



Settlements in the city of Pontianak, Indonesia. Picture: Shared Value Foundation, Milande Busquet

July 17th by Romy Santpoort and Marthe Derkzen

On June 27, 2018, prior to the LANDac Annual International Conference, LANDac brought together 22 individuals from 16 organisations currently working on ways to make investments in urban development more inclusive and sustainable. Because in the past years, we have seen that investments intended to help cities grow or become climate-resilient are often designed abroad and may come at the expense of local residents' needs and wishes. Through the CITYforum expert meeting, LANDac aimed to generate new ideas and new partnerships between those working in the Netherlands and on the ground in cities where investments are taking place.

Annelies Zoomers (LANDac/UU) and Sheela Patel (Slum Dwellers International) kicked off the CITYforum expert meeting by encouraging the group to use the meeting to come up with new and ambitious ideas and create a network beyond academics: "We are inclined to look back, but today, we will look forward. We need our imagination to develop new plans."

The morning session that followed revealed what is currently happening on the ground in different cities. Partners working in Beira (Mozambique), Jakarta (Indonesia), Manila (Philippines), Nairobi (Kenya) and Port Harcourt (Nigeria) shared what they believe is needed to bring out the voice and agency of local residents, especially the urban poor. In all those cities, urban masterplans are being

developed that have severe negative impacts on people living at the city's margins. Women tend to be most affected by the plans. In addition, the plans and their implementation often come 'falling from the sky' for local residents, who are never involved in the planning process.

At the CITYforum, participants stressed the need to move from endless discussions in which we talk about stakeholders but do not come to action, towards an approach in which we speak of people living in urban settlements as rights holders. Current approaches in research and fact finding do not necessarily lead to change. Thus, we need to build movements that stand for the rights of the urban poor. This comes with challenges: you can imagine the possibilities of mobilising a large number of people in case of an immediate threat, but who, on a daily base, is interested in urban planning when there is so much else to worry about? It is not that we, residents, are intrinsically motivated and eager to get involved in issues of urban planning. Michael Uwemedimo (CMAP) shared his experiences from Port Harcourt: "How to mobilise people around a specific plan or alternatives? You need to live up to the expectation that what you do is going to make a difference. This involves telling stories, creating a narrative space, music making, a place where people can hear themselves and recognise themselves. You need to build a movement, and then you need to storm the gates."

"We need to build a movement and then storm the gates" – Michael Uwemedimo (CMAP)

For the CITYforum participants to start looking forward and imagine future plans and collaborations, the afternoon session began



Infrastructure Development in Jakarta. Picture: Shared Value Foundation, Milande Busquet

with Jesse Hoffman from the Urban Futures Studio at Utrecht University who introduced the group to techniques of *futuring*. "Futuring helps you understand how something unimaginable becomes real and shapes reality." Jesse's explanation was well illustrated by an example brought forward by Sheela Patel:

"We've had women sharing each other's stories about their experiences moving into the city. What were first stories of failure for the women themselves, were perceived as stories of survival by other women." The women who moved to the city were seen as strong examples for other women to pursue a life in the city. This shows how an imagined future can shape reality. Today, most imagined futures about (life in) the future city are presented to us by governments or urban developers. Companies and consortia with a lot of money to spend develop their own image of the future city. Using futuring techniques, we can show governments and businesses alternative futures, imagined by those who live and work in the city. Or perhaps we, as a group, can make a first attempt to draw reality into those masterplan brochures?

The CITYforum ended with concrete proposals to work together to make small, but ambitious steps forward to give a stronger voice to the urban poor. Participants left the meeting with the following ideas:

- Assist communities in Kenya and Mozambique to make themselves visible and have a stronger voice in the development of their neighbourhoods.
- Collect and document cases of urban displacement, stories of what happens after evictions that can help in drawing lessons from these processes: what (not) to do? In addition, we want to systematically build a network of partners who know and monitor what's happening in their cities.
- Enable data sharing within cities. Too often, data in a city is scattered and different actors access different sources of data. We want to build a data sharing platform: a way to merge, share and collect data in one place that is owned and accessed by communities as well as any other actor.
- Facilitate more exchange between sectors in the Netherlands to develop integrated approaches and stimulate learning amongst ourselves. We can build on what we are already doing and together come up with alternative futures.

LANDac would like to thank all the CITYforum participants for their ideas and contributions. We invite anyone interested in collaborating with us on these or new ideas to contact LANDac: landac.geo@uu.nl.



Settlements in Malabon City, Metro Manila. Picture: Shared Value Foundation, Jofelle Tesorio.

This is a report by LANDac – the Netherlands Land Academy for equitable and sustainable development. The views and opinions expressed in this article belong to the authors or participants in the CITYforum expert meeting and not necessarily to LANDac or its partners. For more information on the CITYforum expert meeting or our work, please contact us through landac.geo@uu.nl or visit our website: www.landgovernance.org
