



# Perceptions of Housing Adequacy

## A case study of the La Rochelle temporary relocation area in Stellenbosch, South Africa

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# **Perspectives of Housing Adequacy:**

## **A case study of the La Rochelle temporary relocation area in Stellenbosch, South Africa**

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# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Acknowledgements</b> .....   | 4  |
| <b>Meet the Team</b> .....  | 5  |
| <b>Abstract</b> .....   | 6  |
| <b>Authorship</b> .....   | 7  |
| <b>Executive Summary</b> .....  | 8  |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....   | 12 |
| <b>Background</b> .....   | 14 |
| A global perspective on the complex dimensions of housing delivery .....  | 14 |
| South Africa’s strategies for addressing housing needs .....  | 15 |
| Challenges of the lengthy and complex housing provision process in South Africa .....   | 17 |
| Challenges of addressing housing obligations in Stellenbosch, Western Cape .....  | 18 |
| <b>Methodology</b> .....  | 10 |
| <b>Life Histories</b> .....   | 25 |
| Sabina .....  | 25 |
| Katriena .....  | 28 |
| Ricardo .....   | 30 |
| Jerome .....  | 32 |
| <b>Findings</b> .....   | 34 |
| The physical parameters that help to outline housing adequacy .....   | 34 |
| A community is a collection of people that see value in each other, not a physical collection of<br>homes within a small vicinity .....                       | 36 |
| A fostered sense of dependency on the municipality has resulted in the shared perspective that in<br>order for housing to be adequate, it must be given ..... | 37 |
| The challenges faced by the municipality creates undesirable outcomes for residents .....   | 38 |
| Non-Government Organizations push beyond municipal limitations to empower communities .....   | 40 |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....   | 42 |
| <b>Reflections</b> .....  | 44 |
| <b>References</b> .....   | 50 |



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# Meet the Team

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# Authorship

This report represents the collaborative work of Jeremy Bedard, Aleye Momodu, Donna Murillo, and Caleb Ralphs. Each member played a crucial role in the completion of this project and all members contributed equally. All pictures found in this report were captured by the team unless denoted otherwise.



(left to right): Jeremy Bedard, Aleye Momodu, Donna Murillo, Caleb Ralphs



# Abstract

South Africa's constitution guarantees the right to housing, yet, providing housing to all citizens is a challenge. Evictions, shack fires, and homelessness require temporary relocation as formal housing options are identified. This project assisted the Stellenbosch Municipality to understand the housing desires of one temporary community, La Rochelle, whose members declined a resettlement offer. Our recommendations were informed through life histories, interviews with housing professionals in government and non-government sectors, and observations of a range of housing strategies. In new housing, residents of La Rochelle desire access to resources that support their autonomy, opportunities to retain their current social networks, and formal support to integrate into a new community.



# Executive Summary

In 1948, the United Nations established the right to adequate living conditions, including the right to adequate housing. Despite this provision, there are estimates of 1.2 billion people worldwide lacking acceptable living conditions (World Resources Institute, 2017). Various approaches have been attempted globally to address the issue of inadequate housing. In South Africa, for example, housing is a guaranteed right cemented in the progressive constitution (South African Government, 1996).

In 1994, the newly elected democratic government of South Africa, led by the African National Congress (ANC), developed the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The RDP aims to address housing needs by providing fully subsidized homes, equipped with electricity, water, and sanitation facilities, to low- or no-income individuals (Corder, 1997; Robins, 2002). Since 1994 about 4 million publicly subsidized homes have been delivered; however, the South African government still has a national housing backlog of about 2.3 million housing units (Ballard and Rubin, 2017). Despite its best efforts, meeting the housing need of every citizen has proven to be unattainable due to factors like population size and land and budgetary restrictions. It would cost the state about 300 billion ZAR (2.2 million USD) to supply the needed housing units (South Africa Financial and Fiscal Commission, 2012).

In order to combat the growing demand for adequate housing, the South African government has adopted various new strategies in addition to the RDP like the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) and the Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP). The UISP focuses on bettering the living conditions of people living in informal settlements by upgrading their homes through the installation of basic services such as water and sanitation (National Upgrading Support Programme, 2015). The IRDP takes a more socially conscious approach and aims to create integrated communities. The government does this by building low-income RDP housing, median-income partially subsidized housing, and high-income non-subsidized rental housing within the same community (The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017). These housing methods were created, in part, to help break up the pockets of poverty created under apartheid era laws.

Similar to the RDP, the IRDP has proven to be a slow and lengthy process with just as many challenges. As an immediate response to the ever-growing housing needs of residents, the South African government created Temporary Relocation Areas (TRAs). TRAs are used as “short-term housing solutions” meant to provide residents with temporary accommodations before moving into more permanent settlements (Budlender et. al, 2017, p. 39). La Rochelle is a TRA in Stellenbosch housing 33 families including evicted farm workers and homeless people. The community has some basic services such as water and sanitation but lacks electricity. The La Rochelle residents recently declined a resettlement offer to another TRA in Mandela City, a neighboring informal settlement that is slowly being formalized, that has the electricity that La Rochelle lacks, in addition to other basic services. The decline of the resettlement offer has raised questions about the adequacy of housing in South Africa and the social implications that accompany it. These questions that focused our research were:





- *What are the shared perspectives of the physical characteristics of adequate housing?*
- *What are the non-physical characteristics that define adequate housing?*
- *What are the socio-economic and political dynamics of Stellenbosch that influence perceptions of adequacy?*
- *What are the challenges of providing adequate housing?*
- *What other housing strategies are being implemented or considered and do these address the failings of existing housing strategies?*

The goal of our project was to document the political, economic, social, and historic factors that inform considerations of adequate housing, drawing on the case of the TRA La Rochelle. In doing so, we focused on the physical and non-physical considerations community members have in their housing and resettlement.

To achieve this objective, we observed other government housing strategies, conducted interviews with housing professionals in government and non-government sectors, and collected and analyzed life histories<sup>1</sup> of four long-term residents of La Rochelle. We visited the communities of Enkanini, Kayamandi, Mountain View, Khayelitsha, Philippi, and Pelican Park, government provided housing strategies. From our observations, we were able to expand our understanding of the complexities that accompany providing adequate housing in South Africa. We were also able to gain a deeper understanding of how La Rochelle fits within the larger puzzle of inadequate housing. Our semi-structured interviews with housing professionals included representatives from non-government organizations including the Development Action Group (DAG), government housing officials from the Western Cape Provincial Government, and Stellenbosch Municipality officials in informal and formal housing divisions. These interviews provided insight into how the municipal and provincial governments understand and address the complexities of housing provisions. The conversations also informed our understanding of the political and economic factors that influence decisions regarding resettlement and permanent housing. The collected life histories from residents offered us meaningful conversations that centered on the residents' housing experiences. In these conversations, we explored the following research questions: *How have the residents come to find themselves in La Rochelle? Why they have decided to remain in La Rochelle?* These conversations helped us gain valuable insight into what housing means to them and what they desired in future housing.

From our life history conversations, we were able to uncover the physical and social housing considerations that made La Rochelle feel like home and what residents desire in their future permanent housing. All La Rochelle residents cited safety as one of their biggest concerns, with most attributing the lack of safety to the absence of electricity within the community. Residents have stated that since there are no streetlights or electricity in the community, it gives vandals the opportunity to terrorize the community. Many residents have offered horrifying stories of being threatened at night and hearing people being sexually assaulted while trying to use the ablution facilities. As a result, the residents want electricity and streetlights in their future housing to ensure a feeling of safety in their own community. The residents in La Rochelle also want space to be able to customize their future homes. They currently have sufficient space in La Rochelle which they have used to fit their unique

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<sup>1</sup> Life or oral histories is a qualitative research method that grants researchers the ability to uncover the life experiences of others through reoccurring conversations (Atkinson, 1998). This method is best used when a researcher is trying to understand how current behaviors have been influenced by past decisions (Atkinson, 1998).



individual needs. Some residents have used this space to create gardens and awnings that they are proud of and would like their future housing to afford them the opportunity to recreate these upgrades. The La Rochelle residents have built a strong communal bond with each other and want the opportunity to preserve these bonds in their future housing offer. One reason residents rejected the offer to Mandela City was because they would have been scattered around the community. The residents rely on each other to complete day-to-day activities and would like to be neighbors in their future housing.

The residents of La Rochelle will like to be integrated in their new community when they move to permanent housing. They want to know who their neighbors are before they move into their formal house. They want to be able to attend events where they will get the chance to meet their new neighbors and learn more about one another. This will help them form social relationships with their new neighbors and feel like they are part of their new community. Community and social relationships are very important to the La Rochelle residents, and it is crucial to them that they get to keep their old relationships and form new ones when they move to their future housing. This also reflects the long-standing racial divisions in South Africa that make integrated living challenging. La Rochelle is primarily comprised of Coloured individuals, who do not feel that life in a primarily Black neighborhood would be easy, without some formal efforts to bring two disparate groups together.

La Rochelle residents have developed an unhealthy dependency on the municipality, largely a result of the municipality's paternalistic approach to housing delivery. The constant resettlement of residents prevents them from autonomously accessing and maintaining education and employment. Being moved, and being uncertain of when a next move will occur, people have had to give up jobs and elect not to make an effort to secure new employment until a permanent residence is obtained.

While we have idealized the desires of the La Rochelle residents in the current temporary and future permanent housing, we recognize that the Stellenbosch Municipality has to work with limited resources in trying to serve Stellenbosch constituents. This has forced the municipality to make decisions that are sometimes undesirable to the residents. Services, like the ablution facilities, remain broken for months at a time, resulting in health problems for residents. However, the 200,000 ZAR (22,000 USD) cost to fix the facilities makes repairing them every time they are destroyed by vandals infeasible. The municipality is also understaffed, which causes inconsistent communication with residents regarding their housing status. This leaves the residents in a state of limbo with little to no information about their future housing plans. Consequently, residents do not know when they will be forced to give up their jobs and social ties because of their forced relocation. This lack of communication makes it fundamentally impossible for residents to plan for their future.

Given the close proximity of housing, the municipality should give residents the ability to select their neighbors. This will help preserve valuable pre-existing relationships. The La Rochelle residents are looking to the municipality to be the vehicle that allows them to build an inclusive environment with their future neighbors. We also recommend that the residents of La Rochelle be moved to an area that has access to nearby resources to meet their individual needs including access to schools, hospitals, and employment. In addition to placing residents in a location that affords them a higher degree of autonomy, the residents of La Rochelle should be given RDP homes with enough space so that they are able to transform their government house into a valued home by adding gardens or outside living spaces. Finally, the residents of La Rochelle want transparency in their current housing process, being regularly informed of the future plans for their permanent resettlement.



The fundamental problem of housing in South Africa is an unhealthy level of dependency on the state. Limited honest communication from the state has created a social disarticulation, the breaking of a societal relationship between two groups of people. The state wants people to resettle without fully understanding the implications for residents, while the residents feel unfairly treated by the municipality. By providing people with formal, permanent housing, as opposed to constant random resettlements, the state can empower residents to develop and retain social networks that can support their independence, and to begin investing in education and employment that will allow them to function without state dependency.



# Introduction

In 1948, the United Nations established the right to adequate living conditions, including adequate housing as one of its provisions, adopting the statement:

*Everyone* has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, *housing* and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control (Article 25.1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, emphasis added).

Most recent estimates indicate that over 1.2 billion people worldwide lack acceptable living conditions (World Resources Institute, 2017). Accessibility to land, politically constructed spatial inequality, and limited acknowledgment of the social characteristics of housing, are some of the reasons why progress on the global housing crisis has been challenging.

Varied approaches have been attempted globally to address the issue of inadequate housing. In South Africa, for example, housing is a guaranteed right cemented in the progressive constitution (South African Government, 1996). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) aims to address housing needs by providing fully subsidized homes, equipped with electricity, water, and sanitation facilities, to low- or no-income individuals (Corder, 1997; Robins, 2002). Since the emergence of RDP, about four million publicly subsidized homes have been delivered (Ballard and Rubin, 2017).

However, this approach is proving slow to meet the significant need in South Africa. Recent estimates indicate that the South African government has a national housing backlog of about 2.3 million housing units (Ballard and Rubin, 2017). The delivery of publicly subsidized homes has “consistently fallen short of the government’s annual target of 300,000 houses per year” (South Africa Financial and Fiscal Commission, 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, the budget allocated to address the housing backlog is not enough to deal with the rising housing demands as it would cost the state about 300 billion ZAR (2.2 million USD) to supply the needed housing units (South Africa Financial and Fiscal Commission, 2012). Furthermore, reports of low levels of satisfaction with RDP housing casts doubt on the adequacy of the housing being delivered. Researchers in Braamfischerville, Soweto found that less than half of surveyed RDP recipients were satisfied with the housing being provided (Moolla et al., 2011).

Such dissatisfaction indicates that in addition to failing to deliver on units, the RDP housing approach, like other global housing efforts, focuses more on the physical commodities of housing. Housing strategies often fail to consider the social dynamics of housing that include the integration of diverse individuals and communities, the preservation of supportive social structures, and the fostering of individual agency (Gerber and Zavisca, 2016). One example of the failure of government housing programs to consider the social dynamics of housing occurred in Moscow, where the Renovation Program to address housing inadequacy tore down existing housing blocks and relocated residents to other housing units (Luhn, 2017). The displacement of residents from their former homes, permanently disrupted

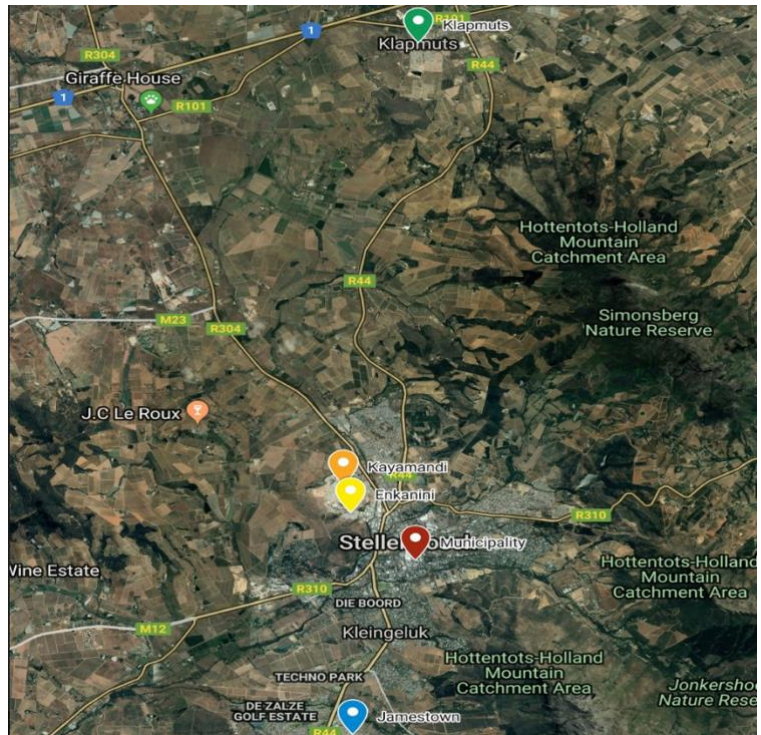


established community dynamics (Tayler, 2017). Similarly, in the United States, in an effort to provide affordable, adequate housing, rental markets in inner cities have been privatized, creating areas that become socially homogeneous, in this case, low-income minority groups in city centers (Belsky, 2006).

The Stellenbosch Municipality (see Figure 1), located in the Western Cape province, is working to address the South African housing crisis by following the national Integrated Residential Plan (IDP) in order to achieve economically and socially integrated human settlements (The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017).

The municipality also implements and manages temporary relocation areas (TRAs) in an attempt to tackle the municipal housing backlog of 20,000 housing units (The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017). La Rochelle (see Figure 2) is one example of a TRA managed by the municipality, with negotiations underway to relocate residents to permanent RDP housing. Some families have resided in La Rochelle for over ten years, waiting for permanent housing to be allocated, others moved into the TRA more recently.

This project aimed to explore negotiations between the Stellenbosch Municipality Informal Settlement and Housing Divisions and the La Rochelle residents regarding their move to permanent RDP housing. Specific questions we aimed to answer included: *Should housing focus primarily on meeting the physical needs of shelter? Should housing consider social issues such as employment and educational opportunities, proximity to established social networks, community, safety, and proximity to resources? How do both contemporary and historical social, economic, and political factors influence the ways in which people relate to housing and engage with the government?*



**Figure 1:** Map outlining the Stellenbosch and Klapmuts area (Google, 2018).



**Figure 2:** The main street that goes through the La Rochelle community.



# Background

## A global perspective on the complex dimensions of housing delivery

The United Nations has built on the initial proclamation of the human right to adequate housing by encompassing the social factors associated with the delivery of a home. In particular, the UN created the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which introduced the idea that there are intangible rights associated with the right to adequate housing (United Nations, 2017). Some of these intangible rights are the right to freely pursue economic, social, and cultural development; the right to work; and, the right to enjoy the highest possible level of physical and mental health (United Nations, 2017). These aspects acknowledge that the right to adequate housing reaches beyond simply providing a citizen with a building that meets a set of predetermined physical requirements.

Countries around the world have adopted different housing policies to account for the social dimension of housing. In particular, the United States uses the right to adequate housing as a vehicle to better the social welfare of communities. With the Charter of Organization of American States, the United States established the right to adequate housing as a measure to eliminate extreme poverty, creating an equitable redistribution of wealth, and allowing citizens to participate in any decisions that affect their development (Organization of American States, 1948). The South African government established the right to accessible, adequate housing as a means of giving every citizen a physical living space (South African Government, 1996). By addressing the physical requirements of housing, additional efforts could be made to target the social aspects of adequate housing. For example, the City of Cape Town adopted a strategy that recognizes the importance of creating housing opportunities that fully integrate access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities (City of Cape Town, 2014). These considerations must be present in order to deliver upon the multidimensional factors of housing.

Throughout the world, governments implement mixed-income housing as a strategy to deliver adequate housing that addresses both physical structures and social considerations. The strategy aims to eliminate poverty pockets by creating mixed-income housing and integrating families of diverse economic and racial backgrounds (Alvarez-Diaz, 2017). The Department of Housing and Urban Development, in the United States, for example, created HOPE VI in 1992 as a response to the pockets of poverty created by previous public housing initiatives (HUD, 2015). HOPE VI replaces distressed public housing projects, occupied exclusively by poor families, with mixed-income housing. This program also provides housing vouchers to enable the original residents to rent apartments in the private market while construction is occurring (Popkin et al., 2004). Similarly, the Renovation Programme in Moscow demolished public housing blocks to create mixed-income housing plots in their poorer communities (Luhn, 2017).

Researchers have argued whether or not the movement of housing beneficiaries to new communities has been beneficial to the socio-economic welfare of communities. Researcher Susan Popkins and colleagues state that the Hope VI strategy in the United States is successful in eradicating poverty pockets, decreasing the social isolation of residents, and increasing personal social capital through the formation of diverse social ties (Popkin et al., 2004). Yet, researchers have also pointed to the difficulties some residences face in preserving past social networks within their newly relocated areas (Clampet-Lundquist,



2007). In Moscow, residents struggled to recreate their previous community dynamics and social relationships when their housing blocks were destroyed under the Renovation Program (Luhn, 2017). Jennifer Barenstein (2016) outlined the social difficulties residences face in relocation when she studied the aftermath following a tsunami in India. In response to the tsunami, the government decided to move shoreline communities hundreds of meters away to temporary housing as a precautionary measure. This relocation left many without work as the strong fishing culture characteristic of the community was no longer intact. Relocation housing efforts can often create a disjuncture in the social relationships and economic livelihoods of its intended beneficiaries.

### **South Africa's strategies for addressing housing needs**

In 1994, the newly elected democratic government of South Africa, led by the African National Congress (ANC), developed the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to outline the needs and strategies for housing provision. Some of the basic services provided under this program included electricity, water and sanitation, and education (Corder, 1997). In addition, the RDP gives low-income citizens (households earning less than 3,500 ZAR per month, equivalent to 248 USD) a fully subsidized home (Landman & Napier, 2010). The physical design of these RDP homes has changed over time as the standards for producing these homes are reinterpreted to cater to individual situations. RDP homes are usually single floor, semi-detached, 30-40 meters square structures (Landman & Napier, 2010). Some more recent renditions, including those lining the N2 highway in Langa and Gugulethu, consist of two-level homes.

However, budgetary constraints and sheer demand has limited the ability of government to adequately address the housing needs of South African citizens, despite a significant effort over the past quarter century. As such, additional strategies have been implemented as temporary measures. The South Africa constitution states that once citizens become eligible for permanent housing, they are often relocated “to a permanent location, ... an existing developed area, ... [or] a temporary settlement area to be relocated again” (South African Human Right Commission, 2016). In 2004, the South African national government created the Emergency Housing Programme (EHP) to address the needs of individuals and communities that were rendered homeless by various emergency situations (Pillay et. al, 2017). These emergency situations include forced eviction from farms due to the inability to perform necessary farming labor, fires that destroy homes built in condensed informal settlements, and general homelessness resulting from rapid population growth and urbanization (Pillay et al., 2017). The EHP was designed to ensure that local municipalities have methods of responding to emergency situations, rather than attributing to the proliferation of overflowing informal settlements (Jonsson, 2015).

The South African government also implements the upgrading of existing informal settlements. In 2004, the Breaking New Ground (BNG) program adopted a twofold approach that included the fast-paced delivery of government-subsidized homes and the upgrading informal settlements (National Upgrading Support Programme, 2015). The BNG program has since been replaced by the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) and the Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP). The former focuses on implementing incremental upgrades overtime to maintain fragile community dynamics. The latter centers on economic integration of diverse communities as an approach towards new sustainable housing development (National Upgrading Support Programme, 2015). The IRDP involves the building of low-income RDP housing, median-income partially subsidized housing, and high-income non-subsidized rental housing within the same community (The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017). Mixed income housing is delivered in order to break down



class barriers and move in the direction of fully-integrated communities. The Stellenbosch municipality adopted this housing approach in the community of Mountain View, where they worked to eliminate informal housing by integrating paid for private homes and publicly provided homes (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

While the IRDP is an ideal strategy theoretically, it is a lengthy process, fraught with complications and challenges. To respond to immediate housing needs, the government often places residents in Temporary Relocation Areas (TRAs). Temporary accommodation for displaced citizens is necessary to comply with the constitutional obligations of local municipalities, and when executed correctly TRAs can have effective outcomes. In the case of transitional housing in the city of Johannesburg, there have been effective methods of compliance with court-ordered solutions to eviction matters. The city first responded to these evictions on a generic basis, but later developed robust methods of handling every specific family situation. The city relocated displaced families to the Ekuthuleni Shelter where residents paid rent based upon their household earnings. This method proved more effective than a flat rate, as families who could not afford the flat rate were still provided with housing and the families that could afford to pay more contributed amounts they could afford. The premise of this approach was to provide evicted residents with an economic opportunity, “transitioning from the dependence on the state” to moving back into private housing (Pillay et al. 2017, p. 41). The opportunity to move into subsequent housing, following transitional accommodations, must be available in order for the idea of temporary housing to be feasible.

Transitional housing is a viable option for the government when permanent housing is unavailable. In addition to emergency response, TRAs are used as “short-term housing solutions” (see Figure 3) meant to provide residents with temporary accommodations before moving into more permanent settlements (Pillay et. al, 2017, p. 39). The location of these temporary accommodations is crucial to the wellbeing and opportunities of the community (National Planning Commission, 2018). TRAs should be near other public infrastructure and services such as transportation, electricity, and education in order to generate economic activity for residents (Pillay et. al, 2017). If these spatial aspects of housing are not considered, economic growth of associated communities may be neglected. TRAs have been developed as Incremental Development Areas (IDAs) to upgrade the level of services provided to communities (City of Cape Town, 2014). IDAs function to better the quality of life in TRAs, rather than abandoning the settlement as a standalone accommodation until permanent housing is available.



**Figure 3:** Some temporary houses, often referred to as Wendy homes, found in the TRA of Jamestown, Mountain View in the Western Cape.





## Challenges of the lengthy and complex housing provision process in South Africa

Despite government efforts to provide housing in a timely fashion within budgetary constraints, the social complexities of housing make the process fraught with challenges. Not only are beneficiaries dissatisfied with the physical aspects of the house, their positioning as beneficiaries makes them unable to pay for services and housing upkeep, individuals with different identities are forced to live in the same neighborhood, temporary residences can appear permanent, and beneficiaries lack agency in the process.

Research indicates a low level of satisfaction with the RDP housing provided. A study conducted in the low-income neighborhood of Braamfischerville, Soweto, by researchers Raesa Moolla, Nico Kotze, and Liz Block (2011), determined that almost half of the 200 people surveyed were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with RDP housing. In addition, RDP recipients often have to relocate from their jobs, thereby hindering income generation and economic opportunity. As a result, “people often sell or rent out their RDP houses bought through the subsidy and move back to squatter or other informal settlements closer to their economic activities” (Goebel, 2007, p. 292). While RDP housing is free, service charges for electricity, water, and refuse removal and the cost of general upkeep make it a challenge for beneficiaries to remain in their homes (Turok et al., 2015). As a result, despite efforts to address their housing needs, even beneficiaries of houses are left inadequately housed.

In addition to not fully recognizing the effects of economic status on the outcomes of formal housing resettlement, government housing efforts also often fail to consider the lasting racial tensions and divisions in South Africa. The land reserved for housing development are most frequently near, or an extension of, the racially divided townships of the apartheid era. Race and class-based divisions date back to the first settlements of Europeans in the Cape, with laws such as the 1883 Public Health Act enacted to limit the mixing of racial groups based on public health and social welfare (Coovadia et al., 2009). These laws became more abundant during the years prior to and during the Apartheid government. For example, the Native Land Act of 1913 denied Black South Africans the right to own land. Under the Group Areas Act (GAA) of 1950, which forced the resettlement of Black, Coloured, and Indian South Africans into designated areas, the government designated townships with poorly serviced homes on the outskirts of major cities (Lanegrn, 2013; de Wet, 1994). Consequently, the citizens who are able to receive permanent housing remain in the segregated spaces once deemed appropriate for them to occupy.

Racial segregation has persisted in the post-apartheid era, as individuals have embodied apartheid era racial identities, further challenging government efforts of integrated housing. In her work in the desegregated township of Delft South, social scientist Sophie Oldfield (2004) found that the different histories of racial, geographical, and economic segregation among the Black and newly resettled Coloured community remained. Delft South began as a predominately Black settlement with many groups of residents relocated from other Black communities. Black residences had already established strong community dynamics when Coloured residents began to move in. While living in Delft South, Coloured community members continued to socialize and send their children to the schools and churches in their former Coloured neighborhoods. Despite the physical proximity of Black and Coloured residences, the day-to-day routines of the two groups “mirror[ed] the persistence of the city’s apartheid segregation in defining the types of spaces in which residents’ social lives take place” (Oldfield, 2004, p. 192).

When race and associated social and economic dynamics are overlooked, the long-term success of newly developed communities is severely jeopardized. Economist Dieter Von



Fintel (2018) suggests that resettling communities without considering social dynamics can intensify pre-existing socioeconomic differences and create spatial inequality both within neighborhoods and between neighboring communities. For example, Joe Slovo Park was constructed to be a new formal residence with “neat rows of brick houses with grassed front lawns” for the residences of the informal settlement of Marconi Beam (Robins, 2002, p. 511). However, urban planners failed to acknowledge the tensions between isiXhosa-speaking Black residents of Joe Slovo Park and Afrikaans-speaking Coloured residents of the nearby middle-income Phoenix housing development. Conflict between the two groups grew to such an extent that a physical wall was built to separate the two, going against the “suburban bliss” public officials sought to achieve (Robins, 2002, p. 513). Moreover, the previous chaotic and disorganized informal living conditions of Marconi Beam quickly overtook the formal housing development. Had urban planners consulted with the community prior to the construction of Joe Slovo Park they might have anticipated the racial conflicts and the “re-informalization” (Robins, 2002, p. 547).

While the lingering effects of colonialism and apartheid on identities and economic status hinder social integration in newly formed government housing settlements, the lack of involvement of beneficiaries in the process of housing resettlement is likely a primary contributor to the dissatisfaction in housing efforts. Program beneficiaries within the housing program have very little control over what type of housing they will receive or where it will be located. The relocation of residents into TRAs, meant to serve as a temporary housing measure, can be a “disempowering experience... that further marginalizes residents and communities,” rather than providing the residents with the feeling of living in a place of dignity (Wilson et al., 2011, p. 2; South African Human Right Commission, 2016). This feeling is largely a response to the lack of agency resulting from living in a TRA. Residents have no idea of when formal housing will become available, where it will be located, or what it will include. Instead of providing temporary relief, TRAs have become a “dumping ground for marginalized people” (Cirolia, 2014; Jonsson, 2015, p. 3). Anthropologist Derick Fay (2012) observed the consequences of this lack of agency in the Hobeni settlement, located in the Eastern Cape Province. Hobeni residents who were moved into a diverse community (Mhlanganisweni) had an easier time integrating than those who were moved into a less diverse settlement (Kunene). The Kunene community had established strong social ties that made many of the new residents feel uncomfortable and under pressure to leave (Fay, 2012). Fay argued that the observed failure to resettle Hobeni residents into formal housing was a consequence of poor urban planning that did not account for the “social and economic differentiation” of the Hobeni population (Fay, 2012, p. 59). The result is that people eventually exercise their own agency by leaving their new formal housing and returning to the informality and flexibility of their former residences.

## **Challenges of addressing housing obligations in Stellenbosch, Western Cape**

The town of Stellenbosch, in the Western Cape Province, comprised of both high affluence and extreme poverty, also struggles in addressing housing demands. The Stellenbosch Municipality currently has a housing shortage of 20,000 units (The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017). However, the income inequality in Stellenbosch (Western Cape Government, 2017) provides a challenge to the municipality in determining land use, as public officials must cater to both low- and high-income groups (see Figure 4). The municipality has made it a goal to build integrated communities with an aim to construct 6,000 more affordable housing units on land near areas of high opportunity and town centers



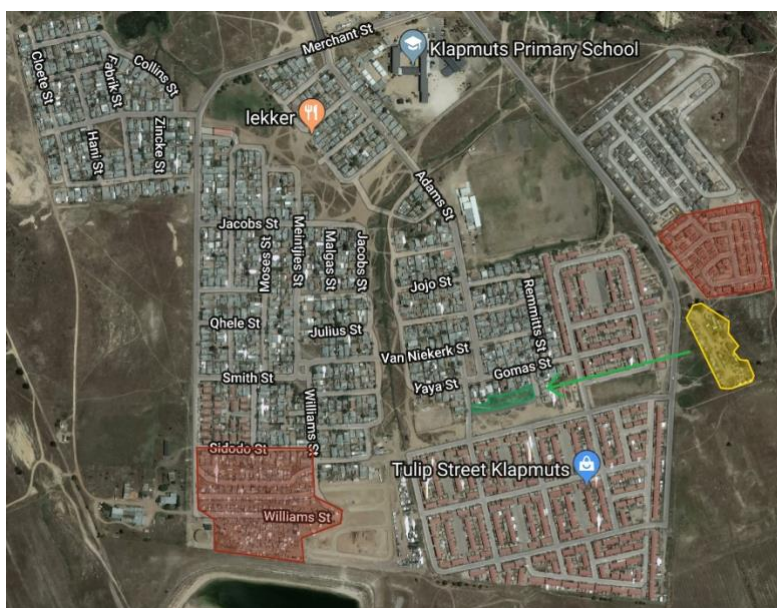
(The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017), in order to stimulate economic growth for low-income residents.

Similar to the rest of the country, the Stellenbosch Municipality also struggles with budgetary constraints when trying to provide enough houses for their residents. A total estimate of 9.5 billion ZAR (652 million USD) is required to give every resident in need a home over the next 10 years (The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017). The municipality recognizes that even in the most ideal fiscal year, the funds required to fix the current housing backlog are unattainable. In trying to allocate land resources for things like agriculture, commercial development, and other sectors of economic growth, it becomes hard to find spaces to build entirely new housing developments. For this reason, the municipality has focused on building these remaining housing units as part, or an extension, of existing settlements (The Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017).

La Rochelle (see Figure 5) is a TRA located within Stellenbosch that has drawn special interest. La Rochelle is comprised of four different groups: evicted farm workers from Lekkerbly, former residents of the Slab Town and Soopieshoogte informal settlements, and original La Rochelle residents waiting on the national housing list. The current living conditions within the community are not ideal as they lack access to electricity and infrastructural lighting. However, services such as communal waste collection and running water are provided by the municipality. The La Rochelle community recently declined a resettlement offer to a TRA with a higher level of basic services. The resettlement offer proposed their move into Mandela City, a densely populated IDA. The decline of the resettlement opportunity raises some questions regarding not only the physical considerations of housing, but also the social implications of housing adequacy in South Africa.



**Figure 4:** Enkanini informal settlement looking over the affluent Stellenbosch Central.



**Figure 5:** A map of Klapmuts with La Rochelle outlined in yellow. The community north of La Rochelle, outlined in Red, is called Frieder Park. The resettlement offer proposed that La Rochelle move to Mandela City, the red outline in the lower left corner. An arrow is drawn from La Rochelle to the space the municipality would like to move residents in their future resettlement, plot outlined in green.

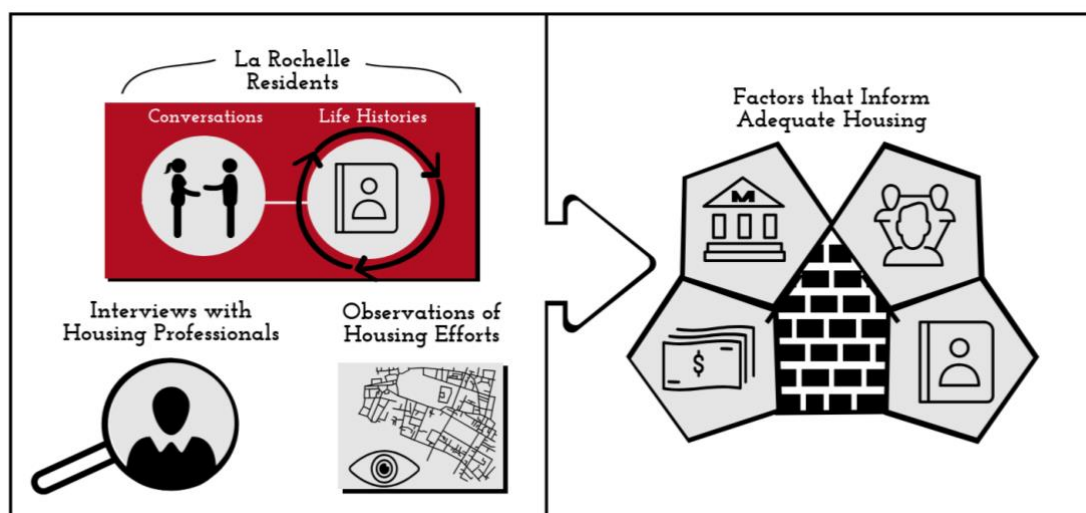


# Methodology

This study aimed to document the political, economic, social, and historical factors that inform considerations of adequate housing, drawing on the case of the temporary relocation area La Rochelle, located in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The following research questions guided our approach:

- What are the shared perspectives of the physical characteristics of adequate housing?
- What are the non-physical characteristics that define adequate housing?
- What are the socio-economic and political dynamics of Stellenbosch that influence perceptions of adequacy?
- What are the challenges of providing adequate housing?
- What other housing strategies are being implemented or considered and do these address the failings of existing housing strategies?

In evaluating the issue of adequacy in public housing delivery, we focused on the La Rochelle community within the Stellenbosch municipality. In order to understand the complex dynamics influencing perceptions of housing adequacy, we conducted life histories with La Rochelle residents. These conversations helped us understand their experiences with housing and the state. We conducted interviews with professionals in the field of housing provision, both government and non-government entities. These methods were implemented to obtain a deeper understanding of the complex housing issues within South Africa, and, in particular, how they relate to housing provisions for the La Rochelle community. Finally, we visited other communities in the Western Cape where government housing strategies are being implemented. An overview of all the methods is offered in Figure 6.



**Figure 6:** The chronological layout of our methodology, beginning with interviews with housing professionals, followed by initial conversations with La Rochelle residents that then led into the life history engagements.

Throughout, observations of other housing efforts were utilized to inform our conversations with both the residents and housing professionals. All methods were implemented in order to achieve the goal of determining factors that inform adequate housing.



## *Semi-structured interviews with housing professionals*

Semi-structured interviews with housing professionals in the field of housing delivery gave us insight into how the municipal and provincial governments understand and address the complexities of housing provisions. These interviews were conducted with ten representatives from relevant non-government organizations (NGOs) including Development Action Group (DAG) and housing officials from the Western Cape Provincial Government and the Stellenbosch municipality (see Figure 7 and 8). The responses from these interviews helped refine our foundational understanding of the specific housing situation within La Rochelle and exposed themes to explore further. The conversations also informed us of the political and economic factors that influence decisions regarding resettlement and permanent housing. Speaking to staff in organizations outside of government, such as DAG, informed us of how NGOs interact with communities and the unique space they occupy in assisting the state in adequate housing delivery. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for deviation from scripted interview questions, and the pursuit of topics raised by the interviewee (Crabtree and DiCicco-Bloom, 2006).

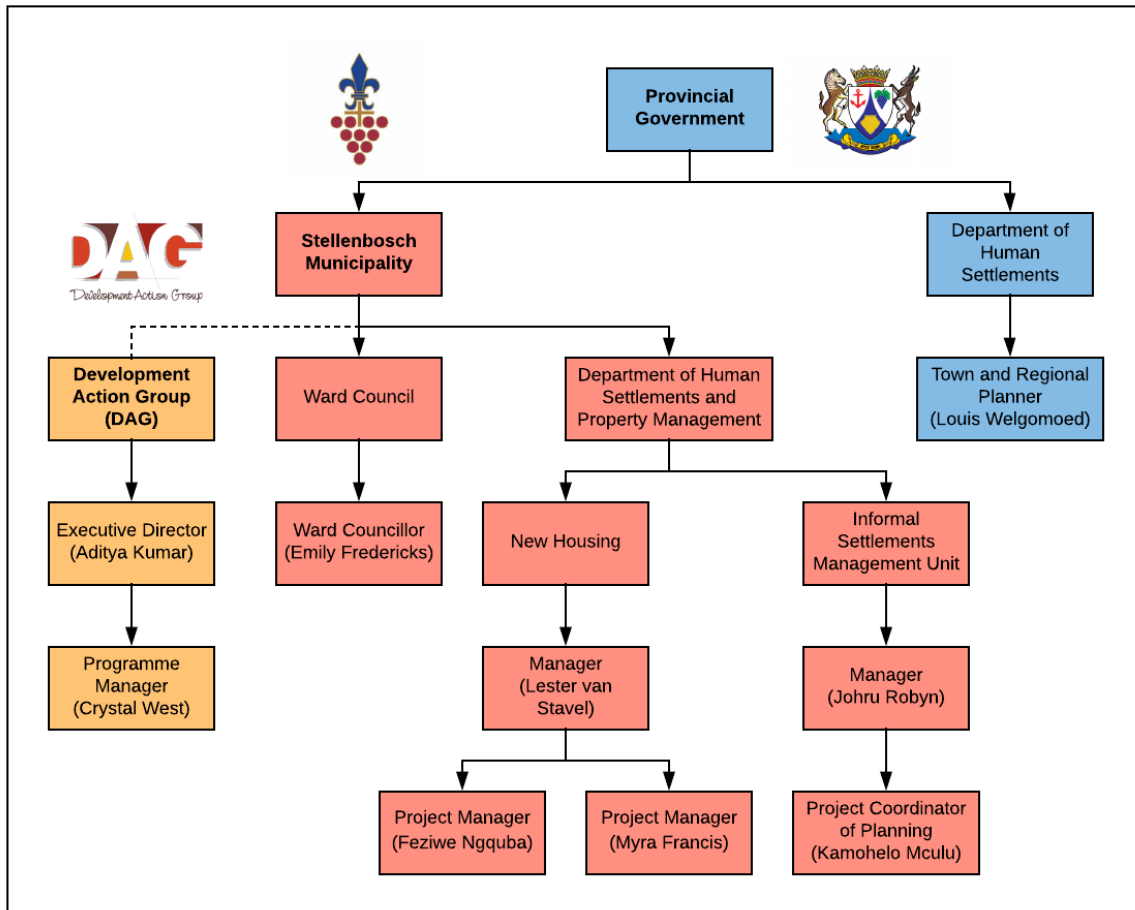


**Figure 7:** Interviewing our sponsor, Kamohelo Mculu, Project Coordinator of Planning in the Informal Settlements Department of the Stellenbosch Municipality.

Interviews were audio-recorded (when permission was granted) to ensure that we captured all pertinent information. During our interviews, we took handwritten notes, which we then compiled into a single word document. Our audio recordings were transcribed and combined with our notes that were then categorized into the different discussion topics that commonly appeared in all our interviews with housing professionals.

This process was continued with every interview until we felt that we had reached a level of saturation with the information being provided. As we approached this point of saturation, we cross-referenced our interviews with housing professionals with our conversations with La Rochelle residents. Through these comparisons, and supplemental correspondence with our advisors, we were able to identify recurring themes. These themes were used as topics of interest that we further investigated throughout our subsequent interviews. In addition, everyone interviewed was asked questions specifically related to their area of focus. We did not adopt a standardized script, choosing instead to have our themes guide our interviews.





**Figure 8:** The interviewed NGO staff at DAG and the government officials with their position within the hierarchy of the Western Cape Government. The dotted line represents a working relationship between the government and the NGO.

## La Rochelle community residents

We were formally introduced to the La Rochelle community via our contacts within the Stellenbosch municipality. During this initial meeting, we explained our research and our intentions, as well as our anticipated interactions with the residents – to engage with us in conversations about their housing concerns and, to a greater extent, their lives throughout the housing provision process. Following our formal introduction, we engaged in initial greetings and informal conversations with individuals who appeared interested in spending more time speaking with us. In these informal conversations we made it a priority to emphasize our role as student researchers there to listen to their rich histories, with a particular focus on housing, and not workers contracted by the Stellenbosch Municipality to deliver on their housing needs.

## Life histories

Life or oral histories is a qualitative research method that grants researchers the ability to uncover the life experiences of others through reoccurring conversations (Atkinson, 1998). This method is best used when a researcher is trying to understand how current behaviors have been influenced by past decisions (Atkinson, 1998). The utilization of life histories allows a researcher to gain a higher level of quality in their recorded data, since researcher and participant can relate to each other over some of the shared experiences (Freedman et. al,



1988). The data being provided has no restraints or guidelines, meaning that for more detailed responses, the participant can go as in-depth about an experience as they desire (Freedman et al, 1988). This freedom grants the researcher the ability to fully comprehend everything the participant says, meaning that they can further explore any story that they feel would be pertinent towards their research.

We chose life histories as a method because it provided us with insight about what housing means to the La Rochelle residents. These conversations revealed past housing experiences, how the residents came to find themselves in La Rochelle, why they have decided to stay in La Rochelle, their sentiment towards future resettlement, and their unique perspectives on adequate housing. The life history participants were selected through initial convenience sampling, where we engaged with all community members who showed interest, followed by respondent-driven sampling in which the Stellenbosch Municipality as well as residents suggested particular individuals to talk to.

Prior to engaging in any conversation, we ensured that the participant understood that if he/she/they were uncomfortable at any point, there was no obligation to answer or continue. We continued to remind the residents of this as our conversations proceeded. Each life history engagement lasted about 30 minutes to an hour. We would visit La Rochelle and have these conversations at least three times per week.

The conversations consisted of two team members, both taking note of anything significant uncovered during the conversations. The notes taken for each resident were then compiled into separate word documents, one-word document per community member, as a means of organizing the information provided. A voice recorder was used to capture the conversation (if permission was obtained). These recordings were transcribed and added to our notes. Most notes were taken following the conversation so as not to distract the person talking. These notes and transcribed conversations were then categorized into the different themes. This process occurred after each conversation, granting us the opportunity to return to individuals if something was unclear or if a discussion topic emerged in one conversation that we wanted to explore further. The themes uncovered through our life histories were cross-referenced with our findings from our semi-structured interviews with housing professionals. Through these comparisons, and supplemental correspondence with our advisors, we were able to identify recurring themes. These themes helped to loosely guide our engagements with residents, while still preserving the comfortable and conversational nature of life histories. In implementing life histories, we were able to reflect upon how their life histories may inform their desires in housing.

## Observations of other government housing strategies

Observations of housing settlements that stemmed beyond just the La Rochelle community helped to expand our understanding of the complex housing crisis, and, more specifically, how the community fits within the larger puzzle of inadequate housing. We observed the housing settlement areas of Enkanini, Kayamandi (see Figure 9), Mountain View, Khayelitsha, Philippi, and Pelican Park (see Figure 10). These areas were selected as they offered a range of different housing settlement approaches including unchanged



**Figure 9:** A TRA in Kayamandi, Stellenbosch.



informal housing settlements, TRAs, and formal integrated housing settlements. In these communities, we spoke to a convenience sample of community members, community leaders, and other housing professionals. By speaking with people within the communities we were able to identify diverse opinions regarding the experience of the housing strategy. Municipal officials and other housing professionals offered insights on rationale and logistics related to the approach. Our conversations and observations taken of the various housing efforts in these communities helped to inform our understanding of the housing situation in La Rochelle, as well as guide our interviews with housing professionals.

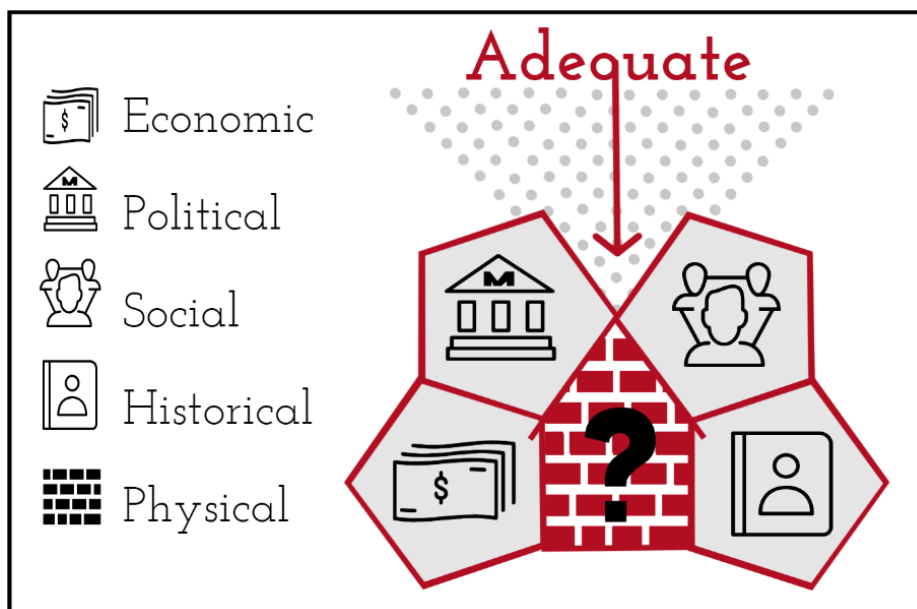


**Figure 10:** Some two-story RDP homes in Pelican Park in the Western Cape.

Within these communities we took handwritten notes, which were later transcribed into a word document. Overall, the information acquired from the visits to other human settlements was used to inform our understanding of housing delivery in South Africa and guide our life history engagements in La Rochelle.

### Understanding inadequate housing

Through the previously described methods, we set out to develop an understanding of the major components contributing to the issue of inadequate housing in La Rochelle and, to a greater extent, South Africa. We accomplished this by evaluating the physical and non-physical characteristics of housing (Figure 11) through our interactions with the La Rochelle community, the Stellenbosch Municipality, housing professionals, and further supplemental research.



**Figure 11:** The factors being considered in evaluating the issue of inadequate housing. These include the economic, political, historical, and physical considerations of housing. Through our methods, we made it a point address and understand these components in order to answer our research questions.





# Life Histories

## Sabina

Sabina grew up on a farm right outside of Stellenbosch. Since she was one of the oldest out of nine children, she had to work with her older brother to help provide for her family. When Sabina was eight years old, her parents signed a contract with a White family that lived on a nearby farm. The contract stated that she was to work for the family for ten years, earning .50 ZAR a month. This meant that Sabina only got to see her parents once a year, when her employer delivered the money to her parents. While Sabina lived on the farm, she was forced to sleep under the kitchen table. Sabina's family was so poor that her parents could not afford to buy her or her siblings' shoes. Her father had to make shoes by hand out of rubber from tires and scrap textile.



When Sabina was 16, she got a vacation to visit her parents for a month. When she got home, she ran away because she didn't want to return to the farm at the end of the month. Her mom ended up finding her and convinced her to finish the contract with the farm family. When Sabina was nineteen, she was "set free" from the binding contract. Sabina then moved to Stellenbosch to work in the kitchen of another white family's home. This was a much more dignified job for Sabina because she was given her own room and "free time to do what [she] wanted." During her time in Stellenbosch, there was a police-enforced apartheid-based curfew on non-Whites; they could not be outside past 9:00pm. According to Sabina, this time was much safer than it is now because the "young people... [were] off the streets... there was no violence." In Sabina's eyes, "the apartheid time was much better" than life for her today.

Between the ages of 19 and 37, Sabina married and had 12 children, four of which are still alive. For most of this time, Sabina lived apart from her children because of the amount of time her work occupied. When she was 37, she moved to Woodstock, Cape Town to work in a factory. This job was short-lived because she was advised by her doctor to leave due to the risks the work imposed to her health. Afterwards, Sabina moved back to Stellenbosch where she got a job in the butcher department of Shoprite (grocery store). This is when she met Donvin, another La Rochelle resident, who worked in the bakery department. In the eighties Sabina received a house in "The Point" because her son worked for the municipality, Sabina's children lived with her in this house. Her older son, whose name the house was listed under, later moved away to work in Johannesburg. Consequently, Sabina was evicted by the municipality in 1993 and relocated to an area of Cape Town known locally as "the flats" for two years. Sabina was evicted from her home in the Cape Flats when she went on holiday to Namibia. She came back to South



Africa to see that the municipality had kicked her children out of their house because there was a “letter of resign[ation]” alleging that she was giving up ownership of the home. Municipality officials told her she could refute the eviction with the police, but they would not accompany her to the police station. Refuting the eviction proved to be very difficult as Sabina was never taught how to read or write. Consequently, Sabina lived on the streets of the Cape Flats.

Sabina moved into a house formally occupied by her daughter in Slab Town, following her daughter’s death. Sabina lived in this house with her sisters and sisters’ children. At this point, she kicked her husband out of the house because he was an alcoholic and was toxic for the family. From that point on, Sabina had to raise her children on her own, without anyone else to depend on. Sabina tried very hard to keep the children in school. She wanted them to have a better life than she did, a life with the education she was never able to afford. In 1993, Sabina was evicted from the house. Her son, whose name had been on the house was killed in a car accident, and Sabina had no claim on the property. The municipality did not provide any alternative living accommodations for her or her family.

This eviction forced Sabina to live in plastic sheets with her children until a woman gave Sabina space in her home in Kayamandi. The woman later asked her to leave when the opportunity arose for another living accommodation. Sabina then moved back to Slab Town where she built a house with the help of other residents in the neighborhood. According to Sabina, Slab Town possessed a strong sense of community. On Sundays, everyone would come together for dinner, with nobody by themselves in their homes. The community helped her build a house when she was in need, a home with multiple bedrooms and a kitchen. Although the sense of community was strong, there was a large gang presence in Slab Town, which contributed to high levels of violence. When the violence became too much, the municipality relocated four families to La Rochelle. This resettlement came with the promise of formal housing. However, today Sabina and the other Slab Town residents live in temporary wooden bungalows, referred to as Wendy houses, without any electricity.

Sabina has now lived in her bungalow in La Rochelle since April 2017 with her three grandchildren - Rihanno, Sabrina, and Moné - and her late daughter’s husband. Sabina’s bungalow is 3 x 6m and is split into three rooms using pieces of cloth. Sabina and her granddaughter live on one side, the two male grandchildren live on the other side. Although her house is small, Sabina is content with the size because she has the space to build a yard with a garden. In her yard, Sabina has constructed an awning that creates an outdoor space complete with table and chairs.

Sabina worries about the safety of La Rochelle. Sabina has fenced in her yard and does not leave any valuables outside because of fear of robbery. Sabina is also scared of using the toilets at night because that would mean walking in the pitch blackness of the dark. Sabina says that she is an old woman that can’t run from the young men who cause violence. According to Sabina, the darkness of the community at night is the main reason for the lack of safety in La Rochelle. There are no lights in La Rochelle as there is no electricity in the community, and all of the surrounding street lights are broken.

Sabina has five dogs that she keeps for protection. She takes one or two dogs with her wherever she goes in Klapmuts. Earlier this year, when her son was walking down the street with one of the dogs to the train station, a group of men grabbed the dog and gorged its eye out. Sabina always sits outside every day, looking down that same street, waiting for her grandchildren to return from school. Sabina says that her grandchildren are her top priority. She lives on a 1,700 ZAR pension and supports the grandchildren on her own. Sabina pays 22.50 ZAR every week day to get Rihanno to school, totaling to 450 ZAR a month. This means that 26% of her pension is just towards getting one of her grandchildren to school. On



top of that, her grandchildren have to leave for school at 4:30am because the nearby Klapmuts primary school has reached maximum capacity and their school is 25 kilometers away. Rihanno, on his walk to school, has been chased home and robbed multiple times.

Sabina urgently wants a new home. In her eyes, the living conditions in La Rochelle are horrible for children. According to Sabina, vandals came from Frieder Park to break the waste pipes in the toilets. Despite the many complaints she has filed with the municipality, no one from engineering services has come to fix it. As a result, Sabina has been forced to live next to the streams of filth that line the community. Sabina attributes this as the main reason behind the development of her lung and kidney infections.

In her future resettlement, Sabina wants cleaner living conditions and proper lighting. Sabina would be content with a home the size of her current bungalow (3 by 6 meters), as long as it was a formal RDP house with separate rooms. The ability to make additions to her home is also very important to Sabina. She would like to have the space to entertain in her yard and maintain a nice garden in her future housing. Sabina would like for her permanent home to be fenced in, and for her family to have their own toilet, attached or within their home. Sabina would be satisfied with sharing a plot with her friends in La Rochelle, just as long as she had space for her own family. Sabina would like the resettlement offer to have all these provisions in writing. Sabina wants the municipality representatives to allow her to see her new home before they give her the key, something that was not a part of the previous resettlement offer to Mandela City. Sabina wants this house as soon as possible because she fears that her children will not get what they deserve before she passes away.



# Katriena

Katriena was born in 1970 in Wolseley, a small town in the Western Cape Province, where she lived with her grandmother, cousin, and her aunt and her husband. They lived in a two-bedroom stone RDP home with a kitchen and outside toilet until Katrina was seventeen. Katriena reflected on her rocky relationship with her parents by noting that her mother never



wanted children, and her father married a different woman when Katriena's mother got pregnant. Growing up, Katriena wished she had parents that wanted her. For Katriena, it was hard "to grow up without a mother or father. I wanted someone that would give me the care that other children with parents had." Katriena barely knew her mother and did not know her mother died until five years after her passing. Katriena shared that her non-existent relationship with her mother has influenced her relationship with her own children. Katriena and her children have a close relationship with one another. She currently lives with her 25 year-old daughter, Emmerencia, and her 14 year-old son, Quinston. Katriena tries her best to provide for her children by taking up odd jobs such as recycling and house cleaning. According to Katriena, "a mother will do everything in her power for her children."

In 1989, Katriena's grandmother and aunt passed away. Katriena was living with them at the time and, upon their passing, her aunt's husband abandoned Katriena and her cousin and moved to Worcester in the Western Cape Province. Consequently, Katriena was forced to dropout of school and move to Cape Town in search of a job. She found her first job as a housekeeper for a couple in Grassi Park, Cape Town. Katriena enjoyed working for the couple because they treated her as their daughter. In their house, Katriena was given her own room, good food, and taken on outings with them. Katriena worked there up until she was 22 years old when the couple relocated to Knysna. After the couple relocated in 1992, Katriena moved to Woodstock to live with her cousin. While living with her cousin, Katriena got a job working as a cleaner at a Holiday Inn. Unfortunately, after seven months her cousin's husband died in a car accident and she moved back to Wolseley. Katriena moved to Stellenbosch.

Katriena met her husband, Simon, on the job while working as a supervisor for a cleaning company. During their courtship, she lived in a RDP house in Cloetesville with Simon's family. It was a three-bedroom house with a kitchen and an indoor toilet with a lot of space outside. While living in Cloetesville, she got certified as a nursing assistant. Katriena reflects on this with great happiness as she always "wanted to be a doctor, but there was no money" for her to go to school. Not long after, she worked as a private nurse for an old couple, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson, from 1994 to 2004. During this time, she had her first two children, Emmerencia and Lyndel. She stopped working there in 2004 when the couple died. Katriena and her children got kicked out of the house by Simon's sister when his parents died. Katriena and her family were forced to live under the Strand Bridge with no roof over their head. While living on the street she got pregnant with her third child, Quinston.

While living on the street, her first son Lyndel got involved in gang activities. At ten years old, a judge gave Katriena the option to send him to Bonnytoun, a juvenile detention



center in Cape Town. After graduating from Bonnytown, Lyndel went to an applied behavioral analysis school in order to learn a trade. Karina blames herself for the way Lyndel turned out. She said that the struggle was too overwhelming after she got kicked out of Simon's parent's house, turning to alcohol for comfort. She said when Lyndel would come back home with stolen items she "was too drunk to tell him he mustn't do that, that is wrong." When Katriena went to visit Lyndel at school, he said to her "mom I blame you for the things I have done." After that visit, she decided to sober up saying that "now is the time I focus on my family no matter what."

Katriena husband's friends in Kayamandi allowed her to sleep in their shack at night. During the day, she and her husband recycled in order to earn money for their family. Katriena said that even though they are poor, she does not allow her children to beg. She and her husband do whatever every odd job they can find in order to ensure that their children have clothes and food. The community in Kayamandi tried to find a permanent space for Katriena and her family. However, the community was at capacity and, consequently, could not accommodate them. After six years on the street in 2010, Katriena found shelter in Slab Town. While living in Slab Town she met Harold, a municipality field worker, who suggested that she and her family move to La Rochelle. Katriena has been living in La Rochelle for about 16 months. Living in La Rochelle, Katriena is concerned about her family's safety. Her children need to wake up at 4am in order to make the train to get to school on time. Katriena said she worries that gang members might try to rob her children while they walk to school.

In addition to safety, Katriena has come to value space in her housing. Katriena was unhappy with the previous resettlement offer because she said the houses were too small and did not afford her family enough space. According to Katriena, "children must get their own room because children need their own room so they don't disturb me." She is currently unhappy with her living space in La Rochelle because she does not have enough space to hang her clothes or to make a garden. Katriena said that in her future housing she would like space for her children to play. She said when Quinston comes home with friends she would like a place they can play so that way she can keep an eye on him. Katriena said that "these days the youngsters change a lot... I don't want my children to follow in my footsteps" referencing her drinking habits. Katriena does not mind having to share the space with her neighbors as long as it is big enough.

Katriena also emphasized the terrible sanitation conditions in La Rochelle. She attributes the poor conditions to vandalism of the toilets. The filth from the toilet runs adjacent to her and Sabina's house. Katriena would like the toilets moved from around her house and placed next to the trash bin. For Katriena the whole situation "is not right...we can get sick. There are a lot of germs and I have to cook." Katriena said she is okay with sharing toilets in her future housing, however there must be an agreed upon cleaning schedule. Overall, Katriena is grateful for her current housing situation as it is an improvement from her previous living conditions in Slab Town, but she would still like to see improvements in her housing situation. Katriena has been on the housing waitlist for 17 years. In the future, she is hoping to get an RDP house because her current situation in La Rochelle "is not the life she deserves."



# Ricardo

Ricardo was born in Moorreesburg, Cape Town in 1982. He moved to Humflame, Klapmuts when he was 11 years old, where he lived with his mother and sister. In 2003, Ricardo's mother applied for subsidized housing. Years went by before his mother finally received notice that she was going to get the RDP house that she desired. At the age of 29, Ricardo's mother died and he and his sister were forced to move from the farm by its owner. Ricardo and his sister tried to stand up against



their eviction from the farm. However, a municipality official by the name of Francois Klump threatened them off of the land. His animosity towards the municipality started early on when the municipal lawyer in charge of his family's case did a poor job at helping him gain back what he perceives is his family's land. After the case, Ricardo tried to get assistance from other municipality officials, but nothing significant came of it. In 2011, the eviction was processed, and Ricardo and his sister were resettled in a 3 x 4 meter bungalow in La Rochelle. In addition, the RDP property his mother was to receive was not transferable to Ricardo or his sister. Ricardo does not agree with the ethics of this and believes he has a right to his mother's home.

During his time in the La Rochelle community, Ricardo has served as a community leader. In this position, he was the main point of contact between the municipality and the residents. He often worked as a housing advisor around Klapmuts. He would help people get registered papers and get onto the housing waitlist. Ricardo eventually was voted out of this position as community leader. According to Ricardo, he was voted out because he tells "the truth all the time and the municipality does not like that."

Since being a community leader, Ricardo feels that the community dynamics of La Rochelle have fallen apart. According to Ricardo, "there is no love in La Rochelle, everyone is out for themselves." In particular, Ricardo is unhappy with the current community leader. He believes he is selfish and has disrupted the unity of the community. Ricardo does not like that the community leader has access to electricity and is charging other residents to charge their phones and for cold-water bottles. Apart from having electricity, Ricardo partially blames the new community leader for the dysfunction in the community. According to Ricardo, the community leader receives information from the municipality, but does not share it with the rest of the residents. Instead, he gives the information to those close to him, leaving everyone else in the dark. Despite this, Ricardo still tries to do his part to make the community better by making it a point to help community members all around Klapmuts. One way that Ricardo likes to help out community members is by offering his phone and airtime to make calls for assistance with problems like broken pipes.

Ricardo's number one concern for La Rochelle is the future of the children. After his sister passed away two years ago, he stepped up to take care of her daughter who was 11 years old at the time. Ricardo, when discussing the huge problem of sexual assault on



children, said that “rape is a big problem in the community. Children are being raped by adults because their mothers aren’t there taking care of them.” Ricardo knew it was his duty to take care of his sister’s daughter so that she could have the best life possible and avoid some of these safety concerns. Ricardo sees the children of La Rochelle doing drugs and skipping school and stresses the importance of keeping his sister’s daughter away from these activities.

Even though he recognizes the community's faults, Ricardo still appreciates La Rochelle for what it is, saying “I have liked La Rochelle people more than other people.” Despite his quarrels with its size and lack of electricity, he views his bungalow as a blessing. Ricardo, while appreciative of what has been given to him, believes that the municipality is not doing the best they can. In Ricardo’s eyes, the country and the municipality have enough money to provide everyone with an RDP house. Ricardo does not understand how citizens can be in the same country and “be living so differently.” Ricardo was not happy with the past resettlement offer to Mandela City with the size and location of the structure being the primary reasons for his denial. Ricardo said that the small conditions the municipality was trying to move them into were “houses the size for dogs, we are not animals.” However, the biggest problem Ricardo had with the resettlement offer was the way in which it was communicated, or lack of communication. According to Ricardo, residents were never alerted of the resettlement offer before the municipality tried to move them into Mandela City.

In our conversations with Ricardo, he brought up the idea of ownership and the importance of valuing one’s own possessions. One philosophy Ricardo lives by is “if you appreciate something, you will handle it with care.” He applies this philosophy to La Rochelle. Ricardo wants the people around him to see the community as something they each own and want to better it for themselves and their neighbors. Ricardo also wants the municipality to start being transparent and admit their shortcomings to the community. Ricardo believes that this would allow both parties to start fresh and work together to build a cohesive and happy La Rochelle. In addition to bettering community dynamics, Ricardo also wants to build a garden that would function as a public space that would bring people together and be a safe space for the community’s children. In his future resettlement, Ricardo would like to live in an area that provides him with the safety, security, and space for a real home.



# Jerome

Jerome was born in Bloemfontein, Free State Province in a ten-roomed home gifted to his mother by her employer. At 19, Jerome's mom sold their house because his step-father passed away and she wanted to move to the Northern Cape Province for work. Jerome was very upset with this decision as this was his childhood



home and he felt a sense of ownership over the house. Shortly after the house was sold, Jerome moved to Namibia where he lived for nine months. In Namibia, Jerome worked odd jobs and lived in houses provided to him by those that employed him. Once his job contracts were up in Namibia, Jerome came back to South Africa where he stayed in Johannesburg for about four months. In Johannesburg, Jerome worked with truck companies and lived in a container home supplied to him by his employer. After this, Jerome moved to East London, Eastern Cape Province, where he spent two months shining cars and living in another container home provided to him by his boss. Jerome then moved back to Bloemfontein, where he worked as a farrier on a farm. Jerome studied at the University of South Africa in order to become qualified to work as a farrier.

During this period of his life, Jerome met back up with his mom and was tasked with giving his father their divorce papers. Jerome's father lived in the community he now calls home, La Rochelle. Jerome arrived in the Western Cape Province via train. After speaking to enough people he was able to discover where his father was staying. Upon arriving in La Rochelle, Jerome gave his father the divorce papers and met community member Ricardo. Jerome saw Ricardo struggling to raise his sister's child and felt it was his duty to help out. Jerome says that Ricardo, "chose him to be his political partner." Jerome recognized the fact that he and Ricardo together could become community leaders that would help guide La Rochelle in a positive direction. Jerome has been living in La Rochelle ever since. Jerome believes that it is only him and Ricardo that are fighting for the good of the community. According to Jerome, the biggest problem with La Rochelle is that "the community is not standing together. People are talking too loud and are not organized." Ever since Ricardo left the community leadership, Jerome believes that the community is becoming increasingly disjointed under the current community leadership.

Jerome attributes a large portion of the problems in La Rochelle to the Stellenbosch municipality. Jerome mentioned that municipal officials never come to La Rochelle with an organized agenda or give residents an opportunity to voice their concerns, "the municipality just talks at us." Moreover, Jerome says that when the municipality does make attempts at speaking to community members it is usually just to one person, the community leader. The information distributed to the community leader stays with him as Jerome, Ricardo, and the rest of the La Rochelle community are kept in the dark. When Jerome does visit the municipality's office in Stellenbosch, he says that he is prompted to leave because all the housing officials are in meetings. In Jerome's eyes, "The municipality has meetings about La Rochelle without the people of La Rochelle." Jerome claims that there was never any resettlement meeting discussing the details of the community's move to Mandela City and





that the municipality has not sat down with the community in over two years. Jerome has no idea what the municipality has planned for the future or the existence of an alternative resettlement plan. Overall, Jerome, like most in La Rochelle, exhibits very little trust towards the municipality and their capacity to carry out the promise of adequate housing.

In the future, Jerome sees himself in a formal home with at least four rooms. In this house, he wants a large living and dining room to entertain his friends. In Jerome's opinion, the most important aspect of a house is owning your own land and having enough land to grow. This means having enough property to have a sizeable garden and have privacy from neighbors. Second to this is electricity. Having the capacity to turn on a TV or a light is a great privilege that Jerome would like to have one day.



# Findings

Through our conversations with La Rochelle residents, municipal officials, and other housing experts, we were able to develop our perspectives on the greater problems of forced resettlement and temporary housing in South Africa. To demonstrate each of these different perspectives, we condensed our findings into themes, which were later organized to form claims. The themes we identified include communication, the challenges of local government, community dynamics, integration in housing, the tangible and intangible aspects of housing, safety, space, and state paternalism. The claims we developed specifically focus on the value of a home, the importance of a strong community dynamic, the presence of state paternalism, the challenges associated with providing adequate housing, and the role of NGOs in the housing sector. Each of these claims presents the different perspectives that we identified during our research.

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*What are the shared perspectives of the physical characteristics of adequate housing?*

## **The physical parameters that help to outline housing adequacy**

Access to adequate physical living conditions, a provision of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is crucial in providing the sense of stability that comes along with a home. To La Rochelle residents, a home is somewhere to feel safe, healthy, and empowered to make it their own. In exploring the idea of a home, the residents noted three major aspects of their current living conditions that have either prevented or helped them in calling La Rochelle home: electricity, ablution facilities, and physical space. These physical aspects all play a role in the paternalism being created by the state. The presence, or lack thereof, of these resources highlights the impact physical services can have on how residents value their housing.

Providing electricity means to provide safety to La Rochelle residents and they will do what they can to get it. Sabina is afraid to leave her house at night to use the bathroom because the lack of lighting within La Rochelle. The dangerous environment at night has led to Sabina getting approached by armed men on multiple occasions. Katriena elaborated on the threat the darkness poses when she told us that many residents experience sexual assault when they leave their homes at night. The dangers of the darkness forced residents like Sabina and Katriena to stay within their houses past sundown, making them prisoners within their government issued Wendy houses. Electricity to the La Rochelle residents means more than turning on a light switch; it gives them peace of mind and safety. This restriction of electricity also promotes dependency. Katriena sought out alternative ways to receive electricity, but still had to go through the municipality to get permission. Even though she was trying to act autonomously in acquiring the housing services she desires, she had to rely on the state for it to become a reality.

Permanent housing must address the need for dignified living conditions. According to Ricardo, young males from a neighboring community came into La Rochelle and damaged the ablution facilities over several occasions (personal communication, November 9, 2018). The damage led to streams of sewage running throughout the entire community, with the sewage flowing directly adjacent to some homes. Sabina suffered liver and kidney



infections due to these deplorable living conditions. Katriena, who also lives adjacent to the stream of sewage (see Figure 12), questioned why she is expected to cook and serve food inside her home when her family can smell the filth in the air. One key aspect of 'home' is having "a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family" (Article 25.1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). The state of ablution facilities has forced residents to depend on the state to fix them. With the facilities being under municipal jurisdiction, whenever they are destroyed, residents must wait for them to be fixed. This is also the case for the sewage problem. We saw residents trying to corral the sewage downstream away from the houses, but this was only a band-aid fix. Residents can do their best to address the problem, but they are not trained, nor do they have the resources to completely fix the problem.

The creation of individualized space allows residents to create value within their homes. Despite the inadequate living conditions, residents have tried to make the best of their housing situation by adding personalized additions to their Wendy houses. Ricardo shared with us was the pride he takes in the garden he created around his house. He made the point that he wants to be capable of continuing his gardening wherever he goes. Sabina mentioned how she uses her self-made awning to entertain visitors (see Figure 13) and would like the same opportunity wherever she goes. At first glance, the garden and awning can be seen as very small additions to a house. However, these additions are what residents' value and take pride in the most. When we asked Sabina and Ricardo what they want in permanent housing, they both mentioned the importance of space for them to carry on their respective additions. Space, in these instances, is being used as a vehicle for residents to create value in their homes. Ricardo touched on the significance of value when he said, "If you appreciate something, you will handle it with care" (November 9, 2018). Through teaching residents to value the aspects of their home, they personally can become more independent, requiring less government intervention.



**Figure 12:** The sewage flowing from the broken ablution facilities next to Katriena's bungalow, on left, and Sabina's bungalow, on right.



**Figure 13:** The outdoor living area Sabina has created next to her bungalow.



*What are the non-physical characteristics that define adequate housing?*

## **A community is a collection of people that see value in each other, not a physical collection of homes within a small vicinity**

Although residents may reside in temporary housing situations, many build strong communal relationships within their temporary accommodation. Some La Rochelle residents were relocated together, having pre-existing relationships, while some community members have built their relationships since coming to La Rochelle. Jerome told us how when he came to La Rochelle for the first time to see his father, who has since moved out, he saw Ricardo struggling to raise his sister's child. Jerome explained how he felt that he was obligated to help out Ricardo. He had no physical obligation to leave the rest of his life behind to help raise Ricardo's sister's child, but he felt some moral obligation to do so. Jerome and Ricardo have since developed a strong domestic friendship and both care about guiding the community in a positive direction. These two residents are not just individuals living in the same community, but social partners who rely on each other. The tendency to look out for one another is also shared by the former Slab Town residents that were relocated together. One relocated resident, Donavon, explained to us how he helped Sabina when she collapsed outside her home from a lung and kidney infection. He repeatedly called for an ambulance and tried to comfort her in the meantime. He told us that she was his mother and he had to look out for her because she has no one else in her life. These residents "like [each other] more than [any] other people" and have no intention in leaving if it means fracturing their current micro-community (Ricardo, personal communication, November 15, 2018). These residents have independently created this strong foundation of communal values; they just want the opportunity to preserve these social ties in their permanent resettlement.

Residents value community integration, and if that is absent, then they will likely reject a resettlement offer. In the case of the Mandela City resettlement offer, the residents were going to be scattered around an established community, without any sort of communal integration. The La Rochelle residents realized this, and there was a consensus around La Rochelle that they do not want to just be thrown into a new community, especially one where they do not feel welcome. When we asked Katriena about settling into a new community in general, she said that she was open to the idea "as long as [she would be] able make friends" (Katriena, personal communication, November 26, 2018). They are looking to the municipality to be the vehicle that allows them to build an inclusive environment with their future neighbors.

The long-established divide between racially different settlements was not addressed in the municipality's plan to resettle La Rochelle residents into Mandela City. Racial tension around housing stems back to the Native Land Act of 1913, which denied Black South Africans the right to own land, and the Group Areas Act of 1950, which forced the resettlement of Black South Africans into designated areas (Lanegran, 2013). Mandela City has emerged as a Black informal settlement in Klapmuts. La Rochelle consists primarily of Coloured residents. Mandela City residents perceive that La Rochelle residents are being unfairly prioritized by the municipality, and that they are "queue jumping" on the housing waitlist (Kamohelo Mculu, Personal Communication, November 12, 2018). Mandela City did not want La Rochelle residents to move into their settlement because, they saw La Rochelle as stealing valuable space and opportunity (M. Francis, personal communication, November 5, 2018). Violence has since developed as a result of the resentment and animosity between the two communities. Sabina explained a first-hand account of the tensions between the two



communities when she told us of how one of her friends, upon entering Mandela City at night, was assaulted and had her arm mutilated.

Local government does not make the same recognition of fragility and complexity of social networks as the national government does. The South African government has acknowledged that in the delivery of housing and the resettlement of communities, social networks should be acknowledged and maintained. At a national level, the government has implemented the Breaking New Ground housing plan, which notices the importance of supporting fragile social networks and the cooperation with residents in community integration (Department of Housing, 2004). The lack of acknowledgement of the racial disparity between Mandela City and La Rochelle in the previous resettlement offer demonstrates the municipality's failure to recognize these complexities.

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*What are the socio-economic and political dynamics of Stellenbosch that influence perceptions of adequacy?*

### **A fostered sense of dependency on the municipality has resulted in the shared perspective that in order for housing to be truly adequate, it must be given**

The Stellenbosch municipality acts as a paternal figure to the people of La Rochelle. Johru Robyn, one of our sponsors and the Manager of the Informal Settlements Unit, attributes his role as a paternal figure to the very nature of his job as a housing official. According to Robyn, the municipality works “very top down in a paternalistic manner. We have deadlines and it’s hard to get to all of the community to agree.... We tell people ‘you will move there’” (November 15, 2018). The housing model the South African government adopted focuses on what needs to be done for people, rather than focusing on strategies that would enable individuals to help themselves (L. Welgemoed, personal communication, November 9, 2018). For instance, the municipality tells residents where they can and cannot live. In doing so, they take away residents’ sense of agency and autonomy as their lives become dictated by their governing body.

As a consequence of paternal government actions, the La Rochelle residents have fostered an unhealthy level of dependency on the municipality. The residents believe that it is the municipality’s responsibility to maintain the physical environment of La Rochelle. We noticed this first hand when Johannes, a La Rochelle resident, pulled us aside to show some grass that we, under the impression that we worked for the municipality, needed to cut, as it posed a potential fire risk. Johannes coming to us, under the impression that we were municipal field workers, was all he could do to resolve the problem. He said he would have fixed it, but he did not have the resources to do so. In addition, Johannes did not express any sense of urgency with this problem. Johannes might have seen his home as a replaceable commodity owned by his local governing body. Perhaps Johannes became accustomed to the slow response times of the municipality and is accepting of them. Residents like Johannes view the municipality as a giving hand. They believe that it is the municipality’s obligation to cut their grass, fix their toilets, and, most importantly, give them their houses.

The constant resettlement of residents prevents them from acquiring the resources and skills necessary to being autonomous from the state. A conversation that we had with Asavela, a resident who was recently resettled to La Rochelle, discussed how he had to give up his old employment when he moved. When we asked him about what he was going to do in the future about employment, he responded with “what’s the point?” (Asavela, personal



communication, November 5, 2018). He believed that he would eventually get resettled again, forcing him to give up whatever new employment he had. When we asked him about how he gets by, he said that he has found some temporary jobs in the past, but he is currently not working anywhere. What we found with Asavela was a sense of hopelessness that developed from the municipality moving him from place to place. When this mindset is adopted, the resident becomes completely dependent on the state. In their eyes, the state places them in this situation and it is their job to help them out.

The La Rochelle residents' perspective on adequate housing has been shaped by their dependency on the state. When speaking to residents it was evident that it is the expectation of the municipality to deliver on their desires in future housing. Elsabe, speaking to her current situation in La Rochelle in an un-serviced Wendy house, believes "the municipality is neglecting [La Rochelle residents]" (November 19, 2018). Elsabe was told when she moved to La Rochelle 22 years ago that she would be given a fully serviced house, however she still waits for the day her RDP home will be delivered. The high degree of dependency perpetuated by the municipality have led many residents like Elsabe to view their future housing as a commodity that is given to them.

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*What are the challenges of providing adequate housing?*

### **The challenges faced by the municipality creates undesirable outcomes for residents**

Local governments have to work with limited resources in servicing residents. We were able to identify some of these limitations through our conversations with municipal officials and other housing professionals. Some of these challenges include restrictive budgets, lack of land, and limited staff capacity. Furthermore, through our life history conversations, we developed an understanding of the far-reaching consequences these challenges may pose for La Rochelle residents. We realized that what may be the most feasible decision in abiding to standard protocol is often not favorable for community members.

The financial restraints placed on local government results in a housing approach that treats the individual residents as a collective. Currently, there are no strict guidelines that dictate the funding that each human settlement receives (K. Mculu, personal communication, November 22, 2018). The municipality determines which housing projects receive funding by meeting with all the stakeholders and creating a financial outline that can last up to three years. The limitations of the resulting financial outline impede the municipality's ability to deliver upon individual housing desires. Jerome, when discussing what he would want in his future home, said he envisioned himself in a living room entertaining his loved ones and the ability to turn on the lights. Residents, like Jerome, often do not get the opportunity to have individual housing desires addressed because of the financial restrictions in place. Lester Van Stavel, Manager of New Housing, when explaining the budgetary limitations of the Stellenbosch Municipality, stated, "there's the wish list, your realistic list, and then there's the budget. We need to cut the cake so everyone can get a piece of it" (L. Van Stavel, personal communication, October 29, 2018). La Rochelle, a community of over two hundred people, is forced to share one piece of cake. As a result, the unique housing situations of the residents are treated as a collective unit.

Budgetary limitations led local municipalities into making cost-effective decisions that do not prioritize adequate living conditions for residents and can lead to the degradation



of communities. There are high costs associated with the maintenance and repair of human settlements; it costs “over 200,000 ZAR (22,000 USD) to fix [ablution] facilities in La Rochelle, each time they are broken” (J. Robyn, personal communication, November 15, 2018). The municipality is not able to afford to repair the ablution facilities in La Rochelle (see Figure 14), resulting in detrimental health consequences for many residents. For instance, Sabina mentioned that a waste pipe from the toilets had broken over two months ago, yet no one from engineering services had come to fix it, despite many complaints filed. The filth accumulated to such a degree that Sabina needed to be hospitalized after developing a lung and kidney infection. The maintenance and repair of the ablution facilities may have appeared as an additional budgetary expense to the municipality, but the reality of the damages resulted in a potentially life-threatening situation for one resident. The municipality has budgetary restrictions that can cost residents their humanity.



**Figure 14:** The vandalized ablution facilities that 10 families are expected to use in La Rochelle.

The role of land as a valuable commodity challenges the municipality’s ability to deliver on residents’ housing desires. According to Robyn, “there are no more cities beyond the Klapmuts area that the La Rochelle residents can be accommodated” (J. Robyn, personal communication, November 15, 2018). The issue of land has reached such an extent that the municipality has to accommodate a higher number of people in smaller stretches of space. For La Rochelle, the limited availability of land means that residents have one of two options: move to the racially intolerant Mandela City, or move to a smaller plot somewhere else in Klapmuts (see Figure 15). The new resettlement offer proposes that La Rochelle residents be moved to an area with a significant reduction in the amount of space made available to them, so that the vacant land could be used to construct additional housing units. The time, effort, and resources expended by the municipality in the resettlement of La Rochelle highlights both the scarcity and importance of land in major housing decisions.





**Figure 15:** The smaller area in Klapmuts, in green, that La Rochelle residents, in yellow, are scheduled to relocate to.

The understaffed nature of municipalities results in poor communication channels that struggle to inform residents of important housing developments that directly impact their well-being. With 27 human settlements and only two project managers with four assisting field workers, it becomes difficult to give each community the information and attention they require and deserve. It is often the case that “the kid that is most sick will be the [one] that gets attention,” indicated Mr. Robyn, (J. Robyn, personal communication, November 15, 2018), meaning that maintaining constant communication with one community, such as La Rochelle, is not always feasible. When speaking to La Rochelle residents on the last time the municipality had a community meeting, each resident gave a different time period for when they last saw or interacted with municipal officials. One resident said a couple weeks, one a couple months, with the most drastic response being over two years. The municipality's inability to effectively communicate with the community of La Rochelle places residents in a state of limbo. With little to no information, residents have no idea of the municipality's plans, and therefore cannot make future plans of their own.

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*What other housing strategies are being implemented or considered and do these address the failings of existing housing strategies?*

### **Non-Government Organizations push beyond municipal limitations to empower communities**

Where governing bodies fall short in developing community dynamics, NGOs specialize in fostering healthy community-driven resettlement. Through visiting other communities around the Cape Town and Stellenbosch areas and speaking to housing experts, we compared problems that we found in La Rochelle to those in other settlements and investigated the different approaches being used to aid them.

A cost battle between residents and government has made access to electricity, an acknowledged basic service, a luxury. La Rochelle is still struggling to access electricity, with only some residents having access through illegal means. Similarly, when we visited the large informal settlement of Enkanini, we noticed that electricity was a luxury that most residents did not have access to. From talking to residents and community leader, Yondela, there were political reasons as to why the settlement did not have electricity. The community was too densely populated, making it infeasible for government to provide electricity in such condensed conditions. The bigger issue stemming from that is the municipality will grant





electricity only after the community undergoes a “rezoning” process. When we asked residents about this process, one said “the municipality won’t tell us what we need to do for rezoning. They just tell us it will take three or more years” (Enkanini resident, personal communication, November 1, 2018). Yondela acknowledged that the vagueness of the rezoning plan created huge amounts of frustration amongst residents.

Residents of Enkanini found some resolution to their electricity problem by working with the iShack project, a solar-based electricity solution started by the Sustainability Institute. This project gives residents the ability to harness solar power within their shacks (see Figure 16), and use it for things like light and appliances. By working outside of the jurisdiction of the municipality, the iShack project able to target their efforts on electricity in Enkanini. There was no rezoning issue or lack of resources that the project had to work around. The results gave residents electricity and created a network of educated Enkanini residents working on the project to push it as far as it can go. The work done by iShack has allowed residents to be autonomous in their housing. Residents no longer had to wait for the municipality to rezone to get their electricity, allowing them to live peacefully in their homes.



**Figure 16:** An iShack solar panel on top of a home in the Enkanini Informal Settlement (iShack, 2018).

The idea of introducing members of a future community to one another before resettlement is one that is not feasible for the municipality, but has found success through the execution of NGOs. Robyn, acknowledging the municipality’s inability to deliver the resources needed for effective community integration, said “we are guilty as charged.... We would like constant communication... in an ideal world” (November 15, 2018). As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons why La Rochelle residents denied their past housing offer was from the bad blood between their community and the community they were expected to move into. In that offer, there was never an acknowledged formal community integration effort made. In researching and visiting the Pelican Park housing area, we noticed that through careful intervention, healthy communication can be fostered to develop a well-integrated community. In an interview with Adi Kumar and Crystal West, two representatives of the Development Action Group who facilitated the move to Pelican Park, they noted that the future community members were required to attend community meetings where they met their neighbors and placed community rules. They also created a committee to look after the community and enforce the rules. This allowed everyone in the community to feel safe and comfortable with one another.

Our visit to Pelican Park presented us with a community of individuals interacting with each other. This method of preliminary community engagement addressed two problems that the municipality struggles with: fostering healthy community interaction and giving residents a platform to share their opinions. By allowing residents to interact with one another, they are able to address each other’s fears in their resettlement and develop relationships that they can value. The formation of these valuable relationships will help drive residents away from having to dependent on the state and towards working autonomously as a community. The example of Pelican Park shows that investing in social issues of resettling will pay off in the long run through community satisfaction.



# Conclusion

Through our visits to the La Rochelle community, we were able to identify some of the many different aspects associated with adequate housing. By developing our findings in relation to the denial of their previous resettlement offer, we were able to understand what the La Rochelle residents desire in permanent housing.

## La Rochelle residents want...

To *choose who they live with* in their future formal housing. They have formed communal relationships with each other and want to be able to keep them, rather than being scattered around a new community.

To *meet the new community* they are going to be moved into before they physically move into their permanent housing.

To be moved to *an area that has adequate resources* to meet their individual needs. These needs include: employment opportunities; schools or transportation to school for their children; and access to public services, including healthcare and emergency services.

To have *adequate space* around their RDP homes. They want this space to create value in their homes.

To have *complete transparency* in their current housing situation and their future plan for permanent housing. They want to know what is happening in regard to their housing and to get updates on a consistent basis.

Through our research, we have found that one of the fundamental problems facing both the residents and the municipality was this idea of state dependency. The municipality has desires to minimize or outright stop the high degree of dependency held by the residents but have not made attempts to change this. We have also found that the dependency of residents has been expanded by some of the actions of the municipality. As we have come to know, the lack of communication has created a social disarticulation, a disconnect between what is being provided and what is needed, between the residents and the municipality, attributing to a dependency on the state. The pushing of differing agendas by municipal officials and residents, with little to no communication between the two, has left both feeling out of touch with one another. The municipality wants people to resettle without fully understanding what that means for each resident, while the residents feel unfairly treated by the municipality without understanding why they are making these actions. During this slow negotiation process, the residents are left to be dependent on the municipality to carry out their daily lives.



Successful housing actions, like Pelican Park, should be taken into consideration when the municipality wants to work with residents. What DAG did that worked well was placing an emphasis on expanding the social interactions of each individual to, in turn, improve the overall community dynamic and repair the social disarticulation. By increasing the social capital of each individual in a community, the community will be able to accomplish more together without the aid of the municipality. What we saw in La Rochelle was the absence of a formal intercommunal communication structure and little to no communication with the municipality. These kinds of communication are the key to community autonomy in La Rochelle and other similar settlements.



# Reflections

## Aleye

No amount of research I did could have prepared me for the amazing, educational experience I had here in South Africa. I remember my brain struggling to comprehend what my eyes were seeing as we walked around Enkanini, the first informal settlement we saw. Reading about it and actually seeing the settlements were two different experiences. I was truly humbled, as I stood there dumbfounded trying to understand what it must be like having to live your life every day in an informal settlement.



When I started researching this project the common story emerged of it being the municipality against the people. They were the bad guys depriving these disenfranchised people of the home they truly deserved. However, coming here has been a truly eye-opening. From talking to the municipality and the residents, I have come to realize it's not the municipality versus the people, rather it's reality versus the people. No matter how hard the municipality works, there isn't enough money, land, time or manpower to provide people with the homes they desire. The Stellenbosch Municipality recognizes this systemic problem and yet they put a commendable amount of effort into their job and try to make the promise of housing come true.

However, the residents still do not understand the complexity and infeasibility of delivering a house to everyone in South Africa. This lack of comprehension was displayed in Ricardo's response when I asked him if he thought that there were enough resources to fulfill the constitutional housing. He responded by saying he believes that it is possible because "we can't be in the same country and be living so differently." This promise has not only been set up to leave people disappointed but has caused people to become so heavily dependent on the state. This dependency has left a lot of residents in a state of stagnation. From my experience with the La Rochelle community, it seems as though a lot of the residents are just waiting, waiting for the municipality to cut the grass, waiting for the municipality to pick up the trash, waiting for the municipality to help progress their life.

Sabina, an eighty-two-year-old resident, made a statement that had a lasting impression on me, she said: "I just want a house before I die. The municipality has plans to relocate the La Rochelle residents to another TRA with basics services, but currently has no future plans to relocate them to their formal RDP homes. Sabina's statement made me think about how many more people are on the housing waitlist optimistically waiting for a formal



house that they might never receive. This realization left me feeling downhearted knowing that Sabina's wish to get a house may never come true. However, I've tried to adopt the residents' spirits and remain optimistic.

I hope that the recommendations from our project will be used to help the La Rochelle residents create a home they value and are proud of. This project has taught me so much and has changed my views on how to approach problem-solving. As uncovered by this project what seems like the most efficient method isn't always the most ethical. This project has taught me that when attempting to solve a problem, it is just as important to take into consideration the social implications. I am beyond grateful to the residents of La Rochelle for taking valuable time out of their day to talk to us and share their stories. Thank you to the Stellenbosch Municipality for giving us this wonderful opportunity to come to South Africa and explore the intricacies of providing adequate housing.



# Caleb

The experiences I have had over the last seven weeks have been a truly life-changing experience. The living conditions I have seen and the stories I have been told by residents were like nothing I had ever experienced. We researched informal housing, but nothing amounted to walking through the settlements. We drove past miles of shacks every day on our commute to Stellenbosch, but it wasn't until I actually walked through one of the settlements that



the multitude of the poor conditions set it, conditions that humans exist in. When I walked up through the Enkanini informal settlement I was speechless. I saw hundreds of dense shacks, packed with families lacking the basic services I take for granted every day. I cannot imagine how these people feel every day, walking outside their cramped shacks. When I walked outside of one resident's homes, I looked down and saw a stream of sewage flowing down between the metal shacks. When I looked up, I saw the university town of Stellenbosch on the horizon and its surrounding formal housing neighborhoods, something that each person in the settlement has to look upon every day while they live in impoverished informality. Never in my life have I seen such disparity in one glance.

When we first entered La Rochelle for our initial community meeting, I was so nervous that I was going to be ostracized for being a rich, white outsider interjecting in their community. Never in my life have I met such welcoming people. Every day when we walked into La Rochelle, Jerome would have the biggest smile on his face, and Sabina would invite me into her bungalow. Sabina told me that she didn't care about the color of skin, she saw me as her son. The stories she shared with me were so rich with emotion, both trauma, and faith. I found myself often leaving La Rochelle emotionally exhausted after having such emotionally rich conversations with her and other residents. The level of positivity that these people are able to hold while living in inadequacy is humbling. I am honored to have had the opportunity to connect with such amazing people.

The exposure of layer, upon layer, upon layer of complexities of the housing delivery system that the municipal officials try to make the best of makes it seem like a nearly impossible process. With only two project managers and four field workers responsible for 27 settlements, along with budgetary and legal restrictions, there is a truly unfortunate reality. With the current systematic problems in South African housing delivery, it may become a reality that not every resident will get the home they have been promised in the constitution. Sabina, who has lived all 82 years of her life waiting on that promise, told me, "I just want a house before I die." I can only hope that change will be made so her dream can come true.



# Donna

Before coming to South Africa, I had little knowledge of the complexities associated with housing beyond my own understanding of the literature available. It appeared to be a straightforward problem that just centered on the difficulty behind



delivering every citizen a home. Only after spending time with our sponsors at the Stellenbosch Municipality and listening to the stories of the La Rochelle community members did I begin to fully understand the dimensions of housing, and what it means for this housing to be truly adequate. I learned that the story of adequate housing is far from black and white. There are complexities that center on social, political, economic, and physical factors that define it.

Working at the Stellenbosch municipality gave me an eye-opening experience as to the responsibility and work of local government. With a limited staff that barely takes up one hallway, people, like our sponsors Kamohelo Mculu and Johru Robyn, are put in a position where their everyday decisions affect the lives of thousands. It astonished me how they were able to reach such decisions with a level-head and how, despite all the restrictions placed upon them, they strived to do the best for the people in their settlements.

In speaking to municipality officials on some of the housing concerns La Rochelle residents raised to us during our life histories, it was evident that they recognized the stresses of their jobs. Most of the issues we brought to their attention they already were aware of and, in spite of everything, were doing their best to address these problems. This showed me the frustrating nature of working to deliver on adequate housing. Everyone, from local to national government, wants to give citizens their perfect homes within their ideal communities. However, the reality of the situation is much grimmer as people living in human settlements spend most of their lives waiting for this promised reality, whilst those in government try and push through the mountain of challenges placed before them in trying to deliver it.

When I first arrived in La Rochelle, I felt uneasy as to how a group of American students would be received. Would they think we were coming in to alter their current community dynamics? Would they want to engage with us in sharing aspects of their lives? Within the first 10 minutes of the community meeting my initial fears dissipated. In our introduction to La Rochelle, I was surprised to see the entire community waiting to speak with us. A part of me attributes this to the food we had with us, but more than this the residents were genuinely curious about who we were as people. They asked me what I was studying and if I was having a good time in Cape Town. The residents I spoke to were more than eager to participate in our research. They showed an interest in speaking to me about their current housing situation and their lives going through housing in South Africa. The stories that ensued from this initial community meeting opened my mind to global issues I realized I thought very little about prior to talking to the La Rochelle residents. Community members like Ricardo and Sabina have taught me the complexities associated with extreme poverty, violence, and homelessness. The community members of La Rochelle have also simultaneously taught me the importance of acceptance, love, faith, and cherish those around me. My worldview has forever been expanded thanks to them, and I can confidently say that I am a more open-minded individual than when I first touched ground in Cape Town.



# Jeremy

The work that I have done over the past two months with the La Rochelle residents and Stellenbosch Municipality is something that I will always remember. Going into this project, I did not know what to expect. There was no amount of research that I could have done to ready myself for the experiences that I was about to have. The La Rochelle residents are not just a group of residents who declined a housing offer. They are a group of unique individuals who all come from different pasts and carry their own narratives. They are perhaps some of the most passionate people advocating for the development of the horrible housing situation in South Africa. Every single person there wants to do everything in their power to better the lives of millions.



When first arriving at La Rochelle for our community meeting, I was stunned. The poor living conditions of these residents were unlike anything I have ever seen. Between the lack of electricity, the sewerage running down the road, to even the basics like the size of their homes, I could not imagine what these people were going through. By physically going and meeting these people, I finally grasped a little perspective on the bigger picture of the situation. I tried seeing life through their eyes and I understood what moving away from everything they have built up as a community is asking for *far* more than just moving into “better” conditions.

What was most eye-opening for me was how happy the La Rochelle residents were given their situation. They have every reason in the world to be upset given their situation, but they still have smiles on their face. From our first community meeting to our last visit with some of the residents, they were always happy to see us, but more importantly, they were happy to share with us. Comparing my experience here to what I have seen in America, I could never imagine walking into a community saying I want to talk to people about their life and expect 10 people to invite me into their home and share all of their most traumatizing hardships with me. This speaks to the level of care and generosity that the La Rochelle residents have.

I thought this project was just going to be visiting residents, asking them about housing, and presenting it. This project became something bigger than I could have ever imagined. After spending my time in La Rochelle, I feel like I have made an honest connection with these people. I not only felt comfortable meeting up with these people, I thoroughly enjoyed it. The emotions that I felt and saw on our last community meeting proved to me that this project accomplished so much more than you could ever ask for in a standard classroom. Also, these people taught me some important lessons on how to be human. They taught me not to see one another as a bother but as an opportunity to enrich my perceptions. For that, I do not believe that there is anything I could give them that would





suffice what they have given me.

After learning about the multiple perspectives involved in this huge problem, it became clear that there is no clear-cut solution for this systematic mess. The La Rochelle residents deserve so much more than what they have. Unfortunately, the complexities tied to the situation are outreaching beyond anyone's control. As much as I want to fix the problem, I understand that, while my contribution was small, that I created a huge impact on the people I interacted with, and that is all I could ask for. Initially, I was skeptical that the idea of merely talking to residents could be useful. After reflecting on the relationships that I have made through this project, however, I truly understand the power of giving someone the time of day.

I would like to thank the La Rochelle residents, the Stellenbosch Municipality, and everyone else that helped us along the way. This experience has allowed me to grow as an individual. I am also blessed to have worked with such a fantastic group of people along my side the entire way. Our group dynamic made for an amazing support system, unlike any other. While my time in Cape Town was short-lived, by the end, I honestly felt like I could call it home.



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