From Ideas to Practice: "Self-Help" in Housing
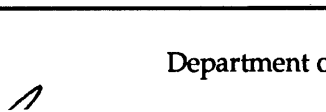## From Interpretation to Application

by

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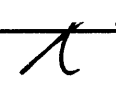MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
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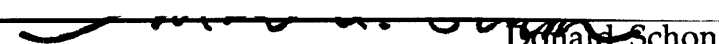Department of Urban Studies and Planning
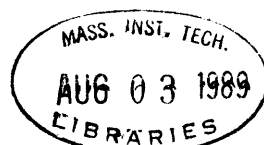May 12, 1989

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From Ideas to Practice: "Self-Help" in Housing
From Interpretation to Application

by
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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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ABSTRACT

A new idea developed in the late sixties that has changed the approach to housing for the poor considerably in the last two decades- the idea of "self-help" in housing. Based on the concept of "progressive development" with participation in the housing process by the dwellers themselves, the self-help idea has since become a new "paradigm," dominating the field of low-income housing. While most governments were initially reluctant to accept self-help policies, over the years the idea has found acceptance in most developing contexts. But in this process of acceptance, the idea itself has been transformed tremendously, according to the agendas and motivations of various groups involved in housing. Varied interest groups- the international donors, the local governments and the NGO's have undertaken self-help housing in different contexts over these years. Today self-help policies are the dominant, if not the only form of low-cost housing provision in most countries.

This process of formalization of spontaneous self-help into official policies has been criticized, particularly by the neo-Marxists who have argued that sponsored self-help has all the limitations of spontaneous self-help and none of its merits. Moreover, the incorporation of these policies in the mainstream is exploitative of the labour and an attempt by the governments and the powerful interests to maintain *status quo*. Over the years considerable debate has been generated on this topic, with the advocates and the critics sharply divided on the self-help question.

This thesis is an exploration of the theoretical and practical potential and limitations of self-help policies. Beginning with a historical critique of the emergence of the idea of self-help, its acceptance in the mainstream policies, is put into the context of the existing set of global relations of power, that have determined the course of development in the "third world." The level of generality that has characterized the above mentioned debate is questioned with evidence of varying interpretations and applications of the idea of self-help in the field of housing. Three projects all of which claim to have a "self-help" component to them are presented to demonstrate the different motivations that lead these varied agencies to undertake self-help. The implications and "achievements" of each of these efforts are so different that they raise questions about the creation of "banners" such as "self-help," within which many different agendas get played out. The danger in the misuse of a banner as noble sounding and universally appealing as "self-help" is pointed out through these examples, leading to a rethinking about our conceptualization of "problems" and constant quest for "a solution."

Thesis Advisor: Nabeel Hamdi
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For My Parents

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my parents, whom I have so much to thank for that mere words would never be enough; to them I dedicate this work as a small expression of my love and gratitude....

Contents

Preface:

Housing policies in the developing countries appear to have been swinging in the last thirty years or so. From the provision of completed housing units to the people in what came to be termed the "mass housing " approach at one end of the spectrum, the emphasis has shifted to the other extreme, where housing is not provided but "supported" by the authorities, in a "self-help" approach. This shift in policies was initiated at the international level of experts, researchers and consultants. Gradually, for a variety of reasons, the approach found acceptance with the International donors and the national governments. After much resistance to this idea, self-help housing has become the dominant form of housing provision in most developing countries today.

The research presented in the following pages began simply as an investigation into the emergence and acceptance of the self-help idea, but as the study progressed, almost a chain reaction of "discoveries" and intriguing aspects of this much used and abused term was set off, leading finally to a study, that is by no means comprehensive, given the limitations of time, but does open up a whole new avenue for further research.

The ongoing debate on the issue of self-help became the natural starting point of this research. But as the research progressed and field details of some of the cases of self-help housing were sought to be put in the context of this debate, it became evident that for all its intellectual verve, the debate was essentially removed from the complex ambiguities of the field. Working from two essentially different world views, the proponents and the opponents of the self-help debate, split the world into two, thereby reducing the realities of the world into

either of these two categories. There was a lot more happening in the field under the self-help banner that this debate could not capture.

Thus the next step was to lay out a conceptual frame work, that would endeavor to capture the variety of projects, their motivations and "achievements", in a manner that the social and political consequences of this variety could be better understood. This frame work then became the basis for examining three specific examples of self-help projects, initiated by different agencies, with different motivations and expectations.

This research has led to major concluding issues. First, not merely does "self-help" as a concept has various different interpretations, but it has become a "banner, under which a whole range of agendas get played out, often having nothing to do either with "self-help" or housing *per se*. Second, the on going debate on this issue does not really get to the crux of the practice of self-help in housing. Its intellectual vibrancy stays confined to an idealized world of theory without a schema for praxis, on one side; and local action by the people without enough conception of the consequences, on the other.

This thesis has been laid out almost exactly as it progressed, which is organized in five chapters, beginning with the exploration of the idea itself....

ONE

Exploration of the Idea

1.1 Self-Help: The Development of a New Idea

A new idea in the field of housing surfaced in the late fifties, that has since changed the entire outlook on the question of housing the poor. Based on field research carried out by a few occidental researchers in cities of Asia and Latin America, a new outlook was provided on the phenomenon of squatter settlements and shanty towns that had become a permanent feature of most developing cities. The housing situation in most such cities was extremely poor in that large majorities of the urban poor (largely rural immigrants), had no access to any kind of "legal"[1] housing options. This had led to the proliferation of slums and shanties, often with extremely poor environmental conditions and almost no public amenities. The attitude of the authorities towards this phenomenon may be understood as consisting of three "phases."

1. The legality of some of these settlements has become less questionable over the years with instances of state intervention to regularize some of the settlements.

To begin with, the attitude of the governments to these settlements was one of indifference, the guiding notion being that these settlements were a transitory phenomenon and would disappear automatically with enhanced development and modernization. But by the late fifties and early sixties it had become quite evident that these settlements rather than disappearing were in fact increasing dramatically, often at rates much faster than the growth rates for the city as a whole. The "regular" housing options including publicly provided housing was out of the reach of most of the city population.

This led to the next phase where the governments tried to eradicate these settlements as far as possible, or at least move them to less visible parts of the city. During this time the settlements were considered a "blight" on the face on the face

of the developing cities, housing the "undesirable" and unproductive elements of the city, occupying land that legally did not belong to them. The "image" of the carefully planned post colonial cities was a major concern with the planners and administrators. Their eradication was therefore justified on moral and legal grounds. Publicly provided housing or amenities were denied to these people on the grounds that if such housing was provided, it would encourage further immigration.

Yet this process of eradication was a losing battle, for the eradicated squatters would re-emerge on another part of the city. The hope of the city administrations that if eradicated often enough,these people would return to their villages proved wrong. Most of them had come from rural areas where they could for various reasons not even eke out a level of subsistence. It was at this juncture that researchers such as Charles Abrams[2] in Asia, and later Mangin and Turner[3] in Latin America, came up with observations about these settlements that were quite contrary to the commonly held negative impressions of them. They found in these settlements incredible energy and initiative on the part of the residents who despite all odds had managed to create appropriate shelter suited to their needs and affordabilty. Based on his field work in Lima, Peru, Turner demonstrated how people using their own resources and creativity had produced 50,000 dwelling units in the seven year period (1949 to 19560, while the government had built 5,476 units in this same period, which were not affordable to an average urban family.[4]

The changed perception of the squatter settlements as a "solution"[5] rather than a problem led to a new school of thinking that can be labelled as the "Self-help" school, led by Turner. This advocacy for self help has led to major changes

2. Abrams, Charles, 1964

3. Turner, John F.C., 1968

4. Turner, Turner and Crooke, 1963, p 389.

5. William Mangin "Latin American Squatter Settlements: A Problem and a Solution," was perhaps the first person to actually call these settlements a "solution" even if they had problems; in Latin American Research Review, 1967.

in the provision of housing from "central provision" towards what Turner has called "local enablement", whereby the potential financial and other resources of the dwellers are sought to be channelled into the hosing process through self help policies.

1.2 The Idea Transformed

From the emergence of a new idea in a field of research to its acceptance (appropriation) by the mainstream policy makers is inevitably a process of transformation of the basic idea, into one that is "acceptable" to these groups or agencies. In this section, the earlier discussion on the process of self help housing in a third word city, its "discovery" by the researchers, and its final acceptance into mainstream policies is put into the context of the major actors in this field- the researchers, the national governments and the International donors.

If we look at the way ideas about self help were generated based on the field work of researchers such as Abrams, Mangin and most notably Turner, we find a lag in time between the publication of these ideas and their acceptance. This is partly due to the fact that these ideas challenged the mind sets in national as well as international circles about the way housing was to be conceived. Until that point housing thinking was dominated by what can be termed the "provider" paradigm. This refers to the notion of housing being an end product that the State or housing authorities would provide to the people. The new ideas about self help required a shift in this basic paradigm from one of "providing" to one involving "supporting" of efforts by the people in housing themselves.

This change in thinking implied a very different set of relations between the common person and the authorities. It required

the bureaucracies and the politicians to accept that the common person was capable of providing for him or herself; in fact that they had been doing so outside of the "official" sphere of influence. This in itself was a big blow to the established mode of operation and administration. To change existing mind sets is one of the hardest things to achieve, especially if those in authority are going to be challenged by it. It is only when these new ideas can be connected with the existing systems of economy, politics, administration that they would find acceptance. The influence of a powerful authority, such as the head of an agency or government in this acceptance is often crucial. The process of acceptance of self help ideas in the international and national circles has to be understood in the context of the nature of association between these three groups: the researcher/academicians, the development agencies and the national governments.

As a new idea comes up, it opens up possibilities; while challenging the current situation, it suggests new ways. The new ideas are recognized, by other researchers and the academic community in general and then the people or agencies in power, (economic or administrative), adapt them. The emphasis is on adaption and not adoption of these ideas in this acceptance. In making that emphasis, the suggesting that these ideas are accepted not merely or largely because of their "inherent merit," but for a host of reasons having to do with the historic timing of these ideas in the context of ongoing efforts and failures in the field. In the field of housing, the notion of self help finds acceptance with an agency like World Bank for instance, not necessarily or even primarily because the World Bank believes in the autonomy of action by the dwellers and issues of dweller control as propagated by people like Mangin and Turner, but because of reasons that were quite different.[6]

6. Some of these reasons are the general disillusionment with the earlier development policies that had influenced the mass housing concepts, projects such as sites and services provided WB with the ideological justification for doing large scale projects that they any way wanted to do (In conversation with Lisa Peattie (Mar. 28,1989), the fact that the internal organization of the world bank was undergoing a transformation and Mc Namara's personal thinking influenced the acceptance of these policies (McCarney, 1987) etc.

This further implies that the ideas as accepted may not be the same as those proposed. i.e.. they are adapted by the agency as they best suit the current interests of the agency with the broad frame work of working towards "development." So the ideas are not merely accepted later in time but are also transformed to some degree in this process.

A similar process of adaption takes place at the next level of acceptance, that by the national governments. Here the dynamics of interaction are even more complex given the historic trends in formulation of development policies in the post colonial period. In the late forties and early fifties, as most colonies in Asia and Africa gained independence, a new set of relations was established between the old colons and these Newly Independent Countries (NICs) . The abysmal levels of poverty and "underdevelopment" in these countries at the time of independence were such that the developed nations particularly the colons, could not but share at least some responsibility for this state of affairs. Prompted partly by these concerns and partly by the notion of a global well being which most developed nations were beginning to realize was essential for their own long term prosperity, a new set of relations was established between the NICs and the developed nations. This was one whereby aid in the form of monetary loans and grants for development as well as technical assistance was to be transferred to the NICs in order to guide them to the proper path of development.

The process of development in the "third world" is intricately tied up with the formulation of policy at a global level largely through the mechanism of transfer of material and technical aid to the developing countries. While most independent governments in the 1950's formulated large scale development plans, the tendency to look towards the west for advice has

continued to this day. The reasons for the reluctant acceptance of Self help policies in housing by most national governments is not unrelated to this intellectual and economic hegemony of International development experts and agencies.

1.3 The Idea Accepted

Most national governments were initially skeptical about concepts such as upgrading slums and actually encouraging squatter like developments, and reluctant to accept them. The reasons for the acceptance of self help policies in the mid seventies are better understood in the light of the larger picture of the debate about economic development.

By the late sixties, there was a general disillusionment disillusionment with earlier development policies based on structural transformation of the developing economies. The UN "development decade" had achieved the objective of high GNP rates, but the problem of hunger and shelter in vast areas of the "developing world" were still as bad a sever, often worse with exploding population rates. Robert McNamara in his first address to the Board of Governors of the World Bank group, after assuming the role of the President of the Bank said[7]: "...as the Peoples of the world looked at the sixties— the United Nations Development Decade — they felt a deep sense of frustration and failure. The rich countries felt they had given billions of dollars without achieving much in the way of Development; the poor countries felt that too little of the enormous increase in the wealth of the developed world had been diverted to help them rise out of the pit of poverty in which they (had) been engulfed for centuries past."

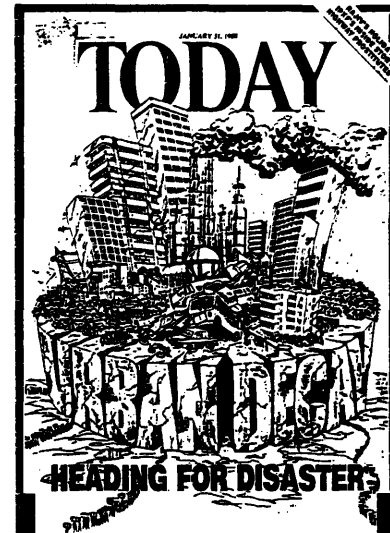In this climate of disillusionment, the time was ripe for the acceptance of new ideas in the field of development in general

7. McNamara, 1981

and shelter in particular.In the period of this decade, housing situations in most developing cities had become absolutely "uncontrollable." The conventional housing approaches of Public housing could not hope to reach this vast population in the cities that was without adequate shelter, while the private market mechanism was out of the economic reach of this section.

The other major development that was occurring globally was the Internationalization of production. This had led to development of more capital intensive industry, in the developing countries, leading on the one hand to greater unemployment in the productive sectors, and draining out of the surplus resources on the other. So a larger pool of unemployed population in the cities was emerging that the governments were finding extremely difficult to house, within their conventional approaches. Self-help policies allowed the governments to benefit a larger percentage of the population *without major increases in the proportion of investment allocated to housing.*

India Today, (Cover), Jan 31st 1988.

Along side this disillusionment with development policies, concepts such as Appropriate Technology[8], and emphasis on local scale craft oriented production, that were emerging created the right environment for self-help policies to gain acceptance.

8. Schumaker, 1976

Finally, large donors, such as the World Bank and the USAID, found in these policies the ideological justifications that they needed to sponsor large scale "development" projects. As discussed previously, their backing of these policies was instrumental in their acceptance by the national governments, as economic and technical assistance was often tied up with self-help housing.

I am not hiding here, I am living here !

1.4 Global Swings: The Development Policy Cycles

Housing policies worldwide have swung over the last four decades, almost in tune with the changing perspectives on larger economic development trends, dictated largely by the international funding agencies such as the World Bank and the Ford Foundation. In the fifties, while the development economists were propagating the gospel of development through large scale industrialization, construction of massive housing projects was deemed the right thing to do. In the early seventies, as the gears shifted with the discovery of the "informal sector," housing became incorporated into this "basic needs" strategy, with self help housing solutions becoming the beacon for the future. Now in the eighties, as global fiscal crisis deepens, and Conservatism finds its way back into economic planning, concerns for efficient investment lead us to "urban management" rather than specifically targeted low income housing[9]. We seem to have come a full circle back to the "trickle down" approach in the global housing concerns [10]

9. Sanyal, 1986

10. McCarney, 1987

What do such swings in the housing policy imply for the provision of housing at the local level? Can one find solutions at the global level that would apply everywhere in the third world ?

The recent approaches to housing, whereby global problem solving through globalized "solutions," (particularly in the field of housing for the poor masses is concerned) has been the norm over the last few decades, needs serious reexamination. Even though the approaches have changed over the years, the basic belief in "a solution" for the housing problem runs

strong. Yet in reality, in any given developing city a range of housing "solutions" are inevitably present. *I will therefore argue that the quest for a "global housing solution" is at best an illusion, even if the solution proposed is that of "self help".* This is not to suggest that we have to find a unique solution each time, but that it is not possible to find "one solution" at a global level that would "fit" every context; especially when these solutions are rapidly found, and then abandoned, as the thinking at the international level changes. This is not to suggest that local housing policies are completely dictated by international forces (researchers or donors), but that they execute a substantial influence, direct as well as indirect, on the formulation of housing policies in developing countries.

It is within a frame work of international interaction that self-help policies have become operational in the "developing" world. While spontaneous self-help existed in most contexts, official policies and programs incorporating self-help were initiated largely on the prompting of agencies such as the World Bank and USAID. Later on national governments as well as NGO's have been taking the initiative in doing self-help housing, often with very different motivations and with different conceptions of what it means. This chapter serves to provide a conceptual base on which the various meanings, interprtations and practices of self-help are explored in this thesis.

TWO

The Impasse in the Self-Help Debate

2.1 The Self-Help Debate

The notion of self-help in the field of housing, has over the years generated considerable debate amongst the academicians and the researchers. The previous chapter explored one aspect of the picture by looking at the initial reluctance, and later acceptance on the part of the international donors and national governments of this idea. The idea found acceptance in the "official" spheres, for various reasons, some of which we briefly went through in the last chapter. Over the years self-help housing has become a common part of national and international housing efforts. Despite this acceptance by the governments and international donors, the "problem" of housing has continued unabated. This has lent force to questioning and criticism of self-help approaches by researchers and scholars with a leftist perspective as being exploitative of the poor. Self help housing, they claim, functions as an ideological means to dampen the fundamental demands of the poor, especially because this individualistic approach results in a growth of social inequality and therefore blunts collective consciousness.[1]

1. Niented and van der Linden as quoted in Pezzoli 1986.

This chapter presents the two sides of this debate as two ways of looking at "reality." Rather than get into a debate about which of of these is more or less "true" or "real," which can only lead to an impasse, the attempt will be to understand the theoretical frames of reference of these two views. There is a slight imbalance in this presentation because of the fact that one of the protagonists of this debate, Turner, has left a significant amount of written information about the development of his thinking on this issue and the various influences on it. This makes the tracing of the development of his thinking relatively easy. The same cannot be said about the opponent in this debate, i.e.. Rod Burgess. Despite this imbalance, this

section is significant to the general argument of this thesis because the point that is being made here is that Turner's position needs to be understood as a product of the particular social, political and historic influences of the time when he was getting his education; the theoretical underpinnings of this position are frequently overlooked by the people who claim to base their programs on Self-help approaches.

2.2 Differing World Views

Two Worlds constructructed of the same "Reality"

Turner's Perception Neo-Liberalist	Burgess's Perception Neo-Marxist
People using their own initiative	Cheap reproduction of labour force
Autonomy of Action	Lack of any other option
Mobilization of personal savings	Govts. and rich elite getting away without giving any resources
Towards more just and equitable development and distribution of resources	Spreading the "thin butter thinner"

Fig. 2.1

How is it that two sets of people looking at the same essential phenomenon can come up with such totally different views of "reality?" The two views may be presented in a rather simplistic fashion, as is done above.

Is either of these two views of the same phenomenon more "real" than the other? Nelson Goodman in his argument against positivist as well as relativist theories, argues that the "reality" of our world consists in ways of defining that world. These realities are constructed on the frames of reference we may use to understand and define and even create our worlds.[2]

"Frames of reference,.... seem to belong less to what is described than to systems of description.....We are confined to ways of describing whatever is described. Our universe, so to speak, consists of *these ways* rather than of a world or of worlds."[3]

2. Goodman, Nelson , Ways of World Making, 1985.

3. ibid p.2-3. emphasis is mine.

Assemblies
(completed houses)

Components
(upgrading/ Sites & Services)

Elements
(land, building materials, labor,& management skills etc.)

Public Input →

Private Output →
and Private Input
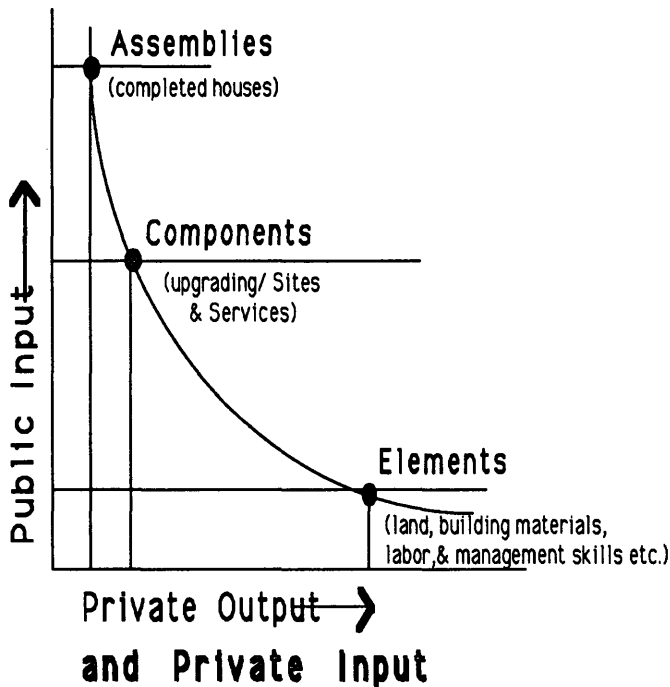
Diagram by Turner entitled
Increasing the Returns on Public Investment

Source: Building Communities Bertha Turner ed.(1987)

Fig. 2.2

This diagram is an illustration of the ways in which two sets of people might view the same phenomenon very differently. While Turner considers the returns to public investment as increasing as we move down the spectrum from the provision of Assemblies (completed units) towards the provision of components. The neo-Marxist perspective would point out that the return to the investment increases because the low income people are forced to invest more, ie. all that occurs is a shift in expenditure from the government to the people.

4. ibid p.18

Thus a phenomenon is as real as the frame of reference one is using to define that phenomenon. The "reality" or "truth" behind these worlds is not the issue here, (for "Truth, far from being a solemn master, is a docile and obedient servant"[4]); rather the frames of reference within which one or the other of these worlds holds true is the center of inquiry. These worlds are themselves constructed of preexisting worlds, that are then the references for the creation of a new world.

This is of important consideration when we are dealing with the question of housing largely because these ways of defining reality have great significance on our proposals for "solving' the problems. Therefore it seems relevant to be understanding it in some depth here. The next section examines how these two sets of people have made their worlds, or what are the frames of reference they are using?

I will not attempt to go into details of their proposals or recommendations, which I would assume most readers to be fairly familiar with, but inquire into the ways in which they have constructed these worlds, i.e. the backgrounds and circumstances that have influenced the thinking; and the theoretical underpinnings of their background which are an important element of this shaping of their world views.

According to our statistics, Sir, 50 % of the population lives below the poverty line in utter misery and 50 % above the poverty line in utter misery !

2.2.1 Turner's World
Neo-liberalist / Anarchist Perspective

"Centrally managed organizations tend to be hierarchic and authoritarian. Community based organizations on the other hand can be directly democratic, and have little need for elaborate lines of command.." (Turner 1988)

Turner was certainly not the first researcher to have realized the potential of the peoples spontaneous action in housing themselves,[5] but he has been the most influential in bringing the issue to the forefront of housing debates. Turner's views on housing were shaped by the confluence of a variety of factors; I have tried to present some of them in the following passages.

5. Charles Abrams, Mangin, and others had been writing on the issue and publishing earlier than Turner.

Turner was a student of architecture at the Architectural Association School in London in the 1950's, getting the conventional "design" education. One of the first steps in his evolution as a housing advocates was his "de-schooling and reeducation" in the squatter settlements of Peru. The theoretical base for this process had already been laid in his mind earlier through his exposure to the writings of Patrick Geddes.[6]

6. Turner in the "Reeducation of a Professional," in Turner and Fichter eds., 1972.

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"... Geddes' work caused me to doubt the value of my professional schooling..... Geddes taught me to think in terms of the relationships between man and his environment - a habit of mind that is essentially incompatible with professional compartmentalization."[7]

7. ibid p.122

This disenchantment with the professional education he had been receiving was further strengthened by his meeting with

8. Colin Ward in Preface to "Housing by People" by Turner, 1977.

9. Turner in Turner and Fitcher eds. 1972, p.124

10. Kropotkin as interpreted by Miller in "The Conquest of Reality: The Social Theory of Anarchist Communism", in Miller 1976. Miller further states " So long as there is *any* governing process, some men will be making political decisions for others, which is tantamount to an continuation of the exploitation of the past. This is a crucial part of Kropotkin's argument and one which separates him entirely from Marxist as well as non-Marxist socialists."

11. Kropotkin, in "Conversation with Lenin" p.327

12. Bottomore et al 1983 p.18 as quoted in Pezzoli, 1986

two "anarchist" influences; Colin Ward in England, who has since remained his most ardent supporter, and a lesser known meeting with the Italian architect Giancarlo de Carlo in Venice in 1952.[8] Turner along with co-student Patrick Cook at the AA school in London, had met de Carlo and Colin Ward at this time, and the four began working out early issues of participatory practice in housing and architecture in general.

Colin Ward also suggests the influence of the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin on Turner's thinking. This is discernible in his early writings , where his concerns with the "autonomy of people's action" were most clearly articulated as was his dissatisfaction with the confining effect of large institutionalized bureaucracies such as the United Kingdom, where he was living learning and practicing. His problem with accepting the "Marxist antithesis"[9] to the issue of social change in the realm of architecture was also in some ways reflective of this influence. Kropotkin had articulated similar concerns, in his formulation of "anarchist-communist" principles. The basic features of this future society were "the abolition of hierarchical authority,..... the end of all state systems regardless of their form."[10] While Kropotkin's anarchist thinking was oriented more towards "cooperative" forms of organization,[11] or the "socialist" anarchy, Turner's writings have shown him to favour "individual" anarchy — a frame which "emphasizes individual liberty, the sovereignty of the individual, the importance of private property or possession, and the inequity of all monopolies."[12]

It is within these intellectual influences that Turner was working in the Post World War II Britain, where the problem of housing in sheer numbers had led to a large scale "Public Housing" programs, consisting of large impersonal housing

estates. The role of the architect in these developments had become a mere subsidiary to the technology with the "problem" of housing being "solved" in a "number crunching" exercise. But the important point was that given its industrial power and wealth, Britain was able to contain the housing problem with this approach. The issues of satisfaction of the users had not yet become all important, even though discontent with the social impacts of such housing schemes was beginning to surface. In any case , given the highly institutional approach to housing in Britain, there was not much scope for the kind of housing practices that Turner's thinking would logically lead him to. His thinking led him to ".....involve himself as closely as he could with all the people concerned, ..." ; Yet "..The possibilities for a young and inexperienced professional to get as involved in such a thoroughly institutionalized country as the United Kingdom seemed remote."[13]

13. Turner in "Reeducation.... " op cite.p.124

Therefore, when in 1955-56, he was invited to work in Peru by a Peruvian architect Eduardo Niera, he "jumped at it" ..."As I came to realize the perverse nature of the premises on which professionalism and institutionalization of services (and values) are based, I began to understand how and why the established system is so often counter productive and so rarely enjoyable. .....When the house becomes a commodity supplied through paternalistic agencies, there is no room for the enjoyment of the process itself."[14]

14. ibid p. 133

Coming with an anarchist perspective, yet living and working within a highly institutionalized context, Turner accepts the notion of people helping themselves as *a priori* positive and sees the large heteronomous structures as the big hindrance to the achievement of this objective. In the spontaneous settle-

ments, he finds the unleashing of the creative potential of the people, which large institutionalized contexts would not allow. Since his conception of the problem lies in these huge bureaucracies, his solutions, are the breaking down of these bureaucracies into many smaller autonomous units. "..... housing is treated as a verbal entity, as a means to human ends, as an activity .... in which the users-as a matter of economic, social and psychological common sense- are principal actors."[15] Yet as we will see in the following passages, Turner is not recommending a withdrawal of the State apparatus from the housing process. Rather he advocates a division of roles whereby the people do what they are capable of doing most efficiently, i.e. manage and/or construct their own dwellings; but "local control depends on personal and local access to resources which only central government can guarantee."[16]

15. Turner, "Housing as a Verb" in Turner and Fitcher, eds.1972
16. Turner, 1976 p.6

Turner based his work on case studies of squatters in Peru, Lima, in the late fifties and early sixties. The problems associated with the rapid expansion of slums were according to Turner a result of failure of the planning institutions and poor housing policies and legislation. His case studies demonstrated that the housing provided by the governments was not only "costly, rigid, stultifying and depressing"[17] for the users, but by its very nature it could only serve a few people at the expense of the majority. These policies he argued were based on "ignorance of the residential needs and priorities and to the consequent misunderstanding of the urban settlement process."[18]

17. ibid p.121
18. Turner, 1968, "Housing priorities..." p.354
19. as summarised by Rod Burgess

Briefly his policy recommendations[19] are as follows:
1) Legislative controls limiting the concentration of resources and facilitating the supply of land, technology and credit to low income people.

2) the modification of existing legislation on minimum standards and building procedures (to more realistic levels so as to reach a larger section of the population)

3)The introduction of legislation and planning practice that sets limits (i.e. it is "proscriptive") rather than procedural lines (i.e. "prescriptions") for housing activities.

4) The legislation of tenure and land, now illegally occupied by the squatters; this is to encourage the consolidation of the housing stock by encouraging private investment, which his research demonstrated was related to the real or perceived security of tenure.

5) The clear separation of various levels of authority in housing, whereby the roles of the central and the municipal governments are limited to the provision of land, services and credit to the people.

6) The encouragement, if possible to informal sector activities through proscriptive legislation that gives decentralized technologies and local systems of labour, finance and materials, greater access to resources.

2.2.2 Burgess' World
Neo Marxist Perspective

" The philosophers have only interpreted
the world in various ways;
the point, however, is to change it"   (Marx 1845)[20]

20. Marx 1845, (as quoted in Simmie, 1985)

Just as Turner has been the most eloquent and vociferous advocate of self-help in housing, Rod Burgess, an English Geographer has been his most ardent opponent. But tracing the development of his argument at a personal level is not easy to do, for unlike Turner, who has left a fantastic account of the

development of his thinking, Burgess, who has also based his work on the same squatter settlement s in Peru as Turner, has not published any such accounts. In this section, I am going to present Burgess's frame of reference as a general neo-Marxist frame of reference.

The Marxist approach draws upon "historical materialism to focus on, among other topics, the position of housing as a commodity system in a system of commodity production and the role of housing as an essential element in the reproduction of the labor force."[21] The "materialist view of social relations of production" is the key to understanding any process of production."A Marxist analysis of housing in capitalist society must start with the commodity form."[22]

The present "duel" between Turner and Burgess runs very similar to the debate occurring over a century ago in the context of Industrializing Europe, between the "Marxist" Fredrerick Engels, and the German "Proudhonist", who later revealed himself to be A. Mulberger. While Marx himself never addressed the question of "housing" *per se*, Engels, his ardent supporter, friend and coauthor, was "forced" to reply to a series of articles that appeared in the early 1880's in the German Social Democratic party organ *Der Volksstaat* . This was the phase in nineteenth century Europe when the theoretical debate on whether the housing problem could be solved under Capitalism had reached its height. So, this present debate is neither new nor un-precedented. The tone of the debate (personalized, tearing each others statements and theoretical claims apart etc.) were remarkably similar to what we see happening today, a century later. The only difference is that today the debate concerns housing in the "developing' countries, whose trajectory of Industrialization is necessarily

21. Basset and Short, 1980, p.1 as quoted in Pezzoli, op.cite
22. Berry, 1979 p.3

going to be very different from that of the nineteenth century Europe, not only because of an altogether different global economic relationship, but also because of simultaneous "evolution" of the capitalist mode of production and the "welfare state" in a direction unpredicted by Marx. (ref??).

The neo-Marxist perspective on housing derives from the Marxist notion of inherent class struggle under a capitalist mode of production. "As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist it is folly to hope for an isolated settlement of housing question or any other social questions affecting the lot of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and appropriation of all the means of subsistence.... by the workers themselves."[23]

23. Engels, (1872) 1976.

The approach taken by Turner was essentially focussing on the institutional structure of housing with reference to bureaucracy, technology and scale. The manipulation of land uses institutions and groups interested in land markets with varying motivations, ideologies and power is the focus of attention there. Marxists on the other hand argue that such institutions and groups cannot be regarded simply as actors obeying some logic peculiar to themselves. Their behavior, the Marxists argue "is structured by deeper underlying logic of capital and its laws of accumulation and circulation in a specific mode of production."[24]

24. Basset and Short, op cit.

Recent work based on Neo-Marxist approaches has attempted to explain the socio-economic and political forces that broadly determine the housing problem. The political role of the state and its implications on the housing problems and policy developments in recent years, particularly with the recom-

mendations of the self-help advocates has formed the basis of the neo-Marxist argument. The state, far from being a passive reflection of or instrument of class struggle, is viewed as a relatively autonomous, sometimes crucial participant in its own right.[25]

25. Pezzoli, op cit p. 39

Without going into the range of these critiques, in the next few passages, I will out line the arguments used particularly by Burgess to attack the self-help advocacy of Turner. The basic flaw that Burgess finds in Turner's work is "the contradiction between the way in which he recommends economic and technical changes of a draconian nature with an almost regal flourish of the pen; and yet at the same time he is unwilling to contemplate any radical change in the political system;" and the "depoliticization" of the housing question, whereby class struggle over use and access to land is ignored completely.[26]

26. Burgess in Ward ed. 1982. p.75

On the issue of regularization of tenure:
Rod Burgess critiques the "merits of private property and Turner's arguments in favour of legalization of squatter land," in much the same way as Engels had done a century ago with the arguments of "anarchist Sax...that housing problem can be solved only transferring property in dwellings to workers."[27]

27. ibid p. 79. Actually Engel's had critiqued the "Proudhonist" Mullers' recommendations about the merit of private ownership of land in this citation by Burgess, not Herr Sax's. Engels attacks the "Philanthropist Sax's recommendations in the next essay, "How the Bourgeoisie solves the Housing Question" in this same book, "The Housing Question, (1872); see Engels 1976.
28. ibid p.31

Engels had questioned the basic assumption of house ownership (as embodied in the "Self-help" proposals) as being most detrimental to their struggle for eventual "revolution" towards a worker controlled society. "Once the workers are flung back into these stable conditions (of home ownership) and the "social whirlpool" has been happily removed,....(It) would turn the present day workers into just such narrow-minded, crawling, sneaking servile souls as their great -great-grandfathers were."[28]

Essentially, Burgess argues that the "system of localized trusteeship which is an up to date version of systems common through out the pre-industrial world in which only the use of the land can be used,"[29] is first difficult to achieve under the present conditions of capitalism in the third world, and second, even if it could be achieved, "how far would it go towards solving or mitigating the housing problem? From the squatters point of view the difference between the nationalization of land and locally controlled usufruct is a complete irrelevance as long as the capitalist mode of production remains intact."[30]

29. Burgess op. cit. p.80
30. ibid

On the issue of appropriate standards:

He argues that the minimum standards imposed by the authorities have historically been used by the authorities 1) as a "method of reinforcing the class segregation of urban habitat," to the detriment of the low-income groups and 2) there are rules designed to facilitate the dominance of Industrial forms of production in the context of certain middle-class ideologies attached to the finished dwelling. So the minimum standards regulation merely "fortifies" this dominance of industrial housing production, but does not "determine" it. "This dominance is rooted in the capitalist mode of production."[31]Therefore he argues that Turner's recommendations on lowering of standards would in effect "legislate" the duality of standards one presently finds in the unequal housing conditions in any case, without challenging the cause of this duality. "What is in effect needed is a set of provisions that apply equally to all, precisely because all groups in society have equal rights to adequate housing ....".[32] So what Burgess recommends is not less controls but controls, but in fact a set of maximum standards, "that would prevent the disgusting display of sumptuous housing in the midst of appalling poverty.."[33]

31. ibid p.83
32. ibid p.84
33. ibid.

On the issue of Finance, Materials and the Informal Sector: Turner's recommendations on the issue of access to finance and building materials (which in a squatter settlement is being provided by the informal sector), are trusted to the state, Burgess argues that this is an impossible thing to achieve, given that the state's own interest are bound by the process of capital accumulation and cannot get beyond them. The state in most third world countries is itself dependent on the foreign monopoly capital and has no control over the actual determination of the rates of interest on this capital.[34]

34. ibid p.81-82

Similarly, essential building materials such as cement, iron, steel etc. are controlled by national or even international monopolies, and their pricing is again beyond the power of the state. There is a clear inference here as in all his recommendations, Turner is taking us to the brink of critical intervention, only to show that it is not possible (under the present conditions of production relations).

Summarizing what the neo-Marxists argue will be the practical outcomes of Turner's recommendations, Niented and van der Linden [35] say:

35. Niented and van der Linden 1985 as quoted in Pezzoli, 1986.

"Turners recommendations will be welcomed by the state as the protector of capitalist interests. First because labour is enabled to reproduce and maintain itself cheaply, thus having a lowering effect on wages. Second, self help housing functions as an ideological means to quieten the fundamental demands of the poor, especially because this individualistic approach will result in a growth of social inequality and therefore blunts collective consciousness. Third, by legalizing autonomous housing, the whole housing process is incorporated in the capitalist market. The penetration and dominance

of the industrial financial and landed capital is greatly facili-
tated by... (this).. incorporation.Housing will assume its
manifest commodity form. The ultimate result ..will be the
expulsion of the poor from their self-help settlements."

The neo-Marxist frame of reference that Rod Burgess uses in
his construction of this reality leads him to see the problem in
the existing mode of production, which creates conditions
whereby the poor have no option but to find their own
solutions and help themselves. It is not so much the bureauc-
racy that is a problem in this perspective, but the insertion of
this bureaucracy in the market exchange economies that have
pervaded the world. Therefore, he does not anticipate, the self
help solutions offered by Turner to achieve anything at all. On
the contrary, he sees self help as yet another tool of control that
the governments can use to suppress the poor even further.

2.3 Is there a way out of this Impasse?

Is one of these world views more "real"than the other? The
question is not whether one is more real than the other (they
both hold elements of truth within them of the existing
conditions), but given these realities, how do we proceed with
the question of housing and the role of self-help in it.

Rhetoric aside, both these view points are essentially splitting
the world into two. Inevitably the debate that follows is highly
abstracted, leading to positions that seem untenable. Within
the world of self-help there is a variety of concepts, actions and
expectations from what is variously understood to constitute
self help. The general assumptions or critique of self help
assumes *one* notion of this concept which is not questioned in

a debate such as the preceding one. That in essence is the reason why we get locked in an impasse. If this was a debate confined to the distant obscurity of the academic ivory towers, it would be less of a concern to this thesis. However, both these views do imply different kinds of action, and over the years recommendations emerging from this debate have formulated and reformulated the housing policies in the "developing" countries.

Over the last two decades, we can find a tremendous variety of projects, in varying contexts and undertaken by different groups, all of which can lay claim to have a component of "self help" in them. It would seem reasonable to at least try and understand what all self help might be assumed to embody and how it might become operational in practice.

The next section sets out to explore this very world of self help. Without attempting to provide a better or clear definition of self help, the attempt would be to explore its various interpretations and their practical implications.

THREE

Towards
a Conceptual
Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is an exploratory one, meant to provide a conceptual frame work for understanding the range of practices that can come under the broad rubric of "self help." It begins by exploring the range of these practices, in terms of two broad aspects: the organization of self-help and the socio-political consequences of such an organization.

The organizational aspect of self-help refers to the various agencies or institutions that undertake self-help projects and their motivations fort doing so. This aspect is explored within the following range: who the various initiating forces for self help are, what their motivations are for doing so, and how do they conceive of self-help?

Next, an attempt is made to conceptualize this range and variety in a manner that begins to relate the source of initiation of self-help (i.e. whether it is the "People" or the "State"), with the definition of who constitutes the "self," (i.e. single person versus a group or a community). Further, it looks at the socio-political implications of this interplay on the "effectiveness" of a self-help approach.

The aim is not to construct neat categories or pockets into which one kind of program or another,can be housed, but quite the reverse; to build up a range of possibilities, within which a program might span a section. In fact this is an attempt to understand the play of factors that can make a program or a policy tend more or less towards one or the other end of this spectrum. In so doing, we might begin to look at these programs as bearing variety of potentials and possibilities, that get played out in a particular manner in a context,

depending on the particular conditions in which they become operational.

3.2 Self-Help: a multi-facetted concept

The meaning and scope of self-help policies in the field of housing for the poor, has acquired considerable significance over the last two decades. Over these years, a whole array of practices, programs and policies have had a component of self help in them. In fact, I would begin with the premise that all housing, other than a complete unit provided by the authorities or by private developers, has an explicit or implicit self-help component to it. In this category one could include a range spanning the self help initiative of the individual squatter at one end to the self built housing (commonly referred to as plotted development) by the middle and the upper middle classes at the other end of this range. Included within this range is the "aided" self help housing initiated by the governments or international donor agencies, projects sponsored by community groups, community development corporations (CDC's) or the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's).

Within the self help housing policies and practices for the poor, the range and types of self help, the motivations for self help, the source(s) of self help and the forms of self help are varied, as are the assumptions about the contexts in which these policies would become operational. Also embodied in these different policies are different assumptions about who it would involve, in what way; as are assumptions about the obligations of the people (the dwellers) towards the group initiating it, towards themselves and towards the State.

In this wide array of housing practices, the implicit or explicit notion of self help embodied would expectedly vary, as would the motivations behind the projects. Even though the housing practices of the upper and middle classes in housing themselves have a strong self help component to them, for the purpose of this paper I am going to concern myself with housing for the poor. The reasons for this "exclusion" of the rich is that the kind of self help practices they employ have historically been within the accepted legal framework. They have been able to access land legally unassisted (at least directly unassisted)[1] by the governments. The concern in this paper is more with the ways the concept of self help, inspired by the action of the poor and unassisted masses has been incorporated officially into mainstream practices.

1. The traditional critique from the left about the class relations (conflicts) where by resources including land are appropriated by the rich minority with the compliance of the ruling class (which in turn is controlled by the dominant interest groups) would lead us to conclude that this self help by the rich is in fact, indirectly assisted by the state.

3.3 Organizational Aspects

For the purpose of a better understanding of the concept of self-help housing, one can look at it in the following framework, accepting of course that there are overlaps with-in this division :

1) Who initiates self-help, who are the "actors" involved ?
2) What are the motivations for doing self-help housing ?
3) What is "self help" assumed to be in the project or program, or what role are the dwellers expected to play ?

3.3.1 Who Initiates self -help?

a) Self initiated self-help:
Before self-help was officially accepted by the governments, it was largely initiated by the poor themselves, either singly,

or collectively. These practices have varied from context to context, depending on the particular social, economic and political conditions. While in the Asian context, squatting by single families or small groups of families with prior lineal or social ties is most commonly found, in the case of Latin America, large scale organized land invasions are not uncommon.

b) Self-help initiated by Private developers :

A very common form of self-help housing has been one where private developers have taken over a piece of land, in a quasi-legal[2] fashion, and developed it without official sanctions or out side of the regulations or zoning codes of the city. Once the land has been subdivided and settled, either the private developers or the local politicians (sometimes the same people), would petition to the authorities on behalf of the dwellers for provision of basic services. Large parts of major cities almost all over the developing world have grown this way, from the "unauthorized colonies" of Delhi, to the "company housing" in Nairobi, to the "barrios" of Mexico city.

c)State Initiated self-help:

Since the mid-seventies however, we see state initiated programs as well that have a small or large self help component. Some of these can be in the form of upgrading or provision of land and services with or without a core house(S &S, core housing etc.) or actual construction of houses with the active participation of the people, in the construction process. This kind of self help is often labelled "Aided self-help."

d)Self-help Initiated by International Donor and Lending Agencies:

Self-help initiated by the international donors generally occurs

2.by quasi-legal, I mean that land, used for agriculture or lying vacant generally on the peripheries of a city, is actually legally purchased by the developer from the owner, but often at very low rates and by dubious means such as the "power of attorney" etc.

in conjunction with the state programs—in fact to begin with states were"pushed" by agencies such as the World Bank and the USAID to initiate aided self-help housing programs, as discussed in the first chapter.

e)Self help Initiated by Non Governmental or Private Voluntary Organizations (NGO's or PVO's):
The other kind of self help which is initiated by either a non governmental organization, such as a church group or a CDC, has been practiced as a legally recognized form of self help but also as a means of serving and helping the poor in illegal settlements. The kind of help rendered may be in the form of environmental or health and education upgrading, or in the form of helping the poor make a case for legal recognition by the authorities. Lately "official" self-help programs (with or without International funding), have involved NGO's or PVO's.

3.3.2 What are the motivations for initiating Self-help housing ?

In an earlier section, some of the motivations for the acceptance of self-help policies by the national governments as well as International donors were explored. Without getting repetitive, the motivations for the various agencies and actors listed in the preceding section will be the focus here.

a) Finding a foot-hold in the city: This is the most common and basic motivation that makes a poor person (generally a migrant from the rural areas) in search of shelter in the city erect a make-shift shelter of some sort on any available piece of land. This kind of shelter is generally found close to employment centers, factories or close to major lines of

Ah, soon I can get my family down. It seems they are going to widen this pavement!

transport, e.g.. along railway lines, or water ways.

b) As a means of land development and profit making: Most small time private developers, sometimes owners turned developers, turn to land development as a response to the high unmet demand for low income housing, that neither the State, nor the market is able to provide. In various cases this has been catalyzed by government attempts at "regulating" land markets, by land ceiling acts or other such legislative devices. in the case of Delhi for instance, the government took over the development of all private land within the defined metropolitan limits of Delhi. Once this decision was publicly manifest, the owners of the land, generally small scale farmers were offered better prices for their land by private developers, than the government had decided upon. Making use of the bureaucratic delays in the actual takeover of the land by the authorities, many of the farmers sold their land to private developers, or turned developers themselves, and subdivided and sold the land to people who were willing to pay the relatively low prices for this unserviced land. The people so served were not the poorest of the poor, but low-rung government employees, auto-rickshaw drivers, even school teachers, who had jobs and a regular source of income, but nowhere near enough to get them housing with-in the "official mode."

c) Concern for the poor; Philanthropy, social work etc.: Self help motivated by a "genuine concern" for the welfare of the poor, has been variously interpreted. Initiated generally by a philanthropic organization, the motivations may be improvement of the environmental conditions of health and hygiene.

Historically, this concern has been interpreted by the left as

You're right son. Homeless means Ministers, MNAs, MPAs, senior Army officers, bureaucrats and their kin.

having been motivated by a concern for the welfare of the rest of the city, much more than the slum dwellers themselves, as happened after the great epidemics of the last century in Europe. In fact in England some of the first workers housing were initiated by the great Industrialists, such as Cadbury's and Sunshine factory owners for their workers. To this date the involvement of Philanthropic and religious organizations, concerned with the "physical and moral degradation" in poor housing conditions has been a strong motivation. In the next section we will look at one such case of involvement by a church group in Africa.

d) Reaching a large majority of the poor OR Control of the squatters :

The state intervention in self-help housing was initially a reluctant one, but gradually self help policies were accepted largely because of their ability to "reach" a larger number of people in the city as compared with the conventional housing approaches (e.g.. Public Housing) But these policies have also become a means of political as well as physical control of the city by the authorities. by incorporating the hitherto illegal processes within the official sphere, the authorities can levy controls through taxes etc. as also have these settlements physically and politically controlled by deciding on where these would be located, how the land would be developed, what kind of services would be provided etc. etc. But perhaps more importantly, this incorporation into the official sphere is seen as an "attempt to neutralize the localized discontent and social explosions" as many researchers from the left have claimed.

The next section includes the case of a sites and services scheme, the most common form of self-help such motivations

have led to.

e) Finding appropriate projects to sponsor - International Development Agencies:

The motivations for getting involved with self-help projects are many and complex. In fact as detailed in the first chapter, the reasons for the International Agencies' acceptance of self-help policies had more to do with the global out look on development at that time, most notably, the disillusionment with earlier policies. Agencies such as the World bank, whose very existence depends on the ability to lend money, (banking being the prime function of the agency), resolved not to "give-up" in the face of the general disillusionment in the field of development.[3] Self-help housing provided these agencies with the ideological basis to proceed with lending for large scale projects, that could be handled by an institutional set up such as the World Bank.

3.McNamara's first address to the Board of Governors of the World Bank, in 1968; he also declared that the Bank was going to double its investment in the next few years, in McNamara, 1981.

The other global concern around that time was that of the spread of "communist revolutions," particularly in Latin America. After the successful revolution in Cuba, the first loan from the Inter-American Development Bank was given to Peru, on the recommendations of Turner himself.[4] Self-help policies became a way of "pacifying" the discontent amongst the poor, and "putting a lid" on future revolutionary trends.

4.Harms, Hans in Ward (ed.) 1982, p.23

f) Organizing around Housing:

The growing numbers of poor in cities, generally living in squatter settlements or other "informal" housing, have acquired great political significance. They constitute a large vote bank that attract the attention of the local politicians. Historically this large pool of people has been highly vulnerable to the political manipulations of various political parties and groups,

because of their own need for "legitimacy" within the city that these political affiliations provide. Self-help has provided the appropriate ideological platform for organizing around issues of housing, by political parties of all ideologies, from the extreme right to the extreme left.

In recent years, one finds instances of non-political (or at least explicitly so) organization of the poor as a strategy for "empowering" them around issues of common concern in a community. Generally a Non-Governmental Organization with a conception of self-help as a means of self-determination by a group of people would be organizing a community, against strong odds from powerful interest groups. In the next section we look at one such example of organization of a community .

3.3.3 What is self-help assumed to be?

a) Self help as Complete "autonomy" of action : In most societies, the urban contexts in particular, do not really allow for a process of completely autonomous action. While this kind of self help is obviously not a part of the official self help policies; (the very fact that a project is initiated by an authority means that the people are now subject to the authority of that body to some degree), even when, a squatter builds a shelter for him or herself, completely outside the legal or official sphere of influence, and even though all decisions regarding, construction, management etc. are decided completely by the dweller, the autonomy of such decisions is severely constrained by the economic, social and political position of the squatter. Therefore, the degree of "autonomy" is relatively greater in spontaneous self-help processes or rather the kinds of controls

the squatter is subject to are more indirect, though never completely absent.

b) Self-help as "self-build" : This is the most common form of self help in the official programs, where land serviced to some basic degree is provided to the dwellers, with or without a "core unit," and the dwellers themselves construct or subcontract the construction. The level of autonomy given to the dweller varies from program to program; a more or less complete autonomy to build as and when the resources and the initiative of the dweller allows being one end of the spectrum, while a very controlled program specifying the kind of materials to be used, kind of construction and the time span within which it occurs being the other. More is written on this kind of self help in the next section, where a sites and services project is used as a case study.

c) Self-help as "sweat equity" : There are numerous variations of this kind of self-help, but essentially, the dweller is supposed to put in a certain amount of labour into the actual construction of the house, and in return, people get credit, either monetary or in some other way, e.g.. materials for construction. The management decisions in most such cases are not made by the dweller at all. Generally a Non- government or a government body would undertake the construction of a large number of dwellings in such a case, and the "self-help" component defined in one of the above mentioned ways, which would apply to all dwellers.

d) Self-help as "empowerment" : This kind of self help, where the notion of self-help is taken to mean empowering the dwellers, in a manner that they can not only improve their environmental conditions, but also be able to sustain this

development, largely unassisted, is in spirit and deed, what protagonists of self-help such as Turner had indeed hoped for, but is the most difficult one to realize in practice. The difficulty arises because first, an empowerment of the poor is seen to be threatening by the existing power structures, and second because the agency involved in this process would itself have to give over the decision making power to the people themselves. So, its own role in the process is limited, which is not easy for most agencies to accept. An instance of this type of self help is provided in the next chapter through the case of an upgrading program.

3.4 Developing the Framework:

The range of self-help policies explored in the preceding section may be conceptually illustrated through a matrix such as the following. Along one axis of this matrix, is plotted the range depicting where the initiative for the project comes from, while on the other axis is the range encompassing who

fig. 3.1

	Self ◄——► NGO ◄——► State Initiated Initiated Initiated		
single person ▲ │ ▼ community groups, unions etc.	eg. squatters in asian context		eg. sites and sevices
	eg. land invasions/ squatting in Latin America		eg. Brigadas in Cuba

constitutes the users. Within the spatial limits of this matrix we can place most self help efforts being practised today.

Towards the inner end of this spectrum, with a single person, self initiated effort, one might consider the squatters, in most Asian contexts, especially those putting up their first shacks. He or she (generally he) would normally be a new immigrant from the rural area, coming to an existing settlement of squatters, some of whom he might know from rural lineal or social linkages. Or he could be a complete stranger in the city, spreading out his mat on a pavement or railway platform for the night, which might extend to several nights. The role that the state might play in this situation could vary from one of indifference to one of open hostility. In the more mature settlements, the state might reluctantly be supporting such efforts by provision of services such as water and electricity.

In fact this latter case of the more "mature" settlements, where the State is forced to provide basic amenities, moves towards the self-help efforts that are still People initiated, but involve community groups or other collectivities, rather than an individual. The most striking example of such efforts are the organized land invasions in Latin America, whereby groups (often quite large) of people collectively invade public or private vacant lands for the purpose of squatting. Often these groups of people consist of those that have been in the city for some length of time.

To say that the State is not initiating these efforts is only partly true, because these invasions are generally very political in nature. If it is not state initiated, then very often it may be initiated by the opposition political groups. The implicit objective of the opposition in this kind of a move would be to win political support of this increasing section of the population.

Often indirect involvement of the state itself might be behind this invasion. It's motives in supporting such an action might be many and complex. For instance, this has been argued to be a way by which land, which within the State's own policies and plans cannot be developed, might be released in the commercial land markets.[5] This involvement of the State would nevertheless be indirect in the capitalist systems.

5.Ward in Payne (ed.) 1984, p.150-151.

The State initiated direct efforts in the modern non communist contexts has been taking the form of upgrading existing settlements, and efforts at resettlements; either through a sites and services approach or through "self help" building efforts as discussed earlier. Other than in upgrading of existing settlements, the form that self help takes is directed towards each individual household rather than the community as a collective group. Most sites and services programs are a particularly good example of this kind of State initiated self-help programs. I shall go into the details of this in a later section, but here I shall briefly enumerate the characteristics, in rather general terms, that lead S&S to be considered as targeted towards each individual household rather than a group.

First, in most instances, these programs are not designed for an existing community group but rather an aggregation of individuals, much along the lines of traditional public housing projects. Even when the intention is to resettle an existing community, the project design, from the physical layout to the non physical elements such as financial arrangements etc. are all geared towards an individual (family or household).

Second, the projects largely attempt to attain a degree of uniformity, in terms of lot sizes, arrangements, provision of

infrastructure (one electric point per household, one water point per household etc.). The mutual interdependence found in the spontaneous settlements, which these programs seek to replace (or do they?), is completely lost.

In any case, one could argue that most, not all Sites and Services projects tend to fall towards the State initiated, single person end of the spectrum.

A few of the State initiated projects do manage to work with collectivities, more so when they are dealing with the upgrading of existing facilities. These work well when there is an existing level of organization within the community that can formulate the needs of the community as perceived by the people themselves; rather than have a set of experts or municipal (city) authorities come into a settlement and determine these needs, even if this is being done with some input from the community.

But the clearest instance of a State initiated effort that would tend towards the unions (more than community groups) end of this spectrum, is the creation of the micro-brigades in Cuba. Here the existing socialist nature of employment allows for housing to become a part of the total work commitment of a person. So within a work unit (such as a factory group), some of the workers with the necessary skills would undertake to construct houses to meet the needs of the group in general (i.e.. not necessarily for their own use). Their co-workers in the meanwhile would, make up for their share of the lost time at the original place of work, ensuring thereby that the productive capacity of the unit does not decline as a result.

This kind of a self help effort is obviously particular to the

socialist mode of production that Cuba follows. It becomes feasible because of the nature of a workers responsibilities to the State and vice-versa.

3.4.1 Effectiveness of Self-help efforts

How can one begin to understand the "effectiveness" of the self help efforts, given a field layout such as the one just constructed?

To do so one needs to clarify what 'effectiveness' would mean first? Effectiveness, within the modern societies may be taken to have two components to it, the ability of the people to make demands on the state and the society, and their ability to mobilize the State and the mainstream society to meet these demands. From the perspective of the squatter, the goal to be achieved is that of integration into the mainstream society. Yet, by this very "integration" they may lose their ability to make further demands on the State.

In the field of housing for the poor, most "spontaneous" self-help efforts can essentially be considered a statement against the inability of the authorities to provide the common person with a shelter in its own defined terms and standards. By erecting a shabby little shack in a developing city, the squatter makes explicit this failure by the authorities, and at the same time makes a "demand" on the State and the society for inclusion within the mainstream.

This would lead one to deduce that the ability of the people to make demands on the state would vary inversely with the level of state intervention. i.e.. in the self initiated self-help efforts,

the people have the maximum capacity to make demands on the state, and in the State initiated projects, this ability would be minimum. In some ways, the state by initiating self-help might be said to be "co-opting" the poor, especially if this closes off the only channel that was open to the poor to at least make their demands explicit. In any case it is evident that if the state itself initiates a program of SH, it has to be accepted by the people on the terms it decides. In other words, they would not be able to make demands on the state any more.
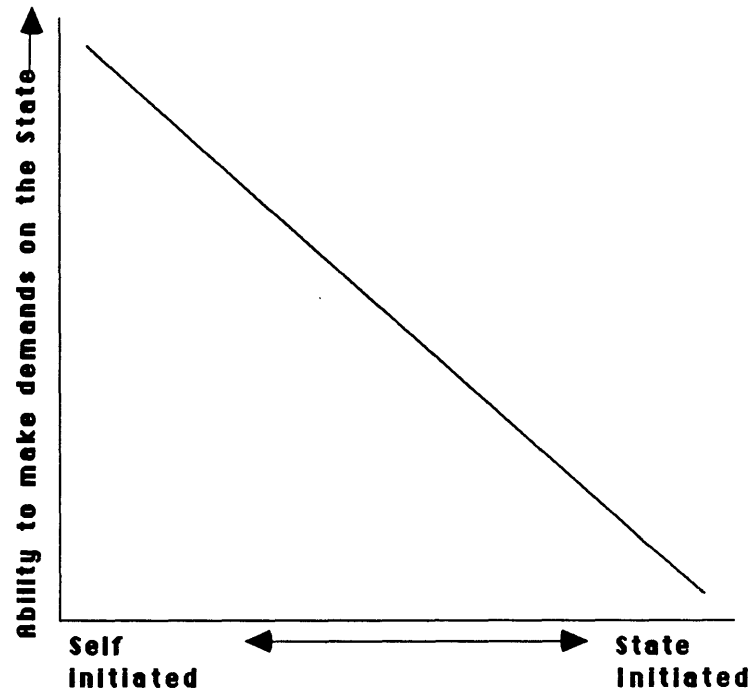

fig. 3.2

The level of aggregation of the people, from a single person to groups is a very important consideration when looking at the ability of the people to mobilize State and other agencies. This is evident from many cases of "community uprising" against state, or even community petitions to the State for various

purposes. But, once these groups are "taken over" by the state, their ability to achieve the expressed goals of the community tend to fall down.

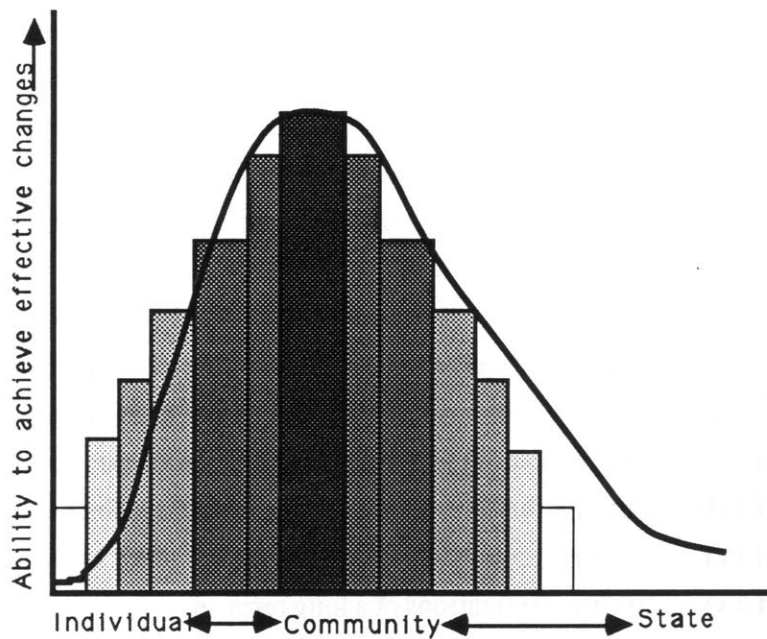One can cite historic examples demonstrating this "take-over by" the state.


fig. 3.3

The case of German Trade unions after the great depression in the early twentieth century, cited by Hans Harms[6] is an illustration of this trend. Disillusioned by the state inability to provide for the working classes, during the post World War I crisis (1915-18), the trade unions took it upon themselves to provide housing, in their march towards "full socialization."

6.Harms in Ward (ed.) 1982, p.41-42

They declared that the State was completely under the influence of the rich moneyed class, and could as such not look after their interests. They would therefore bypass both the State and the profit thirsty entrepreneurs, and would themselves become developers. A great deal of enthusiasm was generated, and the trade unions saw the control of the process of "building and housing production as a step away from "wage slavery and exploitation of men by men," and a step towards better living and working conditions through self-determination of the producers in the context of a socialized production process."[7] This process of "socialization" was not carried through, and the leaders made further "compromises." The State in its expressed desire to help these unions, started promoting joint ventures with these unions. The final result of this joining of efforts was a gradual slip of control over the housing process away from the hands of the unions into those of the state.

7. ibid p. 42

Was that necessarily a move in an undesirable direction?? This raises some interesting, though not easily answerable questions about the role of the State in self-help processes. Do self-help efforts of this sort , outside the State's influence within the modern capitalist system work only "short term? What would be the implications of a long term continuation of some thing like this i.e.. control by unions? .....move towards communism??
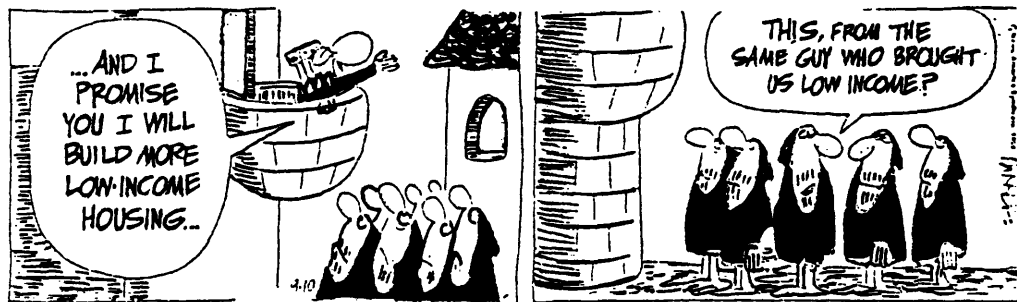
3.5 Role of State in Self-help: A Paradox

The important point that emerges from this and other examples is the paradox in this "State—Self-help" relation. On the one hand State's intervention often results in a subservience of the self help efforts of a group of people; yet within the given system of governance, self-help efforts need to interact with the State for that is the only channel for integration into the mainstream society. A   recent example that beautifully illustrates this paradox, is the squatter movement in Latin America as described by Manuel Castells[8] in his work on the historic development of social movements . The case of squatters in Peru, Mexico and Chile is a demonstration of the "dialectics between social integration and social change." He demonstrates that the squatters tend to organize themselves at the community level largely because of their situation in the urban structure. "Their organization does not imply by itself, any kind of involvement in a process of social change. On the contrary,..... most of the existing evidence points to a subservient relationship with the dominant economic and political structures."[9] Thus in this case, the organization of the squatters is born out of their necessity for survival in the city, and is in fact dependent on the political structure in a "patronizing relationship vis-a-vis the franchise of their right to settle in the city."[10] The political forces in this case are their protective device as well as their exploiters; this dependency is also a hindrance to their development into a social movement, that could lead to larger structural changes.

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate that the on going debates on self-help housing need to be put in the context of this tremendous variation that one finds within self-

8. Castells, Manuel 1983

9. ibid p.190
10. ibid p.211

help practices; these variations in the motivations, may or may not have the potential to achieve a whole variety of things, including the provision of shelter, depending on what is assumed about a project, who is initiating it, with what motivations and expectations.

In the next section we will apply these very criteria to look at three very different projects in different contexts all of which can lay claim to having a major self help element in them. This is important in putting this rather theoretical analysis to a practical demonstration of our understanding of self help practices.

FOUR

Self-Help
in Practice

4.1 Introduction

As the last chapter demonstrated, within the self help housing policies and practices for the poor, the range and types of self-help, the motivations for self-help, the source(s) of self-help and the forms of self-help are varied, as are the assumptions about the contexts in which these policies would become operational. All of these variations obviously imply a whole range of practices all under the broad rubric of "self-help." Unless we carefully examine projects and understand their full implications in a given context, it is difficult to analyze their full potential. This kind of an approach would imply that it is meaningless to make generalized assumptions about the notion of "self help" as though it were one abstract "thing" practiced uniformly everywhere.

This section consists of specific cases of housing programs where self- help was a major or an important component. Each of the cases presented has been hailed as a "success" in its own right and cited in the literature at various points. While the first two projects find reference in the "academic" literature, the third one, done by a relatively lesser known Church group, may be considered "populist". This is being labelled populist because projects such as this one do not find their way into the research papers, yet they are doing a lot of work in the field that the popular press has been reporting. More importantly, such projects have left a significant impact on the context and the people concerned, as this example will demonstrate.

The attempt has been to cite cases of organizing agencies or groups with differing ideologies and motivations for getting involved with housing and with self help processes. This is obviously not an all comprehensive journey through the world

of self-help housing, but an attempt to present several inter-pretations of the concept in varying contexts in order to understand the scope, potential, and the limitations, within these contexts. All of these are based on existing case material in the form of reports, papers or evaluations.

4.1.1 Structure for the Cases:

Each of the case studies will be analyzed in the following general format; as we proceed through the cases it will become evident that it is a general framework within which the cases are approached, and not necessarily an "ordering" of the analysis.

About the Self -help component:

1) *Who initiated the Self help component:* did the existing or potential dwellers demand it, i.e.. were they already organized? Did the people want self-help or was it a part of the project design?

2) *how was community defined?* Was there an existing community group, or many little groups? who were the leaders? how was an attempt made, if any, to make sure the entire community was represented?

3) *how was self help defined:* what did it mean; was it self building; self management?

4) *How was the community organized:* what was the basis; i.e.. residents of a street or a cluster in existing settlements, trade or other social affiliation, such as caste or religion etc.

5) *what role did the "professionals" play:* who were the professionals; whom were they affiliated with or employed

by; and how did they interact with the community?

6) *what role did the people play:* who did they communicate with; at what stages of the project ; Did they feel competent dealing with technical or financial issues involved?

General Information about t He project:

1) *The agency or group involved and their background:* who they are, how long have they been in existence, how did they come together?

2) *Motivations and funding sources:* What are their ideological motivations for doing self help projects, and where do they get their funding from?

These two are grouped together because often there is a very strong though invisible link between the two.

3) *Reference material for the case* : Reports, evaluations etc. that are used and the sources from where these are obtained, i.e.. who produced these.

4.1.2 The Cases Selected:

The cases selected are listed below along with brief reasons for their selection.

1) *Orangi Upgrading Project, Karachi :* This case presents an instance of self help where the non-government agency involved undertook the project of upgrading using self-help as means of empowering the community, based on the ideological beliefs of a local teacher/leader.

This is an upgrading project involving provision of sewage

facilities to an existing housing settlement. The agency involved in a Non Governmental Credit bank that was established in 1979, specifically for the purposes of doing social work.

2) *Dandora Sites and Services Project, Kenya:* An instance of the incorporation of the notion of self-help evolving largely out of Turner's writings in the official housing policies of a developing country. This is one of the first such projects where an International Agency (World Bank) was essentially trying to push the idea to a reluctant national government, largely on rationales of efficiency and affordability.

The project involves a new development, where sites with varying levels of services were provided to the people. A materials loan was also provided for facilitating construction of the initial set of rooms. The agencies involved were the Government of Kenya and the World Bank.

3) *Housing in Zaire, by Habitat for Humanity:* The third instance is one of self help as Philanthropy. The inequities of the present economic system are sought to be corrected in this case through an appeal to the moral and ethical values of the rich. It reverberates in some ways with elements of Victorian Philanthropic housing of the late 19th. century Europe, with very similar arguments for "self-help" efforts.

This project is the provision of built houses to a few "needy" families, who are required to participate in the building process for a certain amount of time. The agency involved is an International Church group, based in the U.S. doing self-help housing in both the developing and the developed world.

4.2 Self-help as "Empowerment" of the People:

Upgrading of Infrastructure : Orangi Pilot Project

The involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations in self-help processes is relatively recent. In many ways the emergence of this kind of a "mediating structure" between the authorities and the common people is directly attributable to the emergence of self-help or "people-centered' policies themselves. The traditional distance in communication between the bureaucratic State structures and the common person's inability to reach this system is sought to be bridged by these organizations. Working in conjunction with State programs or out side of them, NGO's have become very significant in the process of "third world" development in general. The role played by the NGO's in the housing process is perhaps topic enough for a thesis by itself, and far beyond the scope of the present study. However, one fairly successful example of an NGO involvement in an Upgrading project is presented here. This example is one where the NGO involved, working outside of the State apparatus, considers the empowerment of the local people through a process of education as the first step towards a self-sustaining self-help process.

This interpretation of self-help embodies a conception of the common person's ability to really "help" him or her self, *not as an individual, but as a part of a group of people with shared problems, hopes and aspirations* , (what one can term a community group); all that is needed to achieve this is an awareness within the people of their own rights, abilities and limitations.The agency concerned led by a local leader who provides this ideology sets out to do precisely that. Upgrading

of a squatter community here becomes a vehicle which is employed by the Non Governmental Organization (NGO) to make people capable of interacting with the State and its representative agencies. As would become evident, this agency does not speak on behalf of the people, but rather teaches the people to speak with the state in its own language but not necessarily on the state's terms.

1. Most of the material that I have based this analysis on is from the NGO involved in the upgrading work. The reports therefore can be said to be in a way "biased." Yet I think the approach to self help in the project is interesting enough for the purpose of the general argument of this thesis to be presented here.

2. Arif Hasan, 1986, p.2 (emphasis is mine).
3. ibid

General Information About the Project:[1]

This upgrading Project was sponsored by the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) Foundation. This foundation was formed by the BCCI in 1979 specifically for the purposes of undertaking "philanthropic social work." The sprawling "katchi abadi" or squatter settlement of Orangi, on the outskirts of Karachi was selected as the appropriate intervention area. Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan, a highly respected civil servant turned teacher was approached to direct the project.

The shape that the project took is to a large extent the story of this one man's convictions and understanding of the process of community development. "Dr. Khan considers himself to be a teacher and has always emphasized that it is only by raising awareness of the common people and by organizing them, that any *meaningful change can take place.*"[2] Rejecting charity outright, he agreed to undertake a "research project aimed at development through community organization."[3] The foundation agreed to fund this "research."

Therefore, from the very beginning, the project was aimed not merely at improving the conditions in the squatter commu-

nity, but to develop community awareness aimed at bringing more meaningful changes. The fact that there was an unconditional support available for such a venture, is as we shall see a critical factor in shaping this program, the way it did get shaped. In fact, at one stage, there was involvement of UN experts and consultants in the project, on the issue of the appropriateness of the technology being used, which was turned down by the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP). The OPP felt that the recommendations of these experts were not really appropriate given the context, with which the OPP experts were far more familiar.*This rejection of the UN experts' recommendations was possible largely because, the funding for the project was completely independent from the UN.*

Background of Orangi Development:

Orangi Township is a major development consisting largely of illegally occupied squatter colonies, housing close to 800,000 people. Most of this land was developed by illegal subdividers who with the connivance of the local municipal authorities and the police, subdivided large tracts of land and sold it to the poor immigrants, many of whom were coming from the recently created Bangladesh or East Pakistan as it was until 1971. "The process of acquiring land, settling people, dealing with state officials and the police, made these subdividers politically very powerful, and they emerged as the leaders of the people of Orangi."[4]

4. Hasan, 1986. p.3

As Arif Hasan (1986) points out, the developers were broadly speaking of two kinds; one set consisted of those whose prime motive was acquiring money from this process. These people did so and left Orangi. The second set consisted of those who

fig.4.2.1
view of Orangi Township

fig.4.2.2

Map of Karachi showing Orangi
Township in relation to other
"Katchi Abadis"
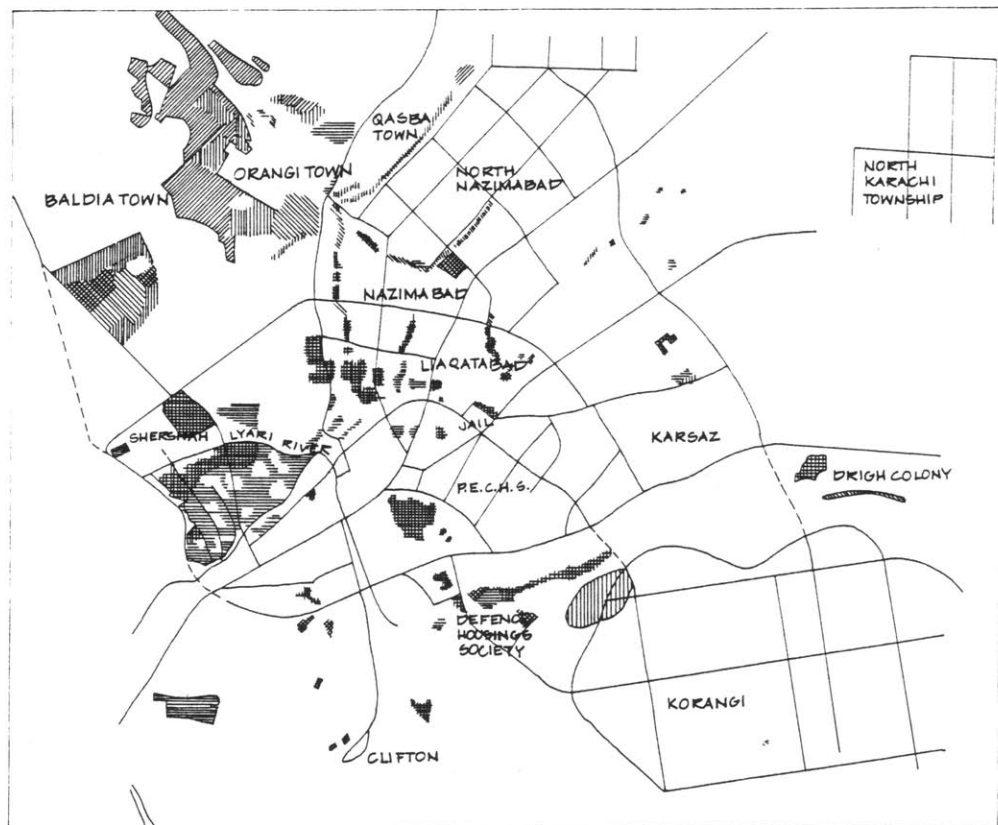
had political ambitions as well. These politically ambitious developers are again divisible into two; those that are willing to use the process of development as a stepping stone in their own political manoeuvres, and those that have "larger political ambitions and are willing to work for a meaning full change."[5] The developers in this category were normally better educated coming from backgrounds as varied as teaching, and law.

5. ibid p.4

This would imply that the often held beliefs about the exploitative nature of such developers is ,in this case at least only partially true. First, not all the developers were necessarily the prototypical "local bourgeoisie;" and second they themselves were often being exploited by the state officials. Third and perhaps most importantly, not all developers were merely exploiting people. Some of the better aware and socially oriented people were using land development as a means to bringing about larger changes.[6]

6. The strategies they employed to do so would be interesting to study, which is something that I have not been able to gather in the course of this short research, based on secondary material.]

The other important actor in the process of this development was the building contractor-cum-component manufacturer, locally called the "*thallawala*." He played a significant role in the building of the houses, providing not only on-site building material and labour, but often doing so on credit. He would often provide cash credit as well. The mode of his operation was not like the traditional banker or credit institution, but rather that of a member of the community, who depended on social pressure to recover his dues. His role in this process made him indispensable to the residents and he became an advisor in public and personal matters of the dwellers.

About the "Self-help" Component:

The impetus for self help came from the ideological beliefs of Dr. Khan, based on a very fine understanding of the local context. The definition of this self help went beyond merely self building; it had to be an effort initiated by the people themselves (with backing, coaxing and support from the Orangi Pilot Project), that was effectively challenging the accepted mode of operation, not merely in the minds of the local agency officials and the politicians, but also the people themselves. The way this notion of self help was put into practice is explained in the following passages. What emerges is a strategy, where a movement is set into place starting from a very small level, which is not perceived as threatening in any significant way by the existing power structure (local leaders or the local authorities), but which gradually builds up the potential within the local population to organize around issues affecting them and gradually be able to make demands on the politicians and through them on the local authorities. *The very connections of the local leadership with the Government. officials that were initially the lever that enabled this leadership to exploit the people, now becomes a tool that the people are able to use to pressurize the leadership into getting them what they want out of the local authorities.*

Pre-Intervention Level of Organization:

Before the OPP came into existence, a somewhat superficial level of community organization existed, but it was more dependent on a leader with little involvement by the people. These organizations were based on neighbourhoods, defined on the basis of the initial land subdivisions. The original

subdividers, after having settled the areas they had grabbed, set up social welfare organizations, with themselves or their nominees as their office bearers. Many of these organizations are properly registered. These organizations were essential in order to lobby for urban services, such as water supply, sewage and garbage disposal, and transport, for which the city authorities needed to be involved. The local leadership would raise funds for getting these services, and based on their prior connections with the government employees and agencies, get these service, often misappropriating part of this money for themselves and the local government people.

In this way, transport was acquired by the people themselves by paying a private contractor to acquire a route permit for the area by bribing the relevant government officials. Similarly sanctions for water tankers were obtained from the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC). In both these and other processes the local leadership had its profits, by forfeiting part of the money or sellable goods (water) involved. The few services such as roads and drains that were provided by the KMC, were generally of extremely poor quality, because the KMC contractor would not use the proper proportions of cement or would simply be ill-equipped to carry the work out to any acceptable standard, especially compared to the exorbitant rates being charged. Often these works would be undertaken without proper plans being made or specifications for the works being written or followed. The KMC engineers would not do their job of inspecting these works.

The local community had learnt perforce to live with this, as it was the only way they could hope to get anything at all. This instance is a very clear example of the problem in designating spontaneous self-help processes as the expression of autono-

fig.4.2.3

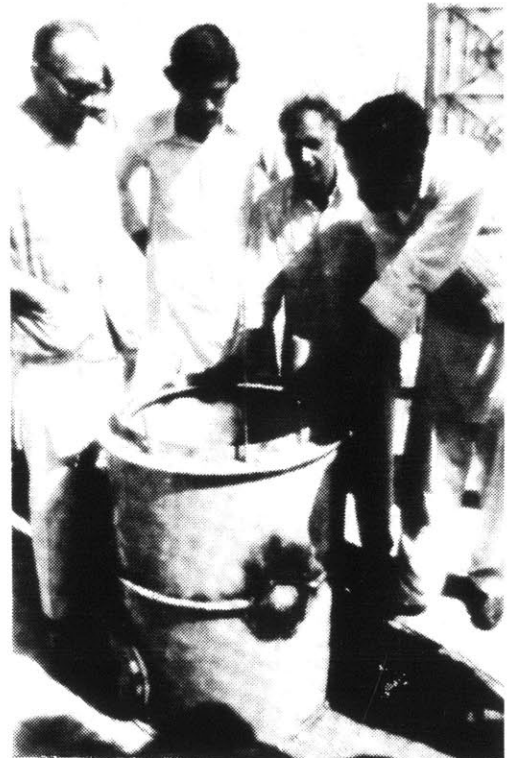A meeting session with the people as
part of educating the community

fig.4.2.4
Dr. Khan discussing the steel form
for casting manhole with the
local "designer" and the
community

fig.4.2.5 & 4.2.6
The transformation in one of the lanes

mous actions by the people allowing them to employ a variety of ways to achieve things, as researchers like Turner had found in their field research. The situation here is not far from the neo-Marxist criticism of "self-help" being the only option left to people.

The Role of OPP.

The role played by the OPP was at three levels; the first involved finding out the "problems" with the existing settlement, and the second was finding an appropriate solution to it, and finally involving the community in implementing the solution, which would involve getting the community to agree with the solution worked out in the first place.

At the first level, the task of finding out the most imminent problem was done by Dr. Khan himself undertook the task of finding the most imminent problem of the community. This he did through many months of informal discussions with the people as well as the local leaders, getting acquainted with the existing organizations and the relationships of the local community to the leadership. This was a process not merely of finding the problems, but getting to understand the functioning of the community and understanding the power structure, which later led him to work out a strategy that would be able to function in this environment.

The problem he identified was that of sewage disposal. Dr. Khan gathered that this was the highest priority for the people. Further they had been led by the local leadership to think that this was a service that the KDA or the KMC ought to be providing them free of cost. This, the research and interviews

with the concerned authorities yielded, was not the case. The KDA normally charged the residential areas a fee of Rs.150 to Rs.200 per square yard of their lots. This implied a cost of about Rs.15,000 or $950 per household for Orangi, which was far beyond the paying capacity of almost all households.

This presented two alternatives: one would be that of raising the funds through international agencies, that the residents would get as loans and later repay; the other was that of raising this money internally, i.e.. by the residents themselves up front.

The first alternative was rejected based on :
1)The fact that urban development schemes prepared with international finance were typically much higher than those developed by the local bodies. This when added to the interest that is eventually to be paid makes these costs twice the original amount
2) The historic record of loan repayment default in Pakistan; and
3) Its being a "non replicable" mode of development, as it would at best serve a few privileged Katchi abadis. Again *the concern through out this upgrading effort has been to look for locally generated solutions with long term applicability and impact.*

If the second alternative was to be taken seriously, it had to be reexamined in terms of the costs involved. A preliminary research into the KDA proposals by OPP consultants showed that the KDA charges were four to five times the actual cost of labour and material involved. The reason for this was Profiteering by contractors and kickbacks to government officials. These "overheads" had therefore to be somehow

eliminated if the sewage system had to be anywhere near affordable to the local people.

These findings showed the way to a strategy that was
a) Not dependent on an outside finance which would involve repayment
b) Not dependent on the local authorities for implementation if the costs were to be kept down.

The Strategy Employed:

How did the OPP leadership achieve this?
To begin with the unit of organization was taken to be a lane, which in this case consisted of about 15-20 households on either side. This decision was extremely crucial on two accounts; first it worked with a small enough group of people all of whom were known to each other. Second and most importantly, it did not interfere with the existing local leadership that operated at the level of the neighbourhood or sector, and not at the lane level.
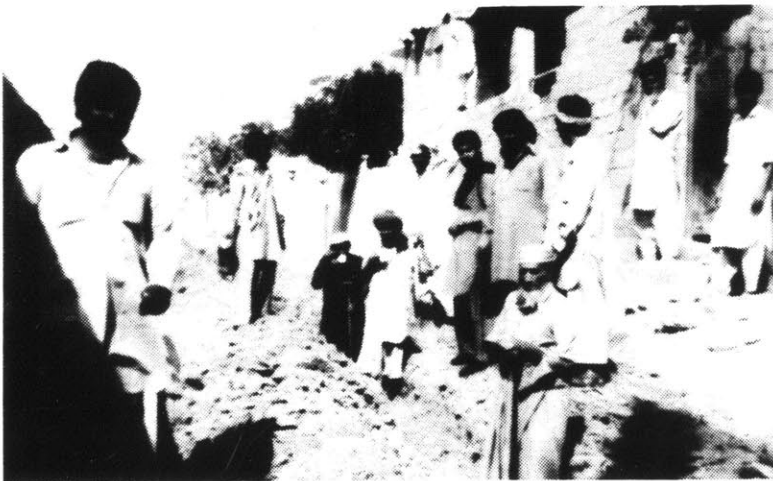

fig.4.2.7
Pipes being installed by the residents of a lane

The strategy employed for organizing the people consisted of educating the local people and motivating them to organize and work towards improving their condition. The education component was not a patronizing one which assumed that the people were illiterate or incapable of grasping the "complexities," technical or otherwise. On the contrary its aim was to take the population with the OPP all through. The people were made aware of the realities in terms of the inability of the local bodies to provide them with the free sewage system, as they had been led to believe by the local leadership. The alternative was then presented where social organizers of OPP "explained the problem of sanitation to a lane gathering and informed them that if they could form an organization, elect select or nominate two lane managers and then apply to the OPP for assistance, then the OPP would give them necessary technical assistance to build a sewerage system." The initiative for actually doing so was left to the people themselves. If they chose to organize, the OPP technical advisors would be there to help them with lane surveys and in drawing up an estimate of the labour and materials required for implementing the work. The task of collecting the money was left to the lane leaders, and the OPP never got involved with that.
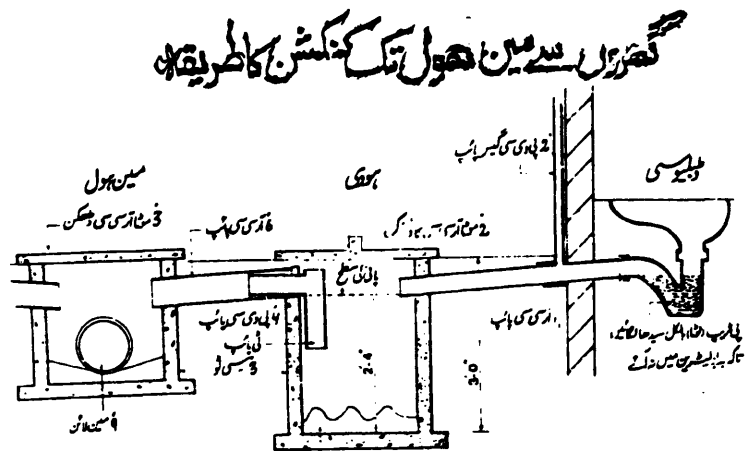

fig.4.2.8
Sewerage system connecting individual w.cs. with the common manholes, designed by the OPP field research team.

The costs for research were kept low by involving the local Engineering and Architecture students in this process. This achieved another very significant purpose, that of "educating" the future builders, and technocrats about real life experiences of the poor. Some of this influence has become a part of the regular education experience at the local School of Architecture.[7]

7. In fact one of the recent graduates from this school is today a director of programs with the OPP.

Once the first few lanes achieved the objective of laying these sewage pipelines successfully, other lanes that were farther "inside" (i.e.. not directly accessible to the natural creeks), the settlements also showed interest in doing so. But the process here was somewhat more complex as it required laying of secondary lanes to connect the Primary ones to these creeks. This meant that now the people had to be organized at the level of a few lanes and work together towards building of this secondary drain first, which was not directly benefitting any of the households.

Here again a similar strategy of motivating the people to take the initiative themselves was applied by OPP. They were made aware of the relationship between sanitation and health, which in turn was tied up with the economic benefits of good health (i.e.. no doctor's fee or medical expenses, or losing of a days wage).[8] The social organizers of the OPP worked towards getting the lanes to work together with an attempt to involve the local Councillors in doing so. The effectiveness of this approach picked up as the demonstration effect of the earlier works began to be realized by the people left out. Gradually the program spread much further and in ways that have today brought forth a new set of relations between the people and the local leadership and the local authorities.

8. Other factors such as the increasing property values in the newly upgraded areas in addition to enhanced water supply in the neighbourhood acted as further incentives to the people.

fig.4.2.9
People supervising the work

9. Hasan op. cit. p.15

Even though the initial response of the local councillors to the OPP efforts was one of polite indifference, gradually, some of them began to feel threatened, especially as the level of organization increased. But by this time, the people themselves had become much more aware not only in terms of what they could achieve collectively by building for themselves, but also in their technical and economic understanding of the processes involved. This put them in a better bargaining position vis-a-vis the local councillors. At the same time OPP was also in a better position with the backing of the local community whose trust it had earned over the years.

This situation has led to a state where the local people have been able to put pressure on KMC to use their funds in a manner that would benefit the community from its own perspective. In 1984, the community, through the efforts of a supportive councillor was able to successfully convince KMC to apply funds allocated towards the construction of an open drain to the construction of underground main drain instead. Such a drain would make it possible for a number of lanes to lay and connect their sewerage lines to it. Their was no provision in the KMC regulations to allow for such a construction, nor was it the practice to lay such a line in the absence of a "master plan" for a sanitation system. Yet the people were able to insist not merely on getting this pipe laid, but had it done to the plans prepared by OPP. The OPP in addition supplied tools shutterings and other technical assistance to the KMC contractor. "The people supervised the construction of the contractor and did not allow him to do substandard work."[9]

This is a remarkable achievement, especially given the fact that these very people were initially passively accepting substandard work from the local authorities as their only

option. This incident has also set the precedent for other similar "divergences" from the traditional practices of KMC, as well as a new set of relations between the "KMC- councillor and councillor-people relationship."

Conclusions:

This is an instance of self-help based on the assumption that a common person is capable of helping him or her self in a given system of governance, not simply as an individual, but as a collective group of people with shared concerns and problems. "Self-help" in this case therefore takes the form of making a set of people aware of this potential they hold as an organized group, as well as their own rights and limitations within the system of governance. Self-help is conceived as an ability of the common person to dialogue with the State, in its own language, though not necessarily on its terms. The NGO involved in this process of empowerment does not directly challenge the given power relations, but rather works within them to find ways and means of enabling the community to improve its lot.

This as it turns out was a very clever strategy. Without unduly alarming the dominant powers a strong base of support is built up at the local level, where people are organized around issues that affect them directly, in their day to day life. All of this is done such that the people are "educated" about the options open to them and the pros and cons of each of those options. The actual decision making is left to the people themselves, thereby creating a confidence within the community for doing so in the long term. The issue of sewer upgrading is merely a medium for achieving this end of empowering the commu-

nity.

The success of this strategy is evident in the results that are obtained at the end of this process, whereby a relatively passive squatter community is impassioned enough to make collective demands on the local politicians as well as the State agencies, demanding a fair deal without stepping out of the "systems" terms of governance. Even though no major "structural changes" are achieved in the neo-Marxian sense, a process of negotiation between the common person and the State has been set forth, where the State authorities are forced to listen to the legitimate demands of the people and respond to them, partly to maintain their own legitimacy. The strength of the people lies in their ability to remain collective; their sheer numbers giving them a power that the local politicians need to sustain their own careers. The very connections of the local leadership with the government officials that were initially the lever that enabled this leadership to exploit the people, now become a tool which the people are able to use to pressurize the leadership into getting them what they want out of the local authorities. This new emerging sets of relationships between the local politicians, the common person and the State agencies is the "success" of this program.
Though how far this process of making demands on the State would continue once the State gets involved on a regular basis and procedures become routine again is any one's guess. Nevertheless, this project shows the way to a self-help strategy that could set forth a sustainable process of dialogue between the State and the common person.

The Role of International Agencies and Experts:

This project has shown that local people, with locally developed technology are capable of addressing their own problems. The circumstances of this project are somewhat special in that one person with a certain ideology is able to motivate a whole movement. It is not the fact that this person happens to have this progressive ideological position that is amazing, but that he should be able to find a backing through funds that makes this case unique.

This brings into question whether we do in fact need international consultants, technical or otherwise, especially in contexts such as this one, (as compared with the two other cases being examined), where there is a sufficiently large local population that has technical capacity as well as a much better understanding of the local issues than any outsider is likely to gain. The fact that such consultancy is often linked with financial assistance, makes one wonder if in fact it is tolerated by the local people more on those grounds. In this case, the OPP was actually able to reject the recommendations of the UN experts. It would not be unreasonable to argue that such a rejection was possible largely because, the funding for the project was completely independent from the UN.

This is not to suggest that international funding for housing or development is not needed, but is it possible for this funding to come with no strings attached as was the case with the BCCI foundation funding here? What would it imply in terms of the internal dynamics and accountability of the donors and the international structure of power?

4.3 Self-help as "Aided" Self Building

Dandora Sites and Services Project

The "formalization" of spontaneous self help processes after their endorsement by the major International donor agencies, is seen most commonly as squatter upgrading and provision of Sites and Services to the poor for self construction. This process of self construction, generally under official guidance with or without any technical and/or material help is the most common "official" form of self-help that we see. This kind of "aided self-help" is initiated by the local authorities with or without international funding and assistance.[1] Low income people are selected for these sites based on criteria of income, length of stay in the city etc. and allocated plots with varying levels of services, on which they build houses through "self help."

1. As indicated elsewhere in this thesis, this "initiation" by the local authorities was (especially in the beginning) prompted more because of the funding available from agencies such as the World Bank and USAID for such projects.

In fact this kind of self help is one where the process is essentially geared towards "a person" (self) or a family unit, who is expected to use his/her initiative and mobilize savings towards self construction or self management of the construction. The process is in a way an attempt to bring the illegal squatting processes under official purview, with the intention of assuring a basic minimum level of services and also avoid speculation by private developers. The initial hopes were to in fact be able to arrest the informal growth altogether, which soon proved quite impossible to achieve. The official acceptance of these programs is largely based on economic rationale of the ability of such programs to reach a wider and poorer section of society with in the given means of local governments. The low cost per capita also provides international donors to get involved in very large projects, which are easier

to manage than a number of scattered small projects.

Implicit and Explicit Aims and objectives

Sites and Services programs are an outcome of the advocacy of public programs based on self help practices observed in the squatter settlements. Based on research conducted in the 1960's it was observed that once tenure was secured by squatters, either legally or even perceptually, preliminary make shift shacks were gradually improved over time by the efforts and means of the squatters themselves. This kind of self help gradually led to the consolidation of these settlements into permanent communities with fair quality of housing. The flexibility offered by this kind of "progressive development" allowed even the very poor to slowly develop better housing for themselves.

The basic tenets of S&S model as it emerged in the International community have been identified as:[2]

1) Improvement over Public Housing Schemes : in terms of being able to reach a greater number of people for the same money spent.

2) Affordability: the unit cost to the dweller is reduced by having the option to buy only the serviced lot rather than a completed unit. Through self help, the dweller can progressively consolidate the house as per the individuals means and capacities.

3) Standard of Services: As compared with upgrading of squatter settlements, S&S allow the governments to lay the service lines in advance in a more efficient and economic manner.

4) Self help and Progressive development of shelter : S &S

2. Patricia McCarney , 1987 p.37-39.

fig.4.3.1
Houses built by ther National housing Corporation:
accessible to a small percentage of the
population in Nairobi

fig.4.3.2
The infamous company housing

fig.4.3.3
And the new idea realized in
Sites & Services

provide a framework for incorporating the SH initiative that the squatters undertake in squatter settlements.

5) Tenure: A secure legal tenure or lease provides the occupant the security to develop the dwelling progressively.

6) Finally orderly urban growth can still be achieved by implementing S&S through Central Planning Authorities.

So in its very inception, S&S incorporate self-help for concerns of efficient and economic provision of housing within the limited budgets that most developing city governments operate under. Self-help is limited in its scope to allow self constructionor self managed construction. Yet it is important that the major decisions still remain in the hands of the central planning authorities to ensure orderly growth.

Dandora Sites and Services project in Nairobi, Kenya is one such typical project undertaken in the early seventies, by the Government of Kenya with the assistance from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), a wing of the World Bank.

Dandora Sites and Services: Background

The concept of providing minimally serviced sites to the urban poor for self-building in Kenya is not new. Such projects under various names have existed in Kenya from 1920'2 when the colonoial Government would provide these sites to the native for housing. A UN task force in 1964[3] made recommendations to the Government of Kenya (GOK) where the role played by such S&S schemes in the provision of housing to the poor in Kenya was emphasized as was the need to continue such programs. Even though these programs have
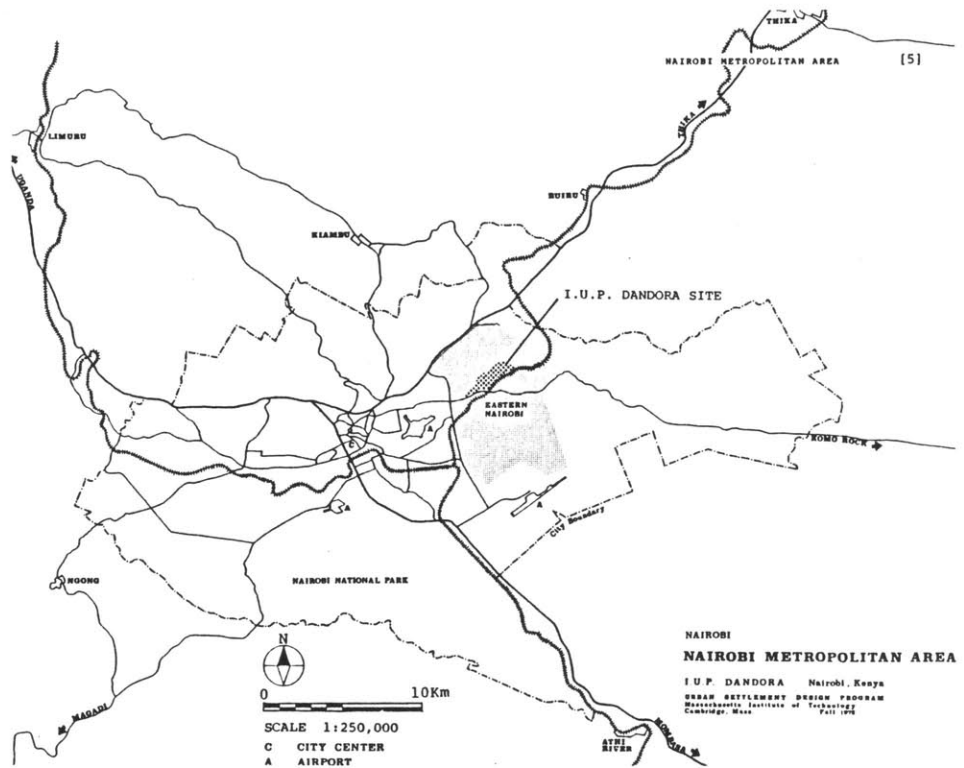
3. Bloomberg & Abrams (1964)

fig.4.3.4
Location of Dandora in
Nairobi Metropolitan Area

since been incorporated into the official housing policies, they were not a major part of the government efforts. The traditional approach of completed dwelling units, generally affordable to the middle and high income families was the most common "Public housing" being produced.

Dandora Community Development Project is a large multi-phased Sites and Services Project , consisting of 6000 plots and related community facilities. Funded jointly by the GOK, and the World Bank, the project was implemented by the Nairobi City Council under the supervision of the World Bank and the GOK.

The project was designed by the World Bank and the local officials of the NCC as a model project that would pave the

way for dealing with the complex issue of housing the increasing numbers of poor in S&S schemes as an alternative to the development of illegal squatter settlements and "company housing" by private developers.[4] The World Bank saw sites and services as more than simply projects: they were also the means to influence government policy on shelter and infrastructure for low-income populations. The stated *"justification and economic benefits"* of the Dandora Project in the Dandora report was: *" the project act as a precursor to other sites and services in Kenya; it will influence government policy on shelter and infrastructure for low income people; and it will demonstrate the feasibility of a large-scale, self help scheme and lead to an overall decrease in public investment in the sector."* [5] So, even though "self-help" was a basic and important concern of the Bank, it was prompted by concerns of doing large scale projects with minimal public investment. In a way it can be said that here self help was really considered more as a means of reducing public expenditures in the shelter sector and demonstrating the ability of the people to build for themselves with land and service provision by the governments. The Nairobi City Council (NCC) on the other hand was reluctant to get involved in a project that it felt would not be up to its standards; it's major concern was that endorsement of a project of this kind would be legitimizing the process of squatting, worse still that they would actually be designing a squatter settlement.

This process of negotiation -between the World Banks initial interest in a project of this kind and the final working out of the details with the Government - took close to 3 years. This may be attributed to the fact that this was one of the first projects of its kind to be implemented in Kenya with international assistance; consequently the expectations and the objectives

4. This form of housing is quite popular in Nairobi, where private developers would subdivide land and sell or rent to the poor urban dwellers. The level of services in these settlements would often be extremely low. The Mathare Valley housing in Nairobi is perhaps one of the largest such developments.

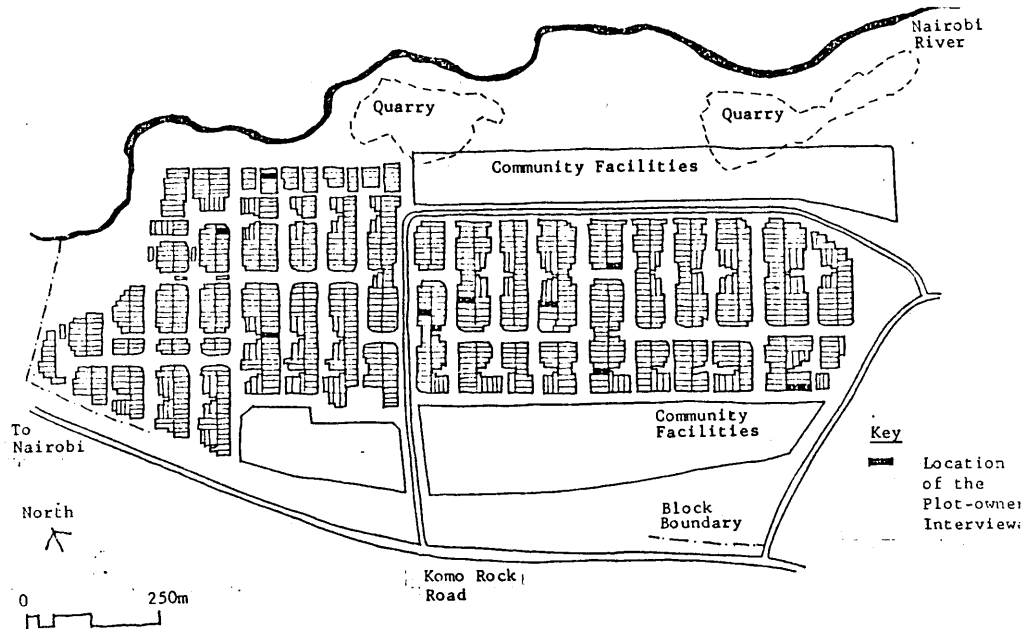5. As cited by Patricia McCarney, 1987 pp73.

fig.4.3.5
Layout of 6000 plots in Dandora
Phase 1

of the project were not only amorphous in their definition but also there were numerous points of conflict between the objectives of the Bank and those of the local Government. The Banks emphasis on making this project completely self paying (i.e. with no government or other subsidies) meant first that certain sections of the population, the lowest 20th. percentile would not be able to participate in the project at all; and second that even for the 30th. and 40th. percentile groups to be eligible the building codes and standards had to be reduced from the ones being followed by the NCC at that point. This became a point of major contention between the Bank and the NCC and generated much debate nationally. Finally the Bank conceded to an "internal cross subsidy," where by a small percentage of the plots would be developed and sold at market rates and the profit from those would be fed back into the project to subsidize the other plots meant for the low income people.

The other major issue to be resolved related to the earlier mentioned fears and skepticism on the part of the NCC. In order to ensure that the project would not become an official slum, the NCC set a time limit of 18 months within which the dwellers had to consolidate their houses by building two rooms. This condition was to be implemented with the fear of eviction. The issue of "standards" was resolved with the NCC still insisting on use of the city building codes and standards. This made the process of self help construction quite complicated so far as the dwellers were concerned, because their self constructed buildings would often not measure up to the required standards, forcing them to seek contractors.

There were implicit notions of self help and community development embodied in the programs, but these were buried underneath the more pragmatic concerns of cost recovery and efficient management of the project. In fact a special project unit was created on the insistence of the World Bank to monitor this project; this Dandora Community Development Department (DCDD), later became the Housing Development ment Department of the the NCC. This consisted of some of the best people from within the local bureaucracy to speed up the process, and keep it relatively "apolitical." By this the World Bank was attempting to circumvent some of the established practices of "favourism" and corruption that the local politicians indulged in.

In this way the Bank and the NCC conceded to some of the points and an acceptable compromise was reached between the two. But all of this was done in the project design and planning stage, with issues like the affordability of the desired target group and so on, but with no input -direct or indirect - from the future dwellers themselves. The undertaking was

supposed to be implicitly for the benefit of the poor people, and both agencies were genuinely concerned with achieving this objective, but it was an objective that the agencies worked out without really consulting the priorities of the beneficiaries. In fact, when the people were selected to occupy these lots, most of them had no idea what self help in this instance meant. A large number of the applicants had heard of the project "accidently," while looking for jobs or through friends and were completely unaware of what was expected of them.

About the "self-help" component

A site 10Km. to the East of the existing city of Nairobi was selected based on the availability of jobs for the target population, and the existing and potential transport connections. There were two basic options of serviced "cores" on plot sizes varying from 90sq.m. to 140sq.m. Type "A" consisted of a toilet and water point as the core unit, while the Option "B" consisted of a kitchen in addition to the toilet and wash area. A range of plan types ranging from 3 room unit to 6 room units on the various plot sizes was prepared by the technical wing of the DCDP. These were provided to the people at the time of the allocation. The allottees had to pick out an option from these and construct their houses as per the requirements of the chosen plan. The NCC staff insisted on having the process of "progressive development be more specifically defined whereby the people would have to consolidate their lots by having two rooms built by the end of 18 months, from the date of plot allocation. This process was to be facilitated by the provision of a building materials loan and on site technical assistance by the NCC staff. The allottees of Type A option could build a "temporary" shelter on site, to

house themselves and building materials during the period of construction. This temporary shelter had to be removed once the permanent rooms had been built. Type B allottees were to use their kitchen as store-cum-shelter during the construction period. This regulation of speedy consolidation of the dwelling units was enforced with the threat of eviction. The allottees began repayment at the end of this 18 month period, when they could begin to get some rental income on atleast one of the rooms.

Even though the original expectation was that most of the people would be building their houses themselves, in this self-help scheme, later surveys have shown that in most cases there was a combination of self-building and sub-contract type of "self-help" especially in the construction of permanent structures. The third option, that of forming "building groups" which the community development wing of the DCDP encouraged, was followed by those people who had either no resources at all to begin construction, or were too old to undertake self construction or even self management of construction. Based on a field survey of nine families in the project over an extended period of time, Praful Soni[6] has worked out the characteristics of the allottee families at the time of Plot occupancy, which determine the type of self-help methods used by them. These are:

6. Praful Naran Soni, 1980. p 66-67

1) Ability to apply oneself in :
- techniques of construction, either the temporary dwelling or permanent dwelling,
- supervision of construction and financial management,
- organizing a construction team which may consist of hired labour, relatives and/or friends.
2) Constraints and Stresses of the plot holder families, such as

- financial resources

- size and nature of family; i.e. responsibilities towards the young and the old,

- commitments to jobs and ensuring a regular income.

3) Attitudes of the allottees during the construction process towards:

- savings on labour and material, opportunity costs',

- rate of construction,

-sentiments attached to the value of the dwelling.

4) Impact of the rules and regulations on the allottees resources:

- stages of construction and eligibility for the material loans,

- the role of the temporary shelter,

- enforcement of the standards during the construction phase.

5) Perceived usage of the dwelling:

- returns on investment,·

- match/ mismatch with the allottees purpose of coming to Nairobi.

6) The house-type plan:

- complexity of the house design.

The decision to adopt a particular form of self help building is a result of the above constraints and considerations.

Building Group:

Building groups were formed with the main aim of enabling those people who were financially or managerially not capable of undertaking the construction of their units on their own. The building group pools the financial and other resources (including labour) of the group, with the aim of building at least one room for each of its members. The group

may decide to subcontract part or all of the construction. In the case of this project, Soni's survey revealed that the people forming the building group were the ones who could be characterized as the most "helpless" of the lot; either in terms of financial ability or knowledge of construction methods. It was in that sense a last resort rather than something that was positive or actively encouraged by the Dandora Committee. His observations also revealed that building groups had more female than male members.

Even though the DCDP has a community development wing whose job it is to help the allottees in "community development," the development of building groups is not something that is encouraged, unless the allottee has "problems" in building through "self-help." These groups, where they existed were fairly independent in formulating their own rules about payments and monthly installments and other inputs on the part of the group members. They worked on the principle of "financial rotation," whereby members pool in their financial resources as well as materials loan and then the group operates as a single entity in helping each member build a room. The order of priority amongst the group members is decide by a lottery system. Each member of the group continues to pay a small pre-decided monthly installment until everyone in the group has a room built. The group elects its own office bearers who would call meetings, keep accounts and delegate responsibilities to members. The group was assisted by the DCDP in technical, financial and organizational matters.

A building group would form its own rules and regulations that the group members had to follow. delinquent members would be removed from the group by unanimous decisions.
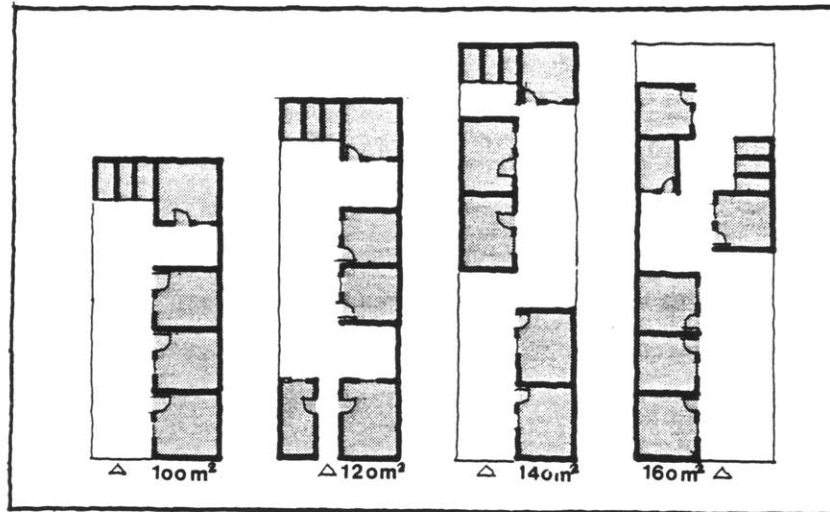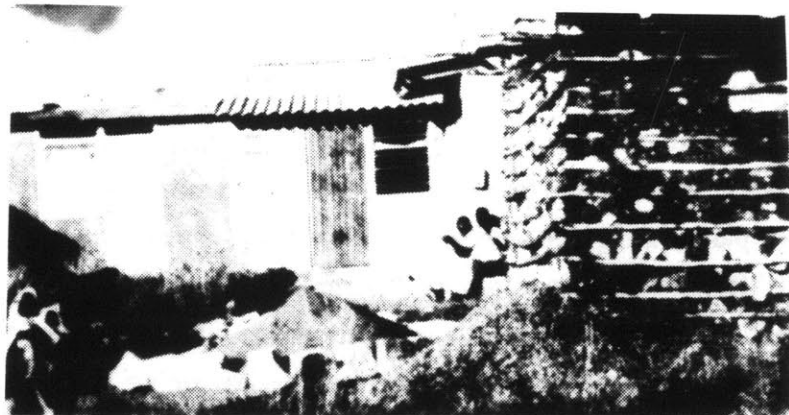
fig.4.3.6
Type plans provided by the DCPD

fig.4.3.7
The temporary and impermanent buildings in the process of progressive development
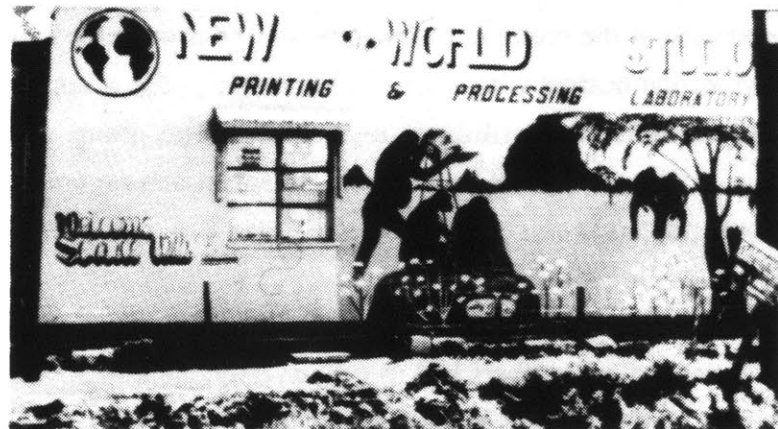

fig.4.3.8
A new printing press in Dandora. Houses have been used for small home-based enterprises

Construction of the rooms was the major objective of the building groups. Even though other objectives such as health and nutrition improvement, cultural and social welfare were part of the objectives, the time constraint in getting the rooms built forced those to be secondary. Even in the objective of merely building of rooms, these groups had advantages over the individual allottees, in that as A group they were generally able to help each other in matters such as selection of the subcontractor, purchase of materials from sources that might be fairly reasonable. Thus the skills and resources of individual members of the group could be used by the group as a whole. Because these groups consisted of the "neediest" members of the project. These groups were dealt with sympathetically by the DCDP staff, who would often help resolve personal problems of the group members. The group could negotiate on behalf of one of its members in case of delays in completion of the rooms as per DCDP schedules or any other problems.

But all through this process, the relationship remained a somewhat patronizing one, with the DCDP members feeling obliged to help the "needy" members of the project in completing their houses. This was also tempered by the DCDP's desire to have the project completed in time as per their specifications. Even though the people themselves were desirous of having houses, this speedy construction was almost forced upon them by the project in the name of self help. Yet everything from unit plans to the materials used were prescribed by the NCC. The input of the allottee was in merely complying without questioning wiht these requirements, or else they could be evicted.

Conclusions

This kind of a "self-help" project which is initiated by the local authorities, with international funding is in some sense inherently problematic. The objectives of the International funding agency as well as the local government, while being those of helping the poor in obtaining houses , essentially become a number crunching exercise of a different sort, from the earlier public housing schemes they were trying to break away from. While taking inspiration from the "self-help" efforts of the squatters, by incorporating these spontaneous processes into the "official" ones, the self help component gets reduced to a forced "self build" process, over which the self helpers have little control either in terms of the financial input they may be willing to make or the time frame within which they would do so. They are brought into the project with everything decided for them. The self help component is for them to comply with these pre-defined processes and build their houses as per the aspirations of the NCC and the World Bank.
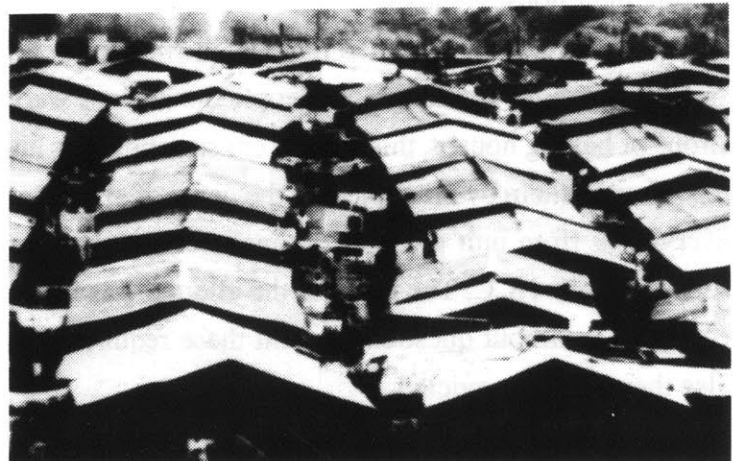

fig.4.3.9
An "informally authorized" settlement that has emerged adjacent to Dandora, supposedly housing

This notion of self help reduces it to a technical exercise in self building supported by the local agencies. In fact one could argue that because it is initiated by the agency itself, the agency has a stake in letting it remain such an exercise in order that it may remain in control of the process. If the self help component was to really develop into a community awareness whereby the community was able to "think" for itself, it would undoubtedly begin to make demands on the local officials and even question their ways of doing things, as is the case with the Orangi project. Such a situation would require a very fundamental change in the ways that the local bureaucrats interact with the common person. In some sense that is what self help ought to be about ; it is not the ability of the common person to build a shelter for him or herself that has ever been the problem; what has been problematic is the system of interaction between the common person and the authorities, where very often the person does not even understand what this "system" is, leave alone how to operate within it. In this case in the name of incorporating the "marginal" population into the mainstream, the local authority has managed to execute a different kind of a project from the ones it used to do; one, moreover that finds acceptance in the international circles because of the banner of "self help" attached to it .

The project design was such that self help was conceived at an individual level, with people having an input only in the design of their own units. Streets, services and other infra-structure was dealt with completely by the NCC, with no input from the people. Thus other than the formations of the build-ing groups (which as we have discussed before were any way consisting of the most "helpless" people in the project), there never was an incentive for people to come together as a

7. Case study of sites and services schemes in Kenya, UNCHS (Habitat), Nairobi, 1987.

8. In fact this study suggests that for a lot of the migrants in Nairobi, housing in the city is always "transitory," even when the migrants have been in the city for an extended period of time. The socio-cultural factors are such that the rural house is always the "home" which is sought to be improved and to which the migrants hope to return at some point.

community. The later state of general negligence and vandalism in the area are a reflection of this lack of "community" spirit. In fact a recent UNCHS study[7] found that nearly 75% of the residents of Dandora were not even the original owners of the plots. Most of the actual allottees, had rented their rooms at rates much higher than they themselves could afford and moved back to the cheaper informal settlements. Their incomes subsequently have increased significantly, which they have chosen to re-invest in small enterprises or education for the children or in their rural houses with which their links are still very strong.[8] While the project objectives had incorporated this kind of rental from the very beginning, the expectation was that the original allottees would continue to live in one or two rooms on their plots and rent the additional ones. But with a majority of the original owners having moved off site, it is evident that the project could not achieve another important objective, that of arresting the proliferation of informal settlements. Infact right next to Dandora, an informal settlement that came up afterwards, today accommodates more people than Dandora. The people it was supposed to have targeted have a new source of income, but they are back in the squatter settlements which the project was seeking to replace.

Epilogue

As early as 1971, Turner himself had expressed concern at the way his recommendations were being put into practice, especially through sites and services programs. In a memorandum (re. appendix 1) to Mr. Jacques Yenny, who was incharge of the Senegal sites and services project, Turner had stated some of his concerns and reservations regarding the project. He had

emphasized the "longer-term (amd larger scale) consequences have priority over shorter term (and smaller scale) effects. Thus in his view the greater emphasis ought to be on national economy and housing policy than on capital alone.

Many of the points he emphasized relate to
-the interpretation of "development": which must refer to the human subjects as well as the national aggregates.
- the danger of premature suburbanization of the development, resulting in the move back to the city slums of those people who are unable to find employment in the city.
- an attempt to have various tenure and dwelling types; eg. providing very low rental sites of minimum size to cater to the needs of the very poor.
- some attempts to phase the project with selling off expensive sites along side the lowest rental ones first, thus creating a "support" base, interms of employment opportunities for the poor. The middle income levels would come in in the next phase.

Pointing out the differences between Turner's reccomendations and the "appropriation" of these by the World Bank, Niented and Van der Linden (1985) point out:
"Both views emphasize the need to economize. However, while one of the main emphases of the World Bank is bringing down the cost to the public sector and shifting them to private and community sectors, Turner's emphasis is on the diseconomies of large scale organizations which cannot possibly cater for the variety of changing housing needs. "Mobilizing the popular sectors' resources" then, has rather different meaning in the two views. In the World Bank's approach, it is a matter of shifting the burden from one sector the other, while in Turner's thinking it is the setting free of frustrated human

aspirations. In the same sense, "progressive development is a means of economizing in the World Bank's eyes, where as Turner sees it as the logical natural expression of the recognition that housing is a process. So economizing is amongst the beneficial results, not the primary aim."

4.4 Self-Help as a Moral Obligation /Philanthropy

The "Philanthropic" solution to the housing problem is as old as the "problem" itself. In the nineteenth century industrializing Europe, the housing conditions of the workers had become so miserable in cities such as London, that they were beginning to threaten the health and well being of the workers on the one hand, and the health of the rest of the city, through epidemics and fires on the other. Cholera, typhus, typhoid fever etc. had become commonplace in the crowded, dingy and unventillated shacks of the "workers' districts." This situation forced the rest of the city — the municipal authorities, the capitalists as well as the Philanthropists — to intervene in a major way. In fact, this marks the beginning of "public" intervention in the process of housing.

Interestingly, some of the early Philanthropic Societies in Britain were sponsored by the capitalists themselves. The "evils" of the capitalist exploitation of the labour were,thus sought to be mitigated by this philanthropic action. "Capitalist rule cannot allow itself the pleasure of generating epidemic diseases among the working class with impunity; the consequences fall back on it and the angel of death rages in its ranks as ruthlessly as in the ranks of the workers."[1] The first workers housing based on Howard's "Garden City" concepts were sponsored, not by the Government or the workers unions and cooperatives, but by the capitalists.[2] In all these instances, the housing was "for" the workers, not "by" the workers; the attempt was to "help" the workers, rather than "self-help" housing. The involvement of religious organizations in these housings was often not in the form of direct Church involvement, but the driving force, even in the capitalists' involve-

1. Engels, 1872. see Engels, 1979
2. Fishman, 1977. (Urban Utopias...)

ment went much beyond the pure economic rationale; religious and moral concerns that were often in conflict with the economic roles of these capitalists, were very often very strong.

The case presented here is that of housing by a church group. The motivations behind this involvement are driven more by religious and moral concerns, rather than any economic rationale. But this "do-good, self-less" helping attitude, though driven by genuine concern, remains very much a parochial "helping the poor" project, despite claims of "self-help," and people's involvement by the group.

Habitat for Humanity: Housing in Zaire

"A decent house in a decent community for God's People in Need"

3."Succinctly put, the Economics of Jesus state that God will multiply the minute to accomplish the gigantic when Christians, by sharing and sacrifice, focus upon human needs in the name of Christ aand not upon some humanly created standard of merit." Stevens and Swisher ed. 1986. pp.7.

This is the motto for Habitat for Humanity Inc. a US based organization, that works with the "Economics of Jesus"[3] to create "self help housing for low income people." The motivation for this kind of self help comes from a deep seated Christian belief in sharing the bounties of God.

The concept is one of helping the poor as well as the rich in what is termed a "two-pronged ministry": The poor are assisted in acquiring an affordable house at cost, ie. no interest is charged on the capital provided, which can be repaid in a twenty year period. The self help component is generally in the form of labour that the future house owners out into the construction of their houses.

The rich on the other hand are provided an opportunity to divest themselves with some of their affluence, which may be a "spiritual liability," in a "Wise, just and honorable" way. "Both the rich and the poor are joined together in partnership through the Fund for Humanity."[4]

"What the poor need is not charity but capital, not caseworkers but co-workers. And what the rich need is a wise, honorable and just way of divesting themselves of their overabundance".[5]

In practice as we shall see, particularly in the African context, this kind of co-working basically takes the form of a team of the locals working under the leadership of the missionary on their own or church employed projects. The self help component is understood to be the missionaries or other volunteers working with the poor people on projects designed and directed by the Church group. The people, while being helped in all good faith by the missionaries have no participatory role in deciding what they want. An implicit (and not so inaccurate) assumption is made that any thing would be better than

4."The fund for Humanity is the name given in every project site to the fund of money used to build houses. Fund's money comes from contributions of organizations, churches, and individuals of good will, from no-interest loans to the Fund, from income from project enterprises, and from Habitat house payments." ibid pp.10-11.
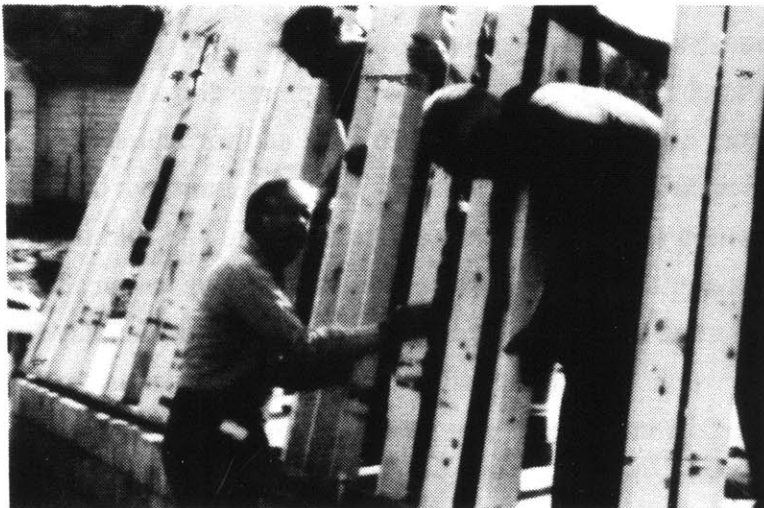
5. ibid p.2

fig. 4.4.1
US Ex President Jimmy Carter helps put up 2 x 4's at a housing site in the US

their present miserable condition. But as we shall see in the African case this complete non-involvement of the local people in the initial planning stages leads to design of projects that may be quite unsuited to the materials and skills available in the area, causing long delays.

Background of the Group

Habitat for Humanity came out of the Koinonia farms, a cooperative Christian community near the small southern Georgia town of Americus. It was founded jointly by two men Clarence Jordan and Millard Fuller. While Jordan was a trained farmer and a Biblical scholar, Fuller was a highly successful businessman and a lawyer, who during a crisis in his personal life, decided to give up all his worldly possessions and devote himself to the "service of the Lord." The framework for today's Habitat for Humanity came about as a result of this cooperation between these two men at the Koinonia farm in the summer of 1968.

The first housing project to be undertaken by the group consisted of a 42 acre site in Americus. Capital from different church organizations as grants or interest free loans poured in from all over the country into the Fund for Humanity (explained in a preceding section). The group built four bedroom houses with bath, kitchen and living room and sold them to poor families at cost with no interest. There was a four acre lot reserved in the middle for community facilities and play area for the children. The families paid a monthly stipend, repaying the cost in a twenty year period. So in this initial stage, the future residents did not even participate in the building of their houses. They got houses they could afford, that were a lot

better than the one's they were living in. They paid for these in small monthly installments and were encouraged to make contributions in addition to this, as per the paying capacity of the family.

While this kind of Christian faith leads the original founders to embrace all humankind; this embracing in the American and the "third world" context is justified differently. In the North American context, the striving for helping the "poor and the disinherited" results in housing and other ventures that benefit largely the blacks in Americus; first because those are the majority of the poor, and second because at that time (1960's), racial hostilities were such that the poorer white families would either not want to be with the blacks, or were scared of backlash from the other whites. In any case, the end result is this venture becoming a kind of an anti-racial gesture. The intervention in Africa on the other hand, while also motivated through "Christian" beliefs of sharing, is justified also on grounds of the lack of civilization amongst the "unchristianed" natives. Instances of the lack of hygiene, and "civilized behaviour" are sited often in the literature and accounts of the projects, that justify the spreading the "message of Christ" to people all over the world to mitigate their sufferings.

Sources of funding: "Money for the fund will come from shared gifts by those who feel they have more than they need and from non interest bearing loans from those who can cannot afford to make a gift but who do want to provide a working capital for the disinherited..."

The fund raising campaign appeals to all religious and other groups and individuals to contribute to the fund as much as

fig. 4.4.2

The existing 'shacks' in Mbandaka that were sought to be replaced with decent housing

6. Feuller, BOKOTOLA, 1977 p.92

they can, either as grant or interest free loans. In fact, the organizers make "no apologies for begging... in the name of Christ,"[6] from any and every source that would give. Even the recipients of the new houses are not deprived of this "blessedness of giving." They are encouraged to share atleast a part of their saving on interest with the Fund for Humanity so that others, who are deprived may benefit.

On the role of Government: Habitat for Humanity does not work with the government for ideological reasons. "But even with millions of dollars at its disposal, Government cannot give man a God-dimension to his life. It is inherently incapable of reaching the inner recesses of his being, which must be touched if life on this planet is to be even passingly tolerable."[7]

7. Clarence Jordan as quoted by Fuller, 1977

Further, " the overall project operation will be without interest and free of government control. .. It is a people-to-people project of love under the lordship of Jesus Christ. However streets, utilities, land ... may be acquired from government agencies, if no strings are attached that violate Habitat principles."[8]

8. op.cit. Stevens and Swisher eds. 1986.

Bokotola: Housing in Zaire

In 1972, the Housing Partnership at Koinonia farms decided to expand out their geographic sphere of activity to the developing areas. Zaire was chosen because one of the Partners, Millard Fuller had been there six years earlier on a trip and seen some Church sponsored activities going on. He and his wife had been deeply moved by the level of poverty and the poor living conditions in the Equatorial region of the country

that they had spent some time in.

The first housing project in Zaire was a 100 dwelling construction undertaken by the United Church of Christ under the directorship of Millard Fuller, which later expanded to 162 dwellings. This project was initiated based on an existing "Block and Sand" manufacturing unit that was in a state of near closure in 1973, when the Fullers reached there. It was first revived and brought to working order, with help in terms of money and materials from church groups and individuals in the U.S. Part of the production from this unit was sold locally at market rates. The profits from these sales as well as the actual cement blocks being manufactured provided the base for launching the housing program.

On the self-help component: This first project was not really a self help project in any sense. The actual dwellers were not involved either in the planning, design or the construction of the houses. Actually, at this time the project was not even formally called a "self-help" project, even though as discussed further on in this section, the Habitat group had some implicit notions about it being a "people's project." In fact, it
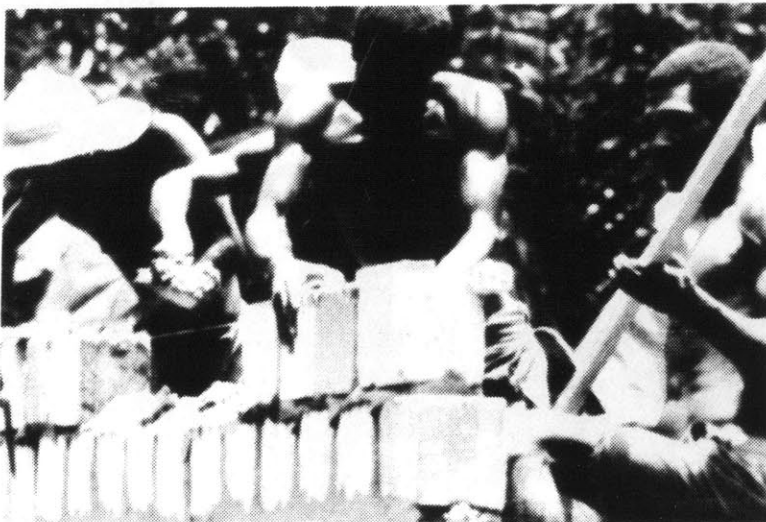

fig. 4.4.3
Cement blocks from the revived block and sand project being used by the local people for building new houses

is the later publications of the group, that have taken on the much trendy banner of "self-help" to describe the housing efforts. The later housing projects, at least in the U.S, actually incorporate an element of "sweat-equity" in terms of labour input by the dwellers to justify "self-help."

In the Zaire case, the Fund for housing would invite applications from all those desiring new houses and then a committee would screen each application and select the desired number of suitable families dependent on certain criteria, such as the current living conditions of the people, the number of people in the family, "character" and repayment capacity of the family. Some of the families inevitably happened to be those of the people employed by the Brick and Sand Project or in the construction of the houses or other components such as doors and windows etc.; or otherwise involved with the Church activities. But all these people did their "jobs" whatever those might be, rather than build their own houses. When the first set

fig. 4.4.4
An ecstatic owner of a new house groups with joy at the dedication ceremony of her house

of twenty or so houses were ready, the selection of the next batch of allottees would be done beforehand so that people could help prepare their plot by clearing the weeds and overgrowth from it.

Technical experts from the U.S. (architects, surveyors and engineers) were responsible for most of the planning and design work with generally some help in terms of manual labour from the local government. Even though the local people were involved in the actual manufacturing and construction processes, they were not being consulted in the designing of their houses or in building of a community. The construction crew would have optional morning prayers where the director would deliver a small sermon often touching on the every day happenings and events.

The "foreigners" themselves would be working on site with the locals in every way except in the actual design and decision making processes. From the materials used for the building to the size and design of the dwelling units, the attempt was to provide the locals with a "decent" standard of dwelling. The Habitat workers were constantly appalled with the living conditions of the Zairois. But what this "do good" attitude achieved was a level of living conditions as closely approximating the former colons as possible. The measure for respectability still remained this approximation. The lucky few who got these houses were of course ecstatic, but it did nothing to boost the pride of the local people or their traditional values. The wealth and work zeal of the white man was held as the beacon, towards which the locals must strive.[9] They were further being told that in the name of Jesus it was possible to do so, as He intended all to be equal.

9. Infact some outright derogatory references to the local and tribal traditions are made by Millard Fuller in the book BOKOTOLA, p.58., in reference to a local non Christian funeral ceremony that he intended.

Driven by this same zeal to provide the locals with what the former colons had denied them, "sturdy long lasting houses" made of concrete, steel and glass, none of which were locally manufactured or available. Therefore long delays would inevitably occur in procuring these materials thereby withholding construction for periods of time. Further, Fuller was disturbed at the lack of "ownership of the project" by the locals; "there is also a widespread feeling of nonparticipation in any enterprise of which Zairois are a part..... frequently I would be asked, *"How is your project going?"* ..... This attitude of working for me and for my project meant that they felt no real stake in the undertaking."[10]

10. ibid p.108

Given that neither the building materials nor the techniques were familiar to the local people, this "lack of ownership" is not entirely surprising. In fact some of the buildings being designed were not very well suited to the climatic conditions or the cultural needs of the local people.[11] The entire effort of housing construction was being carried out by paid employees all of whom were not to get the houses they built. This further

11. In fact a community park designed by the volunteer American architect had to be redesigned, when the local women complained of its unsuitability in terms of exposure to heat and wind during midday when most of the women's activity took place. The second time round the architect did take the comments of the local women into account, but the building form as well as materials used were as alien as ever to the local context.

fig. 4.4.5

made the project more like a job to most of the employees. Even though the group's basic ideology is against charity, the giving of the finished houses at cost to a selected number of poor, in a context where almost every one is poor, inevitably makes this process highly selective,and at the same time brings in a major source of friction between those who receive and those who do not. While the government generally supported this project, it was not intended to become a part of the government housing procedures, by the groups own reckoning.

These two factors together, the non-involvement of the local people in the decision making or planning of any kind, and the non involvement of the local government meant that the project was completely dependent on the Church group for sustenance. The fate of this project, once the director Millard Fuller left in 1976, is something that I have not been able to determine. But it would not be surprising if the project met the same fate as some of the earlier Church sponsored projects in Zaire had.[12]

12.Millard Fuller on arriving in Zaire in 1973 had found most of the earlier projects that had at one time been functioning very well, in various stages of disfunctioning. In fact the Block and Sand project that formed the economic and material basis for this housing project was one such project that he was able to revive. (Fuller 1977).

One of the positive aspects of this project though was that it provided secondary employment to some of the workers, especially a few who had been housed at Bokotola. This employment was in the form of furniture making for the local community, making of door and window frames or some craft and sewing training for the local women. But this was limited to four or five individuals in all. In addition, the Block and Sand project employed a work crew of about 100 or so. Generation of employment was not an integral part of this project at any stage, even though the fact that the Brick and Sand project was one of the two sources of employment in the city (other than Government jobs), was always being empha-

sized by the group to secure government assistance in the project.

Housing in Ntondo: A step forward

Some of these drawbacks were beginning to get rectified, (not because of any concious process of learning on the part of the agency), in the next project that was started in 1976, in the small village of Ntondo, ninety miles from Mbandaka. This "happened" for a variety of reasons. First, the initiative for the project came from a well educated and highly concerned local member of the community, who had already been instrumental in having a high school built in the village, in addition to several smaller junior schools in the villages around. These schools were built by the local people with the school pupils putting in their fair share of the work. Now he wanted to involve the community in rebuilding of their houses.

Second, since the village was fairly small (300 units) and almost every unit was in a bad state, it was decided to rebuild all the houses. This implied that from the very beginning it was a "community effort," since people were to build houses for each family together, in what might formally be labelled as "mutual self-help." A Fund for Humanity was set up here as well, the first contribution to which came from the local people themselves, as down payment. The mother organization at Koinonia farms was to help with raising funds for the project in the US as well as encourage volunteers to go there and help with the project layout and construction.

Third, because this village was a lot poorer than the Bokotola community, it was decided that some of the standards would

be lower. These included use of mud blocks instead of concrete for the interior walls, use of wood panels instead of glass for the windows, both of which would climatically be much more suited in any case, even though that was not the reason for this choice.

In this case the people were organizing the building activity themselves, (with assistance from the volunteers), and atleast partially building with materials that were locally available and familiar to the people. The new layout for the houses and thus the entire village (in a "neat fashion") was done by the volunteer surveyors and architects though.[13] But the major difference in this case as compared with Bokotola is that here the Habitat group was "involved in a project initiated by a set of local people", rather than "involving the local people in their project." The existing structure of leadership in the village would provide the basis for organization of the community for this new venture.

13. The imposition of a new physical order, which inevitably embodies a whole new life style and the consequent destruction of the old way of life completely is relevant issue and has grave implications. It is however beyond the scope of this discussion.

Conclusions:

What does a Church sponsored "self help" such as this one imply in terms of housing provision to the low income people and to the process of development in general?

The whole issue of housing, particularly in the developing world is seen as a mechanism of bringing about a certain level of "basic decency" in the life of the poor, motivated by the Christian belief of "sharing." The mechanism for doing so is an appeal to the "Christian spirit" amongst the rich as well as

the not so rich, inviting them to help their fellow beings who are less fortunate than themselves. Yet, the existing authority, ie. the government is seen as being unsuitable for the purpose of managing this process. The group would like the government to cooperate with the provision of land and services, but not interfere beyond that point.

Interestingly enough, in this view of the "hindrances" involved in government involvement, the attitude is similar to Turner's, but the ideological basis of disagreement with government involvement in the two cases is very different: Turner's ideological basis is an anarchist one, believing in autonomy of individual action, while Habitat for Humanity simply considers the government involvement as problematic in creating a "kingdom of God" on earth. They are not against authority, but it has to be an authority of the Church, as against one of mere government.

The objectives of the project had some implicit notions about involvement of the community, not really in any "self-help" mode, but rather in the perspective of the organizers themselves, in the assumption that it would somehow be a "people's project." The fact that is perception is not automatically shared by the beneficiaries, is something that the organizers have difficulty in dealing with, as discussed in an earlier section. Infact, the later adoption of the label of "self-help' by the group, makes one wonder, if that was more a "swaying with the current" of the popularization of the notion of self-help housing worl wide around that time (late seventies).

The importation of a whole new ideology in the name of development, particularly in a context as poor as Zaire is one that needs careful attention. We have here a context that was

barely emerging from centuries of colonization during which its own cultural as well as material wealth was completely destroyed. Also destroyed was its pride in its own way of life. A "self-help" housing effort of this kind, providing people with a lifestyle they can barely afford unassisted, and barely refuse for lack of any other choice, makes the people further "powerless" in a way. Powerless not in any material sense but in the sense of further dependence on a new institution (the church), and a further erosion of any pride in their ancestral way of life.

By being completely dependent on other peoples "spirit of sharing," (which is ultimately charity), the project does not really build up a local capacity for sustaining the process of housing or employment unassisted. In fact, there is hardly any employment generated by the project in the way that it is operated, other than providing people with the task of building *as long as funds from outside keep coming in.*

By keeping the government out of the picture, no meaningful dialogue is established betwen the people and the local government, with whom the local community has to deal' whether they like it or not.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented three different interpretations of the notion of self-help in housing. Each of these three approaches have some implicit or explicit assumptions about involving the dwellers in the housing process. Even though they all lay claims to having involved "self-help," there are major differences in the ideological positions that lead to self-help, how this self help is initiated, and what is ultimately achieved? The projects involve different agencies and actors occupying different positions with respect to each other.

Orangi project is initiated by an NGO, but the reins are soon handed over to the people themselves, which is in keeping with the objectives of empowering the community. The second case, that of Dandora, is initiated by the State itself through the local city council. Here the objective is to make such projects a part of the mainstream policy, therefore, the project always remains in control of the State agencies The third case, that of the Habitat project in Zaire, is initiated by the habitat group, and despite claims to the contrary remains very much a Church project. The objective here is to propagate the message of the Church through this "self-help" effort, so it is in a way essential that the project remains in the hands of the Church authorities.

In terms of the frame work laid out in the previous chapter, the three projects show a range of organizational differences. The three projects can be placed within the earlier developed range matrix as follows:

	Self ◄──► NGO ◄──► State Initiated		Initiated		Initiated
single person ↕ community groups, unions etc.		Habitat Project In Zaire		Dandora S &S	
		Orangi Upgrading			

fig. 4.5.1

A comparative look at the objectives and the "achievements of these projects in their own terms is set out in the following summary. The three important aspects that can highlight this comparison are: (refer *fig. 4.5.2*, adjoining page)

What do the three initives set out to do?

| Orangi Pilot Project	Dandora Sites and Services	Habitat Housing In Zaire
Educate and empower the commu-nity as a group to be actively Involved In the process of their own development.	Provide an affordable alternative to the process of squatting In the developing cities for the low Income groups, along with providing them a source of Income as rent.	Provide a decent lifestyle to people who are too poor to do so on their own as a moral obligation.

How do they go about doing it?

Orangi Pilot Project	Dandora Sites and Services	Habitat Housing In Zaire
Bring the community together as a group around Issues of common Interest- build community spirit; Educate poeple about heir rights, capabilities and duties- they learn to make demands on the system Work within the existing power structure wihtout directly challenging It.	Set up a project providing land & services to people, on long term loans and materials assistance. Technical assistance is provided to each participant by the agency.	Set up a voluntary work force of concerned people of "faith" from the U.S., who go and work In Zaire building for the local people Funds are arranged from every possible source within this group of concerned people In the US Government assistance sought by the group, not people as and when needed.

What do they achieve?

Orangi Pilot Project	Dandora Sites and Services	Habitat Housing In Zaire
An awakened community that Is capable of making demands on the authorities and make decisions collectively . Better environmental conditions.	A set of people who are materially richer than they were, with an additional source of Income (rent). Their own living conditions are often the same as before, i.e. back to squatter settlements Proliferation of squatter settlements continues.	A group of better housed people, living together on one site, but not confident of achieving any further Improvemennts on their own. Their Interaction with the authorities remains unaltered

Self help as a dialogue between the State and the People

Any self help project has at its core a stated or unstated assumption about the way in which a common person in society interacts with those in authority. The ability of a person or a group of people to initiate and maintain such a dialogue is by the very nature of a governed society an essential pre-requisite for the people to "help" themselves. The three examples presented here view this interaction differently. Two of these were initiated by non-governmental agencies. Thus the government and its representative agencies were clearly separate from the agency .
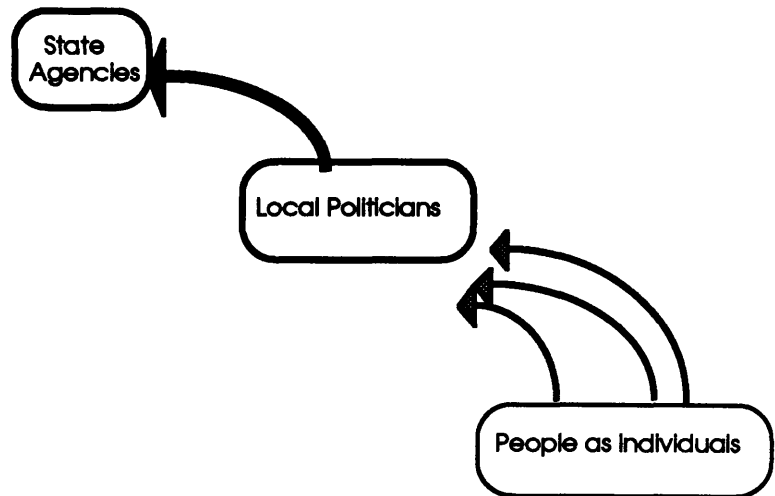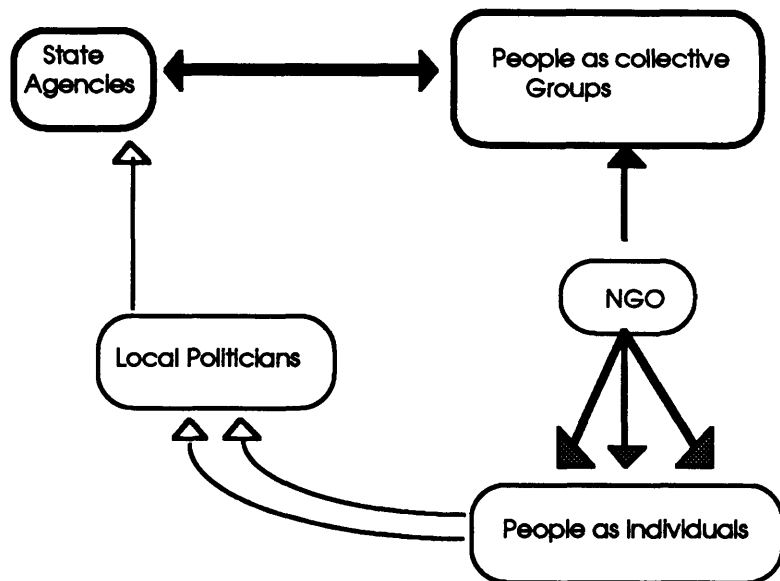
State-Common Person Interaction before Intervention

The only channel of communication between the people and the state agencies was through the local politicians who would often exploit this position of previlege.

fig. 4.5.3
Orangi Pilot Project

In the case of Orangi, the self-help efforts were aimed at making the common person capable of interacting with the State, not as an individual, but as a part of a group of people with common interests. The fact that the unit of consideration was a community, rather than an individual was an important factor in making the bargaining position of the people stronger vis-a-vis the local politicians, as well as the state agencies. Because this dialogue is carried out between the people themselves and the politicians or the agencies, rather than through the NGO, makes the people self-reliant rather than dependent on some higher body for articulating their needs

State-Common Person Interaction after Intervention.

The NGO essentailly brough prople together around issues of common interest, and empowered them to communicate directly with the state
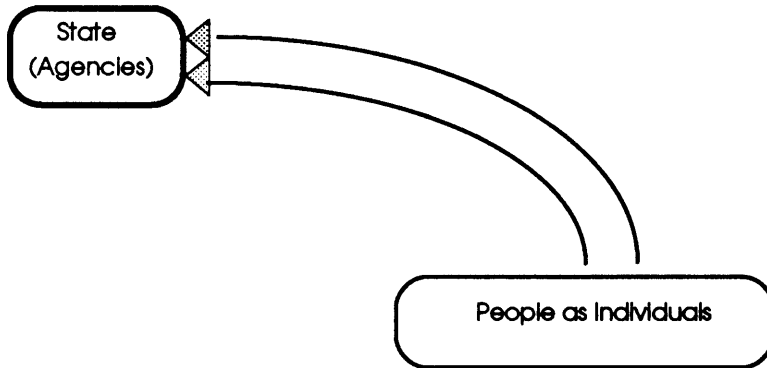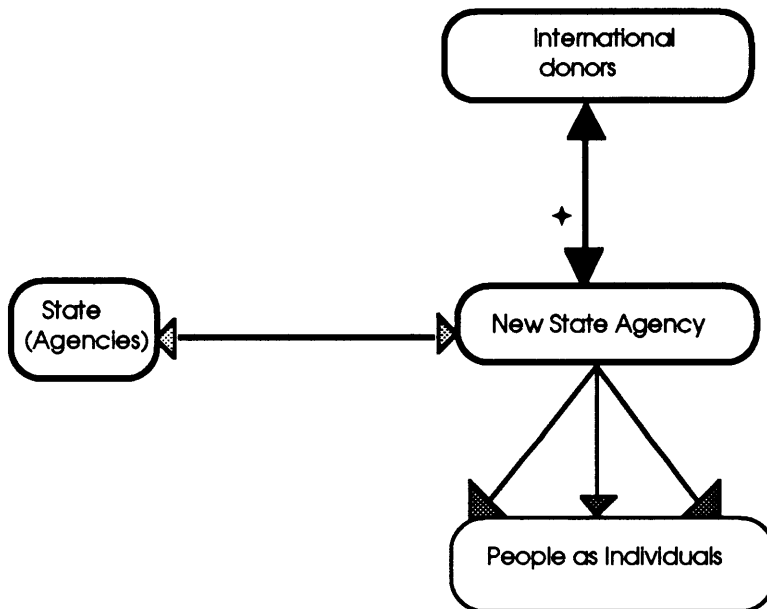
State-Common Person Interaction before Intervention

Almost no direct interaction existed between people and the state agencies, either at an individual level or group level, because most people lived in illegal settlements.
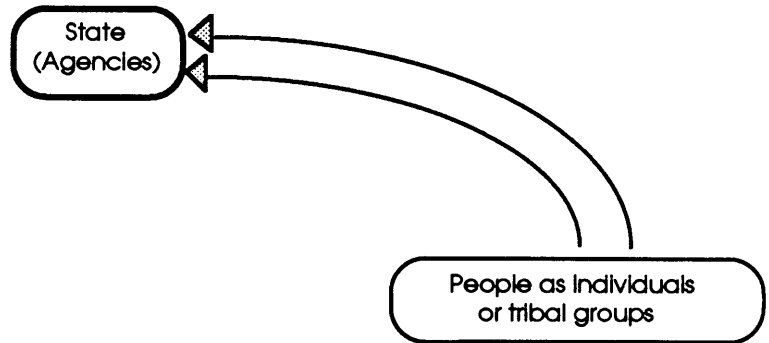
Sites and Services Dandora

fig. 4.5.4

The sites and services project was initiated by the government authorities themselves. But, the fact that within the agency a new cell was created to undertake this project signifies an attempt to establish a new way of interacting with the people, though the project design was such that this interaction was limited to providing technical assistance to the allottees in a rather parochial manner. In this case, the project becomes a means by which the local agency, or the special cell that is formed out of it, manages to make associations with the International donors and their experts. Between them they articulate all the needs of the people. Therefore, the dwellers themselves, still remain dependent on the authorities for deciding what is best for them, and how it is to be accomplished. (ref.diag.)

State-Common Person Interaction after Interaction

The details of "self-help" are all decided between the state agencies and the Intenatiopnal donors, without any interaction with the people. The new agency later helps people with loans and technical assistance at an individual level.
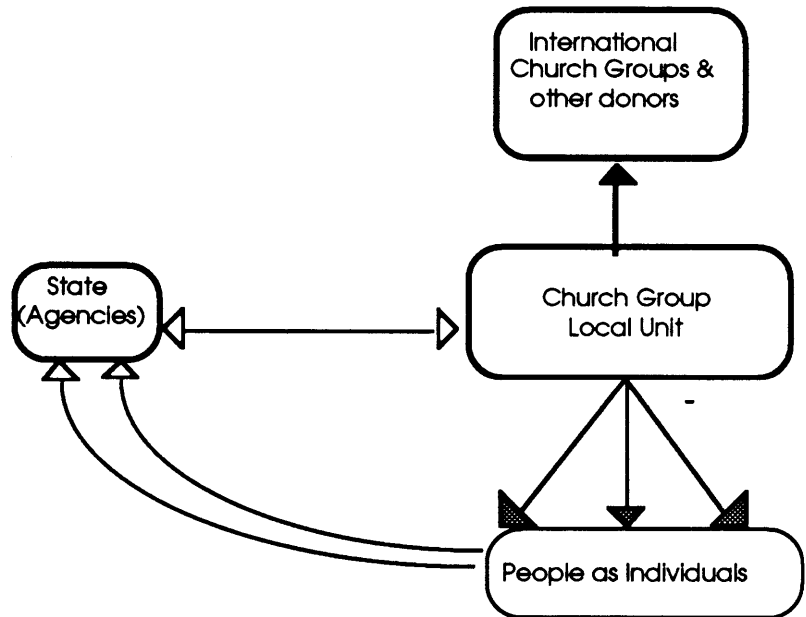
State-Common Person Interaction before Intervention

While tribal groups existed , the modern state was not responsive to that form of organization

Habitat For Humanity

fig. 4.5.5

The last project, involving the Habitat for Humanity group, prefers to keep the government as far out of the picture as possible. They have to approach the government for acquiring land and services, but this is done by the leaders of the Habitat group, with the potential dwellers not having any role to play at all. Thus the people are not any wiser about interacting with their own government agencies when the "foreigners" leave at the end of the project. The dialogue that is established is between the church group and the people on the one hand, and between the church group and the newly made connections in the donor country on the other. The common person therefore, remains as "help-less" as ever, even though a new house has been provided to him or her.

State-Common Person Interaction after Interaction

The Church group does not build on the tribal organization either, nor encourage any interaction between the people and the State, but strives to build a new community, based on "faith."

FIVE

Conclusions

Conclusions

This research simply began as an exploration of the notion of self-help in housing. The vibrant and lively debate already occurring in the field seemed the natural starting point for this exploration. Yet as the reality of some field experiences was sought to put in the context of this debate, a whole new world opened up which the level of generality in this debate could possibly not address. Two major points emerge as concluding issues, one leading to the other. First that "self-help" has become a banner underneath which a whole lot of agendas get played out , as the three cases show; and second that the realities of the cases by escaping any categorization in definitive terms, makes the debate rather esoteric and idealized. These are elaborated in the following passages.

5.1 "Intentions" behind "self-help" efforts

The journey through the world of self-help in the last chapter was a revelation, not merely in the different interpretations of self-help that are given in these programs but more significantly that a project may be motivated by concerns that have nothing at all to do either with "self-help," or with housing *per se*. Under the banner of self-help, these projects become a vehicle for an agency to promote it's own agendas and interests. That is not to suggest that the agencies or the individuals therein are not motivated by "good intentions" towards the people concerned, but that good intentions as conceived by a group or agency vary as these projects demonstrate.

Reviewing the three cases in terms of the underlying intentions

behind using self-help" would make this clearer.

The case of Orangi

In this case, "self-help" is seen as a vehicle for organizing the community, not for any direct gains to the agency involved itself, but driven by the belief that community awareness is an essential step in ensuring the overall welfare of the people. The laying of the sewers in this case therefore is not the ultimate aim of this effort, but a means of organizing the community. The NGO involved assumes this greater awareness of the community to mean achieving a new level of communication with the State and its representative agencies, by the people themselves. The project therefore is geared towards a process of re-education of the community, whereby the ability of the organized community to put pressure on the State agencies is demonstrated to the people through the pipe laying experience. Bringing about larger structural change in the neo-Marxist sense is not what the agency aims for (as will be discussed in the next section), but getting the community a better deal within the given system. The emphasis on a collective effort to achieve this end is strategic in understanding the intricate interdependence between the local politicians and the community, with the existing set of political patronage relations that exist.

"Self-help" in this instance is conceived in its spirit and practice to enhance the ability of a common person to help him or herself by being able to deal with the given system of governance better. A better aware community is in a better bargaining position vis-a-vis the existing power structures. The implicit though unstated assumption of course is that in

the long term, the sustainability of this process would be instrumental in bringing about the "real meaningful changes." The concern of this process with physical upgrading is only incidental, the project is not being propagated as a "model" for solving the housing problem at all (as the sites and services project claims to be doing). Replicability, therefore is not the issue at all here, even though long term sustainability of the process is.

Sites and Services:

Sites and Services have been conceived by the World Bank as alternative "model" to the expensive mass housing schemes or public housing that was the norm. "Self-help" in this case becomes a means of reducing public expenditure per housing unit, the rationale being that a greater number of the poor would be reached without increasing the overall money being spent on housing. The issue of replicability and affordability are very much the concern. "Self-help" becomes a means of achieving these ends. To lower the cost of the house to the people (and to the agency itself), the self-help component assumes two forms: the first being a process of "self-build," such that the house becomes affordable to the poor; and the second, an implicit or explicit expectation that the house thus constructed would become an asset to the people, providing them with a rental income, that could then go towards subsidizing the further consolidation of the units. This is in fact the classic example of the neo-Marxist fears of self-help creating "petty-capitalists" being materialized, as we shall see in the proceeding section.

No attempt is made in this instance for any kind of community

organization, the emphasis is on an "individual." Empowerment of the low income people is not the issue here at all; that an empowerment of sorts takes place in economic terms is incidental to the original intentions of the project, as is the "self-help" component. Self-help here is merely an inexpensive and convenient tool to achieve the end of increasing the number of houses being produced.

The other claims that these projects make of reaching the poor has proved to be the most elusive one. Numerous studies and surveys have pointed out the phenomenon of gentrification in these schemes. In fact, in the Dandora case, as many as 75% of the residents in 1986[1] were not the original allottees. Most of the people actually occupying the houses were of a much higher income level than the allottees. So while the original allottees are monetarily richer than they used to be, they have chosen to re-invest their money in other activities such as education or starting a business etc. Their living conditions remain unaltered. In fact, they are now producing housing with government support for a section of population that was earlier being catered to by the "informal" small developers (distinct from squatting), while the original squatters are back to the squatter settlements.

1.UNCHS (Habitat) study 1987.

The "model" of sites and services as a viable alternative to housing provision economically has therefore been not very successful. The issue of replicability of these projects is tied up with the affordability question; replicability is possible only if the project becomes completely self-paying and not dependent on any subsidies. That implies a complete recovery of all loans given to the people. For various reasons, such as the political patronage, these loans cannot be fully recovered, or the houses get sold over to those who can afford to pay back

these loans. These loans are recovered by the local municipal agencies, and they suffer any defaults, not the World Bank. The governments agree to do so most willingly, largely because they are benefiting indirectly through these projects. They manage to secure precious foreign currency, that is often allegedly spent on items other than housing altogether[2]

2.Allegations to the effect that this money has often gone for covert military activities and arms deals in many contexts have been made.

Thus, under the banner of doing "self-help" housing, the World Bank continues to sponsor large scale projects with successful cost recovery rates, while the national governments play out their own agendas. The housing so achieved reaches a larger proportion of the people than did the earlier mass housing projects, but the "problem" continues unabated.

The Case of Habitat for Humanity

The third instance of "self-help" has the most dubious of intentions, in so far as the benefit to the dwellers is concerned. Even though philanthropy as a motive for helping the poor is perhaps the oldest form of low-income housing, the "self-help" aspect of it as exemplified by this case is really unclear. The people involved are no doubt motivated by genuine "Christian faith" and a real desire to help the poor, this undertaking nevertheless appears more to help themselves, not materially or politically, but "spiritually." There is the underlying idea of "cleansing" one's worldly sins; and the poor because of their unfortunate state, provide the ideal channel for doing so. Therefore the people involved in this "self-help" venture are helping themselves as much as they are helping the poor.

The real danger of a venture such as this though lies in its

3.Fuller, in Bokotola, p.58

implicit notion of creating a "decent" community of Christians all doctrined in the faith that the group tries to propagate. The venture smacks of the older "white man's burden" kind of attitude; derogatory comments on the customs and lifestyle of the natives manage to escape the otherwise "spiritually worded" writings of the leaders.[3] The banner of self-help here becomes a convenient umbrella for the importation and imposition of a whole new ideology along with housing. The dependence of the people on the church organization for achieving every little thing makes the "self-help" aspect rather questionable. In the earlier two instances, the people were getting some benefit, either in terms of political leverage or monetary gains, this project achieves nothing but a few hundred "decent"houses for as many people, in which they have to learn to live decently.

What then is "self-help?"

These three cases demonstrate a whole range of agendas from the "empowerment of the community" at one end to "reaching the poor" through affordable housing options to "creating a decent community" in the outbacks of Africa have all been played out in the name of self-help. How then can one begin to even define what self-help is, leave alone hold a debate on its merits or otherwise? Not merely are the interpretations of self-help different in these case, but what is sought to be achieved does not even have either self-help or housing at its core. Yet the advocates and the critics are always working on the assumption that it is "self-help housing" that is the issue.

5.2 The debate and the reality

At this point it would seem pertinent to go back to the "self-help" debate and see how the realities in the field relate with the two "worlds" created by the proponents and the critics. What can these three cases as instances of self-help housing say about the issues being debated? The proceeding sections will explore this question in the context of the cases discussed.

Orangi is a classic instance of the "spontaneous" squatter settlement that has experienced intervention, not directly by the government authorities, but by an intermediary organization-mediating between the government and the local community, a development that has only recently begun to be talked about by Turner.[4] Traditionally the debate has been concerned with the role of the State, the market sector and the people. The appearance of these intermediary Non-Governmental Organizations is something that neither side of the debate have addressed,. Turner has talked about the important role that this "third" sector could play in the housing process, but again the details of what kind of institutions these would be, and with what motivations would they work is not addressed. Two of the cases examined in this thesis are examples of NGO involvement, but with completely different motivations and outcomes. Both consider self-help as an important element, but to achieve very different ends. Even the way they involve the people is different, in Orangi the attempt is to organize the people in community groups around issues of common interests, while in Bokotola, the conception of community is around religious faith; even though the group talks about a community, the organization remains largely at an individual level. The two sides of the debate never acknowledge the immense variations in the self-help practices

4.see recent articles, such as "The role of NGO's ...." Turner, 1987, and "Building Community" Bertha Turner ed. 1988.

that occur because of all these differences in self-help practices that may be categorized under one label - self-help through NGO's.

The case of Sites and Services is a particular one in this debate, which is a realization in some ways of the worst fears of the neo-Marxist analysis coming true. The arguments about exploitation of labour, creation of petty capitalists and worst of all use of self-help policies as a means of dampening the poor worker's genuine demands for a better deal, all appear to find manifestation in these projects. Even though these projects are supposedly based on tenets of community participation, in practice, that doesn't work out because a community does not exist until the project is underway and the allottees have been selected. As discussed earlier, these projects are geared towards a single family in their design and intent. In this sense, the neo-Marxists were absolutely correct in pointing out that these policies tend to individualize discontent amongst the poor, thereby preventing any collective action by these groups. But while their analyses is remarkably accurate in its prediction, they have no recommendations to offer towards the praxis, other than a rather undefined notion of a complete transformation of the present mode of production. The reality of most "third world" and increasingly of the "first world" contexts begs immediate intervention, where a strong theoretical analysis not followed by any scheme of action is not particularly helpful.

Turner on the other hand, who gives a strong emphasis on action, was himself left wondering at the adaption of his recommendations by the World Bank and the national governments in giving shape to the sites and services projects. The appropriation of his policies by the various agencies and

groups for playing out agendas that are quite contrary to some of his ideals, is partly attributable to his zeal for action where any kind of local participation is an acceptable "improvement," -a situation which often does not allow him to think far enough about these consequences.

Two Idealized Worlds

This leads us to the basic element of idealism that underlies both the world views in this debate. The neo-Marxist analysis idealizes the theoretical materialism based on Marxist view of the commodity status of housing, and as discussed above leads to an idealized solution of *Practical Paralysis*; any thing short of a complete transformation of the capitalist mode of production is not acceptable to the neo-Marxists. Turner on the other hand idealizes the practice of self-help to a degree that any kind of direct action involving people is seen to be *a priori* positive, a recommendation that as demonstrated has led to manipulation and misuse. His recommendations for action are as idealized as is the neo-Marxist leaning towards an analysis that leads to non-action.

This is not to suggest that an element of idealism is not needed; in fact quite the contrary. A degree of idealism is indeed necessary for any kind of change to occur. But the problem arises when the idealism leads to the creation of a World, where one can close one's mind to those elements of reality that do not fit with this idealized world. This in fact is what has happened on both sides of the debate.

While Turner is unhappy with the turn of the events, especially in a case such as sites and services, his idealized view of the merits of autonomous action of the people through self-help is

such that it has become almost a panacea for most ills of the housing situation. The problems with the realization of this idealism are attributed by him not so much to a questioning of the social and political realities that simply do not allow for the truly revolutionary ideas that his thinking implies, but rather to the technical and rational failures in the implementation of the ideas.

Burgess on the other hand, working with a very clear perspective of the particular ills of the present system that would flaw a lot of Turner's recommendations a priori, is however unable to provide any agenda for action. An idealized vision of an ultimate revolution that would change the relations of production in the society, is the intangible goal that he waits for.

Both sides are therefore offering idealized solutions, from the safety of their idealized worlds, while the realities of the contexts have shown the need to go beyond this idealism. "The question here is not of choosing between these approaches as if they were mutually exclusive. The challenge,... is precisely to recognize the ambiguities of reality itself and the complexities they pose, accepting that generalizations one way or another are impossible on this issue."[5]

The notion of self-help, as it is commonly understood is therefore useful in a broad way. It tells of a very general approach whereby people have some role to play in the process of housing themselves. But as seen in practice, there are many variables having to do with the organization of a project and the motivations of the different actors involved, as demonstrated by the analysis and the cases presented. The

need to move beyond this level of generality towards considering the specific situation of the context in which any project or policy becomes operational is therefore essential. To this end the coining of labels such as "self-help" housing can be dangerous in that they do not permit questioning of what all is happening within this label. This thesis attempted to lay out a conceptual framework that moves beyond this notion of a universal "solution" to universalized problems beneath one label or another.

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