



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN PLANNING SCHOOLS

Conference 2010: Revitalising Planning Education in Africa

Summary of Discussion and Proceedings

5th to 8th October 2010

Coral Beach Hotel
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania



The Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) hosted the second biannual conference on African Planning Education, from 5 to 8 October 2010, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The conference sought to further the AAPS agenda around the revitalisation of planning education on the continent.

The conference involved a total of forty-seven participants. This number included thirty-seven representatives of planning schools, drawn from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, valuable input and perspective was provided by representatives of Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI), the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Cities Alliance and the African Centre for Cities. Please see the Appendix A (attached to the end of this document) for more information on the conference participants.

Tuesday 5 October

Day One involved an afternoon field trip to the Hannah Nassif settlement and upgrading project in Dar es Salaam, which has become internationally recognised as an innovative and effective community-based servicing project. The project began in the early 1990s, when local community members formed a committee to negotiate and coordinate the installation of storm water drains, freshwater tanks and access routes (amongst other interventions) via communal savings initiatives. At present, the neighbourhood is both economically vibrant and accessible, standing as a testament to the potential benefits of encouraging community-based *in situ* upgrading in poorly-serviced African settlements.



That evening participants were treated to the sublime synthetic intelligence of Aromar Revi, Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), during the first conference keynote address. Aromar outlined the immense challenges facing cities of the Global South, as they seek to become more prosperous, spatially equitable and just, whilst reducing the ecological ramifications of urban development. He also indicated how the IIHS plans to address India's coming urban transformation, by training interdisciplinary and self-reflexive urban practitioners capable of effective political collaboration and intervention.

Wednesday 6 October

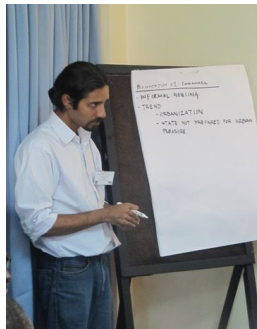
Day Two started with a welcome by AAPS founding member Professor Vanessa Watson (University of Cape Town), and self-introductions by conference delegates. Nancy Odendaal (Project Coordinator, AAPS) presented an update on the activities of the Association, as well as the general purpose and objectives of the conference. She noted that the conference broadly aimed to produce a curriculum framework for postgraduate planning education in Africa. James Duminy (AAPS) then presented the major points of the conference background paper, providing an overview of international planning educational models, predominant educational approaches in Africa, as well as recent international trends in curricular development. The paper concluded by proposing two potential frameworks for planning Masters degrees in Africa. Generally, delegates agreed that the proposed curriculum frameworks were appropriate and useful, although detailed structure and content should vary between contexts.

The remainder of Day Two was constituted by group discussions amongst participants, divided into the following streams:

- Informality
- Spatial Planning, Implementation and Infrastructure
- Access to Land
- Actor Collaboration
- Climate Changes and African Cities
- Teaching Methods

Those participants who had submitted papers were asked to provide input according to the following points:

- How the group theme is currently incorporated into the planning curriculum of their institution;
- The modes by which the theme could be best incorporated into the curriculum;
- The teaching methodological implications of the theme.



Thursday 7 October

Day Three began with a colourful and energetic keynote address by Jane Weru of Slum Dwellers International (SDI). She spoke of the history of SDI attempts to engage with residents of Mathare Valley (Nairobi, Kenya), and of the difficult process of engaging with local community members (including the powerful *Mungiki*) to carry out self-enumerations and community-based *in situ* service upgrades. Lamech Nyariki (SDI) also presented on his eye-opening experiences of working in Mathare Valley as a planning student and young professional.



Following the keynote address, group representatives summarised the substantive points of discussion and consensus arising from the previous day's discussions. These are summarised as follows:

- Group One presented on the Informality theme and highlighted the need for, firstly, planning education to move beyond mainstream politico-institutional discourses that tend to equate 'informality' with 'illegality', and secondly, for informality as a theme to be 'mainstreamed' into curricula. Planning education should encompass the macro-scale structural trends which drive urban informal activities, as well as the specific areas of informality (transport, trade, services, land etc.) that require focused planning intervention. A planning Masters degree incorporating informality themes should promote substantive knowledge and skills in areas such as mapping, community participation, governance, sustainable livelihoods, etc. The group further highlighted the value of learning about the realities of informal urbanism via case studies, student engagement with professionals and communities, field visits, seminars and guest lectures.

A larger conceptual issue relates to the limitations of conventional academic and research debates around informality. Contemporary literature, where it does pay attention to informal issues, often bemoans the lack of theoretical and political interest in the empirics of informal activities. However, the reality is that the private sector views and responds to the phenomenon of informality in a quite different manner from most governmental and civil institutions. Businesses and enterprises focus on the *presence* of resources, flows, energies and synergies, in short the existence of *opportunities*, in stark contrast to the conventional governmental view of informal activities as *lacking* (in legality, orderliness, predictability, aesthetic goodness, wealth-generating capacity, general contractual security of expectation, and so on). As a result private organisations

often show a greater responsiveness to the dynamic socio-spatial processes surrounding urban informal activity, and are far better equipped to tap into the productive potential of 'invisible' yet effervescent urban networks and industries.

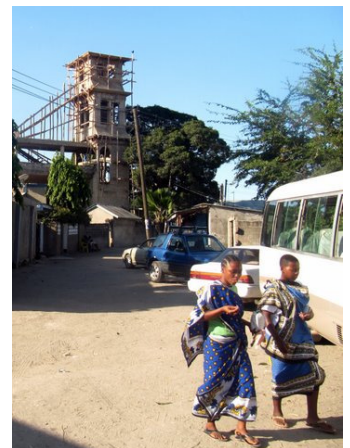


- Group Two presented on the Spatial Planning, Implementation and Infrastructure theme; generally emphasising that contemporary planning education suffers from a lack of integration amongst urban infrastructure delivery, economic development, urban management, as well as long-term strategic and spatial planning concerns. The logic of linking these concerns stems from a conceptualisation of a spatial planning practice that is not highly regulated, but flexible and relational. Planners should be able to see the linkages between infrastructure and planning systems as a means of putting themselves in the position where they might see institutional 'moments' of effective intervention. The group considered that spatial planning principles and skills should be incorporated into all modules of the planning programme – spatial planning remains the characterising feature of the profession of planning and hence should not be neglected by planning education. In addition, curricular reform must address skill areas related to communication, conflict management and working as part of a larger multidisciplinary team, all as a means of developing effective yet sensitive, bottom-up planning practices. Practical problem-based engagement with real-world cases is one means of promoting these shifts.
- Group Three presented on the Climate Changes and African Cities theme, citing a consensual group concern over the general observation that planning curricula seldom incorporate the theme of climate change with any degree of structure or explicitness. In most schools, the teaching of climate-related issues is implicit and spread throughout various courses related to development studies, environmental planning, and so on; one exception being the University of Botswana which offers a course specifically dealing with climate change. The group agreed that the theme should be devised as a specific course, but did not agree on where this should fit into the overall curriculum (should it be an introductory course or a comprehensive and integrative module towards the end of study?). This would aim to foster competencies in risk analysis, vulnerability, environmental impact and carbon footprint assessment, etc., involving the application of GIS as a monitoring and management tool. However, given the links between climate issues and appropriate responses in the form of spatial planning and infrastructure development, climate concerns would also be incorporated into other practical and theoretical areas dealing with the larger questions of sustainable urban planning and management. One means of doing so is the use of case studies for teaching and problem-based learning, which

foster a systems-based analytical understanding of urban socio-ecological processes, and which encourage integrative responses to urban challenges.

- Group Four provided a comprehensive summary of their discussions surrounding the Access to Land theme. Land access takes various forms including physical access, ownership or right to occupy, as well as the right to use places for individual and communal purposes of socio-economic upliftment and cultural expression. Presently African planning institutions incorporate land-related issues into curricular in various guises, predominantly in the form of planning law, land economics and administration. Curricular redevelopment should be undertaken to address the empirical concerns of land administration and management; tenure systems; land law and arbitration; land economics, finance and markets; land use control systems; land reform and policy; and issues surrounding gender, equity and justice in relation to the aforementioned areas. Again, highly empirical and problem-based case projects were regarded as pre-eminent means of promoting the interdisciplinary yet place-based skills and competencies required for planners to be more practically effective.

The larger dilemma around making land more accessible to the poor relates to the need for planners to promote equitable and sustainable urban development in the context of a land tenure system that is structurally predisposed towards the production of inequality and the exclusion of lower income groups. Tensions and contradictions surrounding these realities have to be examined and resolved in any planning situation, as well as in planning education. Issues of equity and values therefore come to the fore of the land question – planners have to negotiate the many different perspectives and interests at play in any development process, and make intuitive decisions based on sound ethical dispositions. This calls for the repositioning of planning ethics and values as central concerns in planning education, if we are to answer calls for planning to be approached as an ethical inquiry.¹



¹ Sandercock, L. (1999). 'Expanding the "Language" of Planning: A Meditation on Planning Education for the Twenty-First Century', *European Planning Studies*, 7(5), pp. 533-544.

- The Actor Collaboration theme, addressed by Group Five, chose to interpret the theme as being primarily concerned with the activities of 'public participation'. In curricular terms, the basic principles of participation should be taught at undergraduate level, whilst more advanced topics would be dealt with at postgraduate level (including community entrance; tools and techniques of participation; participation problems and constraints; capacity building for communities; participatory governance best practices and case studies). The University for Development Studies (Ghana) has devised a specific institutional concern with participation, which is spread throughout the university curriculum. Despite the focus on concerns of public participation, the group also recognised that planners have to collaborate with a far greater array of actors than those drawn from local affected communities. They must work within complex institutional networks and multidisciplinary teams comprised of, amongst others, politicians, businesspeople, developers, and members of the various built environment professions operating in both the public and private sectors, researchers and academics, activists of all sorts, artists, health officials and policy-makers. Planning is about strategic and productive collaboration, not the 'neutral' management of conventional political participatory procedures. To this end, an appropriate theoretical disposition would recognise the persistence of conflict and disagreement in planning, rather than privileging the search for consensus amongst possible development goals and objectives.
- Finally, Group Six presented on the theme of teaching methods, noting that a wide variety of functions are required of planners in the twenty first century. The planner is less a technocrat than a plan-maker, manager, analyst, visionary, 'big picture'-seer, negotiator, entrepreneur, leader and so on. To these ends, planning education must promote the development of technically competent, reflexive, enquiring, empathetic, persuasive, perceptive, ethically aware, strategic, assertive, optimistic, tenacious, innovative, analytical and synthetic professionals (amongst other qualities). Teaching methods involving studio work, seminars, case studies, role play, gaming and 'community service learning', in addition to traditional lecture-type knowledge transfer, can potentially respond to these needs. Transactions in the pedagogical environment need to 'get real', in terms of forcing students to actively engage with the 'messiness' of urban dynamism through, for example, the use of film and literature as media of instruction and learning. Alternative strategies include the creation of professional development courses, promoting institutional interaction with past students, active marketing of the profession, as well as inter-school collaboration.



One of the primary points emerging from plenary discussions involved the general need for a discursive shift in the practices of urban management, including all planning activities. Edgar Pieterse highlighted the potential for a 'soft regulation' approach, in terms of institutional efforts in the fields of informality, spatial planning, infrastructure development, land use, market and tenure management, etc. By 'soft regulation' he means a fundamental rethink of conventional urban management approaches geared towards the stringent restriction and control of development activities in space (usually according to a strict neoliberal economic logic). We have to create a new language and set of instruments for a different type of urban management practice, which takes into account the 'milieu' of perspectives that surround urban spatial practices and infrastructure developments. This should be a reflexive urban practice that is deeply engaged with local community-based movements through the forging of dynamic, multilayered knowledge networks and institutional partnerships.

Nancy Odendaal (AAPS) concluded Day Three's proceedings by summarising the major points emerging out of the group presentations, and their implications for the content and structure of a postgraduate curriculum framework. That evening delegates enjoyed a conference dinner featuring a short address by Anna Brown (The Rockefeller Foundation), who updated the Association on the Foundation's institutional process of funding application. Anna also expressed her approval of the direction of conference discussion, which generally recognised the urgency of a paradigm shift within African planning education and practice. The time is ripe for countries of the Global South to find their own solutions to their particular challenges of urbanisation, climate change and real socio-economic empowerment, and initiatives such as AAPS are the keystones of the 'soft institutional architecture' necessary to effect a fundamental rethink of our modes of response.

Friday 8 October

Day Four began with a forceful keynote address by Professor Edgar Pieterse (African Centre for Cities). He set the scene by offering a 'reality check' of African urbanization and its distributional dynamics, concluding that '[i]nfrastructure markets and investments are predominantly shaped by private and middle-class demand, which produces topographies that exclude the working classes and poor'. Given that 'splintering urbanism' trends are unfolding against massive pre-existing infrastructure deficits, the scale of the 'infrastructure challenge' in Africa is highly intimidating. Yet the solution does not lie in increased infrastructure development *per se*, but in articulating this investment with a politico-institutional paradigm shift that generates 'new discourses that measure value in broader terms and seek to incorporate lifecycle costs and environmental externalities [into developmental decision-making]'. The key question for planners and planning educators is how they can aggregate their efforts to effectively 'change The Game' towards a mode of planning and management that promotes a normative meta-agenda of inclusivity, resource efficiency, economic opportunity and human flourishing. Planners need to learn to act as 'highjackers', capable of identifying and pressing on 'leverage points' within complex systems to effect necessary paradigm shifts. 'Can we really expect radically different impacts and outcomes if we simply tinker at the edges of our curriculum?' If not, our educational modes must be fundamentally interwoven with new urban management perspectives, dispositions and agendas.



Following Edgar's anabolic inputs, the agenda moved to the institutional future of the AAPS, given that funding from the Rockefeller Foundation is not guaranteed for either the near or medium-term future. At the first African planning education conference in 2008, delegates agreed that the Association should ultimately move towards a formal institutional model. In 2010, this agreement was upheld, although the steps to be taken were not clear. Several participants proposed a shift towards a hierarchical structure incorporating a parent

body overseeing the operations of regional sub-structures. In addition, a number of delegates suggested that the AAPS should aim to become more self-sustaining by introducing an institutional membership fee (although this was seen as problematic given the unevenness of institutional resources amongst AAPS members).

Ultimately, a degree of consensus emerged that the AAPS could move forward by maintaining an informal institutional structure with a voluntary steering committee (i.e. if no donor funding is sourced). The following points of action were identified:

- **Funding model:** the Association must determine if it should collect levies from member schools or individuals. It must also investigate other revenue streams as a means of becoming self-sustainable in the medium to long-term.
- **Institutional model:** The Association must investigate various modes of institutional structure – should it be reformulated as an executive committee overseeing the operations of regional structures (e.g. West, East, Southern Africa)? Or should the central AAPS leadership oversee institutional groups that are not regionally specific, but are united by their interest and participation in distinctive project areas (building communities of research and practice)? The intensity and size of these project-based communities or 'thematic nodes' could be very different from one another, yet all would have the common requirement of financial input.
- **Core activities:** The Association must identify its minimum set of activities, and should build a hierarchy of prioritisation amongst potential activities such as conference organisation, journal production, acting as a curricular resource repository, etc.
- **Timing and sequencing:** The Association must produce a plan for its institutional evolution, involving a synthesis statement of when and how formalisation will be carried out, and the implications of this process in terms of internal institutional responsibilities and mandates.
- **Producing publications to leverage fees:** The Association should investigate options for producing a publication capable of attracting income from external sources.

- **Communication and marketing:** The Association should consider embarking on a communications campaign aimed at stakeholders in the development industry (for example, various levels of government), if these actors are to buy into the intellectual direction of AAPS. The campaign should have the overall objective of influencing the market demand for planning graduates to conform with the strategic direction outlined above.
- **Produce a mission list of activities:** The Association secretariat must document and circulate its intended activities for the near future, as a means of keeping members schools informed and up to date.
- **Draft a Memorandum of Understanding with SDI:** The Association should open the door for SDI to become involved as an institutional partner for research and curricular development.

Conference proceedings were closed with thanks from Edgar Pieterse.



Appendix A: AAPS 2010 Conference Participants and Keynote Speakers

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