



DEEP ROOTED KNOWLEDGE? ASSESSING THE LACK OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN UISP PROJECTS

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The challenge of informal settlements can be attributed to the enduring legacy of the ineffective housing programme. In recent years, government departments are increasingly pressured to implement upgrading plans following a significant political commitment to upgrading. Delivery targets in the Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs) of 2010–2014 and 2014–2019 are directly related to informal settlement upgrading. A core intention of programmes and policies aimed at upgrading informal settlements is the empowerment and capacitation of communities, while providing services and tenure security.



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ALTHOUGH THIS PAPER argues that upgrading represents a responsive and incremental strategy towards sustainable human settlements, it seeks to understand why so few upgrading projects have embraced central community participation in their conceptualisation and implementation, even when funding allocations for this function exists. In other words, the policy intention confirms a responsive state role, but the programme application does

not constitute a 'responsible state', in the broader meaning as defined by the SoLG publication. Funding instruments for upgrading include the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), Part 3 of the National Housing Code, and the more flexible Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG). While other instruments exist, these two will become increasingly important, as government agencies re-orientate delivery mechanisms to upgrade informal settlements.

However, concerns are raised about the apparent inability to functionally integrate community needs in these structured upgrading projects.

After unpacking and explaining the key milestones of the UISP, I assess the impact of these programmes in practice, by discussing the Govan Mbeki award winners for the 'best informal settlement upgrading project'. At metropolitan level, further insights into upgrading are gained by reviewing the eight metropolitan municipalities' Built Environment Performance Plan (BEPP), a new planning instrument that guides, among others, the implementation of the USDG.

When reviewing commonly shared implementation issues, I argue that most upgrading projects do not honour the provisions made available in these funding instruments for community empowerment and capacity building. This is worrying, considering the scale and pace at which government departments are required to report on upgrading targets.

A POLICY SHIFT TOWARDS UPGRADING

BREAKING NEW GROUND INTRODUCES UPGRADING

Post-apartheid urban and housing policies have underscored the necessity of progressively integrating the poor, as a means of restructuring spatially fragmented cities and eradicating systemic social exclusion and poverty (CoGTA 2009). Post-apartheid urban policies had to redress apartheid fragmentation and segregation, and the subject of transformation in democratic South Africa has been the historically constructed uneven development of 'islands of spatial affluence' in a 'sea of geographic misery' (Williams 2000: 168).

Despite the government's efforts since 1994, delivering more than 2.5 million housing units, the

housing backlog has remained at 2.1 million units (15–17% of the urban population). While government has pursued a conventional housing programme¹ that is increasingly seen as inefficient and unsustainable (Charlton and Kihato 2006), informal settlements have grown from 300 in 1994 to more than 2700, and continue to grow between 5% and 7% across different regions (NUSP 2010). Urban vulnerability has increased, juxtaposed with worsening human development indices, service delivery constraints, insecure tenure, and safety and security concerns.

A decade of unintended consequences in the delivery of housing prompted the then-Department of Housing (DoH) to re-orientate its focus, largely captured in the strategic document, *Breaking New Ground (BNG): A Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements*. BNG argued that 'informal settlements must urgently be integrated into the broader urban fabric to overcome spatial, social and economic exclusion' (DoH 2004: 18) and identified a need to 'shift the official policy response to informal settlements from one of conflict or neglect, to one of integration and co-operation, leading to the stabilisation and integration of these areas into the broader urban fabric' (DoH 2004: 24).

In Cape Town, the N2 Gateway project was initially launched as an informal settlement upgrading project that aimed to upgrade 'incrementally' sections of Gugulethu, Crossroads and Langa along the N2 motorway. The roll-out of the N2 Gateway project has been well documented, and many of its failures have been attributed to the implementation logics associated with a mega-scale housing development² and upgrading aimed at 'city beautification' rather than addressing the needs of informal settlement dwellers (COHRE 2009; Tissington 2011). Indeed, a closer reading of the N2 Gateway project has led Robins (2008) to argue that state implementation agents used the housing project to create 'responsibilised' citizens

through modernist housing schemes. Following the eviction of some 2000 people from Joe Slovo informal settlement to peripheral temporary relocation areas (TRA), such as Blikkiesdorp, residents and their legal representatives approached the Constitutional Court.

The N2 Gateway case illustrates how government housing projects are often packaged as ‘upgrading’ projects, but in reality the practice of planning housing projects in an exclusionary manner has not shifted towards more participatory planning required by upgrading projects. Pithouse (2009: 8) points to the lack of adequate responses to informal settlements after the policy directives of BNG, attributing this failure to support informal settlements to ‘the housing subsidy system [that] has created a widespread view that shack settlements are temporary phenomena that will soon be replaced by formal housing’. Participatory upgrading necessitates a radical shift from the top-down implementation logics associated with conventional housing projects, but upgrading projects spurred by BNG did not adequately shift government into responsibly engaging citizens.

DELIVERY TARGETS RELATED TO UPGRADING

Promising signs of a political commitment to *in situ* upgrading was achieved in 2010, when President Zuma signed a performance contract with the then-Minister of Human Settlements, Tokyo Sexwale. This performance agreement was encapsulated in Outcome 8 of the 2010–2014 MTEF. Two notable targets were agreed upon: (1) The upgrading of 400 000 households in well-located settlements by 2014 (roughly 30% of the 1.2 million estimated households living in informal settlements), which represented a significant emphasis shift; the UISP was envisaged to be the primary instrument for upgrading. (2) The Department of Human Settlements (DHS) would support the coordinating activities of

Yet, in the same breath, the NDP also acknowledges the ‘ambivalence across government’ about addressing the upgrading of informal settlements and the need to develop mechanisms for *in situ* upgrading, institutional capabilities to manage the related processes and ‘appropriate regulations, in a participatory and empowering way’.

the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs aimed at achieving the following service standards: access to water services up from 92% to 100%, sanitation from 69% to 100%, refuse removal from 64% to 75% and electricity from 81% to 92%.

While the delivery targets are associated with the five-year cycle of the MTEF, Chapter 8 of the National Development Plan (NDP) firmly advocates for ‘developing community organisation and support participatory regularisation and upgrade programme’ (NPC 2012: 256). Yet, in the same breath, the NDP also acknowledges the ‘ambivalence across government’ about addressing the upgrading of informal settlements and the need to develop mechanisms for *in situ* upgrading, institutional capabilities to manage the related processes and ‘appropriate regulations, in a participatory and empowering way’ (NPC 2012: 271).

INVESTING IN SECTORAL CAPACITY FOR UPGRADING: NATIONAL UPGRADING SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The creation of the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP), which coincided with the delivery targets, meant more decisive promotion of available upgrading tools, most notably the UISP. An initiative supported by Cities Alliance and the World Bank that was subsequently adopted by the DHS, NUSP was created to fill a critical void in technical support, capacity building and sharing project learning and successes. The DHS admits that the NUSP was

created following an 'assessment of the UISP in 2009 indicated that there were significant blockages in the upgrading of informal settlements despite the wide array of policies and programmes in place' (DHS 2014a: 24).

Not only were projects blocked, but comprehensive informal settlement response strategies at the local and metropolitan government levels were missing in many statutory plans, such as the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and housing sector plans. In 2010, the Housing Development Agency (HDA) argued that only the KwaZulu-Natal province had a comprehensive informal settlement upgrading strategy, which was largely informed by the experienced work of Project Preparation Trust, a non-profit organisation based in Durban (HDA 2014: 4). NUSP support is aimed at rectifying this situation.

Having successfully secured funding in the 2010–2014 and 2014–2019 MTEFs, NUSP is a significant programme of the DHS, accounting for more than 30% of the total programme delivery support work stream (DHS 2014b: 12). In the first phase of the programme (2010–2014), NUSP technical tenders in support of 53 municipalities have focused on the rapid assessment and categorisation of informal settlements, formulation of municipal informal settlement strategies, systematic resource planning towards such strategies and, in fewer cases, detailed settlement level plans, informal economy and livelihood strategies, and protocols for engaging communities (HDA 2014).

The modalities of NUSP technical support follows conventional supply chain management protocols of the department. The programme is in full swing in its current form but experienced significant delays in years following its establishment in 2009/10 (DHS 2014b: 12). Challenges include the following:

- ✦ Technical support offered by the NUSP is conditional on the involvement and agreement

of both the specific municipality and province in each tender. In some cases, 'a total unwillingness is encountered by municipalities to cooperate with NUSP' (DHS 2014b: 12).

- ✦ Slow procurement and approval processes by the department and a lack of sufficient human resources to manage the NUSP effectively. In order to rectify this, a Professional Resource Team (PRT) consisting of 20 companies are preferred suppliers to the department on a 'request for proposal' basis, and rather than issuing open tenders.

It is worth noting that NUSP technical support has been directed at fixing, strengthening and operationalising the supply of municipal services. Little attention has been given to empowering communities, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other intermediaries who effectively represent 'demand-side' considerations. Although provincial NUSP forums have been effective since the launch of the programme, only some have become 'communities of practice' (to use the language of the NUSP), where municipal practitioners, NGOs, communities and other interest parties like universities contribute to planning, monitor implementation and share learning.

The changes in procurement policy and the appointment of a PRT have also closed the space for NGOs and intermediaries to tender for NUSP contracts. A situation therefore arises whereby one of the 20 companies, many based in Johannesburg, are appointed to provide services in a small municipality. The quality of community participation is limited to a few focus groups and/or stakeholder engagement sessions, rather than a deep and meaningful development facilitation that regional service providers could have offered.

UPGRADING OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UISP)

A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO UPGRADING

The preface to the UISP makes it clear that ‘the programme is one of the Government’s prime development initiatives and that upgrading projects should be dealt with on a priority basis’ (DHS 2009: 25). The programme aims to achieve three broad objectives: (1) to institute tenure security, (2) to promote secure and healthy living environment, and (3) to address social and economic exclusion of the poor (DHS 2009). Box 1 outlines the three stages in the UISP process and the associated project level activities. Options for tenure regularisation and eventual housing consolidation in Phase 4 is briefly mentioned.

DEEP-ROOTED KNOWLEDGE: UISP AND COMMUNITY FACILITATION

The UISP recognises that a community has ‘deep routed [sic] knowledge of its development needs and preferences’, and that this knowledge should be ‘harnessed to ensure that township design [...] is targeted at satisfying the actual needs and preferences’ (DHS 2009: 30). To this end, 3% of the total project cost is reserved for social facilitation, which includes activities such as socio-economic surveys, conflict resolution, facilitated community participation and housing support services.

A further allocation of 8% of the total project cost is reserved for project management. Although the lion share of this allocation will no doubt be taken up by professional fees, some could also be used for enhancing capacity, establishing housing support centres, resolving conflicts related to tenure and occupation rights, and constructing social and economic amenities. Although the UISP does not prescribe the modalities to be followed, it suggests

BOX 1

The UISP subsidy in effect funds the creation of serviced sites. It outlines three phases, after which (in Phase 4) qualifying beneficiaries can apply for housing construction and ownership assistance. Phase 1 provides for preliminary planning, geotechnical investigation, land acquisition and a range of community facilitation services, such as conflict resolution, socio-economic surveying, and housing support services and information sharing. In Phase 2, interim services such as water, sanitation, refuse removal and electrification are provided, while settlement planning commences. This includes detailed town planning, land surveying and pegging, contour surveying and civil engineering design. Provisions are also made for relocation and transport costs, and social service and welfare support, where needed. The UISP emphasises the provision of social and economic amenities, for which municipalities can apply for funding from the Social and Economic Amenities Programme, although funding from municipal budgets should be the first option. During Phase 3, full services are provided including land rehabilitation, final environmental impact assessment, project enrolment with the National Home Builders Registration Council, and project management and professional fees.

The UISP makes provision for incremental tenure options and suggests that tenure can start with administrative recognition (e.g. basic site plan, list of occupants, letter of occupation, rights and obligations and so on) in Phase 2. In Phase 3, preliminary legal recognition can be achieved through maintaining a register of occupants linked to stand numbers. As mentioned, housing consolidation in Phase 4 can be supported through a number of housing programmes. In order to qualify, township establishment is required and tenure options include approved layout plan, township register as per Deeds Registry Act, or individual title deeds.

facilitating participation through ward committees and involving Community Development Workers and potentially workers employed through the Expanded Public Works Programme. Whatever the process is, UISP makes it clear that 'community participation should be undertaken within the context of a *structured agreement* between the municipality and the community' (DHS 2009: 30, emphasis added).

ASSESSING PROGRESS OF UISP IN PRACTICE

Achieving the delivery targets of upgrading 400 000 well-located households, as mentioned earlier, requires a responsive strategy by government. Not only was the UISP policy unfamiliar to many officials, the approach to working with communities in difficult situations required additional capacity, for which reason the NUSP was created. All the ingredients for a responsible state was in the making. According to the DHS, the department achieved the targets (that lapsed in 2014), but concerns have been raised.

Firstly, provincial and local government departments often 'repackage' housing projects and report them as informal settlement upgrades. For example, the DHS's 2013/14 annual report (DHS 2014b: 31, states that '101.9% of the target [was] achieved by 31 December 2013 with 407 463 households assisted utilising mainly the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme, the Integrated Residential Development Programme (Informal Settlements), the Enhanced People's Housing Process Programme and the Rural Housing Programme (especially in the more rural Provinces)'. A closer reading reveals that the UISP accounts for only a small, somewhat token, portion of the upgrading target. The majority of the target is made up of conventional housing projects.

Secondly, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is no consensus on what informal settlement upgrading constitutes, which is evident in the varied interpretations of how upgrading is defined at project level. Foster and Gardner's independent study (2014: 27) found that

"upon closer scrutiny, there are many concerns regarding the official figures. Part of this is due to the fact that the definition of informal settlements, and what upgrading entails, is still unclear. This implies that a portion of delivery claimed has not reached informal settlers, and much of what is claimed as UISP (in-situ) upgrading is in fact not achieved *in-situ*, or uses other methodologies such as relocation or rollover development".

While recognising the shift towards upgrading, official figures maybe misleading, implying that government has reorientated provincial and local government departments towards city-wide upgrading initiatives, as this does not seem to be the case.

Thirdly, by the department's own admission, 'there have been minimal efforts to conduct real impact evaluations to measure the actual change that happen as a result of the Upgrading of Informal Settlement Programme' (DHS 2013b: 3). In 2013 the DHS commissioned an independent review of UISP projects initiated by provincial departments, but this document could not be sourced after numerous attempts were made. More recently, the Western Cape DHS commissioned an independent impact assessment of UISP projects during 2007/08–2011/12. The assessment considered 12 projects, of which 30% were located in the City of Cape Town and the remaining 70% in five municipalities. The independent review found that, despite delivering improved access to basic services such as water and sanitation, 'the current policy focus on the settlement as basis for urban planning is not conducive for

the development of functional and thriving human settlements' (WCG 2014: 3). On community participation, the review found that the province did not activate communities effectively in UISP projects. It is recommended that 'a good understanding of "community politics", [...] well-functioning project steering committees, [and] effective communication strategy' is considered in future UISP projects'.

Assessing the progress of UISP in practice highlighted three major issues: (1) housing projects are 'repackaged' as upgrading projects, (2) there is definitional uncertainty, and (3) the lack of independent impact assessments obscure project-level issues. Despite the challenges identified in government's alleged achievement of the 2014 target, the 2014–2019 MTEF includes a new upgrading target: 750 000 households in informal settlements serviced to UISP phase 2/3 (supported by grants such as the USDG) to acceptable standards of access to basic water, sanitation, and road infrastructure and services. UISP, with all its associated challenges, therefore remain a top priority for the 2014–2019 period.

UPGRADING IN PRACTICE: GOVAN MBEKI AWARD-WINNING PROJECTS

Govan Mbeki awards are awarded annually to projects that display excellence in the implementation of human settlement projects. Provincial government departments award projects in the first round, and these provincial winners compete for the prestigious national award. The 'best informal settlement upgrading project' is one of the nine categories assessed. It is insightful to review what government considers best practice, and the national prize-winners for the last two years (2013 and 2014) illustrate some of the challenges with the implementation and understanding of informal settlement upgrading (see Box 2).

BOX 2

2013: Eastern Cape Province for Addo Nomathamsanqa 300

A closer inspection of the Addo Nomathamsanqa 300 reveals with little uncertainty that the 2013 Govan Mbeki project is a conventional housing project. Promotional material describes this project as having an impact on the lives of informal settlement residents 'by producing the best quality work in housing delivery', adding that each beneficiary household received a 'beautiful 45 square meter house, electrified with two bedrooms, a bathroom and an open plan dining room and kitchen and a vegetable garden' (DHS 2013a: 13).

2014: Western Cape Province for Thembalethu UISP

Thembalethu is a large township south of the N2 motorway in the municipality of George. Over the years, 12 informal areas have emerged in an otherwise formalised township. A number of the informal settlements are located on land reserved for schools and have been rezoned to general residential.

According to the George Municipality's 2015 IDP, 56 informal settlements in George comprising 4230 families have been identified. The municipality has adopted an ambitious informal settlement upgrading strategy aimed at servicing 4500 sites by 2022/3. The IDP states that 751 families, or 17% of the 4230 informal households, have thus far been assisted through UISP-funded projects.

The UISP funding was insufficient to service all the sites. The project was fast-tracked by topping up the UISP subsidy with two grants from the Western Cape Government: Access to Basic Services (ABS) and the Enhanced Service Site (ESS). According to the promotional material of the Govan Mbeki awards, 'densification and stand sizes have been negotiated with the communities' (DHS 2014c: 6).

BEST PRACTICE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

The case studies highlight the confusion over the meaning of informal settlement upgrading in general and participatory upgrading more specifically. The case of Addo Nomathamsanqa 300 is a good illustration of upgrading meaning the provision of peripheral greenfields housing for beneficiaries living in informal settlements. The project shows how upgrading projects are often re-packaged housing projects and obscures the meaning of upgrading, much as the reporting on the 2014 delivery targets has tended to do. Such a reading does not discredit the housing project but rather shifts the focus away from upgrading.

Thembaluthu UISP project, on the other hand, has achieved part of an ambitious strategy by the George Municipality to upgrade all informal households *in-situ*. This project is aligned to the UISP's 'structured approach'. What makes this project unique is the 'turnkey' strategy of delivering the upgrading project. The municipality's service provider, in this case the corporate engineering company Aurecon, was responsible for the full ambit of the project, from inception to completion. The South African Affordable Housing magazine reported that 'Aurecon is an Implementation Agent responsible for all the multi-disciplinary professional services required for the incremental upgrading and extension of the required bulk and connection services infrastructure, as well as the development of fully serviced sites and eventually the construction of top structures for qualifying beneficiaries'.³ The remit even included the provision of all community-based participatory planning engagements, which was facilitated through an Aurecon subsidiary company SAFE.

While the 'turnkey' procurement strategy adopted by the municipality has been clearly effective in delivering services, questions need to be asked about the nature of community participation in the project. This raises two important issues. Firstly, there was a time limit to engaging with communities, since this was bound to the fixed-term contract between the municipality and Aurecon. Once the deliverables have been met, Aurecon exits the project and so does the capacity for community engagement. Secondly, seen through the lens of responsive and responsible government, the project has not necessarily improved relations between the community and the municipality, as the responsibility for engaging the community was outsourced to Aurecon. Responsibility, in this case, implies accountability to communities, consistency across time and communities, efficiency and effectiveness, whereas responsive refers to the degree to which government listens to communities, responds to their needs and upholds their rights.

The role of the private sector cannot be discounted in upgrading projects. Understanding both small and large private enterprise dynamics in complex processes like informal settlement upgrading is important. Various sector-building initiatives to bolster private sector capacity have been launched, such as the Construction Industry Development Board Project Toolkits (CIDB 2011). However, as observed with NUSP technical support tenders, such initiatives remains stubbornly focused on supply dynamics and boosting private sector efficiency, while no such capacity development programmes exist to enhance participatory mechanisms that can articulate demand-side dynamics in designing, planning and implementing projects.

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING AND PLANNING MECHANISMS FOR UPGRADING

URBAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT GRANT (USDG)

National Treasury is taking a lead role in developing new planning, monitoring and evaluation tools associated with the dual aims of boosting economic performance and achieving social goals through capital spending. Urban sector NGOs (e.g. Isandla Institute 2013) are arguing that these new tools could be modified to enhance participatory mechanisms for upgrading between municipalities and communities.

The USDG is an important capital grant available to metropolitan municipalities and is being used in many cities to finance informal settlement upgrading projects and programmes. In the preamble of the USDG's grant conditions, National Treasury argues that the purpose of USDG is to 'supplement the capital revenues of metropolitan municipalities in order to support the national human settlements development programme, focusing on poor households' (National Treasury 2014: 3). In other words, the USDG can be applied to various projects aimed at realising sustainable human settlements and is more flexible than the UISP's structured approach. For example, the UISP does not fund eThekweni's interim and emergency services programmes (the municipality's primary programmes for delivering services in informal settlements) because these programmes do 'not adhere to the pre-defined UISP stages'. According to the municipality, the 'UISP requires land acquisition and individual tenure security before the provision of services (i.e. as part of phase 1 of the UISP)' (eThekweni 2015: 19). For this reason, USDG is preferred over the UISP.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE PLANS

The BEPP is a new metropolitan planning instrument required by the Division of Revenue Act and aligned to the municipal 10–15-year Spatial Development Plan and the five-year IDP, the two statutory plans required by the Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000). The BEPP is renewed annually, which makes it an agile and directive document, and brings line departments in line cooperatively.

Originally intended to be a tool for implementing and reporting on the USDG, the BEPP is 'now a strategic planning tool to coordinate capital spending spatially in cities' (Graham et al. 2014: 37). It guides spatially targeted capital spending, coordinating the following infrastructure grants related to the built environment:

- ✦ Integrated City Development Grant (ICDG)
- ✦ Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG)
- ✦ Human Settlements Development Grant (HSDG)
- ✦ Public Transport Infrastructure Grant (PTIG)
- ✦ Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant (NDPG) and the
- ✦ Integrated National Electrification Programme Grant (INEPG)

Since the BEPP has a guiding influence on the USDG and the HSDG (which is the larger basket of funding including the UISP), it is an important document to understand what provisions and measures cities are taking to ensure community participation. The eight cities' informal settlement upgrading strategies, contained in their BEPPs⁴, are briefly outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of 2015/16 Built Environment Performance Plans

Metro	Informal settlements to be reached	Strategy	Provisions for community participation
Buffalo City	154 informal settlements consisting of 40 365 households (approx. 152 000 people)	8% full in-situ upgrading 42% full relocation 50% partial relocation, partial upgrading in-situ	NUSP-supported asset-based community development (ABCD) approach Allows for community inputs into municipal plans Partnership approach: Buffalo City–community; and inter-departmental coordination (pages 39–42)
City of Cape Town	378 informal settlements consisting of 143 823 households	60% households upgraded in situ and receive serviced package: 40m ² site with slab and wet core 40% households relocated to serviced site package full services to all informal households at 1:1 basis by 2030 Manageable density of 100 du/ha.	Acknowledgement that ‘success will be dependent on effective partnerships and [...] empowerment of all affected stakeholders to participate in their own future development’ (page 66). 1.5% of USDG reserved for internal City project management and governance (page 79).
Ekurhuleni	119 informal settlements consisting of 164 699 households	Six UISP projects Mention made of a ‘number of new [upgrading] projects in the periphery’	Built Environment Performance Indicator (B 1.8) tracks the percentage change in the total number of informal settlement dwelling units within Integration Zones that have not benefitted from integrated upgrading programmes
eThekweni	500+ informal settlements consisting of 306 076 households	2011 Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy (KZN DHS 2011) Interim services programme delivered to 150 000 households by 2020. Service package: Communal ablution blocks (toilets and showers) within 200m of served households; High-mast lighting for security; emergency access roads for waste removal, fire and emergency vehicles	No reference to community participation in BEPP. The 2011 Upgrading Strategy refers to ‘Participation: ensuring that there is an appropriate process for the direct involvement of communities in the process of planning, prioritising and implementing developmental responses and projects’ (page 50). Warns against inexperienced facilitators and raised expectations of communities.
City of Johannesburg	157 informal settlements consisting of 164 939 households	Regularisation of all informal settlements and provision of basic services. Upgrading of informal settlements along corridors identified by Sustainable Human Settlements Urbanisation Plan	Generic references to participation as the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, good governance and facilitation through ward committees

Metro	Informal settlements to be reached	Strategy	Provisions for community participation
Mangaung	28 informal settlement groupings consisting of 27 735 households	2011 Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy (drafted by HDA) 5 areas (59%): full upgrading 15 areas (38%): incremental <i>in-situ</i> upgrading 8 areas (3%): relocation	Informal settlement upgrading strategy co-developed with HDA
Nelson Mandela Bay	81 informal settlements consisting of 30 202 households	2008 Informal Settlements Upgrading Plan 22 040 households (72%) planned upgraded <i>in-situ</i>	Sustainable Community Planning Guide (2007) Implementation of Sustainable Community Units (SCU) as described in the SDF and IDP Reference to “entrenching a culture of public participation in municipal planning, budgeting and decision-making processes” (page 69)
City of Tswane	(unknown number) informal settlements consisting of 155 948 households	Sustainable Human Settlements Plan No details on plans provided	Implicated in Social Development Strategy

From this brief overview of the BEPPs, it could be argued that only a few cities make explicit provision for participatory informal settlement upgrading. Vague references to community participation, facilitation and good governance are bundled together with initiatives such as social development (City of Cape Town, Tshwane and Johannesburg), partnership formation and programme alignment (Mangaung), and participation in general municipal planning (Ekurhuleni and eThekweni). The case of Buffalo City, which through the NUSP contract has only recently developed an Asset-based Community Development approach, is an example of a metro in the early stages of adopting a community planning approach. It can be argued that Nelson Mandela Bay metro, which in 2007 adopted the Sustainable Community Planning Guide, which guides municipal planning units called Sustainable Community Units (SCU), has the most comprehensive guide to community planning. The

SCU is a multi-stakeholder planning forum informing local spatial plans, and consultants are required to comply with the standards set out. The municipal DHS and the Office of the Chief Operating Officer shares the responsibility of the SCUs (McCarthy interview 2015).

The BEPP represents an opportunity to develop criteria and indicators for sustainable community participation. However, a reading of the eight cities’ BEPPs indicates that mechanisms for the advancement and/or financial provision for central community participation in the roll-out of informal settlement upgrading projects is lacking. This is a concern, as it has been clearly established that upgrading is a more participatory-intensive process than (for example) housing delivery, and that the success of upgrading projects often hinges on building credible community capacity and integrating community design into project planning.

THE MISSING COMPONENT IS DEEP-ROOTED COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

Failure to make provision for more effective community participation has had detrimental impacts on state–community relations. In many ways, a major disjuncture exists between policy intentions and planning, and the socially erosive impact of unresponsive government to basic community needs. Instead of being seen as a critical partner, organised groups in informal communities are often framed as conflictual agents to local government. For example, the Slovo Park Community Development Forum (SPCDF) and the Makause Community Development Forum (MCDF), which both have linkages to the Informal Settlement Network in Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni, have experienced the hostility of the state when not complying to the highly prescriptive nature of top-down and hard-handed government engagement. As Dennis Webster illustrates in his paper [earlier in this publication], for nearly 10 years, the MCDF has been advocating for the upgrading of their settlement via the UISP process. This settlement is home to an estimated 10 000 people and conveniently located to economic opportunities in Primrose, Germiston.

Over the years, the MCDF has taken innovative approaches, such as spatial mapping and data collection, small improvements to services such as water and sanitation, and to lighting and public space, strategic litigation towards an UISP project application, and negotiations with private land owners. However, despite these pro-active measures, the Makause community has been constantly subjected to eviction threats, unresponsive officials and non-implementation of upgrading projects (SERI 2015).

In the case of Harry Gwala, a settlement of more than 2000 households in Ekurhuleni, the lack of community engagement has resulted in the formulation of untenable upgrading plans. Consultants appointed to

devise the upgrading plan proposed that a ‘very orderly and eminently upgradeable settlement’ be demolished and replaced with ‘no more than 389 residential stands under the Province’s Essential Services Programme’ (Huchzermeyer 2008: 98). This would have meant the forced relocation of most of the households and was resisted by the Harry Gwala Civic Committee.

Civil society actors are mobilising and articulating alternatives to the state-centric view of human settlements development and, in many instances, framing upgrading in more comprehensive ways than simple technocratic interventions and the scheduling of activities (Bradlow 2013). Alternative organising rationalities, practices and methodologies are emerging and changing the way in which informal settlement upgrading is conceptualised. At the same time, the challenges of marrying bottom-up and participatory practices with top-down policy making and resource flows are not unique to South Africa. The 2014 UN-Habitat (2014: 241) State of African Cities report observes that in southern African cities,

Grassroots and civil society organisations are also active, promoting community-led development strategies and advocating on behalf of marginal communities. In this respect, governance challenges revolve around integrating bottom-up and top-down priorities of development at city and local scales. The challenges also require governance to embrace more inclusive and supportive approaches towards informal sector activities rather than focusing purely on their regulation.

It appears, from recent publications commissioned by the DHS, such as Re-establishing the People’s Contract: Meaningful Participation in Building Sustainable Human Settlements (DHS 2012) that government is increasingly interested in introducing enhanced participatory devices in the implementation of projects (DHS 2014b). The BNG identified social compacts, a form of a ‘people’s contract’, as one of the key aspects in changing the housing delivery

paradigm. Social compacts have been described as a 'contract signed between the community, developer, local authority and financier before approval of projects for subsidy support' (Khan and Thurman 2001: 4). It is envisaged that 'every stakeholder must commit to the project and agree individual roles and responsibilities. The underlying premise of the social compact is conflict management and the creation of joint ventures between beneficiary communities and other actors' (Khan and Thurman 2001: 4). The introduction of similar people's contracts or social compacts is needed in upgrading projects.

CONCLUSION

Upgrading informal settlements by means of structured (UISP) and flexible (USDG) funding mechanisms represents a responsive strategy on the part of the DHS, backed up by political priorities and targets, and investments in state and private sector capacity through the NUSP. Such capacity building is being developed through a range of instruments to address the supply side of the project planning equation. This paper has maintained that, despite the allocations for social facilitation, government has been incapable of prioritising the demand side. In practice, this means that a community's 'deep rooted knowledge' is most often not excavated and integrated into the planning of projects. This disjuncture between policy and practice has resulted in the erosion of state–community relations, and at times irresponsible and hard-handed action by the government.

Looking back at the failures of the N2 Gateway project shortly after the BNG introduced upgrading instruments, little seems to have changed. Upgrading is still viewed from the perspective of delivering the conventional housing product. Moreover, there appears to be no consensus on what upgrading constitutes. This is evident in the controversial claims that government reached its 400 000 target by 2014 and

further illustrated by the Govan Mbeki prize-winning projects in 2013 and 2014. The policy intention of the UISP is, therefore, out of sync with the implementation dynamics, which arguably point to a lesser degree of responsibility on the part of local governments and their appointed service providers.

Some cities find the scope of the UISP too limited to address informal settlement needs and have opted to finance upgrading programmes and projects through the USDG. A review of eight metropolitan municipalities' BEPPs, which guides the USDG among others, revealed that very little attention has been given to designing participatory mechanisms for upgrading, or such allocations are vaguely bundled under social development, partnerships and good governance initiatives. Here an opportunity exists for National Treasury to inscribe performance indicators that evaluate and monitor the quality of community participation.

It is therefore troubling that there is very little focus on developing mechanisms for effective community participation in the design, planning and implementation of *in-situ* upgrading projects. Even though allocations for ensuring inclusive project planning are prescribed in the UISP policy, especially the 3% for social facilitation and 8% for project management, these allocations are almost never honoured, or driven in totality by the municipality's service provider, as demonstrated by the Thembaletu UISP project in George Municipality. This is problematic because of the temporary nature of service providers, and so such 'turnkey' strategies do not necessarily translate into improved governance, decision-making and participation over the long term. Understanding demand-side considerations in projects requires the proactive development of mechanisms that promote central community participation. In other words, upgrading projects require much more attention to finer community details than for conventional housing projects.

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NOTES

- ¹ Meeting the housing backlog with the standard BNG housing package of a 40m² house on a 250m² serviced freehold stand (including 30% land for roads and amenities) would require 40 000ha and a budget of R180billion (NUSP 2010). There is therefore simply not enough resources – financial, land, and infrastructure – to remedy the housing crisis with the conventional package of services.
- ² The project has been considered one of the largest in South Africa, initially planned for 22 000 rental and ownership units at an estimated cost of R3 billion.
- ³ SA Affordable Housing (2014) September 2014, Issue 48, page 5. Trademax Publications.
- ⁴ These are the latest versions of the 2015/16 BEPPs obtained from National Treasury's website www.mfma.treasury.gov.za. Key search terms such as participation*, involvement*, governance*, decision*, empowerment*, facilitation*, and so on, were applied to these documents in order to highlight the provisions (or lack thereof) for inclusive planning of informal settlements.
- ⁵ Interview with D McCarthy, Senior Director: Strategic Planning and Coordination, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, 20 May 2015, Nelson Mandela Bay.