

Informal Settlements

Production and Intervention in Twentieth-Century Brazil and South Africa

by
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The informal settlements or *favelas* characterizing the cities of Brazil are visible evidence that the political-economic system does not adequately serve the urban population. How has society responded to this constant reminder in urban spatial form? How are these responses translated into intervention policies, and how have these in turn allowed the perpetuation of urban informal settlements? The parallels and contrasts in informal-settlement policy and perpetuation between South Africa and Brazil provide an interesting basis for an exploration of these questions.

Broad parallels in the succession of dominant politics and associated economies in Brazil and South Africa form the “contours”¹ that are relevant to a cross-national comparison on the question of informal settlements. As noted in Lawrence’s (1994) comparison between the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers’ party—PT²) in Brazil, the two countries share the persistence of colonial structures and values well into the twentieth century. These supported the

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interests of key exports (coffee in Brazil, gold and diamonds in South Africa) through which the two economies “experienced massive growth” (Lawrence, 1994: 92). Coffee dominated Brazil’s exports from 1901, reaching 53 percent of total exports by 1908. At the time, Brazil produced 77 percent of the world’s coffee (Burns, 1970: 216). In South Africa, the discovery of diamonds had “revolutionary” economic implications (Webb, 1983: 171), with a “shift in economic geography” in the second half of the nineteenth century from the coast to the interior (Lester et al., 2000: 97). However, it was the production of gold “that was to prove far more significant than diamonds in transforming the economy” (Omer-Cooper, 1994: 126). From 1917 to 1938, gold dominated South Africa’s exports with an average of 60 percent of total exports, peaking at 72 percent by 1939 (Lumby, 1983: 217). Diamond exports had peaked in 1925 with 13.2 percent of total exports (1983: 219).

In both Brazil and South Africa, these economies generated regional disparities and social inequalities. Enclaves of privilege, forming part of the global market, developed in vast disparity to the “impoverished rural or semi-rural peripheries” (Lawrence, 1994: 92). In Brazil, economic power was concentrated in the “coffee triangle”: São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro (Burns, 1970: 220). The South African economy is dominated by the Gauteng Province, in which Johannesburg is located (Lester et al., 2000: 237). “Gauteng” refers to the word for “gold” in the Northern Sotho and Tswana languages (Reader’s Digest, 1991). In Brazil as in South Africa, postwar attempts at liberalization (in Brazil including early upgrading of urban informal settlements) triggered a swing to extreme repression through authoritarian rule—the National party government in South Africa and the military dictatorship in Brazil.

The mid-1970s signaled change in both countries, setting in motion a protracted and often ambiguous process of democratization. Radical mass-based movements emerged through popular resistance in both countries. This formed the context for community mobilization around self-determined development objectives and, in Brazil, organized demand for the legalization and upgrading of informal settlements. In both countries, responses to popular development objectives ranged from repression to patronage and clientelism. The mass-based movements became players in democratization or, as it is termed for Brazil (for instance by Souza, 1997: 181), “redemocratization,” but the privileged elite has maintained considerable power—in Brazil through a gradual process of democratization (Sader and Silverstein, 1991: 120; Diniz, 1988: 9), in South Africa through a negotiated process (Marais, 1998; Bond, 2000).

According to their per capita gross national products,³ both Brazil and South Africa are ranked as middle-income countries, comparable with Chile,

Venezuela, Poland, Thailand, and Malaysia (Ministry in the Office of the President, 1995). Because of the vast economic disparities that developed and were maintained through uneven development throughout the twentieth century, reference to average per capita income is of course meaningless without reference to the actual distribution of wealth. According to the Gini coefficient,⁴ Brazil and South Africa display the highest degrees of inequality among middle-income countries. The top 10 percent of the population receive almost half of the national income, leaving a large proportion of the population with little or no wealth (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements [UNCHS (Habitat)], 1996). While illiteracy rates for the two countries are similar (14.7 percent for Brazil and 14.9 percent for South Africa, projected for the year 2000 in the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook*), life expectancy in Brazil is one decade higher than in South Africa (on average 55 for South Africa and 67 for Brazil [United Nations, 1999]).

Given high levels of urbanization in Brazil (the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook* projects that 81.3 percent of the Brazilian population will be living in urban areas in the year 2000) and a high rate of urbanization in South Africa (from 48.8 percent in 1990 to 50.4 percent in 2000 [United Nations, 1999], with an expected increase to 68.6 percent in 2025 [UNCHS (Habitat), 1996]), the population living in poverty is increasingly concentrated in cities.⁵ With an income distribution policy⁶ that excludes increasing numbers from legal access to formal housing, the urban housing stock has come to reflect severe income disparity. In Brazilian cities the poor have found residence in slums or dilapidated inner-city tenements, in illegal subdivisions on the urban periphery, and in favelas. In South African cities, the equivalent accommodation has been in overcrowded migrant workers' hostels, in overcrowded and dilapidated township housing, and in squatter/informal settlements. Among these forms of illegal and semilegal residence, informal settlements or favelas most visibly draw attention to poverty. In Brazilian cities such as São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, approximately 20 percent of the population are housed in favelas (Taschner, 1997), with higher figures for the poorer cities in the north (Maricato, 2000). For South African cities such as Cape Town, the figure for squatter/informal settlements is estimated at around 10 percent, though growing steadily (Abbott and Douglas, 1999).

In this paper I explore how this visible evidence of inequality has been treated. I begin by examining the emergence of informal settlements in Brazil and South Africa, tracing their production in relation to early urban policies and processes of development. I explore the different bases of exclusion of the informal-settlement population from the policy-making process, contrasting the barrier of class in Brazil with that of race in South Africa. I trace the early political tactics of patronage and clientelism in localized inter-

vention efforts, alongside tactics of severe repression. I go on to identify an increasing divergence in informal-settlement policy formulation between South Africa and Brazil since the mid-1970s, with influence by social movements in Brazil contrasting with stronger influence by the business sector in South Africa. Finally, I discuss different interpretations of division and exclusion in Brazil and South Africa, asking how these have informed and supported informal-settlement intervention policy.

THE PRODUCTION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Informal settlements, developed through the unauthorized invasion of land and construction of shelter, have characterized the urban landscape in Brazil and in South Africa since the nineteenth century. In the colonial centers of Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town, informal settlements are first associated with the abolition of slavery (Oliveira, 1996: 74; Harrison, 1992: 15) and the subsequent lack of official urban socioeconomic integration, including legal access to land. From this common starting point, different though parallel processes of division and exclusion in the two countries, implemented through the pattern of land distribution, ownership, and regulation, have resulted in a different articulation of the informal-settlement situation in the two countries.

The legislation regulating access to land in Brazil was the Civil Code of 1916. This created privilege by attaching absolute rights to private property (see Fernandes and Rolnik, 1998: 143), thus allowing for unchecked land speculation that continually displaced informal settlements from profitable land. In South Africa, a fixation on racial control determined the pattern of access to land and ensured white privilege throughout the twentieth century. With the expansion of the white domain to the current South African boundaries, Africans were restricted to “native reserves,” while the system of migrant labor ensured nonpermanence of their much-needed presence in the urban areas in which they served the interests of mining and industry. The 1913 Land Act entrenched permanent racial separation and prohibited Africans from purchasing or leasing land outside of the designated reserves. This act and the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act are referred to as the “key pillars of segregation” in South Africa (Omer-Cooper, 1994: 169). In both countries, this early legislation (allowing unchecked land speculation in Brazil and racially restricting access to the land market in South Africa) later became the basis of land distribution during both countries’ far-right authoritarian regimes, the 1964-1984 military dictatorship in Brazil and the 1948-1994 National party regime in South Africa.⁷

Capital accumulation in Brazil depended on a high rate of exploitation (Alves, 1989: 279). This was made possible through class domination, reinforced by a limitation on the political franchise. The literacy criteria applied in Brazil until 1979 largely denied the rural peasant population and the urban and urbanizing poor a voice through the vote. Lawrence (1994) compared this to the racial limitations on democracy in South Africa. In both countries, mostly the nonwhite and largely illiterate sector of the population was excluded. Class domination in Brazil was reinforced also by the legislation that enabled unchecked speculation in urban land. Thus, while rigidly planned, racially segregated city structures were established throughout South Africa in the early 1900s (Lemon, 1991), Brazilian cities remained largely unplanned into the 1960s, although inner cities were subjected to avenue/transport planning (Taschner, 1995: 187, 188).

Under Getúlio Vargas's control (1930-1945), attempts were made at urban land-use planning, including the application of land-use zoning as a preventive measure against favelas, with little effect (Oliveira, 1996: 75). These attempts occurred in the course of a shift in the relationship between the ruling and the exploited classes in Brazil. Introducing the concept of patronage, Vargas was the first Brazilian ruler to capitalize on popular or working-class support rather than exclusively that of the elite and the middle class. He introduced labor laws (Kowarick and Bonduki, 1994: 128) and the franchise for working women (Burns, 1970: 300). However, state ambivalence, accompanying practices of patronage, clientelism, and the co-optation of the working class in the pre-1964 populist period (Souza, 1993: 195), ensured the persistence of exclusion.

The policies that Vargas directed at the needs of the working class included a decree regulating land sales to low-income people on the urban peripheries, a home loan system, and subsidized housing programs (Bonduki, 1994: 100, 101). In the 1934 Constitution he introduced the concept of a "social function of property," requiring that the use of private property submit to the social interests of the broader public (Fernandes and Rolnik, 1998: 145). A further populist policy introduced by Vargas was a tenancy law controlling the rent in inner-city tenements or *cortiços*. However, as this regulation rendered the provision of tenancy to the low-income population unprofitable, private-sector investments were diverted to industry (Bonduki, 1994). The resulting decline in tenement construction, coupled with the influx of rural people to the industrializing urban centers, led to the "anarchic" extension of the urban periphery, in the form of both land invasions or favelas and the illegal subdivision and selling off of small unserved plots as a form of private speculation (Kowarick and Ant, 1994: 68; also see Seidman, 1994: 211).

In South Africa the pressures of industrialization likewise led to the mushrooming of informal settlements in the 1940s. Given the segregated nature of formal land development in South African cities, informal settlements tended to develop in large concentrations on segregated portions of peripheral land, in contrast to the spread of small settlements across the Brazilian urban peripheries. A trend toward economic realism in South Africa in the 1940s led to the temporary relaxation of the operation of pass laws to facilitate the unprecedented urbanization that was responding to the labor demand of the wartime industrial boom (Omer-Cooper, 1994: 183). This was followed by recommendations to the ruling United party in 1948 by the Fagan Commission that “urbanization should be facilitated to satisfy the labor needs of industry and that the urban black population should be recognized as a permanent part of the urban population” (Omer-Cooper, 1994: 188). Though rejected by the white electorate in 1948 in favor of the apartheid policies put forward by the National party, the recommendations of the Fagan Commission were essentially those introduced through the policy of “orderly urbanization”⁸ in the 1980s.

The swing to the far right in South Africa saw the translation of racist policies into a complex legislative system that set aside and protected the most attractive portions of the urban areas as enclaves for the development of an exclusive white property market and white business. Parallels in Brazil lie in the return of legislated exclusion in an almost absolutist form with the military coup in 1964. A complete ban was placed on political activity from 1968 to 1974. The conservative project of the military⁹ dictatorship discarded the concept of the “social function” of privately owned land and instead reinstated highly individualized rights to property (Fernandes and Rolnik, 1998).

These periods in South Africa and Brazil were marked by extreme repression of popular protest and popular initiative. Informal-settlement removal during the first decade of each of the two regimes affected on the order of 100,000 people in cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, and Durban (Seidman, 1994: 213; Cook, 1991: 32; Hindson et al., 1994: 325, 327). In both countries these removals were accompanied by massive low-income housing programs, with the state production of uniform townships in South Africa and the creation of low-income housing estates through Brazil’s Banco Nacional da Habitação (National Housing Bank). In both countries, however, removals outstripped the formal production of low-income housing, leading to renewed land invasions in less obtrusive locations (Seidman, 1994: 213; Davies, 1991: 327).

While the first phase of apartheid, lasting through the 1950s, legitimized segregation and racial discrimination through the ideology of white supremacy, a second phase (1960 to the mid-1970s) disguised continued white

control with the concept of racial self-determination or separate development. A massive relocation drive led to the orchestrated "urbanization" of the rural reserves or "homelands" (see Lemon and Cook, 1994: 323), which were to be afforded independent status. This policy justified the freeze of African housing production in "white" cities, resulting in unprecedented pressure on existing urban townships, particularly where the homeland boundaries were beyond commuting distance from the city. Cape Town displayed the harshest conditions, as the household investment or consolidation base (in the homelands) was to be 1,000 km from the economic base in the city. Inevitably, these households sought an urban foothold, and thus African "squatting," alongside that of the Colored population, remained a visible characteristic of the "white" city,¹⁰ eventually forcing the state to review its urbanization policy. The Brazilian dictatorship likewise caused urban distortions. Rural populations were made redundant by economic policies, technological advances, rural labor practices, and the landownership pattern (Sader and Silverstein, 1991: 59; Latin American and Asian Low-Income Housing Service, 1981: 6; Chossudovsky, 1997: 185). Massive migration to cities led to their distortion in scale,¹¹ the industrial labor reserves on the peripheries of Brazilian cities having an equivalent in the "urbanized" homelands of South Africa.

The mid-1970s then saw signs of political reform both in Brazil and in South Africa, followed by a gradual and protracted process of political change. While the Brazilian rulers announced a "political opening" out of confidence in the defeat of their opponents and were only subsequently faced by an economic crisis that forced further reform (Sader and Silverstein, 1991: 20), the South African regime was responding to a growing crisis, with pressures both from the African opposition movement and from industry (Omer-Cooper, 1994: 223-226). The establishment of the Crossroads transit camp for African squatters in Cape Town in 1976 was a first step in an ambiguous and gradual process of concessions in terms of African urban rights in South Africa. In the mid-1980s the state production of urban African townships was resumed. With the planned removal from the Crossroads transit camp to the newly established Khayelitsha township on Cape Town's outer periphery, the camp population bore the brunt of the state's new tactics of co-optation, resulting in tragic violent conflict. This period of state ambiguity was characterized not only by new, violently displaced squatter settlements but also by the spilling of the low-income population from overcrowded townships onto open land (see Crankshaw, 1993). The redundant buffer strips that had been established around townships as "ideological friction-prevention zones" spatially segregating racial groups (Krige, 1991: 109) were gradually occupied. As a result, a band of informal settlement characteristically surrounds formal townships in South Africa.

The informal-settlement situation since the mid-1970s in Brazil and South Africa is marked by a broad shift from overwhelmingly repressive intervention measures to the gradual (and often ambiguous) recognition of urban rights of the previously excluded population. While continuities in inequitable income distribution and related high rates of urbanization contributed to the ongoing formation (or production) of new informal settlements in both countries into the twenty-first century, political change to some extent enabled the articulation and institutionalization of less repressive approaches to intervention. In the following section I examine the emergence of divergent approaches in Brazil and South Africa and their effect on the informal-settlement situation. While I engage mainly with the period after the mid-1970s, the processes I discuss are to some extent rooted in the earlier postwar years.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERVENTION APPROACHES

During the liberalizing postwar years in Brazil and South Africa, societal response to informal settlement was characterized by patronage. In the case of Brazil, I have already referred to Vargas's introduction of a clientelistic relationship with the working class, on which he relied for political stability. It was only in the populist period after his initial rule and up until the 1964 coup, when the literate sector of the favela population represented some electoral power, that concrete demands of organized favela communities were translated into government programs. However, the neighborhood associations, which were encouraged by city governments (Kowarick and Bonduki, 1994: 130), tended to be used as "vehicles of political support for populist governments, rather than institutional conduits for working-class pressure" (Alves, 1989: 278), although their roles varied according to the orientation of individual governors and mayors.

In South Africa, racial exclusion from national and municipal elections fostered informal-settlement mobilization and patronage of a different sort. Stadler (1979: 93), analyzing the informal-settlement dynamics in Johannesburg from 1944 to 1947, spoke of "squatter movements" (note the plural) driven by individual leaders. Such mobilization consisted of the recruitment of a following by the leader, sometimes in authoritarian style, the collective invasion of land, and the maintenance of autonomy from the municipality. Autonomy was made possible by the density of the occupation and the authority exercised by the leader (1979: 94). While in Brazil the favela movement had support from political parties of the left and from the progressive arm of the Catholic Church (see Taschner, 1995: 203), the South African

squatter movements avoided compliance with the two main African political parties, the ANC and the Communist party (Sapire, 1990), which in turn seemed not to take up the issue of squatting (Stadler, 1979: 108).

In Brazil, the dominant Catholic Church had been independent of the state since 1889 and despite attempts by the state to maintain power over it was able to support societal causes in opposition to the state (Burns, 1970: 206; Vink, 1985: 97). In addition, progressive activities of the Catholic Church were encouraged by the repressive practices of the military dictatorship, as well as by the 1968 decision by the Latin American Bishops' Conference in Medellín, Colombia, to serve the cause of the poor (Alves, 1989: 286; Vink, 1985: 100).

While political leaders in the ANC "drew on Christian values for the building of a broader political community" (Walshe, 1997: 384), the religious landscape in South Africa did not allow for the Catholic Church to play a role equivalent to that of its Brazilian counterpart. Across the denominational diversity of the Christian faith in South Africa (Calvinist, Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, and independent African Initiated Churches), political convictions and affiliations varied significantly. Bonner (1990: 104) speculated on the intersection between the squatter movements of the postwar years and the African Initiated Churches, which "blossomed" simultaneously among the urban poor. He noted parallels between the squatter leaders and "the charismatic prophet-type leaders" of these religious congregations (Bonner, 1990: 192). Notably, most members of the Independent African Churches¹² adopted an apolitical stance (Walshe, 1997).

In both Brazil and South Africa, the social mobilization in the workplace and the community that had developed in the postwar years was repressed with the swing to the far right (1964 in Brazil and 1948 in South Africa). In Brazil, the Catholic Church was able to maintain a degree of community mobilization throughout the dictatorship through its ecclesiastical or Christian base communities.¹³ This form of mobilization was extended into informal settlements through the "*pastoral de favelas*," giving priests the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of favela residents within their parishes by setting up Christian base communities. While the relaxation of repression after 1974 allowed political parties, unions, neighborhood associations, and progressive professional groups to take over the church's political role, it continued to play an important part in strengthening the popular struggle (Mainwaring, 1984: 98). The formation of the PT in 1980, in an alliance between the labor unions and other progressive and radical groups, including the progressive arm of the Catholic Church (Abers, 1996: 36), allowed for a new relationship between communities and the state. While the heterogeneity of the PT did not lend itself to an official ideology, it promoted the concept

of “autonomous grassroots control and direct participation” (1996: 37). Given its emphasis on conscientization, popular awareness grew over the difference between the PT approach and the patronage and clientelism offered by other politicians (Seidman, 1994: 209). In parallel to the political movement reflected by the formation of the PT, an urban reform movement was created in the early 1980s as an urban counterpart to the movement advocating agrarian reform (Maricato, 1994: 310). This movement, which brought together popular and professional national entities, influenced the process of constitutional reform. Besides other urban instruments of social justice, it promoted the meaningful reinstatement of the concept of the “social function” of property (Lago, 1992).

In South Africa pressure for urban reform came from two opposing camps. On one hand, the white business sector had created the Urban Foundation in 1976 in response to the instability sparked by the brutal police massacre of protesting schoolchildren in Soweto, Johannesburg (Urban Foundation, 1994). This private-sector-funded initiative undertook policy-oriented research on questions of urbanization (including informal settlement) and proposed and piloted the standardized and individualized notion of sites and services with freehold title as a solution to the urban housing crisis. On the other hand, the civic movement emerged in the African townships in the late 1970s (Shubane, 1991: 64) and, with coordination through the United Democratic Front,¹⁴ after 1983 spread beyond formal townships into informal settlements. While the civic movement was developing its own longer-term ideology and concepts for development, in the 1980s it was primarily required to respond to the immediate circumstances created by ambivalent state reforms. It thus orchestrated township boycotts to cripple the imposed black local authorities and set up alternative governance structures, which in turn were severely repressed (see Boraine, 1988). Development concepts, though fragile, that were put forward by the civic movement from the mid-1980s to the 1990s centered on grassroots democracy and the decommodification of basic-needs commodities including land and housing (Mayekiso, 1996: 155). This was in remarkable contrast to the Brazilian popular movement, which was demanding individual freehold tenure. Kowarick and Ant (1994: 71) argued that this aspiration in Brazil may be associated with the exclusion and insecurity faced by the urban working class rather than with a conservative orientation. In South Africa, in turn, it was the Urban Foundation’s market orientation that promoted the concept of individual freehold title or “home ownership” and thus the commodification of land and low-income housing.

Before turning to the processes through which the new development concepts were institutionalized in Brazil and in South Africa, it should be

mentioned that a further societal response to informal settlement in South Africa emerged in the early 1990s in the form of the People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter, a network of dialogue (with international links, particularly to India). This initiative led to the formation of a new social movement, the Homeless People's Federation, consisting mainly of women living in informal settlements and supported by People's Dialogue (see Bolnick, 1996). In opposition to the Urban Foundation concepts, the People's Dialogue/Homeless People's Federation alliance promoted a radical form of housing development based on active savings and credit groups.

The route that democratization has taken in South Africa differs from that in Brazil. As a result, the processes through which the emerging development concepts in the two countries have been institutionalized diverge. In Brazil decentralization of political power, with support from both the neoliberal sector (seeking a leaner central state) and the left (seeking space for political expression at municipal level), has led to "diversity in the way the political system is operated" (Souza, 1997: 6, 7). A result is that policy making regarding favelas largely takes place at the subnational level. The intervention approach may therefore differ from one municipality to the next and from one municipal term to the next. Political space for the implementation of the progressive, integrated in situ intervention proposals of the PT, combining legal, social, and environmental challenges with democratic practice (see Denaldi et al., 1997), may thus be contested. In the 1988 municipal elections, which followed the adoption of decentralization in the constitution, the PT won mayoral office in 36 cities (Sader and Silverstein, 1991: 89). This allowed it to develop and replicate democratic municipal approaches, including responsive informal-settlement intervention. However, the absence of a decentralized democratic national housing system has restricted local governments in fulfilling their housing obligation (Saule Júnior, 1998). Instead, a centralized bureaucratic housing system impedes the utilization of the national housing funds. Related to the absence of a democratic housing finance system are the long-term political obligations (intervention in return for the vote) that are created when municipalities respond to requests for favela intervention by channeling government subsidies into selected settlements (Rolnik, 2000). An additional challenge for effective favela intervention in Brazil is the increasing presence of drug traffickers in favelas and their control and patronage over residents and their community organizations, particularly in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Souza, 2000).

In the South African transition the particular distribution of power led to a very different debate over decentralization. Here it was not the progressive but rather the conservative minority sectors of society that were calling for decentralization and self-determination, and therefore greater autonomy of

local government, as a means to protect minority privilege (Cameron, 1996: 20). The ANC in turn considered a strong central government, with “the power to intervene directly in local government affairs,” necessary to the realization of rights such as housing (1996: 35). In this sense then, the centralized housing policy proposal with a standardized capital subsidy¹⁵ put forward by the Urban Foundation (see Urban Foundation, 1991) was relatively compatible with the thinking of the ANC. The main demand for government restructuring put forward by the civic movement was for “single non-racial cities with single tax-bases” as a means of redressing inequalities (Mayekiso, 1996: 221).¹⁶ In effect, local government in South Africa has come to assume the function of delivery within a broader government program aiming at redressing inequalities. Local government autonomy has thus come to mean no more than “operational independence” (Chipkin, 1997: 9). Bodies of civil society have in turn been reduced to mere advisory bodies (1997: 10; People’s Dialogue, 1995: 9; Seekings, 1997: 12). In addition, neoliberal macroeconomic policy adopted in 1996 has, as in Brazil, ascribed a more modest role to all tiers of government (Chipkin, 1997: 7). While the centralized housing policy entitles most low-income households to the basic product of the capital subsidy,¹⁷ consistent reductions in the housing budget¹⁸ render the realization of this entitlement less and less likely. As a result, beneficiary selection may be as powerful a tool in buying votes as the ad hoc allocation of government subsidies in the upgrading of favelas in Brazil.

Alongside constitutional negotiations around government transformation in the early to mid-1990s, housing policy in South Africa was negotiated in the National Housing Forum. The Urban Foundation proposals that had been implemented through the state-funded Independent Development Trust (IDT) in the early 1990s were dominant in these negotiations. Vocal opponents to the Urban Foundation/IDT position came from the civic movement (see Nuttall, 1997: 166; Mayekiso, 1996: 271), suspicious of the agendas of the profit-making sector and arguing instead for a people-driven approach to housing. While explicit confrontation then took place between the IDT and the civic movement represented by the South African National Civic Organization (see Nuttall, 1997), more subtle maneuvering by the outgoing National party and by business diverted longer-term policy debates in the National Housing Forum into practical decision making on the immediate implementation of government funding (Adler and Oelofse, 1996: 121; Lalloo, 1999: 40). In essence, the policy proposal of the Urban Foundation was adopted, the main amendment being an increase of the capital-subsidy amount to provide not only a serviced site but also an “incremental” top structure or house. Community-based housing methods were gradually accommodated through state support to the People’s Dialogue/Homeless People’s

Federation alliance's savings-based housing approach (Bolnick, 1996) and through the adoption of a People's Housing Process (Ministry of Housing, 1997), albeit within the confines of the standardized capital-subsidy system.

Urban informal-settlement intervention in South Africa remains driven by the standardized and individualized capital-subsidy framework designed for the production of new housing areas. The complex legal, fiscal, social, and infrastructural challenges of in situ intervention that have been confronted by progressive practice in Brazil remain largely unattended. The Brazilian term *urbanização de favela*, which incorporates social, organizational, legal, spatial, and infrastructural dimensions of in situ intervention, with minimal disruption to the original layout and existing social ties, has no equivalent in the South African term "upgrading." In situ upgrading of informal settlements in South Africa currently refers to the replacement of an informal settlement by standardized capital-subsidy units. This usually requires a significant reduction in dwelling densities (since plot sizes and street widths for capital-subsidy developments are rigidly prescribed) and the relocation of a significant portion of the population to other, peripherally located capital-subsidy developments. The more frequent form of informal-settlement intervention in South Africa is the relocation of the entire population to a new, large-scale capital-subsidy development on the urban periphery.

INTERPRETATIONS OF DIVISION AND EXCLUSION: DIVERGING IDEOLOGICAL BASES FOR INTERVENTION

Brazil and South Africa present parallels in the extent to which social exclusion was created and maintained. In both countries, social division was required for the exclusion of one portion of the society from privileges such as formal access to land and shelter. The way in which such social division was interpreted by society defined whether and to what extent the maintenance of this exclusion was challenged. In Brazil, the dominant instrument of social division was the encouragement of class formation. In South Africa it was racial control. However, the existence of class divisions in South Africa and racial divisions in Brazil adds complexity and raises particular questions about the appropriate interpretation of exclusion in the two countries.

Social division in Brazil has consistently been a matter of class more than one of race. Brazil's elite of the late nineteenth century had responded to slave uprisings¹⁹ and the associated threat of a unified black consciousness not by segregating and dividing the African population from the rest of the Brazilian society but by incorporating racial difference into a national identity. Exclusion was therefore legislated not through racial discrimination but through

the promotion of class differentiation. This included labor laws (Kowarick and Bonduki, 1994: 128) and a literacy limitation on the political franchise (Lawrence, 1994). At the same time, the Brazilian state promoted miscegenation as a means of “whitening” and racially unifying the population (Marx, 1998: 15). While denying the existence of racial inequality, the state applied policies for the reduction of black collective consciousness (Carneiro, 1996: 179; Marx, 1998: 15). Thus, while it has been argued that Brazilian intellectuals of the early twentieth century rejected “racist doctrines” as “one more European effort to subjugate their country” (Burns, 1970: 268), promoting instead the concept of racial democracy, Ribeiro (1993) noted that this concept was in itself based on a belief that clearly attached different values to different races.

In South Africa the legal framework that regulated racial exclusion interfered with the processes by which market or capitalist forces shape class divisions in society. On one hand, by rigidly discriminating against blacks the state induced a white race unified across different classes and cultural identities (Marx, 1998: 14, 15). On the other hand, class forces emerged within black society through industrialization in the 1940s, posing a threat to the state. With the coming to power of the National party in 1948, these forces were repressed by submitting the black race to tribal confines. A white race unified across class differences could thereby dominate a tribally divided black race (Mamdani, 1996). At the same time, selective rights to the cities²⁰ fostered division among the urban African population between a relative elite with permanent urban status and temporary or illegal urbanites whose tribal identities were maintained (Posel, 1991; Lemon and Cook, 1994). Differential rights to the city were reflected by separate forms of urban accommodation, allowing for spatial polarization between (1) state-leased family housing, (2) single-sex workers’ hostels, and (3) various forms of illegal accommodation including sublet shacks in the yards of family housing, overcrowded hostel accommodation increasingly spilling into shacks surrounding hostel buildings, and shacks on invaded land (i.e., informal settlements).

In the 1980s socio-spatial polarization was deliberately furthered by the South African state as a means of gaining control over the antiapartheid movement, which in the reproductive sphere took the form of the civic movement. Selective support for the state was won through the partial upgrading of townships (Boraine, 1988), the affording of restricted political expression to Africans with permanent urban rights through the creation of “black local authorities” (Shubane, 1991: 67; Omer-Cooper, 1994: 229), and the introduction of market delivery of African housing, by definition exclusive to the relatively well-employed (Crankshaw, 1993). Market forces in the 1980s then also led to a decline in the demand for unskilled jobs, therefore a drop in

wages, contrasted with an upward movement of Africans into semiskilled and skilled jobs (Crankshaw, 1997). The resulting rise in class differentiation among Africans means that class has increasingly become a barrier among those more broadly discriminated against by race.

The notions of race and class have been applied differently by the South African and Brazilian states to create the exclusion that is partly manifested in the informal-settlement phenomenon. This divergence in strategy between the two countries has led to diverging interpretations of this phenomenon. In Brazil there is a strong intellectual awareness that the main cause of deprivation and impoverishment is tolerated exploitation of the working class through low wages, lack of efficient and affordable transportation, and negligence in the provision of housing and therefore reliance on people's own resources in acquiring land and constructing houses (see Kowarick, 1985). The process of exploitation in the reproductive sphere or "in the community" (as opposed to the workplace) has been conceptualized by the Brazilian urban sociologist Lúcio Kowarick as "urban spoliation" (see 1979; 1985), a concept that has framed the analysis of informal settlements and other forms of deprivation in terms of class conflict and notions of citizenship.²¹

In South Africa, in turn, critical analysis is particularly sensitive to the complex questions of race, ethnicity, and identity that the South African situation raises. Thus Lawrence (1994: 95) argued that in South Africa "the discourse on class distinctions has been often blurred by—indeed, almost to the point of being indistinguishable from—that of 'racial identity.'" The question remains which consciousness is more relevant in challenging the exclusion that is manifested in the informal-settlement phenomenon. With reference to the class-based struggle from within racially mixed favelas in Brazil as opposed to the race-based struggle from within the racially uniform ghettos of the United States, Oliveira (1996: 72) suggested that "political engagement around class issues" may more effectively influence policy making than that centered on race. This, then, is the position of the PT in Brazil and more generally of the Brazilian left (Marx, 1998: 259, 269). Indeed, the Brazilian intellectual left has politically engaged with and furthered (among other things) the demands of those housed in informal settlements. In South Africa in turn, neoliberal market-oriented arguments, associated with middle-class assumptions about the informal settlement reality, have dominated the informal settlement intervention literature since the 1980s through the influential private-sector-funded Urban Foundation. The existence of class differences and their relevance to informal-settlement intervention were consciously played down by the neoliberal orientation of the Urban Foundation's position, which in turn was legitimized by denouncing racism.

CONCLUSION

Favelas in Brazil and informal settlements in South Africa were produced through processes of uneven development throughout the twentieth century. The informal-settlement situation was shaped differently in the two countries through opposing means of division. This, however, has led to parallel processes of exclusion and repression.

The formulation of intervention policy in the two countries since the mid-1970s has diverged. In Brazil, decentralization of political power to local government has allowed for the exploration of localized democratic intervention approaches, countering the political patronage and clientelism with which informal-settlement intervention is commonly associated. The intense political competition at the local level, in the context of limited resources, necessitates an ongoing conscientization of the popular class, which is required to engage with the link between practices of political patronage (in response to demand making for delivery) and the maintenance of exclusion. The progressive popular challenge in Brazil is therefore the pursuit of greater participatory democracy—greater self-determination of development by independent social movements. This is complemented by a demand for increased efficiency and democratization of national structures, particularly with respect to financial and legal support for responsive informal-settlement intervention at the local level.

In South Africa, the current challenge of informal settlement is commonly understood as the need to deliver greater numbers of standardized housing units through the national housing subsidy system, as inspired by the Urban Foundation. Intense demand making for standardized delivery results from a widespread awareness of the universal entitlement (by the low-income population) to a capital-subsidy unit. Despite waning commitment to such delivery by the national government (reflected in cutbacks in the housing budget), this entitlement continues to discourage popular movements and development professionals from exploring more responsive forms of informal-settlement intervention that would accommodate popular initiative, self-determination, or participatory democracy at the local level.

Very broadly, one may argue that political programs addressed to the informal-settlement situation have been driven by one of two opposing interpretations. One sees the harsh experience of a low quality of life for a large proportion of the urban population as a consequence of class-based exploitation (the position of the Brazilian left). Intervention then seeks to support (1) informal-settlement mobilization, (2) the grassroots-based articulation of intervention proposals, and (3) the exertion of pressure on the state for policy amendments and action, including pressure for change in other policy areas

that affect the informal-settlement situation, among them income distribution. The other interpretation sees the uncontrolled informal-settlement phenomenon as a threat to the security, health, and well-being of formal, mainly middle-class society (the position of conservative elements of both Brazilian and South African societies). Intervention based on this interpretation seeks eviction and at best relocation to peripherally located, segregated residential developments.

Short of acting upon this second interpretation, the state may also view informal settlements as a pool of cheap labor,²² therefore tolerating the existing situation and minimizing the cost of intervention. To some extent, the latter is currently possible for the South African state. The ANC government is legitimized among the poor by its removal of repressive and racially discriminating policies. In the absence of a strong consciousness of class-based privilege, the South African government is as yet under no significant pressure to redress the increasing class-based exclusion manifested partly in the sprawling urban informal settlements.

NOTES

1. Term borrowed from Lawrence (1994: 92).

2. The Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' party) emerged out of the mobilization of workers in the industrialized regions of the state of São Paulo in the late 1970s and was formally constituted as a political party in 1980.

3. Gross national product per capita in 1995 was 2.77 for Brazil and 2.67 for South Africa (Ministry in the Office of the President, 1995).

4. The Gini coefficient measures the inequality in a country's economy, taking into account income distribution and disparities. It is based on what percentage of national income each subdivision in society earns; 0 represents "perfect income equality," whereas 1 represents complete inequality (Lester et al., 2000: 232). According to the World Bank's 1997 *World Development Report*, South Africa was rated at 0.58 and Brazil at 0.63, compared with an average of 0.34 for countries of the Northern Hemisphere (2000: 323). In the Southern Hemisphere, South Africa and Brazil may be contrasted with Zambia and Venezuela, both rated at 0.44 (Ministry in the Office of the President, 1995, with reference to World Bank, 1994).

5. The harshest living conditions, however, may still be found in rural areas.

6. With reference to the Brazilian government's agreement to structural adjustment policies, Chossudovsky (1997: 177) pointed out that "poverty was not only 'the result' of the reforms, it was also 'an explicit condition' of the agreement with the IMF." The same may be said of the self-imposed neoliberal economic policies adopted by the South African government through the GEAR (Growth Empowerment and Redistribution) program in 1996. Bond (2000: 51) noted that in the year of its adoption the new policy already accounted for the loss of 71,000 jobs, with worse to follow.

7. It may be noted, though, that some measure of land reform was introduced in South Africa in the mid-1980s.

8. Meaning the controlled settling of new arrivals to urban areas and not to be confused with the Brazilian term *urbanização*, commonly applied to the “upgrading” of informal settlements.

9. The military in Brazil has acted as an independent political force, repeatedly supporting undemocratic change in government (Burns, 1970). It has no direct equivalent among the players in South African history.

10. The “gradual removal of all Africans” from Cape Town had been foreseen in the 1950s (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1956: 2).

11. Seven cities in Brazil have a population greater than 4 million (in 1995 São Paulo had a metropolitan population of 16 million, followed by Rio de Janeiro with nearly 10 million), while 35 cities range between 1 and 4 million.

12. Membership of African Initiated Churches in South Africa is estimated at 2 million for the mid-1950s (Bonner, 1990: 104), with an increase to 10 million in the late 1990s (Anderson and Pillay, 1997: 233).

13. The Christian base communities were first set up by the Catholic left in the early 1960s as a means of working with the popular sector, overcoming the previous paternalistic practices of the church (Mainwaring, 1984: 97, 98).

14. Mayekiso (1996: 76) noted that the United Democratic Front (UDF) (“a broad multi-class and non-racial coalition”) was in many ways the “ANC’s surrogate,” coordinating “the national protest campaigns against apartheid.” Walshe (1990: 394) made reference to a Christian presence within the UDF, with African National Congress (ANC) leaders affirming “their respect for and in some cases their personal commitment to liberation theology.”

15. A one-time household-based grant covering the cost of a serviced site.

16. Local government negotiations at the national level were initiated by the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO), the main national umbrella body for civic organizations. SANCO was formed in 1992 as a unitary, nonaligned organization. In broad support of the ANC’s Reconstruction and Development Program, SANCO aligned itself with the ANC prior to the 1994 elections (Mayekiso, 1996).

17. The capital subsidy product is a serviced site with freehold title and an elementary house.

18. The housing budget was reduced from 4.2 percent of the national budget in 1994 to 1.6 percent in 2000 (Ntabazalila, 2000).

19. Given that an estimated 3.6 million Africans were imported as slaves to Brazil, whites constituted a minority until the early twentieth century, by which time almost 4 million Europeans had been encouraged to immigrate to Brazil. Currently, whites barely constitute a majority (Oliveira, 1996: 73, 74).

20. These urban rights were linked to employment situation, place of birth, and past duration of the urban sojourn.

21. The concept of “citizenship” in Brazil refers “both to the membership in the political community of all Brazilians that guarantees them the right to vote, and to residence in a locality” (Friedmann, 1998: 25).

22. See Souza (1993: 198) for the example of Rio de Janeiro in the 1940s.

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