

Western Cape Housing Crisis: writings on Joe Slovo and Delft



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Introduction

The N2 Gateway project is a “flagship” of the South African Housing Department managed by the parastatal Thubelisha Homes aimed to clear the verges of the N2 highway (between the airport and Cape Town city centre) of shack settlements.

Phase 1 consists of some 700 three-storey rental flats. It was achieved by clearing out some 4500 families from the Joe Slovo shack settlement in Langa after they had suffered a fire in January 2005. They were moved to temporary accommodation (TRA's) on the fringes of the city, in Delft. The current residents of Phase 1 complain of shoddy construction and high rents. Since mid-2007 they have been on rent boycott.

Phase 2 was to consist of some 300 houses jointly financed by First National Bank and the government, together with about 1000 two-bedroom so-called “Breaking New Ground” houses, requiring in the eyes of government and Thubelisha the eviction of the remaining 6000 families in Joe Slovo to Delft TRA's. These families are strongly opposed to this move, and engaged in fruitless discussions with the government and Thubelisha, a march on parliament and an occupation of the N2 highway on September 10. Since then they have been resisting in court an order to evict them.

In December backyard dwellers in Delft occupied unfinished N2 Gateway houses in Delft, charging that the allocation process employed by Thubelisha was unfair. They were evicted by order of court on February 19.

This pamphlet collects together letters and articles by Martin Legassick between September 2007 and February 2008 on these matters. Sometimes these have been edited to avoid repetition, or to re-include passages omitted by those publishing them.

10 September 2007 – Joe Slovo residents occupy N2 highway.

12 September 2007 – 8 Joe Slovo residents charged with public violence appear for first time in Bishop Lavis Court.

25 September 2007 – Joe Slovo residents' eviction case first appears in Cape High Court.

27 November 2007 – Joe Slovo residents, joined by other communities, march on Thubelisha Homes and First National Bank.

12-13 December 2007 – Joe Slovo eviction case is heard in Cape High Court. Judgement is reserved.

19 December 2007 – Backyarders in Delft occupy unfinished N2 Gateway houses in Delft.

24 December 2007 – Cape High Court orders halt to evictions of Delft backyarders occupying N2 Gateway houses

3 January 2008 – Cape High Court throws out eviction order on which evictions were carried out. Provincial government and Thubelisha Homes apply for new order.

5 February 2008 – Cape High Court grants order to provincial government and Thubelisha homes to evict backyarders in Delft on 17 February.

19 February – After appeal rejected, Delft backyarders are evicted from N2 Gateway houses.

Meet Joe Slovo residents, Lindiwe!

(Letter published in the Cape Times, 12/09/2007)



Joe Slovo residents confront police after being driven off the N2, 10/9/2007

Instead of issuing a meaningless “ultimatum” to the residents of Joe Slovo informal settlement, (“N2 Protest ultimatum”, September 11) Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu should live up to her responsibilities and meet the community face to face.

I was invited by the task team at Joe Slovo informal settlement to observe their protest action shutting down the N2 early on Monday morning. What I saw in the dark was a peaceful protest interrupted by a police riot. Contrary to some news reports no guns were fired at the police. Nor were stones thrown, until the police had wounded some 12 people with rubber bullets. Riotous police behaviour was witnessed by reporters again later in the morning, as you report, when police

opened fire on a crowd including old people, children and women with a mere 20 second warning, and wounded many more.

Joe Slovo residents marched to parliament on August 3 asking to see her because they do not want to be forcibly removed to Delft and have a plan for how N2 Gateway should be altered to take them into account. The present residents of N2 Gateway phase 1 also marched to parliament on July 17 asking to see Minister Sisulu, because they are fed up with the unaffordable rents and the building defects in the flats. Both submitted memoranda. N2 Gateway has become a fiasco.

Minister Sisulu did not meet either of these communities, and issued replies only through the media, disdainful of their complaints. As a result, she now has the blood of women and children on her hands. By refusing to meet them, she is acting like a coward. In addition she and her messenger MEC Richard Dyantyi (who has said that removal to Delft is “necessary”) are behaving like old apartheid ministers trying to engage in forced removals. If N2 Gateway is Sisulu’s pet “flagship” project she must meet with protesting communities face to face rather than delegating the responsibility to others. They will not give up their demands, whatever it costs.

Sisulu’s N2 actions lead to conflict

(Article published in Weekend Argus, 16/09/07 revised for publication in Alternatives, publication of the AIDC, November 2007)

Since the launch in 2004 of N2 Gateway, Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu’s pet ‘flagship’ project has run into problem after problem: delayed delivery, cost over-runs, above all lack of consultation. In their 2004-5 report the Development Action

Group, an NGO, wrote “The top-down approach in the N2 project undermines its overall sustainability... The casual, continued and increasing practice of excluding people from decision-making about development processes that directly affect their lives is an obstacle that communities are unlikely to tolerate for much longer.”



Joe Slovo resident wounded by a police rubber bullet on 10/9/2007

Lindiwe Sisulu has several times posed for publicity photos in N2 Gateway with a hard hat on. Yet not once has she sat down and met the residents of Joe Slovo informal settlement, who have been expected to make way for the project.

DAG’s prognosis was vindicated when the discontent of Joe Slovo residents boiled over and they closed down the N2 freeway at peak time on Monday 10 September. After the January 2005 fire, which destroyed 3000 shacks and made

12,000 people homeless, Joe Slovo residents were promised priority in the allocation of N2 Gateway housing. But they were not accommodated at all in the allocation of phase 1 flats. Now in 2007 what they face is being forcibly removed to Delft on the outskirts of the city to create space for the building of phase 2, not for them, but for those better off. They have lived in Langa for years and don't want to be removed to the margins of the city far from job opportunities

The Joe Slovo residents oppose the bond houses costing R200-300,000 that are to be built in the area financed by First National Bank and are asking for RDP housing built in the area for them. They have a plan as to how this can be done without any forced removal at all.

On 20 September Sisulu, together with provincial housing MEC Richard Dyantyi and Thubelisha Homes, project manager of N2 Gateway, secured from Judge Hlophe in the Cape High Court an interim eviction order against the residents of Joe Slovo. Sisulu does not like the term "forced removal." But what substantive difference is there in this interim eviction order from the apartheid government's forcible evictions of the 1960s through the 1980s?

The residents themselves, initially without legal representation, came in their thousands to the Cape High Court a week later to register individual objections to being forcibly removed. On 4 October the hearing was postponed until 12 December, to give the residents' lawyers time to prepare a case against the eviction.

The Western Cape region of COSATU and the Cape Town district of the SACP have compared Sisulu's action to that of apartheid ministers and called on her to withdraw her court action against them and engage in meaningful negotiations with them.

The task team elected by Joe Slovo residents, together with the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, has issued a national call to all FNB clients to close their accounts and use other banks in solidarity with the residents of Joe Slovo, since FNB is complicit in the evictions.

Incredibly, Lindiwe Sisulu also threatened Joe Slovo residents with being struck off all housing waiting lists because they refuse to “cooperate with government” in their eviction. This threat, of course, violates the constitutional right to housing enjoyed by every South African. “She has declared we are not South African” says Joe Slovo elected task team member Sifiso Mapasa, echoing the famous words of Sol Plaatje about the segregationist 1913 Natives Land Act, that it turned Africans into “foreigners in the land of their birth.” Moreover housing allocation is a provincial not national competence, and Sisulu’s action is therefore additionally illegal. As well, at the whim of the minister, her declaration punishes each resident for refusing to cooperate with government, without even a hearing – a third constitutional violation! Sisulu is losing her senses.

The Western Cape (and City of Cape Town) waiting lists are anyway, in the words of regional COSATU general secretary Tony Ehrenreich, “a joke”. There is a backlog of some 360,000 houses in Cape Town yet Dan Plato says there are only 3060 names on the city’s waiting list! The houses being built each year in the whole Western Cape are not more than 20,000, barely enough to meet population increase, let alone the backlog. How many people have been waiting 20 years and more on the lists? The government could put the 4-8 million unemployed to work on a crash programme to build homes if it were not wedded to the capitalist profit system.

Sisulu claims that Joe Slovo residents “would have to make way for people higher up the housing waiting list.” But Phase 1 N2 Gateway housing was not allocated on the basis of waiting lists because very few people could be found who were economically eligible. Instead advertisements were placed in police stations to attract new applicants. What reason is there to expect any difference in Phase 2, where the 300 bond housing being built in a partnership between FNB and the government, costing R200-300,000 would require buyers to earn some R9000 a month to be able to afford bond payments. Rather than allocation by waiting list, Sisulu in fact wants to evict the poor to make way for the better off.



Joe Slovo residents at the Cape High Court, 25/9/2007

Some people ask why Joe Slovo residents are objecting, since they are only being ‘temporarily removed’ to Delft. But the national housing director-general has admitted that the plans are only to build houses for 1000 families on the Joe Slovo land, whereas there are presently 6000 households

resident there, and some 4500 families who have already been moved to Delft. Thus, even if each one of those 1000 was a Joe Slovo family, 9500 families would be stranded in Delft in “TRA” housing – so-called “temporary relocation” housing, which will in reality be permanent since there are no concrete plans for other housing. Moreover, since the projected phase 2 is bond housing, most Joe Slovo residents (and most of those on housing waiting lists) are economically excluded anyway.



The TRA housing in Delft

Those who have visited Delft to see the TRA housing will see that it looks like a concentration camp, with only public communal toilets, few taps, and not much electricity. The toilets are a health and a security hazard. Most of the Joe Slovo residents who have been previously moved to Delft are very unhappy and want to return to Joe Slovo. Many of them moved only because after the January 2005 fire anything looked better than the tent accommodation they were in. They believe they were tricked into moving.

Transport MEC Marius Fransman maintained it was “unacceptable” in our democracy to blockade the N2 when “we have the opportunity to access the government.” But Joe Slovo residents have tried many times to “access the government”. On 3 August they marched to parliament to present a memorandum to Sisulu and asked to meet her. It was received by her personal assistant, who promised a reply within a week. In fact the only reply by Sisulu was a disdainful one reported in an article in the back pages of the *Weekend Argus* (25/8/2007). Sisulu did not even have the courtesy to deliver her reply to those concerned. Thus she undermined our democracy.

In her reply she accused Joe Slovo residents of being “unwilling to accept that communities of the future would cut across race and class.” If that is what she wants, then why does she not “cut across race and class” and (as Ehrenreich suggested) move them to Constantia? She claimed she wanted to “eradicate slums”. But what she is doing is merely moving the Joe Slovo ‘slum’ to Delft and installing better-off people in their place....

[After the occupation of the N2] several residents of Joe Slovo were arrested on charges of “public violence”, two of them for daring to ask the police for permission to hold a general meeting in the aftermath of the occupation! This too was a constitutional violation.

Sisulu claims that Thubelisha is responsible for interacting with residents and that she has “the fullest confidence” in them. Thubelisha was established to build houses, and lacks people-management skills. Residents of Joe Slovo have met with Thubelisha management several times, to no avail.

At the same time as the complaints of Joe Slovo, the N2 Gateway phase 1 residents also have their grievances. Selected as beneficiaries, at preparatory workshops they were suddenly

told that rent would be increased from the R350-R600 advertised to R650-R1000. Desperate for housing, and given no time even to read the long contracts, they signed. They moved into the flats – only to find cramped accommodation, serious structural problems, cracks in the walls, hopelessly defective plumbing, and so on. Later they discovered that some people were paying the old rents (which even Thubelisha admits is an ‘anomaly’). Thubelisha has not addressed their problems to their satisfaction. They have launched a rent boycott in protest, and also marched to parliament on 17 July to present a memorandum to Sisulu – to which she again responded only in the media. They also are threatened with eviction.

The N2 Gateway ‘flagship’ project has become a fiasco.

The high-handedness of Sisulu in all this is also reminiscent of old apartheid ministers. Her behaviour is a symptom of the arrogant, aloof, and self-satisfied unwillingness to listen to ordinary people that increasingly characterises the Mbeki government. Sisulu talks of frequent “consultation” with communities over N2 Gateway. But this “consultation” has not involved listening but rather telling communities what they should do.

Minister Sisulu must come to her senses. By delegating the handling of her pet project to others, she has been acting like a coward. Instead of issuing ultimatums from afar, she needs above all to meet with and listen personally to Joe Slovo residents (as well as those of N2 Gateway phase 1). Then it will become clear to her that both communities are united in their demands, and that they can suggest answers to their problems. Both communities are insistent that any attempt to forcibly evict them will not only be challenged in court but

physically if necessary. But there is a way out of this conflict, if Sisulu lives up to her responsibilities.



Eight Joe Slovo residents were charged with public violence for the N2 occupation on 9/9/2007. Here some appear with their supporters outside the Bishop Lavis Court on 12/9/2007

Joe Slovo housing

(Letter published in the Cape Times, 21/9/2007)

Thubelisha general manager Sigcawu should know his facts better than he apparently does. (“Housing profiteers”, 20/9/2007). He claims that “Approximately 4500 of the 6000 Joe Slovo families have already moved” to Delft. Anyone even driving past can see, by comparing the land used for N2 Gateway phase 1 with the remaining shack area’s land, that a majority of the Joe Slovo residents have not yet been moved. The residents task team says there are still 6000 families there (so there were some 10,000 families initially).

Sigcawu also states that “Because shackland is significantly more densely occupied than suburbs, some Joe Slovo residents will not return to the area.” Some? The national director of housing claims that the plans are only to build housing for 1000 people (families?) on Joe Slovo land which would leave at least 9000 families or (on Sigcau’s figures, 5000 families) -- the overwhelming majority -- stranded in Delft. Sigcawu claims these will get “quality homes in Delft”, which promise has never been conveyed to the residents of Joe Slovo. In what time frame? Is this one of those ‘indefinite future’ promises? In any case, Sigcau cannot provide them jobs in Delft, and job opportunities are a main reason they want to remain in Langa.

Moreover the remaining majority know the (worse) conditions in Delft under which those who were moved are living, and this confirms their decision to remain in Langa.

Prince Xhanti Sigcawu blames the refusal of the remaining majority of Joe Slovo residents to move on the influence of “outsiders” who are “counter-revolutionaries”, “anarchists” and “ultra-leftists”. This propaganda will get Thubelisha nowhere. Prince Xhanti knows very well that when he last met the elected task team, on the evening of Thursday September 13, they reiterated the refusal of the community to move, despite his attempts to twist their arms. They also again asked him to arrange for housing minister Lindiwe Sisulu to meet with them.

Rather than trying to soften up public opinion with his hysterical claims, to prepare the way for a forced removal, Prince Xhanti should for once do something in the interests of Joe Slovo residents, and organise a meeting between them and Lindiwe Sisulu.



Residents of Joe Slovo, supported by other communities, march on Thubelisha and FNB, 27/11/2007

Exchange of letters with Lindiwe Sisulu

Martin Legassick received the following reply to his *Cape Times* letter of 12/9/2007 from Lindiwe Sisulu, addressed to the University of the Western Cape, dated 12/9/2007:

I have read your letter (Meet residents, Sisulu) that appeared in the *Cape Times* of 12 September 2007 and reject the contents with absolute contempt. In fact, if you were present at the N2 Gateway and did nothing to stop what was clearly an explosive situation, who has blood on their hands?

It is such a sad day to see you come down so low in my estimate. Yours sincerely,

L. N. Sisulu, M.P.
Minister of Housing

Martin Legassick replied to her as follows (6/10/2007):

Dear Minister Sisulu,

Because I am retired I do not go into the University of the Western Cape very often and hence received your letter of 12 September replying to my letter in the *Cape Times* of the same date only yesterday. You were clearly very angry when you wrote it, saying that you “reject the contents with absolute contempt”. I hope that by now you are reflecting more wisely on the situation of N2 Gateway and the Joe Slovo informal settlement.

The NGO Development Action Group, which has worked with government on housing, wrote as long ago as its 2004-5 annual report that “The top-down approach in the N2 project undermines its overall sustainability... The casual, continued and increasing practice of excluding people from decision-making about development processes that directly affect their lives is an obstacle that communities are unlikely to tolerate for much longer.”

It is this exclusion of people from decision-making about their own futures which has led to the present situation. There have been several publicity pictures of yourself in the newspapers, posing in a hard hat at various stages of N2 Gateway. But when have you ever sat down and met with the residents of Joe Slovo informal settlement, over whose homes N2 Gateway phases 1 and 2 have been and are planned to be built? Never. Not once! Yet now you intend to try to forcibly remove them. It is outrageous, a travesty of democracy. You should withdraw your court action and engage yourself in meaningful negotiations with Joe Slovo residents, listening to

what they have to say. The Western Cape provincial structures of COSATU and the SACP have also called on you to do this.



Joe Slovo residents march to parliament 3/8/2007

You have relied on Thubelisha and on MEC Richard Dyantyi to conduct negotiations on your behalf. When you first declared this project, it was as your own national pilot project, your flagship. Yet, when there are difficulties, you are not there to deal with them. This is why in my letter I called you a coward. And, unless you are prepared to meet with the residents of Joe Slovo I will continue to regard you as a coward.

Joe Slovo residents have concluded that it is a waste of time discussing with Thubelisha or Dyantyi. They want to talk to you. On 3 August they marched to parliament to present a memorandum with a request to meet you. It was received by your personal assistant, who promised a reply within a week. In fact your only reply was a disdainful one reported in an article in the back pages of the *Weekend Argus* (25/8/2007). You did not even have the courtesy to deliver your reply to the residents of Joe Slovo.

Let us deal first with the hypocrisy of your reply. You claimed that Joe Slovo residents were “unwilling to accept that communities of the future would cut across race and class.” This is because they oppose the building of bond (or “gap” housing) on the land from which you want to evict them. But if you want to integrate communities across race and class, why do you not, as COSATU Western Cape regional secretary Tony Ehrenreich has suggested, move them to state land in Constantia rather than to the margins of the city in Delft?

You also claimed you wanted to “eradicate slums”. But what you are doing is building housing on the land occupied by Joe Slovo residents which they cannot afford – bond or gap housing. The cynical would claim that you merely want to prettify the edges of the N2 before the football World Cup in 2010. In fact you are not eliminating slums but merely moving the Joe Slovo ‘slum’ to Delft. I have seen the TRA housing in Delft and it looks like a concentration camp, with only public communal toilets, few taps, and not much electricity. Most of the Joe Slovo residents who have been previously moved to Delft are very unhappy and want to return to Joe Slovo. Many of them moved only because after the January 2005 fire anything looked better than the tent accommodation they were in.

You refused to meet with the Joe Slovo residents, instead trying to debate with them through the media. Perhaps you do not understand their frustration. They took an action of peaceful civil disobedience, closing down the N2. The police opened fire “explosively” with rubber bullets, and wounded a number of people. You ask me what I could have done to prevent this situation. Why try to shift the blame onto me? All I can say is that this situation would not have occurred if you had

met with Joe Slovo residents. This is why I repeat that the blood is on your hands.



COSATU meeting in solidarity with Joe Slovo residents, 10/12/2007

In fact, your actions, as the SACP and COSATU also state, are no different from those of the apartheid government. They evicted Africans from Cape Town in the 1960s and 1970s on the grounds of race, until the residents of Crossroads successfully defied them in the late 1970s. You are moving the poor from near the centre of Cape Town, where they have access to job opportunities, schools, etc to the margins of the city (Delft) on the grounds of class. You are forcibly evicting the poor in the interests of the better-off. Shame on you, Minister Sisulu!

After the Joe Slovo residents occupied the N2 you lost your sense of proportion. For example you threatened that all residents of Joe Slovo would be removed from the housing waiting lists. Let us leave aside that Tony Ehrenreich regards the housing waiting lists as “a joke”. How could you

unconstitutionally deny the right of housing to any South African citizen? “She has declared we are not South African” said Joe Slovo task team member Sifiso Mapasa to me, echoing the words of Sol Plaatje about the segregationist 1913 Natives Land Act, that it turned Africans into “foreigners in the land of their birth.” Moreover, the allocation of housing is, by law, a provincial and not a national responsibility. Finally, this meaningless “ultimatum” of yours would have constituted action against individuals without giving them a hearing, also unconstitutional.

The international media are very interested in the story of the Joe Slovo informal settlement. Your arrogant behaviour towards its residents will bring world-wide discredit on our government, as has the president’s silence on Zimbabwe and the health minister’s ‘denialism’ on AIDS.

What however most disturbs me about your letter is that you have replied to me at all, when you still have not replied to the residents of Joe Slovo. Your letter is rude to me, but I take no offence at that. What disturbs me is that if you have “absolute contempt” for what I say, then you must have the same for the residents of Joe Slovo. Most of them would have voted for the ANC in the last elections – and this is how you treat them, ignoring them, refusing to meet them, insulting them. From recent statements you have made in parliament it would seem to me you have become mesmerised by the banks, and forgotten that you are a servant of the people. If you wish to continue this correspondence, do so not with me, but with the elected Joe Slovo residents task team, whose contact details you have.



Joe Slovo residents outside the Cape High Court on 25/9/2007

I returned last Thursday from the Cape High Court. The previous week, as you must be aware, thousands of Joe Slovo residents presented papers contesting your interim forced removal court order, making a mockery of your and Thubelisha's claims that Joe Slovo residents are being "intimidated" into opposing removal to Delft. On Thursday I joined those same thousands outside the court in singing "Asiyi e Delft".

Let me conclude by saying that I am willing to meet you any time, with the residents of Joe Slovo, to sit down and discuss these issues on a face to face basis.



Prince Xhanti Sigcawu and other Thubelisha officials face the protest of Joe Slovo residents, supported by other communities, on 27/11/2007

Sigcawu has a duty to explain why he misled the public

(Letter published in the Cape Times, 1/10/2007)

Last Thursday (“Housing profiteers”, 20/9/2007) Thubelisha general manager Prince Xhanti Sigcawu claimed that only 1500 families remained in the Joe Slovo informal settlement who had not moved to Delft and I challenged this (“Joe Slovo housing”, 21/9/2007). What I did not know at the time was that on the same day Sigcawu published his claim, his lawyers submitted papers to the Cape High Court trying to get an order for the eviction of the Joe Slovo residents. In those papers is a listing of some 4500-4800 Joe Slovo households! Moreover the lawyers outlined a removal plan of an average 100 families a week for 45 weeks -- again estimating some 4500 families remained in Joe Slovo.

Sigcawu has a duty to explain to the public why he misled us on the number of families remaining in Joe Slovo. What other explanation can there be than deliberately lying or incompetence? On either count he should resign his position.

Your report of the court hearing of the contestation of the order by thousands of Joe Slovo residents (who had all individually submitted objections) ("Joe Slovo residents to get lawyers", 27/9/2007) quotes the Director-General of the Housing Department as saying "it was important for the residents to understand that the relocation was only temporary." Temporary? Some 4500 families are to be moved to join some 4500 already relocated from Joe Slovo to Delft. The same director-general has stated that only 1000 housing units can be built in Joe Slovo on the present plans. Thus even if all these units were to be occupied by Joe Slovo residents (unlikely, since they would be unaffordable to these residents), some 8000 families would remain in Delft. What concrete plans can the Director-General show the Joe Slovo residents to build housing for them, and where? Otherwise his promises of a "temporary" move are just pie in the sky, like so many other of the present government's "promises".

Moreover the director-general's claim that those in Joe Slovo who do not qualify for subsidised housing are "stirring up the emotions" of other residents is another laughable slander, presented without any evidence, and shows the ignorance of the situation in the national housing department. It is outrageous that in the three years since the project was initiated Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu has posed with a hard hat several times at N2 Gateway yet has not once sat down and talked with the residents of Joe Slovo, and yet now seeks an order to forcibly remove them.



A “show house” – one of those financed by First National Bank for N2 Gateway phase 2

That only 1000 housing units can be built on Joe Slovo land is not inherent, however, contrary to what Keith Gottschalk argues ("Follow the high-rise housing schemes in Europe"). This is because the present intention is to not even to build (cramped) flats like those of N2 Gateway phase 1, but instead bond houses, for the better-off, which require far more space for each unit. If RDP houses were built on the whole space, far more than 1000 units could be built. It would certainly be possible to accommodate all the Joe Slovo residents in the area without, as Gottschalk suggests, building 12-18 storey blocks of flats with all the problems of alienation those have entailed in Europe.

Houses out of reach for residents

(Letter published in the Cape Argus, 17/10/2007)

Jane Worthington-Fitnum (“Call for FNB boycott on N2 scheme is senseless”, Cape Argus, October 15) misses the point, It is the agreement between the government and FNB to build unaffordable (not “affordable”) housing on the Joe Slovo site that is causing the government to demand the forced removal of residents.

Worthington-Fitnum claims the housing is aimed at the “gap housing market”, at “people who can afford to buy a house, but cannot necessarily afford the huge prices on the regular Cape Town market.”

The 300 houses will cost between R200,000 and R300,000 each. To “afford” a bond on one a buyer would have to have an income of R8000 to R12, 000.

So-called “gap” housing was originally intended for those earning between R3500 and R8000 but with the 3,5% rise in interest rates since June 2006, this housing is no longer even “gap” housing.

These income figures completely rule out residents from acquiring housing in Joe Slovo.

Worthington-Fitnum writes: “There are many others waiting for houses, many of whom have been on the waiting list for longer than Joe Slovo has existed.”

Yes, there is a backlog of 360,000 houses in Cape Town. But the plan of the FNB and Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu is not to allocate housing by “waiting list” but by income – only the better off get houses. If the government was to build only RDP houses on the Joe Slovo land, many more of the residents could be accommodated, and that would be “affordable.”

South African banks make higher profits than banks in most other countries. If FNB really wants to “input to massive public projects” as Worthington-Fitnum claims, it could make a donation towards such housing, instead of wanting to reap more profits from bonds. If not, then a boycott of FNB is eminently sensible.

Houses are for rich

(Letter published in the Mail and Guardian, 16-22/11/2007)

The letter by Itumeleng Kotsoane, Housing Department Director-General (“Our focus not the rich”, 12-18/10/07) is disingenuous.

He claims that N2 Gateway phase 1 houses were “offered to residents of the Joe Slovo settlement first”. Kotsoane was not D-G then. The reasons Joe Slovo residents did not receive houses were not because “they did not take up the offer” but because of what a city housing official called “a challenge of affordability.” (*Cape Times*, 5/6/06) In the first attempt to find beneficiaries only 11 out of 200 families invited from various housing waiting lists qualified (*Sunday Times*, 4/6/06) – and the rentals were then to be R3-500 rather than the R650-1050 they have since become. So in the first phase of N2 Gateway the “focus” was certainly on the better off.

Kotsoane also claims that “government cannot fit enough BNG homes [in Joe Slovo] to accommodate all residents.” Previously he has said that 1000 BNG houses would be built there. There are some 4500 Joe Slovo families already in Delft and 4500-6000 still in Joe Slovo, 9000-10,500 in total. “Those that cannot be accommodated at Joe Slovo will be offered identical BNG homes in Delft” he adds. Indeed, 9500 BNG houses are scheduled to be built in Delft. But, according to documents presented by Thubelisha to the Cape High Court,

30% of these are promised to 6000 backyarders from the Delft area, and others to some 11000 'surplus' residents of other settlements along the N2 and elsewhere who cannot be upgraded in their own areas. Thubelisha is trying to squeeze several quarts into a pint pot. Thus many Joe Slovo residents will be condemned to continue living in the horrendous temporary accommodation in Delft.

Kotsoane states "The combination of rental, gap market and giveaway homes will create the integrated human settlements the housing policy enjoins us to deliver." Whose housing policy? This abstract one dreamed up by bureaucrats under the influence of the big banks, or the one demanded by the mass of the people? "Gap market" housing is designed for the better off, and without it many more BNG houses could be built in Joe Slovo. The so-called "integrated housing policy" focuses on the better-off rather than the poor.

Moreover why must Joe Slovo residents be relocated to the margins of the city in Delft rather than (as Tony Ehrenreich, Western Cape COSATU regional secretary has suggested) to state land in Constantia or at Conradie Hospital (in the city centre) or state land around Epping?

For almost two years Joe Slovo residents have asked for a rethink of this whole policy. Instead Kotsoane's boss, Lindiwe Sisulu, seeks a court order to forcibly remove them. If Sisulu and Kotsoane would only listen instead of using coercion to enforce abstractions in the manner of the apartheid government then maybe some progress could be made.

Houses not affordable to Joe Slovo residents

(Letter published in the Cape Times, 4/12/2007)

In your report "Protestors want affordable houses" (29/11/07) you quote Marius Marais, housing finance director

of FNB. He states that “The bank has already announced its development of 3000 houses in the N2 Gateway Project that will be affordable to Joe Slovo residents, which in the main will be in the range between R150,000 and R300,000.”

In my view, this is far removed from reality. First of all, the already-quoted plans are for FNB to build 300 not 3000 'bond' or 'gap' houses in the area of Joe Slovo.

Secondly, and more importantly, most Joe Slovo residents are unemployed or working only casual jobs. To get a bond on a house costing R150-R300,000 -- when the banks require that bondholders pay only 25-30% of income to pay off the bond -- would require (at present interest rates) an income of some R5000 to R10,000 a month -- far above the income of Joe Slovo residents. Let Marais dispute these facts.

What Marais calls “affordable” housing is in fact unaffordable housing. By building these houses FNB is collaborating in the government plans to forcibly remove Joe Slovo residents to the margins of the city in Delft, to temporary housing that resembles the conditions of a concentration camp.

FNB should withdraw from this contract in Joe Slovo, and, if not, any progressive person should withdraw their account at FNB.

Note: In the High Court hearings of 12-13 December, lawyers for Thubelisha announced that the number of FNB-financed houses had been reduced from 300 to 35!

Delft backyarders occupy N2 Gateway houses

In mid-December backyarders in Delft occupied unfinished N2 Gateway houses, claiming they were excluded from the project. On 24 December Thubelisha tried to evict them, and were stopped only by order of the Cape High Court. In January

Thubelisha applied for another court order, which was eventually granted on February 5, to take effect on February 17. They appealed, unsuccessfully, and were evicted on February 19.



Private security guards involved in evictions in Delft, Christmas Eve, 2007

Thubelisha Homes must show a willingness to negotiate with the homeless.

(Article published in the Cape Times, 11/02/2008)

In its latest advertising blurb, “N2 Gateway News”, distributed on 5 February at the Cape High Court, Thubelisha Homes states that “Talks are underway between N2 Gateway developer Thubelisha Homes and various government departments to identify available land in the Delft/Belhar vicinity on which to urgently build homes specifically to release pressure on backyarders in the area.”

Why is this need now identified as “urgent”? Because hundred of Delft backyarders in December (illegally) occupied unfinished N2 Gateway houses in the area. On 5 February the Cape High Court ordered these people to evacuate these houses by 17 February. But the fact remains that, had they not occupied, Thubelisha and the government would not have identified the urgent need to “release pressure” on backyarders in the area.

DA councillor Frank Martin, who is vilified by Thubelisha Homes for instigating the occupation, should in fact be congratulated by every citizen of Cape Town for his courage in exposing the plight of backyarders in Delft. Would that other councillors, of whatever party, were as courageous.

The “pressure” is not just in Delft. Let us not forget that every year the housing situation in the City of Cape Town deteriorates. There is a backlog of some 360,000 houses. Each year this backlog increases by some 18,000 – but only 10,000 houses are built. Each year, people on the waiting list have *less* chance of getting a house. No wonder they are desperate. (This, by the way, is what judge Deon Van Zyl in the Cape High Court failed to understand: “if only people would be patient and wait for their houses”, he said.)



Delft backyarders outside the Cape High Court, 6/2/2008

A similar process of concessions too little and too late by Thubelisha has taken place in the case of the Joe Slovo

informal settlement in Langa. Here representatives of this community had tried to negotiate for ages with Thubelisha regarding the plan for housing in N2 Gateway phase 2. The residents did not want to move to Delft on the margins of the city. They wanted RDP homes built in Joe Slovo and no bank-financed houses. Thubelisha and Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu insisted that at least 300 bank-financed homes should be built in Joe Slovo.

Negotiations broke down. Residents of Joe Slovo occupied the N2 and closed it to traffic for several hours. As a result Sisulu and Thubelisha demanded in the Cape High Court an urgent eviction order against Joe Slovo residents. This was resisted by the residents and the case was heard in December. In the course of it, Thubelisha announced that it had reduced the number of bank-financed houses to 35. The judgement was reserved and has not yet been announced.

However, once again, it took huge protests and expensive court actions to produce a small compromise from Thubelisha – reducing the number of bank-financed houses.

Among the values of Thubelisha homes are “flexibility”. They state “Our ever-changing environment requires us to be adaptable, innovative, and bold in order to remain effective and to seize opportunities.” Why then does it take so much protest action to get them to move such small inches?

Lindiwe Sisulu and Thubelisha insist that the N2 Gateway project (which originally aimed at providing 22,000 homes, a drop in the ocean of the housing crisis) is a “pilot project” which is there to learn from. Why then are they so inflexible and dogmatic about their ideas. Why do they not engage in adequate consultation with communities? Conflict comes about because of inadequate consultation. The actions by Delft and Joe Slovo residents were unnecessary, had there been adequate

consultation. Consultation, of course, involves listening by organs of state and not simply telling people what they should do.

There are 8 million unemployed in our country. If Thubelisha had a license from government to harness the unemployed, through a massively enlarged Expanded Works Project, with the focusing of the relevant SETA's on skills for building houses, the national backlog of perhaps 5 million houses could be overcome rapidly.

But, short of this, there are still things which could be done by Thubelisha to demonstrate their flexibility and their willingness to listen to communities. In court, they refused the offer of the Delft backyarders to discuss a mediated solution to the problem. Now they have two weeks in which they could negotiate with the occupying backyarders in Delft and hear their problems.

They could also enter serious negotiations with representatives of the residents of Joe Slovo informal settlement. It would be quite possible to construct higher density housing in Joe Slovo than the BNG houses planned by Thubelisha, possibly with the ability to accommodate all the residents of Joe Slovo in them, without evicting them permanently to Delft. I in fact wrote to Prince Xanthi Sigcawu of Thubelisha Homes offering such a discussion, but he did not respond.

Thubelisha should learn that, in the desperate housing situation in the Western Cape, inflexibility leads rapidly to extreme conflict situations. But I fear that the state and its parastatal Thubelisha Homes are reluctant to give up their "all-knowing" attitude and to concede at least some participation and control to the communities that they claim to be providing for.



*Placard by Delft backyarders occupying N2 Gateway houses,
21/12/2007*

Thubelisha denies people and city right of participation

(Letter published in the Cape Times, 13/2/2008)

Thubelisha General Manager Prince Xanthi Sigcawu's letter ("Strife delays housing", 12/2/2008) is a perfect illustration of the inflexible bureaucratic paternalism that I criticised in my article on Monday ("Thubelisha Homes must show a willingness to negotiate with the homeless.")

N2 Gateway, which Thubelisha manages, is, writes Sigcawu, "a massive outdoor laboratory to practically test implementation of a new housing policy". If it is to *test*, it should respond to *feedback* from its supposed beneficiaries.

Joe Slovo residents don't want to move to Delft. Delft residents want housing in Delft. Yet Thubelisha wants to forcibly remove Joe Slovo residents to Delft at the expense of residents of Delft. And then it blames the residents of Joe Slovo and Delft for "delaying" the development of housing!

That is imposing an inflexible “master-plan” over the heads of the beneficiaries in the name of a “new policy” made by bureaucrats in Pretoria.

In this N2 Gateway “laboratory” thus far, in fact, every experiment has been a disaster. It is ridiculous for Sigcawu to blame “manipulators” for this – the opposition comes right from the grass roots, as anyone who has seen the demonstrations outside the Cape High Court in December and January would know.

N2 Gateway, writes Sigcawu, has “pioneered the delivery of Breaking New Ground homes” – decent two-bedroom homes. However these BNG houses cannot be built at the density required to accommodate Joe Slovo residents in Joe Slovo. Instead of being willing to consider new higher-density designs – such as those being employed in some other Cape Town townships, Thubelisha insists on BNG houses (because they are better than RDP houses). This is like the old uniform design houses imposed by the apartheid government. It demonstrates inflexibility.

Sigcawu writes that “it is not Thubelisha’s job to resolve Cape Town’s housing crisis” and that Cape Town “is failing to keep up with the requirements of its citizens” in housing delivery. But the funding for housing comes from national government. It is partly because national resources have been diverted into N2 Gateway (from which the City Council has been excluded) that Cape Town is so behind. It is also because only 1, 5% of the national budget goes to housing, in comparison with 5% in most other developing countries. Neither problem is the fault of the City Council.

So Thubelisha implements a plan which excludes the city as well as the people of Cape Town from democratically participating in its allocation procedures. But Sigcawu appeals

“to the people of Cape Town to let us get on with the job” – building houses which “are for you.” What undemocratic paternalism! Cape Town does not need a housing company with that attitude.



Police assist evictions in Delft 19/2/2008

Delft resettlement

(Letter published in the Cape Times, 20/2/2008)

One expects a new acting CEO to take a fresh approach to problems facing the organisation. Unfortunately John Duarte, new ACEO of Thubelisha, does not seem to have the same view. His article “Time to carry on building and put an end to destructive Gateway politics” (18/2/3008) brings nothing new to bear on these problems.

Regarding the demand by Joe Slovo residents not to be moved to Delft, for example, he writes “We are told...” “We have heard...”. Has he not had the courtesy or the imagination to sit down and listen to the views of the Joe Slovo task team, representing Joe Slovo residents?

Instead he engages in speculative innuendos to try to discredit the views of residents in Joe Slovo and Delft, as well as those of the Anti-Eviction Campaign, Frank Martin and myself.

“Evictions are not pretty, least of all when they involve relatively poor people”, he also writes. But he fails to address any of the crucial questions: Why is it necessary to forcibly remove Joe Slovo residents to the margins of the city in Delft, totally contradicting the Breaking New Ground policy of integrating settlements, including moving the previously disadvantaged to inner cities? Why insist on forced removal, rather than a negotiated solution with mediation.

Why should the 70-30 allocation policy agreed to by the three spheres of government not be revisited?

Why is the whole process of housing allocation so untransparent to the public?

Why is Thubelisha not willing to have a mediated solution to the problem in Delft, rather than insisting on the forcible eviction of the occupants who have no other homes to go to.

Western Cape COSATU has offered itself as a mediator, both in the cases of Joe Slovo and Delft. Why is Thubelisha not exploring this offer?

Building houses is not just about bricks and mortar, spreadsheets and so on. It is about fulfilling the needs of living, breathing people. This the process engaged in at all phases thus far of N2 Gateway has failed to realise, failed to adapt to – by failing to consult, listen and negotiate.

Instead Thubelisha wants to bulldoze through obstacles, at the expense of the poor.

(By the way, contrary to Duarte’s implication, I am not an anarchist, and cannot help it if things I write are republished “on anarchist websites.”)



A young child shot in the foot by police bullets in the Delft evictions 19/2/2008. It was later discovered he had also been shot in the back.

Lessons of the Delft eviction

Thoughts provoked by being interviewed by Keketso Sechane, Heart 104.9 radio, 19/2/2008

Today people have been evicted from houses in Delft at police gunpoint – despite their non-violence. But this situation, arising from illegal occupation of N2 Gateway Houses, was not caused, as the Housing DG said on your programme earlier, by DA councillor Frank Martin. It is a product of a contradiction between two things: on the one hand a desperate and worsening housing crisis in the Western Cape; and, on the other, the inflexible bureaucratic attitude of the tops of the national and provincial Housing Departments and the management of Thubelisha Homes in the N2 Gateway project.

In fact the blood spilled by women and children today through police shootings is on the hands of Housing minister Lindiwe Sisulu and Thubelisha tops John Duarte and Prince Xanthi Sigcau.

The housing backlog in the Western Cape is 360,000 and worsens every year. The backlog increases by 18,000 a year, while only 10,000 houses a year are being built. Hence the length of time people spend on the waiting list (more than twenty years) and hence the desperation – expressed in the chants of the Delft occupants outside the Cape High Court (and, for thirty minutes, at a meeting called by provincial housing minister Richard Dyantyi in Delft last Saturday) of “We want houses! We want houses!”

The national government spends a mere 1, 5% of its budget on housing – compared to the 5% regarded as the norm for developing countries. With an imaginative government, in fact, the 8 million unemployed in the country could be put to work to build the needed houses, with the relevant SETA’s focussed on providing crash courses for the necessary skills in building. But this is precluded for the present ANC government by its stress on defending neo-liberalism and capitalist profit.

The N2 Gateway project, moreover, was conceived less to build houses, or to contribute to solving the Western Cape housing crisis, than to prettify the margins of the N2 highway before the 2010 World Cup. The poor were to be eliminated from the sides of the N2, and more expensive housing installed there. The poor were to be banished to the margins of the city in Delft.

This “pilot” project claimed to be implementing the new “Breaking New Ground” national housing policy of minister Lindiwe Sisulu. But in reality it has broken every proclaimed aim of this policy. It was imposed from Pretoria. Every phase

of it has run into problems from the start and overall it has been a disaster. The Cape Town city council (when the DA won control of the city) was removed from any participation in it by the ANC government.

The BNG policy claims, for example, to be “accelerating the delivery of housing as a key strategy for poverty alleviation and using “provision of housing as a major job creation strategy”. However, housing provision has *slowed* since its introduction.

The national average since 1994 of 180,000 a year has declined steadily since 2002/3 – to 137,659 in 2005/6. And even Finance Minister Manuel has disputed whether these figures are correct, or are gerrymandered by corrupt developers.

The BNG policy promised “increased flexibility and demand responsiveness”. It promised to address “the distortions of the inherited apartheid space economy”, i.e. to stop settling the disadvantaged on the fringes of the cities. It promised an “in-situ upgrading approach to informal settlements.”.

But instead of “demand responsiveness” N2 Gateway has ignored the wishes of beneficiaries such as residents of the Joe Slovo settlement in Langa. Instead of ending the “distortions of the inherited apartheid space economy” and “in-situ” (on site) development, it wishes to *forcibly* remove Joe Slovo residents to the margins of the city in Delft from where few of them will return to Langa.

When this creates problems, Thubelisha management, instructed by housing minister Lindiwe Sisulu, and aided and abetted by provincial housing minister Richard Dyantyi, simply tries to bulldozer its way through any problems that arise.

Recently appointed acting CEO John Duarte complained in Monday's *Cape Times* (18/2/2008) that instead of immersing himself "in the detail of the project, building schedules, protocols and targets" he had "been exhausting valuable time and money in court defending Thubelisha's mandate to build houses for the poor".

What he fails to understand is that building houses is not just about bricks, mortar, and spreadsheets. It is about fulfilling the needs of living, breathing people. This the process engaged in at all phases thus far of N2 Gateway has failed to realise, failed to adapt to – by failing to consult, listen and negotiate.

The attempt to find solutions in the courts to a political and social problem is futile. This is what Sisulu, the housing DG, the Prince Xanthi, John Duarte, Richard Dyantyi – the government and Thubelisha tops – have been trying to do. This actually means forced removals, with, inevitably, police overreaction, injuries, possible deaths. It is the poor who suffer the consequences.

In the Western Cape, COSATU offered to mediate solutions to the problems in both Joe Slovo and Delft. This has been ignored by the government and Thubelisha.

It is bureaucratic madness to try to forcibly evict Joe Slovo residents to Delft, where they do not want to live, on the margins of the city, and at the same time to forcibly evict Delft residents from houses that are not wanted by Joe Slovo residents, which are desperately needed by Delft residents who have nowhere else to live.

Who controls allocation of the houses in N2 Gateway? In theory it is supposed to be a collaborative project between the province, Thubelisha, and the city. In practice it is controlled by Thubelisha – who use it for their own inflexible ends.

Constantly spokespersons for Thubelisha proclaim that this is a “pilot project”, a “laboratory” – but in a social science “experiment” it is vital to listen to feedback from your so-called “beneficiaries”. This the N2 Gateway project – in particular Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, and Thubelisha general manager Prince Xanthi Sigcau has signally failed to do.

This is why blood is on their hands, in the injuries suffered by women and children from the bullets of police in Joe Slovo last September, and again in Delft today. They are building up a legacy of bitterness against themselves.

As the housing crisis deepens, these problems will get worse, not better. There will be many conflict situations ahead.

Lindiwe Sisulu has a particular responsibility in this. The N2 Gateway is her “flagship project” yet she has not lifted a finger to try to resolve the problems. Instead she has taken a *hardegat* line but left it to her subordinates to impose. She is a coward not to come and meet the Joe Slovo and Delft communities face to face.

Lindiwe Sisulu, strangely, was one of the 40% of Mbeki’s ministers who survived onto the NEC. Moreover she has been elected to the 20-member National Working Committee of the ANC. She should be forced to resign.



Evictions in Delft on 19/2/2008, for which Lindiwe Sisulu is responsible.

Eviction madness

(Letter published in the Cape Times, 25/2/2008)

Jonathan Schrire's abstractions about the right of eviction (“Evictions are a necessity in overcoming housing impasse” 21/2/2008) are beside the point in the case of the national government and Thubelisha's evictions in Delft and their attempts to forcibly remove Joe Slovo residents.

Let us leave aside his questionable assumption that “there are not going to be enough houses available” as an inherent factor. The government spends only 1,5% of the national budget on housing as opposed to 5% by many other developing countries. [Trevor Manuel's 2008-9 budget allocates 1,46% of spending to housing.] Moreover, if the almost 8 million unemployed could be put to work by government to build the perhaps 5 million houses needed nationally, with relevant

SETA's focussing on crash skill courses, the housing crisis could be ended rapidly.

Schrire states that my belief that “all conflicts can be resolved by mediation is naive and unreal.” I was referring to a particular conflict, not “all conflicts”. Schrire also writes “an ordered and structured process by which new homes are allocated is critical”. The point is that in Delft, backyarders believed that Thubelisha was violating the allocation process for N2 Gateway housing, and not even adhering to the 70%-30% (shack dwellers/backyarders) formula agreed by the three tiers of government.

The Cape High Court judge Deon Van Zyl however argued that this was irrelevant, and rejected it also on appeal. Political mediation would have taken these factors into account.

In addition, 70% of the Delft N2 Gateway housing is allocated to residents of Joe Slovo settlement in Langa. 4500 families of these are presently in TRA's in Delft while 6000 families of these are in Langa and refuse to move to the margins of the city in Delft. But rather than negotiate with Joe Slovo residents for higher density housing in Langa where they can remain, Thubelisha wants to forcibly remove them to Delft. Rather than reallocate Delft N2 Gateway houses to Delft backyarders Thubelisha secured their eviction. This was, and is, bureaucratic madness.

The consequences, as reported in the same issue of the *Cape Times* are that the Human Rights Commission is to investigate human rights violations in the Delft evictions, including the fact that the evictees are now homeless. Political mediation could have avoided these consequences.

The same issue of the *Cape Times* also reports on Tuesday's judgement of the Constitutional Court that “in situations where people face homelessness due to an eviction, public authorities

should generally engage seriously and in good faith with the affected occupiers with a view to finding humane and pragmatic solutions to their dilemma.”

The Cape High Court judge also dismissed the evictee's pleas of homelessness, and again rejected them on appeal. Had the evictees had the money, they could have taken the case on appeal to the Constitutional Court.

The problem, in other words, is not a narrow technical/legal problem of ownership, but a concrete political and social problem. Let us hope that reason prevails in the case of the Joe Slovo settlement, where the occupants are not “invaders” but legitimate residents for more than a decade, where the High Court has not yet pronounced judgement.



The homeless evictees in Delft camp out in makeshift shelters next to the houses from which they were evicted. The Voice (20/2/2008) headlines “This is no way to live”.

The national housing crisis

(Written with Mzonke Poni for Amandla, 2008)

Several times in December and January hundreds of backyarders from Delft, who occupied unfinished N2 Gateway

houses in Delft, marched to the Cape High Court chanting “We want houses! We want houses!” Now they have been evicted – but this does not solve the problem.

Their cry is a collective expression of a demand felt all around the country. The Housing Department says there are 2,4 million families in informal settlements that need homes. There must be at least this number of backyarders around the country also in need of homes: perhaps a backlog of 5 million homes in all. How much does it increase by a year. We do not know.

How many houses are being built a year by the government? Housing Department statistics claim 2,355,913 between 1994 and 2007: an average of some 180,000 a year. However, while the housing budget has increased, the numbers of houses built has declined steadily since 2002/3 – to 137,659 in 2005/6.

Moreover recently even Finance Minister Manuel disputed such figures. Referring to the Provincial Government and Expenditure Review 2002/3-2008/9 he said: “I truly don't believe that the numbers add up here.” Audits have shown that many of the claimed houses are ‘ghost houses’ that have never been built by crooked developers. Moreover up to half the completed houses are reported to have severe defects.

This Review also stated that the *housing backlog was still growing*. (*Cape Times*, 18/10/2006)

In almost every province the housing crisis is therefore severe. The Western Cape, and the City of Cape Town, is symptomatic. The city has a housing backlog of 360,000, increasing by 18,000 a year, but only 10,000 houses a year are being built. The province has a backlog of more than 400,000 homes and according to the 2002 Housing Plan this increases by some 30,000 houses a year – yet only 20,000 are being built. On the present basis *the housing backlog will never be overcome!*

It is no wonder that the Delft backyarders were desperate enough to illegally take over the unfinished N2 Gateway houses being built in the area.

Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu is associated with the “Breaking New Ground” housing policy, which has worthy aims. It claims, *inter alia*, to be “accelerating the delivery of housing as a key strategy for poverty alleviation and using “provision of housing as a major job creation strategy”. However, as already mentioned, housing provision has *slowed* since its introduction.

Moreover it promised “increased flexibility and demand responsiveness”. It promised to address “the distortions of the inherited apartheid space economy”, i.e. to stop settling the disadvantaged on the fringes of the cities. It promised an “in-situ upgrading approach to informal settlements.” Ironically every one of those promises is being violated in the “pilot project” for Breaking New Ground, the N2 Gateway project.

Instead of “demand responsiveness” N2 Gateway has ignored the wishes of beneficiaries such as residents of the Joe Slovo settlement in Langa. Instead of ending the “distortions of the inherited apartheid space economy” and “in-situ” (on site) development, it wishes to *forcibly* remove Joe Slovo residents to the margins of the city in Delft from where few of them will return to Langa.

Moreover N2 Gateway has become biased towards housing better-off people, through collaboration with the banks. The first phase was so expensive that it totally excluded Joe Slovo residents, and its present occupants have gone on rent boycott to protest the high rents and the shoddy quality of the housing. The second phase was to include 300 ‘gap’ houses for those earning above R3500 a year, which has only been reduced to 35 because of mass protest by residents of Joe Slovo.

As for “flexibility” – the Department and its project manager Thubelisha Homes has stuck dogmatically to its proposals, despite the clamour among Joe Slovo residents for a plan for higher density housing on the site.

In addition, Thubelisha Homes broke the agreement brokered between the three tiers of government to allocate 30% of the Delft N2 Gateway housing to backyarders from Delft, stimulating them into occupying the unfinished houses.

If this is a “pilot project”, then what is there to hope from the other housing projects which it is intended to guide nationally?

Yet Lindiwe Sisulu was one of the few Cabinet ministers to be re-elected to the NEC and has been elected to the National Working Committee, *nogal!*

For countenancing *forced removals*, let alone the remainder of her pro-bank housing policy, Sisulu should be forced to resign.

What the government needs to do is to put the 8 million unemployed to work to build the 5 million plus needed homes. This would require a massive expansion of the Expanded Programme of Public Works, and focusing the relevant SETA’s on providing the necessary skills on a crash-course basis (instead of frittering away their money on administration costs). It requires price controls over building products.

What stands in the way of this is the profit system run in the interests of the big banks and the building monopolies in cement etc. So long as capitalism exists, the housing crisis will not be solved.

**Forward to housing for all! Forward to jobs for all!
Forward to socialism!! A luta continua!!**