

Sweet Home Report

An investigation into the socio-political character of recent road blockades by protesting shackdwellers



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Community profile

Sweet Home Farm is a shack settlement in Philippi, Cape Town, consisting of close to 4,000 structures and approximately 17,000 people. The exact number of structures and residents remains unknown.



Approximately 16,5 hectares in size, the settlement is bordered by Duinefontein Road to the west, the Nyanga railway line on the east, Lansdowne Road on the north and Vanguard Drive to the southwest. It lies adjacent to the suburbs of Samora Machel to the southeast, Gugulethu to the north, Brown's Farm to the east, Manenberg to the northwest and the agricultural part of Philippi to the west and southwest. Along with much of the Philippi area, Sweet Home falls under Ward 80 whose current councillor is Thembinkosi Pupa of the African National Congress (ANC).

Official history

The history of Sweet Home is interesting and offers significant explanations about the structure of the community and why its residents have been marginalised and mistreated for so long. Two thirds of the land (erven numbers 2609 as well as 42/604, 43/604, 44/604 and 32/604) on which

the settlement is situated has always been owned by the City of Cape Town or by Transnet. It was previously used as an illegal rubble and refuse dump for farmers, industries and builders in the area. The other one third of Sweet Home (erven number 3/609) was previously owned by Sweet Home Investments CC. This farmland eventually was left empty and underused by this owner. It also became a dumping site for builder's rubble.

By 1992, a small group of shackdwellers began occupying the land. Each year, because of the land and housing crisis in the metropolitan area, more and more homeless families began to settle on both parcels of land. The land was first settled by people who earned their living by recycling dumped bricks and other material which they found on-site. Some of this was sold on the roadside by residents – an informal business practice that has continued until today.

According to research by the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the land accommodated 373 dwellings by 1996 (although some residents say there were only 13 dwellings at this point in time). By 2003, a City of Cape Town survey had estimated that the population had sky-rocketed to 2,217 household dwellings. Nine years later, it is estimated that there are almost 4,000 structures and 17,000 people living in Sweet Home Farm.²

According to provincial deed records, in December 2012 Sweet Home Investments CC sold their land to the City of Cape Town for R750,000; a bargain for the company whose land was essentially worthless because they were losing money paying rates each month despite the fact that thousands of people were squatting on the land.

In many ways, the land is ideally situated for residents who work on nearby farms and factories. Besides the informal rubble recycling business on which the settlement was founded, there are a number of important forms of economic activity in the area which have, over the years, made the settlement attractive to people coming from within Cape Town and from around the Eastern Cape.

Conditions in the settlement and issues identified by the community

The living conditions in the Sweet Home shack settlement are appalling – even by the grim standards of shack settlements in South Africa. While it is not as densely populated as some of the more well known under-serviced shack settlements which have been sites of protests in previous years (such as QQ Section, RR Section and TR Section in Khayelitsha, Barcelona in Gugulethu, Joe Slovo in Langa, etc) conditions in Sweet Home are so bad in other ways that it is surprising that community members have not taken to the streets sooner.

This may be a result of a few minor planning improvements within Sweet Home as well as the fact that the community had been historically considered an African National Congress (ANC) stronghold thereby limiting community participation in development affairs.

On the land owned by the City of Cape Town, as well as land owned by Transnet, there has been an attempt to 'block' the settlement into smaller sections criss-crossed by a number of untarred

2 Community Risk Assessment Report: Sweet Home Farm, 2009

service roads. Eskom has also installed electricity for many of the shacks on this public land. The City has also attempted to install a basic open-air sewage system on this land – which, as I will show later, has actually made the environmental and health situation worse for residents.

At the same time, however, nearly half of the shacks in Sweet Home have been historically situated on private land whereby the owner, Sweet Home Investments CC, has categorically refused to allow government to install basic services for residents and had, until last year, refused to sell the land. This has meant that the City has failed to build service roads, install electricity or even provide basic sanitary services in this section of the settlement.

Instead of taking the private owner to court to make sure legally required services are either provided by the owner, or that permission to provide services is given to the City, government has ignored its constitutional obligations to protect the rights of residents. Even though such failure to provide services is unconstitutional on the part of both the private land owner and the City, no one seems to have informed Sweet Home of this fact, nor the possibility of court action to enforce the provision of services.

On the private land, the only service item that the City has been able to install is the provision of a few water taps to be shared by thousands of people.



Water taps shared between thousands of residents

As a result, the residents themselves have built up their own system of governance to ensure that small walking paths remain open and accessible and to prevent the settlement from becoming too dense. Residents who have not been provided with legal electricity connections have also connected themselves to electricity informally – a well known community-upliftment and [anti-shack fire strategy](#) with some social movements affectionately called “Operation Khanyisa” (Operation Let There Be Light). Additionally, residents have organised to provide one another with a number of informal community services which are being assisted through outside sponsorship by NGOs and church-affiliated organisations. These include the building and maintenance of a community hall as well as the running of a non-profit educare/crèche and community feeding scheme.

One of the primary complaints amongst residents, besides the lack of electricity, water, decent sanitation and formal housing, is the distance that one has to travel to access health and

educational facilities. Children are forced to walk long distances, sometimes over busy railway lines and roads to get to school in Samora Machel or Gugulethu. Similarly, the closest clinic or day hospital is quite a distance away from the settlement. This is also the case with various other services. One community member complained that they cannot even find newspapers anywhere in Sweet Home. They have to go to Gugulethu just to get *Vukani*, *City Vision* or even the *Daily Sun* so that they can peruse the classifieds for jobs.



Sweet Home's anti-shackfire strategy: informal electricity connections

Spotlight on health and the environment

The dire material conditions in Sweet Home can be generally be regarded as a direct result of government policy and, in particular, attributed to the City's lack of meaningful engagement with the community. Besides the inconsistency of refuse removal and lack of water taps in Sweet Home, there are two significant health hazards for residents.

The first is the terrible condition of public toilets in the settlement. The types of toilets range from flush, to chemical, to bucket-system toilets. The small number of toilets (about 607 in total³) being shared amongst so many residents has not only made them extremely dirty but has also resulted in most of them becoming blocked or otherwise broken. This issue could be resolved through *in-situ* upgrading of the settlement but could also be temporarily alleviated through proper consultation with residents whereby each section of the community takes ownership of the maintenance of this service.

The second obvious health hazard in the settlement is, in fact, a hazard caused by the City of Cape Town's developmental intervention in Sweet Home itself. Years ago, the City built a number of open-air sewage canals running through the length of the settlement (something Premier Helen Zille [continues to claim](#) does not exist in Cape Town when she campaigns in Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal).



Sewage canals are a health hazard for residents

These open sewage canals become a health hazard for a number of reasons. They collect refuse, excrement, food and toxic substances from all over the settlement. They also become blocked very easily. Furthermore, from Sweet Home, the sewage canals leave the settlement and run through private property on which sits, among other businesses, a vehicle mechanic and panel-beating business. Residents complain that the sewage system is blocked on this private property and, with the water further contaminated by the businesses, it then gets pushed back into the Sweet Home community. In winter when it rains, this sewage water becomes a lake which overflows into people's homes. Children regularly play near and inside these canals.

The health consequences of this are tremendous. According to the aforementioned UCT risk assessment report; there are high incidents of TB, asthma and stomach ailments as a result of

these health risks. Furthermore, a chemical analysis of the sewage water found “an alarmingly high e coli count, which in some specimens was as high as 250 times the national guideline!”⁴ This would explain residents' assertions that their children have a range of skin conditions and other serious developmental ailments not mentioned in the report.



Adjacent private property that is blocking and further polluting Sweet Home's sewage system

It is difficult to quantify the impact that these environmental factors have on residents' ability to take care of themselves and their families. A committee member named Nobanzi explained that Sweet Home is a

sick, dirty place. There's no schools, there's no clinics. Children and people who are old become sick. It's not nice to stay in the shack with no electricity and sometimes they [the shacks] are burning, we are using the bucket system, that's why we are fighting.

It is no wonder, then, that the community is furious with the conditions they are living under and how they are being treated at all levels of government. This is why they have banded together into a well-organised system of community governance in order to change things.

History of community governance

Before the “split” in 2011, there was only one committee in Sweet Home. This committee was run by an un-elected ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) member named Stembela “Forest” Ndathane. According to many community members, the division in the community took place because Forest, as chairperson, was not working for the community. He was “focusing on politics” (specifically electoral politics and the ANC) rather than listening to the needs and grievances of his community. He was a corrupt strongman of the settlement who would control access to the community hall and sell “space” in Sweet Home for newcomers to

4 Community Risk Assessment Report: Sweet Home Farm, 2009

put up shacks. According to community member Nonkosi Makheba, he would give out Disaster Management blankets to ANC members only and steal food donated to the crèche to give to his friends. A researcher from UCT who has previously worked with Forest warned me that he would engage in “verbal fights” with community members and at one point even “had a murder rap against him”. One day last year, however, residents said “enough is enough”.

Around July of 2011, a large section of the community became increasingly frustrated with Councillor Thembinkosi Pupa and with Forest whom they saw as working against the community and hiding community development information from other sidelined committee members. On the 16th of August, [residents mobilised](#) to demand that Forest hand over the keys to the community hall for which they claim he was charging residents for access and reserving the space for ANC members. When Forest and Cllr. Pupa refused to give up the keys, community members broke into the hall and installed a new lock. They then withdrew support from Forest and demanded that any authentic community committee would speak about development issues raised by residents rather than party politics.



Forest tried to reserve this NGO built community hall for ANC members only

On the 21st of August 2011, Forest went on to found a new committee which remained close to Cllr. Pupa and is affiliated with the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO). Forest told me that it is an ANC and SACP only committee and it is seen by many community members as existing only to carry out the wishes of the Councillor and Forest. It has very little popular support in Sweet Home.

In September 2011, residents came together in a mass meeting and elected a new committee. Siyamboleka “Siya” James was elected as the chairperson of the committee. Siya works for a Christian church-linked NGO that does some community development work in Sweet Home as well as other townships in Cape Town. While he was active in party politics in the past, Siya claims that he is sick and tired of being misled by political parties. He says that development

should be driven by issues rather than party affiliations. He has lost faith in elections. He does not think he is going to vote in the next elections.

This second committee is loosely affiliated with the United South African Civic Organisation (USACO) and is not affiliated to any political party. Based on the wishes of the residents of the community, this new committee resolved to remain disconnected from electoral politics and to focus on the development of the community.

This report will focus mostly on the actions and '[living politics](#)' of this second more representative committee as they tell us a lot more about the socio-political make-up of the Sweet Home community and because they were the committee at the forefront of recent protests.

Committee structure and affiliations

Sweet Home is divided into a total of nine different 'sections'. Each section of Sweet Home has elected its own sub-committee with a total of eight members. These sub-committees are responsible for section-specific issues such as crime, debts, inter-household disputes, numbering of shacks and electricity and water problems.

Each sub-committee is affiliated with the main USACO-linked committee that was formed in September last year. This main committee consists of eight members in total. These constitute five elected executive members plus three additional non-elected members. When general meetings are held, each section sends at most three delegates to the main committee. They are required to report back to their section after the general meeting. All committee and sub-committee members are volunteers who are not receiving any remuneration for their time.

What I found quite telling is that most – if not all – of the eight committee members are very active at attending meetings both inside and outside of the community. Outside of a few well organised communities and this is generally a rare occurrence in community struggles since 1994 as committee members tend to lose interest quickly or are pushed out by other combative or authoritarian community leaders.

USACO is an umbrella body of community committees and civic groups. They are new and extremely small in comparison with the ANC-affiliated SANCO. The body claims that it is not linked to any political party but is rather open to members and voters of all political parties. If this is the case, it has the ability to unite various factions in various communities under common development and socio-political goals – a hugely important asset in a City that is extremely politically divided and sectarian in so many ways. USACO seems to be most active in areas such as Philippi and parts of Khayelitsha, Nyanga and Gugulethu. A man named Matshoba is the chairperson of USACO in the province, but there are questions about how active and effective USACO actually is outside of Sweet Home.

After interviewing committee and sub-committee members, the most interesting revelation was just how legitimate their claim of being non-party political actually is. In order to get accurate information and to prevent any backlash against the individuals, I promised that party voting preferences would remain anonymous. Committee and sub-committee members vote for the

following parties:

- One member of the committee and many members of the sub-committee vote ANC. One of these committee members is now considering voting for the Democratic Alliance (DA).
- At least three members vote for the United Democratic Movement (UDM). One member had previously stood for councillor under the UDM banner but is no longer an active member of the party.
- At least three members vote for the DA (the one DA member was the only committee member arrested during protests on the 31st of July).
- At least two members vote for the Congress of the People (COPE).
- Some committee members told me that they either don't vote, are not going to vote in the next election or would not disclose their voter preference.
- No committee member claimed affiliation to the ANC Youth League and when this was probed further, all committee members stated categorically that Youth League members were not involved in either the USACO committee or the SANCO-ANC committee.

When I spoke to Forest about this matter, he implied that that he did not work with this new committee because he viewed it as against the ANC. The ANC and UDM do not work together, he said. But the committee doesn't seem affiliated to the UDM either. When asked in more detail about the affiliation of this committee to various political parties, Siya, the committee's chairperson, explained that he used to be involved actively with political parties but he now feels so angry and misled by all of them that he does not think he will vote in the next elections.

This disillusionment with political parties was a recurring opinion of many committee members, whether or not they had voted in previous elections. As Nobanzi stated, "people are voting every time, but there's nothing [to show for it]. We don't know why we are voting now, because there's no use of this voting."

Engagement with government and protests

The community of Sweet Home has, for years, attempted to engage with government officials to improve and speed up service delivery and the upgrading of their settlement. For the most part, as Siya (who was a sub-committee member at the time) recalls, the officials just kept on making promises but there is very little that the community had wanted that was actually accomplished. The primary exceptions were the 1998 relocation of some residents to houses in Better Life and the 1999 relocation of some other residents' shacks to their own plots in Mfuleni. In 2006, the City installed electricity, made space for emergency access roads and dug out open-air sewers in some parts of the settlement.

During 2011 and early 2012, the community committee tried to engage with Cllr. Pupa. They were ignored. On the 5th of March 2012, the community decided to take to the streets. They took their chemical toilets to the corner of Duinefontein and Lansdowne Roads where the toilets were burned. According to community members, they did this because they didn't want those toilets,

they wanted functional flushing toilets. To make their point, they also destroyed the traffic light at that corner.

After these protests, Cllr. Pupa was forced to engage with this new committee. He took them to meetings at the Civic Centre where they met Mayor Patricia de Lille and Mayco member for Human Settlements Ernest Sonnenberg. The committee was handed a document showing that the City had recently bought the remaining private land on which Sweet Home is situated (this information came five months late since the land was actually purchased in December 2011). They promised that by the 1st of July 2012, tar-access roads, a drainage system and electricity would be constructed and implemented throughout the settlement.

Disheartened by the lack of progress seen while working through Cllr. Pupa, the new committee that was elected then attempted to meet directly with City of Cape Town officials. They also corresponded via letters to the Mayor, the Speaker, Cllr Sonnenberg and others. They have also approached the sub-council. However, according to committee members, the 1st of July came and went without engagement from government. In fact, City officials and Cllr. Pupa have begun to ignore phone calls by committee members seeking to find out when the engagement and development process will begin.

The community has realised that the government has taken away their dignity as human beings; that government officials see residents as people who “don't have value”. It is because of this frustration – the frustration of a committee and a community that is being treated with contempt and ignored by the City – that the residents have once again taken to the streets.

31st of July, another blockade and police response

Again frustrated by the lack of engagement from the City, Sweet Home decided to return to the streets. Community and committee members recount a mass meeting of several hundred or a thousand furious residents in which they “decided everyone together”, not just “one person” to block Lansdowne, Duinefontein and Vanguard Roads.

Lindiwe, for example, explained to me why she is one of the people who went to the streets that day. From Section F, she is the principal of a crèche in Sweet Home and is on the committee. There are over 50 children at the crèche which is funded by a church and is run out of a shack next to the community hall. She decided to protest because “the children come to school with rashes, they sick all the time [from the pollution].” As the principal of the school, she looks after these sick children and the parents sometimes say that the kids are sick because of the crèche, when she knows they are actually sick because of the environmental conditions the kids are living under. Many parents don't have money to pay crèche fees, so Lindiwe sometimes uses her own family's money to feed the children. Recounting the day she helped blockade the nearby thoroughfares, she told me “I was protesting for the children at my crèche”.

Residents burned tyres on the street (rather than burning toilets because “few [chemical] toilets were left”) and again destroyed the robots at the Lansdowne and Duinefontein intersection. When the police arrived, they began shooting rubber bullets at protesters. Some responded by throwing rocks at the police, a defensive action, while the rest dispersed back into the settlement.

Despite the protest having ended, community members recount how police invaded their community, shooting at protesters and innocent bystanders alike with rubber bullets. People were even shot in their own homes. Subsequently, the police seem to have randomly arrested 12 people. A resident of Mannenberg who was visiting his girlfriend in Sweet Home was among those arrested. Interestingly, the only committee member that was arrested was also an ardent DA supporter.

On that day, police even went as far as shooting Thandikhaya Shweni in front of his home. Thandikhaya recounts what happened to him:

I just returned to my house after the protest and I took off my jacket because it was hot and went outside to see what was the commotion with the police. When I went outside, I saw the police shoot people by their houses. Some innocent people were shot...I see the rubber bullets coming. I went running to my house but turned back just to look at where the police were and was shot in the eye. The bleeding wouldn't stop and my sister took me to the hospital. When the doctors at Groote Schuur did their operation, they realised that it was a real bullet, not a rubber bullet.



Thandikhaya, a churchgoer, was shot in the face by a live police bullet in front of his shack in Sweet Home

Days after this, Siya tried to lay a charge against the police on behalf of Thandikhaya. Police at Samora Machel SAPS refused to accept his charge or go take a statement at the hospital. The Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) in Bellville also refused. When Thandikhaya got out of hospital, he went to police who gave him the J88 medical forensics form for the doctor. The doctor at Groote Schuur Hospital gave him the run around, henceforth sending him to the wrong person where the form was received and promptly lost.

This was not proper procedure. The police at Samora Machel should have informed Thandikhaya that the J88 needed to go to the first doctor that saw him. In this case, the first doctor he visited after being shot was at the emergency trauma unit at GF Jooste Hospital. Thandikhaya is now making plans to get a new form so that he can once again attempt to lay a charge of attempted murder for the police's actions on the 31st of July.

Response by committee members and city officials

The committee was at pains to show that they did not support the destruction of the robots or the defensive violence of throwing rocks at the police after the police had fired on residents with rubber bullets. According to them, it was the justified anger of some community members that resulted in the property destruction and the rock throwing. But they did not see it as the right thing to do and expressed hope that any future protests and acts of civil disobedience would be more peaceful.

Still, they were also quite clear that City officials only take them seriously when they take to the streets. They recognise that sustained protests and controversial forms of civil disobedience is the only way they are able to force the City to engage with them. Their experience is that 'following the proper channels' simply results in them being lied to or ignored.

The committee's views on the relative efficacy of disruptive forms of protest was borne out by the state's response to their road blockade. Immediately following the protest, Lwandiso Stofile from the City of Cape Town came to the community, told them to stop protesting and promised that Mayor de Lille would take things seriously. The following day, a whole range of City officials descended on Sweet Home. They "promised everything", including the immediate electrification of the settlement, the construction of access roads, and the installation of a sewage system. They also promised to address the community's grievances regarding public toilets and the unsanitary open-air sewers. Finally, they promised that arrested community members would be released from police custody immediately.

However, according to committee members, the next day only three workers arrived and then left when the committee could not get hold of Mr Stofile. Once again, since that day, Mr Stofile and other City officials resumed ignoring calls from the committee. Community members are furious once again. It is clear that sustained engagement from the state will require sustained protest. Yet they do not know what action they will next take to make sure the City addresses their demands. The committee is thinking about pooling together funds for a march to the Civic Centre.

Politics: the official response

The political response of the DA and of the ANC Youth League regarding the protest at Sweet Home is quite different to the City's response on the ground. This is a common occurrence in the political arena as politicians present current events to the media and the voting public in a very different light compared to the actual work being undertaken down at the grassroots level. In this sense, I take a similar view as renowned photographer and journalist Greg Marinovich who recently exposed the second location of the police massacre at Marikana. [He has said](#) that “there's a preponderance within the media to rely on the spokespersons. If the spokesperson doesn't say it, then it doesn't count. And that's pretty sad. Speak to the people involved, not the spokesperson. Spokespeople are paid to lie. Why do we print what they say all the time?”

Patricia de Lille, Helen Zille and other DA representatives seem to have attempted to, and succeeded, in turning the media representation of the protests and legitimate grievances of communities such as Sweet Home into a political and electoral fight between the DA and ANC. For instance, on the 3rd of August, de Lille was [quoted](#) as saying that video footage showed that Sweet Home farm protesters were "carefully marshalled by identifiable individuals" which she said indicated that the protest was not organised solely by the community. This statement is, of course, predicated on the widely held prejudiced belief that shack dwellers are not capable of organising their own protests. Yet, such statements, insinuating that this is primarily a political party fight, have become the primary headline throughout the mainstream media (for instance, see [here](#) and [here](#)).

On the other hand, the ANC Youth League and other ANC affiliated structures have responded by refusing responsibility for the protests but at the same time kicking up antagonistic political rhetoric with statements such as their call to make the city “ungovernable”. This has led to the assumption by many that they may in fact bear responsibility for coordinating recent protests – such as those at Sweet Home. The Youth League is more than willing to nurture this impression which provides them with the aura of having popular legitimacy in Cape Town

However, as shown in this report, the Youth League is clearly not involved in Sweet Home at all. Even Forest is willing to admit that the Youth League has no members in the settlement. Their call to make Cape Town “ungovernable” is not part of the agenda of residents and their elected committee which is focused primarily on struggling for the right to engage the City around questions of service delivery in their own area of residence. There is no evidence that any outside actors are involved in any way in the protests by Sweet Home. Furthermore, those main actors representing Sweet Home are not even primarily affiliated with the ANC as a whole. The irony of it all is that many of those involved in this particular community's actions are actually DA supporters and are engaged in protest against both DA and ANC politicians.

It is likely, and there have been reports by alternative media and activists that corroborate this, that subsequent protests in the Cape Flats by Barcelona, Europe, Site B, Siyahlala, and SST, to name a few, have little or nothing to do with the ANC Youth League. At most, the Youth League is a side actor with regards to the majority of the protests and are merely piggy-backing off the legitimate grievances and anger of shackdwellers.

Conclusion: As a case study, why is Sweet Home important?

Nobanzi, who I spoke about earlier, came from the Eastern Cape to Cape Town as a single mother so that she could find a job to support her three children. Even though she could not find a job, she remains the only breadwinner for her children, making ends meet through odd jobs and informal businesses. She says she volunteers in her community because this is one of the ways she is able to improve the lives of her children.



Severe health problems are caused by raw sewage flooding resident's homes

She told me something quite inspiring when explaining why she took to the streets on the 31st of July: “We are not fighting because we want to mess things, we are fighting because we are struggling. Inside our hearts there is no peace.”

In the context of the debate about the use of violence by protesters here in Cape Town, in shack settlements all over the country and in the mines in communities such as Marikana, this tells us a great deal. Nobanzi is no 'hooligan'. She is no 'anarchist'. She does not see herself as a revolutionary or a political actor. She also does not condone the destruction of property – especially the burning of the community's disgusting but needed chemical toilets. And yet, she participated in the road blockade because she is struggling and this is the only way that she and others have been able to get the attention of government.

Yet she is clear that she is merely responding to the violence of the state, to the violence of a society that hates the poor, that denies them livelihoods and leaves them landless and homeless. This society shoots protesters already damaged by poverty, massacres workers already victimised by their bosses, and is so unabashedly violent that it calls for yet further militarisation (whether with the ANC's 'shoot to kill' policies or the DA's call for the army to invade Lavender Hill and Hanover Park). Inside Nobanzi's heart there is no peace simply because every minute of every day she is a victim of unconscionable forms of structural violence that is defended with physical violence of a police force unwilling to recognise of her human dignity.

How then can she do anything but cry out and then either choose to wither away and die or to resist and fight for something better? A living politics as opposed to the politics practiced by politicians can only begin once people recognise this structural violence. Authentic community development can only start by first acknowledging the legitimate anger of the poor. Nobanzi's heart can only begin to find a semblance of peace when she and her fellow neighbours assert their right to be the primary decision-makers in their own lives.

Until then, the structural and repressive violence will continued unhindered; the political bickering will remain a smokescreen for the real issues; poor black people will cling, as if shackled, to the fabrication that is Freedom Day; and South Africa will remain one of the most unequal and economically segregated countries in the world.

For the past month, the police have surrounded Sweet Home as a deterrent to further protests. Siya has remarked that they feel “imprisoned” in their own community. The government has plenty of money to maintain the busy roads surrounding the settlement (which are economically important as channels bringing people to work for wealthy companies), and yet they still have no money to fix the appalling and inhumane conditions under which Sweet Home residents live.

A state that treats the most oppressed people in society as if it were some sort of internal enemy funded by a mysterious third force, is a state that is completely failing to address the gross inequalities in our society. The conspiracy theories that NGOs and politicians peddle to try and explain away the rising tide of protest in Cape Town have little to do with reality and are a further affront to the dignity of the city's poorest residents.

It is true, then, that police cannot surround every shack settlement in Cape Town – there are hundreds of them. Another community will rise up and blockade a different but just as vital

thoroughfare. And de Lille (and those Mayors that will follow her) will continue to send the police from one settlement to the next, playing musical chairs with the anger of the poor.

But no game, especially one as oppressive and violent as this one, can last forever.

(I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone, named and unnamed, who agreed to have me interview them about the history and socio-political context of Sweet Home Farm. Those that were not interviewed anonymously include Siya, Lindiwe, Nobanazi, Forest, Nonkosi, Thandikhaya, Fihla, Johnson, and Mncedisi. A special thanks also to Janeske Botes of Wits University and Richard Pithouse of Rhodes University for helping edit this report).

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