ACTOR COLLABORATION

A toolkit

WHY IS ACTOR COLLABORATION A RELEVANT THEME FOR PLANNING EDUCATION?

African planners work in complex and fast changing urban environments and across widely divergent governance contexts. Planners, policy makers and development actors who seek to engage with the intricacies of shaping and managing the African city must engage with a number of foundational questions:

- How much do we know about our cities, "the real economy and the real social practices and identities of the majority of urbanites?"[1]
- What are the assumptions which underpin 'rational', 'participatory', 'collaborative', 'agonistic' or 'insurgent' planning theory and how relevant are they in the context of the African city?
- Whose voices, vision, knowledge and expertise should guide planning processes and decision making?
- How do we traverse the conflicting rationalities which counterpose the normative agendas of planners against the survivalist imperatives of people living in precarious states of informality?

The frenetic pace of urbanization and rapid rise of informality in cities in the South threatens to outstrip the old conventions of 'community participation' within contained and 'invited spaces'.[2] There is an increasing acknowledgement of the growing disjuncture between current Western derived approaches to planning based on positivism and communicative action theory and the messy realities of contestation, poverty, inequality, informality and spatial fragmentation which characterises the cities of the global South.[3]

LOCATING ACTOR COLLABORATION WITHIN THE AFRICAN CITY

A scan of the 2008/2009 UN-HABITAT State of the World's Cities Report highlights the following trends:

- By 2050, Africa is projected to have an urban population of 1.2 billion and will accommodate nearly a quarter of the world's urban population.[4]
- Much of the urban growth in Africa is concentrated in the capital cities. Between 1990 and 2000 big cities in Africa with populations of between one and five million such as Nairobi, Addis Ababa and Dakar, grew at 3.3 per cent, versus an average of 2.5 per cent for the developing world as a whole.[5]
- Many of the fastest growing urban landscapes are swelled by the mass displacements triggered by armed conflict. Cities such as Luanda, Kinshasa, Khartoum and Monrovia have recorded sharp increases in their populations as a consequence of protracted wars in the countryside.[6] In the Congo there have been an estimated 5.4 million conflict related deaths between 1998 and 2008, while another 30 African countries have experienced conflicts in the past few years.[7]
- Within many African cities the informal, "invisible" and unplanned areas increasingly dwarf the planned parts.[8]

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[1] (Pieterse 2009: 10)
[2] (Miraftab 2009)
[3] (Watson 2009: 1)
[4] (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2008: xi)

[5] (2008: 18)
[6] (2008: 18)
[7] (Pieterse 2009)
[8] (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2008: xiii)

- In 2005, six out of every ten urban residents in sub Saharan Africa were slum dwellers – nearly double the proportion of the rest of the developing world.[9]

These diverse planning and development settings are infused with sharp inequalities, highly mobile populations, skewed access to resources and an absence of services and infrastructure. State actors and property owning social strata seek to control, regulate and securitize zones[10] in the urban landscape, while the ballooning ranks of the poor and the displaced seek a foothold in the interstices – informal urban spaces increasingly beyond the formal planning gaze.
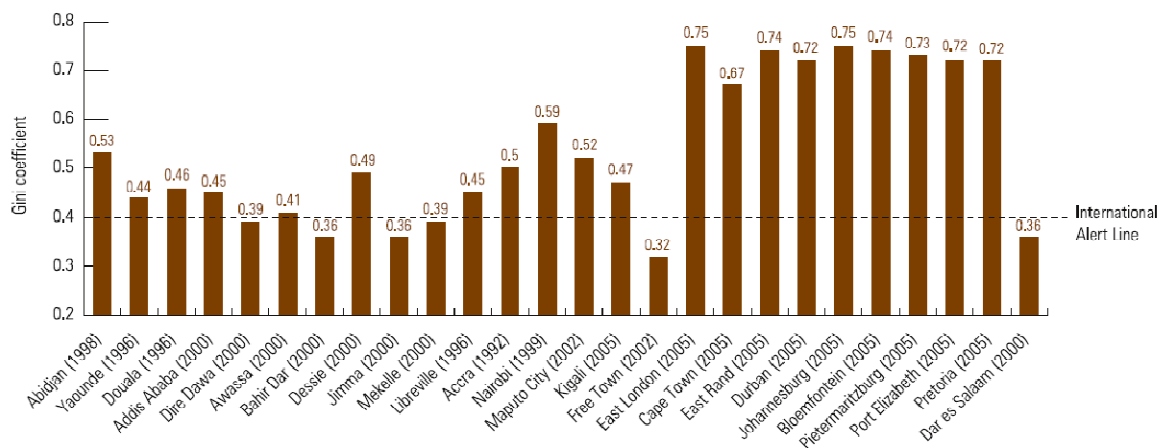
Source: UN-HABITAT Global Urban Observatory, 2008 .

FIGURE 1: GINI COEFFICIENT IN SELECTED AFRICAN CITIES: (UN-HABITAT 2008: 72)

Inequality remains deeply entrenched across the global south. Even where more participatory planning and policy development processes claim to allow the voices of the poor to influence policy priorities and resource allocation there is little evidence that they have impacted positively on levels poverty and inequality.

The social fabric of the city wears increasingly thin. There are growing concerns about what kind of urban citizenry is being formed out of the increasingly warped social underpinnings of the city, dominated by youth without futures or prospect of work, increasingly habituated to the edgy character of day-to-day survival in the inner city where any form of weakness renders individuals vulnerable. [11] Recognising this diversity of citizen and subaltern identities must be at the centre of any approach to actor collaboration.

It is clear that "the shanty city is the real African city, where 62% of urbanites live in informal self constructed dwellings."[12] These informal and the unplanned zones in the city have been characterised as "grey spaces...in the shadow of the formal, planned city, polity and economy."[13] It follows that "the real African city does not correspond to our modernist biases about the physical fabric of cities."[14]

African cities bring together multiple development actors with competing agendas and hugely unequal access to power, resources and information. The rise of informality poses fundamental questions about the approach and agenda of planning and the potential for actor collaboration. It has been argued that these urban settings require "a different approach…which questions the starting point of communicative action planning theory in assumptions of consensus and rather considers a starting point in assumptions of conflict."[15]

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[9] (2008: 70)
[10] (Rose 1999)
[11] (Simone n.d.)
[12] (Pieterse 2009)
[13] (Yiftachel 2009)
[14] (2009: 3)
[15] (Watson 2009: 1)

THEORISING AN APPROACH TO ACTOR COLLABORATION

The approach to actor collaboration articulated in this toolkit starts with the recognition of conflict and differentiation. It is rooted in an adaptive approach which recognises the diverse social settings and localities which make up the 'real' African city. The approach "examines how technologies of power and knowledge"[16] shape actor positions and relations and in turn, the possibilities of collaboration in particular spaces. It examines how macro and micro actors interact through circuits of power and knowledge[17] embedded in particular spatial and developmental settings.

It is one which recognises the "conflicting rationalities"[18] of the powerful and the professional that are conterposed by those in the majority whose lives and livelihoods are shaped and stratified by chronic poverty and informality. It poses the question of how to address as "constituent parts of planning the conflict, ambiguity and indeterminacy characteristic of actual social life" and "include the ethnographic present in planning, that is, the possibilities for change encountered in existing social conditions." [19]

The toolkit takes the approach that actor collaboration in planning is indissolubly linked to larger social questions about power, access to resources and accountability, given that in both local and global contexts these are increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. As such, approaches and methods which notate the plurality of voices and identify the congruencies and contestations between them are essential if African planners are to successfully navigate the fast changing environments in which they work and harness the energies and perspectives of the poor and the vulnerable which increasingly the drivers of the African city.

The approach cautions against simple juxtapositions between the State and civil society and the homogenisation of the poor and 'the community.' On the one hand we need to be cautious of totalising and singular descriptions of the State "whose functionality is historically specific and contextually variable" operating through "multiple circuits of power" and which presents itself through "a multitude of programmes, strategies, tactics, devices, calculations, negotiations, intrigues, persuasions and seductions aimed at the conduct of the conduct of individuals, groups and populations."[20]

On the other we need to be cautious about uncritical valorising of the poor and the local. Civil society and 'communities' are often deeply fragmented. In Africa and elsewhere there are "complex intersections between modernity and retraditionalisation of society"[21]. The identity politics which features so prominently in the North can be the driver of serious conflicts in the South. Clearly "excessive attention to the local has its own dangers,"[22] while we also need to be alert to the possibility that "local enactments of democracy may produce anti-democratic results."[23]

The centrality of actor collaboration in the African planner's toolkit also closely relates to the proposition that:

"There can be no sustainable development without sustainable urbanisation and there can be no sustainable urbanisation unless the needs of the poor are at the core or urban planning and management. The poor cannot be at the core of urban planning and management unless they are directly engaged in the planning and management processes."[24]

Why effective mechanisms for actor collaboration remain important is not in dispute, but how to enable these in the complex context of the African city remains intensely challenging. Part of the solution may lie in a more transdisciplinary approach to urban planning and development which draws on a broader set of professional

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[16] (Deacon 2002: 89)
[17] Latour in Rose (1999)
[18] (Watson 2003)
[19] (Holston 1998: 46)
[20] (Rose 1999: 5)
[21] (Harrison 2006: 322)
[22] (Holston 1998: 53)
[23] (Holston 1998: 54)
[24] (Hague, Wakely et al. 2005: 6)

competencies from different disciplines[25]. This coupled with programmes which bring education, teaching, research, practice and policy together can help promote practical learning about actor collaboration approaches in different settings and begin to develop a robust African centred theory and practice.

ACTOR COLLABORATION AND THE INFLUENCE OF SCALE

In thinking about the relevance of actor collaboration for planning education and planning practice we note how planners operate at different scales:

- localities, precincts and neighbourhoods that are spatially, socially and economically differentiated;
- settlement and city scales;
- provincial and national scales which address overarching spatial development priorities.

We suggest that the potential for actor collaboration, together with the profile of the actors, changes according to the nature of the locality and the planning scale.
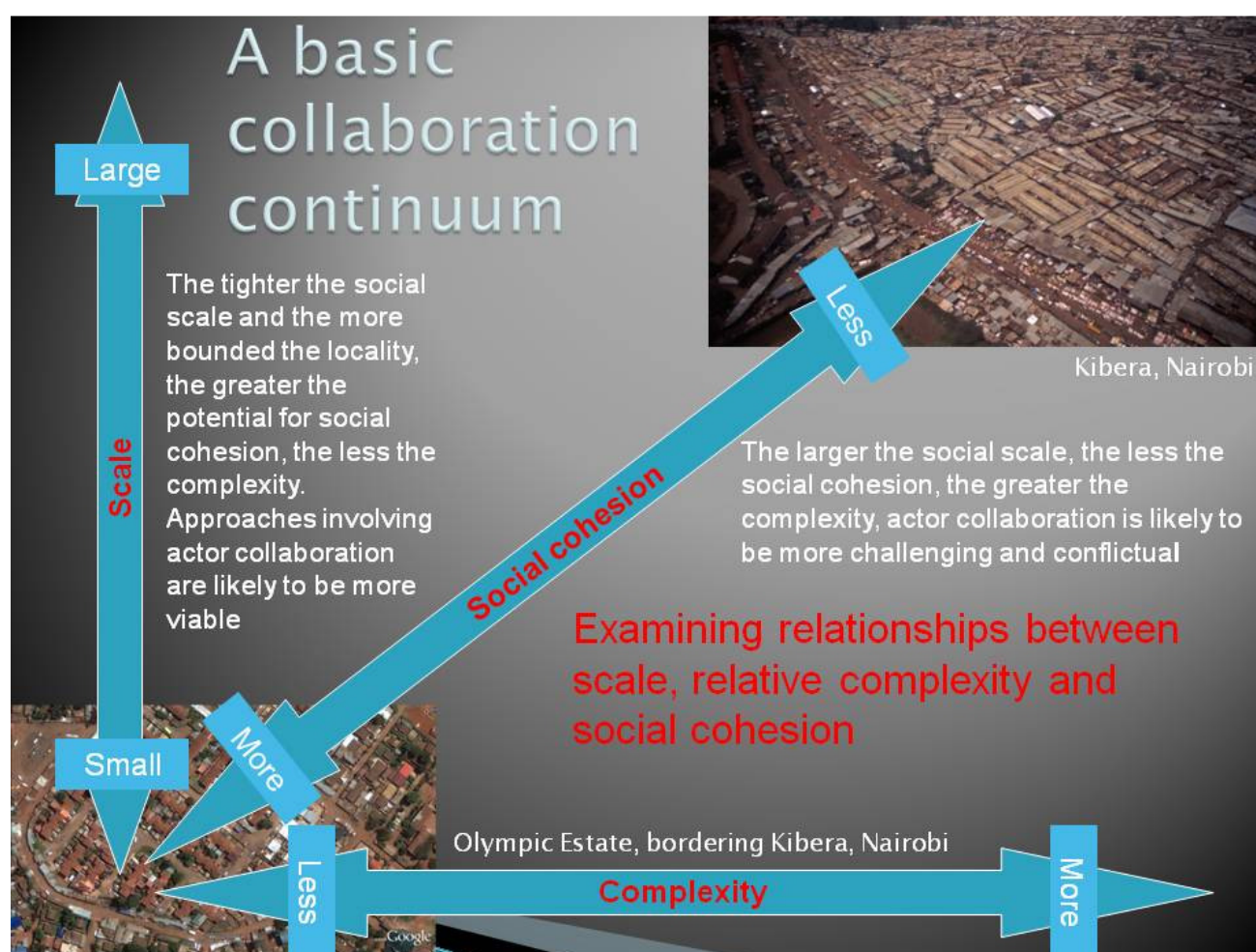

FIGURE 2: THE COLLABORATION CONTINUUM

The graphic above identifies a basic collaboration continuum which explores the relationships between spatial scale, relative complexity and social cohesion. Different sets of actors inhabit different points along the scale.

Bounded localities offer more opportunity for localised clusters of actors to interact with each other and with agents of the State. The defined space facilitates the detailed mapping and mediating of their relative positions. However local

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[25] (UN-Habitat, SIDA et al. 2009)

does not equal simple. Even narrowly bounded localities in large cities can embody immense complexity and high levels of contestation.

As we zoom out from bounded localities to broader settlement and city scales these local voices become remote. Here, at this more abstracted level of planning, decisions are much more likely to be the preserve of professionals and politicians. In this setting it is the nature of the governance system together with the relative strength of civil society and other social forces that will determine whether there is any space for other voices to be heard. However their influences are frequently diluted by the attitude of the state and its institutions to the subaltern living in conditions of chronic poverty and informality, which frequently fails to acknowledge them as citizens.[26]

Pushing even further out, decisions and policy choices at coarser macro scale are almost exclusively the domain of technical, policy and economic elites (be they in the North or the South). There are global concerns about the seeming untouchability of transnational development actors. In Northern democracies there are rising concerns about how the public voice is prevented from changing "the terms of the debate about economic and foreign policy." It is argued there that enormous power has become concentrated in institutions which are "radically and demonstrably unaccountable and unsafe."[27] This concern is aggravated in the South where formal institutions and democratic governance may both be weak.

A REVIEW OF MAJOR PERSPECTIVES THEORIES AND DEBATES

In this section we review:

- the assumptions which underpin development planning and the manner in which planners attempt to configure and regulate space;
- how different approaches to planning theory conceptualise the roles and interactions between different actors in the planning process.

OBJECTIVES OF URBAN PLANNING

Planners aim to harmonise three dimensions in their attempts to mould and regenerate urban landscapes:

- economic efficiency;
- social equity;
- environmental sustainability.[28]

In all of this the "substantive focus of the planning field is the management and development of the relations between people and places."[29] The manner in which planners attempt to engage with these issues and relationships reflects the explicit or implicit theory which underpins their planning approaches.

A PLANNING TYPOLOGY

The table below distinguishes between four broad approaches to planning and identifies the approach to actor collaboration associated with each. These approaches are further elaborated in the text below. It should be noted that in practice the boundaries between these approaches are blurred.

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[26]Corbridge et al (2005: 2) cite Chatterjee's 2001 Leonard Hastings Schoff Memorial Lectures
[27] (Hind 2010)
[28] Zhu (2010) cites CSD (1999) and UN-Habitat (2009)
[29] (Healey and Upton 2010)

Planning approach	Key characteristics	Approach to actor collaboration
Rational comprehensive planning	- Expert led - Normative - Universalist - The rationality of science	Collaboration between experts Nominal consultation with citizens
Participatory development/collaborative planning	- Value led - Rules based - Recognition of diversity and difference - Recognition of expert and lay knowledges - Awareness of multiple meanings - Interplay between knowledges and dialogue to find consensus based solutions	Deliberative democracy Evidence and rational argument to reframe problems and create a shared problem frame Structured dialogue and negotiation Social learning Consensus seeking in relation to bigger picture normative frames and values Recourse to arbitration and litigation as option of last resort
Agonistic planning – managing conflicting rationalities	- Place led - Interplay between politics, power and space - Premised on conflict, contested knowledges and meanings - Adaptive - Pragmatic	Mapping actor positions Evaluating power relations Identifying faultlines Identifying bottom lines and non negotiables Pragmatic deal making Selective enforcement
Insurgent planning	- Space specific - Radical utopian - Survivalist	Planning and action from below In partnership with radical planners/ social movements OR independently of them

RATIONAL PLANNING THEORY

Rational planning theory has deep modernist and positivist roots which draw on "the so-called rational scientific method of expert analysis and policy formation."[30] This draws on a universalist view of the "world as a homogenous place that can be understood and managed using science,"[31] where there is a perceived link between rational planning and the welfare of all.[32]

Modernist planning privileges 'expert' knowledge to conceptualise urban form, manage 'development' and identify remedies for poverty. Modernist expert led planning approaches shaped both the colonial and post colonial eras and fostered a dependence on foreign expertise. This engendered a "tradition of deference to the perceived superior technical knowledge of the 'advanced' economies and societies ... (which) persisted long after independence."[33] This deference to expertise, (both foreign and local) is well captured by Nehru in his motivation for the modernist planning thrust of post colonial India.

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[30] (Healey and Upton 2010)
[31] (Perrera 2010)
[32] (Zhu 2010)
[33] (Ward 2010)

"Under modern conditions we must have experts. If we want to utilise them to the full we must allow them a free hand and there should be as little interference as possible with their work"[34]

Deference to foreign expertise is also a key component of post colonial development programmes funded by donors where "the Western, donor funded expert has assumed an apparent right to intervene and provide policy advice."[35]

There is a very limited conception of actor collaboration in high modernist planning in both the colonial and post colonial eras. At best experts from different disciplines (international and local) collaborate/contest with one another in order to construct policy and order space. They may engage with selected actors for the purposes of consultation and communication.

Expert led rational planning approaches are persistent as can be seen in the design of Cape Town based N2 Gateway which is the subject of Case study 1which highlights how such initiatives are frequently resisted by insurgent subaltern 'planning from below." This in turn resulted in a forced 'communicative turn' to the project after court intervention which was also met with some resistance from below in that it attempted to redraw established relations of power in the settlement. See the case for more detail.

In the South so called rational planning has been increasingly substituted illegitimate force for dialogue. "Sometimes planning relies on violence to maintain its mastery of space"[36]. Extreme examples of this include Operation Murambatsvina 'drive out the filth' which ZANU-PF officials launched in Zimbabwe in an attempt to contain informality in the cities. This is explored in more detail in Case study 2.

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATIVE/COMMUNICATIVE PLANNING THEORY

One of the defining characteristics of expert led development is that it frequently does not 'work'. This was the experience of many rural development programmes and projects which did not meet their (externally defined) objectives and failed, sometimes spectacularly. Frequently these projects rested on transfers of technologies and procedures from the North to the South. As Paulo Friere observed:

"It appears that the act of extension, in whatever sector it takes place, means that those carrying it out 'need to go to another part of the world' to 'normalise it' according to their way of viewing reality: to make it resemble their world."[37]

Widespread failure led to the realisation by mainstream development agencies that it might be an idea to learn something about rural people's lives and livelihoods and listen to what they had to say. At the same time Freire was advocating that the poor have the capacity to analyse and make changes in their realities through a process of 'conscientisation' involving participatory action and reflection.

These conjunctures and ideas contributed to a whole series of approaches to development which began to utilise participatory planning methods. As time went by these methods were refined by an increased attention to differentiation in terms of gender, age, voice and power.

The graphic below highlights different approaches and rationales for participatory development. These can be arranged on a continuum from an instrumentalist 'business as usual' perspective whereby participation improves project efficiency and minimises conflict risk through to participation as a process which enables:

- the deepening of democracy;
- the enhancement of citizenship;
- the securing of rights as evidenced by a transfer of resources and power.

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[34] National Institute of Urban Affairs (1991) cited in Vidyarthi (2010)
[35] (Kazimbaya Senkwe and Lubambo 2010: n.p)
[36] (Kamete 2010)
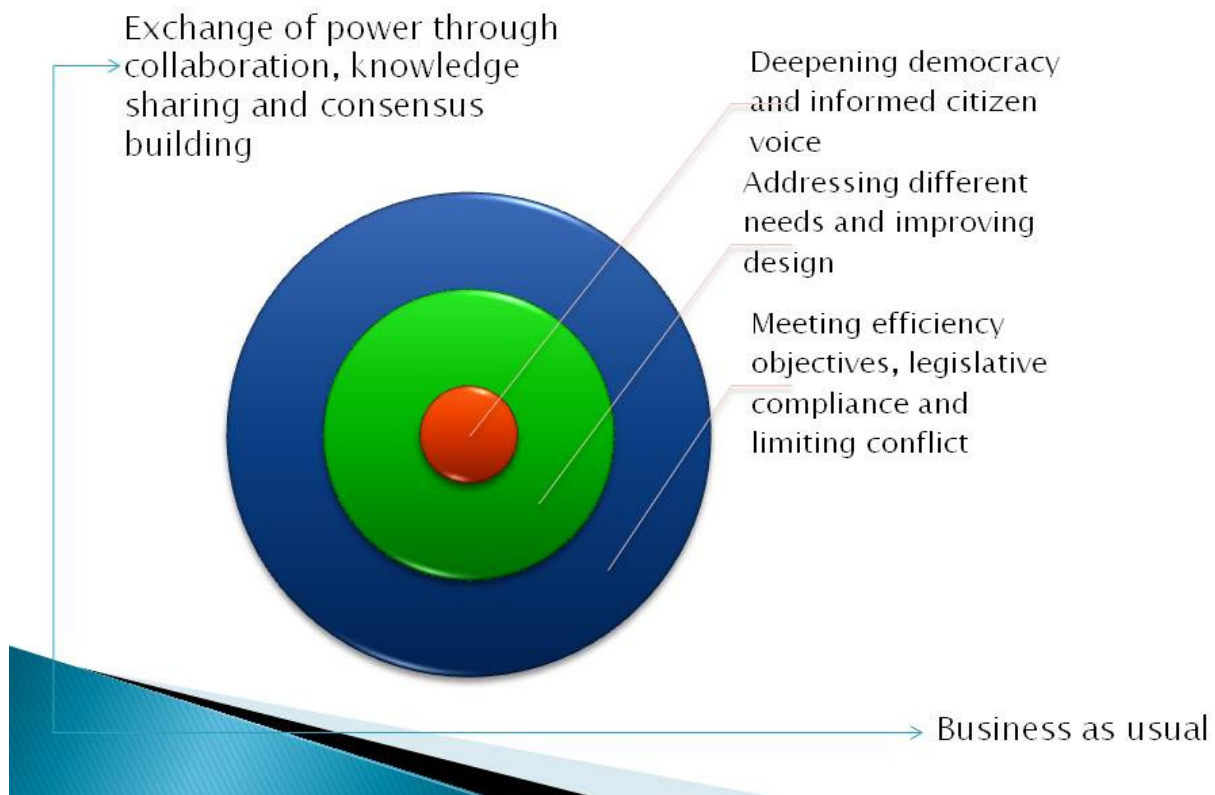[37] Freire (1974: 95) cited in Chambers (1997: 56)

FIGURE 3: PATICIPATION CONTINUUM

PARTICIPATION CRITIQUES

There are a wide range of critiques of participation[38] which highlight how the potentially insurgent nature of the concept in its original form has been domesticated and mainstreamed. These argue that concepts like community participation, empowerment and social capital have degenerated into de-politicised "tools of the trade for governments and establishments such as the World Bank."[39] Reviews have also highlighted that the concept of "public participation" is ambiguous and means "many different things to many different people". [40]

There has been increasing questioning of the effectiveness of what passes for public participation processes and concerns expressed that these are degenerating into increasingly stage managed consultations which have little influence on the direction of policy and planning in the end. At the same time there is a growing cynicism about the professionalisation of politics and technocratic approaches within public administration which alienate citizens and engender mistrust of government.[41]

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[38] (Ranhema 1993; Slocum, Wichhart et al. 1998; Cooke and Kathari 2001; Stiglitz 2002)
[39] Miraftab 2004:239
[40] (Cooke and Kathari 2001; Nicholson 2005)
[41] (Sirianni and Friedland n.d.)

KEY PRECEPTS OF COMMUNICATIVE PLANNING THEORY

Collaborative planning has been defined as "the mediation between conflicting social interests, and ultimately creating common visions of the future of a particular geographical area."[42] However underpinning this is an assumption that in an age of unprecedented urbanisation such visions must articulate with agreed "guiding, normative images" of the "good city".[43]

Communicative/Collaborative planning as promoted by Healey, Forester and others, draws on Habermas' notion of "ideal speech and communicative rationality, in which respectful, inclusive argumentation features as the key to reaching shared understanding and, ultimately, consensus."[44]

Communicative action and planning places a great deal of emphasis on structured dialogue and reasoned discussion. Indeed "the conception of consensus as vital to the very nature of rational communication" has become "almost fundamental to what has become a communicative turn in planning theory."[45]

Habermas' ideas also inform the concept of deliberative democracy that "rests on the core notion of citizens and their representatives deliberating about public problems and solutions under conditions that are conducive to reasoned reflection and refined public judgment; a mutual willingness to understand the values, perspectives, and interests of others; and the possibility of reframing their interests and perspectives in light of a joint search for common interests and mutually acceptable solutions… It promises to cultivate a responsible citizen voice capable of appreciating complexity, recognizing the legitimate interests of other groups (including traditional adversaries), generating a sense of common ownership and action, and appreciating the need for difficult trade-offs."[46]

The actors involved in a process of sharing their views on the problem to be addressed engage "in the collaborative act of reframing it, which in the end gives rise to a new shared frame on the problem."[47]

THE CHALLENGE OF 'DEEP DIFFERENCE'

Increasingly planners in the South report that they are encountering deep 'inter-group' and 'state citizen' differences and "that these differences are fundamental ones... where there is no obvious hope of constructing dialogue or reaching consensus."[48] These differences which are a reflection in part of extreme inequality limit the possibilities of serious dialogue about the nature of the good city so fundamental to collaborative planning.

The records of collaborative planning practice highlight how difficult it is to reach consensus and how precarious it is to maintain once reached. The consensus building approach has been critiqued for failing to contain power and conflicting interests. "In reality actors may see little benefit in behaving 'communicatively rationally when strategic, instrumental power plays...could result in more favourable outcomes for themselves."[49] But perhaps the most fundamental constraint is the prevalence of informality itself which increasingly undermines the possibility of planning and substantive dialogue.

WEIGHTING CONFLICTING KNOWLEDGES

At the same time there is the challenge of conflicting knowledge claims. It has been observed that "while modernist planning theory reifies knowledge as an object and makes it an inherent part of modernism's legitimacy, post modern

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[42] Agger and Lofgren (2008: 146)

[43] (Friedmann 2000: 464)

[44] (Bond and Thompson-Fawcett 2007: 451)

[45] (Hillier 2003)

[46] (Sirianni and Friedland n.d.: unpaginated)

[47] Schon and Rein (1994) in Beers, Sol et al (2010: 46)

[48] (Watson 2006)

[49] (Hillier 2003)

planning theory celebrates multiple epistemologies but fails to specify institutional arrangements for handling multiple knowledges in a way that recognises the specificity of knowledge claims."[50]

This returns us to a key question of whose knowledge and whose reality counts?'[51] It poses dilemmas around the relative weights to accord expert and lay knowledges. Within specific localities these knowledges may be regarded as more closely covalent. However at city and regional scales where the focus is on the overall dependence of urban areas on increasingly stressed environmental systems and the global imperative to combat climate change, we can anticipate that expert knowledge together with the broad visions of the 'good city' and the planning strategies associated with this are likely to overrule the narrower concerns of social actors operating in bounded localities, especially where these may conflict with this broader view. At this scale planners and policy makers must engage with increasingly complex and "wicked problems" which are unique and lack "well defined solutions."[52]

AGONISTIC PLANNING: MANAGING CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES

Agonistic planning may be best compared to a game of chess where the pieces on the board have different powers and mobilities and the players seek to capture and control space. It is premised on conflict and deep difference between formal and informal spaces in the city. The combination of intense competition for access to the city to secure livelihood opportunities, combined with the presence of extra-legal networks ensure that "planning and development is troubled and contested."[53]

Planning and actor relations which are increasingly premised on the predominance of informality "constitute a major theoretical challenge and require an epistemological turn that is beginning to take shape."[54] As noted above it is argued that informality does not lend itself to consensus based approaches to planning. It has been argued that an 'agonistic' model involving "a gymnastic relation characterised by a play of interpretations and anticipations"[55] seems more appropriate in such settings.

Here the challenge is to develop methodologies which enable planners to practically pull off the 'gymnastic' feats expected of them and find ways to navigate these conflicted 'grey spaces' which are co-inhabited both by the desperate poor and the shadow figures of urban life – the shacklords, corrupt politicians and their patronage networks, gangs and criminal syndicates.

INSURGENT PLANNING

There are two versions of insurgent planning:

- A radical utopian version involving political action by organized groups within civil society whose actions "with or without and even against the state" were conceptualised as being aimed at "universal emancipation."[56]
- A survivalist planning from below driven by local conditions and rationalities which inform "the strategies and tactics of those who are attempting to survive, materially and politically in the harsh environment of Africa's cities."[57]

Radical insurgent planning is driven by an overarching value driven vision of citizenships and rights to the city which is achieved by "elaborating a hard-hitting critical analysis of existing conditions; assisting in the mobilization of communities to rectify these conditions; assisting in devising appropriate strategies of struggle; refining the technical

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[50] (Rydin 2007)
[51] As posed by Chambers (1997)
[52] Rittel in Skaburskis (2008)
[53] (Charlton 2007: 385)
[54] (Costa and Costa 2007)
[55] Foucault, 1994:236 cited in Hillier (2003)
[56] (Friedmann 2000: 464)
[57] (Watson 2003: 401)

aspects of transformative solutions; facilitating social learning from radical practice; mediating between the mobilized community and the state; helping to ensure the widest possible participation of community members in all phases of the struggle; helping to rethink the group's course of action in the light of new understandings"[58]

Survivalist insurgent planning are the actions taken by the poor, as individual and in a variety of local configurations to secure the resources required to maintain their foothold in informal spaces. This is a practice which takes place beyond the gaze of the State or in direct defiance of it.

Case Study No 3 focuses on insurgent planning from below in an informal settlement called Hibera in Nairobi, Kenya which combines elements from both these approaches.

CONCLUSION

If African planners are to 'reengage the social' and to navigate the 'deep difference' which characterises the African city this will requires expanding our thinking about planning "beyond its preoccupation with execution and design" to begin to understand the lived experiences of the poor and the spaces of insurgent informality. This requires a new grammar and methodology for actor collaboration which takes its starting point as conflict and works backward to negotiate adaptive solutions.

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[58] (Friedmann 2000: 464)

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