

TALK TO US



Housing affordability study to challenge inner city policy

by Wetu Memela

Planact in partnership with the Inner City Resource Centre, ITO1, as well as the University of Johannesburg have conducted an inclusionary housing affordability study in Bertrams, New Doorfontein in the Johannesburg City Centre. This is one of the dilapidated buildings often referred to as ‘bad buildings’.

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the affordability status of the residents and draw on the findings to challenge the current Social Housing Policy of 2003 which has been criticized for excluding the economically marginalized groups. Whilst the Social Housing Policy aims to benefit South African citizens who are in the lowest earning brackets, a majority of these citizens in cities have not benefited. Instead, most municipalities continue to implement projects which promote displacement of the disadvantaged groups from the inner city (gentrification).

The municipal practice affects the livelihoods of the residents, who seek to take advantage of the vibrant informal sector in the inner city. The residents’ livelihoods cannot be ignored in South Africa, a country currently experiencing an unprecedented high rate of unemployment (29 percent).

This study focused on Bertrams Priority Block comprising six buildings, which the city of Johannesburg metropolitan Municipality has made a commitment to upgrade soon. The study sought to answer the following questions:

What is considered “affordable” for people living in the inner city as well as what the residents consider a safe environment?

A social survey questionnaires were used to gather this information. The Planact team along with seven volunteers interviewed 70 residents in the six buildings of Bertrams, over a period of six days. Preliminary results of the study show that most residents in the area have a household income of R1500-R2000, making the current model of social housing unaffordable for them.

As a mechanism to increase the standard of living for the marginalized, the legislation seems out-dated and unable to deal with the realities of inequality and poverty across South Africa. A report will be produced from the survey and used to challenge the current legislation on social housing. Results from the study will also be used as a basis for an inclusionary redesign process to be undertaken with the residents on completion of the survey.



Above: Lungile Langa conducting a survey with one of the residents in Bertrams during the affordability study.

Emalahleni informal settlements unite to amplify their voice



Left: Community representatives from Emalahleni informal settlements after the cluster launch put up their fists to show their power as a united force.

by Siphwe Segodi

A coalition of informal settlement communities in Emalahleni (Witbank) have officially launched a cluster as an expression of commitment in a united approach to engage municipal authorities on service delivery, development and community participation related matters.

This unity is aimed at amplifying the otherwise currently shallow voice of informal settlement communities in the Emalahleni Local Municipality. The Cluster was launched in November 2019 and had representatives from various informal settlements including; Coronation, Kamgewana, Spring Valley, El Paso, Benicon, Masakhane, Kwa-Jooma, Lindokuhle, Emkantaneni, Somgodla and 5-Shaft.

It was also attended by, amongst others, representatives from the South African National Civil Organisation (SANCO) led by Ms. Thembi Mabuza, Community Development Worker (CDW) – Ms. Pauline Mabuza, Mr. Charles Makola, former Municipal Manager of Nkangala District Municipality and Planact – a partner organisation to the Cluster.

Participants at the launch used the opportunity to share their experiences concerning the poor state of service delivery, and community participation mechanisms in the municipality.



Amongst issues highlighted were the lack of access to adequate housing. Participants shared that they continue to live in informal structures which are often not safe for human habitation. This was despite repeated promises for better housing from authorities. The informal settlement residents raised the lack of tenure security as a thorny issues amongst others. For example, representatives from Benicon and El Paso informal settlements shared that promises from authorities that they would benefit at the new 'RDP' houses in Duvah Park Extension 1 were not fulfilled in 2019.

The general feeling was that government does not appear to have a clear plan for the housing needs of informal settlements communities in the municipality. Another issue raised was the unreliable access to drinking water. Participants indicated that the municipality provides water for informal settlements communities mainly through water trucks.

Communities' shared experience with this service was appalling. There is no set schedule of days and times when the truck will come, sometimes it does not come for a long period. This disadvantages the communities in many ways including threatening their wellbeing and making it difficult to plan their daily activities. There has also been allegations of delivery of contaminated water sometimes.

Charles Makola mentioned that, "when decisions are taken about the development of the town, informal settlement communities are at the periphery – they are not prioritised". The approach for informal settlement communities to work collaboratively in the form of a Cluster is viewed as a strategy that may improve engagements between them and municipal officials in a long run.

Planact continues to support the effort and is intending on scaling up the cluster within the municipality and outside with other interested communities.

REPORT: Findings on Kameeldrift social audit on the hiring & servicing of chemical toilets



Above: Kameeldrift community volunteers interview a resident in Pretoria during a social audit on chemical toilets.

by Shumani Luruli

Achieving universal access to basic sanitation service by 2030 is still a far cry if the inhumane state of sanitation in Kameeldrift 298 informal settlement in the City of Tshwane is not urgently attended to. As you enter, the streets are lined by a potentially harmful, green running liquid chemical used to dislodge the portable toilets.

To build a strong case on their plight, a report on a social audit on the hiring and servicing of chemical toilets that they conducted

in their community has been released.

According to the report, about half of the residents interviewed during the social audit complained about the ratio because in some instances up to 10 families are forced to share a single toilet which is hardly disluded.

The process of social auditing started in June 2019 and some of the recommendations from the report are:

- Improve the household to chemical toilet ratio from the current average of 41:1, to a ratio more in line with the National Norms and Standards for Domestic Water and Sanitation.
- Ensure that the contractor employs members of the Kameeldrift community for the servicing of the toilets.
- Put a monitoring system in place to ensure that the service is being delivered according to the contract specifications.

The social audit provided an opportunity for young unemployed people to participate as volunteers. This initiative was supported by Planact, the Social Audit Network (SAN), the International Budget Partnership South Africa (IBP South Africa) as well as the Open Society Foundation South Africa.

[Get the full report on www.planact.org.za/publications](http://www.planact.org.za/publications)

REPORT: Findings on Sanitation Needs Assessment in Lawley Station Informal Settlement



Above: A team of community volunteers from Lawley Station informal settlement after a debriefing session, at Planact offices, on their findings after the sanitation needs assessment.

by Shumani Luruli

Sanitation provision is a challenge across informal settlements in Region G, in the City of Johannesburg. Lawley Station Informal Settlement is just one amongst a crowd that faces challenges with access to sanitation provided by Joburg Water. However, Lawley residents are not taking it lying down.

A report on a needs assessment conducted in Lawley Station in 2019 is out. One of the key objectives was to assess whether the residents in Lawley Station are experiencing sanitation challenges similar to those identified in Thembelihle informal settlement. Planact had previously unearthed disparities in the provision of sanitation services in Thembelihle but more

evidence was needed to advocate for better sanitation in the Region.

Findings point to underlying problems with the delivery of the services which are not site or settlement specific, and which might be systemic to the delivery of outsourced basic services in general. With the inconsistencies on the service provision, residents are recommending that Joburg Water:

- in consultation with the community of Lawley Station, reviews the desludging schedule to ensure that all residents know which contractor is responsible for desludging their toilet and when this should happen.
- Repairs the wide-ranging major and minor damages to the toilets as discovered.
- Provides suitable sanitation for people with disabilities who are not able to use the VIP toilets, as well as “potty seats” to make it safe for children under 12 years of age to use the toilets.

The needs assessment was supported by Planact, the Social Audit Network, and the International Budget Partnership South Africa who strong believe in responsive living environments for all.

[Get the full report on www.planact.org.za/publications](http://www.planact.org.za/publications)

Addressing the unaddressed in Skoonplaas



Above: One public meeting where residents get to choose their own street names during a public street naming process for the whole of the Skoonplaas informal settlement, in Springs, City of Ekurhuleni.

by Wetu Memela

Residents of Skoonplaas, an informal settlement near Springs in the City of Ekurhuleni, have come together to finally choose their own identity by giving meaningful names to streets they have lived in for many years.

The main goal of the street naming process is for the community to reclaim their spaces and enhance heritage while also get a sense of belonging, ownership and responsibility as they democratically agreed on special names per street in a public meeting.

Having recognised street names assists in cases of emergencies as ambulances and police vehicles will be able to navigate the settlement much better. With running water and sanitation already provided, street naming is a step towards securing tenure for the people living within the settlement and can ensure more dignified living conditions to come.

A series of public meetings are yet to be held to name the main streets that cut through the whole settlement as well as other communal areas like the cemetery and taxi rank.

The street naming process in Skoonplaas began earlier this year and is reaching its final stages. Names such “Thusanang Street”, “Sisonke Street”, “Harmony Street” and many others symbolise the hearts and unity that personifies Skoonplaas.

This settlement is large and lively spanning 5 sections A-E, and has all the signs of a bustling and growing community: from elated cheers coming from the central soccer field to the busy buzz of the taxi rank. Finally, residents will now put a name to the wide streets running across Skoonplaas settlement to demarcate them.

Look out for a short film documenting the street naming process in Skoonplaas on our Youtube page: [Planact South Africa](#)

Events in pictures...

Youth Forum training in Kameeldrift, City of Tshwane



Above: Young people in Kameeldrift have come together to form a forum that will be innovative to use assets within their community to tackle unemployment, economic development and many other issues.

Capacity Building for Orange Farm's Siyakhula Trust Children's home



Above: Siyakhula Trust committee members supported by the Planact team after their first capacity building exercise conducted by Planact to establish the children's home.

Project site visit in Thembelihle informal settlement with UK's Illuminate



Planact, Illuminate, Social Audit Network staff members after a project site visit in Thembelihle.

KwaZenzele Community Wins Housing Battle



More houses like the one above are being built to accommodate the population growth in KwaZenzele informal settlement where Planact has empowered residents to actively participate in their community development for years.

by Siphwe Segodi

The community of KwaZenzele finally realises their dream of more houses for the growing population. The residential area, situated near Springs, under the Lesedi Local Municipality, was established mainly by people who worked in farms in the surrounding areas.

In order to find a solution to the growing population challenge, the community organised itself under the umbrella of the Kwazenzele Concerned Group and approached various government institutions including the Lesedi Local Municipality and Sedibeng District Municipality for assistance.

This organised approach yielded positive results as there is now a new site across Ermelo Road R29 where the government is building a mixed residential areas including RDP houses and flats. The expected total number of houses to be built is 3000.

Planact was then approached to support the community in understanding how the process of Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and Municipal Budget works.

“Planact assisted us a lot in knowing how to engage more meaningfully with the IDP process,” said one of the leaders, Jabu Nkosi.

He added that with better understanding of the budget they began attending IDP meetings better prepared as they would first examine the IDP and municipal budget documents in advance.

In the quest of having their own houses residents initially established a trust fund to facilitate access to land. They identified the land where KwaZenzele is currently located, which used to be an agricultural area. They then approached the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. The idea was to ensure that they receive stands that are big enough to allow for small scale agricultural activities for families. Indeed, for normal government RDP houses the size of the stands in KwaZenzele are huge – about 40 square metres.

Government allocated sites in 2016 and began building houses in 2007. Since then the community began experiencing population growth and thus congestion. The growth was a result of internal and external factors. Internally young people who did not qualify for subsidised government houses were now at the appropriate age for qualification, while other people came from elsewhere to rent backyard rooms and shacks. These brought pressure for the community to act. However, the new development has certainly brought relief.

Planact partners with Engen for education with dignity in Diepsloot Schools



Planact Director with Engen partners in Diepsloot during the handover of boreholes and classroom ceremony.

Planact in partnership with the Engen Corporate Social Investment (CSI) embarked on an eight-month task to transform the schooling facilities, by providing the most basic needs for children, many of whom live below the breadline in Diepsloot Senior Secondary School No.3.

Planact played a conduit role in this project by ensuring that payments to service providers were made for the construction of a borehole, extra classrooms as well as a fully-fledged air-conditioned exam hall, a staff lounge, a library and a fully-fitted kitchen with water.

Despite many challenges, the school has maintained a 100% matric pass rate over the past three years, courtesy of passionate and dedicated teaching staff and learners.

“Planact looks forward to working with more corporate social investment partners to enhance community development across South Africa.”

Positive Results from Engaging local government in Tsakane



Above: This was the state of some major roads in Tsakane before the community was promised tarred roads in 2004.

By Siphwe Segodi

Residents of Tsakane Extension 21 in RDP houses section (City of Ekurhuleni in Ward 86) have finally realised one of the important infrastructural changes in their community. This was after they were promised tarred roads back in 2004 for some of their busy streets to allow better access into the area.

A statement of intent to prioritise the area from the City of Ekurhuleni saw the construction of a priority road- Thuthukani Street. Some residents, under the leadership of one activist, Mnyamezeli Perseverance Makhubo, organised themselves for action to change the situation.

Coincidentally, the community happened to be adjacent to

Railway informal settlement. Railway is one of the communities that are part of the Ekurhuleni Informal Settlement Cluster – a partner to Planact.

Through Railway, the committee from Extension 21 RDP houses approached Planact for support. They were advised to explore conventional processes, procedures and mechanisms provided for by the municipality in order to address the matter in a civil manner. It was their adherence to the latter that they managed to identify the exact responsible officials concerning their matter. Subsequent discussions between the leadership and municipal officials with support from Planact and Railway led to commitment from the officials and the ward Councillor to ensure that the promise of better roads was realised.

The community of Extension 21 RDP houses was established in 2003 after people were relocated from other informal settlements, and it consist of about 2000 households. The development of houses was carried out in phases beginning in 2004, 2009 and 2011.

When houses were allocated to residents they were happy to be off the housing-waiting-list but little did they know that they will soon be confronted with another challenge. The streets were dusty in dry season and vey muddy during wet season.

‘whose knowledge counts? Co-production of knowledge in urban development. Reflections on the TRIALOG conference 2019, Germany

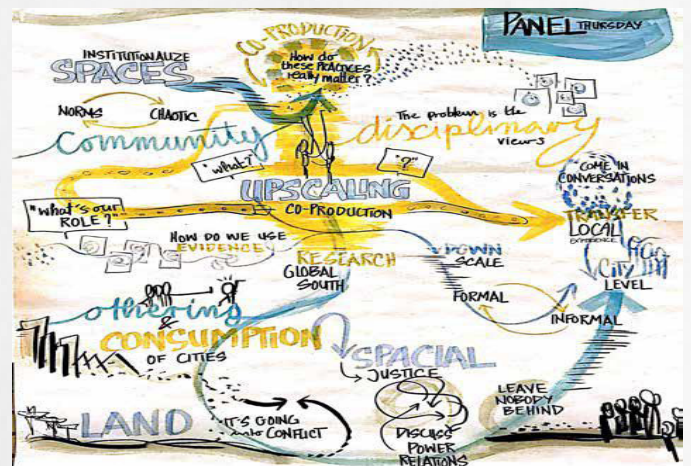
Introduction

Dr Hloniphile Simelane, Planact’s Programme Manager and a Visiting Researcher at the University of Witwatersrand’ presented a paper on the role of social accountability mechanisms such as social audits in urban development at the TRIALOG Annual Conference 2019. The conference was held at the University of Stuttgart in Germany from the 7th to the 9th November 2019. The theme of the conference was ‘whose knowledge counts? The meaning of coproductive processes for urban development and urban research’. This conference had three sub-themes, namely, Co-production of knowledge in transdisciplinary urban research, Co-production of knowledge in urban development and Coproduction or Co-optation.

Summary of the presentation

During the presentation of the paper, Dr Simelane explained that the involvement of marginalised communities and groups in social audits seeks to promote accountability and transparency of state institutions in service delivery. She analysed how social audits executed in selected Ekurhuleni informal settlements influenced the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality’s tender process.

The municipality incorporated the social audit recommendations into the tender specifications² for the provision and maintenance of chemical toilets. Contrary to previous experience, the new



The picture above gives a glimpse of the discussion. Source: Trialog Conference Recap 2019

tender specifications carries clauses on facilities for the disabled, provision of cleaning and disinfecting chemicals, schedules and inoculation of workers. The clear bid specifications have also enabled the communities to monitor the provision of the service effectively.

The presentation invoked a rigorous discussion as participants sought to understand the processes involved in these social audits and how they compare with India’s. Some participants confirmed that social audits have an important role in co-production of policy-relevant knowledge.

Co-production of knowledge in urban development.

CONTINUES...

Reflections on the conference

Co-production of knowledge is an approach characterised by processes allowing practitioners and academics to share knowledge and produce research that could address development challenges effectively. Lemos and Morehouse (2005) define co-production as a contribution of multiple knowledge sources and stakeholders pursuing the science–policy–society interface with the goal of co-creating knowledge and information to inform environmental decisions. Of relevance to urban development is the need for different actors to engage on collaboration and meaningful interaction to generate much usable knowledge.

The fact that the conference was attended by academics, consultants, and practical professionals from different fields such as urban Planning and architecture enriched the debates, around co-production of knowledge. The conference participants observed that sustainable urban development requires innovative science and questioning of conventional approaches of knowledge production. They highlighted the importance of alternative and inclusive approaches of co-production which integrate knowledge from various disciplines and sectors such as civil society and other non-academic actors. Key note speakers such as professor Roderick Lawrence (University of Geneva and Dr Steve Ouma Akothe were critical of the scientific discourses on co-production of knowledge which often exclude other array of actors whose opinions matter in development. Emphasis was placed on the role of collaboration in producing suitable and applicable results to policy making and societal change.

Social audits were highlighted as a pivotal mechanism that could be leveraged by stakeholders in producing knowledge relevant to different local contexts. This resonates with McFarlane's (2009) observation that through coproduction, communities gather knowledge themselves and are empowered to address and overcome urban poverty. Participants deliberated rigorously on how to translate co-production of knowledge into practice given the heterogeneity of stakeholders, institutional factors, competing and sometimes clashing interests of the actors. Suggestions were made, which include the development of a framework of co-production, engagements between stakeholders, effective communication and co-aptation.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, there is a need for academics, consultants, practitioners and civil society in different continental regions to address this question further and develop better ways of collaboration. The current disconnect in knowledge production fails to address the complex and interrelated challenges of urban development, thus, the relevance of social audits. Social audits are an important mechanism of involving communities in production of knowledge. The question that requires further discussions is; to what extent are researchers prepared not only to recognise the knowledge, but to partner with the practitioners and communities in urban research? Furthermore, what are the trade-offs th likely to arise in such partnership?

Notwithstanding these questions, I believe that a sound partnership between the various actors involved in knowledge production could contribute to solving the complex problems in developing countries, not to mention cities in Sub-Saharan Africa, characterised by poor service delivery. Drawing on the conference deliberations and my understanding of the subject, I conclude that coproduction warrants a shift from old practices and 'mental models' described by Peter Senge 1990 (in Fifth discipline: art and practice of the learning organization). In this context, I consider the mental models as ingrained assumptions which posits disciplinary- based researchers as the sole producers of knowledge. Certainly, the Trialog conference was invaluable and in many ways served as a platform for researchers and practitioner to embark on self-reflection.

¹Dr Hloniphile Simelane acknowledges the financial support received from the University of Witwatersrand which covered all her conference-related costs.

She co-authored the paper with Dr Kristen Kornienko, a Visiting Researcher at the University of Witwatersrand.

²The tender: 'Appointment of service providers for the hiring, delivery and maintenance of chemical toilets within City of Ekurhuleni, on and as and when required basis from 01 July 2019 until 30 June 2022'.

Planact in the media



Article published:
[Naming process starts in Skoonplaas](#)

Articles published:

1. [Civil society requires a reorientation](#)
2. [What's in a name?](#)



Article published:
Emalaheni Informal
Settlement Cluster Launch
(on print)

Article published:

[Municipalities need to be transparent to the people they serve](#)



Thursday, 20 February is World Day of Social Justice 2020

2020 Theme: "Closing the Inequalities Gap to Achieve Social Justice"

World Day of Social Justice is an international day recognising the need to promote social justice, which includes efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion, gender equality, unemployment, human rights, and social protections.

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