

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement and motivation

South Africa faces a large housing delivery backlog and dissatisfaction with the housing products delivered to date. The low-cost housing development sector requires urgent attention and further research in order to improve the living conditions of individual communities and the broader South African population.

According to Wilkinson (1998:216) the scale of the housing problem confronting the South African government is enormous. The number of units delivered has paled in comparison with the growing demand for low-cost housing, resulting in backlogs and a disconcerting degree of quality. The need for improved approaches is clearly evident and in this regard. Goebel (2007:299) states: 'Government stated that new models of low-cost housing delivery were being sought and supported on all levels of government'.

The need for an inclusive approach which considers community participation and stakeholder engagement, whilst considering the wide scale of impact related to housing development is recognised, but is currently not implemented. In this regard the quality, desirability and sustainability of existing housing provisions prompts further investigation into more community-driven housing projects which address the needs of low-income beneficiaries whilst making optimum use of available resources.

Planners need to understand the scope of problems and the benefits related to strategic, conceptual and implementation alternatives. The benefits of an improved approach will extend beyond low-income beneficiaries, as housing development and the outcomes delivered impact South Africa at an economic, social, cultural and spatial level.

In this regard this research will aim to provide alternatives to the current dogma of supplying sterile and unsafe brick and mortar boxes, placed on sites chosen for their low cost, instead of their potential to create socio-economic and cultural opportunities. Dewar & Uytendogaardt (1995:3) states the following: 'The dominant impression is one of bleak, wind-blasted landscapes, with almost no vegetation in sight, covered by a non-differentiated blanket of free-standing little boxes, located kilometres from significant employment nodes'. The poor location of most projects under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the implications related to ineffective localities, indicate the impact of low-cost residential location on a regional scale.

According to Mabula (2011) a disjuncture between spatial plans and housing strategies further contribute to difficulties in identifying affordable and well-located land for low-cost residential development. Where low-cost residences are delivered on the periphery or even on better located land, the quality of the units delivered still leaves much to be desired. Wenzel (2010) states that low-cost housing schemes are aesthetic disaster areas, with rows of uniform units which impart no sense of identity or individuality. According to Goebel (2007:292): 'Studies found that people dislike the model of housing used and would prefer larger houses'. This sentiment is echoed by Poulsen & Silverman (2005:2) who state that housing beneficiaries have often expressed their dissatisfaction with the state of finishes and the size of units provided.

Alternative strategies must thus be sought which address issues regarding the quantity and quality of housing delivered. In this regard management, planning and design alternatives need to be considered in the hopes of providing sustainable housing which contributes to an improved quality of life. In Support of this approach, recommendations are provided according to management, planning and design principles in Chapter 14.

1.2 Research goals and objectives

This research will aim to suggest a set of prominent and realistic recommendations on the improvement of low-cost housing delivery by focussing on the various aspects which influence current housing developments. In this regard the main research question to address is: 'To what extent is it possible to improve low-cost housing delivery in South Africa and what can be done to improve delivery processes and housing quality?'

1.2.1 Primary research objectives include

- Examining supportive pre-developmental conditions and considerations.
- Researching design and layout approaches in low-cost residential development.
- Evaluating current methodologies and providing new and innovative approaches to both low-cost residential policy planning, management and layout and design.

1.2.2 Secondary research objectives include

- Investigating the South African status quo with regard to housing policies and legislature.
- Identifying the merits of historical theoretical models and their value in modern day housing development.
- Discussing the importance of a locally focussed development approach with regard to the role of local municipalities versus provincial authorities in low-cost residential development.
- Identifying the value of low-cost housing in local economic development and sustainable socio-economic growth.
- Discussing the role of community participation in delivering sustainable neighbourhoods and communities.

- Investigating the need for higher density development with specific reference to the integration of various housing typologies.
- Exploring the relevance and benefits of alternative construction materials in low-cost residential development.
- Exploring the informal backyard rental sector.
- Exploring the approaches followed in South African case studies of varying successes in various provinces.

It should be noted that the conclusions drawn and the subsequent recommendations made will inform a PhD study to be initiated in 2013. The conclusions drawn and recommendations made will provide research questions to be addressed in future and should thus be viewed as an introduction to prospective research concepts.

As an additional objective many of the research questions raised and topics addressed in this study will inform the writing of various articles related to housing development. In this regard an article entitled 'The South African housing environment and alternative approaches to improve living conditions', based on some of the findings of this study, co-authored by Dr E.J. Cilliers and Ms S.G. Cornelius, was submitted for peer review and publication to the South African Planning Institute (SAPI). This article was also the subject of a presentation at the SAPI Planning Africa Conference 2012, where it was favourably received.

1.3 Research methodology

The research methodology comprised of a literature study and empirical investigation, upon which certain conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.

1.3.1 Literary study

Numerous articles related to the subjects covered in the various chapters of this study informed the research conducted and contributed to the subsequent conclusions drawn and recommendations made. These articles provided insight into the existing knowledge base which facilitated the identification of concepts which required further research and investigation. The literature reviewed for this study encompassed work from both national and international authors from a variety of fields, given the diverse nature and multiple impacts connected to housing development.

Research also involved the evaluation of government literature and policies such as the Department of Housing's White Paper on a New Housing Policy and Strategy for South Africa of 1994, the Urban Development Framework of 1997, the Department Of Land Affairs' White Paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Management of 2001, the Breaking New Ground Initiative of 2004 and the National Housing Code of 2009. These documents conveyed the South African government's approach to housing delivery and placed all other literary sources and the empirical data collected in the appropriate context.

Please see the bibliography of this study for a complete list of the literary sources used.

1.3.2 Empirical investigation

A substantial amount of empirical research was conducted which included several structured interviews, the distribution of questionnaires and the evaluation of various case studies.

Interviews were conducted with planners and professionals in the public and private sector. Interviewees included:

- Mr G. Juthe, Director of Housing for the Oudtshoorn Municipality
- Ms S. Bruce, acting Town Planner at the Oudtshoorn Municipality
- Mr D. Larsen, Director at NuPlan Africa Durbanville
- Mr R. Thomas, Director at NuPlan Africa Durbanville
- Mrs I. Swanevelder, professional planner and Director of the ProPlanning Academy in Potchefstroom.

South African case studies were also evaluated in an attempt to determine best practice approaches. Site visits, presentations by developers and popular media articles informed the research conducted. These case studies include:

- Cosmo City in Gauteng which is commonly seen as the largest influence on the construction of the Breaking New Ground Initiative of 2004, which is one of the country's most important guidelines for developing sustainable human settlements.
- Olievenhoutbosch in Gauteng which was successfully developed with the Breaking New Ground Initiative's objectives as development guidelines.
- The N2 Gateway Project in the Western Cape which was developed as a measure to the Breaking New Ground Initiative and is associated with numerous development difficulties to take note of in future developments.
- Rose Valley in the Western Cape which is still in its planning phase and thus provides insight into the challenges faced by municipalities when charged with low-cost housing development.

Recommendations were also made for Rose Valley, based on the theoretical findings, empirical investigations and best-practice scenarios captured by the various case studies.

Study area locations within the South African context are provided by Figure 1.

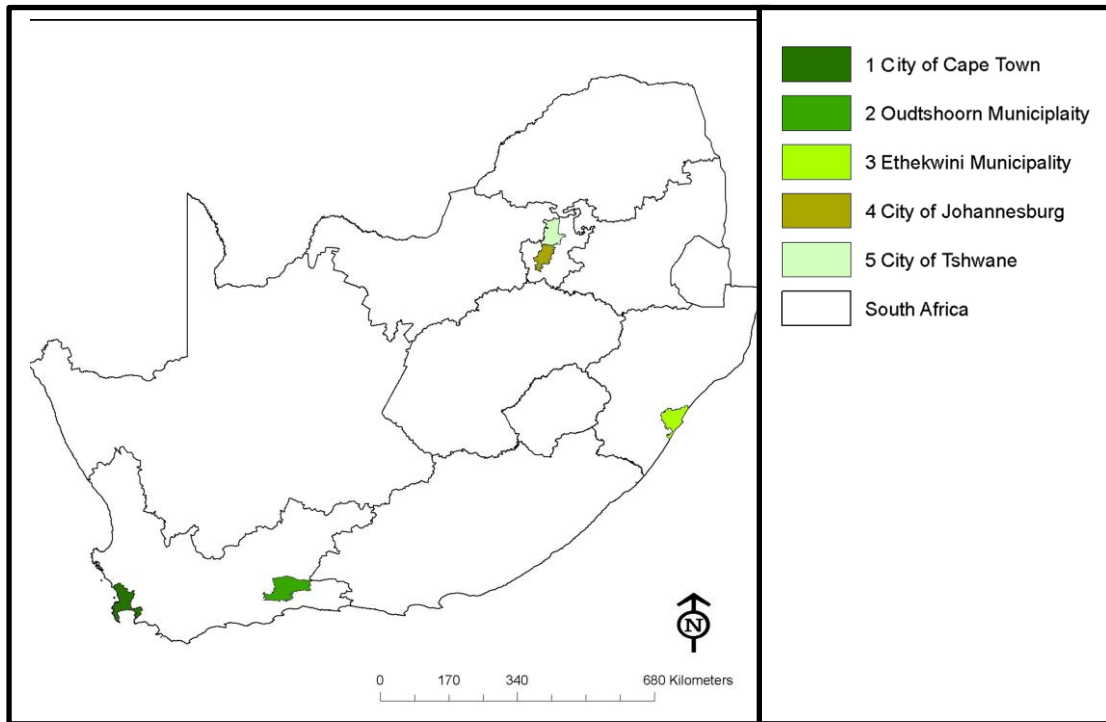


Figure 1: Case study locations within SA

Source: Own construction (2012)

Questionnaires were drafted according to techniques acquired during the Urban and Regional Planning course of the North-West University. The questionnaire format was approved by the North-West University's Department of Statistics and one hundred questionnaires were distributed in the Rose Valley Settlement in Oudtshoorn, Western Cape to one hundred individual informal dwelling units. One hundred questionnaires were received back and the data collected interpreted. Questionnaires were specifically drafted in order to provide for simplified interpretation without the need for complicated statistical analysis. The questionnaire is provided as Annexure A of this study, with questionnaire results captured by Annexure B.

As an outcome, theoretical and empirical studies were integrated and culminated in a set of conclusions and planning recommendations to meet the objectives of this study.

1.4 Research hypothesis

The research hypothesis for this study is provided as follows:

The problems related to the delivery processes and end products produced by low-cost housing development in SA can be related to a lack of responsive and adaptable housing strategies which accommodate alternative management, planning and design approaches which can be implemented at ground level.

The abovementioned hypothesis was researched according to quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the form of a literature study and an empirical investigation.

1.4.1 Assumptions

Various assumptions informed the research conducted. These assumptions influenced the research methodology and sources sought to investigate.

- The assumption that the current approach to low-cost housing delivery is ineffective and unsustainable.
- The assumption that the inhabitants of low-cost housing projects are dissatisfied with the housing they have received.
- The assumption that a lack of governmental structure and planning contributes to housing backlogs and poor quality housing.
- The assumption that many of the problems apparent in the South Africa low-cost residential sector can be addressed by implementing alternative management, planning and design practices.

1.5 Limitations to research

Some factors placed a limit on the research and activities of this study. These limitations included:

- A lack of funding to employ aids to help with the distribution of questionnaires resulted in a long and tedious distribution process.
- The complexity of the theme of research inferred a wide variety of stakeholders, policies and legislative frameworks which needed to be aligned, which proved to be a difficult task to accomplish in practice.

The remainder of this document is divided as follows

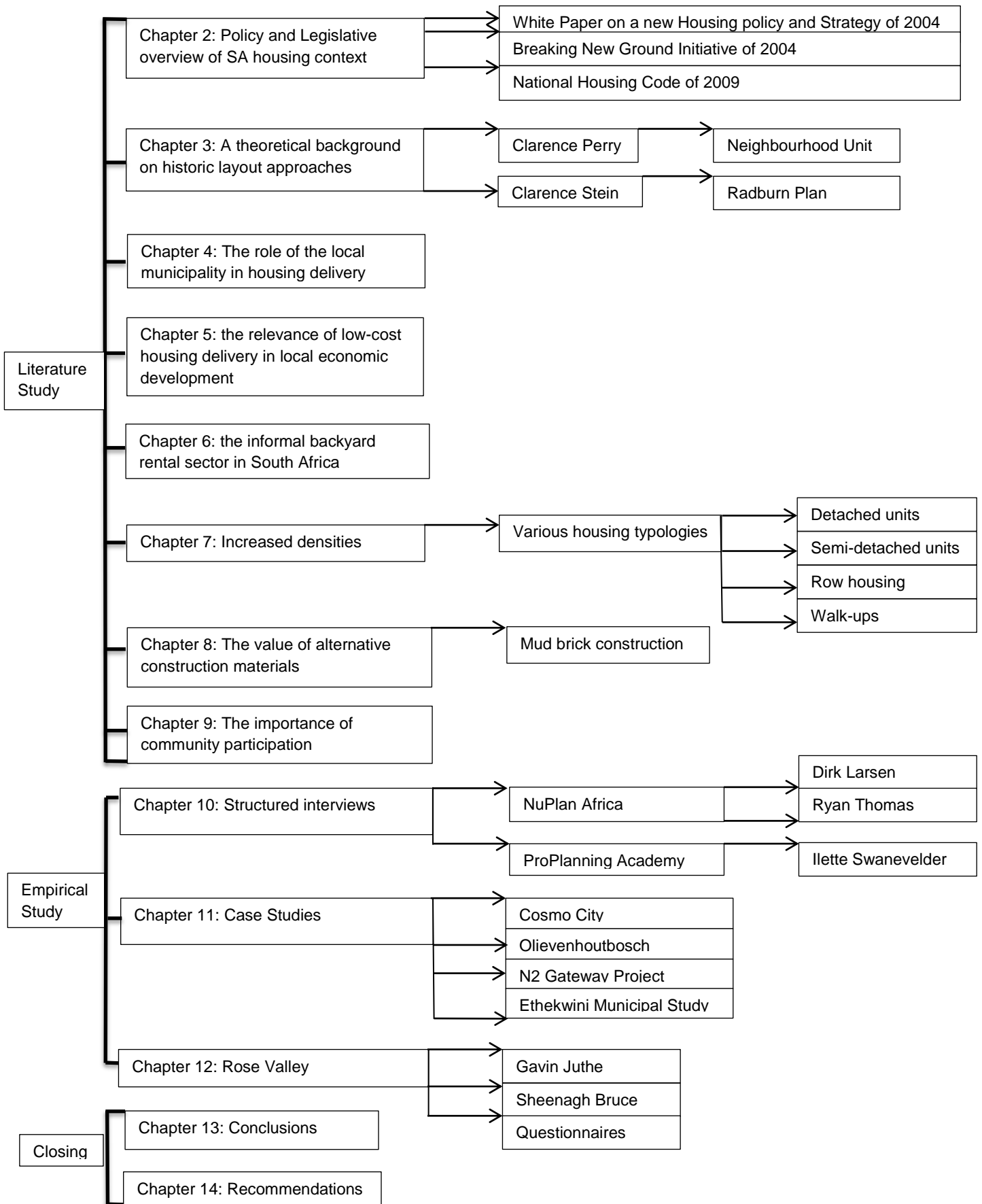


Figure 2: Document structure

Source: Own construction (2012)