**ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN PLANNING SCHOOLS**


**All-Schools Conference 2012**
**16-18 October 2010**

**Co-hosted by UN-Habitat and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning,**
**University of Nairobi**


**United Nations Office in Nairobi**
**United Nations Avenue**
**Nairobi, Kenya**


**Conference Report**

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## Introduction

The Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) is a peer-to-peer network of tertiary planning schools drawn from across the continent. The AAPS has a membership of fifty planning institutions, from all regions of Africa. The Secretariat of AAPS is located at the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town (South Africa).

In October 2012, AAPS and its partners UN-Habitat and the University of Nairobi hosted the third biennial all-schools conference in the Kenyan capital city of Nairobi. It was organised around the following themes and objectives:
- Development of a model planning curriculum for undergraduate planning education in Africa
- Implementation of the Memoranda of Understanding between AAPS and Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and other international advocacy organizations
- Development of strategies for the development of 'communities of practice' around thematic urban research issues
- Planning for the continued work and future functioning of AAPS

This report document provides an overview of the proceedings and discussions at AAPS 2012. It highlights some of the key points and questions raised by participants. Background conference materials and a list of participants are provided as appendices.

# Report on Proceedings

## Day 1: Partnerships and Knowledge Co-production

AAPS 2012 conference proceedings were opened with a short welcome presentation by Claudio Acioly (Chief of the Housing Policy Section, UN-Habitat) who outlined UN-Habitat's key strategies for planning and capacity-building in relation to wider international shifts in planning thought and practice. He further highlighted the key role of planning education reform in promoting a 'problem-solving approach' and thereby narrowing the disjuncture between curricula and the realities facing practitioners on the continent. Mr Acioly called for AAPS member schools to partner with UN-Habitat in collaboratively developing the new African urban agenda, as well as resources for further networking and capacity building.

AAPS Steering Committee Chair Prof Vanessa Watson updated the members on progress achieved by the AAPS network and Secretariat in various aspects of project work, highlighting the rapid growth of the network's membership and project focus areas since its inception in 1999. The Association is currently comprised of fifty institutions drawn from Anglophone, Lusophone and (recently) Francophone regions, and operates a wide variety of projects with funding support from the Rockefeller Foundation and Cities Alliance.

Sheela Patel, Chair of the international advocacy organization Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) presented the opening conference keynote address, emphasising the key role of planners in driving governance structures and practices to become more inclusive – an imperative in African contexts where the urban population is young, networked and increasingly impatient with conventional modes of urban development and management. To this extent, Sheela highlighted the importance of the AAPS-SDI memorandum of understanding; of the current AAPS initiative to change planning law in Africa, and of exploring further means of collaboration beyond collaborative educational studios. She appealed for AAPS schools to proactively engage with SDI federations in their country or city, as well as other institutional bodies (for example, Mayors' forums such as Africities) in collaborative urban development processes.

Key questions emerging:
- Can SDI offer any experiences that may assist AAPS members in engaging with Mayors and other government officials?
- Does SDI have experience with any 'models' of organisation and development that could be mainstreamed and used to counteract Eurocentric planning practices?
- Does SDI have any experience in working in contexts without any urban level or structures of governance?
- What specific role are planners supposed to play within processes of community-based organisation and development?

In the afternoon session, participants reflected upon case study teaching approaches involving local communities in informal settlements. Representatives of the University of Nairobi (Kenya), Makerere University (Uganda) and Mzuzu University (Malawi) gave updates and feedback on their respective experiences of 'live studio' teaching, based on real community-based informal settlement upgrading procedures. The Uganda presentation was made jointly by the Makerere School and the local SDI affiliate, indicating that a lasting relationship has been formed which will lead to joint school-SDI studios becoming a permanent part of the curriculum. This is also likely to be the case in Mzuzu (Malawi), but is not yet definite in the case of Blantyre (Malawi).



Taken together, these presentations pointed towards the complex contextual difficulties and opportunities afforded by collaborative studios. Killian Doherty of the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) also gave a presentation on his experiences teaching an architectural studio in Rwanda (a country without a local SDI affiliate). His presentation raised the issue of how university staff may engage with and earn the trust of local communities in the absence of mediating NGOs such as SDI.

Key points emerging:
- Engagements between universities, governments and civil societies are affected by political, economic and cultural contexts, hence studio planning should take careful account of local realities.
- The roles of different actors and the project scope should be collaboratively established prior to commencement of a studio, whilst accepting that these roles and expectations may change over time.
- Often a collaborative studio is merely the final outcome of an elongated 'gestation period', wherein relationships and common areas of concern are established.
- Pilot projects may be effective means of building trust with local communities, as well as 'leveraging' support from local government, but it is imperative that university-community engagements are sustained beyond single projects.
- Collaborative studios can promote shared modes of critical and substantive learning distributed amongst students, university teachers, community organisers and members.
- Studio outputs (e.g. enumeration reports) are particularly useful when designed as negotiation and planning 'tools' for communities and decision-makers. Studios should be documented in a manner that makes their learning widely relevant and useful.
- The organisation and implementation of studios can be constrained by a range of factors, including technical skills shortages on the part of students; general resource limitations; language differences; curricular structures and requirements, and so on.
- Balancing the scope of a studio with the requirements of a holistic learning process is a key issue requiring careful consideration and planning.
- There is a need to reflect upon the various ways in which the studio can be an entry point for rethinking planning in a more general sense.

## Day 2: Research Coalitions and Communities of Practice

Proceedings of the second day were centred upon the morning field trip, arranged by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning of the University of Nairobi. The first site visited was the Kibera KENSUP Housing Project, a government slum-upgrading project. The second site was a community-led slum-upgrading project in Kambi Moto (Huruma).

The field trip was followed by discussions exploring potential areas of collaborative research between AAPS members and partners. The intention was to use the trip as a basis for triggering comparative reflection and generating ideas around shared research agendas. To this extent, Dr Immaculata Nwokoro (University of Lagos) reflected upon the last AAPS community of practice meeting to be held in Lagos in 2011, during which a visit of AAPS members to the area of Makoko triggered an interest in both collaborative research and advocacy, on the part of the group and AAPS as a whole. Her presentation dealt with the recent demolition of Makoko by the Lagos State Government authorities, which raised the issue of how AAPS can pursue its advocacy agenda in a sustained and concerted manner (i.e. beyond the writing and distribution of news and communiqués).

Representatives of various sectoral departments within UN-Habitat were then invited to present on their current research interests and priorities. Delegates broke into six thematic groups to explore potential collaborations between AAPS and UN-Habitat in a more focused manner. The groups were divided according to the themes: informal economies, climate change, planning, governance, land, and housing.



The conference dinner took place in the evening, and featured an address by Bernhard Barth of UN-Habitat, who mentioned some of the key ways in which educational institutions and networks such as AAPS can engage and cooperate with international research and donor agencies.

## Day 3: Curricula and AAPS Business

The final keynote presentation was given by Prof Winnie Mitullah of the Institute for Development Studies and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), who focused on the need to bridge theory and practice in planning education, in a manner that ensures progressive principles of equity and sustainability do not merely 'remain on paper'. She further introduced the partnership between AAPS and WIEGO to conference participants, and outlined some of the many resources that the latter can offer to planning researchers and educators.



Following Prof Mitullah's address, Dr Douty Chibamba reported on progress towards the pilot of the AAPS Masters curriculum at the University of Zambia. Delegates also heard feedback from two school representatives (Prof Tim Gyuse of Benue State University, Nigeria, and Jacques Korrubel of the Polytechnic of Namibia) whom have recently been involved in undergraduate curricular development procedures. Their presentations highlighted the contextual factors and forces influencing the structure and content of their respective programmes.

A discussion document concerning the development of a model undergraduate planning curriculum was then presented by James Duminy (AAPS). The conceptual frame for undergraduate curricula proposed as part of this document received general support from participants. A working group of school representatives was also formed to continue working on the refinement of the model undergraduate curriculum.

In terms of institutional matters, the draft AAPS Constitution was presented and discussed, with a deadline set for any further comments and suggestions prior to final ratification. Outgoing Steering Committee Chair, Prof Vanessa Watson, then tabled some options for future AAPS collaborations and project work, in particular pointing towards the potential of engaging with SDI in developing a new 'vision' of African urbanization; offering a counter-point to the trend for African governments to hire international planning consultancies (from places such as Singapore and the US) to develop master plans inappropriately aimed at 'world class city' development.

## Conclusion

The third biennial AAPS all-schools conference entailed an intensive yet rewarding programme of discussion. Aside from welcoming new schools into the network, the event provided an invaluable opportunity for planning educators and activists from all parts of Africa to meet face-to-face, share ideas and identify common points of interest in relation to substantive urban research, curricular development and pedagogical innovation.

A measure of the success of the event was the enthusiastic feedback received in relation to the AAPS-SDI collaborative studios. A number of school representatives expressed interest in undertaking studio-based engagements with local SDI federations, or in helping to establish community-based structures for informal settlement upgrading, where they do not currently exist. However, the question of how to move beyond 'the studio' was also a key area of concern. Whilst the practice of informal settlement upgrading is an important aspect of planning in Africa, it is not exhaustive of the responsibilities of planners, nor of the opportunities offered by planning as an institutionalised professional practice. How can engagements between AAPS and networks such as SDI and WIEGO move beyond a focus on localised issues, towards a wider urban- or regional-scale perspective of how space and collective infrastructures should be allocated and used? These questions came to frame some of the ideas around how AAPS should pursue donor funding and future project work.

Another theme underpinning discussions at the conference concerned how to promote the institutional sustainability of AAPS. With external donor funding coming to an end in 2013, the Association faces an uncertain future with respect to its Secretariat function and project work. However, over the past decade AAPS has built an international reputation and robust working relationships with a wide variety of actors and institutions across the globe. These relationships provide a bedrock for further development and consolidation of the network, as well as a basis for attracting funding. Yet the key indicator for sustainability relates to the degree of cooperation and collaboration exemplified by individual AAPS members schools, and here the agenda to create 'communities of practice' is of utmost importance. The Association's future will be most secure if it is comprised of sub-networks of members that proactively engage in collaborative and comparative research or advocacy work. In conclusion, although the future of AAPS is uncertain, it is also exciting and promising, with many opportunities to increase the network's size, capacity and influence, and further to enhance its relations with other actors and networks. It is imperative that the Association retains a flexible network structure that allows for new innovations and relationships to form and reproduce the network from 'the inside out'.