

[Douglas Schorr](#) [1]

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Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing has been on the cards for as long as the new government has been in. And nothing near targets have been met. More than that, the continued unequal geography of South Africa's cities is indicative of the greater crisis facing the country, which needs a far greater solution. Cape Town International Airport is now surrounded by the ever-growing ocean of Khayelitsha's shacks; proof of how the country has split between those who make and bake the economy and those who, forcibly excluded, take. It is into that split that the nation as a whole will slide, unless something is done.

Consider this

What if we started in the Cape's middle class suburb of Durbanville? On the 465-metre-6th hole of the golf course we build a 44-storey, 22 units per floor, apartment block. Not the standard concrete tower, instead we craft a "Boeri vertical forest" [\[i\]](#), an indigenous garden that sucks CO2 and blows out oxygen - a food producing, bird and useful insect haven. [\[ii\]](#)

The lakeside common on the Welgemoed border could house Block II, and below Table Mountain more, and more! Cape units would draw families (mostly) from Khayelitsha. Suddenly those that work together daily, oftentimes inside each other's homes, would live together too.

Poor facts

"The train of life is there, explained my gardener of years ago. "You know just enough to know you must catch that train! You fight so hard, throwing off ankle chains, gathering money, hug and run but it's chugging away. Well-wishers exclaim, 'there will be another to Johannesburg.' Of course you make it, the resolve is there, but the onward links north, south, east and west at the-great-interchange-station have left ... you are always one-more missed train behind."

Radicals, left and right, argue that there are too many people, and something needs to be done. True, so let's provide opportunities, educate and train because those "too many" are here already.

Instead the government has chosen to grow more isolated squatter camps; far away cheap RDP housing schemes and poorly supported "townships" (an economist's smokescreen word) where the poorest compete with the poorest for the only prize on offer - best poorest.

It is time to act on the notion that the Intelligent Quotient of children born in the normal range in the Bell Curve changes for better or for worse, influenced by the environmental-living conditions in which they grow.

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Children coming out of successful environments grow into adults who are (at least) able to cope and contribute to modern living. Poorly rounded children don't and it doesn't appear to be entirely their fault.

A range of sub-quality living issues (from diet to parental involvement) and environmental conditions (from provided facilities to community support/cohesion) contribute to the children of poverty growing into poverty stricken adults (physically, emotionally and mentally) unable to engage modern economic system demands. It is this simple ... 2000, 1000 even 500 years ago it was not a problem, but now if a community subsists outside of today's growth points, it is lost.

As capitalism's drive for perpetual profit runs out of junk to sell and credit worthy debtors (in a word; fails), more than ever South Africa needs to develop its home market. All - not just 35 percent - are needed to be fully productive wage earners and consuming participants.

Share to live

If you live in "a" Durbanville look around, be amazed, recognise why it is so incredibly easy to be successful. A progressive home is a giant step up but all of that learning and growth is confirmed or rejected in the wider community.

Successful communities are supportive, enabled by good infrastructure and facilities, filled with books, computers and competent teachers and, being close to employment points "create" more leisure and "free to choose what to do" time.

It is not a liberal "thing". To move beyond mere survival behind electrified walls, hoping the latest vaccination drive was good, planning for a dead Rand; the non-participants have to be incorporated, and fast. As much as apartheid saw train tickets that were not issued, so too the last 23 years of African National Congress (ANC) conforming to Western monetary and trade rules has damaged the Republic of South Africa (RSA).

Bringing those from the poorer to the better suburbs is the nation building starting point. Incoming weaker citizens are quick to copy and look up to "heroes". In a few years they will want to improve on the "copy and aspire" to having their own "students". There will always be sweepers and managers, but the gap of contribution will close, with a leap with every generation.

If the process were reversed and the middle class of Durbanville found themselves in Khayelitsha (roughly) 70 percent would, given the enormity of change, fail. But by keeping the Khayelitshas over-there, comfortably just-out-of sight is for the middle class to drown slowly, anyway, as the economic quicksand spreads. It has to be a "work in progress" assault on poverty. Start by making prime land pay.

It starts with food

With Cape Town's golf courses given over to homes, why not let that arable land be used for what it's good for? Instead of golf-course staff trimming, watering grass and ornamental trees, they can be retrained to run nurseries stocking, not European flowers, Californian trees and Malaysian ferns, but vegetable seedlings, compost materials and gardening tools.

France, half the size of South Africa, has a population that nears 67 million, and has 18.5 million hectares of arable land. South Africa has 15 million [\[iii\]](#) and of that, "High-potential arable land" comprises only 22 percent ...". [\[iv\]](#)

From that tiny paddock, the global capitalist system pressures South Africa to export to pay their bills and accrued interest while "one in four South Africans faces hunger"[\[v\]](#) and about 60 percent have never had regular wholesome meals. As for RSA's citizens of the future ... well ... "about 53 percent of children under six live in poor households"[\[vi\]](#) ... "The number of children with severe stunting due to malnutrition has increased"[\[vii\]](#). Reversing this is the middle classes' choice.

In six-eight weeks, on our transformed golf courses, there will be spreads of red beetroot, trellises of

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green beans, rows of carrots, with sweet potatoes covering the rough and cabbage in among runs of paw-paw and guava, border strips of baby corn and fences adorned with passion fruit and strawberries. Birds, bees and butterflies, rabbit and chicken, farmed fish too. A great deal of the good farmland given up progressively over the last 100 years will be intensively recouped.

It was the blind belief that private company profits come first that ushered in the taking the best farming land and planting for private developers and private banks brick houses. The land occupied by parliament in Cape Town and the Union Buildings complex, I am sure were once vibrant, verdant, fruitful – useful – spots; I am sure Bloemfontein was once the grazing lands of BaFokeng livestock. This needs to change.

Train, and again train

It won't be easy: Two generations in the concrete world of cities means the majority of South Africans will need training, guidance and schedules to follow on how to once again work the soil.

As the plots will produce the bread and butter income constant follow-up will be needed. Don't be alarmed ... professional rugby has coaches, the "Bread Basket of Africa" Rhodesian farmers (1960s) were heavily subsidised with an entire ministry dedicated to serving them plus any number of fertiliser, seed, water experts and equipment salesmen. Spend some to gain a lot. What an opportunity for home economics and agricultural students to get practical, for supermarkets to advise on reintroducing local fresh markets. What a contribution to slowing Climate Change!

I am not saying golf is not allowed. Let's just move the course to a place more suitable. Perhaps the dunes given up? After all, do we have the space for the luxury of green fields for nothing but entertainment?

Given the alternate of a nation in chaos, moving the course elsewhere wouldn't be costly or difficult or out of the way. The incoming folk will give a welcome revival to Durbanville shopping complexes, boost church attendances, hot-desk the schools, give meaning to Boy Scouts and Lions alike, fill sports courts, greens, fields and transform the sports stadium into what it should be – a vibrant exercise cum competition park, and the attached hall, also virtually unused, is ideal for 24/7 adult learning classes.

We could make it work; all it would take is common buy-in, a shared constructive attitude. The space they give over will make a grand sea view horse racing – golfing complex, the 19th Pub and Grub on the beach!

Nation building

People who share space don't have to like each other, but they do develop true tolerance as they grow to understand each other and appreciate socio-economic differences. Helping comes easier then. That is one benefit of, not integrated, but interconnected class living. It is in the longer term that nation-building will (almost automatically) happen, and the greater the acceptance now, the shorter "longer term" [acceptance] becomes.

Surviving in the poor areas of South Africa requires a will to live, unity (at the same time as battling one's neighbour for existence), creativity and ingenuity. But figuring out how many uses for a plastic bag or an empty tin doesn't equip people to integrate into a modern economy, and that is where the successful South Africans are. But for how long? While it is no fault of those left-behind, they, like Quelea, individually non-threatening, but collectively formidable, weigh on the branches of the tree called South Africa.

A team runs as fast as its slowest member. Building an elite team demands drawing necessary weaker partners in and up to the standard.

The way things are has to change. "American imperialism makes emigration dangerous", said Daluxolo Mpofo, "and South Africa is small enough, still just cohesive enough, to begin the climb", said Kepler Wessels.

* Douglas Schorr (edited by Milton Schorr) is a former soldier and district commissioner in then Rhodesia. He is today a committed critic of capitalism and colonial legacies, citing them as the source of poverty in Africa.

[i] <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/feb/17/forest-cities-radical-pla...> [2]

[iii] Video @ <https://mashable.com/2017/02/07/china-vertical-forest-smog/#DSuVFGN5fkqH> [3]

[iiii] See <http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/Agriculture/Arable-land/H...> [4]

[iv] See www.gov.za/about-sa/agriculture [5]

[v] At www.voanews.com/a/malnutrition...in-south-africa/ [6]

[vi] From <http://theconversation.com/why-child-malnutrition-is-still-a-problem-in-...> [7]

[vii] <http://www.nda.agric.za/doaDev/sideMenu/internationalTrade/docs/itrade> [8]

Tags: [Land reform](#) [9]

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Article-Summary:

The author argues that arable land that is used for entertainment and other recreational activities in South Africa could be used for agriculture to feed millions of South Africans who cannot afford a decent meal. Trying to "safeguard" the interests of the middle class by keeping that land for leisure instead of using it for the general good will not protect the interests of the middle class either.

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[3] <https://mashable.com/2017/02/07/china-vertical-forest-smog/#DSuVFGN5fkqH>

[4] <http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/Agriculture/Arable-land/Hectares>

[5] <http://www.gov.za/about-sa/agriculture>

[6] <http://www.voanews.com/a/malnutrition...in-south-africa/>

[7] <http://theconversation.com/why-child-malnutrition-is-still-a-problem-in-south-africa-22-years-into-democracy-60224>

[8] <http://www.nda.agric.za/doaDev/sideMenu/internationalTrade/docs/itrade>

[9] <https://www.pambazuka.org/tags/land-reform>

[10] <https://www.pambazuka.org/article-issue/859>

[11] <https://www.pambazuka.org/taxonomy/term/3288>

[12] <https://www.pambazuka.org/taxonomy/term/3287>

