

DAG inputs on the Habitat 3 conference

Participation

We acknowledge the noble intent to promote cities and human settlements that are participatory and promote civic engagement. However, the contemporary practice clearly shows that participation is largely limited to consultative processes initiated by government departments and usually compliance related. *We recommend that the document recognises community agency that supports community led initiatives are a key underpinning in the developmental agenda.*

Part of the hypothesis is having the backing of political will, sufficient government resources focused on reinforcing community initiatives, and determined city level leadership and investment plans that manage urban development more effectively in order to promote the struggles of the poor. *Such a strategy requires equal partnership (rather than consultation) with local communities, the private sector and other stakeholders in order to channel their energies in common and constructive directions.*

Value capture

We also acknowledge the recognition of value capture and its significance on shaping financing mechanism of cities. The principal argument advanced by DAG is that interventions in land-management and valuation, is an urban governance issue as much as it is a planning issue. *There is need to acknowledge the significance of promoting civic led initiatives that seek to engage (policy makers and local public officials focusing on the legal and economic foundations of value capture) on alternative value capture tools and mechanism.*

Moreover, the resolution 124 aimed at implementing “policy frameworks to capture the increase in land and property value generated as a result of urban development processes, infrastructure projects and public investments” appear to be premised on the assumption that such policy frameworks do not exist in the first place. Current principles underpinning the policy frameworks and interventions in African member states clearly obligates public administrations to develop mechanisms that are able to recoup proportional cost incurred in provision of public infrastructure, as well as unearned value resulting from various public actions. This argument is based on the fact that planning laws and development practice of one society are primarily borrowed from other societies. In many African countries the “planning policy transplants” are based on legal frameworks originating from the colonial countries that have a history of using the said tools and mechanisms.

It is further argued that the framework for value capture instruments has been in place for many years in various statutory instruments in African member states. However, numerous spatial planning and fiscal mechanisms being adopted at various institutional levels seems to suffer from ambiguity and ad hoc interventions. In some instances the application of land value capture tools and mechanism has been selective for various reasons that should be discussed at this stage. We also strongly believe that the effectiveness of contemporary value capture tools in instances where it has been applied has been compromised by various reasons that should also be subjected to serious dialogue as we prepare towards the Habitat 3 conference.

Finance

We welcome the resolution to address the way cities and human settlements developments are financed. However, *it is highly recommended that in considering the finance mechanism there is need to ensure that strong emphasis on the intent to addressing socio-economic spatial inequities receives equal attention or priority.* The wording on current resolution appears to be inexplicit especially in light of spatial inequity (i.e. end poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions, reduce inequalities, promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, and realize gender equality....)

Urban land markets

We highly recommend that the role of state intervention in urban land markets should come out strongly if we are to redress the socio-economic spatial inequity that is prevalent in contemporary urban cities. It is therefore important that urban planners and development practitioners, and especially those in the employment of government, have a firm understanding of urban land economics and the workings of the land and property markets.

Informality

There is an assumption that urbanisation and associated informality only produces informal settlements and not other forms of urban patters (eg overcrowding, tenement blocks, overcrowding of existing stock etc). *We recommend that the diverse manifestations of informality be clearly acknowledged in the draft and varies significantly between cities, towns and rural areas.*