

Homing Devices

The Poor as Targets of Public Housing Policy and Practice

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Mark Schuller



LEXINGTON BOOKS

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ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Oxford

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A division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200
Lanham, MD 20706

PO Box 317
Oxford
OX2 9RU, UK

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Library of Congress Control Number: 2006923511

ISBN-13: 978-0-7391-1302-8 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-7391-1302-X (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN-13: 978-0-7391-1460-5 (pbk : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-7391-1460-3 (pbk : alk. paper)

Printed in the United States of America

 The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48–1992.

Dedication

To the people in this book whose efforts to obtain and sustain affordable housing have inspired us to use our knowledge and understandings to aid their struggle. May this volume be worthy of their stories, and may their stories serve to educate and inspire others.

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Epilogue: "We Are the First Youth"

At the time of writing this chapter, development processes promised to move to adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people [level 6] and youth-initiated decision-making [level 7], as the outreach workers took up their work.

July 18, 2001

Peel Youth Village represents a vision at the development stages. The draft "call for proposals" for an operator of Peel Youth Village (distributed at today's network meeting) includes a request for the organization's statement of vision and mission. The mission statement is to address and further support the principles intended for Peel Youth Village—specifically, a community development focus, youth involvement in project management, self-determination for youth, client-centered, nonjudgmental, inclusive, and committed to innovation.

Two of the Peel Youth Village youth outreach workers spoke in concert as they introduced themselves at the meeting:

We have been hired now for three weeks. The first two weeks were spent mostly making observations. We visited shelters and agencies to see what they have and what they don't have. This week we have been doing a lot of planning for Peel Youth Village. We are also working on a survey to talk to youth about what they need and what could be beneficial for a shelter. We are the first youth, we are the first phase, and we have to make it happen. Considering our backgrounds, if anyone had any doubts, we're living proof. Our team can all work together: we have all been there.

Notes

The fieldwork for this chapter was undertaken with the aid of my graduate research assistant, Claire Montgomery. Her enthusiasm and conscientiousness were invaluable and made this research possible in large measure. I am grateful to the young people who shared their insights and all those involved in developing Peel Youth Village for being supportive of the research. Gratefully acknowledged also is the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for this research through a Standard Research Grant (#410-2000-0325) from 2000 to 2003.

1. The dynamics refer to dynamics not only within the Network itself, but interactions amongst different levels of government and other agencies and individuals (beyond the Network's immediate composition).

Chapter 8 Jamming the Meatgrinder World: Lessons Learned from Tenants Organizing in St. Paul

Mark Schuller

"It's a meatgrinder world," writes Ann,¹ a single white mother and resident of St. Paul, Minnesota, after winning her battle with the City² to keep her house from being demolished, just as the State of Minnesota withdrew support for her autistic son. "We keep being ground down until there is nothing left, nothing left. . . . One day it's the threat of homelessness. The next day, it's public health. When is it going to end?"

Ann's story is not unique. Directly resulting from a neoliberal "New Federalist" divestment of public infrastructure and social programs in the United States (Goetz 1993:32), and the "privatization" of the public interest through structural adjustment programs in the global South (Karin and Leve 2001), more and more tenants, particularly families of color in the United States, are finding it increasingly difficult to find decent housing. What little is available is often unsafe or too expensive for a mother juggling housing, health care, childcare, transportation, and food costs. What is, or what should be, the government's response to this growing affordable housing crisis? And how can those most affected by this crisis most effectively intervene?

To answer these questions, we need to listen to how the people most affected by housing policy themselves articulate the problem and its solutions, and how they organize to raise these issues to the people with the power to implement them. Which conditions empower tenant organizing, and which make it more difficult? How does the relationship between local and citywide organizing affect the outcome for tenants?

In this chapter I discuss my experiences between 1998 and 2000 with the St. Paul Tenants Union, including a grassroots organizing effort in St. Paul, led by Ann and others, to redress the affordable housing shortage. I also discuss three local organizing efforts involving the same landlord. A deep, reflexive understanding of these lessons learned makes several contributions to understandings of organizing.

Current ways of thinking about local organizing do not fully account for the central role of relationships—between actors and between various institutions—for the kinds of changes that do or do not occur as a result of organizing. Current ways of thinking rely too much on concepts such as “civil society” and “social capital,” which are, as this chapter shows, of limited use to activists because of serious conceptual omissions, obscuring issues of power and difference. Drawing on the organic intellectual work of the activists I worked with, this chapter develops new conceptual tools for thinking and strategizing about social change, and influencing housing policy and practice from a grassroots activist standpoint.

I argue that activists and scholars need an ethnographically derived theory of the state-civil society relationship that can distinguish between organizations, theorize about changing nature of the state-civil society relationship, and also analyze structurally based power inequalities of race, class, gender, and living situation, while nevertheless accounting for the agency of local actors. I propose such a theoretical framework, understanding the connections, complexities, and contradictions of local organizing, based on relationships formed (or not formed) in organizing. This framework, “civic infrastructure,” was built in discussions by tenants union members and myself evaluating our shared organizing efforts.

Methods

Primary information for this chapter came from my own twenty-eight-month-long work as a full-time organizer for the St. Paul Tenants Union. Our activist work led us all to new understandings of justice, and sharpened our understanding of the micro-dynamics of power. As in Chapter 4, this story offers a real-world, bottom-up theoretical approach to problems facing activists for social justice.

Ethnographic research is an excellent way to explore these connections, with anthropology's traditional concern with local actors, their points of view,

and their actions. As far as “formal” methods for this specific chapter, although I was not employed as an anthropologist at the time, methods in fieldwork and organizing have distinct similarities (if different goals). The unstructured interview in ethnography resembles the “survey doorknock.” Once a person became involved with the Tenants Union, her life history emerged during rides to city council meetings, housing court, or the tenants union office. I came to know and understand the people whose stories form the basis of this chapter; I was invited to members' weddings, bar mitzvahs, and barbecues. By the end of my time with the Tenants Union, I had knocked on at least 13,000 doors and spoken with more than 1,000 individual tenants about their perceptions of their housing situation.

I helped tenants in fourteen apartment complexes organize to make repairs, fight a mass eviction, reduce a rent increase, or stop a condemnation. In addition to local organizing, I worked with low-income tenants, most of them women, half Black and half white, on a citywide organizing campaign. I staffed meetings of the Tenants Union's Affordable Housing Campaign and took minutes at Affordable Housing Coalition meetings.

For this paper, I analyze three specific campaigns undertaken during my time at SPTU. These campaigns were: Rivertown Renewed, Colonial Estates, and Evergreen.³ In addition having the same institutional actors, I chose the three campaigns because, together, they are most representative of the history of the Tenants Union's organizing during my time working there. Each offers a different perspective on the relationship of three institutional actors: the state (City of St. Paul), the private sector (landlord), and the Tenants Union as “third sector” (Nerfin 1986⁴ or “civil society” (Cohen and Arato 1992).

Seventeen months after my time at the St. Paul Tenants Union ended, I contacted the staff to get permission to use the information I had while organizing. I attempted to speak with ten leaders: three in each local organizing campaign and the former Tenants Union president. I prepared a survey and interviewed four leaders on the phone.⁵ All the quotations below are from these interviews in September and October 2001. Three of those I interviewed are women. Of those I interviewed, two are on public assistance; two are black and two are white; and two have school-age children. One now is married and lives in her own house; the other three are still tenants.

The information is partial as I was only able to reach the people who were able to maintain their housing and phone service. Furthermore, I primarily knew people who were very active.⁶ I was only able to get to know members because I was an active participant in the organizing, knocking on doors, staffing meetings in people's homes and the Tenants Union offices, and helping members plan and implement strategies. If not for our previous working relationship, the interviews would have been uninformative, if not impossible, because the point was to understand members' analysis of our shared organizing efforts. During my twenty-eight months as the Tenants Union organizer I underwent a transformation common to ethnography. My own ideas about organizing, poverty, racism, economic justice, and public policy formation were informed by low-income tenant

members and our shared participation in the organizing efforts. My own worldview therefore was fundamentally altered by the experience.⁷ After every organizing campaign, the group discussed what lessons can be drawn from the experience, evaluating how it went, what explained the outcome, and how to improve. I participated in these discussions and took notes. These sessions forged the beginning of the concept civic infrastructure.

Differences in power are unavoidable in both the organizing and research processes; even if I personally could transcend the worldview of my privilege, it still started people in the face when they opened their doors to me for the first time. I encountered a difficulty that other "organic intellectuals" often face; on the one hand, while we were in the thick of organizing, it was impossible for us to take the kind of distance that is often useful for analysis. On the other hand, when I became a graduate student, I was truly alone. And I am the one who wrote this chapter. These processes individualize the intellectual work, and put more power into my fingers as I typed the numerous drafts of this chapter. I truly want this chapter to be the members' story as much as possible, or at least "our" story. To counter this, I began doing secondary reading, and then writing this chapter, only after we completed the interviews. The conclusions, although informed by individual members, and a draft shown to a few members, are by no means official statements of the Tenants Union, and any errors in fact or judgment are solely my responsibility.

Rivertown "Renewed"

On April 30, 1998, thirty-five families, over half the tenants in the Rivertown neighborhood, opened a letter with the same message: "The property you are renting is being acquired by the federation for the Rivertown Renewed project." On July 31, an entire city block of single-family rental homes was to be vacated to make way for higher-cost townhouses. For replacement housing, nineteen residents were given the exact same three listings of one- and two-bedroom apartments and \$1,000 to cover rent increases, down payments or security deposits, and moving costs. The average rent at the time for a two-bedroom apartment in St. Paul was \$700; tenants barely could have afforded a security deposit with the initial offer.

"All I remember is the initial panic," Ann recounts. "People were running around like chickens with their heads cut off." The vacancy rate was low, 1.8 percent, and on its way down, according to Apartment Search profiles.⁸ Forty days before being evicted by the City, they faced the real threat of homelessness. Metrowide, in 1997 there were 68,900 renter households with annual incomes below \$10,000, but only 31,200 units available at that income level, a shortage of some 37,000 homes.⁹ "There just wasn't anywhere to go."

The cost of the project was high: \$11 million total, all but \$4 million coming from public funds, including \$2.2 million in Community Development

Block Grant (CDBG) funding, administered by the U.S. Government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD requires that all projects that receive CDBG funds benefit "low-income" and "very low-income" residents, and that projects have "citizen participation" in designing them, including the people for whom the development is done (section 24 CFR 91.1).¹⁰ According to the neighborhood council and City Planning Department, the neighborhood association who drew up the plans satisfied HUD's participation requirements. However, neighborhood residents had little knowledge of, and no input in, this "Rivertown Renewed" plan by the local neighborhood association, the Rivertown Federation. The CDBG program also requires that most of the public funds go to affordable housing. The new homes were going to cost \$110,000 and above, affordable to families earning \$46,000 per year. Even though the people who were forced to move made considerably less, HUD characterizes this income bracket as "low to moderate income"—defined as 80 percent of the "regional median income." This is not the first nor the last time the government's power to define reality hurt tenants (see Chapter 6 for an analysis of the power of the state to define reality).

There was little hope for the affected families, who faced two forms of powerlessness: homelessness and being powerless against the City. In the beginning, "No one was convinced that they had power. No one thought they could take on the City," argued Ann. But an organizing meeting on June 10 turned many into believers. Twenty families crammed into an affected tenant's house. Ann remembers that this meeting "got the ball rolling." Through discursive space provided by Tenants Union meetings, members quickly discovered what issues or problems they do or do not share; they redefined personal problems as results of a common oppression (Freire 2000; Weedon 1987:29).¹¹ Membership in the Tenants Union, or another grassroots organization, can provide helpful deprogramming and consciousness-raising, as poor, single mothers are told many times in many ways that their problems are their fault.¹² At collective meetings, after ditching the individualizing "blame-the-victim" narrative, tenants can then identify specific issues in common.¹³ Through discussion, tenants can change their orientation toward the City from one of passive recipient to active citizen, entitled to rights. From here strategies can be developed.¹⁴

Frightened, confused, and angry, the tenants organized a public meeting in a member's backyard with the City Council member, the District Council, Housing Office relocation staff, and the planning specialist on June 30, 1998, a month before their forced eviction.¹⁵ Forty-nine adult neighbors (the kids were playing stickball in the street) and five media representatives came. As they shared bratwurst and beer, nine tenants spoke of their love for their neighborhood, the impossibility of finding housing, and the real threat of becoming homeless.

Ignored for the last six months, the tenants were finally heard loud and clear. Ann recalls, "I will never forget the time we were all on the news. ... It was great seeing that it was possible to get the City to pay attention." The front-page and evening news stories not only dramatized the plight of the eighteen families who faced imminent homelessness, they brought the issue of the area's

affordable housing shortage to a middle-class public (see Chapter 9 for another example of private media coverage affecting housing policy). Now under public scrutiny, the City changed its mind; while most families were still forced out of their homes, they were given an extra 45 days to find housing. City staff, including their council member's legislative aide, helped them relocate. And they were given money for two years to cover the rent increases they would face. Most were given \$6,000, instead of the initial \$1,000, but one family received a check for \$19,000. For Ann's neighbors, "It made the difference between being homeless or not." Ann had received an initial notice to vacate; now she was able to stay, her fate postponed.

The Tenants Union's Affordable Housing Campaign took off during this period, fanning interest in the issue. On May 18, 1998, after two weeks of door-knocking and two months of research, nineteen tenants living in subsidized and standard housing came together and identified a common solution for their individual housing problems: build more affordable housing in St. Paul. Rents shot up an average of 11 percent in 1998, while average wages went up by only 3 percent.¹⁶ An estimated 6,000 people were homeless. And the City lost an aggregate of 352 units between 1994 and 1998 because of demolition, with the funds supposed to be used for "affordable housing" (Davis et al. 2000:40).

In five months, members of the Tenants Union campaign collected 3,000 signatures on a petition, generated seven stories in mainstream media, held a conference to forge a shared agenda with other groups, and brought 163 people, most of them low-income tenants, women, and people of color, to the City Council chambers. On October 7, 1998, the City Council considered a Tenants Union proposal to build 1,000 units of housing affordable to families earning minimum wage. The issue was postponed, a result of internal differences in the Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party-controlled Council. The City was in the midst of developing a Housing Plan; housing advocates were told to focus our efforts there, and we were also advised to show a broader support base. Nervous Council members wanted to show voting constituents that affordable housing was not just a "low-income" issue.

The new "target" became the Planning Commission, and the Tenants Union worked in a coalition with thirteen organizations, including faith-based organizations, to amend the City's five-year housing plan. On St. Patrick's Day 1999, an important holiday in St. Paul because of St. Paul's Irish Diaspora and union history, Tenants Union members worked the parade crowd, handing out pamphlets to St. Paul residents, carrying borrowed cell phones, asking people to call their elected officials about the vote that day. According to City Council office staff, they received 150 citizen calls that day alone. Again, the decision was stalled. Finally, on April 7, four of the five DFL council members put aside their differences to pass an amended housing plan, calling for the construction of sixty to eighty units each year that would be affordable to people making less than \$32,000, and thirty to forty units for people making less than \$20,000 a year. The number of units was less (between 300 and 400 instead of 1,000), and

the definition of "affordable housing" changed (from minimum wage—at the time less than \$11,000) from our original proposal. Even so, the Democrat-turned-Republican mayor¹⁷ vetoed it. Finally, on April 21, 1999, the Council overrode the mayor's veto.

Ann and some of her neighbors played an integral part in this affordable housing effort; they initially became involved in the Tenants Union because of immediate concerns, but their sense of justice and their awareness of the interconnectedness of their struggle compelled them to fight for other tenants in St. Paul. They built a support network among each other, and from this base stayed civically involved. Ann's Tenants Union membership became an important part of her identity, in part because it was gratifying, but more because it was a source and symbol of personal and collective power. "The Tenants Union made the difference between being on the street with nothing and having something to go on, a bargaining chip. People believed in their power and had hope for the future." Ann attended almost every City Council meeting during the affordable housing campaign, but never spoke out. "I've always been a shy person."

But her time came. The City finally got around to her house in February 2000; by this time all but three of her neighbors had been moved and construction had begun on the new townhouses. "I thought to myself, this is it." She volunteered to speak at the upcoming hearing on HUD's Consolidated Plan, trembling with nervousness and fear of retaliation. But she felt compelled. "It was important that [the City Council] know that real people were being abused. You have to let them know." The day after her testimony, the director of the housing agency called her and promised she would not be moved until the City found her adequate housing. And she was referred, free of charge, to a professional relocation company, where she worked with a woman who was familiar with disability issues (this contrasts with the reaction of Hong Kong policymakers to agitators; see Chapter 9). She now lives in a duplex in one of St. Paul's "nicer" neighborhoods, and things settled down. "For now, we're okay."

I have described so far the typical adversarial relationship that organizers tell each other about over mugs of beer, the story of underdog citizens fighting and beating City Hall to get justice. The power employed against the tenants was coercive political power characteristic of governments. Ann believes that the District Council and City were simply accustomed to doing things a certain way without (her words) "checks and balances" provided by civil society groups like the Tenants Union she and her neighbors organized.

But the situation changed, either as a result of the City's sophistication or its perceived threat of further actions by the Tenants Union or other groups because of the affordable housing shortage. One thing was clear, both "sides" emerged worn but wiser. To use "civil society" terms, the state was pitted against the civil society and private interests, as embodied by Ann's landlord. Here I need to point out that actually the two main actors both included "civil society" organizations, with one representing middle-class homeowners and the other representing low-income tenants. It is an interesting question, and a serious problem, with the rhetoric and practice of participation that only one, the white, middle-class

homeowner association, is the official representative that contracts with the City, and the recipient of HUD "citizen participation" funding.¹⁸ With the private sector and civil society divided and pitted against the state, the result was a stalemate. Everyone had to accept compromise, but the City got what it wanted and the tenants got what they needed. Ann's landlord still collected his rent. In the process, bad blood between the Tenants Union and the Council member representing the Rivertown neighborhood started.¹⁹ He fired off an angry letter to the other members of the Council, complaining about the meeting described.²⁰

The following two cases highlight the power that landlords wield and what happens when tenants organize. These cases show two different outcomes, highlighting the role of the City and the relationships tenants form through organizing. As noted, these individual cases of organizing were part of an overall context of continued pressure on the City to solve the affordable housing crisis.

Colonial Estates

In addition to advocacy on a citywide level and forestalling evictions due to gentrification, the Tenants Union helped tenants in apartment complexes improve their housing conditions. At its core, organizing is about altering the relations of power (cf. Alinsky 1971; Bobo et al. 1996; Staples 1984). As suggested by the reaction to the Rivertown gentrification plan and the postponement of the affordable housing agenda in October, Tenants Union leaders discovered that a root problem was the perception of tenants as unimportant because of tenants' lack of civic participation.²¹ Based on a Tenants Union count of voter turnout in 1995, the previous City Council election, only 3 percent of tenants in eleven subsidized buildings voted, ten times less than single-family house dwellers. Immediately following the October 7, 1998, rally, the Tenants Union organized an effort to get out the vote, focusing on the East Side, with the lowest tenant voter turnout.²²

St. Paul's East Side was, for a number of reasons, not a traditional core of Tenants Union strength, yet it also was in more desperate need of a tenants union. The East Side, traditionally home to a unionized white working class, was undergoing rapid (by Minnesota standards) demographic changes as blue-collar jobs went to a non-unionized South. It attracted a more transient population, with some neighborhoods consisting of more than 80 percent multi-family housing. And the housing was deteriorated and old (Groen et al. 1999).²³ Finally, the East Side was also home to the two maverick Democrat swing votes carried by their representatives on the City Council.

To help new and continuing leaders like Ann be more effective, the Tenants Union organized a Tenants Action Network that included skills training in leadership and organization. I met Melissa at the first training session. Melissa is a passionate fighter for the oppressed. She had to give her first child, a boy, up for adoption because she was too young and her family refused to help her raise

him. She had just finished her GED when I met her, but she wanted to go on to "get more education" and "do something with [her] life." She knows, however, that not everyone who wants to make it does. "Life is unfair, especially if you're poor, especially if you're black, especially if you're a single mother." Melissa, a single mother in her early thirties, was tired of the problems at her home. Her five-year old daughter was often sick because of insect and mouse infestations outside her control. She and her neighbors endured days without heat and plumbing, and repairs were never made. The building's security door did not lock. Fed up, Melissa joined the Tenants Union and before meeting with any Tenants Union staff, passed around a petition to her neighbors about repairs. Melissa was a creative and energetic leader, successfully inviting nineteen tenants to come to an initial meeting with me and Legal Aid to discuss repairs. For a while things went well. We worked with Latino volunteers from a local Catholic church, going door-to-door with them to listen to Latino tenants. Many of these families joined the Legal Aid lawsuit. More than half the tenants in the complex added their names to the suit, outlining specific problems with their units in addition to the code violations and tenant concerns about the building as a whole.²⁴

Subsequently, Melissa was in a car accident. Having neither collision nor health care insurance, she had to pay for her hospitalization herself. As a result, Melissa did not have July's rent. Her landlord, the same as Ann's, evicted her seven days later. According to Dave, a neighbor, "They were getting rid of every tenant who was on that lawsuit, starting with Melissa, the leader."

Dave is, in his words, "just a regular kind of guy" (which in Minnesota terms often means white²⁵). He is a hard worker who was down on his luck, looking for work but having trouble "without a car, without an education, and without a job." Frustrated with his experience, Dave believes that "it doesn't seem like the Tenants Union can help people keep their place."²⁶ Because Melissa was swiftly evicted because of nonpayment of rent, other tenants became afraid to stick their necks out. The court case was still on, but with Melissa gone, there were only three tenants represented by Legal Aid, named parties on the suit.²⁷ With this blow to group morale, risks associated with organizing seemed to outweigh benefits (cf. Bettencourt et al. 1996:173).

What is more, during the organizing effort, the landlord called the St. Paul Police against me to report a violation of a no-trespass order they never served me. The police came anyway, circling the parking lot during a meeting. While I was able to explain to the tenants and the police that I had every right to be there as an invited guest of a resident, the already frightened tenants almost stopped organizing completely in the middle of their lawsuit against the landlord. Differences between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking tenants, some of whom were not citizens who had much to fear, were highlighted in the aftermath to Melissa's eviction, further eroding unity.

But the Tenants Union members persevered; the primary reason was their personal involvement in organizing (Hinkle et al. 1996:45). The battle was now in court, out of the hands of organizers and into the hands of the "justice sys-

ten." Tenant organizer Mike Miller warns, "For the organizer, the courts are deadly" (1979:33).²⁸ Tenants feel that they do not get an equal chance to be heard, as Dave declares: "The court always believes the god-dang landlords." The American legal system individualizes problems; as the housing court referee explained to the tenants, cases that come before the court are heard as single cases of individual tenants against individual landlords, in a specific context. To do otherwise, the referee explained, would be to accept "prejudicial" evidence that has no bearing on the individual case. Judges decide what evidence is considered and how it will be interpreted. As a result, as Dave passionately explains, larger policy patterns go undetected. "You had these same landlords in court twelve times that day. You think [Housing Court] could have figured something out."²⁹ While the court ordered the repairs, they did not stop the landlord's retaliation against tenants. "They were drumming up false charges on me and Jen for no god-dang reason. We got [the eviction case] expunged, but then they threw a thirty-day notice to vacate on us."³⁰ Regarding the City's inattention to the tenants' concerns, in the words of the property inspector, "our only interest is the housing code."³¹

Things were, to put it bluntly, bad. Dave sums it up best: "I think the City supports the landlords." While he, his wife, and Melissa were still active with the Tenants Union at the time I contacted them, they are frustrated with the systemwide injustices against tenants. Dave argues that the City needs to take a more proactive role in defending tenants' rights. "I'd just like to know how slumlords get their places. It's harder to get a drivers' license than a rental license." In cases such as he experienced, the City should just "take [the property] from them . . . if [the City] has to run the place until they find someone who knows what they're doing, then fine." The current political and legal system does not agree with Dave, in part because of the City's refusal to address tenant concerns as a "public" interest.³²

In this case, it was landlord (private sector) versus tenant (civil society). While the City supposedly played a neutral role, they supported the landlord's rights of property at every instance while refusing to use their power to help the tenants. In this case, the Tenants Union was unable to convince the City to adopt even the paternalistic attitude of concern for property that Dave suggests. In the end, the state refused to intrude on private property rights, the fundamental value in the American legal system. Civil society in this case was not powerful enough to change the actions of the state, either as a result of conflict with the council member over organizing as in the Rivertown case above, or because the Tenants Union went it alone.

Evergreen

The citywide coalition for more affordable housing, the St. Paul Housing Campaign, succeeded in changing some aspects of St. Paul's Housing Plan but failed

in our three prime objectives: (1) a specific commitment to, not a goal for, a number of new housing units, (2) more of them as "affordable" housing, and (3) changing the definition of "affordable housing" to address the needs of families earning the minimum wage.³³ Frustrated with the City, the coalition then turned to the federal government for help.

Specifically, HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) regulations specify that St. Paul's \$12 million in annual CDBG funds should be targeted to the "low-income" and "very low-income" members of the community (section 24 CFR 91.1). Poor people, not moderate-income homeowner associations, need to participate in identifying needs, designing programs, and evaluating St. Paul's plan and community development activities. The coalition invited Ed Gramlich, the "CDBG guru" from the Center for Community Change, a national low-income advocacy organization, to plan our political and legal strategy to force the City to listen to poor people, and involve our members and constituencies, low-income tenants and homeless people, in adopting a "Consolidated Plan" (often called "Con Plan" for short, the irony of which was not lost on housing advocates) with more specific language about new housing construction.

Housing advocates found ourselves in a double bind. On the one hand, if we did not participate, there was no hope of addressing the housing needs of the most marginalized. On the other, if we did participate, we risked being co-opted and silenced, prevented from further criticism of the outcome as "partners" in the process. Housing advocates were damned if we did, damned if we didn't. Without clear, agreed-upon definitions of grassroots and participation, the City could have asked groups like the local business associations or churches to round up tenants and homeless people willing to either be bought off, silent, or agree to anything that the City could suggest, being inexperienced with people in power. They could have had a rubber stamp of their existing plans and called that "public participation." In essence, have their cake and eat it too.

Various coalition partners led meetings with the seven City Council members, depending on where our members lived. As much as possible, all the groups sent representatives to these meetings. The Tenants Union arranged meetings with two council members, the sponsor of the original Tenants Union affordable-housing proposal in the City's traditionally Black district and the East Side's representative. By this time, the Tenants Union had a strong membership base in the East Side. The East Side council member reiterated her support for affordable housing but balked at specific goals for new construction. As a former property manager, she believed that rehabbing existing housing stock better addressed St. Paul's affordable housing shortage than new construction. She used Myron Orfield's (1997) language of "metropolitics," arguing that the suburbs need to do their "fair share" (see Chapter 5 for other uses of this discourse).³⁴ In this meeting, she promised to take leadership in targeting the "slum and blight" housing stock for rehab and not demolition.

Diane came to a Colonial Estates organizing meeting, prompted by a flyer we sent out to everyone in her complex, Evergreen, inviting Evergreen tenants

to a Colonial Estates meeting. In part because of the 167 violations her landlords needed to fix at Colonial Estates, maintenance at Evergreen was slipping. Diane joined the Tenants Union because she believed in justice for everyone, but she made clear she was not an activist. Yet Diane's activism grew as she became more involved with the Tenants Union's affordable housing campaign. For her, it was safer to be involved on a citywide rather than a local level because that did not put her at risk of retaliation from her landlord.

After a "Giving Our Story" training for the Tenants Action Network on March 18, 2000, designed to help tenants write personal testimonies in such a way that public officials could understand the policy connections,³⁵ Diane told me the fire marshal had just issued a condemnation notice on her building, listing 237 violations. That afternoon, a group of us went door to door in her building. Although she told me many times that she could not do it, she joined us. There was water damage on the walls and ceilings, paint chips and drywall on the floor, mold in the carpet, broken windows, unsafe electrical outlets, and no heat.

That week, twenty-one neighbors came to a meeting to sue their landlord, Carlene, an African American Tenants Union member who hosted the meeting, recalls, "It was all real quick. First we were being thrown out the street and then in two weeks we're in court." The City Council member and the fire marshal came along. Inspectors showed up every day in court, as well as the City Council staff and the fiery Alinskyite³⁶ organizer from another neighborhood, invited by the council member. The City was serious. The council member wanted to "set an example" for other bad landlords. Having promised the City's aid in maintaining affordable housing instead of funds to build more housing, she pushed code enforcement. Like the housing court judge, she redefined St. Paul's housing crisis as a problem with individual landlords, thus absolving the City of responsibility.

The City's resources thus marshaled, on March 30 the Legal Aid attorney attempted a "preemptive strike." Although Minnesota law outlaws retaliatory evictions, this legal protection can only be used as a defense in an eviction case. In essence, tenants have to be evicted in order to be protected against eviction.³⁷ The tenants, through their Legal Aid attorney, asked the judge to issue a restraining order against the landlord filing retaliatory evictions against the tenants who spoke out. The suit also asked the judge to order a Tenants Remedies Act, which effectively takes control of the building away from the landlord, appointing a nonprofit organization to conduct the repairs and collect rent, until the repairs are done. Not wanting to set a precedent, the judge neither issued a Tenants Remedies Act nor prevented the landlord from evicting tenants, citing the new state law allowing for expungement of evictions.³⁸ However, the judge ordered all 144 remaining repairs to be made. Carlene recalls, "We were afraid of, you know, being evicted, first by the City and then because we were in court [by our landlord]. But I'm still here. And the kids ain't getting sick like they used to." Some of them had to pay for fire code violations, such as extension cords, a

downside of having official protection, the necessity of "abiding by the protector's rules" (Brown 1992:8).

In addition to the fines, the Tenants Union took a hit. In January, just after the executive director quit, the board discovered that the Tenants Union was in a financial crisis. One of the longest-standing funders of the Tenants Union, the only funder for the hotline other than the City, cut its support for the Tenants Union.³⁹ A search for a replacement director was stalled because of this lack of funds, but also because board members, most of them lower income people with little experience having power to make decisions in other arenas of their lives, were not accustomed to doing this work by themselves (the Tenants Union failed to fulfill its responsibility in training and preparing people in this regard). Additionally, the board was divided about the primary function of the Tenants Union (e.g., service or membership organization), unable to prioritize which programs needed to survive forthcoming cuts, an example noted by organizer training manuals, the "case of the ambiguous tenants union" (Bobo et al. 1996:45). On April 28, the last day of court for the Evergreen tenants, all five remaining Tenants Union employees were laid off. One was rehired. Members, like Ann, noticed: "[The City] stepped on you guys." Even though the situation was more complex, and the City actually renewed its support for the hotline, members were quick to read the situation as a case of the City using its power to retaliate against the Tenants Union for our efforts to hold the City accountable.

Residents like Diane and Carlene did not have to move because of the condemnation. All the repairs were made, and no one was given a notice to vacate. In addition to material outcomes, Carlene said, "We are different people. We know our rights. And we know how to enforce them. Especially important, we know each other." They connected with their city officials. They had experience running meetings, preparing legal testimony, and organizing their neighbors. Black, white, and Latina tenants got to know each other and to form a sense of community. And they became involved in the civic process. The City put the landlords on notice to repair all the buildings they owned in St. Paul. The City and the Tenants Union, representing the state and civil society, teamed up to fight the landlord, or the private sector. Teamed up, the City and the tenants both got what they wanted: staying in their homes, the repairs made, a case of the state protecting civil society against the abuses of the private sector. What lessons can be learned from these three cases?

Lessons Learned

In the often-difficult transition from organizer to graduate student, I was directed toward the civil society literature to help understand our organizing efforts. But in the end, our shared experiences actually inform analyses of the civil society literature, especially its limitations. In the Rivertown Renewed case, civil society was divided, and pitted against the state, in this case represented both by the

City of St. Paul and the Rivertown Federation.⁴⁰ Although the City and the Federation eventually succeeded in gentrifying the neighborhood, residents were given more time, money, and staff assistance for relocation, and the issue of the growing affordable housing shortage gained a wider audience. Colonial Estates was a different case: civil society against the private sector, with a supposedly neutral state standing by, requiring repairs but giving the landlord time and money, while enforcing retaliatory evictions and no-trespass laws. Finally, in the Evergreen case, the state and civil society teamed up against the private sector. These results were positive for the tenants.

As noted above, the term civil society is too ambiguous, as both sides in the Rivertown case can be called civil society. Significantly, it ignores both the question of power and inequalities in the groups lumped together as "civil society." In addition, civil society is usually defined in a "zero-sum" opposition to the state (e.g., Clastrès 1997; Pelczynski 1988). But at times the City helped the Tenants Union. What can account for this? Four factors are left out in civil society theory: the state's motivations, the shifting nature of the state and civil society relationship, individuals' agency, and the relationships individuals formed through the organizing process.

In an attempt to answer these questions, civil society theories often emphasize "participation" (cf. Cohen and Arato 1992; Karlstrom 1998; Taylor 1990). As this chapter clearly shows, local councils like the Federation are not always the most effective or democratic means for generating participation. In fact, this development is likely more insidious because it benefits from the legitimacy accorded "participation" while further empowering the already relatively powerful groups in a neighborhood: white homeowners and business owners. In 1998, of the seventeen planning districts in St. Paul, only two had any tenant representation, and only three had African American representation on their governing boards. We could only count four tenants and six African Americans. What is to protect poor people, women, people of color, tenants in the neighborhood from what de Tocqueville (2000) termed the "tyranny of the majority" (cf. Guinier 1994)? This chapter highlights the critical need to expand our theoretical calculus about participation: who, specifically, participates and exactly how (for an other analysis of participation, see Chapter 7)? Still missing is an analysis of how and why tenants were able to convince the City to address their concerns. For that, as a graduate student I was directed toward the social capital literature.

Coming Close: Social Capital

Social capital is a theory about relationships. To be brief and rough, it embodies the phrase "it's not what you know, it's who you know." Tenkin and Rohe (1998) adapted social capital for use in housing policy and neighborhood organizing, settling on two components, "institutional infrastructure" and what they call the "sociocultural milieu" (65). According to the authors, "sociocultural

milieu" measures the level of community integration and trust, in other words, "neighborliness." They argue that the presence or absence of this sociocultural milieu determines whether a neighborhood can defend itself against "decline" (69). If a neighborhood can "leverage a strong sense of place into a collective movement," requiring institutional infrastructure, it is likely to stabilize or increase in socioeconomic status over time. While this model was explicitly developed for neighborhood groups concerned with "revitalization" or increasing socioeconomic status, it acknowledges the importance of collective identity, in addition to institutions, for social change. For example, in part because of a strong identification with the Tenants Union and each other, the Rivertown residents had greater success than Colonial Estates.

The social capital of Tenkin and Rohe (1998) also has limitations, the most obvious of which is that tenants, homeless people, or racial minorities do not always share the same "sense of place" as white, middle-class homeowners.⁴¹ This theory of social capital also assumes that whole neighborhoods can be defined as having a particular socioeconomic status (67). Differences in race, gender, living situation, and poverty that exist in the world are erased in this model. A related problem is in a conflation of the methods of analysis: individuals generate social capital, but neighborhoods are measured by it, owing partly to this artificial whitewashing away of real differences between neighbors (84).⁴² This homogeneity and conflation of individuals and groups, erased of differences and inequalities, is a common problem in all formulations of social capital. I have read, as whole social groups are often compared vis-à-vis their level of social capital. Bettencourt also argues that collective identity is an essential component of grassroots organizing, but she acknowledges that grassroots organizing can be the catalyst for forming the social ties (1996:208). Through the collective representation provided by a grassroots group, marginalized people do form attachments to each other; Ann and Carlene recall the best part of the organizing process was getting to know their neighbors. As the difference in outcome of the Evergreen and Colonial Estates cases shows, not only do relationships among individual tenants matter, but so do the relationships between private citizens as members of groups and as agents of the state. Finally, organizations and their structures do, in fact, matter. Without the Tenants Union, Rivertown residents may well have become homeless. In another example, the Tenants Union's unclear structure and purpose contributed to its downfall.

Toward a Reflexive Activist Research Agenda

What this chapter has shown is that, given the same institutions and similar institutional relationships, the outcomes for each of the cases were drastically different. Given a relatively similar demographic profile, i.e., that the vast majority of Tenants Union members were low-income, single mothers, with a similar equal proportion of Black and white tenants in all three cases, what can account for the

difference in outcomes? Obviously, the activists—both Tenants Union members and my own—agency needs to be acknowledged, including the capacity to make mistakes or incomplete decisions.

I argue that the most important factor is the relationships that people form through organizing: among individuals (in all three cases), between the individual and the Tenants Union (sustaining action in the Rivertown case, while a lack of identification with the Tenants Union, except leaders like Dave and Melissa, contributed to the difficulties in the Colonial Estates case), and between members of the Tenants Union and the City. In every case, the City of St. Paul eventually got what it wanted.⁴³ code enforcement in both Evergreen and Colonial Estates, and gentrification of the Rivertown neighborhood. Most significant is the relationship between Tenants Union members and government, when there was no relationship, as in the Colonial Estates case, the government did not use its power to help the tenants. In Rivertown, tenants flexed what muscles they had to force the City to change its mind. In part because of tenants' affordable housing organizing, a council member took a stand on code enforcement at Evergreen. Through organizing, the individual members of the Tenants Union forged relationships with this council member. And Tenants Union members developed a stronger sense of community in the process, many of them joining other civic agencies after the Tenants Union, for all intents and purposes, closed. In short, all these relationships influenced the others.

When I use the term "relationship" to describe the connection between the Tenants Union members and the City Council, for example, the concept I am describing is not quite social capital. First, in the above cases, most of the relationships began through the organizing effort. Carlene recalls that "it's amazing how we can be neighbors, physically proximate, without knowing the least bit about anyone. Now we are community, family even." Second, although it was not necessarily conflict, the relationships were shaped by the City Council's assessment of the Tenants Union's power, not on the strength of personal relationships. Nor is the connection between individual tenants before organizing necessarily the most important in shaping the outcome. Tenants in Colonial Estates and Evergreen had similarly low levels of community ties, Tenkin and Rohe's "sociocultural milieu." Central to the outcome are what ties people form (or do not form, as in the Colonial Estates case, in part because of racial differences that were not overcome, in part because of landlord and police retaliation) through organizing. Through organizing, tenants got to know each other and develop a sense of place. The critical difference was, as mentioned above, the relationships between tenants as members of the Tenants Union, and the people in control of the City apparatus, such as the City Council; in short, their civic identity.

I argue that other tenant-organizing cases can also be understood in this fashion. Resident organizing in Sarcelles, a suburb of Paris, yielded something new: local governmental officials had to be accountable to a local civic organization, consulting them (Castells 1983:84). In San Francisco, a tenants organiza-

tion formed through a rent strike in the Geneva Towers, a publicly assisted private housing complex, in the late 1960s (Miller et al. 1979:2). After unsuccessfully lobbying to prevent construction of the towers, the largely white neighborhood association in Vistacion Valley gave reluctant support to the tenants because of relationships forged through organizing between tenants and the homeowner association (5).

Organizers and activists need a flexible yet concrete enough theoretical framework that considers the contact between a grassroots organization or movement and government, the contact between an organization and its members, as well as among members themselves. This framework should take into consideration the changing nature of the tensions within the state and civil society relationship, and it should not treat racial and socioeconomic differences merely as an afterthought. Grassroots approaches, particularly in a contested and changing political environment, face the challenge of cooptation of discourses of participation, requiring more precise vocabulary and analysis than tokenism to use as a critique. I propose thinking in terms of "civic infrastructure."

Admittedly, this term is raw, conceived through organizing and refined through conversations among activists. However, I define civic infrastructure as the set of relationships formed in grassroots organizing among individuals, grassroots groups, other civic organizations, and government. Civic infrastructure is a concept that engenders a qualitative analysis of the sphere of relationships surrounding an organization or movement. Built into the assumptions behind civic infrastructure is that these different sets of relationships are interwoven and interconnected, that they affect one another. This is a more realistic assumption than any frame that treats these relations in isolation. For example, the council member discussed above came to the Evergreen tenants' aid in part because of her public stance on affordable housing, which she made in response to our advocacy efforts making it an important civic issue.

I distinguish "civic" from "social" in that, especially in a multiracial context, social ties are not a given. The word "civic" also acknowledges differences in power: often-disenfranchised people—tenants, single mothers, Blacks, and Latinas—need to build a power base through organizing, and they often require the power of the state to protect their interests from the private sector, albeit often in problematic ways. Unlike social capital, civic infrastructure does not build upon metaphors of capitalism, but explicitly acknowledges the importance of the public arena. In an "it's-who-you-know" world, poor people are going to continue to be taken advantage of. Yet with the collective power mobilized as "stakeholders" in the civic process and not merely recipients, as actors and not merely subjects, they stand a fighting chance to get the state to pay attention.

As the word "infrastructure" connotes, in addition to the structures of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, their interconnections are important. Also connoted in the term "infrastructure" is transportation from one hub to another: people like Diane and Melissa participated in citywide actions in order to stay informed and connect to their immediate neighbors. Carlene and Ann started with local tenants organizing, and later became involved with the courts

and finally the City Council. Finally, like physical infrastructure, civic infrastructure requires maintenance. The Colonial Estates case highlighted the perils of a hostile relationship between state and civil society and the need to dismantle the roadblocks of racism and prejudice.

"Civic infrastructure" also allows an activist or scholar to theorize about racial, gender, and class inequality. In fact, inequality between actors is highlighted in a civic infrastructure analysis. Since the "units of analysis" are the relationships between people and not the people themselves, in addition to providing a fruitful way to study inequality throughout the system, the concept of civic infrastructure avoids the legacy of racialism, in which "civil society" or "social capital" are just the latest means of ranking societies or cultures with White Anglo-Saxons typically on top (cf. Chatterjee 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1998; Hann and Dunn 1996).

But civic infrastructure does not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Organizations and activists engaged in social change are, at least implicitly, by definition making comparisons and value judgments, arguing that the status quo is bad and needs to change. Organizers and activists, as well as public scholars, need a tool to assess their effectiveness, to plan strategy, and to evaluate their autonomy and grassroots structure while making decisions about future efforts or their funding. Civic infrastructure served us as a snapshot to assess strengths and potential weaknesses, identifying areas that need reinforcement as well as the bases for our collective power. I wrote this chapter so that other activists can benefit from the experience of Tenants Union members working together. I hope that the tool of "civic infrastructure" can help others engaged in social struggle to not only jam the meatgrinder, but dismantle it altogether.

Notes

We invite readers to browse <http://www.fornypeopleproductions.org> to view a photo gallery. First and foremost, I would like to thank the many Tenants Union members, whose story this is, who led this organizing effort, for their inspiration; may they continue to fight the good fight. I would like to thank Diane Dube, Laura Jelinek, and Laura Melnick at Legal Aid, Melissa Manderschied at Jewish Community Action, University of Minnesota anthropology Ph.D. student Laura Davis, and, especially, University of Minnesota Prof. Ed Goetz for assistance in research. Three other special people deserve mention: my co-worker June Jordan, coalition chair Kristine Madison, and Greg Horan, fighter for social justice and leader of the St. Paul Area Coalition for the Homeless. Amy Selvis and the Tenants Union's executive director (in November 2001) Tatyana Petefish gave invaluable support to this paper. I would also like to thank Karl Bryant, Beth Currans, Dawn Pinder, Amory Starr, and Molly Talcott, as well as discussant Ann Kingsolver and co-organizer Dr. Marilyn Thomas-Houston, for their valuable comments.

1. The preceding quote was used with permission from its author. Note: All of the names have been changed to protect anonymity.
2. I adopted the language, which comes out of the worldview of disempowered people and helps to clarify and communicate their realities, of Tenants Union members that

highlights conflict (e.g., "target") and personifies institutions such as the City (e.g., using the personal pronoun "who" rather than "that" or "which"). And, the "City" is capitalized because as if a person's name.

3. In addition to changing the names of the individuals, I have changed the names of the neighborhoods in an attempt to protect members' identity.

4. Called the "third sector" by Netrin (1986), "voluntary associations" in de Tocqueville (2000), and "political civil society" by Cohen and Arato (1992), a tripartite conception of civil society that splits it from the "private sector" or economic interests is in itself a vast improvement.

5. Conducting research with marginalized people such as Tenants Union members, even the leaders, presents several challenges. First of all, I am limited in the pool from which to select "informants." Often, tenants in marginal settings move without a forwarding address. Even if they are not forced out by a subsequent rent increase or new management, poor families cut expenses where they can in order to afford to have a place to live; phone service is often the first expense cut in this situation. While a twenty-minute drive to their home is possible, I could not reach them while 2,000 miles away. Although I would have liked to reconnect with the members whom I have interviewed, I only had a chance to show this to one of them. When this went to press I was conducting fieldwork in Haiti.

6. This brings up another potential source of bias: I did not work as an organizer with the intention to use my experience as a case study. I was not a participant-observer when it came to the relationships between members and the City. Any applied anthropologist no doubt encounters this question when conducting research.

7. I must again return to this issue; one of the reasons I left organizing to become a scholar is because of this tension between my politics and my position. I made my privilege as a single, white, college-educated male explicit in conversations with members during my time as an organizer and during the interviews. During the months of working for people with different life expectations, informed by racial and economic status, I was able to overcome much, but certainly not all, of my bias.

8. Source: *Apartment Search Profiles*, July 1998. A healthy vacancy rate is considered to be 5 percent, providing stability for tenants, equilibrium for rents, and landlords able to turn a profit and conduct minor renovations.
9. Source: Family Housing Fund, 1998.

10. It appears that since I left the Tenants Union, some of the language may have changed. Since my files have been thrown out when the Tenants Union downsized, I cannot check. Now CDBG funds are supposed to target low and moderate income people, defined as 50 and 80 percent of the regional median income. Source: HUD website, visited March 24, 2005: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpl/community/development/programs/index.cfm>.

11. C. Wright Mills (1959) calls this process the "sociological imagination."

12. This is the source of another difficulty of being in a more privileged social group than members or constituency. I could not personally testify to this process. This is a point of contention between organizing philosophies. For example, some Marxist trade unions feel that a Marxist education is absolutely essential at this point, before organizing can begin (also see Freire 2000:38) for a critique of this trend). Personally, I will say that poor tenants, as with other outsider groups, have a greater ability to see how larger structural forces are at work in their situation than any professionally trained organizer or scholar.

13. Yeich calls this process "critical awareness" (1996:118)

14. The Midwest Academy and other organizers are particular about their use of the word *issue*, which refers to a winnable, deeply felt, shared actionable concern that people can work on together.

15. This meeting was the result of intense organizing: some contacted Legal Aid to sign them up as their attorney. Others did some research into the laws themselves, and the public participation. Two people became the group's liaison to City officials and the neighborhood association. One who would later become a board member for the Tenants Union contacted the media. And five people collected 500 signatures on a petition, asking the City and the neighborhood organization to reconsider, declining the planning process unfair.

16. Source: Minnesota Department of Economic Security, Apartment Search profiles.

17. He was still a Democrat for his mayoral re-election, but turned Republican to run for governor, losing to Jesse "the Body" Ventura, and finally became Senator under the tutelage of President Bush, in 2002, after incumbent Paul Wellstone and his family died in an as-yet-uninvestigated plane crash weeks before the election.

18. Nancy Fraser's idea of "counterpublish" (1992:116) works better to explain this, as the notion of the public sphere has always excluded large segments of the population, including nonwhite people, women, nonbourgeois, and people who did not own property (tenants).

19. This council member also fanned flames of competition between the Tenants Union and an organization that had split off from the Tenants Union in the early 1990s, an example of divide and conquer, hampering our unity and organizing efforts.

20. The only nonwhite council member also wrote a letter to his colleagues, although in praise of our affordable housing advocacy efforts.

21. The council member who carried our demands as a resolution to the City Council at the October 7, 1998, rally said, "You have forty people on a block. Ten of them, the homeowners, always vote. Maybe two or three tenants vote. The ten who do vote want to tear down their neighbors' housing. Who do you think is going to get my attention if they get upset?"

22. Some of the highlights of this campaign included Tenant Union members passing out Halloween candy with cards that explained to parents the location of their polling place and how to do same-day registration. Many members organized last-minute phonebanks and knocked on every door in our selected districts. It worked. In 1999, 2,000 new voters went to the polls, an increase of more than 50 percent from the last non-mayoral municipal election.

23. As of 1996, more than 60 percent of the housing stock in Dayton's Bluff (an East Side neighborhood) needed physical intervention; half the total housing units were more than 100 years old in 1999, while 80 percent were more than 70 years old.

24. Tenants' concerns are not necessarily code violations. For example, a leak in the plumbing in a "common area" is a violation, whereas a flooded and unusable laundry facility is not.

25. Often white Minnesotans (as well as other white U.S. citizens) define themselves as "Minnesotans" (or "Americans") and others as "ethnic," or simply "different," as in, "that's different." "Ethnic" does not refer to Scandinavian or German-descended people, who often highlight their ethnic identity, a favorite ploy in Minnesotan humor, e.g., in the "Prairie Home Companion" or *How to Talk Minnesotan*.

26. Melissa became homeless, one of three people who lost their housing while working with the Tenants Union in the twenty-eight months I worked with them. Seventeen

months later, Melissa was living in a house she and her new husband own. Both she and Dave were still Tenants Union board members at the time of the writing of this chapter.

27. If this terminology seems a bit confusing, it is. Minnesota law only allows for a certain number of tenants to be named on an individual suit.

28. Tenants are made to feel powerless because their fate is no longer in their hands, but in those of the attorneys and the judges using technical, obscure language.

29. This is an example of how the legal system, especially the court, is used as a tool of power (Culhane 1998:73).

30. They stayed in their apartments until ninety days after the court hearing (the point at which the burden of proof in a retaliation case shifts to the tenant), at which point the landlord gave them a notice to vacate. Minnesota law does not require a landlord to offer any reason for issuing a notice to vacate for tenants who have a month-to-month lease.

31. This occurred after I left the Tenants Union.

32. This is an example of what Sally Engles Merry (2001) calls "spatial governmental-ity," the tendency on the part of governments to govern the spaces people occupy rather than the people themselves.

33. Nancy Fraser (1992) discusses domestic violence as another example of the power of the state's refusal to define an issue as "public interest."

34. \$888 for a monthly rent, well above the market average, was considered "affordable housing" by St. Paul's definition.

35. At this meeting, two residents of Colonial Estates spoke of their concerns; the Council member recommended that they move out because she knew their landlord.

36. This training was the same one in which Ann wrote and practiced her City Council testimony, mentioned above.

37. Saul Alinsky, founder of the Industrial Areas Foundation and author of several books, is credited as the founder of modern organizing. Alinsky was famous for his confrontational style and take-no-prisoners approach, often imposing tactics that are humorous and very embarrassing to the target.

38. This language is common to other states' tenant-landlord statutes, which is why the (Seattle) Tenants Union organized to improve legal protections from retaliation.

39. In general, the legal system based on precedent tends to be inherently conservative (Culhane 1998:61).

40. Earlier, when tenants from a building not unlike San Francisco's International Hotel (Salomon 1998) came to the Tenants Union for help, the director sent them to our spin-off organization, which had more tactical experience and organizing resources, because the corporation, the St. Paul Companies, that wanted to build a new office building there was this source of hotline funds.

41. A quasiautonomous nongovernmental organization.

42. This lack of a sense of place does not mean that tenants do not care about their property, but are not encouraged to participate in civic affairs and are not made to feel welcome in public spaces. Malkki (1997:64) argues that adaptive strategies of people who are displaced should not be understood as an "inner, pathological condition of the displaced," reminding us to check our bias against people, such as tenants, who are not "rooted."

43. Indeed this same problem exists for most formulations of social capital. Some (Gibson 2001; Verta 2000) define whole cultures or groups as having a particular social capital. However, as a phenomenon it is most often researched or measured in terms of individuals.

43. I hope I have shown in this chapter that governments are run by people. A strategy of grassroots organizing is to focus on individual people. The two council members, both self-defined progressive Democrats, had different relationships with the Tenants Union and had different beliefs about what to do about St. Paul's affordable housing problem. Therefore, it is difficult to say that the "City" got what "it" wanted. But, as noted above, I am deliberately using the language of the grassroots leaders, personifying the City.

Chapter 9

Expansion and Exclusion in Hong Kong's Squatter Resettlement Program: The Ratchet of Exclusion into Temporary and Interim Housing

Alan Smart and Ernest Chui

All the other chapters in this volume deal with nations in which public housing provides accommodations for only a small and decreasing fraction of the population, and where resort to this sector is associated with high levels of stigmatization. Policies for remediation of these conditions, such as the HOPE VI program examined in the chapters by Lawson Clark, Levy, Rodriguez, and Thomas-houston, and more generally the effort to deconcentrate poverty to avoid its negative effects (Goetz, this volume) have often involved the reaccommodation of deaccommodated housing programs. Until very recently, Hong Kong has been a major exception to these trends.¹ As such, it may allow for questions to be posed about things that might otherwise be taken for granted. The existence of a public housing program that has provided accommodation for half the total population of seven million, with much lower levels of social stigma and pathological conditions, in a territory regularly rated as one of the world's most economically competitive, itself requires explanation. While these successes receive some attention in this chapter, our concern instead is with the processes by which many of those who are in greatest need of assistance (in a city where private housing costs are among the highest in the world) are excluded from access