

MANAGING THE INTERFACE

EXPLORING THE NEED
FOR INTERMEDIATION
IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT
UPGRADING | 2014



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This document was produced by Isandla Institute as part of the Khayalethu Initiative, a project supported by Comic Relief.

The aim of the Khayalethu Initiative is to advance models for participatory informal settlement upgrading through knowledge sharing, collaboration and experimentation. Isandla Institute's role in the Khayalethu Initiative is to inspire and inform communities of practice through research and the facilitation of engagement between practitioners in the field of informal settlement upgrading. One of these engagements takes the shape of a Cape Town-based Community of Practice made up of three NGOs working in the city. Along with Isandla Institute, these organisations include Community Organisation Resources Centre (CORC) and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU). This document distils the knowledge emerging from the work of the Khayalethu Initiative partner organisations, and offers lessons from both theory and practice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In South Africa processes of informal settlement upgrading necessarily occur in complex contexts where multiple actors, interests, priorities and expectations are at play. In order for upgrading interventions to realise substantive change in the lives of urban residents then, it is necessary that these complexities be negotiated in ways that allow for the emergence of collectively defined goals. Both communities and the state are limited in their capacity to engage with one another, and to identify common points of interest.

The document argues that actors who are able to hold the space between key stakeholders have a significant role to play in strengthening development practice in the country. It suggests that intermediation is critical to the success of upgrading interventions as those who perform intermediary functions bolster the capacity of urban residents to communicate with the state, they strengthen the state's capacity to understand the needs of communities, and they manage the interface at which stakeholders meet to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes.

We acknowledge the contribution made by representative from CORC and VPUU during the local Community of Practice meetings held on the 21st of May 2014 and the 7th of August 2014. Representatives from the Development Action Group also participated in the meeting held in May.

FOSTERING MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

In South Africa, development interventions that aim to address issues of public housing provision and basic service delivery are guided by progressive policy measures that promote in situ incremental informal settlement upgrading as a viable and sustainable approach.

In the period immediately following the 1994 elections, the Reconstruction and Development Plan was designed as a means to address the gross inequalities that had characterised South African social life under the Apartheid regime. The housing policy set out in this framework failed to find effective articulation in practice, so much so that strategies of relocation and provision of housing by the state continued to marginalise the urban poor. In 2004, these policy measures were revised and presented by the Department of Housing as 'Breaking New Ground' (DoH 2004). Here, as well as in subsequent policy measures such as the National Development Plan (2011) and the National Upgrading Support Programme (2008), incremental upgrading was outlined as the most feasible strategy for responding to the needs of the urban poor and, in doing so, ensuring spatial justice in cities across the country.

These shifts in policy signal not only a growing recognition of the need for alternative technical interventions, but also draw attention to the critical importance of community participation in any development project. An upgrading approach is premised on the continuous involvement of those whose daily lives are most dramatically impacted by the outcomes of development interventions. Implicit in the notion of upgrading, and in the policy that promotes its implementation then, is an assumption about the central role that communities play in determining the kind of development that best suits their particular needs.

The approach assumes that communities living in informal settlements have immense creative and generative energy. Communities are therefore imagined as active agents with valuable knowledge and experience that allow them to 'contribute to practical problem-solving and upgrading schemes, and [to] hold municipalities accountable' (NDP 2011: 259). Indeed, an effective improvement process is thought to be 'built on close community participation and cooperation' (Outcome 8, Annexure A 2010: 42). But even with progressive policy measures in place, the stark realities of everyday life in urban areas continue to place severe limitations on the capacity of both the state and communities to engage in meaningful processes of participation. As the number of poor urban residents grows, the demand for basic services and shelter steadily

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increases. State interventions have tended to focus their attention on **quantifiable outcomes** which all too easily sideline strategies of community involvement in favour of time-intensive projects with clear results. Despite a strong rhetoric of participation and partnership then, these ideals remain largely unrealised.

The South African context therefore necessitates an investigation of the ways in which community participation can be transformed from an unattained ideal to a functioning reality. In this document we argue that particular intermediary functions are necessary so as to facilitate engagement between the state and communities. If these stakeholders are to work together in partnership in pursuit of collectively defined goals that are truly responsive to the needs of residents in informal settlements, then the interfaces at which they meet must be managed in ways that allow for learning and collaboration. Furthermore, the state must be held accountable when there are marked discrepancies between its policy and practice. Intermediary functions are therefore critical for fostering meaningful engagement between stakeholders with a vested interest in the outcomes of upgrading interventions.

Quantifiable outcomes are

those outcomes that are easy to measure. These are more often than not physical outcomes such as taps, toilets and top structures.

POLICY PROVISIONS RELATED TO INTERMEDIATION IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

National Housing Code (2009): As part of its incremental interventions, the National Housing Code makes provision for the enhancement of People's Housing Process. In the document the then National Department of Housing (renamed the National Department Human Settlements) recognises the need to build strong relationships not only with communities living in informal settlements, but also with key NGOs as partners in the development process. It acknowledges that relationships between communities and NGOs are critical to the success of development interventions, as organisations play a role in strengthening the capabilities of residents and in facilitating participation processes. The National Housing Code therefore understands development to be dependent on the involvement of multiple stakeholders, and suggests that facilitation is key to the design and implementation of interventions.

National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) (2009): The NUSP was set up as a mechanism to support provinces and municipalities in the incremental upgrading of informal settlements. In order to receive funding from the programme, service providers must submit applications to bid for tenders. The applications are guided by NUSP's terms of reference which stipulate the parameters of the assignment to be carried out. While the programme recognises that incremental upgrading requires technical expertise, its terms of reference specify the need for social competencies that would allow service providers to facilitate participative processes and to empower communities through capacity building interventions. The NUSP therefore encourages interdisciplinary approaches to informal settlement upgrading and makes room for actors who negotiate between varying interests.

Integrated Urban Development Framework (2014): The IUDF recognises both the limited capacity of local governments to engage meaningfully with communities, as well as the adverse effects that low levels of education can have on public participation. The document proposes a number of short-, medium- and long term strategies that may be utilised to strengthen participation in the country. Short- to medium term strategies include the completion of the National Framework on Participatory Governance, the development of models for civic education, the establishment and maintenance of public participation forums, the building of institutional capacity to engage, the exploration of co-productive mechanisms, the development of a social media strategy and the exploration of various service delivery mechanisms. The proposed long term strategy involves the creation of an open-source database on innovative practices in neighbourhood empowerment. The IUDF therefore drives a participatory development agenda and highlights the need for substantive communication between communities and the state.



WHY IS INTERMEDIATION NECESSARY IN PROCESSES OF PARTICIPATORY INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING IN SOUTH AFRICA?

A successful upgrading intervention relies, in part, on the ability of stakeholders to engage with one another in ways that allow for the emergence of collectively defined solutions and strategies for action.

The state has access to physical resources and personnel with management skills, while residents in informal settlements have an understanding of the social context within which upgrading must occur and can pinpoint actors with the ability to perform key functions. If the resources and competencies of stakeholders are not able to reconcile in the planning and implementation of an upgrading project, the positive effects of the intervention are not likely to be sustainable. In South Africa the capacity of both the state and communities to engage with one another is limited by a number of factors. As a result, substantial community participation in processes of informal settlement upgrading has remained a normative prescription.

On the one hand, communities living in informal settlements are limited in their capacity to engage with the state and to realise and assert their role as active participants in the betterment of their living environment. According to Landman and Napier, 'the dominance of state allocated housing is as a result of the increased expectations from potential beneficiaries, where a fully subsidised and completed house (so-called 'giveaway houses') is preferred above self-built options that require some physical input (sweat equity) or some financial equity' (2009: 5-7). As noted in the National Development Plan (2011), former housing policies – predicated on the provision of housing and services by the state – put in place a system within which residents in informal settlements were by and large positioned as passive recipients or beneficiaries of state-instigated development projects. These policies, and the practice to which they gave rise, may therefore have dampened the will of communities in informal settlements to take part in, or to instigate, processes of upgrading.

Furthermore, the capacity of residents to communicate and collaborate with the state is also restricted by fragmentation within communities, as well as tensions between community members. In her description of the work of The Concerned Residents of Delft, Millstein suggests that racial divisions and language barriers can serve to frustrate community-based organisations' attempts to mobilise residents (2008: 5). Fragmentations

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along racial and ethnic lines make it difficult for communities to present themselves as unified – as a group rallying behind a common cause. While conflict and contestation are part and parcel of community life, the state is often reluctant to engage in settlements where these are prevalent as antagonism can derail the implementation of development projects, and because conflict resolution requires time- (and resource-) consuming processes. Community capacity is also undermined by a lack of **information** which, in turn, results in an inability to access the necessary channels. As Atkinson suggests, communities are often unaware of their right to participate in municipal processes (2007: 64). Uninformed communities suffer a severe disadvantage and are restricted in their ability to participate in development projects as equal stakeholders. In order for communities to make their voices heard it is therefore crucial that they have access to information about the processes and procedures of the state.

On the other hand, the state is limited in its capacity to coordinate and implement participatory upgrading interventions by its 'inflexible, hierarchical administrative structure', which he suggests is 'often unable to respond to the unique needs of the poor' (Otiso 2003: 223). Furthermore, the state's propensity for corruption undermines its ability to realise the ideals set out in policy, as resources are commandeered and misallocated in practice (Otiso 2003: 223). Here, ward committees have 'emerged as a key institutional mechanism intended to contribute towards bringing about people-centred, participatory and democratic local governance' (Smith and De Visser 2009: 2). Despite their intended function however, these formal structures have been ineffective in ensuring public participation and, as a result, in contributing to the creation of sustainable human settlements. According to Smith and De Visser, tensions between councillors and committee members are often detrimental to the effectiveness of ward committees (2009: 19).

Information

Communities should have access to information about the workings of the state, the funding it provides and under what conditions, and then channels through which support can be gained.



Patronage politics refers to a situation where individuals are rewarded based on their support of those in power

Committee members who aspire to rise in rank may intentionally disrupt committee processes as a means to undermine councillors. The authors also suggest that the two year term of office results in brain drain as 'experienced and capacitated members are regularly replaced' (2009: 20).

Furthermore, development processes in South Africa – which involve the management of state resources – are susceptible to corruption, particularly in the form of elite capture. While ward committees are meant to serve as a symbol of the state's commitment to public participation and community-driven development, Atkinson suggests that these are 'loaded with appointees from the dominant party' (2007: 65). Policy measures that promote community participation, an inclusive attitude towards the poor and equal access to resources and opportunities are therefore made redundant by a practice that favours **patronage politics**. Finally, the state is also limited in its capacity to successfully implement upgrading projects – projects that draw on the knowledge and strengths of residents in informal settlements – by a narrow focus on quantitative outputs. State intervention is largely concerned with delivering a high quantity of houses or services at a low cost, so that projects implemented by the state are characterised by short term engagement with maximum output. This results-based approach, which is heavily reliant on technical processes, does not allow for long and often tedious processes of community participation.

A case study from Delft, an informal settlement situated 30 kilometers outside of Cape Town's central city, shows that both the state and communities are restricted in their capacity to deal with contestation. In Delft, racial divisions caused significant fragmentation in the community. The Concerned Residents of Delft, a community-based organisation working in the settlement, therefore struggled to mobilise the community and to gain support for their initiative. Racially charged tensions continued to be an issue even after ward committees were introduced in the area. These official structures actually contributed to further fragmentation as Delft was demarcated into a number of distinct wards. The issues of the community could no longer be approached collectively, and divisions were reinforced as ward committees became the primary channels through which grievances could be addressed. (Millstein, 2008)

If upgrading initiatives are to be responsive to the needs of residents in informal settlements – if they are to avoid the misallocation of resources and the use of ill-tailored strategies for implementation – then it is necessary to build stakeholders' capacity to engage and communicate with one another. Bolstering the capacity of the state can ensure that upgrading interventions are designed to target issues that are context-specific, while strengthened community capacity can contribute to more sustainable development as projects that are designed in partnership

are more likely to engender a sense of ownership amongst residents. Beyond building the capacity of stakeholders to engage with one another, it is however also necessary that these engagements be managed and facilitated in productive ways. Upgrading undoubtedly constitutes complex processes that draw on the expertise and resources of multiple actors; processes that occur in complex contexts where political allegiances and hierarchies of power are likely to play a role in the shape and form of development. While stakeholders may be capacitated to interact with one another, these interactions can be influenced by a number of factors. Careful negotiation between manifold interests is therefore critical in the implementation of upgrading initiatives.

In previous research undertaken by Isandla Institute it was argued that there are (at least) two key features of informal settlement upgrading that highlights the need for actors who are able to facilitate and mediate between stakeholders (Görgens, forthcoming 2014). Firstly, the success of upgrading as methodology is premised on its ability to understand, work with and mobilise social networks in order to support technical processes of service delivery and settlement improvement.

Relationships between community members, relationships between communities and other stakeholders as well as the introduction of role players such as external funders give rise to a complex landscape where interests and priorities need to be navigated. An upgrading project must therefore be able to facilitate processes in which problems and satisfying solutions can be jointly identified by key stakeholders, and to establish collaborative relationships that can be carried forward into the implementation phase of the project. Secondly, the physical characteristics of informal settlements warrant negotiated interventions that draw on both technical and social knowledge. These characteristics, such as a poor land quality, often make the use of conventional technical solutions impossible. As such, upgrading interventions are dependent on **local knowledge** of settlements and must be able to implement communally acceptable strategies.

It is clear then that there are numerous factors that impact on an upgrading project, and that the careful negotiation of these factors is pivotal if an intervention hopes to reach its aims of effecting sustainable improvement in a settlement, and of meeting the needs of the urban poor. Participatory informal settlement upgrading therefore necessitates the involvement of actors who can perform key intermediary functions, as facilitation and negotiation are crucial for ensuring a people-centred approach to development. Drawing on the context set out above, the section that follows aims to identify the particular intermediary functions that are required to advance a participatory and incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading in South Africa.



Local knowledge

is the community's understanding of their living environment and social dynamics. This knowledge is developed over years and can only be accessed (albeit partially) through rigorous research and sustained engagement.

WHAT IS INTERMEDIATION?

Guided by the input of a national working group¹, Isandla Institute has created a typology of seven intermediary functions that correspond to three major sets of concerns.

The areas of concern reflect the South African context set out above, and include firstly the provision of support to communities so as to enhance their ability to identify and articulate priorities and needs, as well as enabling residents to access information that would allow them to interact and negotiate with the state on equal terms. Secondly, intermediation is concerned with supporting and compelling the state to embrace participation and incrementalism as key principles for development. Finally, intermediary functions seek to establish interfaces that allow for substantial participation, for negotiation between stakeholders that result in collectively defined solutions and strategies, and that encourage learning and knowledge production. These functions are of course interlinked, so that multiple functions can be performed simultaneously, or by the same actor. It is however useful to unpack each of these functions so as to identify the skills and competencies required for their performance, as well as the potential contribution of each function for enhancing a participatory approach to informal settlement upgrading.

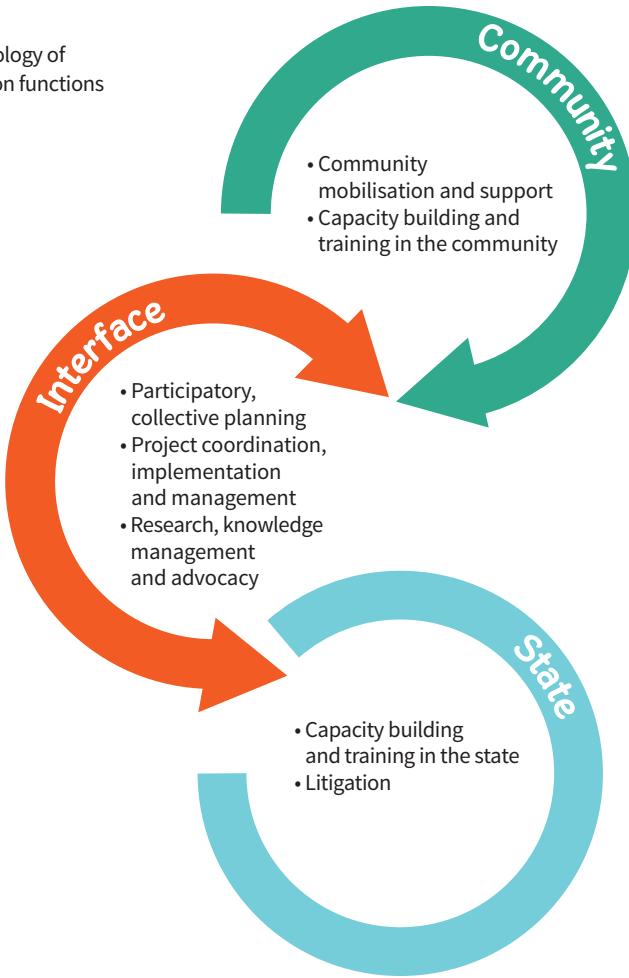
These functions include

Community mobilisation and support: Actors who perform this function provide strategic and financial support necessary for communities to organise and coordinate – to elect leadership, to host meetings and to identify priority areas for intervention.

Capacity building and training in the community: Here, the focus is on creating opportunities for communities to develop the skills needed to effectively engage with the state. Training community members to navigate bureaucratic processes and structures is critical here, as informed communities are capacitated to advocate for the implementation of particular strategies that correlate with their particular needs.

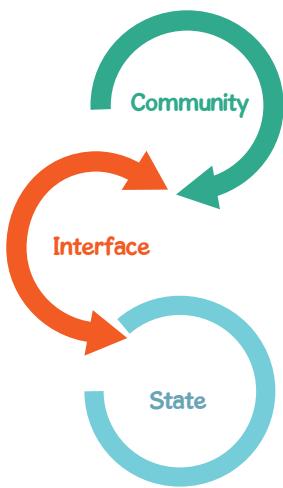
¹Organisations represented in this national working group included Afesis-Corplan, African Centre for Cities, Built Environment Support Programme, Community Organisation Resource Centre, Development Action Group, PlanAct, The Khuyasa Fund, Project Preparation Trust and the National Upgrading Support Programme in the National Department of Human Settlements. The research was conducted in 2012. Interviews and engagements with practitioners resulted in an assessment of the capacity of NGOs to perform intermediary functions, as well as the opportunities for intermediation put in place by the state. The report documenting the finding of the project is entitled 'Assessment of the current practice, capacity and potential of civil society organisation to perform intermediary functions in informal settlement upgrading' (2012 unpublished).

Figure 1: Typology of intermediation functions



Capacity building and training in the state: This function allows for the strengthening of local government officials' ability to act facilitators in the processes associated with participatory upgrading. In South Africa there is a need to equip officials with the tools necessary for negotiating the demands of partners and stakeholders. This function can also enable a shift in focus from a predominantly technical approach to upgrading to an approach that values the role of communities in formulating development interventions.

Litigation: The state is compelled by law to act in accordance with the policy measures that define its role in various processes, including development. Actors who perform this function can therefore take legal action against the state as a means to ensure accountability and to draw attention to areas that have been overlooked in practice.



Participatory, collaborative planning: Participatory planning serves as a process through which communities are assisted in collecting data about themselves and their environment. With this information at their disposal, communities are able to make strategic decisions about their engagement with the state and to formulate locally-driven solutions. Planning can also be undertaken in collaboration with community representatives and officials in order to collectively produce information and to consider alternatives.

Project coordination, implementation and management: Here the focus is on either managing the different aspects of the project as a whole, or on managing the particular actions of certain stakeholders. Those who perform intermediary functions may also act as implementing agents, driving work on the ground. As implementing agents then, actors are given room to significantly influence the direction and outcomes of the project. This function does however also come with a heightened responsibility to deliver on technical and quantitative aspects of a project.

Research, knowledge production and advocacy: Intermediation can also involve the production of knowledge outputs in collaboration with communities, or the undertaking of research projects that analyse the efficiency of particular approaches to upgrading. Those who perform intermediary functions may also be employed by the state to investigate a particular aspect of upgrading. Furthermore, this function may also include building the capacity of other actors aiming to step into intermediate spaces. Through knowledge sharing and collaborative learning, actors with experience in performing intermediary functions can strengthen the work of other stakeholders in the field.

WHO PERFORMS INTERMEDIARY FUNCTIONS?

The functions set out above can be performed by a range of organisations or individuals.

Community members, private sector actors or state officials all have particular strengths that bolster their ability to facilitate engagement between stakeholders, and to manage the interfaces at which multiple actors meet. As Briggs (2008) suggests, actors who perform these functions may be 'interested facilitators' with a vested interest in specific outcomes. While neutrality is a beneficial trait for a facilitator to have, actors with particular interests in the outcomes of upgrading projects can be instrumental in using intermediation as a means for bringing about development that is participatory in nature. Since the Khayalethu

Initiative is focused primarily on the perspectives and experiences of NGOs working in informal settlement upgrading, the project serves, in relation to this discussion, as a platform to investigate the potential of the NGO sector in South Africa to perform intermediary functions.

A case study from Eryka, an informal settlement outside of Johannesburg, shows that organisations who perform intermediary functions may struggle to remain neutral role-players in contexts where complex power relations are at play. In 2012 a prominent community from Eryka sought the assistance of Planact, an organisation committed to the promotion of participatory governance. Planact was to serve as mediator, facilitating a process of conflict resolution in the community. In Eryka tensions between the ANC, the Landless People's Movement (LPM) and the DA complicated processes of development. Each group attempted to gain legitimacy by claiming to represent the needs of the people. The same prominent community member asked Planact to help the residents of Eryka in drawing up an IDP proposal. As the community member was aligned with the DA, the ANC and LPM sought to discredit the process she had instigated in collaboration with Planact. They accused the organisation of supporting a political party rather than a non-political social movement, and of working against the people. Planact therefore became embroiled in the groups' struggle for power. Instead of acting a neutral facilitator the organisation became a political actor working in favour of particular interests. (Mayson, 2013)

The ability of NGOs to hold the space between stakeholders in processes of participatory incremental upgrading is bolstered by key features of the sector that relate to its ideological commitment and its method of practice. Non-profit organisations are thought to be value-driven, with a particular focus on the pursuit of social justice (Görgens 2015). These organisations are therefore more likely to manage resources in ways that are responsive to the needs of the urban poor. Furthermore, organisations in this sector have access to resources in the form of funding and skilled personnel and are, as Otiso (2003) suggests, well-situated to provide communities with financial and material support. External funding also allows NGOs to act with some measure of independence from the state. As independent actors, NGOs are therefore able to play the role of **watchdog** so as to keep the state accountable in its implementation of development policy. During a recent debate between representatives from the African National Congress, the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters, the crucial role of civil society organisations in ensuring that the state is held accountable to the people was acknowledged by all parties. Although party representatives put forward different strategies for supporting the sector, they each referred to the importance of ensuring that the sector is capacitated to operate as an independent actor².

A watchdog

is tasked with monitoring the actions of the state in order to ensure that it is first and foremost accountable to the people.

²The debate was hosted by Inyathelo on the 9th of April 2014 as part of their 'Breakfast on the Second Floor' series. The speakers included Max Ozinsky (ANC), Wimot James (DA) and Naseem Paulse (EFF).

Holistic

A holistic approach does no isolate issues from the context within which they occur and considers physical, social, economic and political factors to be interconnected parts of the same whole.

Of course, the merits of the non-profit sector should not be accepted without some consideration of its faults and limitations. While some organisations may be progressive, using their practice as a means of challenging the status quo, others may in fact operate in ways that serve to maintain dominant social and political systems (Hearn 2007; Morris-Suzuki 2000) that continue to undermine the rights of the urban poor. Furthermore, Habib (2009) suggests that the sector is unable to envision **holistic** programmes for addressing the needs of the poor – a weakness that may, in part, be linked to the lack of coordination and collaboration amongst NGOs working in the same broad field of interest. NGOs are also limited in their capacity to perform particular intermediary functions by funding constraints, restricted access to skilled personnel and an inability to retain skilled personnel. Isandla Institute's assessment of the capacity of NGOs to perform intermediary functions found that a lack of funding places severe restrictions on organisations in South Africa. Practitioners in the sector must therefore possess a particular set of skills that enables them to unlock funding opportunities and to identify areas where the work of their organisation can contribute to the successful implementation of upgrading initiatives.

WHAT SKILLS, COMPETENCIES AND ATTRIBUTES ARE REQUIRED TO PERFORM INTERMEDIARY FUNCTIONS?

Practitioners are here understood to be actors working in the field of informal settlement upgrading. They include, amongst others, social facilitators, consultants, researchers, architects and engineers. Actors whose practice involves informal settlement upgrading are considered to be practitioners in this field.

Khayalethu Initiative partner organisations agreed that, in order to perform intermediary functions, actors require particular skills that allow them to navigate the complexities that arise in the context of informal settlement upgrading in South Africa.

Speaking from their experiences, **practitioners** noted that intermediaries must have an understanding of the potential linkages between multiple stakeholders. They must therefore be able to see how the needs articulated by the community leader connect to the mandate of the municipal official, and through this recognition facilitate engagement between key stakeholders. Actors must also have the capacity to link local practice to broader international debates and to situate their work within existing bodies of knowledge. Those who perform intermediary functions are therefore able to distil knowledge from practice, and to disseminate knowledge products that can contribute to the strengthening of the sector. Furthermore, intermediation requires sensitivity to the needs on the ground. Actors who fulfil intermediary roles must acknowledge

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that informal settlement upgrading is not only a technical endeavour, but also a social one. When conflicts between political factions erupt in settlements, these actors may be called on to negotiate between community members. In instances such as these, the competencies of technical staff may not be sufficient for managing contestation. An interdisciplinary team is therefore critical if organisations hope to hold the space between stakeholders in processes of informal settlement upgrading.

Khayaletu Initiative partners also suggested that practitioners have to analyse the contexts within which they work, and from that analysis determine the required intermediation function. In communities with high levels of self-organisation, practitioners may perform functions such as capacity building rather than community mobilisation. Of course, not all organisations have the capacity to fulfil multiple intermediary functions. As such practitioners must be cognisant of the value that they can bring to negotiations between stakeholders, and must be willing to step back when the functions that they can perform are no longer needed. Actors who operate in in-between spaces require networking skills that allow them to connect to other practitioners. Finally, practitioners noted that intermediary actors often bear the brunt of stakeholders' frustration and anger. In order to perform these functions actors must therefore acquire 'thick skin' through which to guard themselves.



In summary then, practitioners who aim to perform intermediary functions must possess the following key competencies:

- An ability to see the bigger picture, and to identify the potential linkages between stakeholders at different scales.
- The capability to distil and disseminate knowledge and connect local practice with international debates.
- Sensitivity towards everyday realities and a recognition of the need for both technical and social skills.
- Interdisciplinary teams or a team of practitioners that possess both technical and social competencies.
- 'Thick skin' and an ability to negotiate frustration and anger in productive ways.

FROM THE KHAYALETHU INITIATIVE

In their work as intermediaries Khayalethu Initiative partner organisations must engage with the state, particularly in the form of local government.

Indeed **collaboration** with local government is necessary to ensure the sustainability and scalability of interventions. Municipal officials are therefore critical partners in processes of informal settlement upgrading. But while practitioners that perform intermediary functions and local government officials may have similar objectives in terms of providing informal settlements with physical and social infrastructure, there are significant differences in the mindsets and approaches of these actors.

Projects implemented by the state are characterised by strict adherence to rules, and officials are often hesitant to roll out innovative programmes. On the other hand, practitioners on the ground are aware of the pressing needs of residents in informal settlements, and are eager to implement projects that can have significant impact on the well-being of communities in informal settlements. Their everyday experiences have shown that the regulations of the state can serve to hinder the realisation of substantive spatial transformation as these often block the implementation of alternative interventions.

Furthermore, the technocratic approach of the state often sidelines participatory processes in favour of programmes driven by the achievement of quantifiable results, whereas Khayalethu Initiative partner organisations are committed to community-driven development and take participation as a foundational aspect of their work. Engagement with the state can therefore be an encumbrance, or a source of frustration for practitioners.

In order to overcome these frustrations Khayalethu Initiative partner organisations employ various strategies to improve not only their ability to bridge the gap between local government officials and communities, but also to strengthen their own relationships with the state through which to access resources and support.

One such a strategy involves **identifying champions** or trailblazers who are receptive to the inputs of practitioners, and who can drive a participatory upgrading agenda in local government. As Khayalethu Initiative partners noted, champions such as these are able to create openings in municipal budgets for key projects and can garner further support for the work of practitioners.

Secondly, organisations **seek out linkages** between their own work and the national government-led initiatives. For instance, the terms of reference for The Department of National Treasury's urban network strategy project stipulate the need for civil society input. By requesting to be present at these forums, Khayalethu Initiative partners strengthen their position in relation to the state and gain access to a deeper understanding of its workings. They also situate themselves as credible practitioners, whose work is respected at both local and national level.

Finally Khayalethu Initiative partner organisations approached local government directly. In performing intermediation functions organisations have often struggled to gain traction with the City of Cape Town (CoCT) in their individual capacity. Drawing on the energy generated during local community of practice meetings partners therefore decided to present a united front, and to **approach the CoCT as a collective**. The engagement with the City was used as a platform to address pertinent challenges and to identify potential opportunities for further collaboration.



TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTERMEDIATION

In South Africa, processes of informal settlement upgrading necessarily require facilitation and negotiation between key stakeholders.

If upgrading interventions are truly to embrace the principles of participation and incrementalism, then it is imperative that the interfaces at which stakeholders meet be managed in ways that allow for the emergence of collectively defined priorities and solutions. The limited capacity of both the state and communities suggests that there is a need to strengthen these stakeholders' ability to communicate and engage with one another. Furthermore, the shape of stakeholders' interaction also calls for careful management, as various factors can significantly alter the relationships between communities and the state.

Intermediation, we suggest, can take a number of forms. Actors who operate in the space between key stakeholders seek not only to build capacity, but also to implement and manage interventions on the ground, and to distil knowledge from everyday experiences. In order to fulfil intermediary functions actors must possess particular skills that allow them identify connections between stakeholders and their priorities, to respond to context-specific needs, and to remain resilient even when the work that they do often goes unrecognised.

While the efforts of actors who perform intermediary functions may be under appreciated, we contend that intermediation is critical to the implementation of incremental and participatory upgrading interventions. As such intermediation holds immense inherent value, and can contribute significantly to social and spatial transformation in the country.

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