ (brownfields) and relocation (greenfields) projects.

According to the reblocking team, CoE uses reblocking in some of the settlements that can be upgraded in-situ (B1) or that will have to be relocated in the long term (B2) (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017).

5.3 Reblocking Process

The following section documents the current approach to reblocking in CoE. The City does not have a reblocking policy such as has been adopted by the City of Cape Town. The process described below is based on an interview with one of the CoE reblocking team members (07.12.2017). Importantly, the interviewee noted repeatedly that reblocking is context-specific and that every settlement is different (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017). This echoes the original ethos of reblocking and its founder's sentiments. As mentioned, the approach was introduced after CoE officials visited the City of Cape Town and their partners, SDI, who had introduced the CoE to reblocking as a practice (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017).

5.3.1 Pre-Planning

Through a series of ongoing feasibility studies and assisted by projects like the two NUSP's, CoE systematically determines, from a technical perspective, which of its informal settlements can be upgraded in-situ and which have to be relocated. The Department funds the required feasibility studies from the USDG annual allocation.

Settlements considered for reblocking have to be situated on developable land. Settlements that have to be relocated in either the short or the long term are mostly not reblocked. Most informal settlements in Ekurhuleni that are categorised as 'A' (imminent in-situ upgrade) already have housing projects underway and would therefore also not be reblocked.

Part of the role of the reblocking team at CoE: Department of Human Settlements is to identify settlements that could be reblocked. This differs from the SDI/ CoCT approach to reblocking which tends to be initiated by an NGO (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018).

The team from the CoE Human Settlements Department implementing reblocking comprises two officials. As a first step in the reblocking process, the CoE Reblocking Team member interviewed says it is necessary to spend time to understand the settlement and residents' background as well as the promises that had been made to them previously (personal communication, 07.12.2017). This political context is important to understand how receptive the community will be to alternatives, the level of cooperation to be expected, etc. (Ibid.). The CoE officials take responsibility for community engagement – the CoE does not currently use NGOs for community engagement in informal settlement upgrading due to procurement constraints (HDA Official, personal communication, 13.07.2018 and CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017), despite evident capacity constraints.

Kornienko (2017) warns that even the act of enumeration has the potential to create expectations, while multiple enumerations followed by no action could lead to despondency or frustration for informal settlement communities. An example in the CoE where expectations had to be mitigated was when three CoE informal settlements were somehow promised that they were all the beneficiaries of one particular housing project even though there were not enough houses for everyone. Naturally this led to frustration and anger. The N12 Highway informal settlement (one of the three) was situated on land earmarked for industrial development, which is why the settlement was initially identified for relocation. However, the CoE opted to reblock the settlement instead in order to compensate for the fact that the community's expectations of getting houses were not met (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017).

The reblocking team member commented that it takes a lot to establish a relationship with an informal settlement community, "only then can you walk in a settlement freely" (Ibid.). The interviewee recalled incidents of communities mobilising and their CoE team suffering threats of violence. There has been resistance from landlords who would be losing revenue once the settlement is reblocked. Due to this, the officials have had to be assisted by the Red Ants – a South African private security company that specialises in removing 'illegal invaders' from land – on more than one occasion. Apparently even the Ekurhuleni Metro Police Department (EMPD) are not willing to enter some notorious settlements (Ibid.).

The first reblocking projects in the CoE were settlements that were not very dense and which required only partial realignment, with little or no relocation. The prioritisation was also influenced by Eskom's electrification roll-out, which triggered reblocking in Ekurhuleni in the first place.

5.3.2 Planning, Financing and Procurement

The first planning task in the reblocking of an informal settlement in the CoE is to develop a settlement layout plan. This may take different forms. Most often CoE commissions consultants to develop a

conceptual layout plan for the informal settlement in question. This would typically comprise the proposed location for main roads and interim services. This step usually does not entail enumeration or community engagement.

This is not always the case though. Ekhuthuleni was a newly established township in the CoE that was invaded as construction of top structures commenced. The informal dwellings were subsequently realigned in accordance with the approved layout and the 'illegitimate' residents were allowed to remain.

To continue, the need for a layout plan also arises from procurement procedures. The Human Settlements Department reblocking team needs to establish the project budget before applying for funding from its reblocking budget through the CoE Human Settlements Department. Hence, the conceptual layout is used to calculate the budget required, and the reblocking team makes application accordingly.

A CoE informal settlement community does not contribute to reblocking in the form of savings or otherwise. When prompted, the interviewee said it had never been tried, though she was sceptical that it would work in the CoE bearing in mind the lack of social capital, reluctance to cooperate with one another, sometimes rent-seeking behaviour and general attitude she had encountered in informal settlements (Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017). She was also uncertain of whether the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (RSA, 1991) would allow this kind of contribution.

The CoE reblocking budget comprises a portion of the USDG budget and is to be used strictly for realignment of informal settlement structures. It may not even be used for social services such as playgrounds or community halls. The challenge noted by the interviewee with regards to community facilities such as these, is that building plan approval cannot be obtained if it is not on a registered stand (in other words, in a proclaimed township).

Once the budget has been secured, the team goes through the necessary procurement process to appoint a contractor for implementation. Importantly, the CoE does not have specific service providers for reblocking, so they use a contractor with a current appointment with the City, then add an Instruction to Perform Work (IPW) to their existing contract. The IPW has to be approved by various offices, including the Head of Department (HOD), which can be a lengthy process. The need to fix the budget upfront in order to access funding, combined with cumbersome procurement can create a challenge should the conceptual layout be significantly amended later on, rendering the process beyond budget approval quite inflexible.

5.3.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Only after a conceptual layout plan has been developed, the budget has been secured, and a contractor has been appointed does the CoE reblocking team engage the informal settlement community to introduce the reblocking project. This continues until agreement has been reached to reblock. The CoE Reblocking Team member interviewed said that it typically takes long to reach

agreement because of the need to explain that reblocking is not permanent (personal communication, 07.12.2017), and will include services but that residents will not be getting a house or a title deed. Despite these discussions, expectations for the latter have been experienced as a challenge.

Once an agreement has been reached with the community, the CoE reblocking team sees that a committee of community leaders is established. The members are to be nominated and agreed upon by the informal settlement community as a whole. The interviewee noted that, as an outsider, it is difficult to know who to trust. The intention is that the respective Informal Settlement Committees will be kept up to date on City decisions and actions that affect the short, medium and long term upgrading of their informal settlement.

Public meetings are held between the CoE reblocking team, the relevant Councillor and the settlement committee. The intention is that information cascades down to the community at large through this structure. It reportedly often happens that CoE needs to hold meetings with communities as often as every week in order to resolve crises.

During this phase, the reblocking team also introduces the approved concept layout. This is then used as a base, and amended based on residents' inputs. The CoE team, with assistance from the community, then develop a list of current residents. It should be noted that the CoE do have a comprehensive GIS-linked database of all households in informal settlements as surveyed by consultants, with assistance from informal settlement residents, in 2016. Despite the information only reflecting an accurate snapshot of each settlement at the time, and that it admittedly quickly becomes outdated due to the dynamic nature of informal settlements, it can usefully inform the Conceptual Layout until being updated through enumeration. Heads of households' details can also be linked to the national Housing Subsidy System (HSS), also referred to as the 'waiting list', to determine how many residents would potentially qualify for housing subsidies should formalisation take place at a later stage.

It is evident that the small reblocking team have limited capacity, and need to balance administrative and implementation roles, particularly because the latter is ad hoc and particularly complex. At the time of the interview the CoE: Human Settlements Head of Department (HOD) was considering appointing a NGO to assist with social facilitation for reblocking projects, having recognised the need for supplementary capacity and for conflict resolution skills.

5.3.4 Design

As explained above, CoE appoints consultants to develop a conceptual layout, which is then used to secure funding, after which a contractor is appointed for implementation. Only then do the community of the informal settlement being reblocked have an opportunity to influence the layout, but the scope for change is limited due to the funding having already been secured based on a particular design. The layout is typically presented to the community at a community meeting, where comments and input are received.

The typical design is of rows of plots of more or less equal size. In other words, the CoE does not follow the SDI model of creating clusters with courtyards surrounding a shared open space. Even though the consultants developing conceptual layouts are directed to keep relocation of shacks to an absolute minimum, the standard 'linear/ grid' design can result in overflow households. To mitigate this, stand sizes and level of service might be lower than the legislated norms and standards (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017).

According to the reblocking team member, full upgrading of reblocked informal settlements still only happens by means of conventional township establishment, in the form of roll-over upgrading or relocation and funded by USDG. In other words, reblocking in CoE does not serve as the first step of in-situ upgrading through UISP. The reason for this is that the settlements are often too dense to comply with traditional norms and standards, and can therefore not be wholly upgraded in-situ.

The main purpose of reblocking in CoE, therefore, is seen as creating a more efficient layout for the installation of basic services, and to de-densify dense informal settlements but not necessarily intended to lead to formalisation. The standards for interim basic service delivery in CoE are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Package of Interim Urban Services in the City of Ekurhuleni

SERVICE	STANDARD
Water	1 communal tap within 200 m of all residents
Sanitation	1 chemical toilet per 5 families, usually clustered at accessible points
Waste collection	Communal skip containers OR plastic bags for every household, collected weekly OR one bin per household, collected weekly; Recycling facility
Electricity	1 solar light per household
Roads	Gravel access road upon request from the community
Stormwater management	No fixed standard
Sport and Recreation	No fixed standard (but will maintain if existing)
Safety	High mast lighting; EMPD meant to patrol informal settlements
Disaster Management	1 fire hydrant per informal settlement Humanitarian aid during disaster
Tenure	No standard yet
Health	1 mobile clinic, if no formal clinic nearby Rodent control
Aesthetic	Grass cutting, vegetation control and tree felling
Social development	Public Information, education and awareness campaigns by departments

Source: Aurecon South Africa, 2016, Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy: 29

As far as possible, all informal settlements in the CoE are systematically serviced to this standard. Chemical toilets are maintained by contractors. When reblocking, however, CoE tries to provide water and a chemical toilet to every stand, and the residents are responsible for maintaining their own chemical toilet.

In reblocking in the City of Cape Town there is a big focus on reducing fire risk, but this is not as prominent in CoE, though the reduction of fire risk does come about as a by-product of de-densification in CoE. As mentioned, CoE's reblocking does not entail tenure security of any form, and they make a point of explaining this to residents.

5.3.5 Implementation

Once agreement on the layout plan has been reached, implementation by the appointed contractor/s commences. The approach followed during implementation is more or less as follows, although it must be reiterated that each reblocking project is unique and the approach is by nature experimental and dynamic:

1. Site preparation
2. Dismantle all structures (large settlements, for example Winnie Mandela in Tembisa, are divided into sections for implementation)
3. Realign
4. Reconstruct structures (materials from original structures are repurposed when possible)
5. Grade roads
6. Install water standpipes
7. Deploy chemical toilets
8. Provide electricity if possible
9. Number structures (linked to verification done with Housing Liaison Officer)
10. Distribute refuse bins and designate a waste transfer station

The CoE attempts to minimise the period between dismantling and reconstructing house structures and contractors have to adhere to a strict programme. Unforeseen circumstances, such as rain, could delay the programme. Nevertheless, residents have to take time off work to protect their possessions in the interim. According to the CoE Reblocking Team member (personal communication, 07.12.2017) the community tend to assist one another through the inconveniences by, for example, looking after one another's children.

The contractor typically employs between five and ten community members to assist with realignment implementation, who are remunerated for the work. The interviewee noted that it might be even better if the community, rather than a contractor, implemented the reblocking because when a service provider is used "the community expect too many things" (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017). This sentiment came about since it has happened that community members were dissatisfied with the amount of money paid for their labour when assisting a contractor (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017).

Community participation in implementation is intended to increase the sense of ownership of the project which should theoretically counter further land invasion. An interesting anecdote, to appreciate the complexity of such projects, is something that happened in Winnie Mandela informal settlement. CoE had to de-densify parts of Winnie Mandela settlement. After the shacks had been cleared and the site prepared, it was invaded by new residents before the original occupants could be resettled. It then had to be cleared again and, due to heavy rains, site preparation also had to be

redone. Such delays and duplication of effort and expenditure can be frustrating and wasteful. It also shows the dynamic and non-linear reality of informal settlement upgrading.

5.3.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of the reblocked informal settlements happens through the CoE Housing Liaison Officers (HLOs) and community leaders, while the various Departmental officials on the Informal Settlements Task Team report to the Customer Services and Relationships Management (CS&RM) division of the Human Settlements Department on the respective services delivered.

The monitoring and evaluation that is undertaken is strictly quantitative. For the UISP, qualitative monitoring and evaluation is a requirement. This includes "performance against the work plan and expenditure targets contained in the approved final business plan", "improvements in living conditions", and "the sustainability of upgrading projects" (DHS, 2009:35-36). In CoE, no qualitative baseline is established from the outset, nor is there qualitative monitoring or evaluation of interventions. The lack of qualitative information and reporting was also noted by Bafo (2016). In this regard, reblocked informal settlements are treated the same as all other informal settlements in CoE and do not fully comply with UISP requirements.

5.4 Example of a challenging reblocking project

One particularly challenging example of reblocking in CoE is that of Estineni in Vusimuzi, Tembisa. This example is discussed to illustrate the exceedingly complex and politically-charged reality of informal settlement upgrading, which is why following a 'recipe' does not guarantee results.

Reports from Sacks (2018) and Abahlali baseMjondolo (2018b) revealed that community members in Estineni were unaware of the reblocking project although contractors were already on-site and commencing the dismantling of structures. The contractors reportedly threatened residents if they were refused access, before trespassing and commencing dismantling and demolition of structures (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2018b). There were also reports of damage to houses and personal property due to rain and flooding, of residents receiving smaller stands and structures than what they previously had (without compensation for losses incurred), and even of outsiders being allocated stands in the newly reblocked settlement.

According to the press statement by Abahlali baseMjondolo (2018b) Estineni residents were manipulated into agreeing to the reblocking project. It is also said that they preferred the original settlement layout (with zig-zagging roads) to the new grid pattern because it offered protection from outsiders (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2018b). The organisation sees reblocking as government's attempt to systematise neighbourhoods and undermine the power and authority of community leaders (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2018b). They criticize reblocking for being "top-down planning with a grass roots face" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2018b), saying that government and NGOs use reblocking to obtain community buy-in, rather than it being something that residents conceptualise, and that community objection is not tolerated. "This is not democracy" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2018b).

The CoE officials interviewed noted it was very frustrating to work with the Councillor responsible for Estineni's ward as he was communicating wrong information to the residents, including promising them jobs (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017). It is also rumoured that the Councillor was selling stands to 'outsiders' (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2018b) which could explain the newcomers.

The CoE also reported instances of sabotage in some reblocking projects. There have reportedly been cases where community members were threatened by those opposed to the project in order to discourage participation. In another instance, electrical cables were stolen soon after installation. It is therefore evident that the implementation of an intervention is not without challenges or push-back.

5.5 Concluding comments

Cirolia et al are of the opinion that South Africa is a good example of a country "that has shifted from a focus on eradication [of informal settlements] to one of upgrading" (2016:5). As illustrated in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, many believe that this shift is vital, including academics, officials, organisations and institutions.

Despite the need therefore, and Cirolia et al's optimism that South Africa has shifted to a new approach, the CoE case study shows how challenging upgrading in general, and reblocking in particular, is. Some of the challenges include process constraints (needing to secure budget based on a desktop layout design), legislative constraints (often not being able to formalise a settlement without it resulting in relocation), community expectations that do not match project outcomes, human resource constraints (municipal officials responsible for community engagement), and rent-seeking behaviour (from shacklords and councillors respectively).

Reblocking in the CoE came about in parallel to UISP, which highlights the need for alternatives, whether as interim or permanent measures. It is clear that the current UISP framework is not enabling upgrading, for whatever reason. It also seems that the municipal finance structure is too rigid to accommodate the unpredictable nature of upgrading initiatives. Lastly, municipal-driven reblocking seems to not necessarily result in a community taking ownership of their settlement. The greatest success of the CoE reblocking model is that it results in more effective service delivery. It does not, however, seem to result in increased social capital or community empowerment.

6 Analysis of Reblocking in the City of Ekurhuleni

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to document and analyse reblocking practices in the City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, in recognition of the need to close the gap between current approaches and reality on the ground, as called for by scholars such as Watson (2009). Part of this quest is to document and critically reflect on the approach, its value and its potential role in the legal and policy framework, and its lessons for policy and practice in South Africa and elsewhere. The case study discussed in chapter 5 also aimed to document some of the messy reality of informal settlement upgrading, adding to the body of research on informal settlement upgrading in the global South.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first section discusses SDI reblocking in the City of Cape Town against contemporary thinking around 'good upgrading' as determined in the literature review in Chapter 3. The second section is dedicated to analysing the CoE reblocking approach against the SDI model of reblocking, from which it was adopted. The intention was to determine how transferable the approach had proven to be in this instance. The third section discusses the relationship between reblocking in both the CoE and the CoCT and the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (DHS, 2009).

6.2 SDI reblocking as 'good upgrading'

This section analyses the SDI reblocking approach against the principles and approaches for 'good upgrading' developed from first principles in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. The SDI reblocking model is, in most ways, aligned with the identified principles and approaches for good upgrading.

As an incremental and in-situ upgrading approach, the model meets two of the crucial considerations for good upgrading. Furthermore, the SDI model evolved as a bottom-up multi-stakeholder approach, through experimentation, and has retained the imperative of community mobilisation and participation. It has proven exceedingly useful as collaborative planning tool (Heyer, 2015). In fact, the ethos and practices of the SDI reblocking model, with regards to collaborative and community-driven planning, are a rare success story in informal settlement upgrading in South Africa are and in keeping with the principles of 'good upgrading' derived from the literature review.

Informal settlement residents and Councillors, through joint leadership committees, are deeply engaged in reblocking projects from initiation to implementation and maintenance, collaborating, negotiating and jointly developing interventions. Overall, engagement includes consultation, co-planning and strategizing, sweat equity during implementation, as well as education. It was found that reblocking's ability to build citizenry responds to an urgent need identified by Pieterse (2010) and others. All of the above is in keeping with the good practices identified in Chapter 3 from the approach to the desired results. Part of the approach's value therefore lies in the depth of transformation that could potentially take place with affected residents, rather than in its scale in terms of size and number of settlements that can be upgraded.

Where the SDI model of establishing savings groups to contribute towards reblocking has succeeded it has contributed significantly towards social mobilisation and a sense of ownership by the informal settlement community. The savings group contributions are blended with a combination of SDI Alliance funding, USDG funds and donor funding. In this way, the cost of reblocking is shared and, most importantly, not transferred to informal settlement residents. This resonates with most informal settlement upgrading programmes in the global south in that the State is not solely responsible for financing upgrading.

The City of Cape Town has created an enabling regulatory framework through the Reblocking Policy and MOU with SDI which is crucial for successful upgrading. As far as is known, ISN enjoys sufficient autonomy (apart from having to meet targets) to be able to stay true to the original SDI reblocking ethos and appraoch while implementing innovative and localised reblocking projects in partnership with the City of Cape Town and informal settlement communities.

Unfortunately, the need for in-depth engagement is also the approach's greatest drawback in that the resource-intensiveness limits the scalability and sustainability thereof (Heyer, 2015). For this reason, it was found best if reblocking is used selectively – for example in smaller settlements – and in conjunction with other upgrading approaches. Since the City of Cape Town's Reblocking policy (CoCT, 2013) ringfences reblocking to land parcels that are developable, it unfortunately remains irrelevant to settlements on undevelopable land and should therefore form part of a suite of strategies to address informal settlements that require for relocation. This is in line with the literature view that a programmatic approach to upgrading should be followed.

The courtyard layout of the SDI model addresses crucial risks to health, security and personal safety (Brown-Luthango et al, 2017). This further increases social cohesion, and can also lead to improved safety, sense of place, and so on (Heyer, 2015). This is, however, not ideal for informal settlements where significant housing consolidation has already taken place (whereby such houses would have to be deconstructed and re-erected elsewhere). Ideally, residents should be able to break down and re-erect structures without incurring losses or damages. The approach is therefore best suited to relatively new informal settlements and/or where very limited housing consolidation has yet taken place.

Two related aspects of the SDI reblocking approach in CoCT that counters the literature on 'good upgrading' are that it is implemented by the City of Cape Town as a temporary measure and that some form of *de jure* tenure security is not conferred. Marx et al, 2013 were of the opinion that South African informal settlements tend to have relatively high *de facto* tenure security. However, in this instance where the City is not providing any form of tenure security, and because the residents are explicitly made aware of the temporary nature of the intervention, the *de facto* tenure security that may have been inadvertently conferred through public investment in reblocking, is negated.

To summarise, the principles and aspects of the SDI reblocking approach is almost perfectly in keeping with what is currently considered good upgrading. The only discrepancies are namely in the provision of secure tenure and in the level of permanence of interventions. These matters are a result of reblocking not being seen by the City of Cape Town as the first step of the UISP (City of Cape Town, 2013). This is discussed in more detail in Section 6.4.

6.3 CoE reblocking compared with SDI reblocking

This chapter compares the City of Ekurhuleni reblocking approach with its predecessor, the original SDI reblocking approach as implemented in the City Cape Town. It was found that the CoE approach does not fully resemble the SDI approach and ethos.

It should first be recognised that the SDI approach as developed in CoCT was a pilot project which is, by nature, almost always resource-intensive. However, even though the intensive engagement was found to be valuable, as noted, such an approach is difficult to scale up or transfer.

Most importantly, the CoE reblocking team comprises two municipal officials and there is no official political vehicle to govern reblocking, whereas CoCT adopted a Reblocking Policy in 2013 and has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SDI, an NGO, to reblock a number of its informal settlements. It is believed that the governance and resourcing of reblocking in CoE leads to the fundamental differences between the two approaches. This confirms what Pieterse and Van Donk found namely that “in most municipalities, too few people are working on informal settlements upgrading” (2014:7).

The fundamental difference in capacity becomes evident in the CoE not being able to fully meet any of the building blocks of the original SDI approach. AS discussed in chapter 4.3.2, the building blocks include community organisation/ mobilisation, participatory planning, community savings and education. The CoE reblocking approach is analysed in terms of these building blocks.

In response to the first building block, community organisation/ mobilisation, the CoE reblocking team establishes settlement committees for each reblocking project. The role of the committee is to provide input to the layout design and project execution. Its largest role, however, is information distribution. This could be seen as a first step towards organisation and mobilisation, but remains limited. The CoE also make use of some of the mobilisation tools that contribute to the success of SDI reblocking projects, including enumeration and surveys, and do involve a small number of community members to assist with compiling a list of settlement residents. However, the impact remains very limited and is not capitalised on.

The CoE’s challenge related to the second building block, participatory planning, relates to financing and governance. Because the layout developed by consultants and the budget has already been secured by the time that the community is engaged, there is very little room for community input. Stringent procurement and budgeting procedures are therefore, in this case, impeding community engagement in the CoE reblocking approach. In the SDI reblocking model, the NGO engages the informal settlement community from the outset, and the reblocked layout is co-designed by the community and SDI before funding is secured. This allows much room for community input and for multiple iterations.

In addition, the CoE layouts are typical not based on the cluster housing/ courtyard model as encouraged by SDI. Heyer’s second greatest praise for reblocking – after its success in social mobilisation – is for the creation of private and semi-private open spaces to improve safety and

community cohesion. The cohesion and self-awareness that could potentially be established through community mobilisation, co-design and a more communal settlement design is therefore not achieved through the CoE approach.

Lastly, the SDI approach recommends strongly that informal settlement residents be involved in implementation, but implementation in the CoE is executed by contractors. The latter use five to ten residents to assist, but this is not nearly as efficient as the SDI model, whereby residents are themselves responsible for breaking down and reassembling their house structures in accordance with the community-developed layout plan. Such 'professionalisation' of upgrading (Huchzermeyer, 1999; Walter and Mitlin, 2017) is unnecessary since informal settlement residents clearly have the skills and resources to plan and implement improvements themselves (once empowered).

With regards to the third building block, community savings, women-centred savings groups are at the heart of SDI mobilisation and community organisation tools (National Treasury Official, personal communication, 25.08.2018; Tomlinson, 2017). While reblocking in CoCT is partially funded by community savings, reblocking in CoE is wholly funded by the state. One of the challenges is that CoE has no legal mechanism through which to receive community contributions. SDI on the other hand, being an NGO, are able to receive and invest community savings through one of its sister organisations, the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP).

The last building block, education, is addressed in a limited way through the CoE reblocking team sharing with informal settlement residents about the approach, before rolling it out. In the SDI approach, intensive community engagement and peer-to-peer learning exchanges assist to encourage a new informal settlement community to try reblocking, as well as assisting to explain the end state and demonstrate success.

In summary, the CoE approach does not reflect the majority of the key building blocks of the SDI reblocking methodology. Despite the best of intentions, it remains top-down and emphasises infrastructure over economic and social aspects to upgrading.

Heyer found that: "Communities need to be mobilized and economically stabilized in order to change their marginalized position in the long term" (2015:71). The strength of reblocking lies in its potential as collaborative planning tool and the benefit of building strong grassroots capacity. In light of this, it is concluded that both the City of Ekhurhuleni and reblocking settlement residents are missing out on many of the benefits of reblocking, and that the CoE approach is not resulting in the requisite structural reform for long term change. There is a need to resolve the fundamental challenges of limited capacity and stringent procurement to unlock the 'soft' benefits of reblocking.

6.4 Reblocking and the UISP

A number of lessons were learned from the literature review and case studies examined, and particularly from comparing the SDI approach to reblocking in CoCT to its counterpart in the CoE, Gauteng. It has become evident that the governance structures and resources are as important as the approach itself to achieve the desired outcomes and reap maximum benefits.

In light thereof, the focus now shifts to the national framework for upgrading, the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (DHS, 2009). Despite the UISP having been in existence since 2004, together with the Breaking New Ground Policy (Huchzermeyer, 2008c), and the National Department of Human Settlements providing technical support and training through NUSP, the UISP has not been widely implemented (Bafo, 2016). Moreover, alternative and parallel approaches, such as reblocking, are emerging. In the words of Fieuw and Mitlin, the aim is to "expose and constructively critique" reasons for the non-implementation of the UISP to influence policy and programme reform (2017:15).

As mentioned, in both CoCT and CoE, reblocking is not intended as the first phase of UISP but as an interim measure. The reasons for this disjuncture are elaborated below. The SDI reblocking approach is first compared with the UISP approach, and then compared to the UISP objectives, revealing an interesting contrast.

6.4.1 Comparing reblocking with the UISP approach

The SDI approach to reblocking in CoCT is taken as point of reference for the purpose of this comparison since there are greater discrepancies between it and the conventional approach to housing delivery in South Africa than in the CoE reblocking approach.

Fundamentally, reblocking is a bottom-up, collaborative approach of which interventions are needs-based. Therefore, it must be flexible, responsive and community-led. The UISP, in stark contrast, anticipates "a steady and rapid progression to formalisation" (Misselhorn, 2017:33) and is almost exclusively initiated and executed by the public sector. In essence, despite the best of intentions, the UISP is a top-down approach. Although participatory layout planning and meaningful engagement is encouraged, the onus remains on the State to intervene and residents have no option but to wait for government for initiating and driving Phases 1, 2 and 3. Only in Phase 4 are residents responsible (and allowed) to take initiative.

A second matter of contention is the conventional norms and standards (the maximum allowable densities, the high standards for vehicular access and parking, and the requirement for full piped services) that continue to apply (Misselhorn, 2017). This despite evidence that these conventional standards almost always lead to relocation of 'overflow' households while there is a severe lack of available and developable land in urban areas. This often stalls in-situ upgrade projects.

Thirdly, the UISP phases are proportionally linked to grant funding, which means that any deviation will effectively 'freeze' the affected settlement and alternative funding would have to be accessed to fund the shortfall or resolve the anomaly. The UISP (rightly) only makes provision for limited, interim measures during Phase 1. Yet, because settlements tend to remain at this stage for long periods (Misselhorn, 2017), if not indefinitely, the Programme effectively restricts additional State or private investment.

The 'politics of waiting' are discussed by Kornienko (2017). Case studies of Makause and Harry Gwala in Ekurhuleni have revealed that forcing residents to wait for upgrading can have one of two impacts

– either rebellion (through 'illegal' self-improvement) or inaction and eventual despondency. It is therefore argued that the UISP phasing is too linear and neither represents nor accommodates the 'messiness' of reality. The adverse effects of 'waiting' are also relevant to government officials that need to meet quantitative targets. This might partly explain why government officials still prefer greenfields housing projects to the challenges and risks associated with in-situ upgrading projects.

In summary, in-situ upgrading through UISP seems to still be understood as the commencement of the traditional township establishment (formalisation) process. This coincides with a statement quoted in Tomlinson: "While the UISP does provide a rationale for in-situ upgrading, it does not represent a deviation from the basic nature of a housing policy that has single-minded focus on the physical house itself" (2017:6). Due to the rigidity of UISP as described above, the CoE, CoJ, and CoCT have been recorded to fund feasibility studies, reblocking, and interim service delivery through the USDG (as an interim measure), until such time that the settlement is ready for township establishment. Only then is UISP funding applied for, and the traditional township establishment route followed – contrary to the ethos and intent of the UISP.

6.4.2 Comparing reblocking with the UISP objectives

When measuring reblocking against the objectives of UISP, a different picture unfolds to the above comparison with the UISP approach. The objectives of the UISP are three-fold (DHS, 2009):

1. The formalisation of the tenure rights of residents within informal settlements;
2. Health and security through the provision of affordable and sustainable basic municipal engineering infrastructure; and
3. Community empowerment to address social and economic exclusion.

With regards to the first objective, it is not met by either the SDI or CoE reblocking approaches. Furthermore, the literature and case studies have shown that public investment in the form of basic services signals *de facto* tenure security to informal settlement residents. The continued framing of reblocking as an interim measure, while waiting for UISP, is therefore contradictory to the literature and should be re-examined.

Reblocking, with its focus on the delivery of basic services, improved access for emergency vehicles, improved fire safety (in the case of CoCT), fully meets the second objective of the UISP. In addition, the CoE does not reblock settlements that are situated on undevelopable land or that pose a risk to residents' health and safety such as in floodplains or near landfill sites – thereby further supporting UISP objective 2.

Lastly, due to a lack of baseline qualitative information, the CoE cannot measure the impact of reblocking projects on informal settlement households. However, it can probably be deduced that the SDI approach to reblocking, with its emphasis on community engagement and participation, together with the proven benefits as discussed by Heyer (2015), would meet UISP objective 3 to a greater degree than the current CoE reblocking approach (which focuses on the delivery of basic services).

It is the author's view that the SDI approach to reblocking – even though it differs significantly from the UISP approach as discussed in section 6.4.1 – is aligned with the three objectives of the UISP.

6.5 Concluding comments

Reblocking as implemented by SDI in CoCT was analysed and found to adhere to good upgrading practise as outlined in chapter 3. The only discrepancies are namely in the provision of secure tenure and in the level of permanence of interventions.

The SDI reblocking approach was found to be very useful as a collaborative planning tool and valuable to build citizenry and establish social cohesion in informal settlements. It is, however, heavily resource-intensive, which is its greatest limitation. For this reason, it is only recommended for small informal settlements. In other words, it is not suitable in all contexts in its fullness.

It was further found that the reblocking approach followed in CoE is quite different to that of CoCT. Bafo, in a study about the implementation of UISP in CoE and CoJ in 2016, found that the Programme was not being implemented in CoE. Currently, the SDI approach in CoCT takes as starting point the need for community mobilisation, whereas reblocking in CoE is aimed at basic service delivery in informal settlements.

Some of the variables for success were identified as CoCT's employment of supplementary capacity (through SDI), a generally more democratic political climate and stronger grassroots capacity of residents, political commitment in the form of a MOU, and governance support through the Reblocking Policy (CoCT, 2013). More research would be required to understand what aspects, other than these mentioned, might be negating the transferability of reblocking to other South African cities.

Lastly, the UISP's ethos and objectives promote an indirect approach to upgrading (Huchzermeyer, 2008c). Yet, in its implementation, it remains direct and top-down. Neither approach to reblocking (in CoCT or CoE) conform to the required activities for UISP Phase 1 since it does not provide tenure security to informal settlement residents. Despite this, it has been found that the bottom-up SDI reblocking approach in CoCT aligns with the UISP ethos and objectives.

It should be noted that the CoE: Department of Human Settlements team was in the process of undergoing UISP training through NUSP at the time of Bafo's writing, and were well aware that their approach to informal settlements was not in line with the UISP (Bafo, 2016). The training came one year after the CoE had started implementing reblocking (CoE Reblocking Team member, personal communication, 07.12.2017). In the three years since, the CoE Reblocking team have implemented an impressive number of projects, bearing in mind that the team comprises only two people. The reblocking approach is constantly being refined, and the CoE continues to seek ways of supplementing social facilitation capacity to deepen the level of community engagement – a well-acknowledged shortfall.

7 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

As mentioned at the introduction of this dissertation, more than 1.2 million households in South Africa reside in informal settlements, of which just under half reside in Gauteng Province. There are varying opinions on the reasons why, but there is general agreement that informal settlement formalisation and eradication in South Africa remain entrenched despite the existence of progressive policies that promote in-situ upgrading (amongst other indirect approaches) (Charlton, 2012; Groenewald et al, 2013; Huchzermeyer, 1999; Huchzermeyer, 2004; Huchzermeyer, 2008c; Huchzermeyer, 2009; Bafo, 2016; Kornienko, 2017).

Despite strong arguments in support of-situ, incremental upgrading (as expounded in Chapter 3) the implementation thereof remains localised, ad hoc and slow. This indicates a need for change. It can also be said that the need for change is urgent, in view of the "socially erosive" effect of unresponsive government (Fieuw, 2015:70) and the negative impact of hopelessness and 'pacification' caused by perpetual informality on informal settlement residents' psyche (Kornienko, 2017; Lecturer, personal communication, 16.08.2018).

As noted, the need for upgrading was taken as starting point in this dissertation in view of the likelihood of informal settlements being a permanent feature of the South African city, at least in the medium term, combined with the need for improved living conditions in these settlements (Cirolia et al, 2016; Graham, 2003).

The aim of this dissertation was to analyse reblocking, specifically the approach of City of Ekurhuleni, and its value as an approach for 'good upgrading'. The latter was defined in Chapter 3, based on a comprehensive literature review that included case studies across the global South and qualitative interviews with a range of stakeholders. The analysis culminated in a comparison of the CoE reblocking approach with the literature review, the SDI approach to reblocking, and the Upgrading Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) objectives and -approach respectively (DHS, 2009). The latter is especially relevant against the backdrop of a lack of implementation of the UISP in Ekurhuleni and elsewhere (Bafo, 2016; Cirolia et al, 2016; Huchzermeyer, 2008c).

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings from the study, including the literature review, interviews, the SDI reblocking approach, and the CoE reblocking case study. This is followed by the resultant proposed approach to informal settlement upgrading, including a contextualisation of the proposed role for reblocking in the South African context. The final paragraphs offer recommendations for further research, based on gaps identified during the study or that fall outside of the scope of this dissertation but that are considered necessary for a nuanced understanding of some of the challenges identified.

7.2 Key findings

According to the literature review, incremental in-situ upgrading is internationally accepted as the best contemporary approach to informal settlements, particularly in view of the limited state resources and growing housing backlogs typically found in the global South. The SDI's reblocking approach in the CoCT, though only implemented in a few settlements and on a small scale, does align with this approach. The CoE reblocking approach falls somewhere in between the SDI approach and the traditional approach to informal settlement upgrading in South Africa, namely a housing project that often results in full or partial relocation. Informal settlement upgrading in line with the principles for 'good upgrading' in the CoE is, unfortunately, particularly challenging due to the shortage of available, developable land, necessitating relocation.

Incremental upgrading, interim measures, and co-financing upgrading are politically sensitive in light of historic promises of a house, perpetuated by renewed commitments in election campaigns as well as the housing waiting list. It therefore became evident that progressive policies on their own are not sufficient to deliver 'good upgrading'; there is first a need for a changed paradigm that accepts informality and ultimately endeavours to support and empower individual and communal attempts at self-improvement (and self-actualisation) (Braathen et al, 2014; Kornienko, 2017). A general acceptance of informality, and a united political message in support of upgrading will assist to shift informal settlement residents' expectations, and simultaneously create an enabling environment to empower them. Reblocking – or perhaps rather community mobilisation and collaborative planning – has proven a potentially successful strategy to change the paradigm of government officials and technocrats, and as a potential vehicle to empower informal settlement residents.

However, despite high and positive impact, the reblocking approach was found to be best suited to relatively small informal settlements, or parts of large settlements, due to the need for intensive, transparent social facilitation from project initiation to implementation stages. Furthermore, its potential for scale and transferability is further limited by the need to be context-specific and highly dynamic. Furthermore, despite good outcomes from the SDI reblocking approach, it is not ideal that upgrading be driven by a third party mediator. This is because of the tension between serving the needs of the community, those of the City (as client) or those of the NGO funding partners.

The non-implementation of the UISP (DHS, 2009) in the CoE, identified by Bafo (2016), was confirmed. Even though the SDI reblocking ethos and approach are in line with UISP objectives, it could not be reconciled with the UISP's top-down approach, linear progression and strict phasing. Residents do not seem to be effectively activated or empowered through the UISP's framework. The UISP's emphasis on *de jure* tenure security and top structures is not aligned with the criteria for 'good upgrading' that emanated from the literature review.

There is a need for land use application legislation in South Africa to be amended to allow for lower standards that would support much higher densities, as well as incremental upgrading. There is also a need for amendments to budgeting and procurement processes that support community-led, incremental upgrading.

7.3 Recommendations

The final research objective was to propose an alternative to addressing informal settlements in the City of Ekurhuleni. What follows is a set of broad recommendations based on the findings from the research, case study and analysis discussed in the preceding chapters.

The intent is to propose an approach that is more relevant to the 'messy reality' (Kornienko, 2017) of informal settlements, thereby attempting to close the gap between policy and reality on the ground (Watson, 2009). In summary, it is proposed that reblocking in the CoE is no longer considered an interim intervention but a permanent one.

Where possible, undevelopable land should be rehabilitated as provided for by UISP Section 3.14.E (DHS, 2009). It is acknowledged that, depending on the circumstances, this may take long or be more expensive than greenfields development on the urban fringe, but should nevertheless be a first option.

The CoE SPLUMA Bylaw makes provision that an informal settlement be rezoned as a Transitional Zone (CoE, 2015b). It is proposed that such settlements be reblocked and serviced when funding is available. The study proved the benefits of a collaborative approach such as reblocking, not only in tangible outcomes but especially with regards to intangible outcomes such as empowerment and social capital. For this reason, it is proposed that the settlement layout should be co-designed with the resident community after a comprehensive land use survey and household audit by residents themselves. If needed, additional social facilitation capacity should be harnessed for these activities.

The intention of this approach is to reduce the time and money traditionally spent on prefeasibility studies and technical investigations, as well as that the community drives and participates in the process. The aim is also to optimise the layout of existing structures to facilitate the installation of basic services and create semi-private open spaces in between clusters of houses.

Next, it is proposed that tenure security be granted to existing residents. This is made possible through UISP Section 3.14 which makes provision for the Provincial Member of the Executive Council (MEC) to convey *de facto* tenure security to informal settlement residents (DHS, 2009). The UISP makes provision for a variety of tenure options, including 'rental agreements' and a 'gratuitous loan' (DHS, 2009:38). The preferred arrangement should be clarified with the MEC before proceeding with implementing this approach, and then formalised by means of an agreement between the MEC, the land owner, and existing residents. The arrangement will determine whether rental is payable to the land owner.

With regards to level of service, it is proposed that off-grid solutions be promoted where possible, in order to alleviate pressure on natural resources and the impact on bulk engineering infrastructure. Where spare bulk capacity is not available, shared services could be installed until the regional network has been upgraded and services can be linked (if required).

In line with the ethos of reblocking, it is proposed that informal settlement communities play a key role in upgrading initiatives, from co-design to financial contributions and sweat equity. Where

needed (such as where capacity constraints limit the potential for community engagement), the municipality and community's interaction could be mediated by a third party, such as an NGO. The approach should not, as is currently the case, assume a linear progression from informality to formality. It must be a bottom-up approach whereby local government is one of the key roleplayers but not the driver.

It is also proposed that services be paid for by informal settlement residents to promote responsible usage, although reduced rates could be applied where subsidy funding is available. Services such as graded roads and solid waste removal should be provided to improve environmental quality and address health risks for residents.

Finally, it is vital that the CoE governance processes are transformed in the following ways:

- Ensure that all departments buy into the proposed upgrading methodology.
- Reframe municipal officials' Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure incremental improvement and the degree of empowerment in informal settlements.
- Make allowance for the new upgrading agenda in the Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework, Land Use Management Scheme, Integrated Development Plan, Built Environment Performance Plan and Engineering Sector Plans.
- Appoint/ reallocate additional human resources to the CoE reblocking team, and ensure that they are well-trained in the new approach and underlying ethos. Support could also be granted from the respective CCAs, REMs, Councillors, HLOs, and NGOs.
- Secure budget for the technical investigations, social facilitation and implementation activities required.
- Ensure that procedures to access finance are transparent and well-accounted for but fast and responsive.

At a larger scale, it is recognised that the South African policy framework already supports a positive and indirect approach to informal settlement upgrading through Breaking New Ground (DHS, 2004) as well as the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (DHS, 2009). However, the lack of widespread implementation thereof calls for intervention. The analysis highlighted disjunctures between the UISP ethos and objectives on the one hand, and its approach on the other.

Achieving spatial transformation and socio-economic integration in our cities through informal settlement upgrading is widely supported in the literature (Groenewald et al, 2013; Tomlinson, 2017; Brown-Luthango et al, 2016; Tshabalala and Mxobo, 2014). However, the relevance of formalisation (the current end-goal of the UISP (DHS, 2009)) is challenged. This stems from a realisation through the literature review that *de facto* tenure security, as well as alternative forms of *de jure* tenure security (other than full individual title) have potential to achieve good psychological and spatial integration outcomes, at much lower cost and with greater relevance to the realities faced by informal settlement residents than *de jure* tenure security.

Furthermore, formalisation necessitates compliance with conventional norms and standards (specifically lowered densities) which is not possible when there is a lack of well-located, available, developable land such as in the CoE urban core. According to Huchzermeyer, the key to successful upgrading lies in "far-reaching urban planning and land management reform" (2008c:101). It is argued

that the regulatory framework should provide for higher densities and reduced standards in order to reduce the need for relocation.

With reference to existing informal settlements, the author is of the opinion that we must move away from focusing on houses and infrastructure *per se* and instead focus on creating an enabling environment for informal settlement residents to help themselves. To be clear, the proposal is not a *laissez-faire* approach, but to establish a new paradigm and new discourse that accepts informality and recognises the ability of the poor to help themselves. This will, in turn, lead to renewed expectations and reignite hope (Kornienko, 2017) that creates a conducive environment for programmes that equip and empower informal settlement residents to assist themselves.

In support of the above, it is proposed that the state's role shifts from (often reactive) housing provision to proactive release of well-located land. This will certainly hold a set of unique and complex challenges, but falls beyond the scope of this dissertation and is therefore only briefly noted.

Finally, there is a need to balance the municipality's power to demolish new informal structures (SPLUMA Section 32 (RSA, 2013)), and its constitutional mandate to provide services. The latter should not be abused or allowed to undermine rolling out approved upgrading projects in older informal settlements.

7.4 Recommendations for further research

The scope of this study was to provide an overview of the City of Ekurhuleni's reblocking approach. Further quantitative and qualitative longitudinal studies would be required on a case by case basis to measure actual and perceived improvement for individual households and communities of reblocked settlements in Ekurhuleni and elsewhere. A recommendation, to facilitate such research in future, is for baseline assessments to be conducted and documented before reblocking commences.

Such studies should not only measure 'hard' variables such as density, level of service and housing consolidation, but also 'soft' variables such as sense of security of tenure, level of community cohesion, sense of safety, level of self-awareness, and improvement in socio-economic state before and after reblocking. There is a need for qualitative as well as quantitative data, project-specific documenting as well as for comparative studies. This information is particularly useful when isolating key success factors to improve policy and processes, to track progress and to measure success or failure.

Care should be taken that community interviews do not create expectations of financing or intervention as was found to be a challenge in Heyer's study of reblocking in the City of Cape Town (2016). It is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to strengthening the upgrading agenda, particularly in Ekurhuleni and South Africa.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS

COJMM Official 1. (02.08.2018). Regional Head of Housing Official in the City of Johannesburg partly responsible for informal settlement upgrading, Johannesburg.

COJMM Official 2. (02.08.2018). Housing Official in the City of Johannesburg responsible for informal settlement upgrading, Johannesburg.

Housing Development Agency Official. (13.07.2018). Senior Official in Land and Housing Support Services Unit of the Housing Development Agency, Johannesburg.

Lecturer. (16.08.2018). Professor in the School of Architecture and Planning of the University of the Witwatersrand researching and working with informal settlement upgrading, Johannesburg.

National Treasury Official. (25.08.2018). Coordinator for Human Settlements at the National Treasury Cities Support Programme, coordinator for City of Ekurhuleni and former Executive Director of Human Settlements for the City of Cape Town and voluntary partner to Slum Dwellers International (SDI), Johannesburg [skype interview].

Reblocking Team member. (07.12.2017). Senior Planner in Customer Services and Relationships Management Division of the Ekurhuleni Department of Human Settlements (CoE Head Office), Benoni.

Researcher 1. (19.06.2016). Post-doctoral Fellow in Human Economy Programme, University of Pretoria, who had worked in land rights policy and currently researching food systems and the human economy, Pretoria.

Researcher 2. (21.06.2018). Researcher at the Gauteng City Region Observatory doing a doctorate with UCT looking at low-income housing and implications for urban sustainability and social justice, Johannesburg.