



# Overview of the successes and failures of planning education and practice in South Africa

# 1 RETHINKING ROLES



# 2 CONVERSATIONS & KNOWLEDGE

The **CORE** of EFFECTIVE PLANNING is having CONVERSATIONS with the **RIGHT** PEOPLE to GATHER THEIR INSIGHTS.



- FIND CONNECTIONS
- CREATE NEW MEANING

# 3 YOUNG PLANNERS

The ENTRY is an ADOLESCENT STAGE WHERE YOU NEED TO REINVENT YOURSELF in the SPACE to FIND your NICHE.



# 5 FINDING SUPPORT

INNOVATIVELY find SUPPORT FROM the FIRST DAY OF ENTERING the LECTURE ROOM.



# 4 PLANNING & INTEGRITY

• NOT JUST a lack of CORRUPTION but also the making of the **BEST PLANS**



# 6 PURPOSE inspires ALLIES & INNOVATIVE WAYS TO ADD VALUE

• NOT JUST a lack of CORRUPTION but also the making of the **BEST PLANS**



**CONFESSIONS of a PLANNING OPTIMIST**  
(SHARING LEARNING FROM WORK-LIFE EXPERIENCES)



HOW DO WE HAVE INTER-SECTORAL DIALOGUES?

SHARE TO ENABLE PEER LEARNING

# THRIVEL GUIDE to Planning

- NETWORK OF NETWORKS
- REMEMBER: WHO, WHAT WHY, HOW
- SOLID FOUNDATION OF THEORY & KNOWLEDGE
- BALANCE
- USE YOUR RESOURCES, TEAMS, MENTORS
- STAY OPEN MINDED
- NAVIGATE with CREATIVITY
- THERE WILL BE CHALLENGES. DON'T DISPAIR! THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY OUT.
- MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Events

Graphic Harvest

## 2018 Workshop

- ▶ The session was aimed at sharing some recent research findings with the community of practice (an interested & concerned group of practitioners) and brainstorm ways to support young planners.
- ▶ It was especially geared at addressing challenges experienced in early career stages, and in the SACPLAN framework, to be supported during the "candidacy" period.
- ▶ The idea was to use the session to brainstorm some suggestions on actions that can be lobbied with and possibly taken up by various role players i.e. SACPLAN, SAPI, MISA, SALGA etc and others can take up, or position with relevant institutions/decision-makers etc.,



# 2019 Unconference

- ▶ On 28 November, the South African Planning Education Research Project (SAPER), in partnership with SACPLAN, hosted an 'unconference' event focusing on the theme of 'What I wish I knew.'
- ▶ The aim of this event was to bring together practising planners with the SA SAPER team to identify practice lessons and practice stories, with the idea being to learn from each other on how to be better planners, and to consolidate these lessons.
- ▶ Main sessions
  - ▶ 'Voices' and experiences from practice - 'listening' and reflecting
  - ▶ Confessions of a planning optimist - sharing experiences
  - ▶ 'Thrival' guide to planning : What I know now

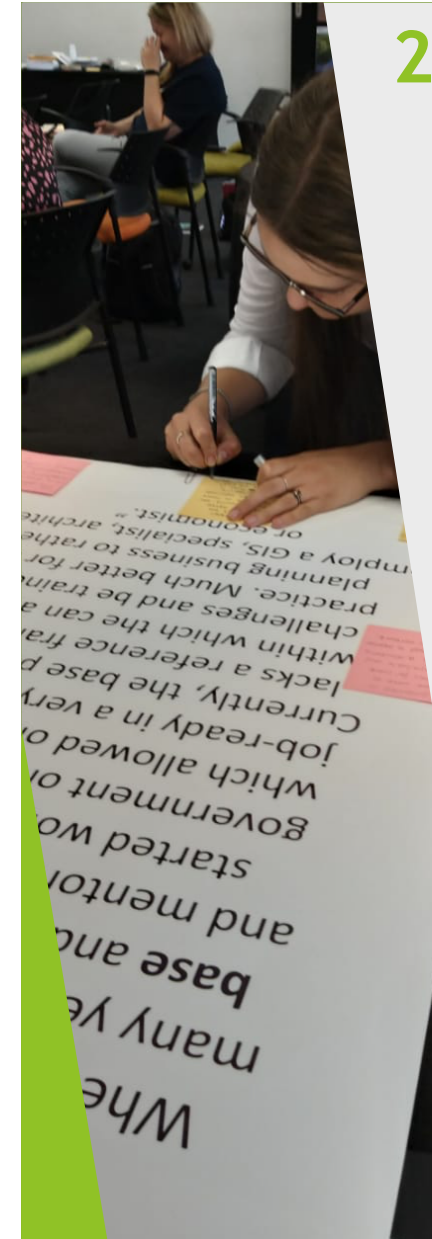


## 2019 Unconference - Dialogue walk

Quote: “The formal education was a foundation only, on the job training and experience is where the real education happened.”

### Responses

- ▶ Why are university curriculums/training still not preparing students adequately for the workplace?
- ▶ The reality is lifelong learning.
- ▶ Reality is the best mentor after education.
- ▶ Why this quote resonates? When I left varsity, I felt I was equipped to conquer the world, but when I stopped into my first job I realized how “green” I was.
- ▶ I believe that education/going to university assisted me with the foundation, of being able to do my work when I started practicing. When I started working, most of the things I could relate back to the knowledge I acquired from university.
- ▶ You need theory to help you base your arguments, but practical experience is essential for success!
- ▶ I have experienced it myself training definitely begins in the first year of work and you feel like you know nothing.
- ▶ ...



Topic	Number of quotes	Number of responses	Average response per quote
Learning on the job	6	20	3.33
Politics / organization	7	13	1.86
Gender/Race	3	11	3.67
Integrity	10	10	1.00
Informality	3	8	2.67
Apartheid	3	7	2.33
Public/Private	5	6	1.20
Culture	2	4	2.00
Recognition of planning	4	4	1.00
Planning education	8	4	0.50
Conflict	4	3	0.75
Environment	2	2	1.00
Other	3	2	0.67
Why I chose planning	2	0	0.00
<i>Total</i>	62	94	1.57

## Towards resilience in planning practice

- ▶ “Drawing on the data generated through the course of today, your own lived experience, use the material on the table to create a prototype model of a ‘planners *‘thrival’* guide: *What we know now.*’
- ▶ A collection of “practice tips” to support young (and older planners) to cultivate a resilient practice, in order to be able to take action and add value in often challenging and complex work-life contexts.



The background features a complex grid of light blue and dark grey squares. A prominent white vertical bar is on the left, with a double-headed arrow indicating vertical movement. On the right, there are overlapping green geometric shapes, including a large triangle and a vertical bar with an upward-pointing arrow. The text 'Challenges to practice and education' is centered in a bold, lime green font.

# Challenges to practice and education







# Challenges to planning in South Africa: (1) Education

PLANNING PRACTICE & RESEARCH  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2020.1735158>

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group

 OPEN ACCESS  Check for updates

## Theory versus Practice in Planning Education: The View from South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reflects on the ongoing debate between theory and practice in planning, using the example of South Africa. Based on survey responses, it discusses how planning education in South Africa is perceived to prepare students for practice. While we acknowledge that the majority of respondents view their planning education positively, the results reveal challenges regarding the practical application of theory, especially in the case of land-use management. We then respond to calls for contextualised practices of knowing, emphasising the 'local' in planning education so that theory and practice can be combined across contexts.

### KEYWORDS

Planning education;  
planning theory; planning  
practice; South Africa

One of the most common concerns related to the use of theory without teaching how to apply it in practical situations (in other words ‘**knowing what**’ without ‘**knowing how,**’ to refer to Davoudi’s (2015) framework).

*The most valuable take from the curriculum were the practical-based assignments where one had to “**apply your mind**”. ...*

*Practically creating land use applications, feasibility assessments and designing maps were among the few which I feel I will always remember as opposed to planning theories which are not always easily applicable or replicable in the work place.*

Overcoming the practice/theory divide is impossible **without a much greater emphasis on applied theory** - giving students the opportunity to **understand how a theoretical position will help them in day-to-day decision-making and practice.** ...

Part of the response to this should come through a renewed commitment to continuing professional development, **creating a stronger feedback loop between practitioners and academics to co-construct theories that better reflect local conditions.**

#### **E.G Traditional -**

*Theory:* Identify how the theories of environmental and social justice support and contradict each other ...

*Practical:* Compile a land use application for a site of X ha ...

#### **Applied theory -**

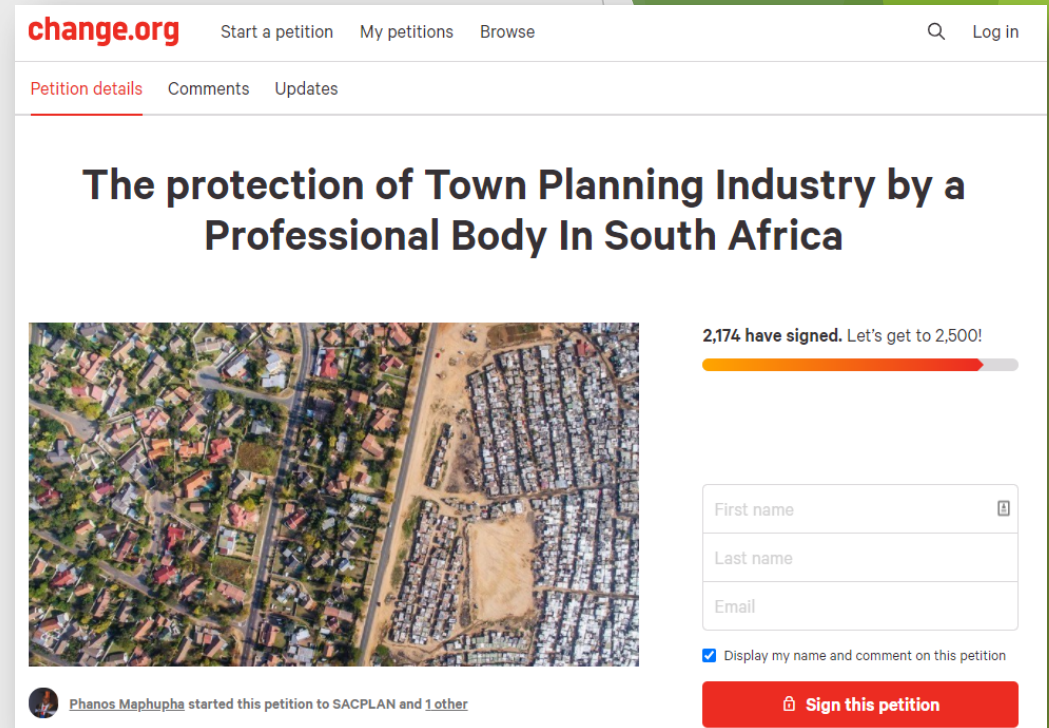
Identify and critique the ways in which the planning regulations for your assigned municipality a) support and b) hinder the achievement of environmental justice, ...

# Challenges to planning in South Africa: (1) Planning practice

## *Unpacking planners' views of the success and failure of planning in post-apartheid South Africa*

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the reform of planning in the post-apartheid period and identifies the successes and failures thereof, as understood by South African planners. We note a perception of success relating to the reform of planning legislation; however, the most commonly noted failures were the inability to achieve spatial transformation, the perpetuation of old and inappropriate planning practices, and the failure to implement plans. Respondents argued that the failures of planning reform in South Africa were explained by lack of capacity; failure to achieve job reservation for planners, leading to unqualified individuals doing planning work; political inference; weak planning tools; and planners' lack of key skills. We challenge the narrative proposed by many of our respondents, arguing that this represents an outward view of planning failure, focusing on what planning cannot control. We argue for an inward view, which makes peace with the limits of planners' power; optimises planning practice and regulations to work within the constraints of limited political, financial, and human resources; and sees planning as an exercise in marketing, where the goal is to 'sell' and not to dictate to key stakeholders the principles of good urbanism relevant to the locality in question.

- ▶ When talking to planners about success and failure of planning in South Africa, there was little consensus on successes, with the exception of the passing of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (16 of 2013).
- ▶ However, there was acknowledgement and a general perception of efforts to reform planning in South Africa being a failures. Reasons given for this:
  - ▶ lack of capacity;
  - ▶ failure to achieve job reservation for planners, leading to unqualified individuals doing planning work;
  - ▶ political inference;
  - ▶ weak planning tools;
  - ▶ and planners' lack of key skills.



The screenshot shows a Change.org petition page. At the top, the Change.org logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'Start a petition', 'My petitions', and 'Browse' are on the right. A search icon and 'Log in' link are also present. Below the navigation, there are tabs for 'Petition details', 'Comments', and 'Updates'. The main heading of the petition is 'The protection of Town Planning Industry by a Professional Body In South Africa'. Below the heading is an aerial photograph of a residential area, showing a mix of well-developed houses and informal settlements. To the right of the photo, it says '2,174 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!' with a progress bar. Below this is a sign-up form with fields for 'First name', 'Last name', and 'Email'. There is a checkbox for 'Display my name and comment on this petition' which is checked. At the bottom right, there is a red button that says 'Sign this petition'. At the bottom left, it says 'Phanos Maphuphe started this petition to SACPLAN and 1 other'.

The screenshot shows the RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institute) website. The header includes the RTPI logo and navigation links: 'Need Planning Advice', 'Join us', and 'Login'. Below the header is a menu with 'New', 'Membership', 'Find your RTPI', 'Policy and Research', 'Become a Planner', and 'Events, Training and Awards'. The main content area features a dark blue background with the title 'The housing design quality conundrum – what can be done about it?' and the author 'By James White'. The date '7 Dec 2020' and location 'United Kingdom' are listed, along with a 'Share' button. A small text block at the bottom of the screenshot reads: 'On 7 December 2020, the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE), led by the University of Glasgow, published a new report, "Delivering Design Value: the housing design quality conundrum".'

... we report that planners are often passionate about creating well-designed places yet feel relatively powerless to challenge the *status quo*. ... local design policy is frequently overlooked because other policy objectives routinely take precedence over design. The case studies also reveal the day-to-day realities of chronic underfunding .. efforts to make design-sensitive planning decisions are often thwarted by a scarcity of design skills and training; a problem frequently made worse by entrenched ‘siloes decision-making,’ ...

This paper challenges these views. It argues that (1) planners are aspiring for goals that **are unlikely to be accomplished to a satisfactory extent**. Instead of focusing our efforts on achievable goals, the collective energy of the planning profession is being wasted on a quest for something that is largely unattainable, **which will likely to continue leading to disillusionment and frustration**.

(2) This dialogue continues to focus on outward issues over which planners have limited control. **Worryingly, far fewer respondents were willing to look inward at planning practice in South Africa**, and whether our current tools offer a real value proposition to South African society.

So what should we do differently

- 1) Given planners' limited power, we must accept that 'big' successes may often not be possible. Thus, **we need to identify and appreciate the 'smaller' successes**.
- 2) We need to build a **planning system that is viable within the existing resources**, i.e. regulations that are 'fit for purpose,' **and which focuses the energy of regulation on the issues that actually matter**.
- 3) We need to move beyond conventional planning tools and embrace different approaches, especially for forward planning. In particular a **move from a document based approach to dialogue and debate within municipalities and with key stakeholders**.

# Looking forward - Planning as technical, planning as the art of persuasion

*“Walking that line between planning fundamentally being about whom, because that who you plan for, that’s who implements your plans, who approves your plans, who funds your plans, who commissions your plans. That’s all people. And the more technical aspect of the discipline understanding the complex network of by-laws.*

*Understanding hard physical limits like flood mains and soil conditions and dolomite. ... Because if you a technical expert but you have no social skills, you not going to get anything on the ground. ...If you socially very fluent but can’t put together a good technical plan, you gonna get things on the ground but they gonna be lousy. ...:*

*So, constantly working as a person between the troubled past and a less troubled future, between a technically determined profession and a socially fluent phenomenon.”*