

SA workshop on Habitat III, 20-21 July 2016

Comments by Mirjam van Donk (Isandla Institute) – closing panel

1. **Some positive features (but may need to be deepened/strengthened):**
 - Right to the City
 - Social function of land
 - Food, nutrition & food security (warning flags re SA position! – see clause 109)
 - Informal Settlements Upgrading (but: PTA declaration and African Common Position stronger)
 - Community participation & role of local communities in development
2. **NUA reflects state-centric and national government centric perspective**
 - Need a decentralized (and enabling) perspective
 - Role of non-state actors (CSOs and private sector)
 - No expectation that role of CSOs will be absorbed by government or that we will always see eye to eye, but rather looking for recognition, partnerships and enabling environment
 - ✦ “sanitised” in that political dimensions/perspectives are replaced by ‘professional’ and administrative perspectives
 - Role of leadership in all spheres/sectors (including political)
3. **Stronger rights-based underpinning (social & spatial justice – but also economic justice)**
 - This means recognizing underlying causes of poverty, exclusion, marginalization and under-development (Note: African position speaks repeatedly about (structural) transformation)
 - Inequality is only mentioned once!!
 - Recognition of cities (and the role of design and infrastructure development therein) wrt alienation and segregation
4. **Focus on community participation and, to a lesser and more implicit extent, civic agency is welcome** (although a clearer definition and articulation is needed)
 - BUT: lingering discomfort that it may legitimize a withdrawal of the state in development processes, especially at a time of economic/fiscal stress
 - Also: discomfort about this duality that often creeps into these docs, where the urban poor are encouraged to be involved in development, but we don’t seem to have a similar expectation of (rights/)responsibilities of the (upper) middle class
 - ✦ while rightly focused on rights and agency of the urban poor, these docs have a tendency to leave more affluent classes and the private sector out of the equation
5. **Implicit imaginary of an (upper) middle class life style** – which is something to be strived for, or at least something to leave untouched where it is present or has been achieved.
 - Call for the inclusion of the *principle of sufficiency* (versus accumulation and wasteful use of resources)
 - ✦ Perhaps this is something to work towards re Habitat IV (2036+): framed around the RttC and the principle of sufficiency.
6. Regardless of final NUA, **call for an ongoing SA multi-stakeholder platform** for review of implementation of NUA and IUDF (and alignment, including with IDPs/SDFs), and for engagement and positioning re Habitat IV.