

# TOWARDS INCLUSIVE CITIES

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING  
FOR INFORMAL SETTLEMENT  
UPGRADING | 2014



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**This document was produced by Isandla Institute as part of the Khayaletu Initiative, a project supported by Comic Relief.**

The aim of the Khayaletu Initiative is to advance models for participatory informal settlement upgrading through knowledge sharing, collaboration and experimentation. Isandla Institute's role in the Khayaletu Initiative is to inspire and inform communities of practice through research and the facilitation of engagement between practitioners in the field of informal settlement upgrading. One of these engagements takes the shape of a Cape Town-based Community of Practice made up of three NGOs working in the city. Along with Isandla Institute, these organisations include Community Organisation Resources Centre (CORG) and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU). This document distils the knowledge emerging from the work of the Khayaletu Initiative partner organisations, and offers lessons from both theory and practice.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inclusive cities can only be built through processes that draw on the experiences and expertise of local communities. In informal settlements in particular residents are best placed to identify pressing needs, and to address these through collective action. The methods through which upgrading occurs must therefore be geared towards enabling communities to drive development processes, and must acknowledge the agency and creative energy that residents can bring to bear on their neighbourhoods.

The document suggests that community-based planning offers key principles and methods that are useful for formulating upgrading interventions that are grounded in community participation and that promote the co-construction of inclusive, just and sustainable urban living environments. While the approach is not without its limits, it offers strategies for ensuring that development processes are not imposed, but rather made through collaboration between various stakeholders. Such strategies hold immense potential in the South African context, where transformation can come only when residents are included in the process of city-making.

## ACKNOWLEDGING AGENCY

**In August 2014 the new Outcome 8 agreement – stipulating the objectives of the Department of Human Settlements for the next five years – was released. As part of the Minister of Human Settlements’ efforts to ensure access to adequate housing opportunities, the document notes that the department will aim to provide 1.495 million housing opportunities in quality living environments by the year 2019 (Outcome 8 2014).**

Such a lofty target holds significant implications for the practice of informal settlement upgrading, a key strategy through which many of these housing opportunities will be provided. It demands reflection on the ways in which development projects in the country are undertaken. Can we meet such a target without steamrolling people’s processes of self-actualisation? And if so, how is this to be done?

Urban residents in South Africa are increasingly positioning themselves as active role players in issues of local development and governance. Communities are staking their claim in processes of urban transformation, and are asserting their right to participate in the making and management of equitable living environments. This document therefore explores the value of community-based planning as an approach to urban upgrading not only for meeting quantifiable targets and realising physical change in living environments, but also for honing and harnessing the agency and creative capacity of residents in informal settlements. It considers the defining features of such an approach, and its merit in the South African context in particular. The key principles that underlie processes of community-based planning are also set out here in an attempt to illustrate the attitudinal shifts that are required to ensure that upgrading is undertaken in a participatory manner. The document also considers some of the concrete methods through which community-driven upgrading interventions may be designed, implemented and evaluated. A final section explores the limitations of such an approach. Despite these however, we suggest that community-based planning may serve as a viable strategy for bringing about substantive transformation in South African cities.

## DEFINING COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING AND ITS VALUE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

**In the context of informal settlement upgrading, community-based planning takes the lived realities of residents as its starting point. These realities include the immediate needs of community members, as well as the capabilities through which residents are able to drive the upgrading process.**

The approach assumes that communities have a critical role to play in determining the shape of development, not only through the articulation of needs, but also through the investment of time, competencies and physical assets (DPLG 2004; Mathi and Cunningham 2005). Community-based planning methods are used to create spaces for participation, co-production and for collective **agenda-setting** and decision-making. The approach therefore encourages the decentralisation of power (Dasgupta and Beard 2007) as it allows communities to perform the role of active decision-makers rather than passive recipients of aid. These methods aim to draw out and harness the energy of communities, so that the upgrading process is continually informed by the situation on the ground. Indeed, Kent suggests that it 'is the empowerment of people from their own resources that constitutes the fundamental value of community-based planning' (1981: 75).

Community-based planning differs from traditional planning approaches in that it does not imagine the needs of a community to take the form of a checklist (DPLG 2004). In seeking to identify local needs, priorities and strategies for action, the approach instead recognises that poverty is not a straightforward problem for which simple solutions exist (Chambers 1995). It acknowledges that deprivation often serves as the physical manifestation of social, political and economic marginalisation. Merely providing houses to communities who have historically been excluded from the making of their neighbourhoods and cities will not disrupt the status quo. The value of community-based planning then lies in its ability to serve as a tool for uncovering and addressing the underlying complexities that give rise to large-scale inequality.

Community-based planning is therefore a process-orientated approach that considers participation to be not only a means to an end, but indeed an end in itself (Miraftab 2003; Patel 2013). This form of planning is concerned with the ways in which priorities are identified and decisions

**Agenda-setting** is the process through which the direction of upgrading interventions is determined. Those who set the agenda can decide which issues will be given attention, and also which issues will go unaddressed. When communities have the power to set the development agenda they can tailor upgrading projects to address pertinent issues, and to respond to their needs.



**Community-based planning is a process-orientated approach that considers participation to be not only a means to an end, but indeed an end in itself**

are made, and highlights the need for participation throughout the various stages of development. Its orientation towards process does not suggest that community-based planning neglects action. Healey notes that '*doing something*, i.e. acting in the world' (1992: 151 original emphasis) is the primary purpose of community-based planning processes which seek to formulate comprehensive plans for action that, once implemented, may result in actual and substantive change in people's lives. This orientation does however mean that the approach remains, as mentioned above, cognisant of the complex contexts within which upgrading occurs. Here, circumstances may change and throw into discord carefully laid plans. In focusing on processes then – and in drawing on various forms of knowledge (Goldstein 2009; Healey 1992) – community-based planning ensures that upgrading interventions are adaptive and that they are able to respond to the changing nature of everyday life.

Such an approach to development has three key advantages that are worth exploring here. These include:

a) increased efficiency through which projects costs are lowered,

- b) increased effectiveness which relates to the expansion of a project's scope, and
- c) the empowerment of local communities through access to information and skills development (Miraftab 2003).

The use of participatory planning as a means for achieving the objectives of efficiency and effectiveness is criticised for its understanding of participation, which here serves as a source of cheap labour and may be thought to perform a tokenistic role in the development process (Miraftab 2003: 228). But efficiency and effectiveness need not only benefit the state by minimising resource expenditure. In South Africa, where poverty affects a disproportionately large part of the population, efficiency and effectiveness also contributes to the well-being of residents in informal settlements by ensuring greater access to service and housing opportunities.

In its use as a strategy for empowering local communities, community-based planning is also particularly valuable in the South African context. Here, the exclusionary patterns of **apartheid spatial planning** remain entrenched (Berrisford 2011) as the urban poor continue to occupy the periphery of cities in both physical and administrative terms. There is a need then to encourage the uptake of an inclusionary planning practice that fosters the making of democratic cities, where the substantial and continuous participation of all residents is considered to be critical. Community-based planning methods empower communities by ensuring greater access to information that can serve as a tool with which to bargain with external stakeholders, and in supporting residents in making key decisions regarding the production and management of their neighbourhoods.

South Africa boasts an enabling policy environment (see page 6) that promotes participatory governance. The country therefore provides fertile ground for the implementation of progressive, inclusive and innovative approaches that are driven by communities' needs and capabilities. The formation of structures such as Integrated Development Planning forums and ward committees indicate a commitment to achieving increased participation. These structures have however struggled to bring to fruition the ideals set out in policy. Integrated Development Planning processes are often led by consultants who tend to address the challenges posed by poverty and inequality through technocratic interventions (DPLG 2004). Isandla Institute (2013) has also argued that public participation in South Africa has become dominated by a culture of compliance and risk aversion which limits its adaptive potential. The practice of community-based planning can therefore serve as a means for animating existing policy provisions, and can offer a set of methods through which the ideal of participatory governance can be realised.

### **Apartheid spatial planning**

*gave rise to divided cities geared towards segregation and exclusion. The effects of this kind of planning are still visible today as the urban poor generally live on the edges of the city – removed from its centre.*

## POLICY PROVISIONS RELATED TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

### *White Paper on Local Government (1998)*

The document stipulates that municipalities are responsible for working together with communities to find sustainable solutions to their everyday needs. It notes that national government should play a supportive role by capacitating and enabling municipalities to achieve developmental outcomes. Local government is described as the sphere of government that should have the most significant impact on people's day-to-day lives, and that should work towards the realisation of integrated cities. The document suggests that a developmental local government is defined by four characteristics: the maximisation of social development and economic growth, integration and coordination, the democratisation of development, and by leading and learning.

### *Municipal Structures Act (1998)*

The Act makes provision for the establishment of ward committees as mechanisms through which to enhance participatory governance. Ward committees are linked to municipal councils through their ward councilors who act as chairpersons of committees. The Act states that ward committees must be made up of members who are able to represent the diverse interests that may be encountered in a ward. These committees are able to make recommendations on matters that affect their wards, and therefore offer a means for communities to influence their municipalities' actions.

### *Municipal Systems Act (2000)*

The Act makes explicit reference to the importance of community participation. It suggests that municipalities should cultivate a culture of participatory governance, and should create opportunities for local communities to participate in municipal affairs. It also states that municipalities are responsible for building communities' capacity to participate in governance related processes, and conversely to train their officials to foster participation. Despite the difficulties faced in translating this policy into practice, The Act's explicit reference to participation as an integral aspect of governance suggests an institutional commitment to responsiveness and accountability.

### *Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) (2003)*

The norms and standards that are meant to regulate the financial affairs of municipalities across South Africa are taken up in the MFMA. Throughout the document it is noted that local communities should have a key role to play in ensuring that municipalities operate in a manner that is responsive, effective and accountable. The MFMA stipulates that annual budgets, as well as contracts with potential budgetary implications, should be shared with communities. The views of local residents are to be considered and reflected in the final versions of annual budgets, and in the consequent actions of municipalities.



## CORE PRINCIPLES IN COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING

**A community-based planning approach to development is underpinned by a number of key principles, five of which we explore here.**

Firstly, community-based planning methodologies recognise the **creativity, capability and agency** of local residents. Those who are affected by development are not considered to be passive, but rather active agents with key roles to play in the transformation of their neighbourhoods. Mathi and Cunningham (2005) suggest that communities possess existing assets that can, once identified and mobilised, be used to design **endogenous** responses to address local needs. Community-based planning acknowledges that people have valuable knowledge and insights that are critical to the formulation of effective development interventions. Indeed, those who live in conditions of poverty and deprivation are best placed to articulate the complexities of everyday life under such circumstances (Chambers 1995). Furthermore, the involvement of local people in the implementation of projects is crucial to ensure long-term sustainability. Where communities are able to take ownership of both the processes and products of development, interventions are more likely to affect significant and lasting change.

Secondly, community-based planning is an approach to development that allows for **multivocality**. It acknowledges the inherent value of various ways of knowing, and offers a space where different rationalities

### Endogenous

*responses are those that are produced by people themselves. The word describes something that is made within a culture or a community. Here it is used to illustrate the need for plans that are not imposed by external forces, but rather created by residents who know their neighbourhoods and settlements and who are best suited to identify and address issues within them.*



can be negotiated in pursuit of common purpose. Healey suggests that knowledge is 'not pre-formulated but is specifically created anew in our communication through exchanging perceptions and understanding and through drawing on the stock of life experience and previously consolidated cultural and moral knowledge available to participants' (1992: 153). She argues for a communicative approach to planning that considers all ways of being to be valid, and yet avoids the pitfalls of **relativism** by seeking to find what she refers to as 'achievable levels of mutual understanding for the purpose at hand' (1992: 154). Even scientific rationality is not discredited completely, but rather considered to be one of many bodies of knowledge from which potential action plans may be drawn. In allowing for multiple voices to be heard, community-based planning processes therefore encourage the emergence of a dynamic development practice that is rooted in everyday experiences.

### Relativism

*refers to a perspective that does not subscribe to one absolute truth, but rather acknowledges that different ways of life have merit when judged according to their own internal rules. While relativism is useful, it can lead to non-action.*

In Northern Bangkok, twelve communities living along the Bang Bua canal formed a network through which to realise the incremental upgrading of their settlements. Their efforts illustrate the potential for residents living in informal settlement to act as agents of change, driving the implementation of innovative interventions. Communities in Bang Bua worked to challenge the perceptions of local government, which accused residents of polluting the canal. The network took initiative and put into action projects that served as evidence of the need for more flexible regulations. While district authorities considered twenty square meter houses to be substandard, Ban Bua residents were able to show that these houses were in fact cost-effective and that they offered sufficient living space. Through community-led development interventions, the network established itself as a valuable ally and a force contributing to significant transformation in the city. (ACHR 2008)

A third important aspect of community-based planning is its recognition of the need for **facilitation**. The approach acknowledges that development projects are designed, implemented and managed in contexts that are necessarily complex, and where multiple interests, priorities and expectations are at play. Forester's (2006) work suggests that facilitation can serve as a means through which to mediate conflict and contestation in communities, and can be used as a tool with which to redirect stakeholder's energy away from tensions towards the identification of common goals. Indeed, Mouffe (2000) argues that conflict – when managed in productive ways – can have immense generative potential. In providing participatory spaces where communities are allowed to express disagreements and to contest power, processes of community-based planning therefore strengthen relationships between stakeholders as they deepen their understanding of one another.

### Co-constructed

*Plans are developed by various stakeholders who work together to find adequate and appropriate solutions to problems. The word suggests that people – whether residents, planners or officials – participate in the planning process as equals. Everyone's views are acknowledged, respected and utilised for the design of interventions.*

Development programmes informed by processes of community-based planning are furthermore cognisant of the need for continued **communication, collaboration and co-creation**. If, as mentioned above, communities are considered to be active agents with valuable knowledge then they must also be recognised as equal partners in development. Healey's (1992) notion of communicative planning is useful for thinking about the processes through which participatory development interventions are made. The concept suggests that community action plans emerge out of meaningful dialogues between stakeholders. As such it does not rely on pre-determined outcomes, but rather allows for collectively defined outcomes to be shaped out of participatory processes. Instead of imposed ideal models, context-specific models are constructed from the bottom up. Such a communicative planning approach ensures that interventions are **co-constructed**, and that they draw on the strengths and capabilities of various stakeholders.

Finally, the practice of community-based planning is committed to **knowledge-sharing and empowerment**. Indeed Kent (1981) suggests that the inherent value of participation lies in its ability to strengthen the capabilities of marginalised communities. Through participatory development interventions communities gain access to information that allows them to enter into negotiations with external stakeholders such as the state.

Each of these principles is based on the assertion that people matter, and that top-down interventions offer insufficient strategies for constructing relevant, transformative and sustainable development programmes. The section that follows considers the methods through which processes of community-based planning operate, and illustrates its commitment to the production of comprehensive community action plans.



## TOOLS AND METHODS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING

**The process of formulating, implementing and evaluating locally design plans for upgrading consists of a number of phases, each geared towards the development of inclusive neighbourhoods. The phases are briefly outlined below, and are summarised in table 1.**

### PHASE 1

#### Pre-planning

During the pre-planning phase it is critical that practitioners get to know the settlement within which upgrading interventions will be implemented (NUSP 2014). An initial profile of the settlement can be produced through methods such as baseline surveys, desk reviews and interviews (UN-Habitat 2014).

These methods are useful for gauging the particular physical, as well as social, dynamics that will undoubtedly influence the shape of upgrading interventions. This phase can be used as a time to take stock of the key issues that need to be addressed, prominent actors in the settlement and the politics of the space, as well as existing interventions (whether undertaken by communities or external practitioners) and their impact. The pre-planning phase also requires active engagement with residents and community leadership. Since community-based planning is firmly rooted in a recognition of people's agency and autonomy it can only occur when there is buy-in from those living in informal settlements. During this first phase then practitioners should work to establish a presence in the settlement and to build relationships with community members. Of course, trust between stakeholders will grow over time. For that reason the pre-planning phase should be understood as an opportunity for instigating the processes that will lead to the formation of strong ties between practitioners and communities.

### PHASE 2

#### Planning

Once an initial profile of the settlement has been produced, stakeholders can move on to the planning phase which includes information gathering, priority setting and action planning (see below). Each of the steps in this phase are led by residents living the settlement, and are

facilitated by development practitioners (whether government officials, civil society actors or built environment professionals). The methods used here are not only geared towards uncovering the needs of communities, but also towards building residents' capacity to initiate, implement and management upgrading interventions. Community-based planning processes are also then about ensuring that upgrading is not done only on a project-by-project basis.

### *Information gathering*

In the process of informal settlement upgrading, information gathering is an important activity that allows stakeholders to assess the critical issues that need to be addressed in a settlement, as well as the potential interventions through which this may be done. By knowing how many households inhabit the settlement, the quantities and qualities of services in the settlement, and the patterns of land ownership, stakeholders can begin to design targeted interventions that channel resources to where they will have most impact. But information can also serve as a powerful tool with which communities can leverage funding, or with which to hold the state accountable.

This information is collected through a number of methods, two of which are particularly useful for informal settlement upgrading. Enumerations, defined as 'household level surveys, where each shack in a settlement is numbered and the inhabitants counted and asked a series of questions about their socioeconomic situation and access to basic infrastructure and amenities' (Farouk and Owusu 2012: 49), differ from standard surveys for a number of reasons (Karanja 2010). Enumerations involve residents living in informal settlements and allow local communities to set the research agenda by formulating the questions that are asked, and by gathering the data themselves. They also cover settlements in their entirety so as to 'ensure that every household knows the reason for the enumeration and how they can become actively engaged in the plans and proposals that the enumeration seeks to support' (Karanja 2010: 218). Finally, the data collected through this method is verified by communities themselves. A second key method is that of community mapping which is done when a group comes together 'to draw, mould, write, or express through any other means some aspect of local knowledge and experience (Amsden and Van Wynsberghe 2005: 356). This method has proved to be a fun and accessible tool for storytelling, and one that works particularly well amongst the youth.

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A case study from Kenya illustrates the value of community-led enumerations for advancing participatory informal settlement upgrading. In 2005, Pamoja Trust (a Kenyan NGO) and Muungano wa Wanviji (the Kenyan Homeless People's Federation) set out to enumerate and map informal settlements in the city of Kisumu. The organisations worked in partnership with Kisumu residents, with the municipal council of Kisumu and with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The information gathered through these processes would then feed into the design and implementation of upgrading interventions as part of the Kisumu Cities Without Slums programme. Enumerators collected data on the status of land ownership in eight of the city's informal settlements, on prominent modes of land acquisition and on household structures. The process of data collection served to bolster community organisations in each of the enumerated settlements, and allowed for the creation of easily accessible information databases through which residents could learn more about their settlement and its connection to other settlements in the city. (Karanja 2010)

### *Priority setting and action planning*

The information gathered through methods such as enumerations and community mapping exercises are then used to identify a community's priorities. Once priorities have been set out, the actions needed to address key issues can be explored and decided on. Through collaborative processes then, stakeholders produce Community Action Plans that stipulate collectively identified strategies for action, and serve to guide future interventions. Community Action Plans are formulated through participatory workshops (UN-HABITAT 2008; The World Bank Group 2001) where communities are guided to identify pertinent needs, pressing priorities, and potential strategies for addressing these. According to UN-HABITAT (2008), there are a number of practical considerations that need to be taken into account when preparing for Community Action Planning workshops. The venue for the workshop, for instance, must be accessible to communities and ideally situated within the settlement itself. Here, **interactive** discussion that allow residents to write, to draw, or to become physically involved in the process of design are useful for eliciting active participation in dialogues and decision-making. Community Action Plans can also be used as tools for monitoring and evaluation. This is not to say that these plans are necessarily rigid and unchangeable. Rather, they are used to remind both communities and external stakeholders about their commitment to the pursuit of collectively defined goals.

### **An interactive**

*planning process is an inclusive process that makes space for all participants to voice their aspirations, ideas, and concerns. Through talking, walking, writing, drawing and building people become involved in planning, and are encouraged to take ownership of upgrading outcomes.*

## PHASE 3

### Post-Planning

**Community-based planning is aimed at affecting actual transformation that contributes to the making of inclusive and just urban environments.**

The final phase of a community-based planning approach is geared towards the implementation and evaluation of the Community Action Plans produced in phase 2.

#### *Implementation*

As mentioned above, community-based planning is aimed at affecting actual transformation that contributes to the making of inclusive and just urban environments. It is therefore important that this process be orientated not only towards the setting out of plans for targeted upgrading interventions, but also towards translating these into action. As with the preceding phases, the activities associated with this phase are driven by community members. Implementation may therefore also include skills and vocational training (ACHR 2012).

#### *Evaluation*

Once action plans have been implemented, it is necessary that stakeholders evaluate the impact, efficiency and appropriateness of interventions. Through surveys and interviews residents can gauge the outcomes (both intended and unintended) of a project, and can determine whether the objectives set out in the Community Action

In 2010, Project Preparation Trust (PPT) initiated a Participatory Community Action Planning (PCAP) process, focused on sustainable livelihood interventions, in two informal settlements in eThekweni Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of this programme was to increase participation amongst poor and vulnerable groups, to develop strategies for action, to assist groups in communicating with local municipal officials, and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of PCAP methods. The programme was completed in 2011 and during this year-long period communities, working in partnership with PPT and the eThekweni Municipality, developed plans to strengthen relationships between spaza shop owners and local police, to assist crèche operators in meeting Early Childhood Development Standards, to mitigate vulnerability to serious illness, and to increase food security through training in organic farming practices. The PCAP process proved to be a valuable tool for securing buy-in and commitment from both communities and municipal officials. It was noted however that greater roll out of the process would require the establishment of a central coordinating structure in the municipality. (Project Preparation Trust 2010)

Plan have been achieved. While evaluating an upgrading intervention, stakeholders must remember that people’s experiences of projects and their outcomes are necessarily subjective. Evaluations may therefore reveal contradictory, yet valuable, experiences. These should be documented, and should feed into an overall assessment of actions taken. The outcomes of evaluations should also be used then to adjust and amend interventions to ensure that upgrading projects remain relevant and responsive.

**TABLE 1: PHASES AND METHODS ASSOCIATED WITH COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING**

Phase	Purpose	Methods
<b>Pre-planning</b>	Gaining understanding of a settlement and its physical and social dynamics.	Desk reviews Baseline surveys Interviews
<b>Planning</b>	To identify the priorities of residents living in a settlement, and to formulate comprehensive and collectively defined plans for action.	Enumerations Community Mapping Community Action Planning workshops
<b>Post-Planning</b>	Translating plans into action through the implementation of projects. Evaluating projects to determine their impact, efficiency and appropriateness.	Surveys Interviews Community forums

The phases set out above seem to suggest a linear path of progression that begins with some initial engagement with the settlement and its residents, and ends with the implementation of collectively defined action plans. In reality however, upgrading is iterative and unpredictable. Throughout the planning process methods should be adjusted in accordance with the context within which they are intended to intervene.

**Community members may in fact have a range of different (often conflicting) priorities, allegiances and analyses of their circumstances and the ways in which issues are best addressed.**

## LIMITATIONS TO PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

**While community-based planning methodologies may give rise to sustainable, responsive and co-constructed development interventions, the approach is not without its limitations.**

Actors working through participatory planning methods must remain cognisant of the potential pitfalls of the approach. Indeed, various factors may impact on the quality and outcomes of community-driven process. Four of these are worth exploring.

Firstly, the term ‘community’ is often taken to describe a group that is characterised by homogeneity in terms of needs and interests. But community members may in fact have a range of different (often conflicting) priorities, allegiances and analyses of their circumstances and the ways in which issues are best addressed. Community-based planning endeavours may therefore be thwarted by **conflict and contestation** within communities. Conflict may erupt from tensions between political factions, or as a result of fragmentation and division along racial lines (Millstein 2008). While community-based planning processes are geared towards conflict mediation, continuous frictions between groups within a community may serve to prevent the establishment of collaborative forums.

### Decentralisation

*refers to the process through which power is distributed among various actors as opposed to a single authority. Here, it refers to an upgrading practice that redirects decision-making power from the government to the people. By spreading power away from one central authority, people can guard more easily against corruption and non-responsiveness.*

Furthermore, community-based planning processes are often subject to **elite capture**, as methods may allow for the perpetuation of dominant power dynamics in a community. According to Dasgupta and Beard, the **decentralisation** of power through community driven development has in certain instances ‘created unprecedented opportunities for predatory politics’ (2007: 231). The authors also note that elite capture is not necessarily a harmful practice. Where community leaders are committed to improving the living conditions of all residents, elite capture may in fact give rise to well coordinated development interventions. Elite capture becomes problematic, however, when prominent members of the community – who are well-placed to access external resources – channel potential benefits away from the marginalised residents. In order to guard against elite capture then, development practitioners must ensure widespread community participation so as to ensure that the programmes they implement do not serve the interests of the few to the detriment of the many.

A third factor that may impact on the quality of community-based planning processes is that of **political instability**. In South Africa,

informal settlement upgrading interventions operate in a volatile political environment. Informal settlements in the country serve as reminders of the dominance of exclusionary planning practices that sought to divide South Africa's cities and its citizens (Berrisford 2011). Today, political parties attempt to win the favour of residents in informal settlements through promises of housing and service delivery. Community-based planning processes are therefore often supported only insofar as they will result in political backing and support. Because the community-led development processes rely on the collaboration of the state as a key stakeholder in upgrading interventions, it is necessary that greater political will and commitment be fostered amongst political actors – particularly in local government.

Finally, planning practitioners may experience **difficulty in reconciling lengthy participatory processes with the need for quantifiable outcomes**. While community-based planning strategies are valuable for assisting in the design and implementation of responsive interventions, they may be tedious and can lead to stagnation or inefficient outcomes. Community-based planning as an approach is most successful when it is coupled with – or leads to – the achievement of quantifiable targets that have a marked impact on the survival and quality of life of the poor. As mentioned throughout the document, collaborative and communicative planning processes should always be geared towards action (Healey 1992).

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## FROM THE KHAYALETHU INITIATIVE

Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORG) advances community-based planning tools in order to build community capacity and networked platforms.

Such methods include **city-wide profiling** of informal settlements, and more in-depth house-to-house **enumerations** generating a socio-economic and demographic profile of settlements. Once the communities captured the data, which is processed and reported on, the draft databases are verified and tested in the community, and the community finally signs off on their settlement data. **Spatial mapping and geo-referencing** of important facilities and basic services is facilitated by the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) and combines the profiling and enumeration into spatial databases. This is used to analyse patterns of informality in cities, and to advocate for regional and area-based interventions. In Khayelitsha, CORC and community partners ISN and FEDUP have profiled settlements in four sub-regions, and spatial databases have been created. This work, funded by Comic Relief and part of the Khayaletu programme, is fundamental building blocks for the creation of **community development plans**, from which projects will be identified and funded.

Isandla Institute's work is geared towards **creating linkages** between planning practices operating at various scales. The organisation recently put together a propositional framework arguing for a more **collaborative approach** to development planning. It suggests that adequate, coherent and sustainable responses to informality in South Africa can only be formulated once processes of community-level

**deliberation and learning** are linked to city-level processes of planning and decision-making. Strong connections between the scales at which planning practices play out will result in development programmes that are both responsive to the needs of local residents and able to navigate complex bureaucratic systems. As such Isandla Institute has shown that these linkages would give rise to processes that contribute to the betterment of everyday lives, as well as to the transformation of the structures that continue to marginalise the poor. As a practical step towards encouraging a more robust and integrated development practice, Isandla Institute hosts regular **community of practice** meetings that serve as spaces for stakeholders to share their experiences, and to learn from one another.

Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) is a comprehensive **area-based development programme** that aims towards safe and integrated sustainable communities, citizenship, pride and the improvement of quality of life for residents in low income neighbourhoods. The participatory approach is based on a **needs assessment** with the community of the focus areas – Safe Node Areas (SNA's) including informal settlements in Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Lavender Hill and linked to the City of Cape Town (CoCT) Integrated Development Plan and Provincial Strategic Outcomes. VPUU is a population-level intervention which aims to relieve exclusion and vulnerability by acting principally at the level of community. It does this while remaining engaged with factors that operate at micro (individual and family) as well as at macro (metropolitan, provincial,

national and international) levels. **Active involvement** (voluntarism) and co-operation are considered to be part of the development from the beginning where the community takes on levels of responsibility, ownership and identity. It is believed that this will help to improve safety as a personal and public good, decrease crime and violence, increase social cohesion and prepare a community

for incremental infrastructure upgrading in a process co-owned by community leadership, the public sector and a dedicated intermediary (VPUU NPC). The VPUU NPC works in partnership with the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Government. Co funding is received by Comic relief and the German Development Bank.” [VPUU NPC, 20 October 2014]





## ENABLING TRANSFORMATION

**In South Africa there is an ongoing tension between quantity and quality in development.**

On the one hand, the severity of issues facing the urban poor necessitates responses with quantifiable outcomes that have a marked impact on peoples' quality of life. To this end the provision of 1.495 million housing opportunities could undoubtedly serve as a step towards the realisation of inclusive South African cities. But on the other hand our history has also shown that inclusive urban environments can only be made when needs, priorities, experiences and capabilities of local residents are at the heart of development processes. It is critical then that we continue to interrogate *how* development targets are met.

Throughout this document we argue that community-based planning may serve as a strategy for overcoming this tension between quantity and quality. While the approach will not offer a catch-all solution to the various and complex issues faced in South African cities, its principles and methods may allow for a development practice that is responsive, efficient and that enables communities to drive transformation in their neighbourhoods and cities.

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