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**A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE ROLE PLAYED
BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
IN THE PROVISION OF HOUSING
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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I. Introduction

In the past decade there has been a deepening of the development crisis and a worsening of the housing situation in most developing countries. In addition it has become increasingly apparent that the majority of the population's housing needs are not being met by either the state or the market. The failure of existing approaches to housing and the demonstrated success of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in meeting the housing needs of the poor, albeit on a very small scale, have led to a growing interest in the role that these organisations can play in the provision of housing and other developmental efforts. This interest is evidenced by the numerous international conferences¹ and growing body of literature on the subject (eg. Turner; 1988, Drake; 1987). It is also apparent in the increasing amount of bi-lateral and multi-lateral aid being spent on or through NGOs (de Graaf, 1987; Van Heemst, 1985). For example in the past 10 years the EEC's contribution to NGOs has increased by 543 % (Stevens et al, 1985-6).

The purpose of this paper is to improve our understanding of what NGOs are and the role that they can play in the field of housing. Its more specific tasks are, firstly, to examine whether the generalised roles ascribed by Turner (1988) to NGOs, namely to act as catalysts for change, to enable communities and to act as mediators, are adequate. And secondly, to examine the problems and constraints² NGOs encounter when trying to play the roles ascribed to them. The work of Turner has been isolated for study because it is the most systematic focus on the role of NGOs in the field of housing.

It is argued that whilst Turner manages to isolate the generalised roles played by NGOs in relation to the community and the state, and between the two, he fails to recognise the role they play in enabling the market. Furthermore, he depoliticises NGOs and the roles that they play and because he concentrates on what they should be, instead of what they are, he fails to recognise the paradoxes and ambiguities which emerge in their practice.

The paper begins by exploring the definitions of NGOs, and then outlines their origins and the shifts that have occurred in their activities. In the second section the three roles identified by Turner are outlined and then assessed. Following this, as a means of testing Turner's analysis, the activities of a South African NGO, the Urban Foundation, will be examined. This case has been chosen because it is a limit case. Although classifiable as an NGO the scale and orientation of its activities differ from the more archetypal NGOs; the small organisations usually working on limited budgets and in close co-operation with local groups which Turner (1988) tends to use to substantiate his arguments. Finally, some concluding remarks will be made. It should be noted that as there is a marked absence of critical analysis of NGOs this paper should be regarded as an initial contribution to an area of research in which there is both the scope and need for much further work.

¹ Limuru Symposium, Kenya, 1987, Habitat Forum, Berlin Conference, 1987, and the London Symposium on "Development Alternatives; The Challenge for NGOs", 1987.

² The term constraint is understood as the boundary between what can and cannot be done.

II. Background to NGOs

1. Definition of an NGO³

As the NGOs dealing with housing are very heterogeneous organisations it is generally accepted that it is difficult to provide a definitive definition of what they are and what they do. The points of consensus in the literature are that they explicitly try to differentiate themselves from government and that they are "not for profit" (Schneider 1988, Turner 1988, Drakek 1987, Rahnema, 1984). It is also agreed that they do not exist to serve the interests of their own members and that they try "to amass financial and or technical/scientific resources to meet socially identified needs" (Frantz, 1987, 122). Many NGOs directly or indirectly assist the poor and/or those with special needs, for example, the old or the disabled. At the Limuru Symposium in Kenya in 1987 a useful distinction was made between NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). CBOs were seen as locally based and controlled by the residents of a particular area, whilst NGOs were seen as frequently organised by outsiders from a different social group.

What is meant by non-governmental and non-profit-making is subject to debate. Does non-governmental mean that they cannot accept resources from the state or does it mean that they cannot work on joint projects with the state, engage in the same activities as the state or hold the same objectives as the state? These are very valid questions but ones which are difficult to take a firm position on. An organisation can receive a substantial amount of its funds from the state and yet be able to operate autonomously from it, whilst another may receive no funds from the state but in the process of negotiation become co-opted by the state.

For the purpose of this study those organisations which are set up by the state and/or receive all their funding from the state cannot be considered to be "non-governmental". It is recognised however that this definition does not preclude NGOs from being *de facto* extensions of the state or surrogates of the state.

The issue of "not-for-profit" raises similar problems. Does it mean that resources and services must be provided without profit as a motive, or is it acceptable for an NGO to make a profit so long as the profits are kept within the organisation and/or used as a means of cross-subsidisation. The crucial issue here is how these profits are made, at whose cost and for whose benefit. It is held that where profits are made they should be ploughed back into the organisation or used as a form of subsidy for the most disadvantaged.

Notwithstanding, the above considerations perhaps the two most important aspects to grasp about NGOs are firstly that, as Turner (1988) has argued, their activities are not bound by the rationality of the market namely, profit, or the rationality of the state, which is based on the need for legitimacy and control. Whether this qualifies them to be classified as part of a "third system" (Turner 1976; 1978; 1988) which is of equal status to the state and the market, and which exists above class, and the conflicts and intrigues of society, is an open question. Although it is a question worthy of further investigation it is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this study.

³ It should be noted that as a wide range of organisations eg. Universities, trade unions, etc. can be classified as NGOs the discussion focuses on housing NGOs and where necessary developmental NGOs.

The second important aspect to grasp is that because NGOs tend to operate in those areas where the state and market are either unwilling or unable to operate, they are in essence political. The reason being that they are concerned with the redistribution of a country's resources. Another reason is that even where NGOs are financed by foreign aid, aid usually has political connotations, for example, it may want to promote the American way of life, or promote the ideology of private property etc⁴.

The heterogeneity of NGOs concerned with housing (and all other matters) derives from the fact that they exhibit great diversity in their affiliations, organisational form, methods of work and development philosophies. In their affiliations NGOs may work closely with the state or be in opposition to it, similarly they may or may not be dependent on bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies, entrepreneurial groups, political parties and other NGOs. Their methods of work can be at the micro-project scale, or they may concern themselves with national or international issues. They may work closely with grassroots organisations or they may act as agents, linking "donor" or assistance providing organisations (which are often NGOs) with their "target population". They may be hierarchically organised or democratically organised. Some NGOs make extensive use of professional staff, others use only voluntary workers whilst yet others may use a combination of the two. With respect to their development philosophies they may differ as to what is to be achieved, and how it is implemented.

Whilst the heterogeneity of NGOs may be of great frustration to those who like to understand the world in terms of neat categories, for others who do not share this preoccupation it is precisely this that contributes to their uniqueness and makes their actual or potential contribution to housing and other developmental efforts worthy of attention.

2. Origins and trends

A distinction needs to be made between the emergence of international and indigenous NGOs. International NGOs operate in more than one country and have, with very few exceptions, started in developed countries and then set up or supported NGOs in developing countries. Typical examples would be Oxfam and the Red Cross. Indigenous NGOs, on the other hand, have usually developed in response to local needs and conditions. They operate at the local, regional and national scale and may or may not receive support from international NGOs.

The NGOs concerned with housing have their roots in three areas; the church, ethical and moral sentiments, and the development theories and realities associated with the Third World. As there is very little literature that deals with NGOs concerned with housing, and the figures relating to the allocation of funds by international NGOs and other funding agencies do not refer specifically to housing, it is difficult to trace how their activities have changed over the years. Notwithstanding the above, it is considered safe to assume that housing NGOs have, by and large, experienced the same shifts as the NGOs concerned with health, education and particularly rural development.

⁴ The political nature of NGOs is discussed in greater detail in Sections 2 and 3.

The Church :

Even before the colonial era, missionaries from Europe sought to establish organisations and societies providing health education and other services as a means of spreading their faith and providing for the social welfare of their followers. In many parts of Africa and Asia the word NGO is still strongly associated with the church (Turner, 1988). Latterly, the adoption of "Liberation Theology" in Latin America for example has enabled NGOs supporting the economic and political resistance of the poor to operate under the auspices of the church, or alongside its pastoral work. In many repressive countries this has provided one of the few opportunities for NGOs to operate.

Ethical :

NGOs based on moral and ethical values go back way beyond this century and are seen as having contributed to the development of the Welfare State (I.C) (Sugden, 1984). Moreover, the role played by the Philanthropist Movement and their Model Dwelling Associations in Britain has parallels with some NGOs. After World War II this influence was apparent in the NGOs, which, alongside governments, became involved in emergency relief assistance. The activities of these NGOs were based on the notion that poverty imposes a moral duty on people (and countries), especially the more affluent, to assist the less fortunate to overcome or at least ameliorate their situation. Ethical and charitable sentiments still influence the work of many NGOs. They are most prevalent in those NGOs concerned with emergency relief assistance following natural disasters, for example, earthquakes, floods and famine, and those NGOs assisting people displaced by civil strife. It can also be argued that an element of charity exists in the grants provided by one NGO to another. Oxfam supported projects, for example, do not have to fulfil the stringent economic conditions (full cost recovery, specified redemption periods etc) laid down by multi-lateral organisations such as the World Bank. Greater emphasis is put on the NGOs moral integrity to use the funds wisely and its knowledge that further funds will not be forthcoming unless it "produces the goods".

Development theories and development realities :

In the past four decades it is possible to identify "three generations" (Korten, 1987) of NGO activity. The three generations have been influenced by different theories of development, the changing patterns of capital accumulation on a world scale and concrete conditions in developing countries. Whilst the shifts in strategy have largely emerged in the industrialized countries, they have manifested themselves in the activities of NGOs operating in less developed countries (LDCs). In the 1940's and 1950's the activities of NGOs were influenced by the idea that the less developed countries could be wrested out of their backwardness by massive injections of aid and the transfer of technology. Their efforts were paternalistic, directive and, like the Ethical NGOs, concentrated on the provision of relief and charitable actions such as the transfer of food surpluses from the developed to the less developed countries.

The second generation of NGOs, on the other hand, tried to include a developmental element in their activities. The bulk of their work comprised sector-based, and later, multi-sectoral projects. This shift was largely influenced by the non-Marxian critiques of the previous development strategy (G. Myrdal, R. Prebisch and more particularly E. Schumacher and other writers of the appropriate

technology school). Myrdal and Prebisch highlighted the fact that economic growth did not necessarily benefit the poor and that much aid had been frittered away through misappropriation, misuse and corruption. Moreover, they argued that it created dependencies amongst its recipients and as a result had no lasting effect on poverty. Schumacher (1973) placed greater emphasis on the destructive consequences that the transfer of large scale technology had on the LDCs, whilst Illich (1973) referred to the negative impact industrialized society had on social values, and to the depersonalising features of contemporary government and business.

As an alternative they posited small scale development, self-reliance and the appropriate use of technology and resources. They also placed emphasis on democratic values and the development of institutions which reflect participation and co-operation in their practice. These concepts have been incorporated into what has become known as "Alternative Development" (Nerfin, 1986) and have strongly influenced the work of housing specialists such as J. Turner. They can be regarded as the principles which guide the activities of the second generation NGOs. Today, many NGOs have, to a greater or lesser extent, adopted these principles.

According to Korten (1987) third generation NGOs differ from their precursors in that they mark a shift from the conventional service delivery roles of NGOs to more catalytic roles. They place much greater emphasis on sustainable development and the need to mobilise the resources of the people by the democratisation⁵ of the societies in which they live. These changes are the consequence of the growing recognition that isolated projects are limited in their impact and cannot be sustained without a supportive institutional framework. They are also consistent with the theory that development should not be seen as the "transfer of financial resources but as the development of human and institutional capacity" (Korten, 1987). In essence these NGOs are looking for ways to make successful small-scale developments, large-scale (Annis, 1987). The organisational implications of NGOs playing a catalytic role are that they will have to focus their activities at the supra-local level, and increase their interactions with the public and private sector organisations that control the resources and policies that affect local development (Korten, 1987).

Falling within the category of third generation NGOs, but not mentioned by Korten, are those NGOs that work closely with grassroots movements and are born out of a strong social commitment to the needs of the poor. These NGOs tend to place greater emphasis on strategies designed to empower and conscientize people than many of the NGOs delivering conventional services. They often have a clear political agenda, which may or may not be publicly expressed, and see themselves as contributing to the "strengthening of civil society" (Frantz, 1987).

In sum, although different categories of NGOs have been identified, NGOs may incorporate first, second and third generation strategies, and church-based NGOs may adopt strategies very similar to the aforementioned. The challenge facing NGOs is how they respond to the increasing demands being made on them, and how they make use of the space created by the inability or unwillingness of many Third World governments to meet the housing and other needs of their people.

⁵ Korten has defined democratization as the "broadly distributed control over political and economic assets, and the open flow of information" (1987, 147).

III. Analysis of the three roles ascribed to NGOs by Turner

1. Advisors on/promoters of policy change

According to Turner, NGOs working at the supra-local level can encourage local and national governments to adopt policies which make efficient use of resources (1988). More specifically, he sees them promoting the introduction of "support oriented policies" which enable people to find their own solutions to their housing needs. This role is analogous to that of the third generation NGOs discussed above. In terms of Turner's analysis NGOs may seek to influence policy decisions by acting as consultants to those who control and decide upon housing policies, by demonstrating the feasibility of innovative approaches to housing and by voicing their opposition to evictions, etc. (ibid).

NGOs are able to play this role in Turner's view because he sees the source and the solution to the housing problems of developing countries as technical in nature. In his analysis the source of the housing problem lies in the existing relationship between the state, the private sector and the users. Although he sees the three sectors as interdependent he focuses on what he refers to as the heteronomous system (the state) and the autonomous or third system (the users). The former is seen as the primary source of the problem, in that it is inflexible, hierarchically organised and makes use of large scale industrialised building methods which are inappropriate to the resource-base of developing countries. It is also socially dysfunctional because "when people have no control over the responsibility for the key decisions in the housing process... built environments... become barriers to community and personal fulfilment as well as being a burden on the economy" (1978, 1137). In contrast, the third autonomous system is seen to hold the solution to the housing problem. It allows the users to control the decisions that affect their housing and it makes appropriate use of resources by, amongst other things, maximising the resourcefulness of the people; their initiatives, skills, labour, savings, etc. It is also seen as contributing to greater social justice.

Following on from this Turner argues that the users should have the main say in the planning, construction and management of their housing and that the role of the state should be to support the development of the third system by improving people's access to the essential resources, namely, land, credit and infrastructure. State power, he argues, must be used to redistribute resources... directly through public ownership or indirectly by use of instruments and methods through which governments can alter relations and change systems (Turner, 1986 ; 20).

Other reasons why NGOs are regarded as well placed to advise on and promote policy changes are their organisational characteristics; their technical expertise and flexibility. An NGO's technical expertise derives from the fact that, in Turner's analysis, it is part of the third system and hence more in tune with people's needs and capabilities. Their flexibility, on the other hand, derives from the fact that they are not bound by bureaucratic structures and procedures. Further reasons for their playing this role are their ability to communicate with a wide range of groups, and, within the confines of the political and economic contexts in which they operate, to write and say what they want (Turner, 1988). The links that many NGOs have with foreign donors - the World Bank, for example - who may exert a fair amount of control over the economy of the national governments, and the strengthening of the voice of NGOs via the establishment of national and international NGO network also help NGOs to perform this task (ibid).

One of the factors that Turner sees as limiting the ability of NGOs to play this role is that their contribution has not been widely acknowledged. To quote from Turner "Without a public face as familiar as that of the state or the market, their [NGOs] direct influence on policies is reduced, however great their actual contributions to society may be" (Turner, 1988 ; 178).

The methods of and scope for changing housing policies have been much debated in the literature on or related to housing in the past decade (Burgess, 1982a & b & 1983; Castells, 1977, 1978 & 1983; Pickvance, 1976). Whilst no critical assessment of Turner's interpretation of the role of NGOs has been written, it is possible to deduce from the critiques of his work by Burgess (1982a & 1983) and Pradilla (1976) how they would interpret the role of NGOs with respect to the policy changes required to solve the housing problem of developing countries. The main thrust of their argument, would probably be that within the capitalist mode of production NGOs can play no meaningful role in solving the housing problems of developing countries, and that the ability of NGOs to influence housing policies is extremely limited.

Their critique is based primarily on the grounds that Turner depoliticises both the housing problem and the state. The former by analyzing the housing problem in developing countries as the result of large scale, institutionalized delivery systems which cannot meet the multiplicity of housing needs, and the latter by seeing the state as representing the common good and power and authority, and as being autonomous, having no bearing on specific class forces (Burgess; 1982a). Burgess argues that Turner establishes a false dichotomy between popular and official forms of housing and that he pays insufficient attention to the commodity status of housing. As a commodity, he argues, housing needs to be understood in terms not only of its consumption but also in terms of the various interests tied up in its production and exchange. He further argues that it has to be seen as a means of extending the ideology of private ownership. In his opinion the third system is not in conflict with the heteronomous system but functional to the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.

The second thrust of Burgess's critique is that Turner overestimates what the state is able or willing to do. Burgess sees the state as designed to maintain the reproduction of the system and to serve the interests of the dominant classes or sectors of classes. Thus he sees structural and conjunctural limits placed on its activities. At the structural level the state is unable to introduce policies which contradict capitalist relations of production, consumption and exchange or are contrary to the ideology of the hegemonic social class or classes (1983;4). At the conjunctural level, variations in policy are explained by different fractions of capital managing to establish their hegemony over the ruling bloc, and the intensity and balance of the class struggle (ibid).

The third thrust of his argument related to the methods of changing housing policies. Burgess (1982b)⁶, premising his work on Castell's (1977, 1978 & 1983) and Pickvance (1976) has identified two different means, "institutional" and "extra-institutional", through which the demands of low income groups for better access to land and housing are expressed⁷. Institutional means relate largely

⁶ This argument was not specifically addressed in Turner's work.

⁷ There are varying interpretation as to what constitutes an urban social movement, how they should relate to political parties and their impact on social change. Of particular contention is whether a causal relationship can be established between an urban social movement and the changes that are introduced (Pickvance, 1976) and whether

to legal channels for expressing demands; petitions and deputations to state bodies and legal demonstrations, often involving vertical links with political parties. As he sees this form of mobilisation as associated with "the politics of paternalism, populism and reformism" (Burgess; 1982b) the gains made are reformist, and the pressure groups prone to clientelism, co-optation and repression by the state. Extra-institutional mobilisations on the other hand are associated with illegal action, horizontally linked to other organisations and more politicised in that urban demands are linked to broader political and economic demands. Their potential to contribute to social change is, therefore, greater. They are, nevertheless, also prone to co-optation and clientelism and, because they are often perceived as a threat by the state, they are far more likely to have their activities curtailed by it. While Turner conceives of NGOs as making extensive use of institutional means, Burgess sees them as open to co-optation and integration by the state.

Burgess has in turn been criticised by Peattie (1982), Fiori and Ramirez (1986) and Gilbert and Van der Linden (1987) for failing to recognise that the state is subject to a multiplicity of pressures and, therefore, is often forced to respond in way which, certainly in the short-term, do not serve the interests of the dominant classes. In Fiori and Ramirez's view the state is "always ambiguously and tensely immersed between the immediate interests of capital accumulation and the long-term need of social stability; a state which becomes itself the arena of political dispute and struggle" (1986). They have further argued, in relation to self-help housing policies, that what is important is not that the policies are palliative, or shift the cost of housing onto the poor, but whether they lead to an improvement in people's material conditions and how that improvement is brought about (*ibid*). They would therefore see more scope for NGOs to bring about policy changes that benefit the poor than Burgess or Pradilla.

In Pickvance's (1976) and Goldsmith's (1982) critiques, Burgess' work fails to recognise the conflicts and contradictions which exist within the state, between the different levels of government, and the place of values and individuals in the formulation of policies. Saunders goes further by arguing that urban politics can only be understood in terms of the four competing theories, pluralism, instrumentalism, managerialism and structuralism⁸ and recommends a dualistic perspective which "recognises the theoretical specificity of the different levels (central/local), functions (investment/consumption) and modes of representation (corporate/competitive) of the state" (1982; 49).

Recognition of the contradictory nature of the state, and the multiplicity of pressures to which it is subject, has led some authors to argue that within the existing social framework the possibility exists for "socialist praxis" (Mc Dougall, 1981). Closely associated with this view is the concept of aspiring to progressive results by making use of and continually trying to extend the "room to manoeuvre".

Whilst agreeing with Burgess that there can be no real solution to the housing problem without the transformation of the social order and that NGOs, when acting as catalysts, are unlikely to have

they can contribute to social change. On the latter point Castell's (1977; 1978; 1983) has varied his opinion.

⁸ In Pluralism the representativeness of state institutions is emphasised whilst Instrumentalism stresses the domination of the state by a particular elite or class. Managerialism refers to the influence of those in key positions in the state and Structuralism sees the state as dominated by economic class interests (Saunders, 1982, 29).

much impact on the root causes of the housing problem, it is debilitating to assume that they can play no meaningful role until "after the revolution". NGOs, especially in their role as "enablers" can make a contribution to social change⁹. By understanding the political, economic and social context in which they operate, and deliberately seeking to maximize the room to manoeuvre, it is possible, notwithstanding the dangers of co-option, that they can bring about changes which will lead to an improvement (even if it is small) in the material conditions of the poor and reinforce the pressure for social change being exerted by grassroots organisations. The value of the improvement, of course, depends on how it is brought about (Fiori and Ramirez, 1986) and its short and long-term implications. Much detailed analysis is needed on the exact nature of the policy changes that NGOs can presume to influence and the organisational and political implications of NGOs acting as catalysts on the outcome of the policy changes.

It is clear that Turner's greatest weakness is his failure to recognise the paramount nature of politics as Schaff & Williams argue, whatever the causes of change and the origins of relevant groups, struggles over policy will take place in the political arena, and results will be a matter of political choice" (1982; 52). To see the catalytic role of NGOs as limited by their relation to the other systems and their lack of "public face" instead of by the class structure of society is politically naïve, as is Turner's belief that should an NGO manage to persuade the state to adopt support oriented policies it would redistribute resources directly or indirectly. Such policies would require the state to work against those very interests which it is meant to serve. If the state were to try and improve access to land by increasing its supply for example it would come into conflict with the land owners and other groups, with a vested interest in restricting the supply of land so that it remains a profitable area of investment. It is interesting to note that in Sri Lanka, despite the strong commitment of the state and more particularly the Prime Minister towards support oriented policies, the Urban Housing Sub-Programme of the Million Houses Programme has been far less successful than its Rural Housing Sub-Programme precisely because of the difficulties encountered trying to acquire affordable land (Dasanayake; 1988). In the final instance the state's ability to bring about the above mentioned changes is determined by political will, the nature of the existing structure and relations of housing provision and the political pressures being exerted for change.

What becomes clear is that on NGOs ability to act as a catalyst for policy change cannot be taken for granted and that the political, social and economic ramification of such changes may extend far beyond those which were sought. At the same time that NGOs are trying to win concessions and services from the state, the state is trying to adjust its control, improve its legitimacy and rationalise its own approaches to housing. Paradoxically, those characteristics that Turner identifies as enabling NGOs to play a catalytic role may be their undoing. For example, in repressive countries emphasis on user control may be perceived by governments as a threat to their authority making NGOs vulnerable to repression. Similarly, "small-scale" may mask the powerless nature to NGOs, and "low-cost" may *de facto* mean under financed.

2. NGOs as enablers of people and their organisations

As an "enabler" the two roles ascribed to NGOs are to help local groups develop their own projects

⁹ Refer to the next section for a fuller discussion of this topic.

and programmes and to help them organise themselves so that they can, amongst other things, negotiate on better terms with those who control the resources they need. 'NGOs and the CBOs they serve are essential. Only they can build up the necessary political pressures and only they can successfully balance opposing interests' (Turner; 1988; 173). The reason why NGOs are well placed to play this role is firstly that public participation features strongly in their activities and secondly, that they have the skills, resources, contacts and knowledge which are useful to communities. Turner believes that NGOs should always work with or through CBOs and he sees their involvement with local groups varying between consultation on technical matters to active participation in the building of "self-managing groups".

The use of NGOs as enablers marks a shift from his earlier work and has to be understood in the context of his assertion that the solution to the housing problem in developing countries lies in the devolution¹⁰ of authority down to the "lowest effective level" of responsibility for the management and maintenance of housing. The "lowest effective level" refers to the "smallest social group that can economically support or claim the exclusive use of goods and service" (Wakely; 1987, 122). Implicit in this approach is the "small is beautiful" dictum of E. Schumacher. In "Housing by People" (1976) he saw the users as possessing all the necessary resources, skills and motivation to provide, manage and maintain their own houses, but unable to use them because of the conditions laid down by the heteronomous housing system. Later in "Building Community" (1988), he recognised that all the necessary skills and resources are not available in the local communities, and that NGOs can play an important role in filling the gaps in their resource base. Local autonomy is, however, still implicit, as he argues that NGOs should always seek to minimise the dependence a CBO may have on them.

For Turner the NGOs that see housing as a product to be supplied to people that are excluded by the market or state delivery systems are wrong. The function of NGOs is to use housing as a tool for community building and introducing more effective approaches to housing. He further argues that NGOs that do not concern themselves with enablement are likely to exhibit the same shortcomings as the heteronomous system; they lose their flexibility and establish the same relationship between provider and user as the state. It should also be noted that Turner does not see the role of NGOs as filling the gaps in the state housing delivery system, or substituting for the state. For him the real value of NGOs is in building alternative and sustainable approaches to home and neighbourhood building (1988 ; 16).

Turner's conception of NGOs as "enablers" has merit. There is a growing body of evidence that the "people oriented" participatory strategies adopted by NGOs and particularly the technical and educational support they provide play a valuable role in strengthening CBOs, enabling them to negotiate on better terms with the state and helping them overcome their housing problems and needs. Moser (1986), in her survey of numerous projects funded by the World Bank and UNICEF, found that whilst the state provided projects did not include any element of "enablement" those of the NGOs studied, for example, Fundasal in El Salvador, did. It is also being recognised that NGOs can contribute towards development, and the strengthening of civil society (Kajere; 1987, Sethi; 1983, Frantz; 1987). They provide a platform for people to organise themselves, to discuss their problems

¹⁰ Wakely has made a useful distinction between devolution and decentralisation. Decentralisation refers to the "transfer of responsibility for the implementation of centrally taken decisions (whilst) devolution implies a genuine handing over and dispersal of responsibility by a central authority. This inevitably means a loss of some control over the use of some resources which is generally associated with a loss of power" (1986, 122-123).

and to try and find solutions to them; an opportunity which many people, especially those living in repressive societies, do not have.

The Orangi Pilot Project [OPP] (Maskrey & B. Turner; 1988) provides a useful illustration of some of the above points. The assistance and support provided by the OPP to locally organised groups has not only resulted in 20 000 homes having access to a better sewer system, but has given people the confidence to challenge the undemocratic practices of their leaders and to pressurize local councillors to redistribute resources in their favour. Furthermore, the project has managed to replicate itself, thus : - "OPP no longer needs to motivate people. The demonstration effect has encouraged lanes to organize themselves and to contact OPP, who now concentrate on technical supervision. Relations between the local community and local government have been redefined, along with OPP's scope for future development work" (ibid; 88).

Although the merits of NGO activity are very real there is a tendency to overstress them and not to look critically at what acting as an "enabler" means and the problems, ambiguities and paradoxes that relate to the activities of NGOs at this level. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand the parameters within which they operate knowing that they are not the state, the market, or a political party trying to seize control of the state apparatus.

Firstly, to clarify the issue of participation and enablement it is useful to look at Moser's (1986) distinction between participation as a 'means' and participation as an 'end'. Participation as a means refers to the use of participation to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of projects and programmes, whilst participation as an end includes an element of empowerment/enablement¹¹. Moser (ibid) also raises the possibility of participation as a means moving towards participation as an end. She argues that in examining the complexities of the use of public participation in projects it is necessary to understand the process by which participation as a means can be transformed into participation as an end and more importantly, to identify the consequences of that participation by making explicit the "inherent contradictions between real empowerment and what frequently happens to the people when so empowered, particularly under repressive regimes" (ibid; 5). She cites a Fundasal project as an example of how, as a result of the successful process of empowerment, the community became the object of state repression and harassment.

Similar experiences have been recorded by Skinner with respect to Villa El Salvador in Peru. He argues that if the participatory project is intended as an exercise in 'consciousness raising' it should come as no surprise if that raised consciousness expresses itself in demands to play a greater role in local, or national government decision-making. To many governments this would be a dilemma to be solved by crushing participation before it had reached this stage". Gran (1983) raises the point that there is a very fine line between the need to exert influence over people for the purpose of building their capacity to influence their own lives, and manipulation to serve ones own ends.

Whilst Turner sees both types of participation being used by NGOs he does not spell out what the objective of enablement is, what the obstacles to achieving it are or its consequences. Is the object of

¹¹ What she means by empowerment is not clear. For the purpose of this dissertation empowerment will be understood as comprising of the following three elements. "The growth of critical consciousness, the development of capacity to effectively transform reality and the strengthening of class organisation" (Killian, 1987, 92).

enablement to help small localised groups build and manage their houses and obtain the social and physical infrastructure that they need, or does it extend beyond the local level and localized needs to include political conscientization. Should the groups with which NGOs work form the organisational base for legal or illegal grassroots movements attempting to change the status quo ? What is the balance between social action and political militancy that an NGO needs to establish ? These are all important questions which he fails to address. Notwithstanding the above perhaps his greatest omissions are firstly he does not recognise that the ability of an NGO to enable communities is strongly influenced by the political space that exists for them to do so. Secondly he does not spell out the risks and dangers that NGOs concerned with enabling communities will have to contend with. And lastly he fails to recognise that enablement, regardless of whether it expresses itself politically or not, is perceived by the state and grassroots organisations as a political act and, therefore, has to be treated in political terms.

An other inadequacy of Turner's treatment of participation is that he fails to recognise that some donor agencies are interested in NGOs because they have demonstrated themselves to be more efficient and effective in the provision of housing than the governments of many developing countries, not because they enable people. This view is evident in the following statement made by a member of the World Bank. The "local presence and special commitment to the betterment of the lives of their members makes local NGOs the only practicable - not just the most cost effective - link between large-scale investment and the ... city dweller at whom the investments are directed (Mason; 1985, 39). Nor does Turner recognise that NGOs themselves may only pay lip service to participation in order to obtain funds (Aid Programme Discussion; 1982).

Because Turner tends to conceptualise the world in terms of two opposites, the oppressive hierarchically organised heteronomous system and the "good", consensual and enabling autonomous system, he fails to recognise the political and social forces and pressures operating within and between local groups. Leontidou (1985), Moser (1986) and Ward & Chant (1987) have all highlighted the diversity and heterogeneity of social groups within squatter and other communities and the conflicting interests they represent. These divisions and conflicts may seriously impede the work of NGOs just as the activities of an NGO may have a negative impact on the groups with which they work and the broader community.

Ward and Chant (1987) in their analysis of community leadership in self-help housing have identified a number of sources of conflict which may result from the involvement of external agents, for example, NGOs, in housing projects. Some of the sources of conflict mentioned by them are differences in opinion as to the extent, nature and aims of participation, the priorities for development and differences of opinion as to how costs are to be recovered. With respect to the latter point, NGOs which have to pay back loans may become unpopular rent-collectors. Conflict may also arise as a result of NGOs entering communities without respecting the established channels of communication, acting in a paternalistic manner and setting a pace of development to meet deadlines which is not synchronized with that of the participants. Furthermore, the activities of NGOs may also create divisions in the groups they are working with and between the beneficiaries and their neighbours who do not benefit from their activities (Ward & Chant 1987, Phal 1970). The latter points raise two important questions, who is "enabled"? and whose interests are served ?

In sum one needs to be discerning in the way one treats and understands the role of NGOs as enablers. Although NGOs have in many respects proved effective in enabling individuals and local

groups to meet their housing needs, even the most well intentioned NGOs may impose some negative externalities on the groups with which they work, or find their work hampered by divisions which exist within the groups with which they are working. What Turner fails to recognise is that the ability to enable is determined by the political context in which NGOs operate and that enablement has, in turn, political consequences that ricochet back on those enabled.

3. NGOs as mediators

Turner (1988) argues that because NGOs are detached from the interests of the market and the state they are in a better position to be trusted by those who suffer at the hands of these systems. He further argues that this "third party" status enables them to act as mediators between the people and those who control access to the goods and services they need. Implicit in his work is Berger & Neuhaus' definition of a mediating structure as an institution 'standing between the individual in his private life and the large institutions of public life' (1977; 2) the latter being understood as representative of the welfare state, totalitarianism and socialism. An ambiguity in his work is that, on the one hand, he sees NGOs as above the intrigues and conflicts in society and able to operate as neutral arbiters, and on the other, as closely aligned with CBOs and the "third system".

It should be noted that he does not see NGOs as the only organisations that can act as mediators. He notes that in repressive countries the Church has been very effective in playing this role (1988). And he does not believe that negotiations between the state and CBOs should always be via NGOs. On the contrary he believes that ideally CBOs should be powerful enough to negotiate on their own behalf.

Turner's analysis that the third party status of NGOs makes it possible for them to act as mediators requires further investigation. Does being a third party mean that an NGO is autonomous and apolitical? What does mediation mean?

Although NGOs may enjoy different levels of autonomy they cannot claim to exercise full autonomy. One of the major factors that inhibits their autonomy is access to resources. Most NGOs are dependent on loans or grants from multi-lateral, bi-lateral and international NGOs like Cebemo and Oxfam. In the case of loans especially, conditions attached to these sources of funding can have quite a strong influence on the activities of an NGO, and even where conditions do not apply, NGOs may deliberately tailor their activities to conform with the lending criteria established by these agencies (Schneider, 1988). World Bank loans to NGOs call for a trilateral relationship in which a government has a central role. Since the Bank only lends to or through governments, and because of the conditions laid down by them, - cost-recovery, no subsidy -, they influence the design and implementation of projects (Van der Linden, 1986, Stein, 1988). Although it is common practice for NGOs to try and improve their autonomy by taking loans from different agencies they cannot escape the constraints imposed on their activity. This practice makes the financing of projects very complicated, and if the different sources of funding are not co-ordinated properly they can have a negative impact on the effectiveness of NGOs (Schneider, 1988). Other factors undermining their autonomy are the operation of the market and state controls as the former influences the affordability and availability of the goods and services they need such as building materials and land, and the latter forces their developments to conform with prescribed regulations and standards.

Furthermore, NGOs do not operate in a political vacuum. They operate within national and even international political systems, and are subject to a multiplicity of pressures. The state, may try to use them as a means of deflecting political pressure, multi-lateral agencies may see them as an efficient way of implementing projects, local groups may see them as a means of improving their access to the city's resources and political parties and the private commercial sector may well also try to use NGOs to serve their own ends. As a result an NGO may at one time reflect the interests of the state and at another those of the community.

As development and housing issues are by their very nature political NGOs cannot be apolitical. Those NGOs attempting to redistribute resources in favour of the poor will inevitably come into conflict with local and sometimes national elites and vested interests (Sethi, 1983). As a result even those NGOs trying to be apolitical find themselves deeply immersed in politics. Each NGO has its own vision and rationality. Where this coincides with that of the communities' harmony prevails, but where it does not it can become a political imposition and a source of tension between the NGO and the community.

The third party status of NGOs does not derive from their being autonomous or apolitical. It is not, as Turner has argued, that they are detached from the state, market and community, but rather that they appear to be separate from them. They may at different times and in different ways serve the interests of all of these groups.

Turning to mediation, according to Grindle "a (mediator) does not directly command the resources relevant to an exchange but instead maintains a personal relationship both with the actor who does control the needed goods and with the one who desires to acquire them" (Quoted in Ward, 1987, 90). The function of the mediator is to ensure that both parties (or all the parties in cases where numerous groups are involved) come out of the negotiations happy, although this does not always occur. The value of mediation is that it establishes a new relationship between the people and the state and in so doing opens the spaces for negotiation, especially in situations of extreme conflict. It also makes possible a redistribution of resources in favour of the poor. In Tenancingo, El Salvador, Fundasal and the Church acted as mediators between the state, the army, the revolutionary movement and people displaced from their land as a result of the war. The object of the mediation was for the displaced people to return to the area in which they had lived. The outcome was that they were permitted to return and were able to benefit from the modification, in their favour, of the pre-existing centralised pattern of land ownership. In addition the project opened the way for other displaced people to return to their homes (Urban Planning Implementation, 1988).

A major constraint that an NGO experiences in operating as a mediator between the state and the people is that mediation places no obligation on the powerful to take heed of the aspirations of the relatively powerless. Much depends on what the former has to gain and the amount of pressure being exerted from below. This is a consideration which Turner tends to underplay. As Ward & Chant (1987) have argued the position of a mediator is a difficult one. Should the mediator ask for too much, too fast he/she might antagonise the state, become alienated from it, and possibly also become a victim of repression. Conversely, if the mediator does not manage to win concessions for the community his/her position in the community becomes tenuous.

Two further points need to be made with reference to the role of NGOs as mediators. While Turner sees mediation taking place between the state, the NGO and the people he does not recognise the

need for mediation to occur between the people and the market. Thus he ignores the fact that in the final instance, it is the operation of the market that is denying people access to affordable land and the building materials they need. The second point is that an NGO is not a neutral actor in the mediation process. As mediation in essence involves playing one side off against another it creates opportunities for the mediator to manipulate decisions according to his/her vision. Where a community is weak the mediator may exert a strong influence over the decisions of the community and hence the outcome of the negotiations.

In sum, the roles played by NGOs are far more complex than Turner implies. They are multifaceted, variable in time and space, multi-levelled and full of contradictions and paradoxes. As a result it is not possible to categorize NGOs as instruments of the state or instruments of those seeking change. What also emerges from close analysis is that their ability to perform the roles assigned to them is constrained by political and socio-economic factors operating at a number of levels; within the small groups with which they work, at the national level and even at the international level. Finally, the greatest shortcoming of Turner's analysis of NGOs is that he depoliticises them thus depoliticising their roles.

IV. Analysis of the urban foundation

Having assessed the roles ascribed to NGOs at a theoretical level it is necessary to test how Turner's categories apply to a concrete case, the Urban Foundation (UF), and to identify some of the problems and constraints it has experienced in its work.

1. The context in which the UF emerged

The idea to set up the UF was first mooted in 1976 by the two most prominent representatives of monopoly capital in South Africa, Sir H. Oppenheimer and Dr. A. Rupert. Although the impetus for their setting up the organisation was provided by the 1976 Soweto uprisings, these uprisings were symptomatic of a much deeper crisis to which they felt the need to respond. By the mid-1970's cracks had begun to appear in the structure of domination based on apartheid, and in the 11 years that the UF has been in existence these cracks have widened. To date a new structure of domination has yet to emerge. This has led some authors to argue that South Africa is in an interregnum where "the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (Swilling, 1987).

Some of the factors contributing to the "cracks" and which can be seen to have prompted the UF to involve itself with housing are firstly, the recognition, as a result of the Soweto uprisings, that the subordinate classes were a force to be reckoned with, and that wide ranging reforms, including reforms in the field of housing, were necessary if the status quo was to be maintained. These uprisings drew attention to the poor material conditions under which the majority of South Africans lived. In the Commission of Inquiry following the uprisings, inadequate urban services, housing shortages and overcrowding were identified as major causes of dissatisfaction and sources of political instability.

The second factor was the economic crisis that was developing in the 1970's. During this period it became increasingly apparent that the model of accumulation based on the migrant labour system and controls over the upward mobility of "Black" labour had reached its upper limits. The construction industry was stagnating as a national surplus of "White"¹² housing had developed (Christie, 1987) and there were numerous obstacles to its involvement in the "Black" housing market, some of the most important being the low level of home ownership and the monopoly the state had over the supply of land and housing in the "Black" residential areas¹³. Continued economic expansion was dependent upon the development of a skilled "Black" labour force, increasing productivity and the expansion of the "Black" consumer market, including the housing market (Murray, 1987, Saul & Gelbe, 1986).

Faced with declining profits and escalating strike action, monopoly capital, comprised of the 8 major conglomerates which dominate the economy,¹⁴ and including foreign capital, became increasingly vocal in its criticism of apartheid and the state's high level of participation in the economy. In an attempt to stimulate economic growth it began to call for the adoption of monetarist economic policies. Accompanying this call there was, as Mann (1988) notes, the recognition by big business that, within the South African context, monetarist policies were inadequate on their own and that they had to be complemented in the short-term by greater intervention in particular fields, especially housing and education, in order to ensure the long-term viability of the free enterprise system.

The third factor was the realignment of class forces in the ruling bloc in the late 1970's which opened the way for reform, and for private sector organisations to operate and influence government policy. The class composition of the ruling Nationalist Party, which in 1948 represented an alliance of the Afrikaner bourgeoisie, white workers, fractions of industry, commerce, finance as well as agriculture, had polarised into two camps. The "enlightened" group encompassing big Afrikaner business and some portions of the Defense Force coalesced around a reformist strategy. It advocated growth based on monetarist policies, closer co-operation between the business sector and the state, the relaxation of job reservation and the creation of a "Black" middle class which had a stake in the capitalist order, and was therefore sympathetic to "free enterprise" values. The conservative group, deriving its support from the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie, and the white working class, argued for continued state control over the provision of housing and the urbanisation of "Blacks". They also favoured the retention of job reservation as they feared that their privileged position would be threatened by its removal (ibid & Mann, 1988).

According to Murray (1987) the appointment of P.W. Botha as Prime Minister in 1978 not only confirmed the ascendancy (not hegemony) of the "enlightened" faction but also the consolidation of a new political alliance between it, monopoly capital and the upper echelons of the military establishment. This is evidenced by the following quote from Major General Lloyd. "It would... be

¹² Because of the race based nature of South African society reference will, where appropriate, be made to the different race groups. The term "Black" will be used to refer to all those groups which in terms of the apartheid legislation are not classified "White".

¹³ In 1981 approximately 90 % of the housing for "Africans" and 80 % of the housing for "Coloureds" had been provided by the state (Stevenson, 1981, 88).

¹⁴ These conglomerates include financial, mining, commercial and industrial capital.

wrong for the private sector to leave the entire task [of providing housing] to the government and its various organs. The private sector has to be guided by the government and government departments, on all levels, and the security forces. (quoted in Karon, 1982, 143).

2. Background to the organisation

Against the background of economic crisis and political instability, the objectives that the UF set itself were (a) to improve the quality of life of "Black" urban communities by promoting peaceful structural change especially in the area of housing, education and training and employment, (b) to be a link between these communities and the private (and public) sectors and (c) thereby to contribute to the establishment of a society founded upon justice and the explicit recognition of the dignity and freedom of the individual (UF, 1987a). The most important principles on which its activities are based are that they should contribute to economic growth and be conducted within the existing political and judicial framework.

The UF has always openly admitted that it is "an extension of commerce and industry, expressing the considered opinions of the nation's leading businessmen and industrialists" (UF quoted in Karon, 1982, 10). Its Board of Governors comprises both government supporters and government critics. It also incorporates prominent members of monopoly capital, a few liberal academics and, since 1981 some moderate members of the "Black" community.

In order to finance its activities the UF raises loans from local and international banks and from the various State Funds for housing. Its activities are also funded by the donations of over 1 000 multinational and local private sector concerns (UF, 1987a, 2). Although these donors represent all sectors of the economy a more detailed examination of its donors in 1981 clearly showed the predominance of monopoly capital and this situation is unlikely to have changed. Four percent of its donors contributed 51 % of the money raised from the private sector¹⁵ and approximately 34 % of this money came directly from the Anglo-American Corporation (Karon, 1982, 110). In 1987 this Corporation owned 54 % of the stocks listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (Sechaba, 1987, 31).

The UF operates on a national scale and has regional offices in the four major metropolitan areas. It employs approximately 238 people and its subsidiary housing utility companies employ approximately 322 people (UF; 1987a, 2). A large proportion of the staff are highly qualified professionals. In the past ten years the UF has undertaken 850 projects and programmes and of the funds raised in the private sector priority has been given to housing programmes and the provision of educational facilities.

3. The urban foundation as a catalyst

Initially the UF did not see itself improving "the quality of life" of "Black" South Africans by acting as

¹⁵ These donors are AECL, *Anglo American Corporation, Barclays Bank, *Barlow Rand, *De Beers, *E. Oppenheimer and Son, Rembrandt, S.A. German Chamber of Trade and Industry and the Standard Bank Investment Group (Karon, 1982, 118) [* these are part of the Anglo American Group].

a catalyst. Instead it attempted to do this by engaging in welfare orientated projects in the field of housing, education and a variety of other services. By 1980, however, it realised that the impact of this strategy was insignificant and that "fundamental improvements (were) not possible within South Africa's existing structures, policies and attitudes" (Leatt, 1984, 9). As a result it redirected its activities towards advising on or promoting policy changes. As part of this strategy the organisation identified certain key areas in which policy changes were necessary and in which it was possible, within the existing "room for manoeuvre" to achieve reform. It then focused all its activities on the chosen key area. For example, between 1984-85 it identified urbanisation as a key area in which reform was necessary so it geared the greater part of its research, reports and lobbying to this area. It also ran workshops on this topic for members of the business sector in order to canvass their support for the policy changes it was recommending. In so doing it hoped to strengthen its lobbying power vis à vis the state.

The main focus of the UF's catalytic activities has been to reshape the structure of housing provision in South Africa in a way that will promote social stability and economic growth (Mann; 1988). More specifically it has attempted to "unlock the blockages in the housing market" on a commercially viable basis, without subsidies. This orientation is clearly evident in the following statement made by Hon. J. H. Steyn, the Chief Executive Officer of the UF : - "The UF has been motivated by the need to create a market in housing to expand the role of individuals and the private business sector in the buying, selling and building of houses. We believe that a properly structured housing market is the best method of producing and distributing the social good of housing" (Steyn, 1985, 41).

In terms of its analysis the blockages were apartheid related, poverty related and/or institutional. The apartheid related blockages were seen as relating to the racial segregation of land and housing markets, the migrant labour system and its associated controls over land tenure. The poverty related blockages referred to low-incomes and poor access to credit, whilst the institutional blockages were seen as high building standards, housing subsidies and the conventional housing policies of the state.

The policy changes which have to a greater or lesser extent been influenced by the activities of the UF, have increased the social coverage of resources spent by the state and the private commercial sector on housing, and/or facilitated the commodification¹⁶ or recommodification of housing via the extension of security of tenure to people formerly excluded from it. An example of these changes is the decision by the state to sell off all its rented accommodation at discounted prices. Another is the improvements in the security of tenure of some urban "Africans" made possible by the introduction of first the 99 year-leasehold system, and later, freehold rights and the adjustments made to influx control in 1986. The UF has also been instrumental in persuading the state to adopt self-help housing policies. This was done firstly by demonstrating that self-help housing could work and that the state could still maintain an effective level of control and secondly by showing that it is possible to meet the housing needs of those households earning more than R350 (£75) per month on a market basis. This represents 60 % of the housing need, and contrasts sharply with the R800 (£200) limit that exists in terms of conventional housing (1978b).

As a catalyst the UF has not only attempted to enable the market by modifying government policies

¹⁶ Refer to Burgess (1982; 1983), and Fiori and Ramirez (1986) for discussions about commodification.

and approaches to housing it has also attempted to influence the activities of the private commercial sector. The UF has been instrumental in getting building societies to grant housing loans on the basis of the household's income not just the income of the head of household. It has also sought to demonstrate to private developers that they can profitably move into the "Black" housing market and has kept them informed of cost-effective innovations in the housing field (Ridley, 1987). Another way its activities have influenced the private commercial sector is via the injection of a substantial amount of capital into the housing sector. Since its inception the UF has mobilised a total of R490 million (£123 million) from private sector banks, companies, building societies and public sector institutions, for the provision of housing and infrastructure (UF : 1978a, 2). It has estimated that the R40 million (£10 million) that it used on a roll-over basis to produce serviced stands between 1984 - 1986 led to the further investment of R300 million (£75 million) on these sites, most of which was provided by Building Society Bonds (UF, 1987b, 104).

Whilst the achievements of the UF are fairly impressive and have removed some of the obstacles to the expansion of the market, and improved the access of some "Black" South Africans to housing its catalytic role has been limited in a number of ways. It has not managed to touch the structural factors influencing the operation of the market and people's access to housing like the Group Areas Act (racial residential segregation or meet the housing needs of the poor. The reason for this is that the resolution of these factors depends, in the final instance, on political considerations. The Group Areas Act is one of the pillars of the apartheid state and it has and continues to be used to "divide and rule" the subordinate classes and to control the movement of "Africans" to the "White" urban areas. Other reasons are that the profit orientation of the various actors involved in the provision of housing the oligopolisation of the building materials industry and the low incomes and high levels of unemployment amongst "Black" South Africans, militate against the market being able to meet at least 40 % of the "Black" population's housing needs¹⁷.

Furthermore, as the UF is not subject to the same constraints as the state, and its conception of the reforms needed go beyond those that the state is willing or able to introduce the proposals it has put forward have not always been adopted in the manner it would like. Hence, the minor modifications made to influx control in 1986, instead of the removal of these controls as the UF had proposed. Despite the fact that the reforms introduced by the state have not gone far enough, they have, by and large, not been contrary to the interest of the UF, which has usually heralded their introduction as a "step in the right direction", when, many CBOs have either criticised them for not going far enough, or for being amelioratory and seeking to rationalize the apartheid system.

The catalytic role of the UF has also been limited by tensions and divisions existing within the South African state post 1976, which have meant that reforms introduced by central government have not automatically been implemented. An example of this being the 99 year-leasehold system, where local authorities opposed to this policy made no attempt to implement it.

It is important to note that contrary to Turner's analysis, one of the paradoxes of the UF's role as catalyst is that by stressing the need for housing and other reforms, and in many instances lobbying for changes which are similar to those of the more progressive organisations, like the removal of the Group Areas Act, the UF has not only further politicised housing issues but has also created the

¹⁷ Although comparable figures are not available for "Whites" it is safe to assume, given their relatively more affluent position, that the majority of their housing needs are met by the market.

conditions and the space, for progressive organisations to put forward their more militant demands; demands for universal franchise and the redistribution of land, which go beyond what is considered necessary or desirable by the UF. The policy changes brought about by the UF do not emerge directly out of grassroots needs and priorities and it is questionable to what extent some of them serve the needs of the people, especially the poor. The policy changes are introduced from above and with no consultation with the organisations of the people. Thus, although put forward as solutions to the housing and other needs of the poor and oppressed, the primary objective has been to pressure the state to introduce changes which will ensure political stability and serve the needs of the business community, financial institutions and the like.

The UF activities as a catalyst highlight the limits placed on the activities of NGOs by the political, social and economic context in which they operate. Clearly the catalytic functions of an NGO are not tied to the interests of the system and in practice (give rise to numerous contradictions and ambiguities).

4. Urban foundation as an enabler

The UF's understanding of public participation is largely as a "means" and not an "end". Participation itself is not seen as an important goal and community development programmes designed to build viable organisational structures, improve leadership skills and make people aware of the political, economic and social forces affecting their daily lives, are not part of their project design or implementation. Enablement has by and large been limited to technical enablement related to people's dwelling units; helping people draw house plans, explaining how housing loans work and providing technical advice during the construction process. A less frequently used form of enablement is that designed to create local home building industries by providing practical on site training, educating people about basic administrative procedures and the preparation of tender documents.

Furthermore, whilst the UF, like Turner, recognises that greater economy and user satisfaction can be obtained by the decentralisation and devolution of decision making down to the users, it does not see this process occurring through empowerment at the grassroots level. It has chosen instead to try and bring about these changes in a top-down manner, by trying to influence state policy makers on matters relating to local government and development. The reason being that within the present South African context, empowerment at the grassroots level would, in all likelihood, reinforce those groupings who operate outside the existing political and judicial framework, and are advocating reforms beyond those which the UF supports.

Other factors affecting the way the UF operates as an enabler are its concept of housing, its relationship with the progressive "Black" CBOs and political and social forces, and pressures operating at the project level. The UF's concept of housing is encapsulated in the following statement. "The UF... learned... that housing as a development tool was a luxury [it] could not afford in terms of manpower and time. The UF is in the business of facilitating home-ownership and [will] concentrate on that (UF, 1987b, 64). Faced with the spectre of enormous housing shortages¹⁸ and

¹⁸ The shortage was estimated to be 700 000 units (UF, 1987a).

the social and political problems associated with these shortages, the UF has chosen to concern itself with the number of houses built and the efficiency with which they are built, instead of using housing as a tool for community building. This trend has become increasingly evident since it set up separate housing utility companies¹⁹ in 1984. Today the UF claims to be one of the largest developers of "Black" housing (UF, 1987b) in South Africa and it plans to expand its capacity in this field. This claim leads to the question : - is the UF becoming a surrogate for the state in some parts of the country ? And "is the potential per private

sector involvement in the "Black" housing market more limited than the UF makes it out to be ?

Because the UF's involvement in housing has been perceived by progressive "Black" CBOs as a political intervention it has been regarded with suspicion by them which has sometimes hampered the implementation of its projects. As the Chairman of the UF notes "the suspicion that the real object of the [UF] is not freedom and democracy for South Africa but a new form of apartheid goes very deep... The more radical leaders [are] disposed to think that the activities of the UF are aimed at offering them an inferior substitute for political power and at building up a "Black" middle class in order to facilitate a "White" policy of divide and rule (UF, 1987b, 42). The latter suspicion is not unfounded for the UF has geared a large proportion of its activities at the upper end of the housing market. Approximately, 43 % of its previous and 37 % of its future housing output will be in the form of conventional housing for the relatively affluent households. Distrust of the motives of the UF has also arisen from its close collaboration with unrepresentative Community Councillors, moderate "Black" groupings such as Inkatha and warlords such as Roger Ngcobo in the squatter communities.

Finally, the role of the UF as an enabler has, as its involvement in Crossroads in 1985-1986 demonstrates, been influenced by a range of factors operating at the project level. This project was one of the few UF projects where a concerted attempt was made to work with community groups.

In 1985, 160 000 people (Glover, 1987, 16) lived in Crossroads and were organised into 8 different groups under different leaders. Whilst at times these groups worked together, competing interests and struggles over the political and economic control of the area and various interventions by the state created divisions between and within them.

As the upgrading project was based on the principle that all the residents of the Crossroads area had a right to remain in Crossroads and participate in the upgrading process the UF, for its part, attempted to keep to this principle. One of the obstacles it faced in trying to set this process in motion was that when one of the leaders was detained in 1985 his supporters refused to co-operate with the UF until he was released. Another was that 1985-6 was a period of heightened insurrection in the "African" residential areas.

As the Crossroads area was the locus of much of the resistance the upgrading process was disrupted. The most serious obstacle, however, was presented by one of the squatter leaders, Ngxobongwana, who, feeling that his power and resource base were being threatened by opposing groups in the Crossroads area and by the upgrading process, began deliberately obstructing the upgrading.

¹⁹ A utility company is a non-profit housing organisation which has access to funds from the state but does not rely exclusively on the state for funds.

According to Glover (1987) he denied the UF access to his community, objected to it negotiating with the other leaders when he was the most powerful leader in the Crossroads area, and fed incorrect information to this community. All in all "Ngxobongwana's need to own [the UF] and totally direct [its] operations started undermining [its] ability to perform" (Glover, 1987, 19).

Mounting tensions between what became known as the "Witdoeke", Ngxobongwana's supporters, who had the backing of the state²⁰ and the "Comrades" who had their power base amongst most of the other Crossroads groups culminated in mid-1986 in the destruction of the area controlled by the "comrades". Scores were killed in the process and 70 000 were left homeless. When the state announced that those left homeless would not be allowed to return to the area the UF withdrew from the project on the grounds that this was contrary to the terms on which they had become involved. The state then took over the upgrading process and allocated all the land to Ngxobongwana. This serves to highlight some of the difficulties an NGO can encounter when trying to work with local groups. It also shows how the involvement of the UF far from "building the community" assisted in further dividing it and in so doing helped to herald what has become a new state removal strategy (Cole, 1987).

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the role of the UF as an enabler has been to enable the market, not the people as Turner proposed. Implicit in its strategy of improving people's technical ability is the desire to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their projects. One of the paradoxes is that this implicit intention has been the major factor constraining its ability to enable people in a manner which goes beyond the level of technical skills training and contributes to the undermining of the structural impediments to the expansion of the market.

5. Urban foundation as mediator

The UF has on numerous occasions acted as a mediator between local groups and the various government departments and bodies that control the goods and services they need. It has also acted as a mediator between different groupings within a residential area.

An example of the role of UF as mediator is provided by the 1979 negotiations between the new "enlightened" Minister of Plural Relations, Piet Koornhof, and the Crossroads community regarding the future of the squatter area. Initially the lawyer representing the Crossroads residents acted as mediator between the state and the community, but later this role was assumed by the UF at the request of the community as they thought the UF held some sway over the state and could help them. The community had requested that the area in which they lived be upgraded whilst Koornhof, from the outset made it clear that the only solution he was prepared to consider was the construction of

2 700 houses for "Africans", a partial lifting of the moratorium that had been placed on the construction of "African" houses since 1968. He was, however, not prepared to provide any guarantees as to who was to live in these houses.

Ultimately, the role played by the UF in the mediation exercise was to persuade the Crossroads

²⁰ Refer to J. Cole (1987) for an in-depth discussion as to how this came about.

community to accept Koornhof's proposals, a decision they were later to regret, since Koornhof's "April 1979 Settlement" divided the community between those who could stay in Cape Town and qualify for the houses (those with jobs), and those that did not qualify and were to be repatriated to the "homelands". In terms of Cole's analysis of the situation the April Settlement "in many ways... reflected the ['enlightened'] position on how to deal with influx control in a way that suited both the state and capital and, in the process divided the "African" working class" (1987, 36). It also provides a good example of the farce mediation becomes when the powerful actor is not prepared to negotiate in the real sense of the word and the dangers that community groups face when an external agency act as a mediator.

The mediator exercise that surrounded the upgrading of Crossroads in 1986 was in many respects the converse of the 79 Settlement for here the UF transgressed from its role as mediator into the sphere of politics. By withdrawing from the upgrading process and supporting the call for a judicial inquiry into allegations concerning the role of the police and the "Witdoeke" in the destruction of portions of Crossroads the UF not only came into conflict with the state but also came out in support of the "Comrades". According to an employee of the UF, these actions antagonised the state and following this it adopted an obstructionist attitude towards the UF²¹.

These examples highlight just some of the ambiguities and paradoxes that emerge when an NGO operates as a mediator. They also illustrate how at one time an NGO can serve the interests of the state and at another act in favour of groupings opposed to the state. Furthermore, they show that mediation is "razor-edge politics... the minute you talk to the state... the township (progressive "Black" community based) organisations think you've sold out, and the minute you talk to the township organisations the state thinks you've joined them" (UF, 1987b, 77).

V. Conclusion

This analysis of the UF's activities clearly shows there is a role which Turner has forgotten and which constitutes one of the main functions of the UF; that of enabling the market. The UF has demonstrated that an NGO can intervene in those areas the market cannot reach and within certain limits can try to create the conditions for it to operate again. The changes that the UF in its role as catalyst has tried to introduce in the policy arena were not motivated by the desire to bring about a more just society or to "improve the quality of life of "Black" South Africans", or to "enable people", although they may have had those results, essentially they were designed to remove the constraints which inhibited the development of the market. Similarly implicit in the UF's role as "mediator" and particularly as "enabler" has been the purpose of freeing up the market.

Whilst Turner has explored how NGOs relate to the state and the community and the role they can play as mediator between the two, he has completely overlooked how they relate to the most crucial actor in the housing process, the market. This arises because he places greater emphasis on the use value of housing rather than its exchange value, and because he identifies the roles that NGOs should or could play instead of the roles they actually do play. Also does not adequately examine the problems and constraints NGOs experience when trying to play the roles he has ascribed to them.

²¹ Talk given by C. Glover at the Urban and Regional Planning Department, University of Cape Town shortly after the destruction of Crossroads.

As a result he tends to present a romantic image of NGOs as well-intentioned, unproblematic community builders.

Consequently, Turner has failed to recognise that much of the interest that is currently being expressed in NGOs by the sponsors of low-income housing in developing countries is not that they "enable people", but that they enable the market and that they provide a means of compensating for the negative impact that the structural adjustment policies recently adopted by many developing countries are having on the poor. This point was highlighted in a recent report prepared by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund which states "The Bank is increasing its cooperation with NGOs to address poverty concerns in the context of adjustment. The flexibility, local knowledge, and staff commitment of NGOs often allow them to administer social programmes more efficiently than many official agencies" (Development Committee, 1987, 33). It is further highlighted by the fact that organisations like the World Bank are not interested in participation *per se*, but in how they can use public participation to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the free market economy (Van der Linden, 1986).

From the case study a conflict emerges between deliberate strategies to "enable the market" and deliberate strategies to "enable people" in a way that goes beyond improving their technical ability where empowerment and consciousness raising are the objective. Those NGOs that place high emphasis on empowering people by working closely with grassroots movements and helping them build viable organisations are not concerned with enabling the market but with supporting grassroots struggles and trying to effect a redistribution of resources in favour of the poor.

The case study also confirms that NGOs are not the apolitical organisations that Turner presents them as. Political considerations, whether implicit or explicit, permeate every aspect of these organisations and their activities. The setting up of the UF, for example, was prompted by the political and economic crisis facing the country. Because of political constraints, its activities as a catalyst, have not redressed some of the structural obstacles to unblocking the market like the Group Areas Act. And in trying to implement its projects the UF has had to come to terms with political dynamics operating at the local level.

It is also apparent that NGOs are not an omnipotent force. They operate in a context which is not of their own making, and over which they have very little control. The exact boundaries of what they can and cannot do vary in time and space, and are internally and, more importantly, externally determined. The external constraints are imposed by political, economic and social forces working at the local, national and possibly the international level. The internal constraints relate to both the capacity of the organisation in terms of the volume and type of activities they can engage in, and to the rationality that guides and sets the limits of their action.

The last, and possibly the most important conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that numerous paradoxes and contradictions emerge in the practice of NGOs. At one point in time they may open the space for negotiation and facilitate a redistribution of resources in favour of the poor and, at another, they may open the way for the state to divide a community and weaken its negotiating power. Similarly, an NGO may find itself supporting the interests of the state or be in direct conflict with it. Furthermore, as the UF has shown, an NGO may be set up to serve the interests of the poor but may *de facto* serve the long term interests of the rich.

It is because NGOs cannot clearly be labelled as "instruments of the state" or as "an agent of social change" that the role they can play in the provision of housing in developing countries cannot be dismissed. By recognising the contradictions and paradoxes that emerge in their practice, being vigilant about the negative externalities their actions may impose and by building on their positive attributes and maximizing the "room to manoeuvre" NGO's can make an invaluable contribution towards the improvement of the material conditions of the poor.

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