Chapter 11
Agonistic Engagements: Difference, Meaning and Deliberation in South African Cities

Mark Swilling, Pierre Roux, and Amélie Guyot

Agonistic politics seeks to advance radical democracy by highlighting and challenging the limits of "the possible".
Edgar Pieterse, 2006

Dissenting voices receive no special privilege; they have to enter into the 'agonistics of the network', where their relevance is dynamically determined through competition and co-operation in terms of the history as well as the changing needs and goals of the system.
Paul Cilliers, 1998

Introduction

The burgeoning literature on complexity and complexity theory has emerged primarily (but not exclusively) from North American and European contexts where modernity and the Enlightenment project profoundly transformed the economic, technological, socio-institutional and cultural dimensions of these societies. Various permutations of complexity theory have provided a set of epistemological and ontological critiques of modernity with respect, in particular, to the impact and future validity of the so-called "grand narratives". These critiques have challenged Cartesian logic and the promise of rational planning as the best means to achieve progress towards what has become historically associated with a Eurocentric preconception of an ultimate historical end point, namely the seemingly obvious so-called "good society". In particular, it provided the basis for a systematic critique of an ethics that associated ethical conduct with adherence to the rules of conduct as laid down in rational plans, constitutions, laws and norms. But what are the implications of complexity thinking for societies that have only been partially transformed by the modernist project?

M. Swilling (✉)
Sustainability Institute, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa
e-mail: swilling@sun.ac.za

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African societies were transformed by colonialism and by this means incorporated into a global economy dominated by the modern capitalist economies that emerged out of the industrial revolution. But this did not require the total decimation of pre-modern institutions and the creation of modernist institutions to prepare the way for the birth of a predominantly middle class society and its consumerist cultures as happened in the global north? Africa is not where the bulk of consumers of manufactured products lived, so there was no need for the cultural, educational and institutional arrangements to develop such a middle class. Instead, partial modernisation and therefore "partial modernity" gave rise to a condition that most African scholars like to refer to as "hybridity" – a condition fundamentally different to a pre-colonial past, but equally fundamentally different to the promise of a Eurocentrically defined consumerist lifestyle and social structure. But what are the implications of this kind of context for complexity thinking and the ethical foundations of development theory and practice?

Although the aspiration to "become modern" is an all-pervasive theme in the development policy frameworks of a large number of development agencies and developing country governments in Asia, Latin America and Africa, many African scholars have begun to question the validity and utility of this aspiration.[112] To question the assumptions of modernist logics in African development theory and practice, these writers have used a deconstructionist mode because this makes it possible to see and write about hybridity, diversity, difference, multiple identities, and the seeming "irrationality" of everyday life in African cities in ways that are not possible via the clinically delineated and profoundly normative categories of mainstream social science and development theory when applied in the African context. For many of these writers, normative claims about acting in the name of the general good have often been legitimating masks for oppresssive regimes, no matter whether these are externally opposed by Western agencies or self-imposed by corrupt dictators. For them, deconstruction is about de-legitimising all claims about positive normative value. Because action itself is suspect, so too is any notion of an ethics to guide action.

But is an ethics of rational rule-based action or its opposite which is a non-ethics of deconstruction, the only alternatives? Our argument is that complexity provides a third option, one that recognises that it is context that matters most and the capacity for judgement that are appropriate to the context.

Interestingly, although these African writers are obsessed with complex realities, they have not turned to complexity theory to make sense of these realities and the post-deconstructed implications of their critiques. They are interested in many of the things that complexity theory is interested in (i.e. contextual specificity, relational dynamics, the relational self, incompressibility, unintended consequences, difference, diversity, multiplicity/multi-nodal, richness), but not emergence. Emergence is where (extreme) deconstructionism and complexity thinking part ways.

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[112] See, for example, Bekker and Leilde 2006, Pieterse 2008, Mbembe 2002, Simone 2004a, Simone and Abouhani 2005, Swilling et al. 2003.

The concept of emergence as it has been used within complexity theory has major ethical implications for development practice. As will be discussed in this chapter using a series of stories derived from developmental experience in the City of Cape Town (CCT), specific actions are undertaken within particular local contexts that result in emergent outcomes that can rarely be predicted from the outset. This, however, does not disqualify the need for claims about the possible results of action, it merely means moderating these claims in ways that leave considerable space for a wide range of probable outcomes. These kinds of claims can be tricky in highly politicized environments where political leaders are under huge pressure to reassure agitated communities, provide certainty to investors and shore up increasingly fragile regimes of legitimation. Nevertheless, as the title of the book by the great revolutionary thinker from Guinea put it: "Tell no lies, claim no easy victories."

Following Paul Cilliers (1998), emergence in a "connectionist model" presumes that "society forms a network" and that discourses are in fact "pattern[s] of activity" within this wider network. This suggests a pattern that may not be predictable, but this does not imply an understanding of diversity as isolated random and accidental interactions (Cilliers 1998: 119). Emergence implies patterns that can be anticipated and therefore promoted, modified, initiated or suppressed by whoever may have interests in particular outcomes depending on their location within particular nodes in the networks. This notion of emergent outcomes is difficult for intellectual cultures that are concerned primarily with critique and therefore healthy iconoclastic pessimism, and when – as is the case in African societies – pessimism is reinforced every day by what actually happens in the lives of the vast majority of African people. For those who insist on difference for its own sake, or randomness or the in-built tendency to subvert what is so common at the interface between institutions and citizens in African cities, emergence implies the presence of structure and this, in turn, potentially creates a discursive framework for yet another threatening act by those with power who claim to know and who search out and co-opt any suggestion of a normatively preferred future.

The problem, of course, is that deconstruction may appropriately disempower narratives that legitimise kleptomaniac elites and ethically problematic development aid practices, but it can also obliterate the normative space that is required for purposive and concerted action to change things for the better. We are, of course, most conscious of the ethical dangers here of implying the possibility of a better future – it means such a future has to be specified (and implies the pre-existence of the "specifier") and this can be dangerous because once it has legitimacy it gets co-opted, emptied of meaning and used against society to retain the status quo in the interests of a few. Complexity thinking can help us to move beyond deconstruction to re-develop the notion of a preferred future in a way that mitigates the danger of elite co-option. In our view, post-modernist deconstructionism has aggressively shied away from this task, remaining largely satisfied with deconstruction and critique. The problem with this, however, is that it leaves uncontested the space for articulating an alternative, more just and sustainable future. To this extent, deconstruction as critique of action effectively obliterates the space for an alternative ethics of action.

Our argument that complexity provides a basis for an imaginary of the future can be envisioned in two respects. Firstly, emergence is itself disarming – it implies multiple causation and multiple effects that are ignored at some risk by the kinds of reductionist logics that legitimise domineering power-based interventions and actions. Emergence is no friend of certainty. Secondly, emergence implies what both Pieterse (2006: 288) and Cilliers (1998) have described as "agonistic" processes of engagement that generate the kind of meanings that are durable and enjoy a sense of validity and legitimacy, precisely because they are embedded within complex networks rather than captured by powerful elites.

The rest of this chapter will draw on the African experience of urban processes with special reference to cities in South Africa. It will be explored whether complexity thinking can help to go beyond simply an ethics of difference and hybridity, and the relatively weak notion of tolerance that this tends to underpine. Rather, an attempt will be made to analyse (largely unintended and unpredicted) emergent outcomes and their associated "agonistic engagements" in order to develop a body of concepts that may be a useful ethical basis for purposive and concerted action for change that is appropriate for the realities of everyday life in African cities.

Utopianism, Certainty and Contextuality

Since 1994 a vast array of South African social forces were mobilised in various and often contradictory ways, with the aim to realise the ideals and dreams that inspired the possibility of a more just post-apartheid South Africa (Lodge 2003). These ideals and dreams were codified in the Constitution, in grand development visions like the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (Wenzel 2007) and in moralistic narratives about the "rainbow nation" that permeated popular political and cultural discourses since 1994. It is arguable, however, that the most sophisticated attempts to codify these ideals and dreams were to be found in the elaborately detailed development plans that were compiled for our cities, in particular the major metropolitan centres.[113] The purpose of these so-called Integrated Development Plans was to demarcate a decisive break from the past in order to imagine a perfectly plausible implementable future free from the separations, divisions, inequalities and injustices that defined the apartheid city. To this extent these city development plans were examples of modern utopian thinking. The South African story since 1994 has been the story of the "rainbow nation", an image of "unity in diversity" – "A Home for All"[114] – that inspired a generation of nation-builders and the massive social, economic and institutional restructuring that has characterised post-1994 South Africa.[115] However, it is a story which many think has gradually

[113] See Ambert and Feldman 2002, Berresford and Kohato 2008, Harrison 2008, Muller, 2006, Unpublished

[114] This is the slogan of the Western Cape Provincial Government

[115] For a review of the local government context see Van Donk et al. 2008.

transformed into a formalistic legitimating ideology that denies how little actually changed, in particular for those who still live in poverty. Friedman defines utopian thinking as

> the capacity to imagine a future that departs significantly from what we know to be a general condition in the present. It is a way of breaking through barriers of convention in a sphere of the imagination where many things beyond our everyday experience become feasible. (Friedmann 2000: 462)

We are of the view that it is how we use utopian thinking rather than utopian thinking itself that is problematic. Utopian thinking can be the liberating dynamic that Friedman has in mind, but it can also be a deadly trap if it rests on the presumption that the future is just as knowable as the past and therefore the outcomes are predictable, controllable and therefore self-evidently attainable. For nearly all South Africans, the founding democratic election in 1994 marked a decisive turning point: the certainty that pervaded our knowledge of a rejected past was carried through into a projected, shared vision of a desired future. Nation-building entailed, almost by definition, an intense process of formalizing, codifying and institutionalising the utopian vision of a non-racial, democratic and more equitable future.[116] This is, after all, how states work, or as J.C. Scott put it in his classic text, its' because this is all about "seeing like a state" (Scott 1999).

The problem was, however, that we tended to use reference points for the future that were rationally derived logical opposites of the past, rather than rooted in an understanding of what was contextually specific, uniquely configured in space and time and, therefore, profoundly contingent. With few – and maybe even no – historical or contemporary precedents to draw on, we drew down generalised (largely sanitized and idealised) prescriptions of urban modernity imported mainly from Western cities, replicated these principles in our city development plans, and then geared financial expenditures, regulatory regimes and implementation strategies accordingly. Unfortunately, these elaborate prescriptions for "rolling out"[117] versions of urban modernity implied a simplistic linear conception of urban development that needed to suppress the tension between, on the one hand, the tendency to rationalise, codify, order, finance and make transparent the functions of clearly delineated institutions and governance processes and, on the other, the tendency to intensify highly idiosyncratic, often non-formalised, creolised, hodge-podged, hybridised and contested social orders and territories that ambiguated any clear reading of what was really going on.[118] Instead of creating spaces to allow for the expression and legibility of contextual specificities and features, our imported prescriptions – mixed in with some inspired guesswork – buried these spaces below a cacophony of words and (often meaningless) concepts, often written in tedious

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[116] For overviews see Southall (2006, 2007)

[117] "Roll out" being one of the most oft used and abused phrase amongst government officials since 1994.

[118] See Simone (2001, 2004a), Simone and Abouhani (2005), Swilling et al. (2003)

impenetrable technocratic jargon replete with all the tables, graphs and figures that create the impression of objective quantitative knowledge.

As this bland planning language cemented together an alliance of city administrators, local politicians and local business elites, this alliance lost sight of the real forces shaping everyday life. Instead of empowering people to take responsibility for their own development, investments were made in majesty, importance, and efficacy, as manifested through spectacle, formality, bureaucracy, ceremony and the facades of urban modernity (malls, elite enclaves, big projects, applause for conspicuous luxury). Rooms full of empty hand-clapping, grandiose ceremonies, and excess consumption, are now the well known rituals of municipal governance; no matter how big or small the town. They are, however, well seen through by everyone, and are taken seriously simply because they are so empty – as governance becomes pure style and urban developments a fraud, no qualifications, no prerequisites are necessary. Politics as theatre obfuscates the need for serious intent. Combined with the arbitrary nature of violence in South African society, the surface compliance of the masses to the incontestability and majesty of elite behaviour (increasingly backed these days by threats of violence against non-compliers) acts as a way to defuse their power.[119] In short, the spectacle is supported because in the absence of viable alternatives, the collective mockery of the caricature is an act of mesmerizing self-recognition.

In the language of this book, South African cities have become melting pots of complex identities that derive from both liberating and suppressive dynamics. Liberating because the formalities of apartheid have been replaced allowing all South Africans, but in particular the black majority, to move, express, live and play in ways that were previously prohibited. Suppressive because differences have been subordinated by the process of formalising an official ideology of urban development that aspired to unify through repetitive meaninglessness rather than allowing deliberative and open exploration of (often uncomfortable) substantive diversities of identity, vision, values and norms of everyday living. Outbreaks of NIMBYism,[120] xenophobia and mass personality politics may well be reminders of the consequences of restricting spaces for articulating the more inconvenient discourses that are an endemic part of the socio-ideological mix of the post-1994 era. The more the liberatory discourses were codified and imposed on society via the media, the political system, regulation and informal violence, the more vacuous and empty the ideas became. Ironically, this same process created spaces that fostered discourses that followed quite different logics, some in conscious defiance; others simply about survival instinctively articulated in whatever colloquial assemblages were available to make sense of what was required to make it through to the next day. In short, restrictive boundaries reduced meaning, but this does not mean the opposite is true, namely that meaning is derived from an endless multiplication of informal identities

[119] Mbembe (2002), Swilling et al. (2003).

[120] NIMBY = "Not in my back yard"

as represented by a deconstructionist discourse – it's the balance that this chapter explores.

There is a rapidly growing academic literature that is exploring these tensions between formal ideology and identities embedded in lived realities.[121] Robins, for example, draws from a case study of the Marconi Beam informal settlement in Cape Town to argue that the modernist "bureaucratic dreamscape of properly planned and orderly suburbs" typically makes the mistake of assuming that very poor South Africans will "fit into this fantasy of suburban living" (Robins 2006:112). This author is deeply critical of the utopian thinking of planners and their technocratic plans and blueprints in the face of everyday struggles by poor urban communities. This line of argument suggests there is an intractable dualism between bureaucratic modernist logic and the "solutions from below" with their self-organising logics of informality (Robins 2006: 113).

The latest South African planning textbook also questions whether these "deep differences" and conflicting rationalities between official ideology and informality can be bridged through debate in a consensus-seeking process (Harrison et al. 2008: 219). For Harrison et. al. "the clash of realities or differences in meaning are so great that it is difficult to believe that consensus could be achieved through discussions or conflict-resolution to overcome this divide of differences that go far beyond speech-level misunderstandings or an unwillingness to see the other's point of view" (2008: 222).

We explore two inter-linked processes: the formalisation of housing policies after 1994 that interpreted the RDP vision within the housing/urban sector and thus profoundly shaped the evolution of the post-apartheid city; and the responses of poor urban communities who both colluded, and also invented their own worlds as they struggled to survive and make sense of the post-1994 promises. But to avoid the tendency in the emerging literature to counter-pose bureaucratic rationality and community-level informalities, we use a case study from Cape Town to show how bureaucracies can discover the virtues of a relational mode of interacting, and we also try to introduce concepts into the discussion about informality that suggests the need for certain kinds of boundaries if we are going to make sense of what is going on.

To reach beyond codified institutionalised visions of the city, we draw lessons from three seemingly unrelated sources: the idea of "mediated modelling" as applied within the City of Cape Town, the Stalker movement in Rome, and a growing literature on the significance within cities of a range of "loose spaces" that have escaped the rigid rationalities of formalised planning and the commercial logics of privatised spaces. Our aim is to make a case for experiential approaches that open up more complex spaces for deliberative knowledge-building and imagining thus counteracting the impact of increasingly constricted modes of thought that deaden rather than energize public discourse. Re-enchanting public discourse via "agonistic

[121] Mbembe and Nuttall (2004), Robins (2006), Pieterse (2005), Simone (2004b, 2001, 2006), Swilling et al. (2003)

engagements" is a genuine means of interaction that is a pre-requisite for rebuilding utopian thinking as an authentic source of inspiration for active change. Ours is a search for processes and spaces that validate and support the transgressive dialogical engagements that allow authentic differences to emerge, flourish, clash and reshape in relation to each other. To this extent we want to discover "in the mess" some patterns that can be useful for dialogue about change, rather than simply celebrate an unbounded mess that can be as meaningless as the emptinesses of official ideologies and technocratic plans.

We concur with Pieterse who calls for a "transgressive politics" capable of "fostering a culture of agonistic engagement that is institutionally mobilised and embedded. . . .Agonistic politics seeks to advance radical democracy by highlighting and challenging the limits of 'the possible'" (Pieterse 2006: 288). Similarly, Holston called for a type of planning "grounded in . . . antagonistic complements". He suggests that we should "hunt for situations that engage, in practice, the problematic nature of belonging to society and that embody such problems as narratives about the city" (Holston 1998: 55).

To tell this story, we have selected a set of stories that help reveal the way these complex dynamics unfolded in time and space. They are not stories that aim to counter-pose utopian visions and the "real world". Like Friedmann (2000), we feel it is important to set up an ideal of a much better future, which can mobilise collective action for change. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine substantive change without the emergence of shared utopian visions of the future that a given coalition of social forces aspires to achieve. But while simplification of these utopian visions may be necessary to mobilise the maximum number of people, they risk masking uncomfortable complexities that often defy articulation as simplified constructs for massive popular consumption. This is trouble enough. But when this discursive mode gets carried over into the formalisation of what constitutes knowledge and becomes "science", that is when we get into really deep trouble. What we are interested in here is what John Law (2004) has called, quite simply, "mess". "How might method deal with mess?", he asks at the start of his book appropriately called *After Method*:

> [W]hat happens when social science tries to describe things that are complex, diffuse and messy? The answer, I will argue, is that it tends to make a mess of it. This is because simple clear descriptions don't work if what they are describing is not itself very coherent. This very attempt to be clear simply increases the mess. (Law 2004: 2)

We need, he proposes, to drastically widen our conception of research methods to include experiential approaches that can grasp the diversities and differences that enrich the real patterns of everyday city living.

We will tell some of the stories about these lesser known dynamics and trajectories that are assumed to be either irrelevant or non-existent because they don't appear in the sanitized idealised pictures of how things should be. We use these stories to suggest that there are ways of thinking about contextually rooted change that is informed by a process of opening up deliberative spaces for dialogue so that

differences can be surfaced, acknowledged and then used to catalyse re-invigorated dialogue about potential realisable futures.

The Unintended Consequences of Joe Slovo's Housing Policy

Joe Slovo, the renowned South African Communist Party leader, was appointed by President Nelson Mandela as the first Minister of Housing in 1994. He, in turn, appointed Billy Cobbett as his first Director-General of the National Department of Housing – before this Cobbett was a leading figure in the so-called "urban sector network" which was a coalition of leftwing urban development NGOs (Swilling 1999). Cobbett led the ANC negotiating team that negotiated a deal with big business in the National Housing Forum during the transition years leading up to 1994. Ironically, it was Minister Slovo who became the political head of a negotiated policy that aimed to meet the needs of the homeless and strengthen the role of the construction and property development industry in the design and building of the post-apartheid city.

The post-1994 housing policy took as its point of departure the constitutional right to housing and the existence of a market economy regulated by a developmental state (Khan and Thring 2003). This was the essence of the message encapsulated in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that was the cornerstone of Government policy for the period 1994–1996. At the core of the housing policy was the so-called "capital subsidy". This was defined as a lump sum of money payable to any agent that delivered a predetermined housing asset to a South African citizen who earned below a certain amount of money. The capital subsidy was designed to cover the costs of land, service infrastructure and a small portion of the so-called "top structure".

There is widespread consensus in the literature on housing that the post-1994 housing policy unintentionally replicated and expanded the "apartheid city".[122] The reason for this rather drastic statement is that post-1994 housing policy defined the problem it sought to address in purely quantitative terms as numbers of homeless (black) people who, in turn, needed access to land and services. The solution was equally quantitative: provide a capital subsidy to cover mainly the cost of land and services, and ensure access to affordable land in greenfields developments.[123] The focus of the post-1994 housing policy was "the poor" and in particular the "urban poor", and the creation of a single homogenous product (the capital subsidy) to trigger housing developments "for the poor" using state-funded private sector delivery mechanisms. Significantly, no matter the context of a particular group of homeless (backyard shack dwellers, occupants of standalone shacks in distinct settlements, overcrowded homes, renters of housing and flats, citizens of large or small towns, etc), the solution was the same: capital subsidy for a private sector-delivered asset in greenfields developments. As the popular saying in the housing sector goes, "if the

[122] Harrison et al. (2003, 2008), Khan and Thring (2003), Van Donk et al. (2008)

[123] Greenfields means a development on land that had not been previously developed

solution is a hammer, then all the problems are nails". Dewar, a leading academic authority in the planning field, argues as follows:

> A major problem of housing policy historically in South Africa is that it has always promoted overtly simplistic 'either-or' approaches to housing provision. . . .The housing problem, however, is complex. The fact that the demographic and financial circumstances of homeless people vary significantly denies a single approach to housing delivery. Choice and diversity are the keys.(Dewar 1997: 26)

The focus of the post-1994 housing policy was not the overall housing system and its complex dimensions and modalities, and contextual specificities were largely ignored. This policy framework replicated the apartheid spatial pattern because the cost of land needed to be covered by the subsidy. This inevitably meant the poor would get housing opportunities where land is cheapest, i.e. on the urban periphery. The result, which was only predicted by a few, but ignored by the decision-makers, was unsurprising: the poor ended up far from centres of employment thus undermining employment-generating growth, racial apartheid spatial forms persisted, and environmentally unsustainable urban sprawl was encouraged. This was only made financially viable by massively escalating the transport subsidies required to transport poor people over long distances from their peripheralized formal housing settlements to the centres of employment. In other words, the Department of Transport helped the Department of Housing to make financially viable an extremely costly land and housing program that has, on the whole, made the poor poorer while costing the state more than more compact solutions would have cost. The only real beneficiaries were the construction and property development industry that made profits from the process and an increasingly multi-racial middle class united by the NIMBY syndrome.

The radical disjuncture between the intentions of post-1994 housing policy and actual outcomes raises fundamental questions about why Minister Slovo and the policy-makers around him did not anticipate these outcomes. The evidence points to the fact that despite the rhetoric of stakeholder involvement in policy-making at the time, the key players that influenced the final outcome were narrowed down to a few technocrats and influential representatives of business interests.[124] Interactions with communities were few and far between and where they did occur, communities were not empowered through systematic educational processes to fully understand the implications of seemingly attractive proposals like the capital subsidy for the poorest of the poor. Radical researchers employed by NGOs who worked closely at the time with organised politically conscious communities, were intentionally excluded from the National Housing Forum and the policy-making process leading up to the adopting of the post-1994 White Paper on Housing. In short, the exclusion of perspectives that differed from those that united the group that authored the White

[124]There is no space to go into this vast and complicated story, but the deliberate restraint on public debate about housing policy during the years 1992–1996 are derived from two post-graduate theses supervised by Mark Swilling, namely: Rust, 1998, *Civil society participation in the housing process, 1991–1996. Masters in Management, Unpublished* Also: Khan (2008).

Paper resulted in a failure to anticipate system consequences that would undermine the intentions of the White Paper over the long run. Or, in short, politically-inspired attempts to suppress differences created an ideational deficit that ultimately drained policy intentions of any substantive meaning in practice. The end result was an ideological process that led to denials of the negative outcomes, followed eventually by admissions that the policy had failed.

Ten years later, the post-1994 housing policy began to be reviewed within a context of a national policy shift away from the neo-liberal notion of "state-as-facilitator" of development, to the notion of a "developmental state" approach. Protest actions against the consequences of the old policy, plus critical research and the opening up of the policy dialogue created space for this review. The result was a search for a mid-way between the old policy because of its failures and the more radical demands for pro-poor state-delivered mass housing schemes. The reason why the latter was seen as problematic is that it runs the risk of the same error as the old policy, i.e. a narrow focus on the needs of the poor, no restructuring of the economics of the housing delivery system as a whole, a tendency to ignore contextual specificity, and being state-centric it could reinforce household and community disempowerment (even if this was not intended, it is highly likely that this would have been the case when implemented by a bureaucracy that almost certainly would have been ignorant of the dynamics of developmental practice).

Since 2004, the National Department of Housing has been following a new policy approach known as Breaking New Ground (or BNG). Seeing BNG as a "mid-way" solution between Slovo's policy and the statist leftwing alternative, however, does not imply that it is a compromise, or the "best of both worlds". As it stands, it is a policy framework that is faithful to a "developmental state" approach in that it makes provision for state intervention across a wide range of fronts, in particular in land and property markets. At the same time, its so-called "demand-driven and supply negotiated approach" is simply another way of saying that contextual specificity is finally recognised. The most significant consequence of this is that the recognition of contextual specificity immediately opens up the space for empowerment. The reason for this is that if it is recognised that each context is different, then it follows that specific knowledge of that context is now needed as a basis for planning a particular project (e.g. Greenfields development) or systemic intervention (e.g. reinforcing backyard housing development via loans to landlords and regulations to protect tenants, etc). The need for contextually specific knowledge is what makes participation an authentic necessity, rather than the rhetorical ideologically determined formalistic and therefore legitimating ritual that it has become. For the first time, there is therefore a real potential role for CBOs and NGOs who know how to facilitate authentic participation of the poorest households. Finally, the BNG framework recognises the need to work with the private sector and the market while simultaneously transforming the ground rules.

The story of post-1994 housing policy is a story of unintended consequences that have had particularly negative implications for the urban poor. This was a policy that reflected the interests of the construction and property development industry and was codified by systematically restricting the inputs of diverse policy actors

at critical junctures in the policy formulation process. It was, nevertheless, propagated as a pro-poor policy via a forceful marketing campaign that depicted rows of new neatly stacked single family homes sprawled out across a single story physical monoculture that was extremely seductive for all those living in appalling conditions of poverty and homelessness. A remarkable coalition of government, business and community interests colluded in this utopian vision despite clear evidence that the spatial outcomes contradicted the policy intentions, and the resources, regulatory regimes and institutional capabilities available to the implementers of the policy were clearly inadequate given the magnitude and, more significantly, the complexities of the task. Some of the stories that follow capture the unintended consequences of the Joe Slovo housing policy; in particular, the way homeless communities have forged their own living arrangements and patterns while the loud machinations of public policy making took place way beyond their reach and experience.

To avoid depicting public bureaucracies and policy processes as endemically prone to ideological formalisation that disconnects from contextual "mess", we first give an account of a contemporary public policy making process in the City of Cape Town that was designed to open up rather than close down the process of deliberative policy formulation. This is an example of enhancing meaning by widening the diversity of voices that engage in the policy formulation process.

The Ethics of Mediated Modelling in Cape Town

It is fashionable these days for managers who manage large public and private bureaucracies to adopt the language of systems thinking and complexity theory. Instead of really understanding how things work around them, the language of complexity allows them to depict their organizational reality as a "complex system" which is often interpreted by all those around them as meaning that only a select few are smart enough to know how it all works. Instead of empowering people to seize control of the organizational resources they need to get things done, the locus of action is relocated into the intangible world of "self-organising systems" that will somehow ensure that we all end up contributing to the realisation of the organisation's strategic goals. This, according to this simplistic popular reading of complexity, is what is meant by "emergence" – a non-linear outcome that transcends the sum of its component parts. It is from within this opaque constructed world that requests are received by modellers to somehow find a way of capturing it all in a "model" that can somehow empower the select few who understand all this complexity to do what no other managers can do, namely see into the future. For these converted complexity managers, if the laws of complexity govern the present, then they must also govern the future. It follows, therefore, that the future is simply an extrapolation of the present using software that can compute a much greater number of variables than what is possible using traditional analytical tools that are constrained by the linearity of the technical narrative. Underlying this aspiration is the assumption that the greater the diversity of elements that the model is required

to compute, the greater its predictive capabilities will be. If it's too simple, somehow it has less value. In other words, the model is endowed with the ability to impose order on an incomprehensible and seemingly disconnected set of phenomena that are deemed "too complex" for ordinary forms of analysis. The outputs of the model are often accepted uncritically, largely because of the perceived "computing power" of the model. Like the words of a medieval oracle, what the model "says" is endowed with awesome explanatory power simply because the listener is a believer in its ability to "make all the connections", and therefore know and predict the future.

The description provided here of the inner world of the powerful manager of a large bureaucracy who needs to build a story may be a bit of caricature, but many researchers will recognise it in some form. Many researchers – or what we will call modellers – build models, these days, to meet the demands of these kinds of managers. The problem is, of course, that these managers recognise the veracity of a diverse relational world, but they want to capture and tame it so that they can avoid uncertainty at all costs – to do this, they must impost another set of ultra-tight boundaries that once again ensure that all the potentially rich meaning that they could access from the diversities of their context are drained away and suppressed. What is significant for the purposes of this chapter is the research methodologies that are built up by researchers that reproduce the power relations embedded in the caricatured organisational setting described above. In general, University- or consultancy-based modellers spend years building up hugely complex data-intensive models using an increasingly wide range of proprietary software packages. Specialist operators need to be trained extensively, and hugely expensive ongoing data-flows are required that must all be inputted and processed on a continuous basis. Two research procedures then follow. Either the modeller is contracted to develop a model for a particular organisation, or the modeller obtains third party research funds to conduct research that requires the cooperation of a particular organisation. Either way, the role of the modeller is to access data held by the organisation, extract it using various qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and then "input" the data into the model. After a suitably long gestation period, the modeller activates the model to generate an expert output that can take various forms. It can either simply be the end product, i.e. a report that gives the answers. Or it can be a working version of the model that the manager can use to generate his/her own results. Either way, what has taken place is that data is extracted from the organisation; experts feed the data into a model and produce a sophisticated output that the members of the organisation (including in most instances the managers themselves) have played no role in producing other than to provide what are often perceived to be seemingly random pieces of data to the experts. Because of the limited role of the end users in the production of the output, there is very limited understanding of how it works and what it is actually trying to say. After the modeller is paid off, different things happen. Often that is where it ends and the model simply dies a natural death. However, it can be used to construct a story that is legitimised by the fact that all this was developed by a smart modeller using a very smart model and who was paid a fortune for what must be a valuable set of insights/data.

Complexity Modelling

When the City of Cape Town agreed to work with the Sustainability Institute (SI) (see www.sustainabilityinstitute.net) in 2006 to develop an analysis of the city's current and future infrastructure options, it was necessary to find an alternative way of modelling this reality. There is no doubt that Cape Town's urban infrastructure is an extremely complex physical system of stocks and flows that is managed by a series of massive bureaucracies formatted by extremely rigid regulatory frameworks. The Electricity, Waste, Water and Sanitation (EWWS) Departments managed around 50% of the City's total budget of R18 billion in 2006/2007. Since 1994 the focus of both local and national government funding has been on capital investments to deliver services to the urban poor. In Cape Town this has been very successful with over 95% of all 800 000 households enjoying access to water, sanitation, solid waste and energy services – a significant unacknowledged achievement. However, this was achieved by neglecting investments in maintenance, upgrading and refurbishment. At the same time, the electricity and water services generated surpluses worth hundreds of millions of rand that cross-subsidised other services. Ten years later the entire infrastructure system started reaching critical thresholds, with substantial breakdowns. Furthermore, these thresholds were not simply financial and technical, they were also ecological. Severe limits to bulk water supplies, filled up landfill spaces, water bodies overloaded with un(der)-treated sewage and electricity blackouts all underscored the fact that Cape Town was a city that depended on material and energy flows that were fast disintegrating or reaching their limits. To spend its way out of trouble, the City had also begun to reach the limits of how much it could tax and charge its residents and businesses, especially in light of the fact that it was businesses and richer residents who were cross-subsidising an increasingly large number of poverty stricken households via a very progressive rates and tariff policy. As long as the economy was growing, it was only just possible for this all to hold together. But as economic growth started to slow from 2005/2006 onwards, the severity of the crisis became glaringly apparent. The time had arrived for "a model" to predict the future.

Instead of entering this fray using a traditional expert-based data-intensive modelling approach, the SI decided to use what is referred to as a "mediated modelling" approach (Van Den Belt 2004). This approach differs from the traditional approach in the following ways. Firstly, instead of extractive research methods, this approach aims to "co-produce" the research outcomes with the active participants in the system. Secondly, what gets modelled is not simply quantitative data, but rather causes and effects as perceived by the participants themselves. The participants express in workshops what they think are the multiple causes and effects and these are captured by the modellers/researchers as the conversation unfolds. In other words, what gets modelled are in reality a set of narratives rather than a set of perceived positivistically derived objective realities. Thirdly, data still plays a role, but the aim is not to generate a model of reality in the positivist sense, but rather to generate an adequate construction of reality that is shared by those who participated in the process. Data, therefore, is not used as objective quantitative measurements that "test" the

empirical validity of the perceptions, but rather as a different set of constructs that enrich the emerging shared understanding of the complex dynamics generated by the dialogues.

Expressed in terms that John Law would use, *meaning* and *mess* are not counterposed in this methodology, but rather mess is respected for what it is – a rich environment of enormous diversity that the participants themselves understand very well indeed. What they lack is a language for telling their own story. What the modelling process does is gradually pick out key patterns that become a frame for making sense of what is going on. The mess in its total messiness cannot be modelled, but via a process of limited reduction a bounded sense of meaning emerges that is far more useful than an overwhelming sense of randomness or a positivist rendition of reality.

The SI team facilitated 28 workshops with experts and officials drawn from across the EWWS sectors. These workshops involved people from within particular sectors, but also from across different sectors. These dialogues generated spider diagrams of multiple feedback loops, both positive and negative in nature. These were all logged on flipcharts as the deliberations proceeded, and then fed into a model using a software package designed for this purpose called PowerSim. Because this package allows the modeller to log a wide range of relations represented as "stocks" and "flows", it was possible to generate a set of representations that the participants could recognise as the various drafts unfolded. However, what is significant is that the workshops helped build networks and participants (most of whom were senior managers) started acting on the outcomes of the workshops long before the researchers were able to complete the final reports. In other words, if the system has started to change it will be difficult to argue that this was because of the persuasive power of the final outcome of this 2 year process. Rather, system change started because narratives shifted in response to both the unfolding crisis and because of the dialogues that triggered new realisations and internal learning networks within the organisation. In short, embedded meaning was co-produced by these interactive engagements between modellers and practitioners.

The learning from this remarkable research process is that complexity modelling has a key role to play, but not if the aim is an end-product that claims to deliver on the aspiration to be omniscient. Complexity modelling, to be sure, can exploit this aspiration to get into the game. However, the aim should be to facilitate a more authentic participatory experience to build up a shared narrative for translating what's happening into meaningful modes of cooperation and joint action. By creating a space for participants in the system to simply surface in a relaxed environment their own constructions of the rich set of feedback loops at play in the system, the modeller is actively expanding the range of voices and ears that participate in the co-creation of new modes of meaning. Although this is similar to what many organisational development consultants do, what is different here is that these constructions are being captured, logged and merged into a wider analytical process that includes rigorous data collection and analysis. The facilitator-as-modeller, therefore, is also deeply implicated in the end result, rather than simply being the neutral manager of the process no matter the content of the dialogue. To this extent, this modelling process

was about creating "loose spaces" (discussed further below) that allowed people to talk outside the formal rigidities of bureaucratic discourse and norms. Although these "loose spaces" served the purpose of generating new knowledge, it also created connections, relationships and eventually the beginnings of new learning networks that span sectoral divides.

If the Cape Town process is contrasted with the process of formulating housing policy after 1994, the former has involved the active involvement of a fairly diverse range of participants in the system while the latter was centrally controlled and constrained. If the resources were available, much more could have been done to further expand the dialogical space in Cape Town by bringing in key stakeholders such as the trade unions, community leaders and business representatives. Although it is being suggested here that the Cape Town process was superior to the process followed in the formulation of housing policy in the post-1994 period, this does not mean that the actual historical outcomes will be any better. Actual outcomes are shaped by many different conditions, not simply the nature of the policy process itself. What is significant, though, is that an open process of dialogical exploration can build relationships and networks that can continue to respond to changing circumstances as they unfold. An open deliberative process that depends on transactions within rich dense networks has a better chance of building long-lasting institutional memory and capacity for coping with complexity and diversity – these being key intangible resources for building resilient systems capable of rapid responses to contextual shifts.

Creating Urban Spaces where Differences Can Meet: Complexity and Informality

Beyond simply acknowledging the complex nature of settlements, South African urban studies has paid little attention to theoretical representations of informal settlements as complex systems. Whilst the social, economic and bio-geographical contexts are different in African cities than in Western cities, conceptions of urban modernity through which formalisation takes place, are equally different (Smit 2000).

The acknowledgement of the complexity and diversity of informal settlements should be recognised as a central feature in the formalisation processes of cities in Africa. As an example, formalisation processes in the City of Cape Town, South Africa serve to illustrate this argument. Cape Town's informal settlements are complex and diverse in many ways when considering their morphology, stratified poverty, vulnerability and social problems within settlements and the rural linkages of residents (Smit 2006). The spatial arrangement in informal settlements may be haphazard in appearance, composed of a chaotic hodgepodge of dwelling structures, but in reality settlements often have a complex physical layout and history that are closely aligned to social networks and livelihood activities. The processes of formalisation should acknowledge and respect the existing complex and diverse

informal processes that are present in informal settlements. Hence, a "one-size-fits-all" approach for the upgrading and development of such spaces would not be successful.

A number of authors have explicitly treated self-organising settlements as examples of complex subsystems within a complex urban system (Barros and Sobreira 2002) while others describe complex adaptive systems but without using this conceptual language or trying to "prove" that what is being seen is a complex adaptive system (Swilling et al. 2003). Roy characterises "urban informality" as indicative of "an organizing logic, a system of norms that governs the process of urban transformation itself" (Roy 2005: 148). She rejects the dichotomy of the two economies or sectors – formal/informal – arguing instead that informality is not a separate sector but rather a series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another. Roy critiques replicable utopian universal urban blueprints as a "vocabulary of planning" that does not have the ability "to think about the complex social systems through which plans must be implemented". She argues, instead, that planners must learn to work with the "unplanned exceptions to the order of formal urbanization. Informality is an important epistemology for planning" (Roy 2005: 156).

Loose Spaces

The notion of "loose spaces" is receiving more attention in research on alternative development and formalisation processes.[125] Predominantly a feature in Africa and other developing countries, loose spaces can be defined as temporary or even unfamiliar and disruptive spaces. Theses spaces are mainly defined by people's spontaneous actions and not by controlled borders and homogenous themes. The boundaries of loose spaces are not physical as such. They may even be seen as chaotic, unpredicted and unruly (Karen et al. 2007).

In South Africa, examples of loose spaces are recognisable in the transformations taking place in the inner city of Johannesburg. There for example, underground parking garages are used as sites for mega-churches; hotel kitchens as day care facilities; and indoor swimming pools as butcheries (Simone 2006: 362). In Maitland, in Cape Town an old cemetery is now home to a community (Fig. 11.1). There are both benefits and risks associated with loose spaces, as often both diversity and disorder emerge from them. Loose spaces are not strictly delimited from other spaces and we cannot equate loose to be the same as informal spaces (Karen et al. 2007: 2–3).

[125] See De Boeck and Plissart (2005) on the "invisible within cities" and Simone (2006) on pirate spaces.

Fig. 11.1 Maitland cemetery in Cape Town (21 June 2007)

Spaces where Differences Can Meet

Following Cilliers' (Chapter 1) suggestion, that identity is a result of negotiated differences rather than something that precedes such interactions, the understanding of how cities acquire identities can also be reframed. The classic metaphor of the "city as melting pot" does not simply mean facilitating the merging of fixed pre-existing identities (as the current discourse about xenophobia suggests), but more fruitfully it means tracking the emergent identities that ever-changing layers of urban diversity make possible. This suggests that the resources for cultural change should be sought outside modern "habitual spaces"; it can be found in loose spaces that cross through and connect sameness and difference. These porous spaces, comprising identifiable bounded thresholds and heterotopian spaces act like bridges across diversified realities. Loose spaces are emergent outcomes where creativities can flourish because they are not controlled by a dominant imaginary. It is within these liminal spaces or heterotopias[126] where differences can meet and where meaning can be negotiated within the context of the lived experiences of the people and organisational structures that utilise the space.

The story of mediated modelling, as discussed above, could also be understood in this context as creating relational bridges that allow for more deliberative policy-making and more humble approaches to implementation within urban management bureaucracies. Appreciating complexity inevitably means having less rather than more faith in predetermined procedural formulae that often prescribe routinized actions based on generalised conditions that are presumed to exist universally.

[126]Heterotopias are defined as places where differences meet

Porosity and Heterotopias

Loose space bounded by a patchwork of ever-moving "doors and thresholds" are richly textured heterotopias that display "porosity"; spaces that connect and separate simultaneously. The social identities of loose spaces form bounded wholes that have the characteristics of complex systems. The boundaries of complex systems are porous and can be understood to be "an interface participating in constituting the system" (Cilliers 2001: 141). By reframing informal settlements as complex systems that are constituted by relational processes (or loose spaces) rather than being a series of physical entities, new practices can be discovered that produce porous thresholds that enable communities to negotiate alternative development policies and to develop new concepts that could enable social change (Stavrides 2007: 174).

These concepts can help us see the importance of paying attention to perceptions and narratives and inform actual interventions in trying to create these in-between spaces. If the implementers of governmental housing projects were equipped to see these porous heterotopian cities of thresholds, the chances are better that unintended expectations will be met with greater humility than is currently the norm. As an empirical case, we refer here to the example of the Stalker movement which aims to do just this in Rome. We will look at this movement and at how it might relate to the South African context.

Stalker

Rome's "Stalker movement" started in 1995 when a group of people from different backgrounds and fields of interest (such as architecture, art and journalism) did a 4-day tour of Rome's outskirts by foot (Lang 2007). They were so inspired by their experience that they formed an organisation in order to investigate new narratives and approaches towards "marginalized territories". Their approach is interesting, because narratives and the lived experiences of communities are used as variables in the modelling process of complex spaces (Uprichard and Byrne 2006: 675).

The Stalkers are interested in "actual territories" which are characterised by loose spaces that are liminal and marginal, abandoned or in the process of transformation (Stalkers 2008).

Stalkers works at creating art interactive instillations that can become a new voice and dream catalyst. In using Stalker's methods one could explore different ways of approaching the richly textured ways of living the informal city in Sub-Saharan.

Anthropologically informed perspectives have been used to explore how people have lived through the changes in their city throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (Tostensen et al. 2001). Unable to reach the dream of modernity and incapable of turning back to tradition, people feel doubly cursed. People living in Kinshasa, for example, described feelings of being stuck in this "no-man's-land" where linear time and global norms of reality seem to have rusted away and been replaced by the uncertainty of the spirit world. A set of behaviours are conditioned that may appear completely irrational when compared against modernist urban planning

assumptions, but it makes complete sense when it comes to understanding the way they relate to a social and physical environment that is effectively a simultaneous diabolical antithesis, mockery and copy of urban modernity.

In Cape Town, the community of Marconi Beam used to be a squatter camp of 1500 families in the middle of the conservative white suburb of Milnerton on well-placed land close to the industrial park of Montague Gardens. Soon after 1994 it was replaced by a so-called "Presidential Project" called Joe Slovo Park with 950 standardized "RDP houses" developed adjacent to the informal settlement. The community as a whole could not be accommodated in the upgrading and a minority group of very vulnerable citizens were relocated to the peripheral informal settlement of Du Noon.

A limitation of urban upgrading is the limitations of the ideology of space that comes with it (Roy 2005). The change in the built environment to a "proper community" and "proper housing" brought about a change in the everyday lives of the residents. Research on Marconi Beam reveals a "deep difference" and conflict of realities between the rationality of the prescriptions of urban planners and the complex realities on the ground which shape informality and the livelihood strategies and tactics of shack dwellers to survive materially and culturally in "the other" spaces in the city (Yose, 1999, From shacks to houses: Space usage and social change in a western cape shanty town, Unpublished).

The "difference" in perception between life in a shanty and the suburbs emerges from this narrative of a Joe Slovo Park resident:

> People have changed. They are no longer the same. These concrete houses have made them totally different people from what they used to be at Marconi Beam. They lock themselves in their houses. They no longer visit. They see themselves as people with high status and they look down upon some of us. Look at me now. I am bored and I am scared to go knock at people's houses to visit them. (Yose 1999: 81)

Subsequently, Marconi Beam did not disappear as originally intended – some moved to Joe Slovo, others remained in Marconi Beam and still more moved in this strengthening an urban form that was supposed to dissolve. Many residents continued to rely on informal processes and the affordability of corrugated-iron building materials. The case of Marconi Beam serves as a monument, which displays the aporetic nature of development processes that implement rationalist planning tendencies that fail to anticipate the unanticipated and unexpected. A sociological blind spot emerges which "represents the folly of the master plan (or meta-narrative) that excludes social conflict, ambiguity and indeterminacy as characteristics of actual social life" (Robins 2006: 112).

The Marconi Beam example represents a case where a Stalker-type approach could help us change our relationship to how we approach such a place. An approach that might well mean simply walking about, and promoting a much slower pace to allow for experience and, ultimately, emergence. Going slow enough for emergence might be an interesting research methodology, but it could also in the end deliver development results much quicker. This is very different to the fast-paced norms that consultants on hourly rates are used to. For most of them, imagining and

designing urban spaces by walking about, hanging out, imbibing the intangibles of actual territories will simply be a waste of financially valuable time. Planning via downloadable templates is so much easier, and delivers the illusions of order that investors and planners require.

Crossing Territories and Reclaiming Spaces

> Crossing is for Stalker a creative act, that means creating a system of relations within the chaotic juxtaposition of time and space that characterizes 'Actual Territories'. Crossing means composing in a single conscious parcours the strident contradictions that animate these spaces, in a search for unedited harmony. (Stalkers 2008)

Learning through experience is a form of art – a creative act that does not necessarily have a pre-determined outcome. It is for this reason that the , Stalker movement believes in the importance of crossing territories on foot. Crossing and making crossings becomes both an experience of porosity and a purposeful act of creating heterotopias. Generally speaking, the planning profession in South Africa fails to understand the role that the norms and logics of urban informality play in fragile livelihood strategies of the poor in harsh urban environments. At the same time, richly textured multi-class environments are highly valued in the property market precisely because they are not themed, but provide "loose spaces" for an emergent lifestyle that is diverse, constantly moving, aesthetically stimulating and dense enough for a multiplicity of vendors and services to be economically viable. There appears to be a reluctance to accept that all kinds of informality and porous spaces have a identifiable form and logic, which may be at odds with the prevailing developmental prescriptions, and which are themselves rational responses to poverty and marginalization on its own terms. By valuing methods such as simply walking and crossing space to experience and appreciate its unique character, we may be able to transcend seemingly unbridgeable differences by finding what is specific and unique to each context.

Stalkers aim to reclaim spaces in different ways through shared experience. "Abandonment" is for the Stalkers a necessary part of this reclaiming because it reflects on the process by which nature was tamed by humanity in order to fit into the ordered and predictable schemes of the modern utopia.

This concept of abandonment is important in understanding the failures of current development. It is suggested that certain perceptions of places have to be abandoned and re-thought before actual change can happen. The Stalkers movement offers such a new way of thinking that is open to the process of nurturing diversity within communities and cities. For the Stalker movement, intervention is not understood to be just an objective act of planning, but an "act of creation" that aims to stress contradictions and negotiates the provisional transcendence of old dichotomies. They change spaces through interactive collective visioning, through being present and inspired by the mediated experience of porosity. Actual implementations of threshold spaces in which heterotopias can emerge are negotiated. In this way it could be

said that they work at creating spaces in which richly textured and embedded identities can emerge. This suggests a different reading of utopian thinking – not simply a codified vision imposed from above, but a slow process of leading people into new experiences of their environment and therefore new possible ways of changing it. For this experience, a codified utopian vision becomes a hindrance because the moment things change, it is out of date but there is no time to dismantle it – it simply becomes irrelevant at best, or a stifling obstacle at worst. Dreaming, visioning, imagining – these are not fixed, but ongoing reconstructions as the context shifts and aspirations adjust.

The local and metaphorical city language that emerges from these thresholds, bridges and loose spaces create richer identities and offer the possibility of conceiving and creating alternative communities.

Conclusion

This chapter opened by suggesting that the notion of emergence provides the basis for rethinking the ethical basis for development theory and practice, and in particular the articulation of alternative futures. It was argued that although many African intellectuals have rebelled against the rationalities of a modernist paradigm by using post-modernist deconstructionism, this runs the risk of leaving the space for alternative futures uncontested by those who shared an ethical commitment to social justice and human rights. Because all claims about a better future are suspect because they tend to mask a hegemonic agenda that later can become oppressive, efforts to articulate an alternative future are avoided or, at best, simply postponed until a future moment that is hardly ever accurately specified.

To construct the argument that emergence provides an alternative ethical basis for development theory and practice, this chapter commenced with a discussion of utopianism and argued that it still has a key role to play as a catalyst for collective ethical action for fundamental change. However, it is a concept that runs the danger of being discarded entirely as utopias get codified and institutionalised by the logic of governance, and used to legitimise the present. The problem, however, is not utopian imaginaries per se, but rather who controls the process of utopian thinking and how these utopias are constructed and reproduced in popular culture. We have argued for the opening up of a multiplicity of spaces and dialogical processes that can reflect and capture more complex emergent utopias that cannot be easily captured by powerful interests. These "heterotopias" emerge from the kinds of "loose spaces" that exist across the city in some informal settlements, older high density socially mixed environments, various cultural projects, many expanding street markets and even within some of the more themed environments that have become the new havens of global post-modern consumerism (pedestrianised inner city areas, waterfronts, reclaimed low value dis-used spaces, urban food markets, etc). They need to be stitched together via methods that are better able to relate to "mess" than the largely quantitative methods that most planning and engineering professionals are trained in. Hence our interest in Rome's Stalkers movement that emphasises

experience as a means of knowing. Using this explicit movement as a precedent, we argue that similar methods are required within the African context where the dysfunctionalities of top-down rational planning have been repeatedly documented and discussed. This has significant ethical implications for planners and engineers employed in both the public and private sectors. Strictly speaking their practice is consistent with the rules and regulations that govern their professions, but because of their disconnection from experiential knowledge and discourse, the actual outcomes of their practice contradict the developmental goals and intentions of government policy.

In this chapter the dynamics of these engagements were contextualised by briefly describing the rise and (partial) fall of Joe Slovo's quantitative approach to housing that ended up marginalising the urban poor. We identified particular contexts for more detailed analysis that revealed the complex (largely unintended) micro-impacts of Slovo's policies. The case study of mediated modelling with Cape Town's officials was used to question the assumption in much academic literature that governing bureaucracies are somehow by nature incapable of engaging dialogically with complex social realities.

Instead of simply celebrating unlimited diversities as the antithesis to rational planning logics, we have tried to move beyond this dualism by articulating patterns of meaning that can inspire the kind of collective actions and practices that can potentially shift the wider balances of power. Following Pieterse and Cilliers, we see in "agonistic engagements" not simply superficial attempts to build consensus and so-called mutual understanding between what are often presumed to be fixed identities, but rather quite profound struggles to reconstitute and express the meanings of everyday living across a wide range of diverse contexts that are themselves being rapidly transformed. This, in turn, may well be a precursor to developing a way of thinking about institutions, governance and urban social processes that derive more from contextual thinking than aspirations to be something derived from elsewhere or from an abstract set of first principles. Institutional arrangements and an ethics of developmental practice that are appropriate to the context may well be the kinds of emergent outcomes that complexity thinking makes possible. This, it seems to us, frames the next set of research questions that this approach would need to address.

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