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Tools for the land

Alanna Hartzok looks back at what led up to the UN Habitat's GLTN Land Value Capture Project

In 1980 I was introduced to the world of United Nations NGOs by Dr Lucile Green and I later suggested to the International Union for Land Value Taxation that they apply for official UN NGO status. The IU finally became a UN NGO in 1993. Pat Aller (who had led the application process) and I served as the IU's two UN representatives. During the past few years the IU has gone on to be accepted as a consultative organisation with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and now has fifteen UN NGO representatives from several countries.

The IU's involvement with UN Habitat – one of the major UN agencies – dates to 1996 when I participated in the Habitat II conference in Istanbul. I followed the official proceedings of the UN nation state ambassadors, particularly the Land Access section which recommended land based taxes and land value capture. We wanted to make certain that those sections remained in the official documents. Even so, the first Habitat conference, held in Vancouver in 1976, had contained an even stronger and longer section advocating land value tax.

UN Habitat has grown in stature within the UN system since the Istanbul conference. In 2002, in Nairobi, UN Habitat held its first World Urban Forum. I believe there were about 500 participants. By that time our colleague Tatiana Roskoshnaya, past president of the IU, had joined the Habitat staff.

Year 2000 had seen the major gathering of nearly all heads of state at the UN which produced the *Millennium Development Goals* – a several-point

agenda for poverty eradication. In looking closely at the condition of the life of slum dwellers it became clear that there was a problem with land tenure. So a focal point on land tenure issues grew in UN Habitat.

Tatiana brought the importance of land value tax policy to the attention of those working on land tenure issues. She noted that it had been recommended in the official action agendas of both the Vancouver and the Istanbul Habitat global conferences. After the second World Urban Forum in 2004, which I also attended, I was informed that a Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) was going to be established, and that land value taxation would be included as a policy approach.

Some months after, I met with the consultants preparing to establish the GLTN. Subsequently Habitat was successful in its request for a US\$10m grant for the ten-year GLTN project, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency. GLTN was officially launched and celebrated at the UN Habitat World Urban Forum III held in Vancouver in July 2006.

I was asked by the GLTN leadership to develop a multi-faceted Ivt information programme – the Land Value Capture Project – to serve as a basis for future implementation projects.

Via the GLTN we are now thoroughly and officially engaged with land value tax policy development within the UN system.

Training materials will be available online to public officials, NGO and grassroots leaders and others who are committed to ensuring access to land for affordable shelter for all. US\$20,000 has so far been allocated by the GLTN to the Land Value Capture Project, to be administered through the Earth Rights Institute. **L&L**



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