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Zachary Levenson, *Delivery as Dispossession: Land Occupation and Eviction in the Postapartheid City*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2022; GBP74.00, 271 pp.; ISBN 978-0-19-762925-3 (pbk.), ISBN 978-0-19-762924-6 (hbk.).

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The frequently repeated political promise of a free house, first made in 1994, has long marked the post-apartheid condition for the low-income majority of South Africa's citizens, even if for many it no longer holds credible hope. Delivery of free housing is financed by the state. Land occupiers in the heady but also tumultuous and violent days of political transition around 1994 often proactively mirrored formal township layouts. They anticipated the newly elected first democratic state to complete the work they had begun, which had required a level of organisation. With few exceptions, the post-apartheid state's inherited and in many ways unreformed housing delivery machinery ignored such collective initiative as well as the leadership structures that made anticipatory land occupation possible. The built environment industry on which the state relied for its delivery, including planners and civil engineers, required a clean slate for standardised mass housing roll-out. By and large, this is still the case today.

But the rationale for evictions in the larger housing delivery trajectory, as Zachary Levenson's book *Delivery as Dispossession: Land Occupation and Eviction in the Postapartheid City* (2022) argues, is more complex. It is also, as Levenson points out, not fully explained by the narrative of a 'state-led state accumulation strategy' (p. 24), which was a compelling narrative in the 2000s when municipalities adopted unnuanced strategies centred on urban competitiveness along with an official discourse of derogative labelling of shack settlements (Huchzermeyer, 2011). Levenson makes the compelling, overarching point that whereas the apartheid state carried out dispossession through delivery, the post-apartheid state practices delivery through dispossession. With an interest in the shifting relationship between delivery and dispossession, Levenson sets out to understand the interface between land occupations and delivery in South Africa in the second decade of the millennium.

Levenson takes the reader onto the ground in two simultaneous but contrasting land occupation trajectories starting in 2011 and 2012, those of Kapteinsklip (Captain's Rock) and Siqalo (derived from *isiqalo* – the beginning). These are located on the edges of an apartheid era 'coloured' township, Mitchells Plain, on Cape Town's sandy and wind-swept Cape Flats. Kapteinsklip, a field or dune, seemingly a railway reserve, just 600m from the windswept coastline, emerged as an organised occupation in May 2011. According to the main informant's diary entries, Kapteinsklip swelled in numbers, but after an immediate and ruthless eviction by the municipality's Anti-Land Invasion Unit, the settlement stabilised with a group of some 125 people. Levenson's interlocutor recounts that holding out in Kapteinsklip for the following 18 months meant a precarious existence, but households bore individualised hope for their free house. With this hope that formed part

of the drive in the initial occupation organised by an already existing, politically affiliated organisation, the occupiers later divided their loyalty as a broader-based community organisation in the area offered support. Ongoing eviction threats, and pro bono legal assistance but biased communication channels about this, as Levenson argues, in part explain the group's fragmentation and factionalisation. At their ultimate eviction, some take up an invitation from Siqalo's leadership to join that settlement. The housing biography of Levenson's informant thus leads through Kapteinsklip to Siqalo, where her household initially feels welcomed but is poorly integrated and eventually moves back to an overcrowded family backyard. Thus, a fascinating and rich comparison and interaction between these two occupations unfolds in Levenson's chapters, including interactions with the state, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), legal representatives and the court.

In contrast to Kapteinsklip, Siqalo emerged in 2012 in a less organised fashion but rapidly grew in numbers to over a thousand homes. The land is privately owned and was being quarried for building sand. A community organisation emerged and over time, as Levenson sets out, the occupation became integrated into the system of local political representation through a ward councillor. Drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre's writing on group formation, Levenson refers to Siqalo as a 'fused group' (brought together by a common concern or object, which they pursue collectively), contrasted by the 'serialised' or 'atomised' nature of Kapteinsklip (each household in pursuit of its own plot and house). As Levenson explains, Sartre's 'serialization', like 'hegemony in Gramsci, . . . explains how collective life in relation to commodities – to objects under capitalism really – yields passivity' (p. 30). Levenson further embraces Gramsci's conceptualisation of civil society as inseparable from political society 'as two moments in a single process of politicization' (p. 95), twinned and existing 'in a single empirical location, which [Gramsci] terms the integral state' (p. 28). He therefore theorises Kapteinsklip's serialised civil society developing a political society, this taking the form of factionalism, whereas Siqalo develops a 'politics of fusion'. This insight structures the chapters that follow the introduction to the two occupations and Chapter 2, which provides the shifting 'dynamics of delivery and dispossession' across South Africa's apartheid and post-apartheid history. Chapters 3 and 4 engage civil society articulations in Kapteinsklip and Siqalo, respectively, and chapters 5 and 6 engage political society articulations for each of the occupations, albeit treating civil and political society as inextricably twinned.

Taking the theorisation with Gramsci further, the final chapter puts forward four theses on the expanded or integral state, which Levenson explains as 'a terrain of struggle, distinct from the set of administrators and buildings captured by the term in mainstream political science' (p. 28). This conception, Levenson argues, allows one to understand land occupations in a new way. The first thesis is that the state must be seen as 'a social relation', as 'arena of struggle' incorporating civil and political society. The two land occupation trajectories demonstrate that, although attempting to evade the state, the state's hegemony demands a relation between the land occupation and the state. If not stamped out or made to accept what the state has in mind for them, they are kept in a subordinate position. The second thesis suggests that autonomously organising without existing civil society may avoid the atomisation and factionalism that prevented success of the Kapteinsklip occupation. The third thesis reiterates the point that civil and political society articulations are inseparable. The last thesis underlines the importance of understanding the postcolonial institutional and legal context.

With this fourth thesis in mind, I would like to suggest that Levenson's book is read in conjunction with Stuart Wilson's (2021) *Human Rights and the Transformation of Property*. An important conversation can be constructed between the two books. As acknowledged by Levenson, Wilson crafted the legal case for the occupiers of Siqalo. In Wilson's book, one of the many socio-economic rights cases discussed is the Marikana land occupation. This is also on the Cape Flats to the south of the Cape Town International Airport and is similar to Siqalo in scale, timing and broad trajectory. Through such cases, but without the ethnographic layers of Levenson's book, Wilson lays out the shifting legal context in post-apartheid South Africa, showing how reforms and case law have

undermined the way common law rendered unlawful occupiers subject to eviction. Thus, Wilson adds an important angle to our understanding of the relationship between delivery and dispossession: '[t]he certain dispossession that followed the termination or absence of rights has been replaced by a conceptual battleground in which action and resistance are possible' (Wilson, 2021: 139). Wilson's book puts forward an argument for an 'agent-centred theory of property law and social change' that 'draws attention to the manifold ways in which property law integrates itself into society and structures' (Wilson, 2021: 143). This challenges us to think across an integral state (Levenson, 2022) and an integrated and 'agentive' law (Wilson, 2021) in understanding the trajectory of land occupations in South Africa.

Wilson or other housing rights scholarship can also be read for a more nuanced portrayal of the Constitutional Right to Housing in South Africa. Perhaps not intended, but those not familiar with South African law may read Levenson as assuming the South African Constitution mandates the state to deliver housing for all. Levenson refers to the Constitution, but without a deeper legal review argues that with limited state capacity to deliver, the right to housing leads to judicialisation of politics, suggesting along Gramsci's theory of hegemony that this inevitably draws land occupations 'into the formal-legal apparatus of the state' (p. 29). It may be helpful to clarify that it is a policy choice how the South African government carries out its Constitutional obligation to use its available resources to progressively realise the right to adequate housing. Under the post-apartheid Constitution, it has had the option, for instance, to promote and resource collective auto-construction. It has, for complex political reasons, chosen and maintained the route of individualised state delivery. It has largely resisted implementing its progressive, participatory upgrading programme adopted in 2004 (to complement housing delivery), which is tailored to land occupations such as Siqalo, Marikana, and even Kapteinskliip. For instances in which relocation is necessitated as the land cannot be rendered safe for occupation, this programme provides for participatory and empowering relocation. It facilitates, as argued elsewhere (Huchzermeyer and Kornienko, in press), self-determination. Perhaps in tension with the thesis on hegemony, Levenson observes that the Siqalo community leader 'articulated a politics of collective self-determination' in choosing not to advance the struggle against eviction through NGOs or political parties, depending only on a judge to 'regularize their land tenure' (p. 107). Here a dialogue could emerge as to whether Wilson's portrayal of the role law as 'agentive' may outweigh Levenson's concern with judicialisation. A core argument in Wilson's book is that law can be used to either create or destroy the 'spaces in which ordinary men and women can act for themselves' (Wilson, 2021: 136), in essence underlining that law possesses the agency to create spaces for self-determination.

Drawing attention to the intricacies of land occupation, Levenson's immensely readable book opens a field for much-needed enquiry, grounded research, theorisation, debate and ultimately political conscientisation. The appendix with a generous reflection on reactivity, bias and reflexivity in ethnographic research is important in inviting (and at the same time cautioning) researchers to widen the number of land occupations through which we get to understand the integral South African state from below.

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