IDEALISM AND RESISTANCE IN SPATIAL PLANNING: QUESTIONING THE NEW HORIZONS OF PLANNING EDUCATION

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SAPER

South Africa Planning Education Research

SAPER: THE APPROPRIATENESS, USEFULNESS AND IMPACT OF THE CURRENT URBAN PLANNING CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

30 months project – Start date: February 2017 – Till July 2019

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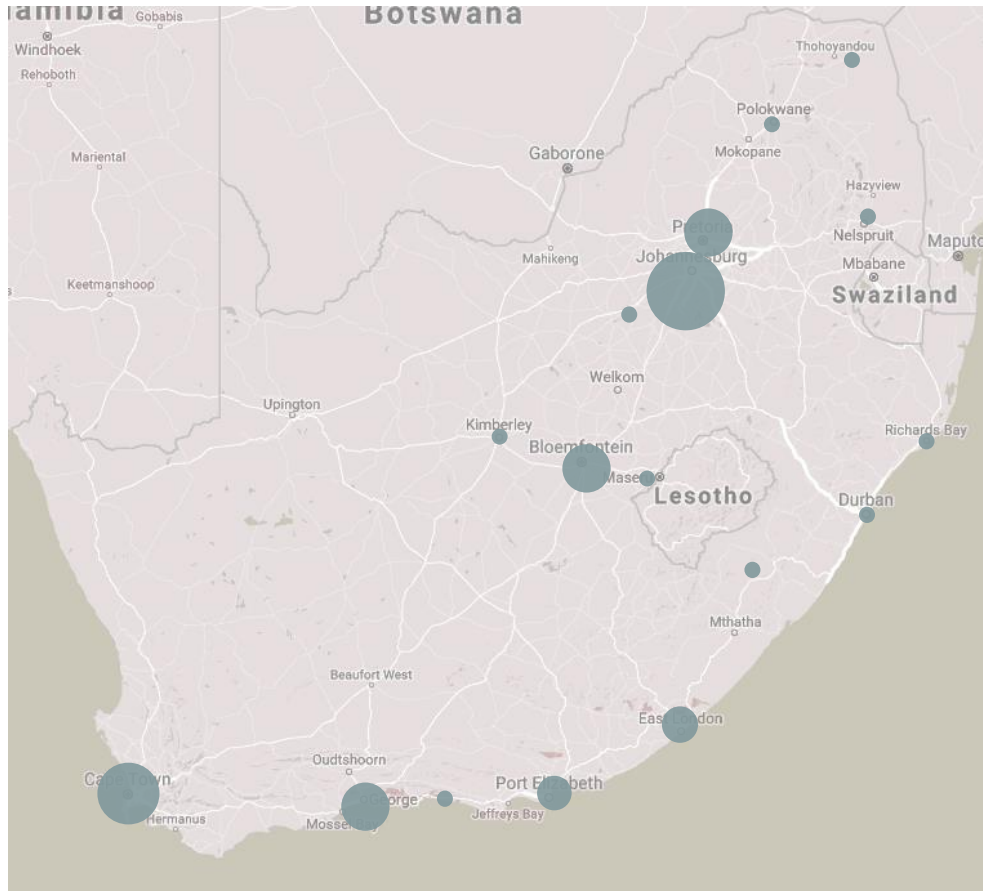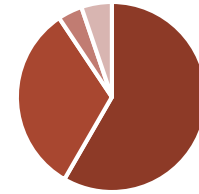PhD.c. Mischka Jacobus
PhD.c. Rouvé Bingle

OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION

First comprehensive overview of the state of the profession in South Africa with

- 212 questionnaire responses
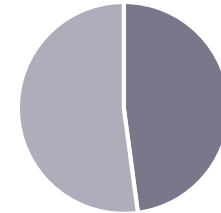- 96 interviews with planning professionals and educators
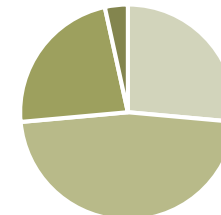

Race

White   Black   Indian   Coloured

Gender

F   M

Sector

Private   Public   Education   NGO

THIS PRESENTATION

▸ **Planning educators and mentors need to challenge presenting ideas of ideal planning as means to tactically resist the messy realities of planning practice. Instead, they need to show students how to engage with different types of strategic power in order to deliver the public good.**

1. Racialised planning: the post-Apartheid South Africa
2. The state of the planning profession
3. Facing the Realities of the everyday
4. What does this mean for educating and training planners?
5. Reality Check for planners
6. Conclusion: new horizons of planning education

1 - RACIALISED PLANNING & THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

▸ In apartheid South Africa - **Planning profession complicit in materialising the ideology of superiority by enforcing racialised spatial inequities** (Berrisford, 2011)

▸ This resulted in a **highly fragmented and segregated sociospatial built environment** that still persists and is often reproduced

▸ **Planning is key but planning still has to re-construct itself** and there is **not enough economic and political support for planners to tackle the increasing fragmentation and social polarisation of space** (resource issue)

➤ **2 forces in place**: municipal planning versus private market mechanisms

➤ **Hegemony of market rules and neoliberalisation of the State**
   (Watson, 2012, 83)

"I think to a large extent public urban planners, their voices have been drowned out by private sector planners. You know? And they've been driven by, and they've been very successful at that, **they've been driven by the need to make as a bigger profit in a shorter period of time** […] **I think vested interest has also been very successful in influencing the opinions and the decisions of those that have decision making power**"

IC_63

▸ **Significant political interference in planning**

▸ Since 1994 - **legislation highlighted the need to provide equitable access to opportunities** (e.g. work, housing, etc.) to all South Africans

▸ **Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act**, 2013 (SPLUMA)

▸ **Pressure for universal access to housing reinforces racialisation of planning**

▸ Contributes to **land fragmentation, lack of services and jobs**

▸ **No resources to address cultural differences in housing**

▸ **Informality and temporary urbanism is not acknowledged** as a driver of place-based development

"But people, yes, it's like, it's turning a blind eye to it like, because the relocations and resettling in suitable places and finding a way to settle people in places where they can actually survive has not been solved. Yes it's not, **we just keep rolling out mass housing areas further and further away** and there some of our planners and surveyors are guilty. We do a layout a 1 000 new phases because we get paid per erf and that is a problem because some of **those houses that grow out way beyond towards the urban edge is not sustainable for the people**. It spoils the appearance of our cities, the sprawl and they don't have a livelihood. "

IC_22

2 - THE STATE OF THE PLANNING PROFESSION

➤ Urban and regional planning is **a relatively young profession and one of the smallest in South Africa** - just on 4000 registered planners.

➤ Was identified as a **scarce skill in South Africa since 2002 – and still is** (on average, there are only about 10% to 15% of the planners in South Africa compared to the UK or Australia)

➤ **Accreditation process** – v detailed accreditation process - graduates required to complete *practical training* to enable them to attain all the applied skills needed in practice (candidacy phase)

This shortage of planners will also impact on the productivity of cities which are the most significant generator of productivity around the world. If the high rates of urbanisation being experienced in many cities were combined with effective planning this could potentially have an increasingly positive impact on productivity in the economic centres of many countries.
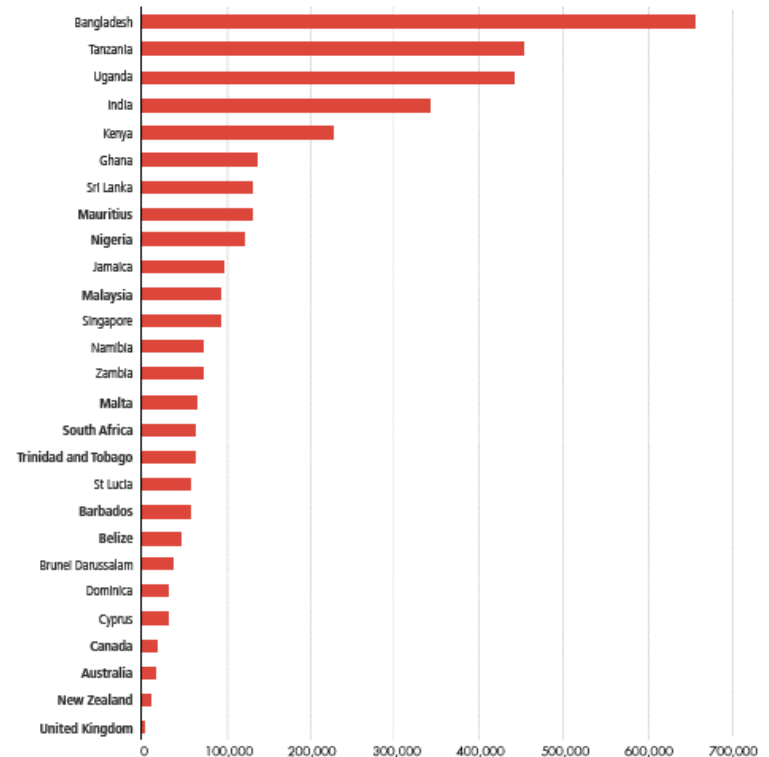

Figure 1
Population per individual member of national planning association

Commonwealth Association of Planners, 2018

Key disparities and challenges facing planning and planners

➤ **Smaller and rural municipalities** are less likely to have planners than those in metropolitan regions and are less resource to employ many and experiences planners.

➤ Yet the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, 201312 (SPLUMA) implicitly **requires municipalities to employ planners to oversee the preparation of spatial development frameworks and evaluate land use management applications.**

➤ This **adds up to other challenges** linked to

   o **different planning systems simultaneously operating**

   o An **important informal sector and cultural and ethnic diversity**

Being a planner in South Africa

Year of SACPLAN registration, broken into gender and racial group

Legend: Unknown, Female White, Female Black, Male Black, Male White
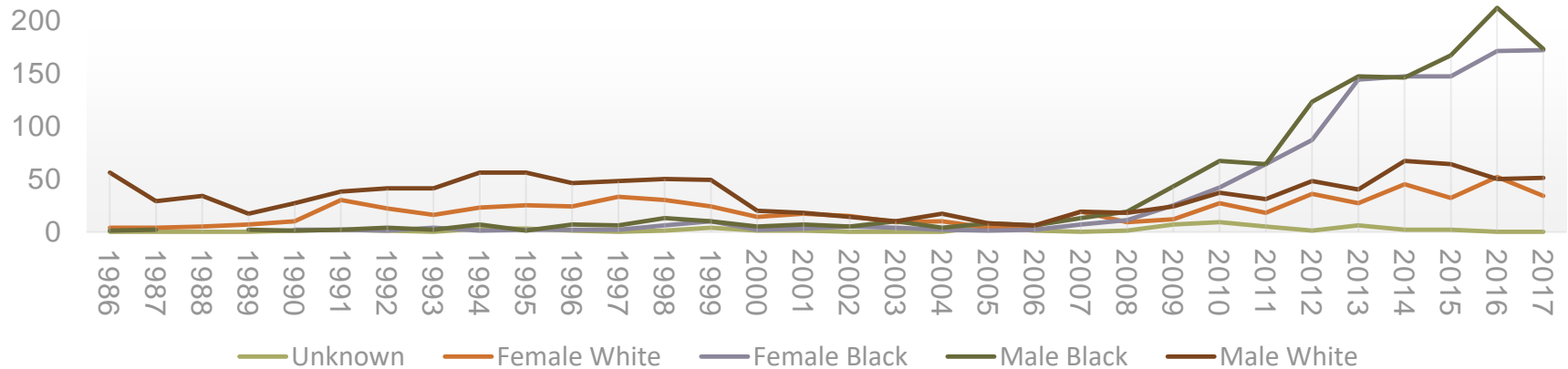
▸ Steady increase of registered Black planners

▸ Persistence of perception of planning being a old, white, Afrikaans profession

➤ "not only am I very aware when I walk into the room with other planners that it's **very White, but it's also a lot of older White men and mostly Afrikaans speaking**. So even myself as a younger English speaking South African I feel outside, **so I can only imagine what it must feel like as a young Black person or any other colour or female in the profession**."

➤ *IC_54*

	White	Black	Difference
Interest in the subject	44.0%	31.4%	12.6%
Desire to change society	24.2%	37.3%	-13.1%
Advice of family / friends	14.3%	11.8%	2.5%
Other	17.6%	19.6%	-2.0%

'I came with a poorly planned city [...]. [A] career in planner was a step in creating the change I desired to see in the communities where I live and hence the studying of Town and Regional Planning [...] was to fulfil those fancies **of being the change I want to see and creating an environment where I would want my children to live in**.'

Survey respondent

3 - FACING THE REALITIES OF THE EVERYDAY

➤ Severe tensions: the **desire to overcome the impact of apartheid is hit with these exogenous and endogenous factors that reinforces racialisation of space**

➤ The work **environment is affected by country's limitations and some planners are demotivated**

➤ Despite the desire to have a more equitable profession that allows for the diversity to exist, there is **the perception that change is just too slow and patterns of racialisation are being reproduced**.

"But people, yes, it's like, it's turning a blind eye to it like, because the relocations and resettling in suitable places and finding a way to settle people in places where they can actually survive has not been solved. Yes it's not, **we just keep rolling out mass housing areas further and further away** and there some of our planners and surveyors are guilty. We do a layout a 1 000 new phases because we get paid per erf and that is a problem because some of **those houses that grow out way beyond towards the urban edge is not sustainable for the people**. It spoils the appearance of our cities, the sprawl and they don't have a livelihood. "

IC_22

4 - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR EDUCATING AND TRAINING PLANNERS?

➤ **Westernised Urban education and practice questioned** (Watson, Harrison, Oranje).

➤ Calls for **decolonising the curriculum in theory and practice** is resonating in current debates while being a **very sensitive issue**.

➤ Critical aspects regarding **gaps in skills and appropriate knowledge** to address context-specific challenges (ranging from GIS, to facilitation) and specifically relevant context-specific skills and knowledge of i.e. land use management, settlement design and other practices.

➤ Tensions between **teaching skills and teaching theories**

OVERCOMING THE EUROCENTRIC MODE OF EDUCATION?

▸ Where is the **learning and training** coming from – North/South; South/South?

▸ Critics on how education addresses issues **of poverty and informality and cultural differences**

"When we did theory, even in undergrad, we learnt a lot about Germanic planning**, looking towards Germany and continental Europe and so on, but really nothing on the south,** and that was actually flipped for me when I went to Leuven, because Leuven as a university and their planning programme, they focus on the global south and theory there and practice there. […]**Why aren't we looking to what's happening in other southern hemisphere countries**?

IC_06

ADDRESSING SKILLS GAPS?

➤ The ability of planning professionals to effectively lead and co-produce change, is highly dependent **on their professional and personal practice development** and consequently, the **conditions enabling such impact**.

➤ Now, young planners are **struggling find employment without relevant experience** (issue for accreditation)

➤ **Difficulties in applying their education in vastly diverse and challenging local contexts**, where municipalities are often under resourced, and in regions where senior planning capacity is limited

➤ **Lack of appropriate continued professional development support and practice-orientated mechanisms (including formal mentorship)**

SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

What does this tell us :

- ➢ Need for **political will and change in regulations** including Voluntary Community Service year
- ➢ Linking **unemployed planners through the Community Service year** to municipalities with planning capacity challenges.
- ➢ **Allocation of new funding support**

But - wider implications for planning education reflecting on the realities of the everyday

- ➢ Who has the power?
- ➢ What impact are planners having in societal change?
- ➢ Is it possible to have a reflective practice?
- ➢ Whose voices are they representing?

The way forward?

➤ Planning education helps to mobilise tactics of **resistance** to the neoliberal realities of practice by creating a set of ideals framed around questions of social justice against which planners can measure themselves

➤ Planning education can itself be seen as a **strategy**, attempting to impose a set of ideals upon professionals that are often impractical or irrelevant.

➤ Rather than seeing tactics and strategies as simple binaries, those different manifestations of strategic power can themselves be played off against each other as an **act of resistance**

➤ **New ways of advocating** for planning

➤ **New roles and purposes** for planning and planners

CONCLUSION
THE NEW HORIZONS OF PLANNING EDUCATION ?

▸ **Shift towards a more contextualised and localised planning approach that needs to be incremental and adaptive to deal with complexity.**

  ❖ Temporary urbanism and the recognition of informal activities being held

  ❖ Negotiating and finding a balance between what is dictated in the legislation and what may be feasible

  ❖ Allowing some room for others to be tactical (citizens' led)

▸ **Prioritising what needs to be planned and what should happen more fluidly** (unplanned, more informal and temporary)

▸ Questioning the **meanings between planning theories and being 'honest' about the realities of planning practice (***creative thinking for adaptive and reflective practice***)**

THANK YOU

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