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Ward Committees: Stoking the embers of intolerance and conflict

Peter Kimemia

Every once in a while very intelligent people do very foolish things but when it comes to matters of political expediency, they invariably engage in acts of absolute absurdity and imprudence. Unfortunately, we are in such times now until elections are dispensed with.

However, even as we campaign and try to outdo each other we must be mindful of the fact that the elections will come and go and the communities which have become our stomping grounds in the political duels will be left behind to pick up the pieces and soldier on.

Sadly, the damage that is being dished out on long-term relationships among communities is at times devastating and likely to linger on long after elections.

There have been complaints about the use of public resources to campaign for a certain political party, politically motivated purges of civil servants and people working for public corporations as well as general witch-hunting staged against real and imaginary political opponents. As accusations and counter accusations fly, it is difficult to tell exactly who is holding the skunk.

What we have witnessed in no uncertain terms is the blatant misuse of ward committees to campaign for the ruling party. As usual we hold brief for no one else except democracy and good governance practice for the benefit of the people.

That is why what transpired in a ward committee meeting held at Mzokhanyo Senior Secondary School in Duncan Village on the 15th March 2009 cannot go unchallenged. The meeting was ostensibly called to enable

the community to participate in the discussions over the IDP. It turned out that the reference to the IDP was just a facade meant to mask the real intentions of the ward committee! The meeting was quickly turned into a political campaign rally of sorts in favour of the dominant political party in the area to the dismay of community members who were not in the least interested in the political shenanigans.

The well choreographed drama began with a ward committee member jumping from his seat and belting out an anti-opposition song laced with generous praises of the alleged exploits of the ruling party. A thoroughly enthused councillor found it too hard to resist the temptation to join in and she also quickly motioned at the bewildered audience to partake.

But this was just the beginning and more outrageous things were to follow. Our hallowed constitution and its enabling pieces of legislation and particularly the Municipal Structures Act (1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (2000) clearly oblige municipalities to facilitate community participation in the affairs of local government with regard to planning, service delivery and performance management. It is equally a responsibility of the municipal leadership to foster harmonious relations between the Council and the local communities through reciprocal rights and duties.

To this end, ward committees were established as a forum for community participation in the context of a participatory democracy for all local citizens, irrespective of party affiliation.

Whether out of audacious ignorance or downright arrogance, the councillor in question made a mockery of our laws and in

the process violated other people's rights and helped sow seeds of future conflicts among the people she is supposed to be representing. The singing of politically partisan songs and the disparaging references to members of opposition parties was in very bad taste.

However, the shameless and misleading tendency to enumerate perceived successes as having been made possible through the benevolence of a political party and not via allocation of state resources is equally worthy of a barb. It is perhaps too much to ask for a bit of common decency among some grassroots

politicians when political stakes are high. But we want to believe that the leadership would find it equally repellent and embarrassing that one among their ranks actively engaged in all this tomfoolery and even attempted to incite violence against a community member who in the humble belief in the word and letter of our laws, stood to ask a question. Some of the choice epithets used to silence the 'wayward comrade' were; a traitor and a counter-revolutionary. For what its worth, the poor guy is a supporter of the party in question!

In spite of the wide latitude offered by the relevant pieces of legislation, we

will keep our expectations modest in these seemingly perilous times. But at the very least, bearing in mind, there is life beyond the general election and that we still want politically stable communities, the political leadership should use ward committees to promote political tolerance and mutual respect and not as tools for partisan political skirmishes. In this way, faith will be restored in this key forum for community participation and ward committees will hopefully cease being regarded as mere extensions of dominant political parties.

Be fair. Won't you? ■

The youth agenda in the 2009 elections

Thabile Sokupa

South Africa is set for unprecedented voter turnout in 2009, with more than 21 million people – nearly a quarter of them, the youth – registered to vote in the country's fourth democratic election, to be held in April.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) announced that a record 1.6 million people had taken part in its voter registration drive over the weekend of the 8-9 of November 2008. Out of these newly registered voters, 1.2 million are in the 18 to 29 age bracket. Far from being politically apathetic, as is often claimed, it seems South Africa's youth are redefining the way they engage in a democratic society, by seeking to play a direct role through the electoral process.

Many political analysts believe that this new interest in participating in the elections is largely a result of political developments in the country. These have included the replacement of former president Thabo Mbeki with current President, Kgalema Motlanthe and the formation of a new political

party, the Congress of the People (COPE), by a breakaway faction of the ruling African National Congress (ANC).

Barack Obama's successful election campaign in the US may also have something to do with it – particularly in kindling interest in voting among previously apathetic young people. The election of America's first black – and relatively young – president may have inspired the youth to believe democracy can actually work.

"We have seen how the Obama strategy enticed younger voters to enrol to vote, and our politicians have clearly not employed this (in the past), but current political developments seem to have encouraged the youth to vote," local political analyst Steven Friedman told the Sunday Times newspaper.

One of the biggest challenges facing current political parties in South Africa is the way to capture the youth vote, particularly since this constituency has been known to be the "king makers" in some political parties. The ANC

conference in Polokwane for example bears testimony to this.

Here, the ANC youth league played a critical role in installing populist, Jacob Zuma as the president of the ANC. However, capturing the youth vote at the national elections will largely depend on how the different political parties articulate their youth agenda in the 2009 elections.

Past surveys conducted by the Human Science Resource Council (HSRC, 2004) showed that 84% of youth were not members of political parties and were sluggish in coming forward to register as voters. Backing off from the democratic process became an indication of the cynicism that young people felt about politics and the people involved. However, new research shows signs of renewed interest in politics among the youth. Surveys show that the youth have new ideas about many things and are not as polarised as the older generation.

In a recent study, for example, it was found that the notion that young people have stopped participating in

politics may have been "over-simplistic and a premature conclusion". More likely what's happening, says senior researcher Dr Saadhna Panday, is that the nature of their participation has shifted.

Most probably, it was a case of the youth being more interested in "issue-based and voluntary participation" as opposed to "political and formal membership". They say today's youth participation has expanded far beyond typical activities like, say, canvassing on behalf of their political party. They are more likely to volunteer at their local clinics or work with NGOs – activities which are directly linked to issues affecting their lives.

On the other hand, "the massive registration of young people in the November 8 and 9 2008 registration window periods proved that young people are ready and will vote in their numbers in the coming elections," said ANC Youth League spokesperson Floyd Shivambu. He further elaborates that the youth are "very aspirant, daring and innovative", but are limited by a lack of opportunities – as well as information.

But perhaps it is the political parties that are information-deficient. According to the outcome of recent discussions conducted by the youth research agency 'Instant Grass', the study found young people "did not feel that political parties had a solid understanding of the youth". Young people are truly living in exciting time especially owing to the multiplicity of choices available in the form of political parties. However, relevance and context is still lacking as parties struggle to woo young voters.

Indeed the cited research reports suggest that this year's election holds some wonderful opportunities of breaking past political moulds. Perhaps the major missing ingredient though, is that not many political parties'



leadership has enough charisma, talent, great oratory powers and contextual relevance to the concerns of the youth.

In addition, most parties are also much too infatuated with themselves and are rather self-indulgent and pay little attention to the youth electorate. More attention is focused on internal fights or tired old arguments between opposing factions. Equally so there is clearly still a yawning gap of youth leadership within the political parties themselves; young people still desire for that progressive youth force in the different political parties that will speak to their needs.

One ought to remember that young people are the largest interest group in society. However, when it comes to elections it seems that they are stakeholders holding few political dividends. From an observer's point of view, young people have become increasingly restless for opportunity and eager to claim their space, but the institutions of democracy have seemingly conspired against them. It is a danger to democracy that young people are not considered – directly or indirectly – as anything other than

a liability to democracy. Besides their vote, the youth are the most active come election time. They volunteer to put up posters and conduct door-to-door voter drive campaigns. Unfortunately, the youth have also been used for dirty campaign tactics like political violence, intimidation and harassment.

Although participation in elections is only one measure of civil participation, many young people in South Africa for example still do not know who their ward councillors are, as well as the exact nature of councillor's roles and responsibilities.

Yet, the councillors ought to be the most accessible elected political leaders, but what we see is the constant squabbling for positions by political parties. How do we benefit from this as young people?

Young people are, in many ways, under siege: marginalized by adults and the elderly from decision making processes, faced with the prospect of health threats from the HIV/AIDS epidemic, denied employment and blamed for the increasing level of crime and violence.

They are at the mercy of political proprietors who take it upon themselves to interpret and decide what citizenship entails for young people. An added dilemma for democracy is that the majority of young South Africans are women who live in rural areas and are subjected to all forms of gender inequality.

Those in politics may do well to look beyond previously covered terrain to provide a vision for the youth, a vision that unites young South Africans across divides and a vision that provides the social cohesion that is so desperately needed by the young electorate. ■

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Do **more** for the rural economy

Nontlantla Skenjana

Rural development has become the new buzz word in political circles as we move towards elections. Politicians seem to have suddenly realised that after 15 years of democracy, inroads have hardly been made in improving the economic participation of rural households.

This is most evident in the Eastern Cape, where most rural households are headed up by women and which are dependent on social grants. With the current global crisis, many of these households' men face retrenchment and returning home disillusioned with no money or future job prospects.

From the dawn of democracy, many visible changes have taken place in rural communities such as the electrification, potable water, sanitation and roads that have been delivered courtesy of the RDP, Municipal Infrastructure Grant and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). However, the economic participation of rural communities has been almost non-existent and the migration of families into urban areas is only making things worse. A number of schools have had to close as

they could not achieve the targets set by the Department of Education in the interests of rationalisation.

This has also resulted from the vigorous change in leadership structures of the rural communities, where the introduction of the democratic ward system led to duplication of roles between ward structures and the traditional authorities. Many conflicts arose because of this leading to social instability as a result of lack of clear lines of authority. This also adversely affected the primary rural economy.

With the current challenges of food shortages, global climatic change and the campaign around sustainable development, it has come to the attention of many that rural communities have a huge role to play. However, in the context of South Africa, it must be understood that, these areas were poorly planned and had very limited support from government structures. However, if one expects the rural communities to provide food for the country, it is necessary to understand that the generation of economic activity depends on how much is invested in the infrastructural requirements.

The question is, is this sufficient or are rural areas once again getting a raw deal?

It has been said that the success of the coming election term will be judged by how many inroads can be made in rural development.

In the 2009/2010 budget, the Minister of Finance has put aside an amount of R 3 billion for rural development. This amount has been allocated to three projects, R 1.8 billion for land and agrarian reform and R 1.2 billion for supporting small scale farmers and women in agriculture.

The question is, is this sufficient or are rural areas once again getting a raw deal?

The concept of sustainable development suggests that, for it



One of the major concerns in the Eastern Cape is that, most of the population is employed by government and in community services. This is a trend that does not support sustainable development.

to succeed, it must be supported by the integration of various systems including: social systems, governance systems, economic systems and environmental systems. As a participant in the World Sustainable development summit, it is crucial that whatever development takes place in South African rural areas that development should comply with sustainable development principles.

This means that before the actual activities there needs to be structural reforms which become the basis for any economic activities. Post-1994, much of the rural land was left desolate with non-existent agricultural activity and limited crop planting for example, maize. This means that while agricultural land is available it may need to be rehabilitated.

Rural communities have over time tended to believe that they must go to urban areas to look for job opportunities, thanks to the entrenched migrant labour system.

Very little agricultural production has been taking place especially in the former so-called homelands. It is therefore common to find that, although people live in rural areas, their groceries are bought in town including vegetables and staples.

This means that when we speak of agrarian reform there should be consideration of the social facilitation component, infrastructural requirements and the requisite personnel. In a previous issue of the *Transformer*, it was stated that rural development must be holistic and integrated. This means that rural education, although complying with the National Curriculum Statement, must contribute to making rural communities a better place to live and work.

The Eastern Cape transfers to public entities amount to R 63 million. One of these entities is the Eastern Cape Appropriate Technology Unit (ECATU) which is responsible for government support in rural development and poverty eradication through planning, financing and project implementation. ECATU received only 20% of this budget while the major portion went to the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC) (approx 60%) and the rest to the Eastern Cape Youth Commission. It is understood that some of the work done by ECSECC is for the benefit of rural communities, but the objectives of ECATU are more specific to the work that needs to be done among rural communities. This trend in allocation has continued in the past three years with no significant shift in terms of provincial government transfers.

The Eastern Cape government has three clusters and looking at the budget 2009/10, allocations are as follows: governance (4%), social (81%) and economic development (15%). There is increased expenditure on the social cluster with limited increases in terms of the economic development as one would have expected.

The economic development cluster includes the Economic Development and Environmental Affairs, Agriculture,

Public Works and Roads and Transport departments. These are the departments that are central to the economic development of the province, specifically looking at set priorities. It can be said that the social cluster is a higher priority but there has to be more engagements if the structural economic landscape of the province is to be changed.

One of the major concerns in the Eastern Cape is that, most of the population is employed by government and in community services. This is a trend that does not support sustainable development. The real growth in the economy must be supported by all growth sectors particularly employment from the private sector.

For the agrarian sector to contribute to real growth; there has to be greater participation of rural farmers in commercial farming and employment creation. Rural communities make no direct contributions to government except through economic participation where they pay VAT, Fuel Levy, Companies Tax, PAYE, etc. The greater the participation of rural communities in the economic value chain, the more their GDP contribution will be. This needs vigorous government-driven programmes that are people-centred to empower them.

It is necessary to understand that, rural development, although mostly agriculture-dependent, it involves a lot more non-farm activities. Perhaps the budget should not only set aside specific programmes focused on rural development but that rural development should be mainstreamed into each department's strategic plan as well and given equal consideration as the PGDP. The achievement of rural development and growth in the rural economy will lead to the achievement of PGDP and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The proposed budget may be a good start, but it is not enough to address the structural challenges, infrastructure backlogs and capacity issues in rural communities. ■

The value of ethical governance

Gugu Mgwebi

Ethical governance is a key feature of good governance practice. It is partly predicated upon responsiveness towards people's needs and demands and the ability to coordinate a democratic balance with efficiency and equity as core principles.

Other factors that contribute towards good governance is the availability of resources and the existence of a politically conscious, active and organised civil society who are credibly aware of policies in place that protect their interests as well as their constitutional limits together with an understanding of powers and functions of government institutions in place.

The continuous practice of ethical governance and leadership within a country ushers political stability e.g. the experience of over 20 years of a politically stable and independent Ghana, increased economic growth through market oriented governments who contributed to the reduction of red tape and the improvement of regulatory environments with more effective business dispute resolution mechanisms.

In general, ethical governance, devoid of corruption and other criminal tendencies has quite a number of positive spinoffs especially in Africa. In his piece on '*leadership matters*' in September 2008, Fred Swaniker discusses some of these possible benefits.

Increased GDP growth is one such spinoff. According to the IMF and World Bank, Africa is experiencing the fastest level of sustained economic growth (at least until the current global economic slump) it has seen in 30 years (averaging over 5% since 2004.) In fact, at a time when most of the world was already experiencing

an economic slowdown, Africa had remained one of the fastest growing regions in the world.

According to various analysts the continent's economy is focused to grow between 5% and 7% over the next five years. Despite popular belief that most of this growth is temporary and is driven by the global increase in commodity prices, a deeper analysis shows that this is a more robust form of growth. According to research by McKinsey & Company, the international management consultancy, only 15% of economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa between 2000 and 2006 was directly attributable to an increase

in commodity resource prices. This point is underscored by the fact that countries such as Mozambique, Rwanda, Ghana and Uganda were all growing at rates of 5-7% per annum and yet they have no commodities of significance to export. The likely contributing factor to this sustained impressive growth rates can be traced to democratic transitions which although still on-going and has led to greater openness in such countries.

Democratic transition has also enabled macroeconomic stability. After years of hyperinflation and large government deficits, inflation across the continent and interest rates have come down across the continent to



more acceptable rates in the lower double-digits. African leaders are implementing far more prudent, fiscal and monetary policies than in the past.

Another positive outcome has been the increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In 2000, Africa received about 8 billion in FDI. By 2006, this figure had quadrupled to \$ 33 billion. This investment is being led by both multinational companies and private investors. For instance, Prince Al Walid of Saudi Arabia (the thirteenth richest man in the world according to Forbes magazine and renowned as one of the world's most astute investors), has set aside almost a billion dollars of his net worth just to invest in Africa. In the past, foreign investors shied away from Africa due to political instability. The new surge in investment signals the increased belief in the long term future of Africa.

Moreover, with more stable environments and booming economies, more and more Africans are returning to the continent and beginning to

reverse the "brain drain" that has long played out in Africa. Nigeria is attracting several of its highly skilled citizens back from the west, as are Ghana, Kenya and others. These returnees are bringing back their ideas and launching new businesses and participating actively in a broader socio-economic revival of their countries, similar to what occurred in China and India when its western educated and trained citizens began to return.

Presently, a common persistent problem prevalent in many African countries is corruption-induced poverty. The practice of ethical governance at this point is severely weighed down as efforts to sustain a democratic culture among the majority are nonetheless faced by serious resistance from those who benefit from corruption and rent-seeking behaviour.

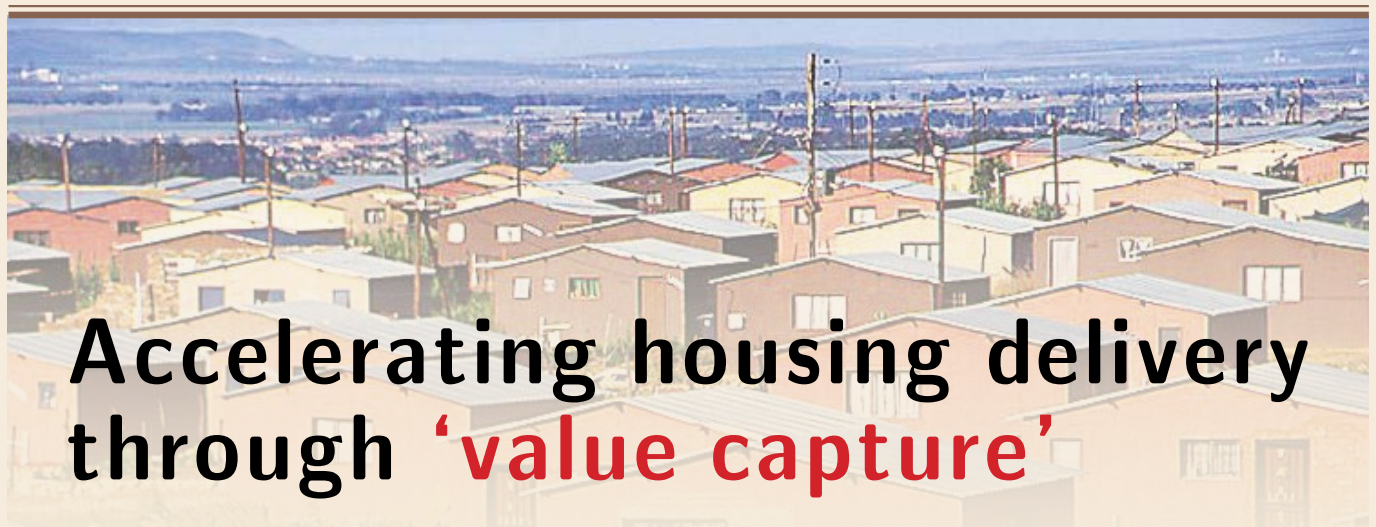
Documents such as the South African Constitution of 1996 committed the country to the implementation of an ethical, transparent, accountable and

democratic system of governance. As addressed by Mr Tony Ehrenreich of COSATU under the topic: *Thirteen years after apartheid: The quest for democratic governance*, it is important that we define what we mean by ethical leadership.

Ehrenreich describes it as a standard that should be universal, as a tool that guides as to appropriate conduct. In democratic governance, ethical leadership is the kind of leadership that ensures there are regular free and fair elections, the marginalised and disadvantaged are included in society, there is a separation of powers between the judiciary and government, giving both credibility and transparency. In addition, citizens must be given a chance to participate in building up the democracy by being provided with sufficient spaces to do so. ■

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Accelerating housing delivery through 'value capture'

Dr Mercy Brown-Luthango
Development Action Group (DAG)

The South African economy experienced impressive growth over the last decade. The National Department of Trade and Industry reported that between September 1999 and June 2005, South Africa experienced an average annual economic growth rate of 3.5%.

This is considerably higher than during the decade preceding 1994, when the economy experienced average annual

growth of only 1%. The rewards of economic growth and increased foreign investment have, however, not been equally enjoyed by all South Africans. In fact, this growth in the economy has failed to significantly alter South Africa's socio-economic landscape. Big businesses continue to be the main beneficiaries. The only noticeable difference is the inclusion of a minority of black business elites.

Twelve years after the advent of democracy and ten years since the birth of the South African

constitution, South Africa continues to face enormous developmental challenges. The rate of poverty, inequality, homelessness and landlessness remain unacceptably high in South Africa. Economic growth and a booming land and property market have failed to realise any tangible benefits for the poor and marginalised.

Instead it has produced further inequality, deepening poverty and exclusion of the poor. The number of poor people in South Africa living on less than \$1 dollar¹ a day rose

¹This is the international poverty line

from 9.4% of the national population in 1995 to 10.5% in 2002 making South Africa one of the most unequal countries in the world.

The scale of poverty and inequality in South Africa is evident in the number of people living in inadequate shelter, despite the fact that the right to adequate shelter is a basic human right contained in the South African constitution.

According to the most recent estimates there are 2.4 million households living in informal settlements in South Africa. In an environment characterised by exclusion and unfulfilled needs, social ills such as woman and child abuse, substance abuse and domestic violence thrive.

Unabated poverty, inequality and the slow pace of delivery of infrastructure, services and the land redistribution programme have created a mood of discontent and growing tension at grassroots level.

While the South African government has introduced several policies and other initiatives to address the enormous development challenges, it is clear that the government will need to access considerable resources in order to effectively address the needs of the poor in South Africa.

At the same time, the boom in the land and property market has seen house prices increase by an average of 20% per year between 2000 and 2006. This has put home ownership out of reach of the majority of South Africans. Land and property speculation has been highlighted as one factor accounting for the significant increase in land and house prices.

What can be done?

It is clear that a market-oriented, trickle-down approach will not address South Africa's urban development and housing crisis. The scale of this crisis calls for bold, decisive initiatives and strategic interventions in the market to make it work better for the poor. These interventions should be aimed at redistributing the value derived from a soaring property and land market more equally (what is referred to as '**Value Capture**'), and simultaneously strive to protect and secure the right of the poor in the city.

Value capture is a process by which government recoups the surplus land value brought about by government interventions for redistribution to the poor. This increased value can arise from three sources:

- Changes in land use regulations through the use of planning and regulatory instruments, like zoning;
- Provision of infrastructure to a parcel of land; and
- Growth of the population which would create a demand for land thereby increasing its price.

The rationale for value capture is the fact that the increase in land value often results not from the efforts of individual land owners, but from government interventions. It is thus only fair that the increases in land value attributed to public resources be used for the greater public good. These increases in land value can be recouped through instruments like development and zoning levies, land value increment taxation, land leasing and a land value tax. These instruments are being used in many countries in the world to boost local revenue for the provision of infrastructure and services and to deter land speculation.

Disturbing issues in the Western Cape's land and property market certainly warrant a closer examination of the value capture concept. These include the imprudent sale of prime government land and property to private developers and foreigners. Another issue is rampant speculation in the Western Cape, where it has been reported that on the West Coast, buyers of "raw" land have realised profits of up to 1000% after holding on to it for six to eighteen months. Cape Town's property rates system also needs closer scrutiny. Attempts to update the valuation rolls in 1996 were abandoned after rich land and property owners objected. Even though the city had a strong case and would probably have won a court challenge, rather than showing the necessary political will, the City acceded to the demands of the rich.

Despite the recent update of valuation rolls in Cape Town, the property tax system is still characterised by inefficiencies and inequities. Peter Meakin, a registered professional

valuer, points out in a past article ('Banding Systems provide better rates valuations', *Cape Times*, 09 January 2007) that the rating system in Cape Town which is based on an individual property rates system, means that vacant land owners are taxed significantly less than homeowners. It is clear that such a system not only encourages speculation, but actually rewards those who engage in this unfair practice. Meakin estimates that the City is currently losing out on R7.2 billion in vacant land value.

Besides the loss in revenue (money which can be used for the provision of housing and infrastructure to the poor) speculation also hinders economic activity in the city and impedes job creation. It is clear that an urgent investigation is needed to quantify the revenue which has been lost to the city as a result of undervaluation due to the use of outdated valuation rolls as well as weaknesses in the current property rates system which actually encourages practices such as speculation. Value capture mechanisms such as a land value tax should also be investigated.

This is a critical exercise in a city plagued by a huge housing backlog, a critical need for service delivery to poor and marginalised communities and a population who are increasingly voicing their frustration and impatience with the appalling and inhumane conditions they are forced to live in. Rich property owners in the city can not carry on thinking that high property prices and equally high walls will continue to insulate them from the harsh realities of live in Cape Town's informal settlements. If present housing delivery practice persists in indulging NIMBY-ism (Not In My Backyard), then the rich should be forced to pay in other ways for the privilege of holding on to huge, well-located plots of land and sprawling gardens, while the poor are huddled up in overcrowded, un-serviced informal settlements on the margins of the city.

The creative use of value capture mechanisms can ensure a more equal distribution of the benefits of a growing economy and can assist the state in meeting its constitutional obligation in terms of the progressive realization of the socio-economic rights of all its citizens. ■

Make housing delivery easier by unlocking bulk land for ‘Land First’

Ronald Eglin

Afesis-corporation has been advocating for a ‘width’ or Land First approach to settlement development for a number of years. One example of the Land First approach, called ‘managed land settlement’, involves government providing (basic) serviced land with secure tenure for people to occupy and built basic temporary accommodation.

Over time, government can then go back and help these people improve their neighbourhoods and houses by providing further services and top structure subsidies. The upgrading of informal settlement programme is another example of a Land First approach but is not discussed further in this article.

The table below helps to compare this Land First approach to the ‘packaged house’ or traditional RDP type housing development where government provides households with title to a serviced site and a starter house. The table, for simplicity purposes, assumes that there are 20 people living in ‘shacks’ and then compares, for both the ‘packaged house’ and ‘Land First’ approaches, how many people at the end of each year are living in either a shack, a basic house or a formal house.

The table assumes that there is only enough money each year to build four full houses. It also assumes that the cost of a ‘basic’ house is one fifth the cost of a full house. Using the 2008/9 national housing cost estimates for services and top structure of about

R61 300/ site, this means there would be about R12 260 for basic development. A full house includes the cost of the land, full services, individual ownership and a RDP type top structure. A basic house is a self built house built on a planned plot with access to a basic level of services and some form of tenure security.

In both approaches, the ultimate goal is for all 20 people to be living in full decent houses after 5 years; it is just that each approach has gone about achieving this in a different way. What this table clearly shows is that in the Land First approach, all 20 people are able to occupy the land after year 1 with no people remaining in shacks. In contrast, in the ‘packaged’ house approach, after year 1 only 4 of the 20 people have land (and services and house) with the remaining 16 people still living in a shack. Even in year 4, in the packaged house approach, there are still 4 people living in shacks.

The major advantage of the Land First approach is that right from year 1 all 20 households have security of tenure and basic services. They feel that they are recognised citizens of the city living in dignified conditions, no longer feeling the need to ‘toyi toyi’ demanding that they be immediately given a house.

Using Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) as an example, the backlog of houses is conservatively estimated at just over 40 000 houses (BCM Land Management Policy 2007), but could

be as high as 75 000 (BCM Housing Policy 2004). The City has set itself an ambitious target of producing about 4000 houses a year (from about 1300 in 2007/8 financial year). Following the packaged house approach it will take over 10 years to remove the backlog. Using the Land First approach (assuming basic development at a fifth of this cost), all 40 000 households could be occupying secure land with basic services after 2 years.

One of the main challenges that emerge from the adoption of such a Land First approach that needs to be addressed if it is to be successful is that large amounts of land at the project scale need to be found, right at the start, so that all people can be accommodated in year 1. For the packaged land approach, smaller portions of land can be made available each year with fewer houses needing land each year.

Effectively this means that large portions of project scale land needs to be in the hands of ‘intermediaries’ like municipalities or communal property associations right from the start, either in terms of outright ownership or in terms of some form of land availability agreement with the present owner of the land. The intermediary also has to ensure that the necessary bulk services are available and that environmental and town planning approvals are obtained.

We do not want a situation where people are waiting to move onto

YEAR	Packaged house			Land First		
	Living in shacks	Living in basic houses	Living in full houses	Living in shacks	Living in basic houses	Living in Full houses
0	20	0	0	20	0	0
1	16	0	4	0	20	0
2	12	0	8	0	15	5
3	8	0	12	0	10	10
4	4	0	16	0	5	15
5	0	0	20	0	0	20



Explore and pilot different 'value capture' techniques.

This includes both fiscal tools like modifying property tax legislation so that it discourages excessive land speculation, and makes sure that any value captured is redistributed in service of the poor; and regulatory and planning tools like incentive zoning where for example commercial property 'developers', in exchange for some community benefit (e.g. a community hall), are provided with density bonuses that allow them to have larger building floor areas than would be allowed under the normal zoning scheme or plan.

Speed up the release of state and parastatal land for settlement development purposes.

This has been on the drawing boards for a number of years but has not gained momentum. Some sort of high level 'investigation' is needed to investigate how any challenges to the release of state land can be overcome.

The poor should not be located in large monolithic 'ghetto' type townships, so it is important to make sure that lots of smaller pieces of land within existing higher and middle income areas are also identified; and that within the land portions that are developed other forms of housing such as middle income bonded housing and social housing is also accommodated.

By its nature, Land First type approach tends to support lower density "one-house one-plot" approaches because it is difficult for poorer households to self-build multi-storey or row houses. In well located land situations, you would need to reduce plot sizes so as to increase the number of people who can benefit from locational advantages.

There may then be a need to include other elements into what is defined as basic services such as fire walls along certain boundaries, and the provision of 'safety deposit boxes' where people can store valuables. If even higher density housing is sought, the provision of only land and basic services may not be enough. Consideration may need to be given to, for example, medium density walk up "shell" apartments, with communal ablution facilities.

land as part of a Land First project without the necessary approvals and agreements in place. Organisations like the Housing Development Agency (HDA) and the National Department of Land Affairs will have to re-prioritise human and financial resources towards sorting out these land assembly pre-conditions, even if it means temporarily shifting personnel from other sections in these organisations to address these urgent land packaging issues.

We do not want a situation where in the haste to find land, larger portions of cheaper land on the edge of urban areas are purchased and people then struggle with transport to get into town. A range of innovative solutions that need to be explored to overcome these challenges include:

Make additional funds available for the purchase of more expensive well located land.

The new Land Acquisition for Sustainable Settlement grant from the Department of Land Affairs is an example of where this is already accommodated. There is no ceiling on how much money projects can apply to for land purchase as long as it is well motivated. Funds are disbursed on a first come first served basis until all funds available for that period are allocated.

Introduce land banking initiatives where land is bought in advance of need.

This needs to be done when land prices in more peripheral areas are still low,

even if there are no immediate plans to use this land. The HDA can play an important land banking role but more localized land banking solutions, by for example municipalities, also need to be explored.

In such scenarios municipalities can start to link these future development areas into their public transport plans, so that people who live in these areas in future have access to the city. Plans can also be put in place to direct investment in new schools, health facilities and other facilities and services into these future development areas.

Conduct pilot land pooling and readjustment programmes.

Municipalities and development agencies facilitate a process where a number of different land owners in an area pool their land into one larger project scale parcel of land, that is then developed by the state, with bulk and basic infrastructure, and sub divided into settlement plots. The original land owners then get back a smaller portion of the land they originally owned that is now equal in property value to the land they originally owned. The 'surplus' land can then be used for Land First type initiatives.

Introduce the proposed inclusionary housing programme.

Get the private sector and higher income residential and commercial developers, as part of their approvals processes, to help subsidise the purchase and development of land for lower income housing.

Environmental and town planning approval processes must not be allowed to unnecessarily hold up settlement development processes. Municipalities, with the encouragement and support of the Department of Environment Affairs, need to start doing city or area wide Strategic Environmental Assessments which allow municipalities to proactively determine the most suitable type of development for an area before development proposals are formulated.

Once land suitable for Land First type development is identified, each separate project should be exempt from having to do separate Environmental Impact Assessments. Municipal planning departments need to get ahead of the game by dealing with zoning and sub division issues prior to land being needed. Land can be sub- divided into larger sub-divisional areas that can then be

allocated to future housing projects where more detailed internal layout plans can be prepared at a later date.

Land First projects must also not be delayed due to difficulties in coordinating all the various funding streams needed to implement such an approach. Examples of the different departments that are involved include the Department of Provincial and Local Government through the Municipal Infrastructure Grant for bulk services; the Department of Land Affairs for some of the land purchase costs; municipalities themselves for other land purchases (where they have their own funds); and the Department of Housing in instances where projects are unable to source funding for land and services from other sources; and some other department (is it the Department of Housing, Local Government and Traditional Affairs or maybe even Water?) for basic services. Having multiple departments involved

makes it difficult to hold any one department accountable when things go wrong, or praise them when projects are a success.

One department needs to be held accountable for making land available, at least to a 'basic' standard as outlined in the Land First approach, for settlement development purposes. The responsible department could be the Department of Land Affairs, building on its new Land Access for Sustainable Settlement Grant; the Department of Housing, building on its new Housing Development Agency that aims to help unlock land for settlement development purposes; or it could be the Department of Provincial and Local Government, building on its role in promoting the use of Integrated Development Plans at a municipal level, and funding support through Municipal Infrastructure Grants. The various government departments need to sort out between themselves who this responsible department will be. ■



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