


# Housing challenge and urban regeneration: A contribution of faith-based action with special reference to a case study from the City of Tshwane

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The main objective of this article is to describe a problem portrayed into critical human conditions in urban margins characterised by the deprivation of most basic human needs, housing in particular. This is undertaken in search of alternative ways that promote a bigger plan of urban regeneration while exploring whether faith-based action makes a special contribution to this goal, both sustainably and innovatively. The article uses a case study of faith-based action from the City of Tshwane in Gauteng province, South Africa. It first begins with constructing an untoward paradoxical narrative of urban marginalisation and housing crisis scenario. It proceeds, responding to marginalisation in light of values of spatial justice and housing. This insight leads the article to sketch a paradigmatic point of departure addressing urban margins, looking at the sustainable livelihoods framework and its basic tenets that mobilise livelihood assets (tangible and intangible) to tackle urban marginalisation from its roots. The article moves on to explore a contribution of faith-based action in urban regeneration through housing value. The penultimate point of the article engages the case study followed by drawing the general conclusion and way forward. The article adds to the existing literature, employing an epistemological approach that integrates multidisciplinary sources and empirical reports on urban marginalisation. Unstructured interviews, participatory observations and personal experience on housing practice help to achieve the main objective of the study.

## Introduction

One of the thought-provoking themes and a cause of concern among practitioners today is the growing phenomenon of urbanisation associated with marginalisation, leading to degradations. Generally, this problem is rooted in urban practices that tend to disengage fundamental human needs from urban development agendas. I refer to the World Bank (Elias & Roberts 2016:2), International Monetary Fund (Primdall 2013), African Development Bank (2016) and the United Nations Reports (Pengfei, Kamiya & Haibo 2017) that mention issues such as: (1) sprawls and slums, (2) poverty and (3) lack of interventions. Responding to this, urban activists condemn these conditions caused by 'messy and hidden urbanisation' (*Express News Service* 2015 & Husain 2016).<sup>1</sup> The report features Delhi and Mumbai cities of India where one in seven poor people live in slums without essentials for life.

This article resonates from skewed plans of urbanisation that tend to uproot urban poor and most vulnerable people who move to cities to look for change and living without social networks, and they become marginalised. Consequently, they lack a place to call home to establish themselves and contribute more to their own well-being. After analysing their needs and circumstances, the article proposes that housing value is a breakthrough and catalyst of urban regeneration in general. Further to this observation, the article notes that rethinking housing solutions is a compelling issue that remains at the global research desktop. UN-Habitat (2016) warns that, by

1.The report clarifies that the narrative of 'messy and hidden urbanization' is a technical expression that urban experts use to describe global challenges experienced in building viable and sustainable cities. The problem is associated with the proliferation of urban sprawls and slums whereby poor people live in appalling conditions because of a lack of basic services, and as the pressure of human needs rise, governments fail to respond appropriately.

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the middle of the century, cities will be homes for no less than 66% of the world's population. By 2030, 50% of the population of the African continent will be living in cities. Significantly, these statistics are intended to indicate that if the urban human settlements issue is not prioritised, human living conditions will deteriorate, leading to the social catastrophe in the end.

From the local settings, the City of Tshwane is one of South Africa's major cities facing urban marginalisation that becomes a threat to the management of this city. *The City of Tshwane* (2017) records that the number of informal settlements in the inner city has exponentially increased, and among the pressing needs is included the housing crisis, water, sanitation and electricity. Engaging faith-based action, the article analyses its contribution by journeying with poor and vulnerable people who are trapped in marginalisation to envisage liberation. To achieve this objective, the article uses the literature that addresses the City of Tshwane and dramatic events of human living conditions in the neglected urban spaces. It poses a question of what extent faith-based action contributes to urban regeneration goals through innovative and sustainable interventions that eradicate marginalisation. It also poses another question exploring what frameworks are serving faith-based action to respond to the poor and most vulnerable people bruised by marginalisation. The article is structured in seven main sections: recapturing a narrative of urban marginalisation, redressing urban marginality, building a paradigmatic point of departure, rethinking a contribution of faith-based action, a case study and conclusion.

## Recapturing a narrative of urban marginalisation and housing crisis scenario

I start with a narrative story that sketches a human experience of urban marginalisation.<sup>2</sup> In 2004, I moved to the City of Tshwane to take up a new occupation. I lived in a flat situated at 137 Joubert Street in Sunnyside (near the University of South Africa). Opposite that flat is De Villiers Hof, a multiunit building stretching from Joubert Street to Meyers Street (Steve Biko).

Due to the fact that the building was not managed, desperate poor and vulnerable people gradually moved in as their alternative shelter. A lack of electricity, water, sanitation, maintenance and overcrowding are among other myriad issues that created untenable human living conditions in the building. In addition, the absence of waste management attracted widespread illegal dumping, plunging the precinct into squalid and slum-like conditions. Further events that followed were chaos and lack of control, creating a health hazard environment.

<sup>2</sup>The World Council of Churches (2012:157) helps to picture the idea of urban marginalisation. People living at urban margins are excluded from the welfare systems that benefit those living in the centre. Those living in the centre have rights, freedom, respect and individuality.

During an interview held with Linde<sup>3</sup> on 29 April 2018, one of the residents in that area, they indicated that the situation of De Villiers Hof was unique in its nature because of perceptions that among the occupants were serious cases of Tuberculosis (TB) and leprosy. Criminals took advantage of the situation to terrorise the neighbourhood in various ways including drug dealings, rapes and robberies.

In another interview conducted on 29 April 2018 with Philemon Tlalephane, who is also a local resident, he remembers that, when the authorities finally responded to the situation, they forcefully evicted all the occupants from the building without providing alternative accommodation. In view of this intervention, one can clearly see that forceful removal of poor people from their last resort in the inner city amounts to marginalisation while reflecting an image of the city without a vision of humanity.

Beyond the De Villiers Hof experience, early research shows that Sunnyside faces a challenge of overpopulation and high concentration of business activities. As Tlhoko (2016:7) reports, part of the problem is from the volume of students who are attending the nearby institutions of higher learning. According to eNews Channel Africa (ENCA 2017), the extent of homeless students has gone beyond proportion, forcing some of them to squat in libraries and even in toilet blocks. It is very dehumanising that students who come to pursue their goals through channels of education end up facing marginalisation.

Tlhabye (2017) shows that Sunnyside is not the only part of the inner city facing despair. In Marabastad, No 2 Struben Street Shelter, the only inner city municipal-owned facility for homeless people was designed for 150 residents but now faces an overflow of over 800 destitute people. The reporter laments that the facility looks dilapidated, with flooded toilets infested with worms. As the case of De Villiers Hof mentioned earlier, it is revealed that the shelter has health problems, including TB. Many reports have been profiled about deterioration of human conditions, until the previous City Mayor himself undertook a visit to see the facility (Sibiya 2014). Yet, today the situation has become even worse. For me, Ilo (2012:254–256) is correct when saying, 'the basic problem of human suffering may not lie in individuals but in systems of society'. As No 2 Struben Street Shelter residents face a lack of most essentials for life, one also remembers that they are close to the Schubart Park and Kruger Park buildings that have been empty for 7 years after forceful removals of poor people without alternative accommodation (Moatshe 2017).

The Salvokop informal settlement next to the Freedom Park is another case of urban marginalisation caused by a proliferation of shacks and bad houses, and loss of lives is reported when fires destroy structures (Van Petegem 2017). A report made by Batho Earth (2016) is worrisome because

<sup>3</sup>All the names of the interviewees used in the article are pseudonyms with respect to their request.

it shows the possibility of evicting people from their neighbourhood to create more space for urban development projects like the new Statistics South Africa headquarters completed in 2016 in that neighbourhood.

Overall, various reports show that urban marginalisation includes mainly those urban-neglected spaces that have become abodes for the poor and most vulnerable people who fight for their liberation. It observed that their situation tends to become very critical in the inner city because of being left alone to deal with their problems.

## Redressing urban marginality

In response to the above reports, challenges lying ahead include awareness of systems and forces behind urban marginalisation. Mehretu, Pigozzi and Sommers (2003) argue systematic marginality. The authors refer to a socioeconomic condition of disadvantage created by socially constructed inequitable non market forces of bias. With systematic marginalisation, they show that poor people lack bargaining power in free markets because of dominant stakeholders. In this article, marginalised people living in the above-identified places without proper housing are also facing 'systematic marginality' and 'dominant stakeholders'. The reasons why this article values spatial justice and housing as reassuring are presented below.

### Urban spatial justice value

One of the physical manifestations of urban marginalisation is the formation of slums and squalid conditions that gradually harm humans and the environment. This condition is a mirror reflecting pitfalls in ways 'stakeholders' manage the city, undermining the legitimacy of basic needs of the poor and most vulnerable people, hence urban marginalisation. The value of spatial justice set out to enhance the culture of fairness and compassion so that public resources can be used to rebuild inclusive communities.

Accordingly, the notion of 'spatial justice' is a theory and practice flowing from Lefebvre's *spatial triad*. At the core of this theory lies recognising 'urban space every day as directly lived by inhabitants and users' so that 'the dominant representations of space' do not oppress the poor (Owhim 2015:3). Coming back to Salvokop, when the Department of Public Works built the Statistics SA headquarters there, they demolished the two only shelters for boys in the city. They were promised that the shelters would relocate to the building as part of the Educational Zone (Batho Earth 2016:22). However, those like us who are residents at Salvokop find that the plan was simply a daydream.

The Nobel Laureate Sen (1999:3) warns that 'development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities ...' It appears that the Minister of Human Settlements, Nomaindia Mfeketo agrees with these remarks when she

says that the current problems poor people face include inhumanity and lack of shelter (Mirembe 2018). Yet, little is done to ensure that proper plans and strategies are in place to change the appalling conditions of people living in the inner city slums without basic services in place, and that deters them in their efforts to forge their own liberation.

Taking into account all the above reflections, it is my opinion that spatial justice value is an expression that helps to advocate well basic rights of urban marginalised people. It thus recognises that their needs are specific, focusing on housing value, as developed in the next section.

### Urban housing value

Taking a step back to see life in slums and squalid conditions, it is observed that a pressing need of poor and vulnerable people staying in those conditions is proper housing infrastructure. I imply a type of housing that is relatively well developed and sustainably managed to ensure long-term viability to break the cycle of marginalisation. To achieve this mandate, there is a need to apply a deeper sense of compassion, that is, sensitivity, sympathy, empathy, motivation, tolerance, caring and non-judgemental practices to achieve inclusivity (Clara et. al. 2016). There is also a need for practicing 'radical compassion' that is all-encompassing to achieve quality standards of living, as Babauta 2011 states that, 'Compassionate acts are generally considered those which take into account the suffering of others and attempt to alleviate that suffering as if it were one's own'. There are implications of this analysis for the city and housing value, as I look at social needs and economic circumstances of poor and vulnerable people.

I specifically refer to the *ENCA* shocking documentary screened on the evening of 26 December 2017, when the television show *Checkpoint* exposed homelessness of the university students who attend classes while sleeping on streets. Among other difficulties faced, documentarists revealed students' exploitation through high rent they pay to private property owners who shut doors to students from disadvantage backgrounds. Assessing the situation, Keppler (2018b) reports on the shortage of accommodation at the Tshwane University of Technology where this year only 5000 students secured accommodation, whereas 15 000 remained stranded. Zuydam and Mouton (2013) report that, according to the University of Pretoria's growth plan for 2025, 8000 additional beds are to be provided to meet the 30% standard. 'We are looking for well-designed, quality, affordable student clusters with supporting facilities to create a quality living and learning environment'. Here, I take my reader back to the earlier discussions revealing students sleeping in libraries and toilet blocks because of housing problems.

Aside from the report on students, *Pretoria News* (2017) covers rampant street homelessness that affects people from all ages, races and nationalities. The reporter indicates that 'thousands' of homeless people sleep in different abodes including street pavements and community parks. The reporter goes on showing that, while facing accommodation crisis, some of

them are in the city looking for employment to support themselves and their families. Dibakwane (2018) shows that somehow they have livelihoods from in-kind donations that keep them going. It is also generally observed that others do recycling, car guarding, selling and general labour. However, it is understood that income from these initiatives mismatches housing cost, hence leading to homelessness.

Another report on the housing crisis is an insertion from the City Mayor's keynote address, giving the status of the housing crisis in the city. It indicates that a housing demand survey from the Pretoria Central Business District (CBD) and its surroundings shows an immediate need for 18 000 and 30 000 housing units (Keppler 2018a). An oversight in this report is a failure to underline available opportunities showing an interest for an immediate intervention. Because of the West Capital project (worth R16 billion), the city's biggest project intended to revitalise the areas including Marabastad neighbourhood. Siliga (2014) reports that the first phase was due for implementation in 2013, with a mixed-use housing development part of it. The question to ask is what stopped the project implementation in the city that is facing the massive problem of housing. Looking at the situation, Swart (2011:78) criticises the city for its lack of capacity to drive the urban housing vision referring to the bad buildings of Schubart Park and Kruger Park.

Reflecting on the above experience, and housing value, Lefebvre's idea of 'urbanity' serves as a lesson and warning. It offers new ways to see the role housing plays in human development in that (Merrifield 2006):

a loss of inhabiting is a political, social, and aesthetic loss ... , reducing it to a mere habitat, signifies a loss of the city as *œuvre*, a loss of integration and participation in urban life ... (p. 69)

The philosopher's insight also promotes the role of housing in urban regeneration by emphasising the notion of social and political integration.

## Building a paradigmatic point of departure towards a change

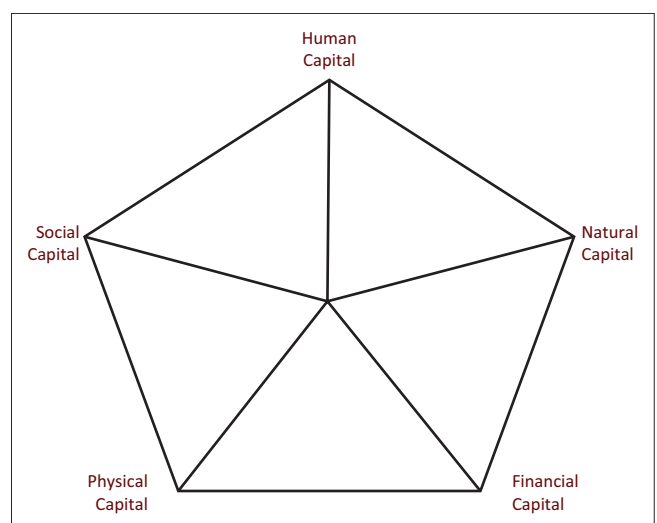
An entry point to tackle the housing crisis is entrenched in the Constitution that offers mobilisation of available resources (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996:14). An alternative theory that mobilises resources in development is the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) that becomes a new focus in this heading. The sustainable livelihoods framework is not a new concept among worldwide practitioners like the World Commission in Environment and Development (WCED) that used it to respond to concerns of food and security, poverty and the earth crisis (De Gruchy 2005:57). The British Government and Department of International Development (DFID) adopted it to address local and international social and economic challenges. In the same way, the Oxfam used it to eradicate injustice by unlocking the 'wealth of the poor' and participatory practices (Chambers & Conway 1991:296).

The SLF is also common in academia, referring to the University of Sydney in Australia that has it as a framework to generate knowledge in the areas of conflicts arising from urban spatial planning and housing (Gurran 2002; Priemus 1998). In the Netherlands, the Utrecht University employs it to assess factors that threaten the livelihood support of vulnerable people living at urban margins (Reimink 2014:13). Here, in South Africa, the University of KwaZulu-Natal SLF was incorporated into the theology and development programme for postgraduate students in 2004. This is the first time I was exposed to the SLF and I am convinced that it is a useful tool for urban practitioners working with marginalised people. Through a two-dimensional shape, Bulte (2010) provides its basic tenets as follows.

### Sustainable livelihoods asset pentagon

From Figure 1, one can observe that SLF has five dimensions relating to development as capacity-driven and participatory. Morse, McNamara and Acholo (2009:5) and De Gruchy (2005:61) give a broader understanding of how these dimensions should be comprehensively developed in practices as follows:

- Firstly, 'natural capital' is about natural resources in the form of 'tangible' and 'intangible' assets, that is, urban space including land.
- Secondly, 'human capital' denotes capacities such as skills, knowledge, experience and labour that poor people bring to their own development.
- Thirdly, 'financial capital' reflects capacities such as regular inflows of money from wages, social security and other remittances, informal and formal businesses.
- Fourthly, 'physical capital' explains infrastructure such as buildings, transport and technologies required to support livelihoods.
- Fifthly, 'social capital' embodies social resources such as networks, connectedness, relations, affiliations and associations.



Source: Bulte, E., 2010, *Evidence and questions about livelihoods and conflict*, viewed 03 July 2018, from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEVIMPEVAINI/Resources/3998199-1285617002143/7430173-1287379152106/9 Butle livelihoods.pptx>

FIGURE 1: Sustainable livelihoods: Assets.

## Implications of the sustainable livelihoods dimensions

Looking at the integration of above dimensions, I note that SLF conscientises practitioners to familiarise themselves with existing assets while exploring how better to mobilise them to address the plight of marginalised people. Connecting this analysis with housing services, I see that the urban agenda will reflect a question of urban space availability including land that respectively becomes a vital asset to drive the same objective of housing. In a more concrete way, the DFID (1999) explains how SLF provides a checklist of important issues, sketching out their linkages to fulfil development goals. Beyond this, SLF is also promoted as an informative source that helps with harnessing 'core influences and processes' and 'multiple interactions...'. As implications, one sees that SLF becomes a tool serving an urban practitioner to embark on urban land audits and listing of all available bad buildings to explore housing development options. Again, with SLF, a practitioner will go further to research the obstacles that hinder development of housing services in the identified areas, that is, Sunnyside, Marabastad and Salvokop, together with delays in implementing the Capital West project mentioned earlier will be evaluated. Importantly, SLF will conscientise both urban practitioners and poor people to be aware of intangible capacities such as talents, stories of hope, gifts, calling, vocation and experience. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993:13–14) advance this approach in terms of 'people-centered' and 'capacity-driven' in understanding that disadvantaged people play a leading role in their own development. As one can observe, this aspect is an important strength vested in SLF as it recognises poor and vulnerable people as agents of their own transformation through participatory practices.

## Rethinking a contribution of faith-based action to housing and urban regeneration goals

I now move to an important aspect of the study to analyse the contribution that faith-based action makes to long-term sustainable urban regeneration through housing, building on the above paradigmatic point of departure. By urban regeneration, I imply placing the most essential needs of marginalised people at the centre stage of urban planning conversations for their liberation. In a broader sense, Alpogi and Manole (2013) believe that the focus is on addressing urban problems in ways that benefit current and future populations to achieve the standard of living for disadvantaged communities. Accordingly, an alternative theological framework that thrusts faith-based action to contribute to urban transformation is *missio Dei* and its notions of justice, liberation, salvation, contextualisation, common witness and ministry of people of God (Verster 1991:251–252). The World Council of Churches (WCC) used this source to develop the 'mission from the margins' and incarnational practices. As a result, it was established that

being present at urban margins (World Council of Churches 2012):

We bring first-hand knowledge of the suffering that accompanies exclusionary practices, as well as the capacity to unmask the forces that work against God's will in the world. We bring gifts that are underutilized because of a lack of opportunities and disempowerment. Through our struggles for the abundant life, we become the vehicles by which the true nature of the *missio Dei* (mission of God) is made manifest. (pp. 158–159)

In application of the above contribution, cross-reference is directly made to Figure 1 and SLF dimensions helping to mobilise intangible livelihood assets, that is, 'gifts that are underutilised because of a lack of opportunities and disempowerment'. Inspired by this mission from the margins, faith-based action is in a position to generate 'first-hand knowledge' from urban marginalisation because of its direct contact with daily life experiences of suffering from most vulnerable people. By following this orientation, faith-based action is becoming a learning hub geared to disseminate: (1) updates on urban marginalisation, (2) research-based knowledge on diversified housing options to address the housing crisis and (3) guidance to unlocking capacities of poor and vulnerable people to take part in problem solving.

Looking at the works of Sarisky (2014:275) and Fitch and Holsclaw (2013:391), faith-based action needs a concrete agenda to address social and political issues that affect poor people. Inspired by the *mission Dei*, and SLF, above being a learning hub, faith-based action becomes an advocate who works hand in hand with marginalised people to address the violation of human rights. The early Methodist's contribution to promote human rights lies in efforts to raise a groundswell for the liberation of African slaves. Its agenda was concrete and robust and sometimes they led boycotts on slave-produced sugar as an expression of solidarity with the slaves. This is a model of synergy and mass action initiated by a faith action and Methodist men and women who sacrificed themselves for humanisation of vulnerable people are celebrated as follows:

The boycott spread rapidly until, by 1794, it is estimated that over 300,000 families had joined the protest. Grocers reported that demand had fallen by a third. The boycott helped reduce consumption, and before long the plantation owners were faced with falling profits. Since slavery was driven solely by profits and greed, it meant that there was far less opposition to the trade being abolished (Rendell 2015:49).

From the City of Tshwane, faith-based action can accordingly build such solidarity with marginalised people from the identified neighbourhoods (Sunnyside, Salvokop and Marabastad) to condemn slums and squalid conditions and demand access to proper housing in the city. It is through this process of becoming a companion of poor and vulnerable people that faith-based action makes a special contribution to urban regeneration goals. A selected case study in the article shows an attempt of faith-based action to respond to the housing crisis in some of neglected areas in the inner city.

## The case study

Earlier discussions on urban marginalisation landscapes showed that a limited access to proper housing in the inner city is one of the startling experiences that steal humanity of the poor and vulnerable people. I mentioned instances of health deteriorations because of living in squalor, and pointed out cases of specific groups like university students forced to sleep in undignified places. This discussion moves from the theoretical focus to the operational ground. The case study of Yeast City Housing (YCH) helps explore a contribution that faith-based action makes to address the housing crisis in line with long-term sustainable urban regeneration goals. Its legal status within the national framework of social housing sector will be noted, bringing in when and how it started. Discussion relates to its values, number of housing units that are under management, housing typology and current challenges experienced.

### Yeast City Housing

Yeast City Housing is a non-profit faith-based company in the heart of the City of Tshwane and was initiated in 1998. Officially, it operates under the *Companies Act* no. 61 of 1973, registered under Section 18A as a public benefit organisation. Its main mandate is to develop and manage social housing in line with the *Social Housing Act* 16 of 2008. Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA [2017:64–66]) indicates that today it is among the top ten fully accredited nationwide by the SHRA. In this respect, accreditation benefits include accessing government grants to develop affordable housing for families of monthly joint-income between R1500.00 and R15 000.00.

As for its background, YCH began through the work of Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF) (the then Pretoria Community Ministries). Tshwane Leadership Foundation emerged from an urban ecumenical partnership in 1993 to respond to urban changes associated with the transition from the apartheid regime to the democratic dispensation. One of its objectives came to be 'build healthy urban communities in places of struggle' (Swart 2011:52). From inception, as a social conscious organisation, its vision and ethos centred on human experience of vulnerability and the liberation struggle. It is within these lines that empowerment programmes helping to journey with battered women, at-risk young girls and homeless people were established. Other programmes dedicated to special community health care and human rights advocacy became a symbol of TLF's commitment to urban social transformation (Batho Earth 2016:24). Yeast City Housing was created as an expansion of this vision, specifically to focus on urban housing development. Yeast City Housing (2018) records that the company became the first institution of its kind to respond to the throes of the housing crisis in the inner city. In 2002, the Institute for Housing of South Africa awarded YCH as the pioneer in the provision of transitional, institutional and special needs housing nationally. With this recognition, it is inspired by the values of social justice, compassion, human dignity and community empowerment (Yeast City Housing 2018:3).

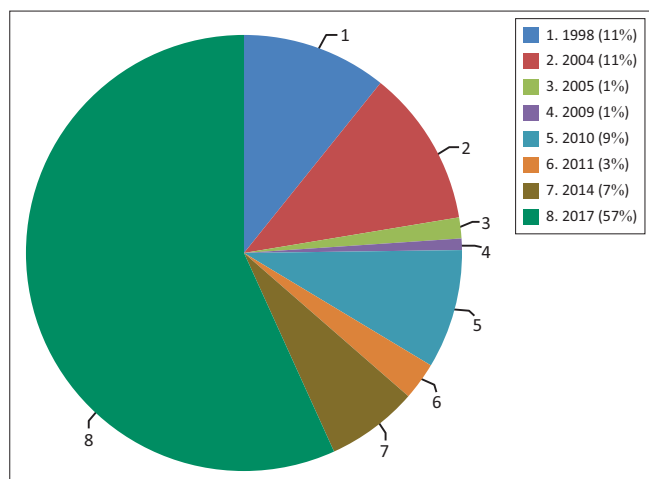
Contributing to long-term goals of urban regeneration, YCH identifies badly managed buildings in the inner city, like De Villiers Hof mentioned earlier, and converts them into safe and decent urban human settlements. Litakoemi Hof and Hofmeyr House were acquired through this process to develop socially inclusive housing units open for all races (Magome 2008:8). Tau Village in Pretoria CBD is a conversion of a notorious budget hotel that was a den of sexual exploitation, drugs and human trafficking. It was redeveloped to become a max-used social housing facility giving hope and home to at-risk girls, institutional housing units for low-income families, people living with disabilities as well as a baby care centre (Swart 2011:52).

Contributing to urban regeneration of the neighbourhoods, YCH targeted the segregated and neglected areas where there has not been any housing development for the past five decades. Salvokop informal settlement is its first target and Batho Earth (2016:23) commends its efforts for the successful completion of 88 social housing units in that area of informal settlement. As Christie (2009) points out, Marabastad is another segregated and neglected area in the inner City of Tshwane. YCH targeted this neighbourhood to pursue also its housing mandate in the heart of the city. The successful completion of Thembelihle Village development in the area provided 736 residential units that bring it to a total number of 1290 units under YCH management. Other community facilities include shops, a training centre, children play facilities, a swimming pool and a community hall (Yeast City Housing 2018:28). It is worthwhile to mention that, according to Shield (2018) from the International Property Awards, Thembelihle won the 2018–2019 award of excellence in the category of mixed-use architecture in Africa. The project will be representing the African continent for the global award competition that will take place in England in December this year (Shield 2018; Szalavicz 2018).

I append the diagrams (Figure 2) detailing the number of projects, dates completed and housing typology.

Interpreting the diagram (Figure 2), it is observed that the company has not grown organically. The study has established a number of causal factors behind the problem. As an example, YCH's Chairperson (during the launch of Thembelihle Village, 17 April 2018) drew the public's attention to complications in securing urban space to provide housing. He pointed out that it took 12 years for the municipality to allocate land for the development of this project. Looking at space challenges, in some instances, YCH negotiated with the inner city churches to develop housing units on rooftops of existing church halls. Wesley Methodist Church and Leyds Street Congregational Church are examples that provided space to achieve this objective (Yeast City Housing 2018).

Another factor is the lack of capital funding because the government can only provide 60% of the total cost of development (City of Tshwane 2005).



Source: Adapted from Yeast City Housing, 2018, *Celebrating 20 years of success, building lives*, Unpublished handbook, Pretoria

**FIGURE 2:** Yeast City Housing – number of exiting projects and years completed to date.

## Journeying with residents in their housing process

Rooted in its values of ‘compassion’ and ‘community empowerment’, YCH uses temporary or transitional housing as a foundational phase towards a more permanent housing solution (Yeast City Housing 2018:4). To reflect on this journey, I recorded two successful stories showing how the company pursues this goal. Ivy Makhubela is one of YCH’s tenants who took part in this study. She lived on the streets for a long time with her partner and child until she moved to The Potter’s House, a transitional facility of YCH. While in the temporary facility, she acquired skills and YCH hired her. Having a monthly fixed income status, with her family, she then moved to permanent housing within the YCH housing portfolio. She tells her experience as follows:

‘After moving to Thembelihle Village from the shelter, our child goes to school across the road, all is well. Then management approached me as well to advertise units for the launch on the 17 April 2017 where I met the Minister of Human Settlements. I met the Minister and was humbled by my story and how Yeast City Housing helped me. She then invited me to the Parliament in Cape Town on the 10 May 2018, where the Parliament and the country saw that there is hope if we use the necessary resources.’ (Ivy Makhubela; YCH tenant; Interviewed 2018)

Subsequently, another inspiring story is from Julia Mbete, a survivor of gender violence. While living in the YCH temporary facility, she joined skills development programmes that opened an opportunity for employment from the bank. Earning a monthly fixed income, she went to stay in a permanent housing facility with her two children. She gives an account of how her life changed as follows:

‘I moved to the Potter’s House in 2007 after terrible events of abuse carried to me by my partner and I did not have anywhere else to hide from him. I remember one Sunday I met with a friend of mine who was staying that time in one of Yeast’s buildings and advised me to seek for a help from the Potter’s House. When I arrived there, they gave me a place to stay, food, counselling and skills. After three months, I got a job through their assistance,

and I then moved to Hofmeyr House where I started paying R550 for rent. I moved out early this year after buying my own house. I am very gratefully to Yeast for offering me an affordable accommodation, which helped me save money, and I am now staying in my own place with my children. Words are feeble to describe how thankful I am.’ (Julia Mbete; YCH tenant; Interviewed 2018)

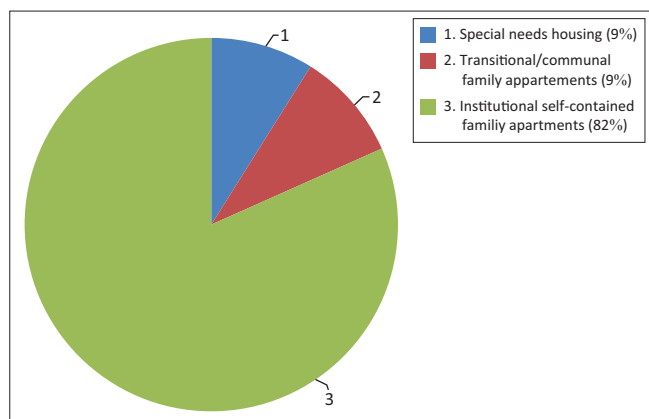
These examples and others represent models of good practices, demonstrating that housing is in a more broad sense a catalyst of urban social change. A special contribution of faith-based action is established through the above examples in that, ‘becoming a housing developer provides a way to go beyond “band-aids approach” including those that provide temporary shelter for the homeless’ (Briggs 2003:4).

## Underlining issues of concern discovered from the case study

Complications to access urban land to develop diverse options of housing aligning with social and economic situations for poor and vulnerable people has been identified as a cause of concern. I refer to Figure 2 in the article, showing that YCH has not grown organically because of the lack of land to develop housing. A lesson from Lefebvre’s theory of ‘urban space’ is hidden in the epithet of ‘counter-projects’ in that ‘initiatives by the civil society interest groups to run counter to official representations of space often face resistance from the city authorities’ (Butler 2012:144; Owhim n.d:23). One sees that YCH initiatives are also among counter-projects that address urban marginalisation. Moving forward, Briggs (2003:8) recommends a political support for housing strategy because ‘housing is a political enterprise’. This strategy has different applications that include forming coalitions with other organisations, partnership with grassroots organisations and policy advocacy. Applying this strategy in its own context in line with the discussed SLE, YCH can also consider forming coalitions with marginalised people as an expression of solidarity as they both become advocates of urban land availability for housing.

In final analysis, the diagram (Figure 3) shows that the percentage of the special needs or transitional housing units is minimum. The reason may be a gap from the current Social Housing Policy that does not make provision for the poorest of the poor citizens (PPT 2014:12). This weakness shows that if the public sector remains neutral, faith-based actions like YCH interested in addressing special needs housing problems will not achieve satisfactory results without having policy framework support. A strategy that the Project Preparation Trust of KwaZulu-Natal recommends overlaps with advocacy of availability of urban land to develop housing. Yeast City Housing will consider joining the coalition of organisations that are advocating for the adoption of the national policy on special needs housing (PPT 2014:13).

Taking into account the above strategies, the case study of YCH reflects an expression of a sustainable model of urban regeneration in two ways: (1) conversions of inner city ‘bad buildings’ into quality standard housing units for poor and



Source: Adapted from Yeast City Housing, 2018, *Celebrating 20 years of success, building lives*, Unpublished handbook, Pretoria

**FIGURE 3:** Housing typology for Yeast City Housing.

vulnerable people from urban margins and (2) developing housing targeting urban segregated and neglected neighbourhoods requiring rejuvenation.

## Conclusion and way forward

The main objective of the article has been to describe a complex situation of people faced by urban marginalisation because of a deprivation of a right to access proper housing in the inner city. Investigating the extent to which people experience this problem, the article used a narrative story from the Sunnyside precinct. This story exposed awful conditions of marginalised people who invaded one of the bad buildings in that respective neighbourhood. Events that followed the invasion include a lack of intervention to respond to a dire housing crisis, health hazards and environmental degradation in general. The article used a YCH case study to explore the contribution that faith-based action makes to respond to this situation as part of supporting the broader plan of sustainable urban regeneration. Salvokop and Marabastad precincts were identified as the major segregated neglected neighbourhoods that YCH has targeted to pursue its housing mandate and urban regeneration.

Considering all insights, the article concludes acknowledging that, in pursuing urban regeneration, faith-based action contribution goes beyond 'band-aid housing approach'. It makes an attempt to diversify housing options with a style of journeying with poor and vulnerable people from temporary facilities to permanent housing, including home ownership. Moving into the future, the article wishes to highlight challenges lying ahead:

- Faith-based action will explore the possibility to be part of bigger assiduous learning hubs to generate knowledge grounded from urban marginalisation. Through this platform, a research desk can be established to generate knowledge on possible housing options available to overcome urban marginalisation.
- Faith-based action will consider becoming a key player to develop a database of people living at urban margins, including university students from disadvantaged

backgrounds, seeking to integrate them into the framework of inclusive housing. It is this housing demand database that both faith-based action and poor and vulnerable people will use to advocate and lobby for urban housing for all.

- Urban property inventory, whether privately or publically owned, together with land audit in the identified precincts will remain on the agenda to identify opportunities for housing as well as continuing to combat the inner city decay.
- In exploring opportunities for housing development, faith-based action will target the urban segregated and neglected areas that reflect the blueprints of slums and will form a partnership with the marginalised people living in those conditions to initiate the liberation process together.

As soon as the implementation plan of these recommendations starts, it is with prayer and hope that the faith-based action will not attempt to be a co-creator among others behind urban marginalisation woes, excluding marginalised people from partaking into their own development initiatives. For housing to be a monumental achievement in the city, nurturing a participatory and inclusionary leadership style will keep faith-based action on pathways to a mutual journey with poor and vulnerable people as both companions lead a shared vision of liberation. With this concluding remark, it is finally stated that if an opportunity arises again to write about the issue of urban marginalisation and housing, the primary focus would be on investigating an alternative leadership that stimulates inner city poor and vulnerable people to mobilise themselves as they initiate synergy and advocacy to advance the common goal of better life in the city.

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## Competing interests

I declare that I have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced me in writing this article.

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