The city of Cape Town has attempted to intervene in areas of city-owned properties to approve backyard accommodations. Backyard units in municipal housing areas account for 38% of the 109,000 documented backyard structures in the city. The city provided legal mechanisms to include backyards in the minimum standards for service provision in accordance to national policy norms and standards drawing on funding from the Urban Settlement Development Grant focusing on infrastructural investment and legal protection for backyarders.

Many local NGOs like the Development Action Group focus on capacity building through a "right to the city" framework committed to offering technical advice to local CBOs. DAG has engaged in research of the Kensington/Fractreton backyarders and facilitates horizontal learning programs for the Cape Metropole Backyarders Association.

Rather than comply with organized horizontal learning programs facilitated by NGOs, the CBOs take advantage of the meeting space to create their own agendas and voice concerns to each other to foster networking potential and mutual learning.

CASE STUDY - Backyarder informal rentalship

The Backyarder housing model provide a narrative of how individuals create different types of housing models as a response to misdirected governmental action and its lack of strategic focus. The Backyarders blur the lines between informal structures incorporated in the housing typology. Exploring the social spaces generated through this community-level approach will paint the picture of an overlooked but significant proportion of a burgeoning housing submarket in Cape Town through the lens of the Backyarders.

INFORMALITY - a framework for development

As evidenced by the burgeoning informal housing sector in many developing countries, governments, planners, and general stakeholders’ traditional housing policies have failed to tend to the needs of the communities affected. Given the projected rapid increase in the proportion of the global population dwelling informally, the issue must be taken seriously and integrated into future planning practices.

GOVERNANCE - municipal / institutional / local

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COMMUNITY - LEVEL RESPONSE

Many local NGOs like the Development Action Group focus on capacity building through a "right to the city" framework. The CBOs have engaged in research of the Kensington/Fractreton backyarders and facilitates horizontal learning programs for the Cape Metropole Backyarders Association.

METHODS

The primary method of data collection was in-person interviewing. The interviews were conducted conversational but were framed in terms of understanding how the interviewee came to live in his/her current housing situation and to understand personal hardships/benefits/aspirations regarding their housing. Prepared departure questions are listed below. These are general questions aimed at backyarders, but questions were tailored to individual situations and followed accounts. The research conducted site visits with a community host Adiel. Sample questions:

1. social + physical infrastructure --> successful housing delivery
2. addressing benefits of informality as opposed to formalization as best practice
3. realize networking potential among geographically disparate communities - power of sharing stories / self-organizing strategies
4. self-build and in-situ upgrading tendencies among communities (natural process)