

INCLUSIVE AFRICAN CITIES CONFERENCE: SUMMARY REPORT

Inclusive African Cities: Mapping challenges and opportunities in contemporary urban Africa

Overview

The Inclusive African Cities Conference was held in Johannesburg on March 6 and 7 at the University of the Witwatersrand. This was a joint conference co-hosted by; Development Bank of South Africa, Human Sciences Research Council, South African Cities Network, University of the Witwatersrand, City of Johannesburg and Urban Landmark.

The conference aimed to explore inclusion and exclusion through three broad themes: access to urban resources and infrastructure – material inclusion and exclusion; constructing urban citizenship in everyday lives; emerging experiences of inclusion in African cities and what they teach us about cities. Over 150 delegates attended the conference seeking to deepen understanding of how to make rapidly urbanising African cities more inclusive and to provide the basis for developing locally appropriate tools for doing so.

One of the main points of departure was the rapid urbanisation rate, which it was argued was exacerbating the challenge of inclusivity. By 2020 it is estimated that almost half (46%) of Africa's projected population will be living in cities. At present African cities are marked by high levels of inequality, low levels of infrastructure development, slow service delivery and declining job opportunities. Rapid urbanisation is putting pressure on already scarce resources and it is bringing together diverse groups of people. International and local discourses on these developments were presented, and the programme was designed to demonstrate many case studies and implementation projects so that concept and ideas on inclusivity could be applied and tested. Many presentations were drawn from the African continent so as to demonstrate the specific realities of African cities.

The organisers hope to develop concrete criteria and common indicators for inclusion, which will be used to further the agenda of inclusivity in African cities.

Day 1 – March 6

Presentations in the introductory session provided an overview of access to urban resources and infrastructure. The prevailing picture was one of cities attracting poor migrants who arrive and find themselves economically excluded from the very services and opportunities that drew them to cities in the first place, especially since the urban poor are usually confined to the periphery of the city and are hence poorly connected to opportunities and services.

The presentations explored to what extent there is material inclusion and exclusion: what strategies do poor households use to access the resources and what policy responses can increase their access to these resources. Themes of land and housing, security of tenure and spatial integration, and the role of customary law were discussed. The economically productive activities of the poor were appraised and weaknesses in existing policy models in adapting to and integrating the circuits and linkages of the informal sector were interrogated. People's lived experiences and narratives were examined so as to understand the different physical, political and cultural spaces. In this regard the common meanings and interactions of groups were analysed, as well as the outcomes of these places of diversity – from confrontation, to conflict, to fear, avoidance and exchange. A few speakers deliberated on the reasons for exclusion, from not having access or voices in state mechanisms, to the marginalised position of women and migrants.

Jay Naidoo, Chair of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), introduced the session and outlined the “innovative” ways in which the DBSA has responded to the challenges of urbanisation and poverty. He stressed the role of the private sector and the desirability of including it in public-private partnerships particularly with regard to financing housing; as well as the importance of skills-transference in project implementation, and he cited housing densification as a priority.

The keynote address was made on behalf of the mayor of Johannesburg by Councillor Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, a Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Development in the city. She noted the importance of sharing African experiences in order to find ways of overcoming the legacy of colonialism, developing inclusive African cities – places in which “all the residents feel welcome” and to foster social cohesion. She described some of the responses of the City of Johannesburg to these pressures, including its “Human Development Strategy” and a help desk for immigrants. The councillor then urged delegates in the course of their deliberations to assist with finding solutions to some critical questions: How can we collectively and more effectively harness economic growth and build social cohesion in our cities? What are some of the common challenges in harnessing this potential and how to address these? What lessons can be learnt through interventions that have sought to promote diversity and yet address poverty and inequality in the city?

Questions from the floor raised the following concerns: Who is leading the process of integration in the cities? How do you move from theory to practice? How can we ensure de-segregated housing patterns when at present development in the property sector is driven by the market which moves much faster than planned initiatives?

In the evening there was a tour of Constitution Hill as an example of an urban space with an oppressive history that has been reclaimed for the public followed by a light supper.

Day 1, Session 1: Plenary: Inclusion and Exclusion in post-apartheid and post-colonial cities

This session was chaired by Seana Nkhahle, National Programmes Co-ordinator of the South African Cities Network (SACN). He said the session would be informed by two main principles: a South African perspective, and an assessment of what other cities on the continent have been doing.

Sithole Mbanga, CEO of the SACN, presented a summary of the South African State of Cities Report 2006. The aim of this report is to provide a comprehensive analytical framework, and to assess the global competitiveness of cities. It also provide a map of the interactions between cities, regions and countries, and as such takes cognisance of a city’s broader “footprint” that extends beyond its municipal boundaries in terms of accessing labour and resources and in terms of exporting goods and services. While such indicators help planners, he noted that it falls short in establishing what the quality of life of citizens is – an issue which he said could only be assessed through *qualitative* reporting which should be informed by well defined indicators. He noted the tendency of urbanisation to take place away from the core of the city and the generally slow pace of change to colonial urban patterns. He highlighted three critical concerns: the availability of land to bring people closer to the city; the ability to deliver housing and the mobility of citizens. A trend observed in the report is the tendency of big cities to grow slower than when the last report was published in 2004 due to a reduction of migration rates to big cities and an increase in the rate towards secondary cities. The report reflected a decline in the unemployment rate, and yet the affluent still lived comfortable lives alongside the poor, which he attributed to the fact that the poor are not being included into the economic system. In this scenario, even if services are extended to all citizens, they may not be able to pay for them. He said the report had identified an emerging Strategic Agenda which could be steered towards facilitating inclusivity in cities. It covers the following critical areas: an urban development

agenda; an urban growth agenda; urban fiscal agenda; urban services agenda and an urban governance agenda.

Mankunku Mampuru, a representative of the Secretary General of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, also highlighted the challenges brought on by rapid urbanisation. Mankunku noted that Africa is still stuck with colonial cities and that they must be referred to as such - "colonial cities"; not "post-colonial cities". He argues that the colonial city centre was exclusive to the descendants of the former colonial class and that the further you moved from it, the less affluent and more populous, poor and African it becomes. This poses three key challenges: how to make the 'African' part more developed, how to retain 'development' of the colonial centre, how to assist the African city to compete on a global scale. He urged analysts to look at the potential of the NEPAD framework for identifying blocks or cities for ensuring that Africa move onto the global arena.

Steven Friedman, research associate at the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) emphasised the need to develop spaces and mechanisms for unleashing the "voice and voices in the city" so as to ensure full participation of many of its excluded citizens. Steven identified various "speaking disabilities" that prevent inhabitants of the post-colonial cities from participating: illegal migrants who seek to hide their presence; language barriers; the lack of avenues for dialogue and negotiation that silences voices. He too called for a qualitative approach so that voices can express themselves in a clash of ideas and dialogue. While others have noted the benefits of a "community" and "civil society" approaches for extending inclusion, he said they still excluded many and instead called for an "active citizenship approach" while noting that it is important to include residents who are not technically citizens since they do not have voting rights. He said every resident of the city has a right to speak out and so the challenge remains how to ensure that all who want to speak will be heard.

Abdou Maliq Simone from the Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths College, University of London, criticised the current tendency of city planners to impose an "overarching map" on how they perceive cities to develop. He said this overlooks many complexities and said it was necessary to define the relationships between people, places and spaces as a way to find out exactly how urbanisation deploys itself. He described the organic ways in which cities develop into multiple networks between people that cannot be steered in a particular way that designers think is appropriate. Some of these complex arrangements and networks include: the manipulation of anonymity for protection; intersecting economies; use of under-utilised spaces in cities by the marginalised; lifestyles that embrace the "language of ambiguity" so as to enhance fluidity and provide more opportunities; the productive ways in which people engage in "speculation from below" that is as important as the economic activities of formal, influential developers.

The discussion raised the issue of incorporating the role of the rural economy in propping up the city; the tensions between chaotic behaviour of citizens and the "straight-jacketing" approach of planners and the subsequent need for planners to be attuned to the unpredictability; the importance of spaces for debate, being heard and contestation so as to avoid violence and conflict.

Session 2 (a) Inclusionary access to land

Mark Napier from Urban Land Mark opened the session with the comment that a quarter of South Africans do not have permanent tenure. The presentations described the different ways in which people access land and accommodation in the face of state failure to do so. The Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia evolved out of community-based savings schemes that raised funds for people to buy land and build houses. It has grown into an impressive model of public-private partnerships on a national scale and it has influenced law reform in Namibia. Another paper posited that state and market-based land markets do

not work for the poor, but that poor people still access and transfer land in a variety of ways that are unregistered and unsanctioned by the state. These transactions are often seen as not following “the rules of the game”. This points to a grey area between inclusion and exclusion where many people find themselves. Conceptually the existing binary classification is inadequate (formal/informal; legal/illegal) for harnessing this active part of the economy. A Nigerian speaker described the situation in Lagos whereby access to land is vested in a dominant class, including the rulers of the country, who gained the land through patrilineal inheritance based on “who was there first”. **A customary ownership exists alongside a private ownership system, often leading to confusion that is exploited by spurious land vendors who sometimes employ violent means. It was an example of what happens when there is not formalisation of property and when regulations are not enforced. The final paper emphasised how strategies for inclusion of the poor must include** their contribution to economic growth, saying that this was currently undervalued with the result that poor people are not allotted land that is deemed productive. He also expressed concern as to whether markets could work for the poor since they are by definition competitive and result in the poor being apportioned smaller units far away from the city centre. A common theme was the need to broaden definitions of how to evaluate the performance of a piece of land by taking into account for whom it performs and whom it benefits.

Session 2 (b) "African urban identities"

The session was chaired by Caroline Kihato and the discussant was Abdou Maliq Simone. Four papers were presented. One paper on the role of literature in Nigerian society showed how greed and corruption are practised by certain segments of society. This corruption has led to under-development of the cities, in particular, to the detriment of the country's citizens. Another paper looked at cosmopolitan and homogeneous elements of African societies, postulating that cosmopolitanism would be advantageous as a buffer against racism, and encourage cultural freedom. The third paper looked at consumerism, stereotyping and the ordinary citizen, concluding that consumerism leads to stereotyping and negates all the other subtle influences on individuals. The last paper of the session outlined how Douala in Cameroon, dating back several centuries, had developed as an ethnically inclusive city until the 1990s when party politics divided the many communities of the city into separate ethnic groupings, thus leading to a less harmonious city. The papers raised some common themes: while language can bring cohesion, it is not a guarantee of inclusivity; the ways in which ordinary people go about their lives and the sense they make of it and in turn who reflects this for what purpose: literature may provide necessary social critiques, but advertising may exploit identities for commercial use; cosmopolitanism encourages diversity and cultural freedom as well as the homogenisation of culture.

Day 2: Wednesday March 7

Session 3: Chair Mark Napier

Mark Napier is from one of the co-hosts of the conference, Urban Land Mark. He introduced the session by summarising some of the statements from the previous day: the definition of an inclusive city as “one in which people feel welcome”, the need to “crowd in the private sector” for cities to grow, the need for government to access the “voices of the city”, the need to recognize local institutions and to incorporate them into the legal system, the necessity for coping with “multiple arrangements” in the city, and the undesirability of giving poor people cheap land.

Belinda Bozzoli, Deputy Vice Chancellor Research, at the University of the Witwatersrand, welcomed delegates to the university. She said that Wits University has identified cities as one of its main research thrusts. She said she hoped the conference would sufficiently unpack the notion of an inclusive city: what forms and institutions promote or inhibit this and in which ways do people design their own mechanisms for inclusion? She identified a

prominent challenge that the conference sought to address: to resolve the tension between the desires of social engineers/scientists and the realities of the city planners.

Alan Mabin, Head of the School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, stated that his job in scholarship is to encourage people to think about and look at new things happening in African cities. He quoted from a book by Bill Freund of the University of KwaZulu-Natal called "The African City" which he described as an eclectic history of African cities: "the future is open-ended, uncertain, not lacking in contradictions..." He asked if we are looking enough at these "new emerging futures", saying that in his travels in Africa he has seen many neighbourhoods that defy what many prominent theorists say. Beyond the "buffer strip" he has seen eight-floor high rise buildings where once there was one and he urged theorists to look at extraordinary new things are happening in such neighbourhoods. He cautioned against relying solely on the state to solve the tensions of urbanisation.

Udesh Pillay, Executive Director Urban, Rural and Economic Development, Human Sciences Research Council, noted that three prominent challenges had emerged from the presentations of the previous day: How does one make existing mechanisms more participatory and what is the role of local government in this? How does one enhance the role of local government? With what does one substitute the narrow site-specific solutions of policy makers? The solutions to such problems and to ensure inclusive cities demand that the importance of the informal economies is recognised; basic infrastructure and services be delivered; the acknowledgement of rural-urban and trans-frontier is necessary as is effective governance and planning.

Session 4 (a) Citizenship and Urbanisation in African Cities

The session was chaired by Loren Landau of the University of the Witwatersrand Forced Migration Studies Department, a co-organiser of the event. Loren noted that citizenship is contested in academia as much as it is in politics. He said that citizenship is assumed to be inclusive but that it is not necessarily so since many do not have a voice in cities and since many people are residents but may not be citizens of the country. Furthermore, he stated that formal relationships and the right to vote may be insignificant for many people and that their attempts at inclusion go beyond merely being recognised and included by the state.

The papers concentrated on themes of "lack": poverty, slums, lack of social services, which point to a deep contradiction between citizenship and urbanisation – many African cities undermine the notion of citizenship. However, access to basic services like water and health requires being able to participate with your voice. Citizenship implies the existence of a public ground for negotiating these rights and the civic realm implies certain shared standards and rights.

One participant said the authorities in Nairobi, Kenya, neglect informal settlements and skewer their resources in favour of the middle class. As a result, slums lack basic services and security of tenure. More recently slum dwellers have organised themselves into federations and groups so as to counter these problems and a few successful self-help initiatives have emerged and they have gone on to work with governments to advance pro-poor policies. These federations are engaged in community-driven initiatives to upgrade slums and squatter settlements, to develop new low-income housing, to provide infrastructure and services, to support members in developing stable livelihoods. The foundations for these groups are thousands of savings groups formed by urban poor groups which offer emergency funds and a way to accumulate money for housing development. A paper from Madagascar revealed that living in poor neighbourhoods affects the political opinions of its inhabitants, and the more socially excluded people are, the more they distrust democracy. Some of the people in the study had formed into associations of various kinds to further their needs, but this did not make these individuals more civic minded and instead fostered sectarianism, ethnic identification and greater distrust of democracy. The researcher posed the question: "Is Madagascar an exception in this regard?"

Another study explored ways in which migrants from Mozambique to Johannesburg adopted various lifestyles and identities in order to feel more inclusive in the city and to escape xenophobia. The research established that there was an absence of political organisation among migrants and weak social links. Instead, the immigrants make a concerted effort to blend in. The paper raised the question: is this a type of migrant labour system between the two countries: the SA economy benefits from the low wages and lack of protection for workers, while Mozambique benefits from the cash inflow of wage remittances or trader's profits?

Another paper looked at this history of Freetown, Sierra Leone, tracing the various influences on its demographic constitution. For a long time it was cosmopolitan and yet divided into separate enclaves based along ethnic lines, but that there was for a long period an "Krio" culture which became the lingua-franca and it was an embodiment of Afro-European cultural forms. However, emergence of a class system based on access to property rentals undermined the citizenship of the city, and this was further eroded under the one-party dictatorship. Although free today, it is a city of diversity yet exclusion. The discussant noted there is often a view that Africa is exceptional in these trends, but that this is not the case. He said that all over the world such situations are repeating themselves: distrust of democracy, insecurity over everything and what the future will give children. New movements are evolving all the time to deal with these problems and it is important to establish these comparisons. Everywhere there is an increase in structural violence that explodes episodically, everywhere the vulnerable are threatened by democracy. What happens in Africa is just an extreme version, and what is happening in Africa is happening because of what happens in the north. The north exports its problems to Africa and then they are re-exported north.

Session 4b: Urban settlements and poverty in the 21st century

This session was chaired by Seana Nkhahle and the discussant was Ahmed Vawda.

A study of Aids orphans in KwaZulu-Natal showed the orphans were largely excluded from feeling part of their communities, and often lived in very poor conditions, being taken in usually by extended families, who themselves were struggling to make ends meet. Another paper looked at rented accommodation in Johannesburg, focusing on single room accommodation. The dilemma for the city is that, whether private or publicly funded, any improvements to rented accommodation would automatically exclude the large lower rungs of society because they would then have to pay more for the accommodation. Access to cheap rental accommodation within the city is a must, according to another paper.

Governments should perhaps ignore the ideal of providing every person with their own house - inclusion should firstly give everyone acceptable, affordable accommodation in the city. The final paper considered informal traders in Nairobi. This sector, although a major contributor to employment and city revenue, has traditionally found itself excluded from the city's planning. But a new act and new alliances have already made a difference to their representation within the city structures and thus their inclusion in the formal economy. The discussant Ahmed Vawda said that the state had to respond to the fluidity of the situation, and provide "flexible instruments", and that institutional limitations don't lie just with the state, but also with civil society.

Session 5 (a) Participation: Policy and Practice

Five papers were presented during this session, and it was chaired by Seana Nkhahle and the discussant was Jackie Lamola. Four of the papers were case studies of marginalised and excluded groups, their survival mechanisms, and efforts to include them by local government and in two cases, by non-governmental organisations. One case study evaluated the attempts by South African local government to include women by comparing three different municipalities. The conclusion reached was that their inclusion was "partial and uneven". While women are being included in local politics, IDP processes and local projects more than before, this does not necessarily change pre-existing gender relations nor result in programmes that change address deeper gender issues at the local level. At

the root of this problem is the idea that a quota system would automatically lead to putting women's issues on strategic agendas.

The case study of informal transport networks of Douala, Cameroon, revealed that young people with few job prospects have taken advantage of inadequate transport facilities by starting informal businesses as motorbike taxi drivers and in handcart transport. These people are organised into small, tightly-knit groups offering much solidarity, and although there have been attempts to organise them into a professional association to regulate their activities, this has not yet happened. The presenter described this informal market as "innovative" and called for it to be recognised and integrated into formal structures of society. The role that children can play in participation was championed in a paper that compared three successful cases of children being involved in decision-making. The presenter argued children should be encouraged to make an active contribution in decisions which affect their lives from a young age so that citizenship can be "nurtured". Other benefits of more positively promoting children's participation include: the development of social skills and hence better performance of responsibilities; participation facilitates the flow of child perspectives into social decision-making, it improves communication and negotiation skills, builds self esteem and confidence, and participation in significant affairs of life gives them a sense of meaning and enables more mature, respectful relationships to develop between adults and children and generations. In discussing the connection between participation and policy-making, one Durban-based researcher warned of the ways in which claims of participation can be abused and used to include and exclude at the same time so that only certain kinds of voices are encouraged, and that this is the predominant method of "formal" and "state-led" participation. He referred to this as "invited" participation and called for more substantial participation which enables dialogue and discussion of policies. The final paper described a housing complex which is being used to develop a model of inclusive development in the inner city in South Africa. It is situated in an area surrounded by good city facilities, is multi-cultural and has many economic and physical assets, and is led by a consortium of representatives from different sectors to form the Berea-Burger Park Community Development Corporation, registered as a non-profit organisation. Its main focus is regeneration of the neighbourhood and it has developed an action plan for the area that includes financial, economic, physical, social, institutional and financial strategies, with an emphasis on finding synergies between them in an integrated approach.

Jackie Lamola, the discussant, summed up the main themes explored. Who defines participation and who defines who are participants and why participation in the first place? It is necessary to establish whether participation has improved relations between people – has it affected people's lives? She said it's necessary to analyse the assumptions of engagement – does everyone understand what is being discussed? Is everyone's input valued? Does everyone have the same power and resources to begin to engage with policy? She noted a need to "consciously" make room for whoever is defined as a participant and the issues this raises about "invited" and "invented" spaces. Who sets the agenda? Finally, participation is not cheap and resources are needed for training, space, capacitation, time.

Session 5b: Lessons for service delivery

Four papers were presented that detailed some attempts at service delivery by authorities, analysed their shortcomings and the ways in which they lead to exclusion. The first paper presented the argument that various waste management initiatives haven't necessarily created jobs and led to inclusion. The second paper detailed an extremely excluded community of 30 000 people who lived in "hidden spaces", with unemployment and Aids being just two of many challenges they face. The third paper indicated that over 70% of the urban population of Tanzania live in increasingly crowded informal areas which lack basic facilities like piped water and electricity, making them feel excluded. There is an urgent need for intervention to relieve their situation.

The discussant, Nolwazi Gasa, said that the two systems, the informal and formal, were dependent on each other, with the formal system is unable to exist within the informal system. Transformation is needed in both the formal and informal spheres. It is evident that health services should be prioritised when it comes to delivery agendas. Poor living conditions contribute to the poor state of the informal sector's health. Several issues would help improve service delivery: capacity at government level; the readiness of the private sector to respond; the dynamic interplay between the public and private sectors; the capital constraints at state level; the unrealistic standards set; how essential it was for the stakeholders to assess socio-economic realities so that what is done is relevant; the need for dialogue and engagement with the community and other relevant stakeholders; the importance of co-ordination and accountability; the need to review interventions. Comments from the floor stressed the importance of with examining and incorporating the aspects of informal settlements that actually work; and the assessing the ability to engage people within the informal settlements co-ordinating what is being addressed with whom. In this regard it is often people who are far removed from the ground that decide on the interventions. There is much politicking around informal settlements, which should be seen as a transitional stage of development, and it is evident that bureaucracies are not ready to engage, and so a laissez-faire approach has prevailed.