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**Grounding 'globalization from below':
'Global citizens' in local spaces**

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“We are doing the daily savings not only to collect money but to collect the lives of the people. We do this so that they can know what is happening next door, what is happening today and tomorrow, how can I help, how can we involve each other daily” (Member of the South African Homeless Peoples Federation (SAHPF), Phillipi, Cape Town, July 2002).

“In India you learn a lot of things. Those people are very hard workers and they can look very well after their money. They are very trusting of each other... They are very united. There is no crime there, not like here where you can’t leave your house for half an hour to go around the corner.” Member of the South African Homeless Peoples Federation (SAHPF), Phillipi, Cape Town, July 2002).

“The language of the Federation is saturated with [social capital] imagery: ‘We build houses in order to build people’; ‘we don’t collect money, we collect people’. That is all over the show (Joel Bolnick, Director and founder of People’s Dialogue, the NGO partner of SAHPF, Observatory, Cape Town, July 2002).

Introduction: ¹

The cover of Zygmunt Bauman’s (2001) *Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world* consists of a photograph of seven free falling parachutists holding hands as they plummet towards earth with the last traces of a blood red sun setting on the horizon. For Bauman, the parachutists represent the hyper-transience of the experimental communities of late modernity – communities built on the freedom to choose to belong and the freedom to terminate membership on short notice. This freedom to ‘bale out’ at will represents community without long-term commitments. The phenomenon of *the hyper-transient community of late modernity* is a far cry from the ‘traditional community’ built upon primordialist myths of ‘natural belonging’, and characterised by involuntary membership and long-term, life-long commitments and solidarities. While the latter relies on narratives of cultural and historical continuity and coherence, the transient community has no such requirements – anyone is free to sign up as long as you pay your membership fees!² Maintaining these transitory communities requires enormous effort to avoid dissolution, whereas ‘traditional communities’ appear to take on a naturalised sense of permanence. But do these traditional communities still exist, and if so where can they be found?

The perennial social science and public policy problem of how to create social cohesion in times of rapid social change seems to have come full circle from Emile Durkheim to Robert Putnam to Zygmunt Bauman. Writing primarily about northern countries (i.e., ‘the West’),

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² According to Bauman, as the old certainties and loyalties to the ‘nation state’ seems to weaken in the wake of globalisation, citizens may either seek new experimental forms of belonging or else fall back upon older ‘organic’ forms such as blood and soil ethno-nationalisms. Whereas experimental communities rely on voluntary commitment and ‘free choice’ – like joining a parachuting club – traditional communities tend to demand long-term commitment and involve stringent policing of behaviour as well as the exclusion of outsiders and strangers.

Bauman argues that under contemporary conditions of late modernity, the citizen's identification and loyalty towards the 'nation state' has waned, and at the same time the state is less concerned with the cultural/ideological mobilisation of the subject population through evocations of nationhood and patriotic duty. Neo-liberal States have surrendered control over economic and cultural processes and handed these functions over to 'the market'. As a result 'identity stories' and membership of community is rapidly becoming a matter of 'personal choice' – choosing your identity, life style and group membership can become much like shopping at Woolworths, Pick 'n Pay or Sainsbury's. So what kinds of solidarities and forms of social cohesion and 'social capital' are possible in this marketplace of identities and instant communities? For some self-sufficient and resourceful individuals – e.g., the middle classes – belonging without commitments may be less of a burden than longer-term communal ties that could intrude upon their 'freedom to choose'. For less self-reliant and resourceful individuals, however, there is likely to be more of a need and desire for the shelter and security of belonging in a community built on solid foundations, even if the price tag is an involuntary, lifelong belonging - one that one cannot simply terminate on demand.³

'Trust' and 'social capital' have become fashionable keywords in current academic and public policy discourses that seek to understand how social cohesion, democracy and 'good governance' is possible under conditions of late modernity. Robert Putnam's (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* is the classic statement of the problem. According to Putnam's influential thesis, the higher the level of civic activity and associational life, the more likely it is that government will be both democratic and efficient (Koelble, forthcoming, p.1). Drawing on his study of the political differences between Northern and Southern Italy, Putnam concluded that active citizen participation in bowling and football clubs, baseball leagues, chorus groups and bird watching societies created positive social capital, which is good for democracy (ibid). Putnam's work has generated an enormous World Bank-sponsored research industry addressing the role of trust and social capital in creating the conditions for 'good governance' and democracy (Levi and Braithwaite, 1998, Braithwaite, 1998, Hardin, 1998, Seligman, 1997). Trust, networks and norms are also seen as the crucial ingredients for the creation of social capital and the maintenance of cooperative economic relationships.⁴

³ It would seem at first glance that Bauman's observations are not particularly useful for understanding African realities. For instance, African states, even the neo-liberal ones, still seem committed to nationalist projects and territorial citizenship, and few, if any, have 'outsourced' the cultural and ideological mobilisation of the subject population to 'the market.' Similarly, Africans are often perceived to be trapped within the straightjacket of 'traditional communities' and territorially defined communitarian solidarities that bear little resemblance to the instant and transient 'communities without commitments' described by Bauman. In addition, market-driven liberalisation policies and the opening up of African nation state borders to global flows of capital, people, ideas, images and commodities have not always ushered in a free marketplace of identities and citizenships. Instead, they have often produced highly localised, and at times very violent, xenophobic and parochial backlashes, discourses on autochthony and various other forms of exclusion. Neither do African realities appear to conform to 'northern' conceptions of the post-national, cosmopolitan global citizen that circulates with dizzying speed in Euro-American academic and policy circles. So, what relevance and resonance do Bauman's observations on 'community' and 'globalisation' have for post-apartheid South Africa? Are Africans somehow more predisposed towards belonging to organic 'traditional communities' as opposed to Bauman's transient communities without commitments? The case study below questions these essentialist assumptions.

⁴ Trust is seen as a crucial ingredient in societies where economic transactions and institutional practices are so complex that law cannot cover all contingencies, or where there is no formal system of contracts anyway (Moore, 1994). This situation requires the creation of trust relations both in terms of generalized norms of morality and more personalized sources embedded in social networks (Lyon, 2000, p.664). For example, Lyon (2000:663) notes in his study of agricultural economies in Ghana that 'exchange requires interaction and a level of security which can be based on legal measures, trust or coercion.' Lyon refers to the need for trust in contexts

This paper focuses on two community-based organisations (CBOs) that consider the building of social capital and horizontal relations of trust and exchange to be at the heart of what they do. The paper is part of a larger project that focuses on new post-apartheid conceptions of citizenship, ‘community’ and civic action promoted by Cape Town-based NGOs and CBOs involved in struggles over access to land, housing and AIDS treatment. The organizations discussed in the paper are the People’s Dialogue (PD), a Cape Town-based NGO that ‘services’ the South African Homeless People’s Federation (SAHPF), a community based organisation (CBO) connected to networks of slum dweller organisations based in 14 countries and including cities such as Mumbai (Bombay), Calcutta, Nairobi, Bangkok, Karachi and Bogota. SAHPF is a mostly women’s organization that is involved in a wide range of activities including savings clubs, housing and land issues, income-generation projects, community policing, AIDS intervention and so on.

The World Bank, NGOs, activists and anthropologists have become fascinated with these global networks, which are sometimes referred to Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). The savings groups in Cape Town and Mumbai are part of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a global network of homeless people’s organisations that are connected through Federation members visiting each other’s cities.⁵ This form of ‘horizontal exchange’ assists poor people to exchange ideas through direct peer learning, a ‘ritual’ referred to in the SDI literature as ‘the poor peoples pedagogy’. These organisational networks, increasingly described in academic and donor discourse as ‘grassroots globalisation’ or ‘globalisation from below’, are recognised as playing a crucial role in the creation of an international civil society representing the needs of the poorer 80 percent of the population of the world (now totalling 6 billion).

It is not entirely coincidental that this ‘global civil society’ is emerging at the same time as global capital is undermining the autonomy of nation states, and donor, IMF and World Bank structural adjustment policies are prescribing the contraction of the Development State. Poor people living under conditions of neo-liberal austerity and the ‘downsizing’ of the welfare state, seem to have developed sophisticated survival strategies by simultaneously enlisting themselves as global citizens *and* citizens of cities, regions and nation-states. Through various ritualised practices – for instance daily savings, ‘self-enumeration’ and ‘horizontal exchange’ (see below) - women’s savings collectives in Asia, Africa and Latin America are becoming increasingly successful in lobbying, pressuring and shaming the state into meeting

where small-scale rural producers and traders in less developed countries have limited access to legal measures and sanctions. According to Lyon, these conditions necessitate that traders and small-scale producers build up trust in order to engage in ongoing exchange relations in situations of high risk and no formal insurance. Considerable empirical work on social capital in Africa has focused on the role of social networks, norms and trust in facilitating co-operation and co-ordination amongst traders and producers (Widner and Putnam, 1993; Lyon, 2000; Widner and Mundt, 1998).

⁵ Arjun Appadurai’s (2002) study of Mumbai-based urban housing organizations affiliated to of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI) shows how through participation in this urban activist movement ‘the global and the local can become reciprocal instruments of the deepening of democracy’ (Appadurai, 2002: 25). This is part of Appadurai’s larger ongoing study of how grassroots movements are finding new ways to combine local activism with horizontal, global networking. While this study shares common concerns with Appadurai, it focuses on the ambiguous, and at times contradictory, relationship between SDI’s ‘global vision’ and the everyday ‘local’ realities and political cultures of poor communities in different parts of the world. This raises many questions, for instance: To what degree is the SDI’s ideological commitment to daily savings shared by Federation members in different parts of the world? What kinds of democratic or non-democratic practices are generated at the local level, and what kinds of cultures of leadership and participation are emerging in ‘local’ spaces?

its ‘social contract’ with the poor, in terms of the provision of housing, health care, policing and so on. The paper will critically evaluate whether these new associational forms and strategies are in fact viable alternatives for large numbers of poor citizens disillusioned with the limits of national liberation. To what degree are these developments signs of the emergence of a ‘global civil society’, and what are the implications of this global connectivity for democracy, community and citizenship? To what degree are these *locally embedded but globally connected* organizations and networks capable of creating new forms of social capital and new solidarities that span local, national and global spaces?⁶

Social capital: from Northern Italy to Southern Africa

The concept of social capital features prominently in the SDI literature and in Federation slogans such ‘we do daily savings not only to collect money but to collect the lives of people’, ‘We build houses in order to build people’ and ‘we don’t collect money, we collect people’. Whereas the dominant academic usages of social capital (based on networks, norms and trust) derive from rational choice theory and economistic conceptions of *homo economicus*, it will become clear this is not the case with SAHPF’s deployment of the term.

Social capital and trust, like the concept civil society, are very vague and elusive terms. Nonetheless considerable effort has gone into trying to stabilize and ‘fix’ these protean social science concepts.⁷ The most influential and definitive statement of social capital theory can be found in the work of Robert Putnam. Despite the enormous influence of Putnam’s work, especially within mainstream US political science, social capital and trust theory can be criticised on a number of fronts. For instance, in much of this political science literature it is simply assumed that trust is the outcome of mutual calculations of interest, thereby revealing the pervasive influence of rational choice and game theory. However, as numerous critics have pointed out, decisions on whether to trust are not only based on calculations of interest (Lyon, 2000, p.664). There are also non-calculative, habituated practices and social relations that are not reducible to economic or other forms of self-interest. For instance, extra-economic incentives to create cooperative and trusting relationships can draw on information on reputations, sanctions and moral norms. In other words, conventional understandings of trust fail to acknowledge the domain of cultural expectations, social pressure and ‘community’ conceptions of reciprocity and obligation.

One of the most significant areas of social capital theory concerns the role of trust in creating and consolidating institutions of civil society – the professions, industry, associations, unions,

⁶ Given the dire current realities of many developing countries, are these liberal democratic imaginings of global civil society not as utopian, romantic and unrealistic as the radical visions of social movements theorists such as Arturo Escobar and Wolfgang Sachs et. al. For instance, Escobar and Alvarez (1992), Esteva (1997) and Kothari (1996) envisage the emergence of autonomous grassroots initiatives committed toward building a new society which is ‘gender just, culturally plural, socially equitable, politically and democratically participatory, ecologically sane and based on life-centred values – compassion, solidarity and reciprocity’ (Kothari, 1996:11, c.f. Leal and Opp, 199:21).

⁷ For example, Thorvald Gran (n.d.) identifies two major schools of thought in the literature on trust. Firstly, there is the Seligman view whereby trust is seen to arise as modern bureaucratic systems become increasingly complex, specialized and differentiated to such a degree that they become opaque, and knowledge and confidence in them declines. For institutions to function under these ‘modern conditions’ requires the building of trust between persons: “one trusts... when one cannot know” (Seligman 1997, p.21, cited in Gran, n.d.). In other words, trust mediates human interactions in contexts of institutional opaqueness and risk.

self-regulatory organizations, business schools, churches, families (John Braithwaite, 1998; Putnam, 1993). As John Braithwaite writes,

The most important mechanism for enculturating trust is deadly simple; it is to trust others. Societies do better with an interpersonal associational order that provides venues for the proliferation of this interpersonal mechanism. This means a rich civil society. We learn to trust and be trustworthy by being trusted in families, schools, churches, community groups, sporting clubs, and institutions of civil society generally (Putnam 1993).

While trust and social capital are seen as self-evident virtue and ‘good for democracy’ in the writings of Putnam and Braithwaite, there is no clear consensus on what this ‘civic virtue’ actually means and where it is located. As Thomas Koelble points out, ‘social capital and horizontal associations can have their “dark side,” as Timothy McVeigh (the Oklahoma City bomber) met his co-conspirators in a bowling club and many of Rwanda’s genocidal killers were part of horizontal associations which, according to Putnam, are more likely to support democratic outcomes’ (p8). In addition, differentially situated citizens and members of diverse institutions within ‘civil society’ do not necessarily agree on what constitutes ‘civility’ and trust. Contestation is at the heart of political life in all its dimensions and there is no Archimedean vantage point from which to judge what constitutes civility, trust and virtuous citizenship. Civil society organisations may be built upon the foundations of horizontal trust and civic engagement, but their actions may not be perceived as ‘civic virtue’ by government officials, for example in the case of violent police action against anti-globalisation demonstrators from Genoa to Johannesburg. What constitutes ‘civic virtue’ and ‘positive social capital’ depends on which side of the barricades one stands! Similarly, assessing the benefits of decentralisation policies that are meant to promote local social capital formation depends whether you are situated in ‘civil society’ or ‘the state.’⁸

Dominant conceptions of ‘civil society’ and social capital also tend to be of a highly normative, universalizing and prescriptive nature. This not only fails to acknowledge the embeddedness of local hierarchies and patronage networks, but it also ignores the possible political consequences of attempting to dislodge these local structures of power. While local age and gender hierarchies may certainly go against the grain of ‘Western’ liberal democratic notions of ‘good governance,’ the case study below draws attention to the difficulties of changing these ‘non-democratic’ and ‘non-liberal’ forms of internal organization.

⁸ The concept of social capital is increasingly associated with decentralization policies, which appear to dovetail neatly with the retreat of the lean and mean neo-liberal state. This promotion of social capital allows the neo-liberal state to ‘outsource’ some of its welfare functions to local communities. The argument goes something like this: ‘We (the state and donors) do not have resources to address your problems and we suggest that you create your own voluntary associations and scale up your own organizational capacities (i.e., social capital). Its good for you and its good for democracy’ This approach, however, often fails to recognize that poverty-stricken communities may not be in a position to ‘scale up’ without state support. This is becoming increasingly evident in the field of health and AIDS where poverty and disease can systematically undermine any attempts to sustain civic life and inter-household cooperation and reciprocity. As Gillies notes, “Social capital is not an economic concept but it is directly affected by socio-economic contingencies. Whilst impoverished communities can overcome the lack of infrastructural development which facilitates civic involvement in health promoting activities through having relatively cohesive informal support networks, *a point of economic crisis or hardship is reached beyond which reciprocity between households ceases* (Gillies, 1998, emphasis added). See Gillies, P 1998. ‘The Effectiveness of alliances and partnerships for health promotion’. *Health Promotion International*, 13, 99-120, p.116.

Despite these problems, the current interest in ‘social capital’ has led to a proliferation of studies, most of which rely on extremely vague definitions (Harriss and De Renzio 1997, cited in Bryceson, 1999 316). Putnam’s (1993) normative interpretation of ‘real’ social capital as the associational ties built on horizontal norms of identity, trust and reciprocity continues to dominate contemporary academic, donor and World Bank discourses. Neither the solidarities of family, nor vertical and authoritarian patronage networks of trust and reciprocity are recognized as ‘proper social capital’ within this framework (Bryceson, *ibid.*)⁹ Not surprisingly, donor and academic interest in ‘good governance’ and ‘deep democracy’ tends to valorise and romanticise horizontal association ties of trust within civil society. These celebrations of the benign ‘invisible hand’ of social capital need to be balanced by the recognition of undemocratic and hierarchical aspects of social capital formation. It also requires a sober assessment of the limited capacities of civil society to ‘scale up’ social capital under conditions of extreme poverty, unemployment, everyday violence and AIDS. Unless this is taken into account, the social capital paradigm could be deployed as an alibi for the downsizing post-development state to withdraw even further from meeting its obligations toward its citizens. This takes us to the following discussion of the limits and possibilities of community making in a global culture of neo-liberalism.

The quest for community in an age of globalisation

While the term ‘community’ continues to conjure up warm and ‘good’ feelings of comfort, safety and security, it is becoming a notoriously elusive ‘paradise’, especially for the poor who are in most need of its comforts, protection and security. For the poor, the ghetto has become a space that represents ‘the impossibility of community’, a place of social disintegration, atomisation and anomie’ (Wacquant in Bauman, 2001:122); as a document on the SDI website puts it: ‘poverty is a relentless isolator’. According to Wacquant, ‘Whereas the ghetto in its classical form acted partly as a protective shield against the brutal racial exclusion, the hyperghetto has lost its positive role of collective buffer, making it a deadly machinery for naked social regulation’ and isolation (Wacquant in Bauman, 2001:122; see also Merry, 2001). Meanwhile the middle classes in the leafy suburbs retreat behind electrified fences, vicious dogs and private security companies and confine themselves to mass private spaces such as mega-shopping malls and entertainment centres. Mike Davis (1990) has written eloquently about ‘Fortress L.A.’ as the archetypical Northern American city – perhaps even the quintessential global city - characterised by middle class suburban enclaves and gated communities; elsewhere I too have written about post-apartheid Cape Town as ‘Fortress L.A. at the tip of Africa’. Ghettoes and gated *communities* in these divided

⁹ Deborah Bryceson criticises this social capital discourse on a number of grounds including the following: “Community harmony at the micro scale is linked to macro-scale civil order and democratic politics. The trust embedded in social capital is considered to be cumulative and path-dependent, bringing about a virtuous cycle of citizens relationships to the state and the market. This is in contrast to the opposite path of vertically channeled, exclusionary clientelist supply of goods and services generating widespread societal distrust and economic and political corruption (Bebbington 1998). The ‘thickening of social capital’ is believed to generate improved civic leadership, better information flows within and between networks, more democratic interaction and efficient local economies. This investment in social capital within the rural community is seen as a way of individual actors improving their resource access at the same time as they are paving the way for a ‘sustainable’ enabling environment for their communities. This perspective and its accompanying terminology and optimistic outlook is reminiscent of *Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’, metaphorically wearing a social rather than an economic glove*” (Bryceson, 1999, 316, emphasis added).

cities are clearly very different kinds of communities, but both draw attention to the difficulties of forging solidarities across fortified enclaves and racialised camps.

Given this scenario how can relations of cooperation and exchange be forged amongst poor people, as well as between the urban poor and those beyond the walls of the ghetto - 'the state', 'civil society' and the gated communities of the urban middle classes? Are the middle classes interested in looking beyond their high walls and electrified barricades? Are the suburbs not attractive to the wealthy precisely because they appear to allow for disengagement from the urban problems of poverty, crime and violence?¹⁰ Community also offers comfort, hope and security to those 'inside' while specifically excluding others and creating new forms of oppression. It is clearly a Janus-faced phenomenon riddled with contradictions and paradoxes. So what kinds of new community solidarities and social commitments are possible in post-apartheid South Africa, and what could 'the globalisation of civil society' look like from the tip of Africa?

Globalising citizenship, localising community: from Cape Town to Mumbai and back again

On 17th September 2002, about two hundred people from diverse race, class and ethnic backgrounds gathered at the Centre of the Book in Cape Town's city centre to hear the internationally known housing activist, Sheila Patel, talk about the work of an alliance of Mumbai-based slum dweller's federations. The audience included a large group of black African women and youth from the South African Homeless People's Federation (SAHPF), NGO and development activists, Members of Parliament, judges, academics and ordinary citizens. This was Patel's twentieth visit to Cape Town as part of a decade long exchange programme between housing and NGO activists and slum/shack dwellers from India, Thailand, South Africa and eleven other developing countries. Patel spoke of her organisation's strategies for empowering the urban poor in India - of the 'horizontal exchanges', savings schemes, 'toilet festivals', self-enumeration and self-census exercises and various other empowerment rituals deployed by these Indian women's Federations. Patel concluded by noting that houses, savings, 'good governance' and accountability were not the objectives of these slum dwellers organisations. Instead, the aim was to create poor people's networks and 'scale up' social capital in order to fight the isolation and disempowerment produced by conditions of poverty. SAHPF members, many of whom had visited India, spoke of their own experiences in establishing savings groups and building their houses in Cape Town's African townships. This 'town hall' meeting in the heart of a still hyper-segregated post-apartheid city certainly provided a glimpse of what a global civil society could look like.

With the steady support of its NGO partner, People's Dialogue (PD), SAHPF has grown into a 100 000 strong post-apartheid community based organisation (CBO) - perhaps even a social movement in the making - that is both locally-embedded and globally connected. The SAHPF-PD website documents (see below) reveals that some members of the organisation

¹⁰ Community is clearly Janus-faced: it offers the prospect of security and protection, but it can also present dangers and threats. While for some the membership of a 'traditional community' offers comfort and security, for others involves constraints on individuality and freedom. In other words, to belong one has to conform to the dictates and norms of 'community values', e.g., belonging to a tightly knit community has its disadvantages and burdens. Belonging to a 'traditional community' can also cost you your life, as Gugu Dlamini discovered when she was killed by community members for publicly divulging her HIV-positive status and being perceived to have brought shame and stigma to her rural village. Similarly, male members of tightly knit 'traditional communities' regularly conspire to deprive women of ownership of rural land by drawing on the traditional land tenure system. Witchcraft is another danger that lurks for older women living in 'traditional communities'.

have engaged seriously with issues relating to the building 'social capital' and understanding and interrogating the relationship between local knowledge and 'expert' power. This website literature also draws attention to debates on various strategies for negotiating and lobbying with officialdom to access state resources and shift the balance of power between poor people and hierarchical, technocratic and bureaucratic states.¹¹ What this all suggests is that 'globalisation' is not only a source of structural disempowerment for the millions of poor people in developing countries, but it also offers opportunities for creative financial, technical, cultural and social transactions and interactions between professionals, activists, state officials, donors and hundreds of thousands of homeless people and shack dwellers from Cape Town to Calcutta and beyond. But what kinds of communities and forms of social cohesion are emerging through these global exchanges?

These days concepts such as 'global citizenship', 'global civil society', 'global governance' and 'grassroots globalisation' or 'globalisation from below' are common currency and in constant circulation in academic and policy discourses (Ellison, 1997; Heater 1999; Falk 1998; Held 1995, 1997; Appadurai, 2002, 2001). They have become keywords in a celebration of the emancipatory possibilities of globalisation in a context in which the nation state is seen to be increasingly incapable of delivering resources in the form of enforceable rights to goods and services and political participation. In addition, the influence of multinational and intergovernmental institutions over people's lives calls for the acknowledgement of the need for accountability and rights to be enforceable across national borders (Newell 2000; Cohen 1999; Urry 1998; Beck 1995; cited in Jones and Gaventa 2002:20). Even the World Bank has got in on the act with international conferences on 'connecting the local to the global.' Global connectivity has also been linked to calls from Third World leaders such as President Thabo Mbeki to 'narrow the digital divide'. Notions such as 'digital citizenship' are also bandied about despite the extremely limited distribution of cyber technology within developing countries.¹²

Globally connected social movements have mushroomed that address a diverse array of issues including Aids, medical technologies, biotechnology, the environment, indigenous land rights, Third World debt, trade liberalisation, housing, as well as struggles over abortion and gay rights and the cultural politics of racial, linguistic and ethnic pride. This rise in 'global citizen action' has been described in a vast and burgeoning academic literature as cross-border activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998), global social movements (Cohen and Rai, 2000; Wilson and Whitmore, 1999), global civil society (Clark, et al. 1998; Smith 1998) and

¹¹ The website of the Slum Dwellers International and SAHPF-PD's partners in India also provides access to the writings of globalisation theorist and the US-based anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who has worked very closely with the Mumbai Alliance of slum dweller organisations.

¹² Considerable scholarly and public policy attention has also been given to transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and globally connected social movements such as those affiliated to SDI. These developments are seen to have contributed towards a new form of politics or 'cross border activism' that enables citizens to work across national boundaries to advance their concerns to both national and transnational institutions (Beck 1995; Newell 2000; Madon 2000; Bhandari 1999; Taylor 1996; cited in Jones and Gaventa 2002). The globalisation of the anti-globalisation movement has also become highly visible at mass demonstrations in numerous cities including Seattle, Davos, Genoa, Durban, Johannesburg, and Buenos Aires. Academics and activists wax eloquently about a paradigm shift from the well-worn adage 'think globally, act locally' to the new rallying cry: 'think locally, *act globally*? But are the globally connected anti-globalisation demonstrations from Davos to Durban signs of the emergence of 'global civil society' and civic action that some refer to as a 'global associational revolution'? Some civil society crusaders go so far as to applaud this revolution and claim it is 'as significant to the latter 20th century as the rise of the nation state was to the latter 19th century (Salamon, 1994, quoted by Gaventa, 2001, p. 557).

global governance (Deacon et al. 1997, Edwards 1999, Scholte 1999) and ‘global citizenship’ (Gaventa, 2001).¹³ However, relatively little reflection has gone into assessing exactly who belongs to this global citizenry and what this form of belonging could mean for different social classes. Highly mobile middle classes seem to be particularly drawn to the idea of global citizenship and the cosmopolitan lifestyle possibilities offered via the ceaseless flow of commodities, ideas and images across national borders. By contrast, working class Turkish migrants in Berlin are likely to have a very different experience and understanding of transnational culture. Similarly, many of those unable to purchase the cosmopolitan fruits of the consumer capitalism of late modernity have opted instead for more defensive and parochial responses, including the deployment of discourses on autochthony and xenophobia (Nyamnjoh and Gieschere, 2001; Sichone, forthcoming), territorial citizenship, and defensive patriotism (Falk 1998:2). Clearly ‘globalisation’ means different things to different folks. It also produces a multiplicity of outcomes for differentially situated citizens. For instance, it may weaken or strengthen territorial ties between citizens and the state; it can also produce a variety of responses ranging from the construction of ‘post-national’ cosmopolitan identities to exclusivist forms of ethno-nationalism and chauvinistic communitarianism. It can also produce the isolation and alienation characteristic of the hyper-ghetto and the gated community.

Citizenship is meant to erode local and communitarian hierarchies, statuses and privileges in favour of national jurisdictions and contractual relations based in principle on equality of rights and the individual right bearing citizen. In other words, the liberal individualist conception of citizenship implies ‘self-interested’, ‘autonomous’ citizen, a construct ‘critiqued by communitarians who argue that an individual’s sense of identity is produced only *through* relations with others in the community of which she or he is a part’ (Gaventa 2002:4). In other words, the communitarian conception of citizenship is that of the socially-embedded citizen.¹⁴ The notion of the communitarian citizen becomes particularly important in the South African context where, in certain social spaces, the liberal individualist conception of the autonomous citizen is often misplaced and inappropriate.¹⁵

¹³ The above sources are cited from Jones and Gaventa (2002) and Gaventa (2001).

¹⁴ Civil republican models of citizenship, place more stress on people’s political identities as active citizens, apart from their identities in localised communities (Gaventa, 2002:4). This model emphasises individual obligations to participate in communal affairs through deliberative forms of democracy, in contrast to the liberal stress on representative democracy. As John Gaventa notes, ‘Recent work in contemporary citizenship theory attempts to find ways of uniting the liberal emphasis on individual rights, equality and due process of law, with the communitarian focus on belonging and the civic republican focus on processes of deliberation, collective action and responsibility. In so doing, it aims to bridge the gap between citizen and state by recasting citizenship as practices rather than given (Gaventa, 2002:4).

¹⁵ These debates on liberal and communitarian notions of citizenship come alive when considering the ongoing struggles over the role of traditional leaders in local government structures and land ownership and administration. It would also seem that the liberal democratic vision of a ‘non-racial’ post-apartheid society that coalesced under the banner of the United Democratic Front (UDF) during the 1980s is being challenged by the retreat of citizens into race, class and ethnic laagers and communitarian solidarities. The difficulties the South African State has encountered in terms of providing jobs, health care (e.g., AIDS treatment) and social and economic security to the poor could also end up undermining any possibility of stabilising the liberal democratic project, for instance by failing to meet the obligations the ‘social contract’ between citizens and ‘the state’. Instead of creating a liberal democratic moral order and political culture based on the mutual benefit of equal participants – an image of mutuality and equality elaborated in theories of ‘natural law’ and contract by 17th century legal theorists Locke and Grotius (see Taylor, 2002) – the failure of the state to meet its obligations to its citizens often reinforces and consolidates non-liberal, hierarchical and patriarchal structures and client-patron relations of domination and subordination. Such processes tend to reproduce the contradictory logics of liberal

Alongside these communitarian identities and solidarities, new globally connected community-based organisations are emerging that appear to counter these parochial tendencies. For NGO activists, academics, donors and policymakers this emergence of a burgeoning 'global civil society' is seen to offer the prospect of a renewal and deepening of the liberal democratic project (see Appadurai, 2002). But what is all this talk of 'grassroots globalisation' and 'globalisation from below' really about? Do these new forms of grassroots participation really represent accountable and democratic practices, or do they not often simply reinforce local power asymmetries? While the rallying cry 'think globally, act locally' has been part of the activist's lexicon for at least two decades, the notion of 'thinking locally' about the impacts of global institutions and global forces, *and* 'acting globally' upon them, is perhaps a relatively new development (Clark, in Gaventa, 2001). But what does it actually mean to 'act globally'? What new forms of citizenship and belonging are emerging as a result of these developments?

New communities after apartheid: local is not always lekker!

During the anti-apartheid struggle there was a palpable sense of 'community solidarity' in the townships and in what was then the mass democratic movement.¹⁶ A non-racial social imaginary of political struggle included working class communities, trade unions, black and white middle class professionals, university students, and other sectors of South African society. The United Democratic Front (UDF) came to represent this multi-racial, multi-class political movement. During the 1980s the term 'community' usually referred to black communities of resistance to apartheid; it was a keyword in political discourse (Boonzaier and Sharp, 1988). It was also appropriated by the state and business e.g., through community development projects and the creation of Community Councillors. Anti-apartheid activists and the liberal media represented black communities as being involved in heroic resistance to apartheid. Post-apartheid city managers, government officials, tourist entrepreneurs and big business represent some of these same communities as 'dysfunctional' and call for measures to re-establish governance in these 'unruly communities.' In other words, community is no longer perceived to be a space of unmitigated good. For example, youth activists, who were once lauded as courageous 'Young Lions, are now represented as the 'Lost Generation.' Similarly, working class communities on the Cape Flats, once celebrated as spaces of resistance to apartheid, are increasingly characterised by officials as places of social pathologies such as crime, violence, illegal drug trade, gangsterism, and high incidences of diseases such as TB and AIDS, teenage pregnancies and substance abuse. Gang and neighbourhood solidarities are regarded as 'negative social capital', and obstacles to establishing liberal democratic modes of governance and citizenship (see Robins, 2002). In addition, township residents who cannot afford to pay for electricity and water services, and who embark upon rent boycotts, once the defining features of the anti-apartheid struggle, are nowadays hounded and evicted from their homes. Anti-evictions urban social movements are growing as increasing numbers of urban poor people find themselves targeted for evictions. These urban activists, as well as those belonging to the Landless People's Movement, have

and non-liberal political cultures that currently characterise the South African political landscape (see Von Lieres, forthcoming).

¹⁶ When intra-community conflicts erupted in places such as Crossroads, Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal and the Vaal Triangle, it was usually instigated by a state security establishment determined to use conservative elders to purge the townships of militant youth activists, *amaqabane* or 'comrades'.

been identified by the state as a threat to good governance. Their social capital is clearly not viewed in a positive light.

What kinds of communities and forms of social capital and citizenship are possible in Cape Town's working class townships given the chronic poverty and unemployment produced as a result of the shift from a traditional manufacturing to a service economy? Given these changed social and political realities, it is hardly surprising that it is becoming increasingly common practice to describe poor communities as 'dysfunctional' and to debunk heroic and romantic myths of 'community'. Similarly, direct community action is no longer always praised for being 'grassroots' and democratic. Anti-crime vigilante killings, macho, sexist and chauvinistic neighbourhood gangs and male solidarities, and the marginalisation of women through traditional land tenure are nowadays seen as a threat to our Constitutional democracy and the social fabric of our society. Local is clearly not always *lekker*, and social capital is not always positive. But is global civil society and liberal democracy the panacea? What kinds of 'local' ideas and communitarian practices do the globally connected organisations discussed in this paper have to deal with, and what does this tell us about social capital and the new forms of citizenship after apartheid?

SECTION II

Case study: The South African Homeless People's Federation

Introduction: Social capital and social cohesion from Calcutta to Cape Town

The South African Homeless Peoples Federation (SAHPF) was formed in 1991 and comprises over 100,000 mostly black African members, of whom more than 85 000 (85%) are women. It is supported by People's Dialogue, a Cape Town-based NGO,¹⁷ and is an affiliate of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a global network of poor peoples' organizations from fourteen countries of the South. SDI affiliates range in size from a few hundred in Zambia to more than a million-and-a-half in India (SDI, 2002:1). The network comprises Federations of community organizations that are linked to NGOs and groupings of professionals who support Federation initiatives. Although SDI affiliates work primarily with women, it is the broad category of the urban poor that makes up the Federations' membership. Federation activities include facilitating access to land, housing, infrastructure, finance, employment, and income generation projects. The stated objective of the SDI federations is for members to assume 'ownership of problems and the identification of local solutions that are participatory and inclusive [and] by doing so they automatically create new nodal points of governance, in which organized communities of the urban poor assume their rightful place as development actors' (SDI No.2, 2002).¹⁸

The SAHPF slogan: 'We do not collect money, we collect people' captures the organisation's concern with 'social capital'. Drawing largely upon the Indian experience over the past two decades, the People's Dialogue and SAHPF promote daily savings as a 'ritual' that produces high levels of participation and mutual interaction between Federation members – these daily encounters are perceived to be the 'social glue' that binds communities. In addition, through investing limited funds, members have a material stake in their organisation and its decision-

¹⁷ Slum Dwellers International, Journal No. 2, March 2002.

¹⁸ Slum Dwellers International, Journal No. 2, March 2002, p.14.

making. Not only do daily savings encourage regular interaction but they also create a space for the central participation of women in informal settlements that tend to be dominated by patriarchal local structures. It is also meant to shift the balance of power and expert knowledge from technocratic and hierarchical state structures to local, decentralised Federations. Savings and loans also enable Federations to develop capacity to manage and control finance and to display this local competence to the outside world. Members learn housing design, construction and finance, layout design, brick making, toilet construction, crafts and a range of other competencies including bookkeeping, census enumeration and information gathering (e.g., self-surveys), methods for identifying vacant land through physical mapping and visits to the deeds offices, and the development of negotiation skills in order to secure land from the state. These activities are consciously framed as public performances of local competence and innovation. This has a number of purposes including posing a challenge to existing class cultures and beliefs about where expertise lies. It is an expression of *a politics of visibility and a public demonstration of 'autogovernmentality' or 'governance from below'* (see Appadurai, 2002).¹⁹ Horizontal exchange is perhaps one of the most important of these rituals because of its ability to foster direct learning experiences from peers as opposed to the usual expert-driven methods of formal training. As will become clear in the pages that follow, these visits also facilitate the creation of new transnational solidarities and networks, as well as being a catalyst for cross-cultural reflection and analysis by Federation members.

The discussion of the case study below focuses on the following areas: (1) the 'official ideology' and discourses of the SDI; (2) the various ways in which SDI ideology finds expression in the documents, strategies and practices of the People's Dialogue; (3) the gaps and disjunctures between the discourses of SDI and People's Dialogue and the everyday practices and political cultures of Cape Town's Federations; and (4) cross-cultural reflections by Federation members on the gap between SDI ideology and 'local' practices, as well as reflections on cultural, religious and political differences between South African and Indian Federations and socio-cultural environments.

1. Surfing the Slum Dwellers International (SDI) homepage

A scan of SDI publications, including its website, provides a clear indication of the 'official' ideological orientation of the SDI and its affiliates. The SDI literature reveals a deep scepticism of the State's capacity to eradicate poverty and comply with its social contract with its citizenry. It is equally sceptical of the ability of traditional trade unions and Left-wing political parties and rights-based social movements to provide the kind of long-term capacity building that organizations of the poor require in order to strengthen themselves at the local level. The anonymous author(s) of the document cited below calls for poor communities to engage in practices of 'active citizenship' rather than becoming passive recipients of state and party political patronage and largesse. Contrary to neo-liberal ideologues and free marketers, however, SDI ideology does not call for the dismantling or 'downsizing' of the development

¹⁹ Appadurai (2002) provides a fascinating account of SAHPPF's SDI partners in Mumbai in which he analyses their rituals of 'toilet festivals' and 'the politics of shit'. He shows how a carnivalesque spirit of transgression and bawdiness prevails during toilet inspections in the presence of middle class government and World Bank officials. This is interpreted by Appadurai as an attempt to redefine the private act of humiliation and suffering - shitting in the open - into a scene of technical innovation and self-dignification. It is seen as a remarkably innovative 'politics of recognition from below.'

state, but rather the empowerment of poor communities to enable them to pressure and lobby the state to meet their developmental needs.

They [the SDI federations] see themselves as opponents of centralised state power, backed by these global agencies – the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank... They all share a common vision: that the State on its own cannot solve problems of poverty and underdevelopment. While the State, especially in Southern countries, has a monopoly on power, its very relationship to this power and to the local and global economy makes it a very weak instrument for the delivery of resources and services needed to eradicate poverty... Since they question the capacity of these [State] agencies to deliver, they constantly seek situations that enable those who are affected by poverty to become organised and united in ever-expanding networks and to play a defining role in the way in which Governments and multilaterals discharge their obligations to the poor. This is in sharp contradiction to the rights-based social movements or the micro-finance organisations, or even archaic social movements of the past, such as earlier rural and urban movements of the poor, including trade unions and left-wing political parties... SDI is an attempt to *move away from sporadic impulses to sustained, long-term investments in local Federations of the Urban Poor*. SDI, as a network of these Federations, opens opportunities at the international level in order to strengthen its member organisations (emphasis added) p1.²⁰

These SDI publications represent the Federation affiliates and their members as belonging to a transnational citizenry of the urban poor, hence their use of the all too familiar slogan: ‘think global, act local.’²¹ This ‘cosmopolitan’ perspective seeks solidarities and alliances of the urban poor across national, ethnic and religious lines. It appears to promote a sense of ‘global citizenship’ rather than being confined to local, regional or national spaces and identities. SDI also represents the work of the Federations as providing a clear alternative to mainstream development thinking and modern state development ideas and practices. Although SDI publications are critical of centralized, top-down state-driven development interventions, they do not follow the adversarial logic of anti-globalization social movements. Instead, these statements seem to imply that through the combination of pressure, persuasion and negotiation, the state can be convinced to comply with the ‘social contract’ of democracy and develop more ‘poor-friendly’ policies and urban development strategies.

Although some of the language of SDI documents is reminiscent of radical underdevelopment theory and post-development thinking, SDI and its affiliates are not a militant social movement seeking to smash capitalism. Neither is it the voice of an embryonic political party waiting in the wings. Instead, SDI’s ideas and practices are concerned with enhancing the capacity of the urban poor in solving their own problems.²² This is to be done

²⁰ Slum Dwellers International, Journal No. 2, March 2002. p.1.

²¹ Slum Dwellers International, Journal No. 2, March 2002. p.14.

²² See *Face to Face: notes from the network on community exchange. A publication of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights*, January 2000: ‘In a world that is shrinking fast, the relationship between the *haves* and the *have-nots* gets more and more paradoxical – especially in cities. On the one hand, all the economic and ecological formulas behind urban prosperity link together the lives of *all* city-dwellers in complicated webs of interdependence. Mr. Capitalist needs cheap labour and infrastructure. Mr. Poor Migrant needs a job and minimal, secure housing. And Mr. Public Official needs to juggle larger resource agendas and still get re-elected. The three may not understand each other very well, but their interdependence is one of the most fundamental – but least understood – imperatives of modern cities. There are have and have-nots at every scale:

through various activities that promote experimentation and learning through face-to-face encounters rather than formal training methods.²³

Various commentators on the nature of late modernity have referred to the isolation produced by conditions of poverty. SDI rituals and everyday practices aim specifically to overcome these obstacles in the path of the realization of community.²⁴ The rituals of the savings schemes facilitate face-to-face encounters between members on a daily basis. It is these interactions, along with the horizontal exchanges at the city, regional and international level, that are seen to create community networks and empower Federations by building 'social capital' and strengthening the bargaining power in negotiations with officialdom, including the national, regional and local state.

These rituals are performed to inscribe and embody the SDI's ideology of 'building people not things'. Savings schemes are meant to contribute towards the creation of *social capital* rather than mere houses. SDI's approach to social capital and community building revolves around the fact that about ninety percent of members are women. The gendered composition of the Federations is perceived as an advantage given that women are generally the *de facto* managers of poor households, the household being the primary sphere of social reproduction.

2. People's Dialogue and post-apartheid visions

People's Dialogue and SAHPPF define their objectives and ideological commitments in similar terms to other SDI affiliates. They are also concerned with participation of 'the urban poor', in particular women, in decision-making processes that impact upon their communities. However, not surprisingly there are certain specifically South African, and highly localized, dimensions to SAHPPF savings schemes and the leadership styles of South African Federations. Before discussing these localized practices, it is worthwhile drawing attention to the ideological orientation of People's Dialogue, the NGO supporting SAHPPF.

The People's Dialogue manifesto presented at the launch of the SA Homeless People's Federation on 21st March 1994 presents a 'radical' critique of the state and technocratic

within communities, cities, countries and regions, and between the "North" and the "South". In every context, it is generally the haves who take the prerogative to solve problems. In the case of cities, solutions put forward by the haves have not worked at all... So how do you shake off an age-old tradition which excludes the poor from participating in the exploration and testing of solutions to problems which affect their own lives?

²³ The following excerpt is from an SDI publication entitled *Face to Face: notes from the network on community exchange. A publication of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights*, January 2000: "Exchange is nothing new. Linking with like-minded people, across distances, is probably one of humanity's oldest impulses. There are exchanges of administrators, politicians, developmental professionals and NGO activists all the time, who move out of their own situations to learn, meet peers and to fortify themselves with fresh ideas from elsewhere. But *poverty is a relentless isolator*, and puts formidable constraints on this kind of mobility and the linkages it engenders – of at least reduces the sphere of mobility to a single lane or a slum – which is nobody's idea of a larger world. ... Exchange learning come in, as a development tool which helps people build capacities to deal with root issues of poverty and homelessness, and to work out their own means to participate in decision-making which affects their lives – locally, nationally and globally. In exchange, people are not being trained to "do things". They decide themselves what to pick up and what to discard, by visiting others in the same boat. It is learning without an agenda or anybody else's atmosphere – its on-site and vital learning, direct, from the source, unfiltered. Nobody's telling who what or when to learn..." (emphasis added).

²⁴ In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, one of the obstacles toward the actualisation of community includes the systematic demobilization and bureaucratisation of civil society, and the new found 'freedom' consumer capitalism presents to disengage from society.

development. The highly polemical and poetic language of this PD document represents a critique of the inevitable rise of the post-apartheid technocratic state. Barely a month after the tumultuous celebrations of the ANC's landslide victory in the first democratic elections of April 1994, the People's Dialogue message is one of profound scepticism and distrust of the intentions of the new political and bureaucratic elite. The anonymous author warns that 'now that the Great Cause has been won, the average men and women in this land will witness the gross spectacle of politicians and other elites [using] the Cause to further their own personal hunger for power... The State will use an army of technocrats and planners, equipped with the Great Cause, to control the social life of its subjects... Their primary concern will be the circulation of things, and of human beings trapped in a world of things: cars, trains, commodities, sewerage. Poor people have to try to tear these topological chains asunder...'.²⁵ This anti-development language is suggestive of a radical alternative to 'development as usual'. Whereas these days PD works in close partnership with the ANC government, the PD's early manifestos represent a radical critique of state-led technocratic development reminiscent of recent post-development critiques (Escobar, 1995, Sachs, 1992).

Although current PD discourse can be characterized as 'critical engagement' with government, PD nonetheless remains critical of state and private sector-driven low-income housing delivery that fail to build poor peoples capacity. Beneficiaries of state subsidy housing are provided with a physical structure but not the means to survive under conditions of extreme poverty. As PD respondents noted, in many cases unemployed recipients of the R16 500 government housing subsidies end up selling their subsidy houses for extremely low prices and moving back into informal settlements because the houses are too small and they cannot afford to extend using formal building materials, and/or they cannot afford to pay rates and service fees. In other words, these product-driven housing delivery schemes tend to reproduce relations of dependency and passivity amongst development beneficiaries: houses

²⁵ This anti-elite, anti-nationalist and anti-technocratic polemic is worth quoting at some length in order to convey the degree to which early PD ideology challenged the new state's vision of nation building and development. The following excerpt represents a stridently militant and 'post-modern' voice railing against the gray and soulless surveillance city created by technocratic state planners – a foul modernist nightmare that would make Foucault's hair(?) stand on end!:

At last: oppression is no longer centralized because oppression is everywhere. One just has to look at the most recent examples of town-planning to see it. The reference point the planners propose is no longer the apartheid-structured city. Hooray! However, from the perspective of all communities, especially the poor, homeless communities, the reference point proposed by these revisionist town planners (soon to be endorsed by revisionist politicians) is always somewhere else, meaning always outside the daily lives of the inhabitants of these communities. What we see is a grid of roads linking vast expanses of toilets to gutless city centers, plate-glass shopping malls and dark streets surrounding industrial plants and factories. In the minds of some this may be satisfactory compensation for 350 years of slavery... Here is the crux of development practice in the new South Africa. Who will be at the center? The people or the state? ... *The State will use an army of technocrats and planners, equipped with the Great Cause, to control the social life of its subjects.* And the vision of the post apartheid city is its masterstroke. The town planners are its shock troops. In a rapidly urbanizing society the development of the urban environment is one of the most profound political acts of all. Have we moved away from apartheid? Beware if the town planners, the architects, the bureaucrats try to point the way, for *their primary concern will be the circulation of things, and of human beings trapped in a world of things: cars, trains, commodities, sewerage. Poor people have to try to tear these topological chains asunder...* He who thinks and plans for you, judges you, reduces you to his own norms, and whatever his intentions may be, he end up making you stupid... The formation of the SA Homeless People's Federation will go some way towards ensuring that the democratic right of poor people to plan and manage their own developments is enforced in practice throughout the land. People's Dialogue commits itself to giving continued support to the initiatives of the Federation... (emphasis added).

become ‘projects’ and ‘products’ rather than opportunities for the long-term income-generation and community building.

In addition to being critical of the product-driven character of state and private sector low-income housing schemes, the approach of People’s Dialogue also questions the hierarchical and project-based nature of conventional NGO-CBO relations. This means that NGOs need to ‘scale up’ and consolidate their partnerships with CBOs, and that ‘horizontal partnerships’ need to be strong before vertical links can work effectively. According to PD’s director, Joel Bolnick, NGO/CBO relationships tend to end once projects are completed and the ‘development objective’ or ‘product’ has been delivered. There are generally no real ties between the organizations beyond the lifecycle of ‘the project’. Neither is there autonomy for the CBOs in terms of defining the needs and objectives of communities. Effective NGO/CBO partnerships therefore ought to be built upon the foundations of prior grassroots mobilization and community organization. From the perspective of the PD professionals the delivery of a service or a ‘project’ is not an end in itself. Instead, it ought to be a means towards changing values in society, and building ‘social capital’ and participatory, democratic and accountable systems of governance in poor communities.²⁶ This philosophy has contributed towards a division of labour within the NGO whereby technical issues such as financial management, loans and state housing subsidies are taken care of by the Utshani Fund, referred to as PD’s ‘ministry of finance.’ This allows PD to focus on more generic developmental issues such as direct, experiential learning through ‘rituals’ of horizontal exchange etc. Although the focus was originally on land and housing, there has been a growing recognition of the need to build ‘social capital’ by addressing a range of other issues including health, income generation, education, and youth development.²⁷

The PD proposal to begin a process of collecting statistics on HIV-AIDS prevalence within the Federations reveals the influence of SDI theorizing on the knowledge-power nexus, especially the role of censuses, statistics and surveys in the reproduction of bureaucratic state power. Instead of resisting these forms of state power, the SDI affiliated Federations have sought to appropriate and recast these bureaucratic practices and use them as leverage for accessing state resources, for instance health care resources and AIDS treatment. Self-enumeration and information gathering are also seen as crucial for engaging the State on more equal terms and holding it accountable to its citizens. These practices reflect a sophisticated understanding of the political and bureaucratic machinations of the modern State. By appropriating these rituals of bureaucratic State power, the Federations acquire leverage in their negotiations with the State to secure resources such as housing and health.²⁸

²⁶ As PD director and founder, Joel Bolnick, put it, ‘We must make a distinction between mechanisms of learning and mechanisms of delivery. We [People’s Dialogue] are more interested in mechanisms of learning [and bringing] communities are closer to participatory, democratic, accountable systems of governance.’ In other words, PD’s emphasis is on engaging with communities ‘in a generic way’ by building horizontal relations and networks, rather than focusing on delivery and narrowly technical expertise.

²⁷ As Bolnick puts it: “The language of the Federation is saturated with that kind of imagery: *We build houses in order to build people*; *we don’t collect money, we collect people*. That is all over the show. And this is where separating the Utshani Fund from People’s Dialogue has come in, because we [People’s Dialogue] put so much emphasis on social capital, that we simply used their [Utshani Fund] financial capital to build social capital, without really being too preoccupied about the sustainability of the financial capital... People’s Dialogue’s responsibility now is to pursue abundance, and the Utshani Fund’s responsibility is to manage scarcity. If they’ve got 60 million Rand, they’re got to make sure it grows. If we’ve got 100,000 members, we’ve got to make sure we’ve got a million members - and so draw down more resources from the state...”

²⁸ The thinking underlying the appropriation of this bureaucratic language of state power is spelt out in the SDI Journal No.2 for 2002, p.13: “Knowledge is power. The counting of people and the gathering of socio-economic

PD's current thinking on how to approach the AIDS pandemic provides an insight into why 'social capital' is such a key component of SDI affiliates' *modus operandi*. Rather than attempting to treat HIV-AIDS by bringing in medical specialists and experts, PD sees its task as that of mobilizing Federation communities so that they can persuade the State to comply with its contract with its citizens and provide treatment to Federation members. This is to be done by collecting AIDS-related data from Federation members. By drawing on State rituals of enumeration and the power of statistics and the survey, the Federation will have strategic Aids information not at the disposal of the State. The Federation can then use this statistical data to pressure the government to come up with concrete programmes to treat its members. As Joel Bolnick puts its,

“Forget all this vague vacuous stuff: 10% of the population is HIV positive because of the anti-natal tests they do. *We want to actually test every ... Federation member - and then every community member.* And when they come and have a test, we will ask them a certain set of questions, and gather information. If the Federation does it effectively, within a year we will have data around HIV/AIDS that no other institution has. And then we can go to the city [administration] and say, ‘you are spending 10 million on AIDS and 300 million on building a highway. These are the realities on the ground’. And [the statistics] go to community leaders and they say [to city officials] ‘you are not dealing with the situation. Look, this is the situation

In an anonymous People's Dialogue document circulated to the South African Federations, the author/s draw attention to the potentially emancipatory logics of practices of enumeration, censuses and surveys traditionally associated with the state. What emerges is a sophisticated re-reading of Foucaultian notions of governmentality.²⁹ The document entitled, ‘Some notes on enumeration’, questions certain Foucaultian critiques of governmentality that suggest that

data is normally perceived to be a boring and imperfect social science, which is practiced by university graduates and their professors. In fact censuses are at the very heart of modern statehood. Before being sentenced to the government archives, information gathered by means of enumerations is used to determine resource distribution by the state. From start to finish these processes are driven in a totally top-down way by professionals and officials. The Federations in the SDI network have developed people-driven techniques of surveying and enumeration. They gather information about slum settlements and their inhabitants in ways that simultaneously gather important information and mobilize whole communities. *SDI affiliates are deeply aware of the radical power that this kind of knowledge (and ability) gives them in their dealings with local and central State organizations* and also with multilateral agencies and their regulatory bodies. Armed with information that decision-makers often do not have, Federation groups use the findings of their enumerations to shift negotiations in their favor – whether it be negotiations to secure resources for development or to prevent evictions” (emphasis added).

²⁹ John Comaroff (2002:114-115) makes the following observations concerning the orthodox Foucaultian reading of the (post)colonial state in Africa: ‘From a Foucaultian vantage, the modernist state is itself a disciplinary formation. Its power is less instrumental than capillary: it stretches, autonomically and unseen into the very construction of its subjects, into their bodily routines and the essence of their selfhood. Indeed, it is by inculcating a deeply interiorised, individuated sense of *self-regulation* – through its clinics, schools, prisons and other sites of surveillance: its censuses, surveys and cognate forms of accounting; its modes of objectifying personhood through the ‘human sciences’; its ‘natural’ institutions like the family, established religion, and commodified regimes of recreation – that the state imposes order... All this was effected by a range of now familiar methods of enumeration, serialization, individuation, identification: the registration of births (hence, also, of names) and deaths (along, in time, with wills); the certification of lawful wedlock and its dissolution’ the extensive documentation, bureaucratisation and rationalization of everyday life...This involves the insinuation of an entire space-time world into the mundane practices of citizens. Thus are subjects subjected to modes of control that are rendered unseen in their every enactment’ (2002:114-115).

these state technologies inevitably buttress bureaucratic state power (Ferguson, 1990; Escobar, 1995), and are part of the surveillance apparatus of the modern state (Scott, 1998). Whereas James Scott (1998) and Arturo Escobar (1995) portray these practices as bureaucratic forms of state domination and disciplinary power that render populations legible and susceptible to state processes of governmentality, People's Dialogue 'rituals' of enumeration are precisely about rendering the Federation members *more legible to the state* in order to lobby for state resources. In other words, unlike orthodox Foucaultian critiques that essentialise state-led development – which is portrayed as part of a monolithic and all-encompassing set of institutional practices – People's Dialogue intellectuals and their SDI partners suggest that there is nothing inherent in such state practices that pre-determines the outcome of their application.

3. Mind the gap: global ideologies and local realities

While People's Dialogue and the SDI ideology stresses the importance of horizontal relations of trust and non-hierarchical and decentralised political structures and practices within and between Federations, the SAHPF national leadership contributed towards the establishment of highly centralised decision-making structures. This was particularly evident in the Western Cape Province, where the leadership was unwilling to relinquish its control and authority over 'junior' Federations. This resulted in the consolidation of local hierarchies, power cliques and patronage networks that allowed certain individuals to act as gatekeepers and powerbrokers. It also resulted in accusations of financial mismanagement and widespread grievances concerning the alleged undemocratic practices of the leadership. This culminated in general disillusionment with savings schemes and large-scale withdrawal of Federation members from participation in these schemes. As PD's Cathy Glover put it, 'The Federation has still been very successful in securing land in the city and initiating housing developments' but once people get these resources they often see no reason for continuing to belong to savings schemes and they tend to withdraw from Federation activities.

The leadership style of the SAHPF, especially in Cape Town, contradicted the liberal democratic visions of SDI and People's Dialogue. However, it proved to be extremely difficult to alter these hierarchical political styles and power dynamics. This was especially the case at showpiece Federations that were regularly visited by dignitaries, donors and government officials. One strategy adopted by PD in order to decentre and dismantle these concentrations of power has been to attempt to 'reinvent' and reorganise the organisational structure of the Federations through a system of rotational leadership and by resuscitating local savings schemes and devolving decision-making powers to these schemes. These initiatives, however, encountered fierce opposition from a powerful SAHPF leadership determined to hold onto power and to resist attempts to decentralise the decision-making structures. This contributed towards ongoing clashes between People's Dialogue and the SAHPF.

There were numerous other divergences between the desires, agendas and objectives of the NGO and its CBO partner. For instance, PD, like SDI and its Indian affiliates, believes that long-term processes of creating and 'scaling up' of 'social capital' and community building is more important than product-driven concerns such as housing construction. However, PD's commitment to building 'social capital' through savings was not always shared by SAHPF members, who often 'disappear' once they receive the object of their desire – the house.

Unlike their counterparts in India, many South African Federation members did not seem to 'buy into' daily savings and other Federation rituals.

Another key area of difference relates to the political culture of the Federations. While these organisations are meant to be non-party political, a number of the leadership figures are seasoned ANC Women's League veterans who are deeply enmeshed in local, regional and national ANC networks. Further, whereas PD believes in 'critical engagement' with the government, many of the ANC-aligned SAHPF leadership were less inclined to criticise the ANC government and leadership. Instead, a number of SAHPF leaders were prepared to allow Federation networks to be used as ANC political resources. In addition, unlike their Indian partners, South African Federation members tended to view the ANC government as a powerful patronage machine that could be accessed through party political contacts and channels. This perception of a powerful state was reinforced by the reality of the R16 500 state housing subsidies. The state was not only perceived to be powerful provider of material resources, but also a repository of technical expertise and know-how. This SAHPF perception of the power of the technocratic state was very different to the anti-technicist, anti-hierarchical, anti-project and anti-bureaucratic perspective of PD and SDI. Whereas PD and SDI produced eloquent anti-technocratic tracts that challenged the expert/client relationship, it seemed that rank-and-file Federation members, as well as the leadership, were not always as committed to this anti-technocratic post-development agenda.

PD practitioners and SAHPF members openly acknowledged the gap between SDI's 'global ideology' and the complex social realities that Federation members experienced on a daily basis. They were also all too aware that the SDI development paradigm was not necessarily shared and embraced by Federation members. This was particularly evident when Federation members withdrew from regular participation in savings schemes upon the completion of the construction of their houses.

These competing understandings of 'development' permeated many aspects of PD's involvement with the SAHPF. The website and newsletter publications of PD and SDI promote the long-term building of horizontal relations of trust and social capital. By contrast, the SAHPF leadership at the Victoria Mxenge settlement at Phillipi, Cape Town, seemed more concerned with housing delivery and the consolidation of vertical relations of patronage and dependency. This political practice challenged the SDI's vision of an anti-elite, anti-hierarchical, anti-technocratic and decentralized development model. People's Dialogue members acknowledge that Federation members, especially the leadership, seemed more interested in land acquisition and building houses than investing in less tangible outcomes such as 'trust', 'networks', 'social capital', and democratic and accountable governance systems. This situation of competing development visions and agendas is graphically illustrated in case of Victoria Mxenge (VMx).

The case of the Victoria Mxenge Scheme

As a result of the considerable successes of the Federation savings and housing schemes developed at the Victoria Mxenga Scheme (VMx) in Phillipi, Cape Town, a leadership cluster established itself up as the 'nerve centre' of all SAHPF activities in the Western Cape Province. This leadership then began to control and dominate the 450 other savings Federations in the Western Cape. These centralizing processes intensified with VMx's successes in attracting international media attention, donors and visiting dignitaries, including

former President Bill Clinton and Hilary Clinton and other high-level South African government and EU delegations.

Victoria Mxenge Federation tended to focus on housing delivery rather than recreational spaces, crèches and other built environment matters that could contribute towards building community networks and the social fabric. In addition, despite PD's attempts to 'restructure' and 'reinvent' organizational structures to counteract and subvert the centralization and consolidation of local power around certain VMx leaders, these centralizing tendencies and processes persisted. These attempts to decentre and disperse these localised nodes of power were contested by the strong Federation leadership. In addition, whereas the 'official' SDI line is non-party political the Federation leadership, many of whom are ANC Women's League stalwarts, worked closely with ANC party structures.³⁰

The Federation leadership proved to be as hierarchical, centralised and intolerant of competition as the neo-traditional male leadership structures that emerged in many urban and rural informal settlements throughout South Africa. For instance, 'Ndumisa', a PD coordinator, made the comparison between the current Federation leadership and the highly centralised (male-dominated) neo-traditional leadership structures that emerged in Western Cape Province informal settlements such as Crossroads during the 1980s.³¹ Dissatisfaction with this centralised Federation leadership contributed towards a massive decline in participation in the Federations in the Western Cape, culminating in the collapse of many savings schemes. PD's strategy for addressing this leadership crisis has been to revive savings schemes that had collapsed as a result of disillusionment with centralising leadership styles and grievances about alleged financial mismanagement. This resuscitation of the savings collectives also sought to decentralise decision-making power and control over financial resources to local-level structures.

³⁰ According to Bolnick it is necessary to constantly 'reinvent' and 'restructure' the organization to prevent the ossification and consolidation of local power nodes and community structures. As Bolnick explains: "On the one level, since 1994 when the Federation was formed, we have triggered a process where the Federation structures have changed four times. National, regional and local. And that has been part of the way in which the NGO has interacted. It has not been an easy role at all. It has been a very difficult role. Every time contradictions emerge inside the Federation, our response has been not to change the leadership, although the leadership changes, but to change the structure and that way to change the leadership. So there are moves from regional coordinators and a national consultancy group, to having national coordinators and a national core group, and now they are going back to a different method and structure. So we are constantly pulling the process down by changing the structures, not allowing it to rigidify. The other thing is around programme stuff - to just be extremely flexible, and create situations where the organisation as a whole is responding to the issues that are coming up from the ground. The two interact because if you have a rigid structure, it is much harder to respond to the needs as they emerge. So that is how the re-invention happens."

³¹ In 1986 I had personally witnessed the direct role of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in fuelling inter-community violence in the Crossroads shanty settlement on the outskirts of Cape Town. The SADF and South African Police had clandestinely armed a large group of Xhosa-speaking neo-traditional male elders, referred to as the *witdoeke* or 'fathers', in an attempt to purge Crossroads of militant anti-apartheid ANC youth (comrades or *amaqabane*) and women's organizations that had established strongholds in Crossroads in the early 1980s. Academic and journalistic accounts attributed the Crossroads violence to a convergence of interests and agendas between the apartheid security establishment and patriarchal neo-traditional structures. When NGO and donor resources began to flow into Crossroads in the early 1980s, this male leadership systematically displaced the Crossroads women's committees that had been at the forefront of resistance to evictions and demolitions at Crossroads in the early 1980s. Josette Cole (1986) referred to this moment as the historical defeat of the Crossroads women. In 1992 a small group of these Crossroads women, who also happened to ANC Women's League members, founded the Victoria Mxenge branch of the SAHPF.

Divergences between SDI/PD ideology and the everyday practices of Federation members seem to lie in the very different historical experiences of the South Africans and their Indian counterparts. Whereas the Indian organizations, for instance the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), have been around since the mid-1970s, PD and the SAHPF were only established in the early 1990s. In addition, while the Indians have had five decades to come to terms with the limits of liberation and State-driven development, the South African Federations are relative newcomers to democracy, and have far more faith in the capacity of the modern State to promote development and eradicate poverty. This faith is not entirely misplaced as the South African state does indeed have the capacity to hand out large development resources, for example the housing subsidies. As a result the South Africans tend to buy into State patronage politics and development visions rather than setting their own agendas. This dependency has meant that South African Federations are generally less self-sufficient and less committed to long-term investment in building social and financial capital through everyday savings rituals than their Indian counterparts. The following section discusses the ways in which ‘horizontal exchange’ has become a power methodology for reflecting upon these differences and creating spaces for cross-cultural reflection by both PD professionals and ordinary Federation members.

4. ‘Horizontal exchange’ as cross-cultural exchange

While it has been difficult to sustain SDI rituals such as daily savings, there has been more than a decade of exchanges between South African and Indian Federation members. These exchanges were perceived to create opportunities for the sharing of experiences of Federations through direct learning encounters. It also provided opportunities for cross-cultural reflection.

Federation reflections on home from afar

Publications by the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (January 2000) and various affiliates of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI), as well as interviews with SAHPF members who have visited India over the past decade, draw attention to the disbelief many black South Africans experience upon encountering, fifty years after Independence, extreme levels of poverty and homelessness in cities such as Mumbai and Calcutta. These sobering encounters with the limits of the post-colonial Indian state during visits in the early 1990s served as a catalyst for the formation of self-help saving schemes in South Africa. As VM put it: ‘If you look at India they are still struggling, even 50 years after independence... That is why we started our work in 1992... That is why it was necessary to prepare ourselves before to make changes come about... If the people are not helping themselves, there is only so much the government can do.’ Another SAHPF member made similar observations and personal reflections concerning ‘the culture of poverty’ she encountered during her visit to India,

<p>CA – ‘You learnt to be humble and to appreciate what you have got, what we have got here in Cape Town. We are a little better off in the sense that the houses are bigger, and our squatters are better because people in India are just staying on the street and things like that. So we a little bit advanced... But we can learn about daily savings from the Indians. You can be surprised by the amazing trust that people have amongst one another in India. It is street people going around collecting from street people... For a street person just to give money to a collector and to have no guarantee that that person will come back tomorrow. That kind of trust is amazing. ... We got a lot of ideas from India. – toilet festivals and enumeration – counting huts and families, walk on every</p>

path and observe all the structures in the settlement – draw a map with houses, roads, places of worship, toilets etc – survey produced - gather detailed information about the community.

Other comments from SAHPF interviewees referred to visits to savings collectives in Kenya where ‘we found that the people couldn’t hold [Federation] meetings without first telling the tribal leader, even though the government and the country was now independent.’³² The idea that Federation members had to defer to traditional leaders in order to hold meetings was strange and ‘backward’ from the perspective of many of these highly assertive urban African women. One of the most common reflections on the visits referred to the extraordinary levels of trust that existed amongst the urban poor they met in India. These observations were also made in relation to the high levels of distrust and crime experienced by the urban poor in South Africa.

TM, an ex-MK soldier working with the People’s Dialogue and the Federation reflected on the many cultural and religious differences between Indians and black South Africans. Like many of the other SAHPF exchanges, these visits were a catalyst for critical self-reflection and comparative social and cultural analysis. For instance, like many other South African exchange visitors to India, TM observed that India was much poorer than South Africa yet poor people in India seemed more determined to improve their situations and seldom resorted to crime. Whereas South Africans still expected formal employment and state patronage, the Indian poor expected neither wage income nor housing subsidies and other forms of state assistance. According to TM, this meant that Indians were generally far more self-reliant and less dependent on state patronage. Neither were they captive to the myths of modernity and development. TM also attributed the high levels of mutual assistance, trust and self-motivation that he observed in India to the deep commitment of Indians to their Muslim and Hindi religious beliefs and practices. By contrast, he felt that black African Christianity was a relatively superficial affair, with Africans attending church because it was ‘a social gathering, and a way of relieving you from your day-to-day stress’. According to TM, the serious religious commitments to Islam and Hinduism informed the everyday cultural beliefs and social practices of Indians. Such religious, cultural and social commitment, solidarity and trust did not, TM claimed, express itself amongst South Africans.

These cultural and religious differences have influenced the ways in which the global ideology of Slum Dwellers International (SDI) gets re-interpreted and reconfigured ‘from below’ by local Federations. It also explains the disjunctures between the ideological positions of People’s Dialogue and SDI on citizenship and participation, and locally produced social and cultural practices and leadership styles. Yet, this cultural, religious and political diversity across Federations can also be strategically deployed to draw attention to alternative organisational strategies. Bolnick notes that it is important to draw on cross-cultural comparison in order, for instance, to be ‘more effective in an environment where you have a hostile state’

³² Federations have had to deal with a range of locally embedded obstacles to mobilisation, including antagonistic patriarchal traditional structures that are inherently suspicious of autonomous social forces, especially those that appear to threaten to undermine established gender and age hierarchies. Some of the rural-based Federations have attempted to allay the fears of chiefs and headmen by convincing them that the Federations are only concerned with savings schemes, which are generally perceived to be ‘harmless’ women’s groups that pose no real threat to the authority of patriarchal neo-traditional leadership structures. These examples of locally generated power dynamics illustrate how SDI’s global discourse is reconfigured in local contexts, in the process generating innovative organizational forms and practices.

... A million people in Jakarta [Indonesia] are facing evictions right now. There have already been about 20 or 30 thousand evictions and the logical response from the communities is to resist and fight [rather than] collaborate with the enemy... There is a lot of value in the international network [because we can say]. 'Don't send the Indians to interact with the Indonesians, because the Indians have no real experience in their living memory of dealing with that level of confrontation with the state. Send the South Africans, because the South Africans have that living memory, but they also have a history of pragmatic approaches. And that is how you see the value of these [international networks] and relationships. It is similar to an exchange programme where you send a group with a health issue to deal with another group with a health issue, or you link a group with a land issue with a group that has a land issue. The groups in Kenya need to develop stronger systems of savings and systems management ... Send the Indians or the Thais. If they have got to start negotiating with these corrupt bureaucrats who have been involved with evictions for the last 20 years, don't send the Indians, because the Indians will say 'It doesn't matter, it is fine, you must negotiate. Send the South Africans who will say: 'Yes, we ... have also had to deal with [evictions]. How do we handle that'...'.

Conclusion: 'Globalisation from below' : transnational hype or deep democracy

This paper has attempted to show how a Cape Town-based NGO and CBO have attempted to reposition and reinvent themselves within a post-apartheid, Post-Cold War scenario characterised by the developmental constraints imposed by the 'lean and mean' neo-liberal state. In this changed political landscape, class-based mobilization is no longer the only game in town. Instead, issue-based organizations and new social movements addressing AIDS, biotechnology, the environment, indigenous, feminist and gay rights, child labour, housing and landlessness have emerged alongside traditional trade unions and anti-globalization movements.

An interesting innovation of some of these new issue-based organizations has been their deployment of the media and cyber-technology to forge global connections with similar organizations elsewhere in the world. Global networking has become a key feature of what some refer to as the new global civil society. Arjun Appadurai's (2002) work on Mumbai-based urban activist movements draws attention to the emancipatory possibilities that globalisation presents in terms of 'deepening democracy' and facilitating 'cross-border activism' through transnational advocacy networks or TANs. According to Appadurai (2002:25), these transnational advocacy networks provide '*new horizontal modes for articulating the deep democratic politics of the locality* (emphasis added).

This case study has attempted to understand the processes involved in building the horizontal relations of trust and social capital that underpin these innovative social forms. It has investigated what global civil society actually means in terms of the everyday practices and strategic priorities of globally connected organizations of the poor such as PD and SAHPF. It would seem that, despite numerous difficulties, the forms of social capital developed through SDI rituals of daily savings and 'horizontal exchange' can contribute towards the emergence of communities with longer shelf lives than the hyper-transient 'communities without commitments' referred to by Bauman (2000). The SAHPF example suggests, however, that despite SDI's commitments to the building of social capital, ordinary Federation members in Cape Town do not necessarily share this long-term vision. For some Federation members the

attainment of 'the product' (land or the house) results in a decision to 'bale out' of 'community'.

The paper began with a discussion of the photograph on the cover of Bauman's (2001) *Community* of seven free falling parachutists holding hands as they plummet towards earth. This paper has shown that this striking image represents not only the transience of the experimental communities of late capitalism in 'the West', but also reflects the realities of the fragile and transitory communities found in many parts of the developing world. Despite the creative and sustained efforts by SDI Federations from Cape Town to Calcutta to build social capital and communities with long-term commitments, the urban poor are often unable, for a variety of reasons, to make these binding commitments. Dissatisfaction with centralised and undemocratic leadership practices was a widely cited reason for decisions to exit Federation savings schemes in Cape Town, but this was not the case in many other parts of South Africa. Like the parachutists holding hands in a state of temporary *communitas*, many Cape Town-based Federation members decided to 'bale out' of savings communities once they had built their houses on solid ground. Clearly social capital, like global capital under conditions of late capitalism, can be fluid and fickle; here today and gone tomorrow. But, the successes and longevity of many Federations in other parts of South African and the developing world suggests that these innovative organisational can indeed meet many of the needs of poor people living under the harsh conditions of neo-liberalism and the global retreat of the Development State.

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