This article investigates housing allocation politics in the Ikapa townships of Cape Town from 1981 to 1994. It focuses on the ways in which officials and community actors struggled for agency in housing allocation through differently constructed assertions of legitimacy and legality. Complex and contested politicised identities both divided and interlinked ‘community’ and ‘state’, enmeshed in dichotomous categories such as: ‘borners’ (people holding limited residential rights because they were born in the city) and ‘amagoduka’ (people born in rural areas with no rights to urban residence), politicised residents and non-politicised residents, and local officials ambiguously positioned both as agents of the state and as township residents themselves. Through this analysis, we demonstrate the complex ways in which community-driven and state-determined processes shaped housing allocation practices, and the contested politics they produced in New Crossroads specifically and in the Ikapa area more broadly. The competing discourses that developed around the right to allocate houses in New Crossroads illustrate how formal and informal allocation systems were established and transformed over time, their inter-relationships and disjuncture, and the processes and politics they consequently produced. Although the article’s analysis is historical, the housing conflicts and politics investigated resonate with the politics of housing access in South African cities in the contemporary period.

During the apartheid period, efforts to gain access to precious resources, such as housing, in African urban townships in South Africa led to competition between officials in the local state and local community leaders over the rights to allocate and access housing. The struggle to gain agency in resource allocation reflected a broader quest for legitimacy and legality in the highly politicised township environments of that time. In this complex urban landscape, such competition produced a range of evolving identities and relationships in local-state institutions such as Black Local Authorities (BLAs), instituted from 1982, and in township political organisations and among residents, struggling to access homes.

Acknowledging only ‘legal’ African urban dwellers, those qualified to reside in the city under Section 10(1) of the Black (Urban) Areas Act of 1945, BLA housing processes excluded thousands of ‘illegal’ residents who technically had no rights to the city. This division not only perpetuated their illegitimate status, effectively setting them apart from established township dwellers, but also explicitly excluded ‘illegals’ from access to state resources such as housing. Engineered through influx control mechanisms, BLAs’ housing
allocation policy manifested itself spatially in the allocation of houses in state-built townships to ‘insiders’, so-called ‘legal residents’, while ‘outsiders’, so-called ‘illegals’, made do in burgeoning informal settlements on the periphery of major urban areas. At the same time, ‘temporary’, though ‘legal’, hostel dwellers were separately contained within hostel compounds in established townships.

BLA housing allocation policies, and the mix of formal and informal practices, often initiated to engineer community approval, were contested intensely by residents, community and political organisations. To gain agency in housing allocation processes, both state officials and community actors struggled, respectively, to implement policy and to access homes and, in doing so, to assert their legitimacy and legality. Frequently such claims were articulated through the status of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. In this urban landscape, such competition produced a range of relationships and identities between the Council and other tiers of government, between individual local officials and their communities, and among local community groups and residents themselves. Depending on the nature of the particular relationship, a role player could simultaneously be positioned as an ‘insider’ with recognised, legitimate rights and as an ‘outsider’ with no rights, lacking legitimacy.² Many of these identities overlapped and were sometimes interchangeable. For instance, African local officials, while representing the state, were also township residents themselves; and local community groups, while challenging the legitimacy of the apartheid state, also at times co-operated with the local authority in order to compete for access to housing.

In effect, notions of legitimacy and legality shaped the ways in which officials, councillors, activists and residents were positioned as either insiders or outsiders, dependent on the relationships they formed and the identities they adopted. These complex and contested politicised identities both divided and interlinked ‘community’ and ‘state’, enmeshed in dichotomous categories such as: ‘borners’ (people holding limited residential rights because they were born in the city) and ‘amagoduka’ (people born in rural areas with no rights to urban residence); politicised residents and non-politicised residents; and local officials ambiguously positioned as agents of the state and as township residents themselves.

This article examines the contradictory identities adopted in the daily process of contesting and negotiating housing, both formally and informally. These issues are explored in the context of contestation over the allocation of new housing in the Ikapa BLA in Cape Town, an area that included Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga (see Figure 1). We focus in particular on housing allocation politics in New Crossroads, then a new neighbourhood built between 1980 and 1981, and administered under the Ikapa BLA. Allocation processes of new houses in New Crossroads derived from formal policy directives controlled by the Ikapa BLA, but also on allocation processes established in Old Crossroads, the illegal transit camp from which many New Crossroads residents moved. Housing allocation politics in New Crossroads therefore developed in response to struggles in the original Old Crossroads informal settlement that shaped residents’ housing activism and their expectations of entitlement to formal housing,³ as well as in relation to the ways in which BLA policies were implemented in Ikapa. Thereafter, allocation processes became immersed in a broader set of struggles between civics and the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), processes that reflected national and citywide struggles that played out in particular ways in the politics of housing rights in New Crossroads itself.

Through this analysis, we demonstrate the complex ways in which community-driven and state-determined processes shaped housing allocation practices, and the contested politics they produced in New Crossroads itself and in the Ikapa area more broadly. The competing discourses that developed around the right to allocate houses in New Crossroads illustrate how formal and informal allocation systems were established and transformed over time, their inter-relationships and disjuncture, and the processes and politics they consequently produced. In this complex and contested arena, definitions of legitimacy and illegitimacy, insider and outside, and *borner* and *amagoduka* were reinforced and even, at times, became interchangeable, shaped by competing and conflicting identities and relationships that evolved in the New Crossroads context. Although the article’s analysis is historical, the housing conflicts and politics investigated resonate with the competitive and contested context in which residents, community organisations and the state construct notions of legitimacy to negotiate the politics of housing access in South African cities in the contemporary period.

**Black Local Authorities and Housing Allocation Histories**

Our research builds on a large body of work on ‘African’ urban housing that describes apartheid policies relating to urban rights and housing. For instance, Rassool framed the struggle for housing as part of the apartheid state’s strategy to divide and control the...
‘black’ working class. In parallel, Wilkinson\(^6\) described how, after 1948, housing policy was used to implement the Nationalist government’s social development strategy. Analysing specific apartheid policies of separate development, Mabin, and Chaskalson and Duncan, among others, examined how apartheid legislation – such as the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952, and the Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970 – effectively denied African people rights to reside in urban areas by tying access to accommodation to residence rights.\(^7\) In particular, housing rights were linked to Influx Control policies introduced under the 1952 Native (Urban) Areas Act.\(^8\) These policies drastically reduced the rights of Africans to live in or even visit urban areas and limited access to ‘approved’ accommodation, allowing only a minority to qualify for permanent residence.\(^9\) Failure to find accommodation meant endorsement out of an urban area.\(^10\) In consequence, government housing policy divided township dwellers into ‘legal insiders’, with access to state housing, and ‘illegal outsiders’, denied these same rights and access.

Growing discontent within African urban communities after 1976, forced government to concede that new housing was essential to maintain quiescence in the townships and to depoliticise the issue of housing.\(^11\) Open resistance forced the apartheid state to acknowledge the inevitability of African urbanisation and, at the same time, reinforced its commitment to controlling and directing the process.\(^12\) The consequent changes implemented by the state in the administration of urban African housing reflected changing political ideologies, as township administrations juggled strongly centralised systems and nominally ‘independent’ local government control.

An acknowledgement of the necessity for more substantial local government reforms that encompassed fundamental changes in African urban housing policy, the BLA system was introduced in 1982 as a so-called ‘evolutionary process’ to provide a semblance of autonomy for African local authorities over time.\(^13\) The Act converted the previously discredited Community Council system to a structure, albeit drastically under-resourced, that looked similar to the racially segregated white local government system at that time. In this system, townships residents elected councillors for each township ward in black local authority elections.\(^14\) BLAs were given significant formal municipal powers that made them responsible for some of the most unpopular aspects of government policy, such as the collection of rent and the increase of rental charges, as well as the eviction of defaulters and

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\(^9\) Chaskalson and Duncan, ‘Influx Control’.
the allocation of houses.\textsuperscript{15} To a degree, placing the responsibility for these tasks in the hands of local government officials\textsuperscript{16} deflected the blame for contentious government policies away from the central state.

Varying accounts of the BLA administrative era\textsuperscript{17} emphasise its non-viability in the volatile political climate of the mid-1980s to early 1990s. Foremost, the new authority structures reinforced apartheid rule and failed to offer a solution to black political aspirations. Particularly relevant to this analysis, BLAs persisted in maintaining a narrow and exclusionary definition of ‘legal’ residents: those residents who qualified under Section 10(1) of the Urban Areas Act to live in the city. This continued to exclude thousands of ‘illegal’ residents who had no such formal rights. This status effectively set them apart from established township dwellers. BLAs favoured the interests of permanent township dwellers over backyard shack, hostel and informal settlement dwellers.\textsuperscript{18} As Todes and Walker\textsuperscript{19} argue, the concept of ‘qualified’ access to housing stratified urban Africans into the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’, and entrenched artificial divisions between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Consequently, township authorities became the target of community resistance to local administration in those townships that particularly focused on housing-related issues.

Little critical analysis of BLA administration in the Cape Town townships exists in the literature.\textsuperscript{20} Although Elias,\textsuperscript{21} and Mazur and Qangule\textsuperscript{22} compiled extensive demographic housing studies of Cape townships, only Fast’s study\textsuperscript{23} of Nyanga housing administration up to 1990, and Kahanovitz’s\textsuperscript{24} history of the Cape Town Community Council, analyse the BLA era in the Cape townships in any detail. This article adds to this literature in its exploration of the interface between local communities and Ikapa local officials in their daily formal and informal encounters to allocate and access housing in New Crossroads.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\bibitem{22} R.E. Mazur and V.N. Qangule, ‘Household Dynamics and Mobility Amongst Africans in Cape Town’, Report to the Western Cape Community-based Housing Trust, Cape Town, 1995.
\end{thebibliography}
Surprising Liaisons: Contested and Contingent Housing Allocation in Ikapa

The moratorium on the building of houses for Africans within the city made the allocation of existing housing stock a quagmire of opposing interests. The availability of dwellings gradually diminished due to the increasing number of people living in the townships as a result of both a natural increase and migration from other areas.\(^2\) The following discussion, first, contextualises the politics of housing allocation processes in Ikapa in light of the illegitimacy of the system and the rapidly growing demand for housing in the area. To explain how housing allocation processes worked in practice in New Crossroads requires some historical contextualisation, particularly in the history and struggles of Old Crossroads and the ways in which they led to the building of formal housing in New Crossroads, the focus of the second sub-section. Lastly, the article considers the ‘counter’ politics that the allocation of New Crossroads housing to families considered to be ‘amagoduka’, outsiders and illegals, generated both in New Crossroads itself and in broader civic and SANCO politics in the Ikapa area.

The Old Crossroads community’s struggle against the state is key to understanding the housing history of New Crossroads, and influenced the ways in which the New Crossroads community later organised and interacted with local government in the allocation of houses. Old Crossroads was established in response to repressive influx control measures. The ‘illegal’ status of many of Cape Town’s African population, together with the shortage of housing for ‘legal’ residents and the demolition of several other informal settlements by the state, drove thousands of people to establish an informal settlement bordering the Ikapa area. Determined to remain in the city, Old Crossroads residents and organisations forced the apartheid state to negotiate over a period of several years for legal rights to stay in the city. In 1979, after intense conflict, including repeated razing of the Old Crossroads settlement, Minister Koornhof brokered a deal to provide the community with formal houses.\(^2\) Located in the Ikapa area a few kilometres from the original settlement, between Nyanga and Guguletu, the new houses were to be built for the community in three phases, in an area later to be called New Crossroads.

Through the reconstruction of this historical narrative, we argue that Old Crossroads families, all informal dwellers and ‘outsiders’ in the urban context, achieved something quite remarkable in the 1980s in their successful struggle to gain access to formal housing in the newly built neighbourhood of New Crossroads. Through struggle against the official apartheid system and then, somewhat ironically, by working with Ikapa housing officials, they became, relatively speaking, ‘insiders’ within the Ikapa BLA official housing process. At the same time, Ikapa officials with whom they worked, stigmatised in general as ‘outsiders’ and ‘sell-outs’ by the Ikapa communities they administered, received in New Crossroads some community sanction, building at least partial legitimacy for official housing processes.

The analysis draws together archival and interview materials to investigate the implementation of housing allocation policies. The history of housing allocation in Ikapa was pieced together from minuted records of Ikapa Council meetings and agendas as well as official documents, such as letters and policy papers that circulated between the Ikapa local authority, provincial and central government – dense sets of documents that trace the routine

\(^{25}\) Ikapa file 18/7/P.


\(^{27}\) Cole, Crossroads, pp. 1–175.
functioning of the Council. The files of the Housing Allocation Committee, in particular, facilitated a historical understanding of official allocation practice and process. Local Cape newspaper archives shaped a general understanding of the socio-political environment of the period. Subsequent interviews with key informants informed a more nuanced interpretation of the official records and press reports, and illustrated the complex and often contested ways in which policies were implemented in practice.  

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The Black Local Authorities Act of 1982 made new local authorities responsible for the administration of housing under their control, but did not lay down any other specific regulations. Township Superintendents were responsible for allocating houses and maintaining waiting lists. They were also tasked with issuing registered occupiers and lodgers with permit books and maintaining housing files for each legal resident. In Ikapa a new local housing policy was then formulated that identified the need for a Housing Allocation Committee to deal specifically with allocations, and the challenge of negotiating and enforcing official procedures. The committee, launched in 1988, had to compile a housing allocation list, which was submitted to the Council for approval; thereafter it became the official allocation list, to be continuously reviewed and circulated to all Councillors and Ward Committee chairpersons, and also posted in public. The Committee consisted of city and Ikapa officials, including the township superintendents from Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga and the Mayor of Ikapa. The Housing Allocation Committee was thus at the centre of struggles to access in New Crossroads and Ikapa more generally, in practice merging the draconian rigours of state policy with local context and demands.

In many ways, local housing officials faced an impossible task. The retired Director of Housing for the Community Services Division of the Western Cape (a white official who engaged directly with Ikapa housing allocations), for instance, spoke of the frustrations of administering township housing in an era in which policy makers sitting behind their desks in Pretoria failed to understand the realities of life in Ikapa. He explained that:

> In terms of the Bantu Urban Areas Act [and] ... the Black Local Authorities ... that is the way you ran a Black Local Authority, written by the ball-makers in Pretoria who haven’t got the foggiest idea what happens in the inner workings of a Black township, no idea at all. Now how do you impose that on people?  

29 Officials were both local residents classified African and also white, resident in central, segregated white, areas of the City.

28 In some places, for instance in the documentation of the formal allocation processes in Ikapa, the article draws on the archival materials and interview discussions. In contrast, in exploring the informal processes through which allocations were centrally shaped, we draw primarily on qualitative interviews because many informal processes were not documented in official records. Researching this previously unrecorded history of township housing administration required trawling through the archives of the Ikapa Town Council. The records, mostly recorded in Afrikaans, provided a general picture of process and practice. Subsequent interviews were held with five former Ikapa officials, one former provincial administrator, and the three former Ikapa BLA councillors. The materials gathered through these interviews were cross-referenced in interviews with various other key role-players, including: a lawyer who had advised the Council, six New Crossroads residents of various ages, three former New Crossroads community leaders who interacted with the Council in their capacity as members of the New Crossroads Residents’ Committee, two community leaders from Ikapa civic organisations, as well as with an activist who worked with the Old and New Crossroads communities for over 30 years. Collectively, these accounts described a changing landscape in which community activism became increasingly politicised at the local level, and they depicted the divisions between so-called ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ and the shifting political dynamics that framed these categories.

30 Interview with retired Director of Housing for the Community Services Division, Western Cape, 20 May 2005.
The promulgation of new housing legislation in 1988 led to administrative confusion and prompted an urgent request from the Ikapa Town Council to the provincial authority to allow the Council to draft their own by-laws regarding matters of housing, a request that was denied.

In consequence, officials had to implement unrealistic regulations at the grassroots level, constrained by the shortage of housing. One emphasised:

There was a moratorium placed on housing ... there were no state funds made available for housing for blacks. It was the policy that no state funds were made available. You had the dilemma already of overcrowding and natural increase of population. ... [There was] nothing new so you just had a bottle that just kept overflowing because there were more and more people ... hundreds of people who need houses and there is no more housing being built.32

By the early 1980s, the compilation of waiting lists for housing had become a futile exercise according to an Ikapa housing official, later an Ikapa Township Manager, and a township resident himself. He explained: ‘There was a waiting list but no land allocation for development ... [so] they stopped using them. You can also only allocate existing houses to immediate families. [They] must be considered first and then the next person’.33

The acting Control Administration Officer of Housing of the then Cape Town Committee, and thus responsible for overseeing Ikapa housing allocation practices, drafted a report in 1988 that documented allocation practices, and illustrated the dilemma facing housing officials at the time. He argued that:

Due to the number of families occupying one dwelling and site, the dwelling can only be re-allocated to a family already on the site and the waiting lists can seldom be used. Residents gradually realised that it was fruitless reporting to the Superintendents to place their names on the waiting lists or to enquire about the allocation of dwellings and stopped doing so, with the result that the existing lists were outdated ... Superintendents had to be very cautious and had to act correctly in deciding on the future tenancy of dwellings ... In many instances the party who lost made allegations of corruption with fingers pointed at the Superintendents.34

Ikapa housing officials were precariously positioned in this context. Local government officials worked according to a multitude of prescriptive apartheid rules and regulations, reflected in the huge ‘Manual of Bantu Law’ published in 1971.35 Impossible to reconcile and administer housing allocation, he insisted that in consequence, allocation strategy effectively became a case of ‘politics versus reality’.

In practice, a number of local demands infused the Ikapa allocation process. For instance, if houses became available, then in practice preference was generally given by the officials to accommodating families, although official policy gave preference only to male-headed households, with single persons, either male or female, disqualified from housing access altogether. Claims to traditional practices often shaped official negotiation of access in New Crossroads. For example, a retired Director of Housing for the Community Services Division described how difficult it was for local government officials to ‘stick to the book’ when allocating houses because township dwellers generally interpreted their rights to a particular house in terms of ritualised traditions. Such efforts legitimised Council decisions not only in the eyes of local communities, but also those of local African officials.

31 Ikapa file CCT 1/3/1/ letter dated 30/1/89.
32 Interview with retired Director of Housing for the Community Services Division, Western Cape, 20 May 2005.
33 Interview with retired Township Manager of Guguletu, 5 April 2005.
34 Ikapa Housing Allocation File, March 1988, pp. 2–3.
35 Produced by a retired Director of Housing for the Community Services Division, Western Cape, in an interview, to illustrate his point.
Thus, although mandated to implement official government policy, in practice officials
adapted regulations procedurally and substantively to make allocation decisions more
acceptable to township residents. For example, the Committee regularly summoned local
Councillors to mediate housing disputes as well as additional persons or parties who could
further help to resolve the dispute. Housing allocation files reflected the regular presence of a
variety of representatives at meetings on behalf of the applicants, a list that included burial
societies, civic associations, street committees and groups representing the elderly. Moreover
‘cultural’ and pragmatic considerations often formed part of decisions. Street committees, for
instance, became involved in deciding to whom a house should be allocated. A retired
Township Manager of Guguletu for instance, recalled that, although procedurally an oldest
son supposedly was given preference:

You may find that the oldest son may be useless and the youngest son may be the hard
working one; or neither of the sons may be worth it, maybe one of the daughters ... The street
committee will recommend ‘Listen now this girl has been the one who has been looking after the
parents, who has been maintaining the house, and who has been co-operating with the street
committee’ ... Good behaviour! They will recommend and we will accept the recommendation
of the street committee ... Whoever has been co-operative then they will recommend that person
... When there was a controversy they would ask somebody to come in and assist them,
somebody who would know the history of the family to come and give as much input as to how
much does he know about that particular person.36

In the case of death or divorce of registered occupants, although strict regulations
governed the allocation of new housing and transfer of existing stock, in practice traditional
understandings as well as strategic action by residents often circumvented official processes.
The retired Guguletu Township Manager illustrated this point in this way:

The black concept is that children always remain children; even if they are over aged they will
stay there. They will always claim that this is their home ... So if a man’s wife dies, he remarries
and the wife comes to live with that man, and immediately when that man dies these children will
tell the woman ‘Now you have to go. This is our home’. At times they are on good terms and they
can talk it over, but mostly that doesn’t happen. In some cases ... the children will leave when
the stepmother comes in and they will be living elsewhere. Others are maybe married and got
their own house, others may be scattered around living in backyards, but immediately when the
father has died, naturally they will come to bury their father, they will come to Council and start
claiming and saying: ‘This is our home’.37

While housing allocations reflected these local pragmatic and particular concerns, these
processes were also bound up in the specific histories of township struggles, framed
powerfully in the New Crossroads context by practices imported from Old Crossroads.

The Infusion of Community Systems from Old Crossroads into New Crossroads
Housing Allocation

The allocation process developed to allocate the newly built housing in New Crossroads was
unusual for this period. Local Ikapa officials engaged closely with the Old Crossroads
community, particularly its housing committee, to resolve the housing issue.

From the time when families first moved onto land in Old Crossroads until the
declaration of the area as an emergency camp between February 1975 and June 1976,
residents of Old Crossroads developed a well-organised community38 that included a process
that controlled the way in which shacks were located and developed. This system came from old and trusted rural systems that were locally adapted with an ‘urban twist’. An elderly woman from New Crossroads, formerly a member of the Old Crossroads Women’s Committee, explained that the settlement was divided into five sections. Residents in each section elected izibonda, or chairmen, as they were known, and a committee to assist them in their areas. Although independent within his own section, each chairman answered to the Old Crossroads Executive Committee, the overarching authority structure also elected by the residents. New people who arrived at the settlement had to approach one of the chairmen to request permission to settle within his section, and as such he and his committee became responsible for allocating space. In the urban context the function of izibonda was translated from representatives of the chief to agents for the leader of the Executive Committee, at this time the mayor of Old Crossroads, Johnson Ngxobongwana. With the assistance of the izibonda and the Women’s Committee, he drew up waiting lists of Old Crossroads residents wanting to relocate to New Crossroads. In this process, they used numbers painted on shacks during a 1979 Bantu Affairs Administration Board Survey, then intended to enumerate the Crossroads population for the state to decide who would qualify for houses in New Crossroads.

Community leaders submitted these lists to the local Ikapa housing officials who were responsible for the final allocation. An Ikapa housing official, working with the Old Crossroads community at that time, explained that the allocation system that was developed for Old Crossroads differed from official practice in other Cape townships in that Old Crossroads residents were not on the official waiting list. In addition, this process meant that the Old Crossroads community accepted the Bantu Affairs Administration Board survey as the basis for the housing allocation process, in part an acknowledgement of the authority of the state. Although community leaders were given a degree of control over the procedure, they also surrendered some of their independence and traditional systems by submitting to administration by a state structure. Formerly united and defiant, these choices divided the community. While some residents saw it as an opportunity to access formal housing in New Crossroads, others preferred to remain in Old Crossroads, a known environment governed by their own elected leaders.

When the time came for relocation to the new housing and neighbourhood, there was, inevitably, a great sense of insecurity and a lack of faith in the apartheid government’s commitment to broker a fair deal. Most importantly, the proposed housing created new divisions amongst this once united community because the New Crossroads development was unable to accommodate the entire Old Crossroads community. Compilation of the allocation lists by local leaders led to infighting and a constant, shifting realignment of groups that often directly undermined the informal allocation system. Many residents, including lodgers, were ineligible for housing in the initial allocation process as only residents who had lived in Old Crossroads were eligible.

39 Interview with J. Cole, Director of Mandlovu Development Institute, at her office in Cape Town, 20 May 2005.
40 Interview with an elderly member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee and, founding member of the New Crossroads Residents Committee, at her home in New Crossroads, 16 July 2005.
41 Ibid.
42 In some ways, the izibonda may be construed as the forerunners of the street chairmen later established in New Crossroads, their power not grounded upon traditional familiarity alone, but on access to urban resources such as plots and houses.
43 Interview with J. Cole, Director of Mandlovu Development Institute, at her office in Cape Town, 20 May 2005.
44 In 1979 the Bantu Affairs Administration Board (BAAB) conducted a house-to-house survey of Old Crossroads, marking each shack clearly with a number. Subsequent to the survey, many more people moved onto the land, living in unnumbered shacks. The BAAB survey numbers were used by the Old Crossroads leadership to compile the allocation lists for houses in New Crossroads. Thus, an apartheid-driven process underpinned the community allocation of houses process.
Crossroads during the Bantu Affairs Administration Board survey were eligible. Nonetheless, many ‘un-numbered’ residents subsequently appeared on the allocation lists, and at one point several community leaders were arrested for fraud in connection with the lists.\textsuperscript{45} The agency to affect the allocation of houses changed community dynamics as various groups sought to influence and control the process, sometimes to the detriment of others within their community.

\textbf{Contested Terrain: The Politics of Housing Allocation and Eviction in New Crossroads}

The huge backlog in state-built housing in the surrounding townships, where residents had been on the waiting lists for many years, caused fierce resentment of the provision of new houses in New Crossroads to informal dwellers from Old Crossroads. Residents from Ikapa areas argued for their own preferential access to the houses ahead of the Old Crossroads informal dwellers. This section traces the evolving co-operative process of housing allocation in New Crossroads, exploring in particular the political consequences that this collaboration produced in the broader Ikapa area. We trace the ways in which housing allocation in New Crossroads was regulated, first by the newly formed Residents’ Committee, and then by civic and SANCO activists, demonstrating the ways in which the politics of housing allocation became a continuously contested terrain.

\textit{The New Crossroads Residents’ Committee’s Initial Control}

Once moved to New Crossroads, community structures developed that mirrored those in Old Crossroads, combining, in complicated ways, the formal, often locally illegitimate, policies of Ikapa with those generated informally in the community. Soon after the first houses in New Crossroads were occupied, the Residents’ Housing Committee formed, and became part of the formal housing process administered by the Ikapa Council. Street committees replaced the \textit{izibonda} and legitimised the allocation process in the eyes of many of the community. Recognising this, local housing officials endeavoured to continue to work collaboratively with the New Crossroads Residents’ Committee.

Intimidation of Old Crossroads people by Ikapa residents who contested their right to move into the new housing, coupled with the concerns of Old Crossroads residents about the higher rentals for the New Crossroads houses than they were accustomed to paying for their shacks, led to New Crossroads houses standing empty for several months. Eventually, families took occupation because they feared that housing would be allocated instead to people from the surrounding areas.

The process of physically allocating each specific house to an Old Crossroads family was varied in practice. A retired Nyanga Township manager, then involved intimately in housing allocations,\textsuperscript{46} recalled two methods used to allocate homes: families were given houses either (1) in terms of the size required, as there were several different sized houses in New Crossroads or (2) according to personal preference. Some people, he remembered, went to New Crossroads themselves, picked out the house they wanted and then approached the

\textsuperscript{45} Interview with J. Cole, 20 May 2005.
\textsuperscript{46} Interview with a retired Township Manager of Nyanga at his home in Cape Town, 11 May 2005. In the period under discussion in this article, he resided in the Ikapa area.
Council with the plot number and requested it. Thus, he argued, engagement with local authorities occurred even at an individual level. In contrast, an activist recalled that community activists negotiated intensively with the local authority for community members’ access regardless of income so that everybody could afford the move. At the same time, houses were allocated to key people who had played central roles in the Old Crossroads struggle to gain rights to stay in the city and to get this housing.47

In practice, the New Crossroads Residents’ Committee became the interface between the new community and housing officials. Street committees underlay the informal processes of housing administration adopted by the Committee, with each street chairman reporting to the Housing Committee on changes in housing occupancy.48 The Committee compiled allocation lists from the information supplied by the street chairmen, then submitted these to the Council, a process similar to the practice in Old Crossroads.

The involvement of street committees became an important aspect of the official allocation process throughout Ikapa.49 He explained how the housing officials consulted street committees, especially after divorces and the deaths of registered occupiers:

[During] the actual allocation … you will talk to the entire family and they will decide. After they have made their decision you call in the street committee, but you only call in the street committee if there is a dispute between members of the family … we will accept the recommendation of the street committee. Whoever has been co-operative, they will recommend that person.50

In New Crossroads, in particular, the Committee tried to ensure the continued process of accommodating the people from Old Crossroads by controlling the allocation system and the waiting lists for houses in New Crossroads from within the community. The local Ikapa Housing Office in Nyanga worked from their lists and formalised the process. In many senses, the community structures were organised to ensure that Old Crossroads families had exclusive access, resisting the ‘intrusion’ of ‘outsiders’, especially because many Old Crossroads families had not received houses in the new township.51

Ikapa officials were well aware of how fiercely New Crossroads residents protected access to the new housing and that they considered people from other communities as ‘outsiders’. A retired Guguletu Township Manager, for instance, attempted to move into the new housing himself. He recalled, however, advice he was given:

I went to see [a housing official] at Nyanga at that time because I also wanted to be accommodated there [in New Crossroads]. As an official you know, because most of the officials were not on the waiting list, they were given houses since they were working for the council … His advice to me was he can give me a house there, but I will suffer the consequences of that … so he is advising me not to go there.52

Reiterating the defensive nature of the tightly knit New Crossroads community, a retired Ikapa councillor, suggested that: ‘You wouldn’t come to New Crossroads if they know that you don’t belong there’.53 Over time, however, broader national and Ikapa-based political agendas upset the Committee’s localised control over the housing allocation process.

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47 Interview with an elderly member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee and founding member of the New Crossroads Residents Committee, 9 May 2005.
48 Interview with a retired Township Manager of Nyanga, 11 May 2005.
49 Ikapa Housing Allocation Committee, Agenda & Minutes, various.
50 Interview with a retired Guguletu Township Manager, at home in Guguletu, 5 April 2005.
51 Interview with an elderly member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee and founding member of the New Crossroads Residents Committee, 9 May 2005.
52 Interview with a retired Township Manager of Nyanga, 11 May 2005.
53 Interview with a former Ikapa Councillor, at his home in Guguletu, 6 April 2005.

The meteoric rise of a strong civic movement in the Western Cape was a major factor that opened up the housing allocation process in New Crossroads. In the Ikapa area, during the 1985 and 1986 rent boycotts, the ANC-aligned United Democratic Front (UDF) recruited support for the banned political party among aggrieved residents.\(^{54}\) Motivated by the promise of radical political change, many youths joined the resistance movements in the townships, becoming known as ‘comrades’.

An elderly Ikapa resident, and a founding member of the Guguletu Residents’ Association and later the Western Cape Civic Association (WECCA), recalled how local residents at that time began to counter housing evictions by the local council:\(^{55}\)

If the sheriff comes in we tell him in a nice way that he better move out or else, and then he had to because there wasn’t a way of doing that [evictions]. [The eviction officials] were helpless because the force, the comrades were ruling in the townships.

Thus, participation in civic structures provided avenues for this political struggle, particularly in WECCA and later SANCO. In their activist capacity, they challenged the New Crossroad’s internal housing processes, particularly their co-operation with Ikapa officials. Civic activists inserted themselves into the official allocation of New Crossroads houses.

The politics involving civics dealing with residents organising allocations became intricately entwined and intensely contested. Although sharing in a common struggle against the apartheid regime, civic groups found homes in contrasting ideological camps, often competing against each other. In the WECCA case, for instance, a link between the two was forged in 1982 when Johnson Ngxobongwana, the Old Crossroads leader and then also the self-appointed representative of the New Crossroads community, was elected as WECCA’s first chairman. Although never directly part of the process of allocating houses in New Crossroads,\(^{56}\) WECCA – elsewhere in the Ikapa area – kept its own waiting lists and often directed the allocation process on the ground.\(^{57}\) In contrast, the emergence of ANC-aligned civics, many under the direction of the United Democratic Front after 1983, challenged WECCA’s authority as they attempted to unify civic associations in the Western Cape. These tensions played out in New Crossroads. Civic activists sought to gain agency over the allocation process in order to reallocate the New Crossroads houses. At the same time, leadership structures in New Crossroads did not reflect the civics, remaining non-party in their alignment.\(^{58}\) These competing agendas regularly erupted into physical fights over housing.

New Crossroads residents working in neighbourhood structures such as the Housing Committee, and more broadly within the Residents’ Committee, interpreted these challenges as an attempt by civics and the UDF to oust the New Crossroads leadership and to replace it with ANC-aligned supporters, using comrades to evict Committee leaders from their houses. Cole\(^{59}\) described the antics of young comrades in the Ikapa area as they rooted out non-party supporters; for instance, forcing an old lady on one particular occasion to eat the soap powder in

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\(^{55}\) Interview, 8 April 2005.

\(^{56}\) Interview with an elderly member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee and founding member of the New Crossroads Residents Committee, 9 May 2005.

\(^{57}\) Interview with a founding member of WECCA and community leader, at his office in Cape Town, 8 April 2005.

\(^{58}\) Interview with an elderly member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee and founding member of the New Crossroads Residents Committee, 9 May 2005.

\(^{59}\) Cole, Crossroads.
her shopping bag and using other such methods of intimidation. In consequence, some former Old Crossroads residents abandoned their allegiance to the Residents’ Committee, instead joining the new political movements, particularly the Cape Youth Congress. Evicted from their homes by comrades, many others fled the township and threats to their lives. In remembering the clash in the streets of New Crossroads between ‘card carrying’ comrades and other New Crossroads residents, an elderly member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee argued that: ‘It was the comrades . . . they were jealous of us [the way we negotiated housing] . . . they would lock us out and [say] we must go back to [Old] Crossroads . . .’60

At one level, the open battles that erupted in the streets of New Crossroads reflected the housing crisis and ‘insider–outsider’ discourses about rights to access housing. This ‘insider–outsider’ polemic had profound implications for the community organisations formed, the relationships that developed, and the actions of community groups in defence of their positions as ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ in the Ikapa townships. The animosity of the ‘borners’, established ‘city blacks’, towards the ‘amagoduka’, traditional rural migrants subsisting in informal settlements, underlay some of the political agendas of the civic movements.

Established township residents often perceived migrants as different, as traditional rural Xhosa people, as ‘amagoduka’ who were considered out of place in the urban environment where city residents and organisations were politicised. The derogatory attitude towards ‘amagoduka’ may also be understood as a class issue, reflective in ‘borners’ entrenchment in the city and access to relatively better resources. The division of interests between the two groups was further politicised by the omission of informal settlement and hostel dwellers from organising by the early civics.61 This exclusion led to the formation of strong alternative civic groups such as the Western Cape Squatters Association and the Western Cape Hostel Dwellers Association, which represented the interests of these ‘outsiders’, whose grievances and concerns were in many ways different from those of the ‘borners’. Many of the officials interviewed, as established township residents themselves, corroborated the sense that, for township society, ‘amagoduka’ held an inferior status.

These politics and divisions played out in New Crossroads in 1986 in the dissolution of the New Crossroads Residents Committee after the eviction from houses and ejection from the neighbourhood of many of the community leaders who had organised the committee.

A new committee that reflected a politicised and civic-aligned membership was quickly constituted within New Crossroads to replace the old leadership structure.62 Fleeing residents left vacant many houses that were subsequently allocated to ‘outsiders’, residents from the surrounding townships. The new committee made decisions without taking the matter to the Ikapa Council for approval or dispute resolution. They only later approached the Nyanga Housing office with the list of new allocations, requesting that they be registered officially.63 This change in leadership placed the Ikapa housing officials at the local Nyanga housing office in a delicate situation. Officials were initially unsure how to proceed when the new group came forward, claiming to represent the New Crossroads community.64 Suffering from a legitimacy crisis of its own, the Ikapa local authority needed some degree of

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60 Interview with a member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee, 9 May 2005. For an extensive discussion of the consequences of these politics for those who fled New Crossroads, see Benson, Crossroads Continues.
61 Interview with a founding member of WECCA and community leader, 8 April 2005.
62 Quoted from an interview with an ex-Councillor for the New Crossroads area who was born in Old Crossroads and later moved to New Crossroads where he became the chairman of his street committee. He later became a local SANCO official before being appointed in 1995 as councillor for New Crossroads, a position he has since vacated.
63 Interview with a retired Township Manager of Nyanga, 11 May 2005.
64 Ibid.
community buy-in to legitimate their authority over housing matters. Therefore, a meeting was called between the newly reconstituted New Crossroads Residents’ Committee, organised by the ‘comrades’ after the eviction of the original committee members, and the housing office, during which the officials approved the ‘illegal’ allocations in order to avoid houses remaining empty. Officials felt under pressure to acknowledge the allocations, not only for fear of reprisals, such as further destruction of property, but also to sustain some small level of legitimacy. However, in the dynamic political climate of the early 1990s yet another powerful actor, SANCO, later took control of the allocation process in New Crossroads as part of a broader regional political agenda developed after the organisation was formed in 1992.

**SANCO in New Crossroads: Further Politicisation of New Crossroads Housing Allocations**

In the early 1990s, WECCA and the Cape Housing Action Committee were the two biggest civic organisations in the Western Cape. The executive of the Cape Housing Action Committee pressed the UDF to form a national civic body. In consequence, SANCO was established early in 1992, taking advantage of the established street committee system to gain a foothold in urban African communities at grassroots level, so that many street chairmen in the early 1990s became local SANCO representatives. In the Ikapa area, several older informal community structures were severely undermined in this process, losing support to the new national civic organisation. In New Crossroads, older residents feared that SANCO structures would ignore their history, particularly their struggles as Old Crossroads residents and their negotiations for housing in New Crossroads. This fear was compounded by their experiences of evictions, first from Old Crossroads by the apartheid state, and then in the ‘battle of the civics’, which had evicted and demonised leaders in their community. An activist who fought in these struggles recalled her worries about SANCO:

> I would never join SANCO because SANCO is a political structure ... the people of Old Crossroads, we struggled as residents not as political structures so we don’t want to confuse ourselves or involve ourselves with SANCO ... It is SANCO who gave people’s houses to other people ... We don’t want to politicise things because once you politicise things we are going to lose our rights here in New Crossroads.  

From past experience, many residents felt strongly that local committees best addressed their issues and they resented the interference of ‘outsiders’ which, they felt, were embodied by organisations such as SANCO.

In 1993, however, within a year of the establishment of SANCO, the local branch concluded an agreement with the Ikapa Town Council that instituted SANCO in the official process. Consulted on all housing matters in the Ikapa area, SANCO effectively became an integral part of the Ikapa Housing Allocation Committee. A retired Ikapa Township Manager recalled how SANCO became quickly integrated into Council housing administration:

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66 Interview with a founding member of WECCA and a community leader, 8 April 2005; J. Werge, ‘Civic Associations in the Cape Metropolitan Area: The Geography of an Urban Social Movement’ (Honours thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1992).

67 Interview with a founding member of WECCA and a community leader, 8 April 2005.

68 Interview with an elderly member of the Crossroads Women’s Committee, 9 May 2005.
SANCO of New Crossroads requested that any dispute should be directed to them so that they can discuss it and solve it. If it is difficult for them to solve they will refer it to the [Ikapa] office. So even the residents of New Crossroads knew that they must go to the SANCO members ... The SANCO guys you see are street committee leaders, and they are from the upper body, SANCO.69

In such a powerful position, SANCO undermined other organisations, for instance the still existent New Crossroads Residents’ Committee. As part of the Housing Allocation Committee, SANCO had official sanction to intervene in housing disputes. Thereafter, the New Crossroads branch of SANCO held monthly meetings and received reports directly from the street committees. In effect, they took over what had been the New Crossroads Residents’ Committee’s process.70 By 1994, SANCO were central to the Ikapa Town Council’s newly constituted housing allocation process, particularly its newly formed Dispute Resolution Committees, which consisted of housing officials and four members of each section of local SANCO branches71 and which mediated all housing issues in the New Crossroads and Ikapa area.

The Ikapa Town Council, however, soon became concerned about evidence of individual SANCO officials making unilateral housing allocation decisions. A letter from the Ikapa Council to SANCO’s regional office in Cape Town in 1994, for instance, stated:

We have noted that some of these recommendations are made by single SANCO officials without any indication that the relevant executive of the local civic branch had discussed the relevant matter ... In order to overcome any potential for biased decisions which could prejudice some of, or all of the interested parties, it is hereby proposed that your regional office should assist in creating the necessary transparency pertaining to the need for formal letters of recommendations from the various branches of SANCO ... [with] the full consensus of the executive members of each local branch ... with the letter from the relevant street committee of the house under dispute enclosed.72

Indeed, from the time of the emergence of SANCO and their involvement in the Ikapa allocation process many more homes in New Crossroads were allocated to ‘outsiders’.

While the first New Crossroads Residents’ Committee initially played a role in the official allocation process in conjunction with the Ikapa BLA, they were forced by political events to relinquish their position to a politicised group of ‘comrades’, militant young ANC-aligned UDF supporters. A larger SANCO civic structure later built on the successes of the early civic organising, using the same street committee system to entrench and legitimise their agency in the allocation system at the local level.

Conclusion: Contesting Legality and Legitimacy

In the endless debates that pose ‘structure’ against ‘agency’ and ask how much our lives are determined for us and how much by us, we are apt to forget that the balance between the two differs depending on where we stand in relation to social power.73

In this article we have shown how contestation over agency to allocate houses in New Crossroads engendered changing community and official dynamics as various civil and local government groups battled for control over that power, and as residents and officials shifted allegiances to access and direct housing resources, highlighting Bozzoli’s characterisation of the fragile and situated balance between structure and agency in social struggles.

69 Interview with a retired Township Manager of Nyanga, 11 May 2005.
70 Ibid.
71 Archives 7/3/1/102, Agendas, minutes and reports, organisations and institutions: SANCO, 1994.
72 Ibid.
In our unravelling of the complex history of changing allocation practices in New Crossroads under the Ikapa BLA, we have analysed the development of competing discourses around the rights to control the allocation process, interpreting the inter-relationships between formal and informal allocation systems during that time. The research thus demonstrates the ways in which the local state and its housing allocation policies were a site through which these struggles were enacted, highlighting the role of local government in mediating between ‘conflicting ideological and material imperatives’ and the ambivalent and situated positions of local officials tasked with administering according to unrealistic apartheid regulations. We thus demonstrate in the Ikapa and Crossroads contexts, as Fincher argues, that ‘... an ever changing, conflicting set of relations exists between different levels of government and between government and local community members, alliances and groups’, as evident here in the ways in which differences of insiders and outsiders were constructed and used in township struggles to access housing. Notions of legitimacy and illegitimacy and legality and illegality were defined in this dynamic historical context and in these everyday politicised practices.

In many ways this analysis has echoes in contemporary housing allocation politics in the Ikapa area today, where housing remains in critically short supply, waiting lists are still fraught with queue-jumping and unfair practices, and insecurity of tenure undermines the lives of poor families. Cross’s more recent work on informal settlements in the Ikapa area reflects the continued manifestation of the ‘insider’ versus ‘outsider’ polemic.

The challenges of housing delivery, particularly the allocation of the limited supply of low-cost housing, persist. These issues demand politically acceptable waiting lists that manage historical differentiation not only between different race groups but also between historically differentiated categories of urban residents, particularly the rights of squatters in informal settlements in relation to long-term renters and owners, as well as backyarders and those still in hostels. Municipalities in South Africa today face immense difficulties to reconcile equitably historically differentiated residents’ access to housing in order to create legitimate and orderly allocation policies and waiting lists. In the complex urban environment where rights to access housing have historically been contested by various groups, each having their own sense of entitlement, we argue that a historical analysis of these politics is critical to understand contemporary housing politics and the ways in which historical legacies are being recreated in contemporary struggles to access housing. In order to access land and housing, township residents in the Ikapa area today continue to by-pass official processes, and local officials draw on these processes to implement and legitimate policy in spite of the democratisation of local government and its processes in South Africa today. Housing allocation and access in both apartheid and democratic South Africa have been politicised and contested. Thus, we continue to debate formal and informal dwellers’ rights, asserted on narrow and competing notions of legitimacy and legality.

74 Parnell and Mabin, ‘Rethinking Urban South Africa’, p. 46.
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