

The resilience, adaptability and transformation of the South African Planning Profession

II International Conference
AFRICAN URBAN PLANNING

Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon
& International Planning History Society

Lisbon, Portugal

7-8 September 2017

Verna Nel and Martin Lewis

T: +27(0)51 401 9111 | info@ufs.ac.za | www.ufs.ac.za



UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



Contents

- Introduction
- Conceptualising resilience
- The adaptive cycle
- A brief history of the South African Planning Profession
- How resilient is the SA Planning Profession?

Introduction

- Internationally, planning thought and approaches have reflected the dominant **paradigms** of the era.
- **Modernism**, with its faith in science and technology has been a dominant mind-set in the West, but post-modernism and radical viewpoints have also influenced planning.
- **Sustainable development** along with climate change is increasingly informing planning discourse. In addition to protecting the natural environment, issues of **equity and justice** and **community participation** have been stressed as a component of sustainable development in, eg:
 - Brundtland definition
 - Millennium Development Goals
 - Sustainable Development Goals
 - New Urban Agenda

Resilience is emerging as a new perspective

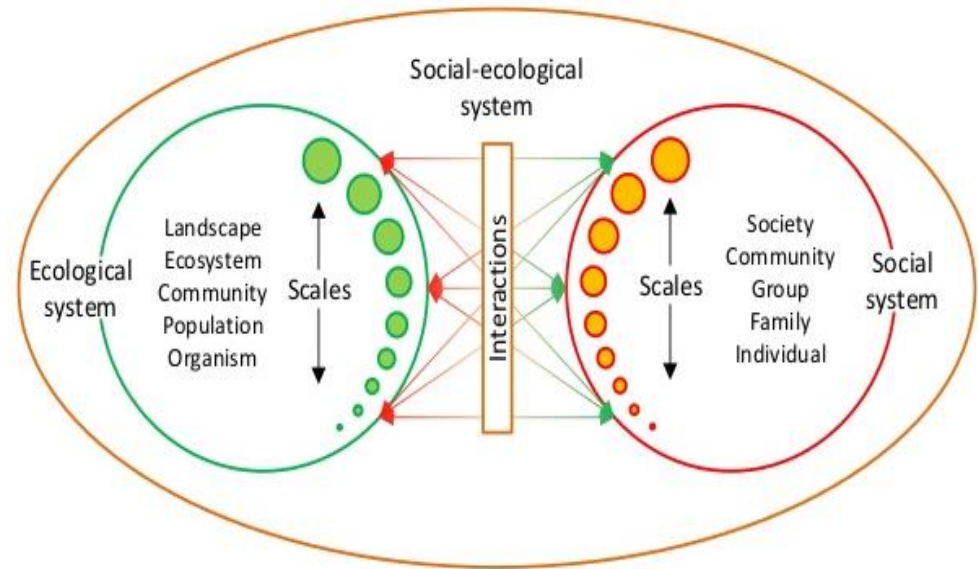
Introduction

- **Resilience** has become a popular policy goal, often linked to sustainable development and disaster risk management.
- But applicable in many other fields
- This paper applies some of the concepts of resilience to the development of the planning profession in South Africa to conclude whether the profession is resilient or not

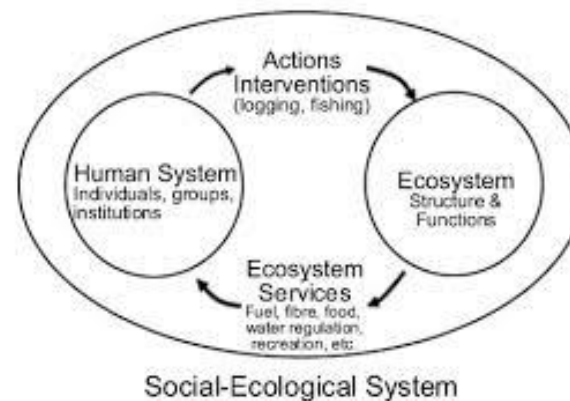
Social-ecological systems

- Urban settlements are complex human or socio-ecological systems (SES)
- **Adaption and transformation** are key elements of the resilience of complex adaptive social-ecological systems
- Resilience an **emergent property** that arises from the interactions within the SES.

Social-Ecological Systems (SES)

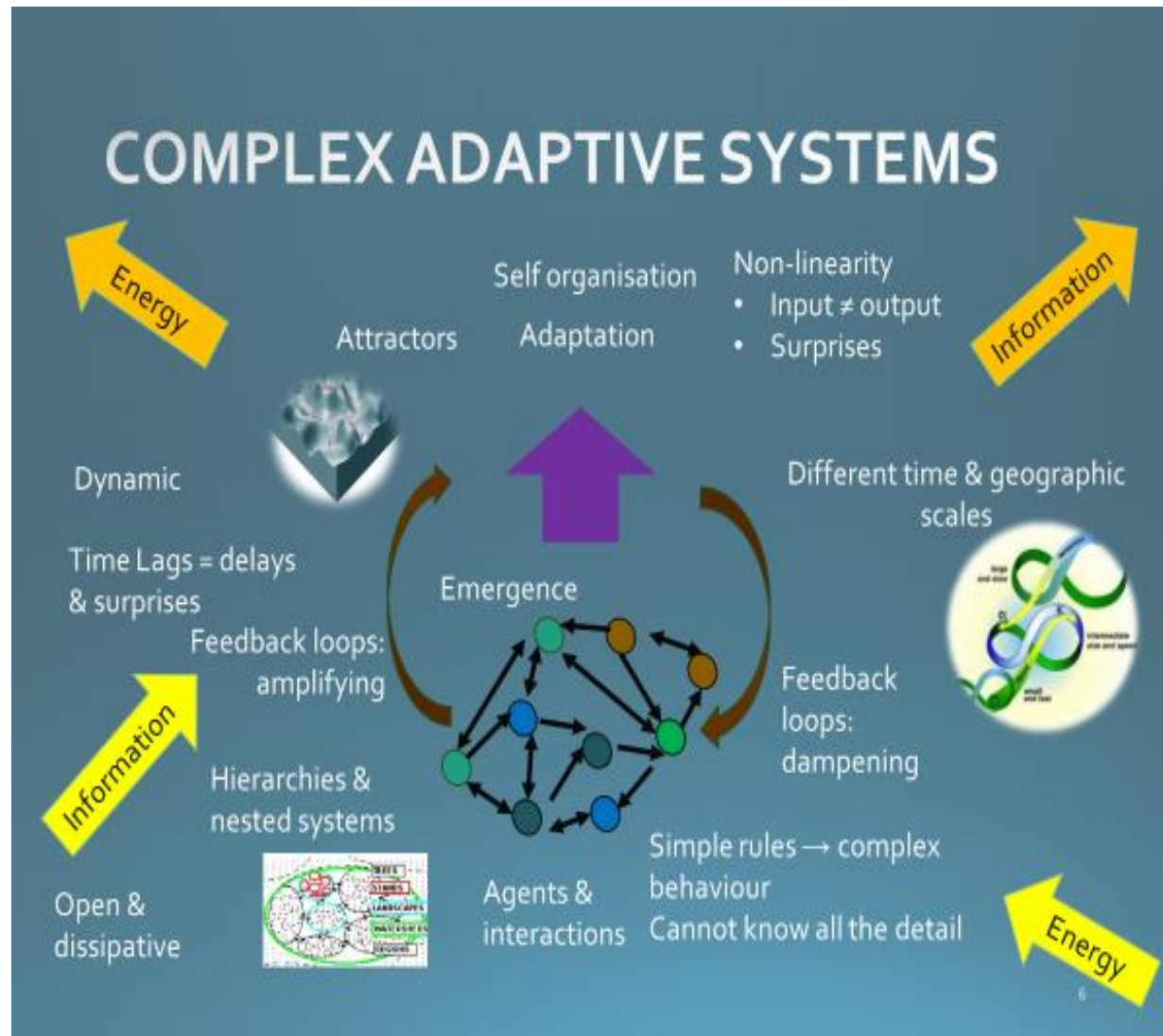


- **Nestedness:** system components may be subsystems with components of their own
- **Adaptiveness:** constant reorganization to maximize resource and energy efficiency
- **Nonlinearity:** manipulation may result in an outcome of unexpected magnitude
- **Emergence:** properties or behavior may only be explainable by the sum of dynamics at a higher level



SES & CAS

Complex
Non-linear
Open
Simple rules
Emergence
Self organisation
Hierarchies
Adaption



Conceptualising resilience

Bouncing back

Returning to same state after shock/stress

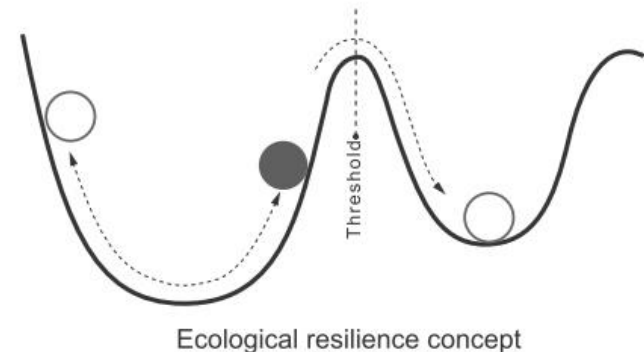
Time to return to original state



Multiple equilibria

Absorb disturbance and reorganise but retain essentially the same function, structure and feedbacks

The capacity to change but maintain the same identity

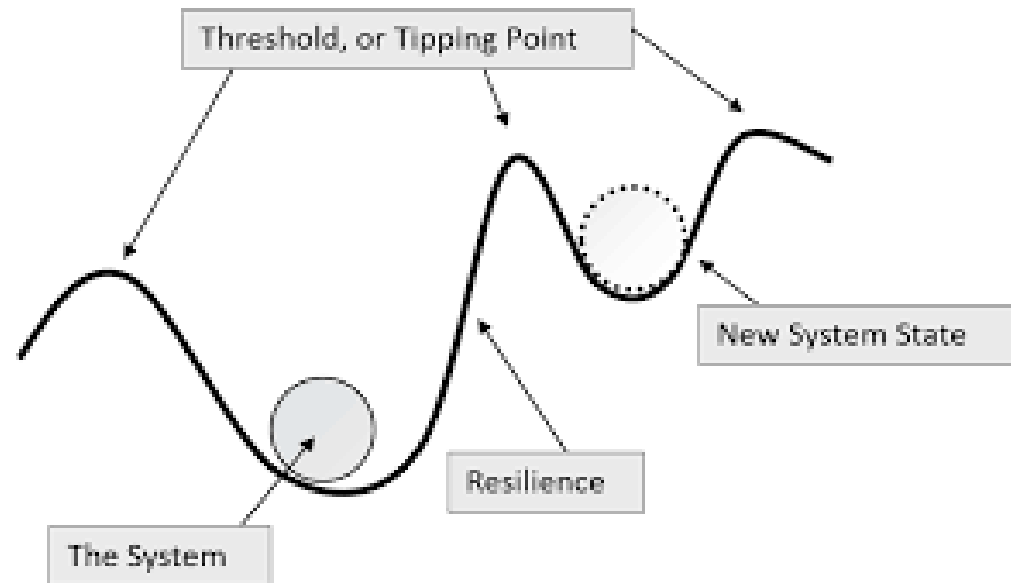


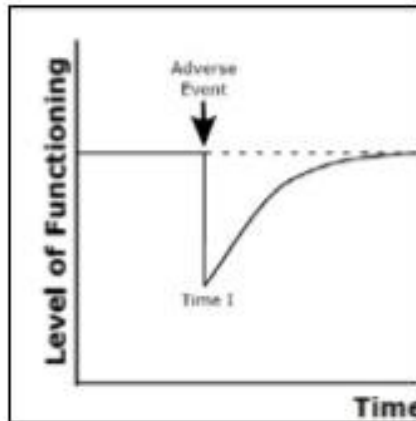
Conceptualising resilience

Social-ecological resilience

Persistence,
recovery,
adaptive,
transformative

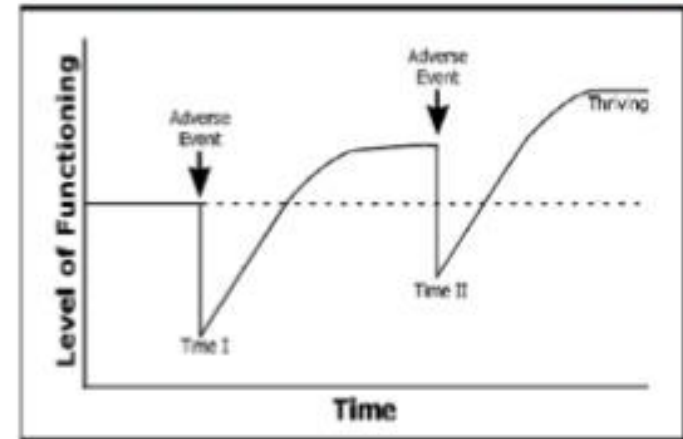
Capacities of interlinked
social and ecological
systems and subsystems



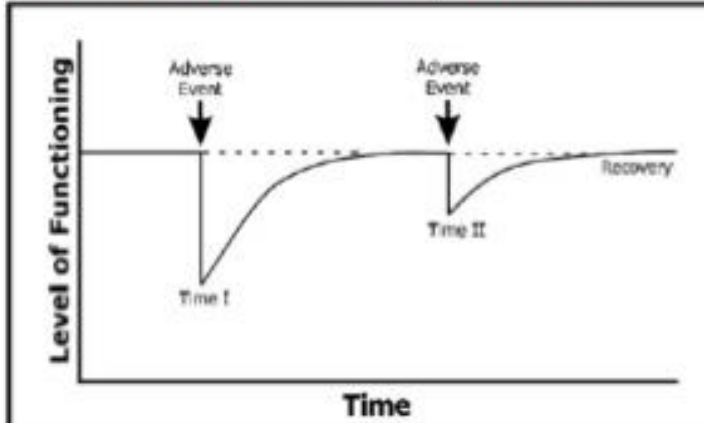


Engineering Resilience
- Return to Equilibrium

Transformational Resilience
- Learn & Create a New Paradigm



Ecological Resilience
- Learn & Return to Equilibrium



- People become resilient in response to adversity
- Disturbances include both acute shocks and chronic slow burns
- Tools: institutions, leadership, social capital & social learning



- Diversity
- Redundancy/ modularity
- Stores/buffers
- Connectivity / network structure
- Energy & information flows
- Learning
- Adaptability / flexibility



vulnerable
flexibility



adaptive
transformation



self-organisation



Resilience

bounceback



persistence



renewal



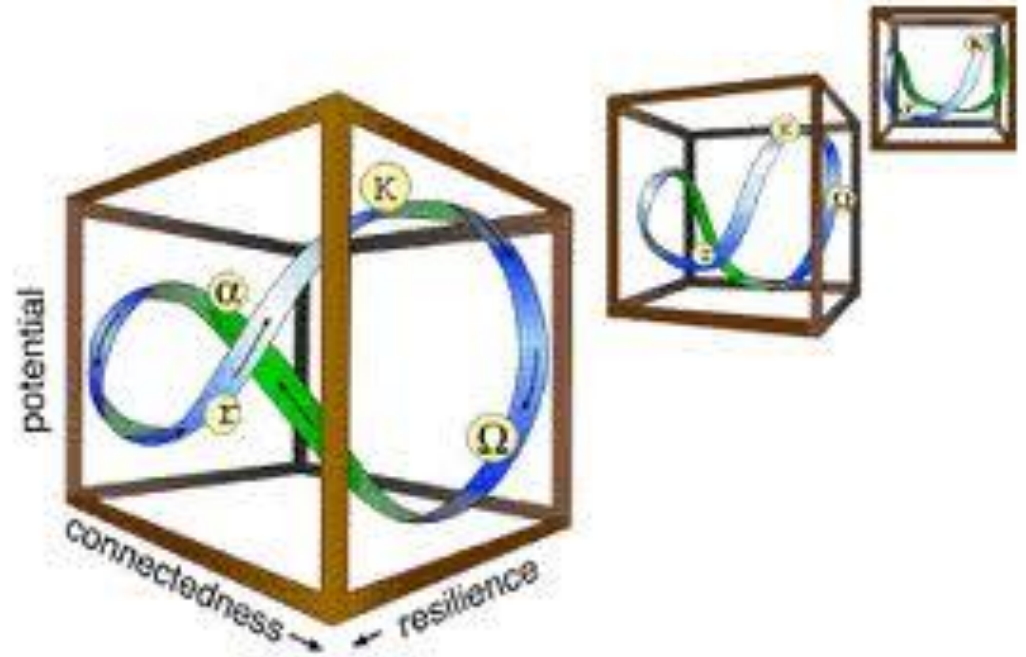
Building resilience

‘Resilience thinking’ involves a way of thinking about change that implies a

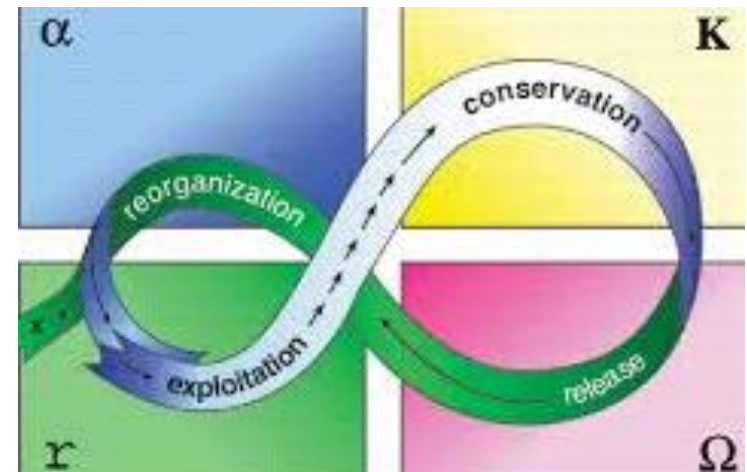
- *high degree of learning,*
- *flexibility and*
- *self-organisation in*
- *anticipating and responding to change*

It is a way of thinking, an attitude about understanding, accepting, and engaging with a rapidly changing, uncertain and complex world in order to enable an appropriate response to the challenges. (Walker and Salt 2006)

Adaptive cycle



- Introduced by Gunderson & Holling in book Panarchy (2002)
- Models of adaptive cycles and change over time at different spatial scales
- Based on complex socio-ecological systems
- Includes concept of resilience



The adaptive cycle

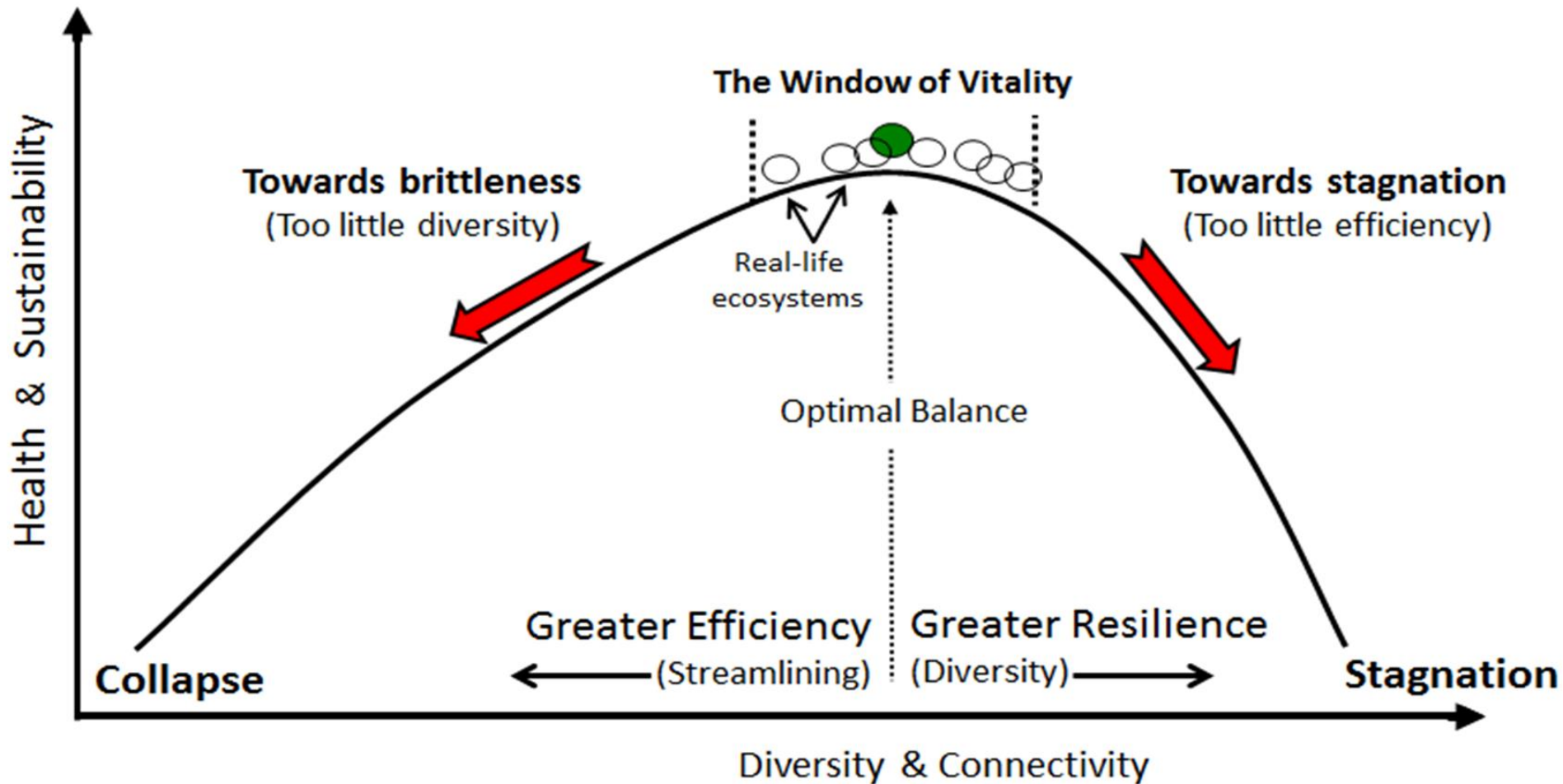
growth phase
- new opportunities and available resources are exploited
- weak interconnection and weak regulation
- pioneers/opportunists successful
- may or may not resemble previous growth phase

conservation phase
- energy gets stored, material accumulates
- increasing and stronger connections and regulations
- specialists take over (are more conservative and efficient)
- system increasingly stable/rigid, loss of flexibility
- increasing dependence on existing structures and processes, system increasingly vulnerable to disturbance

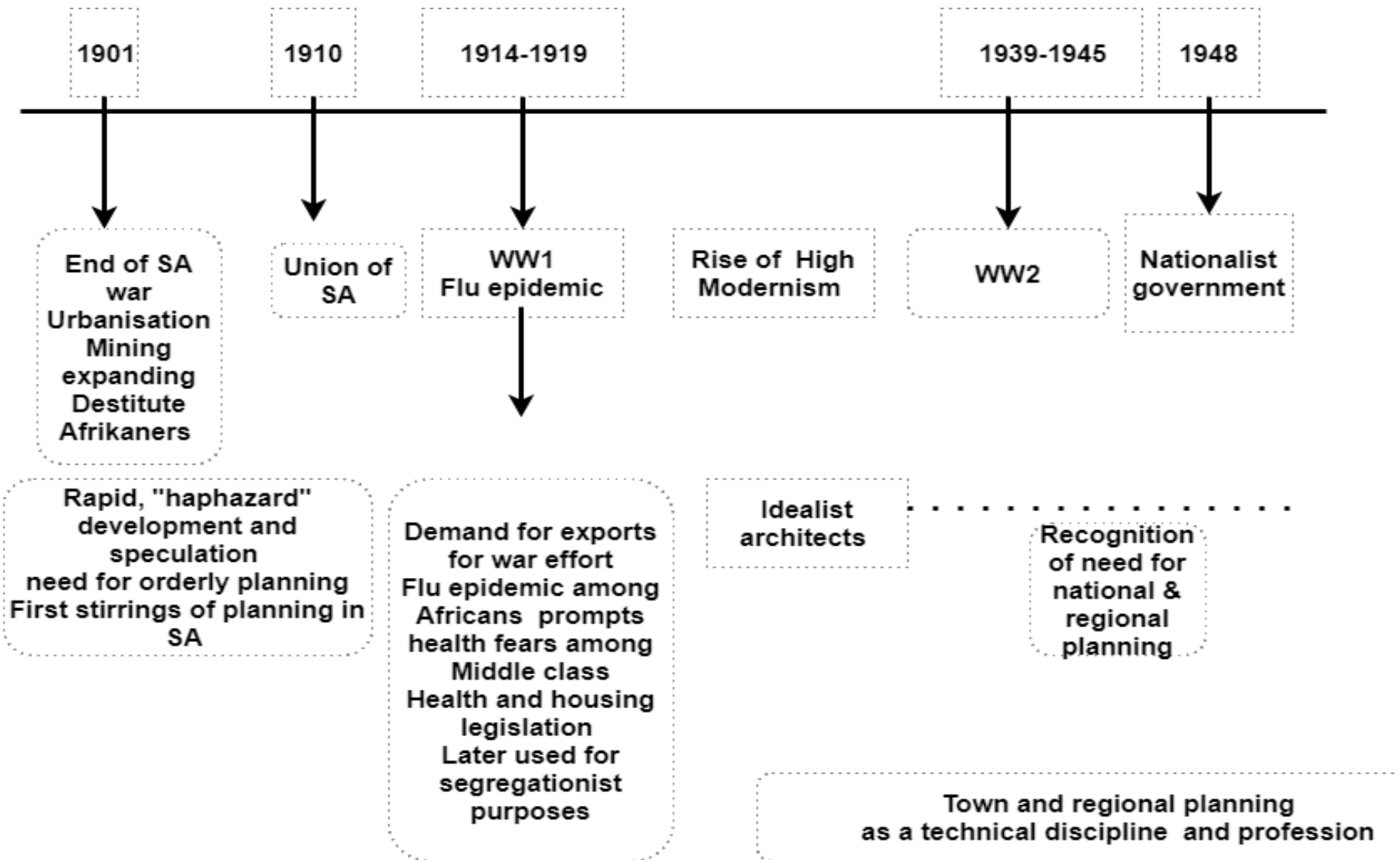
release phase
- the web breaks, the systems comes undone (after a shock)
- resources released; all kinds of capital (social, natural, economic) leaks away
- connections break, regulation weakens
- chaotic dynamics, uncertainty rules, destruction

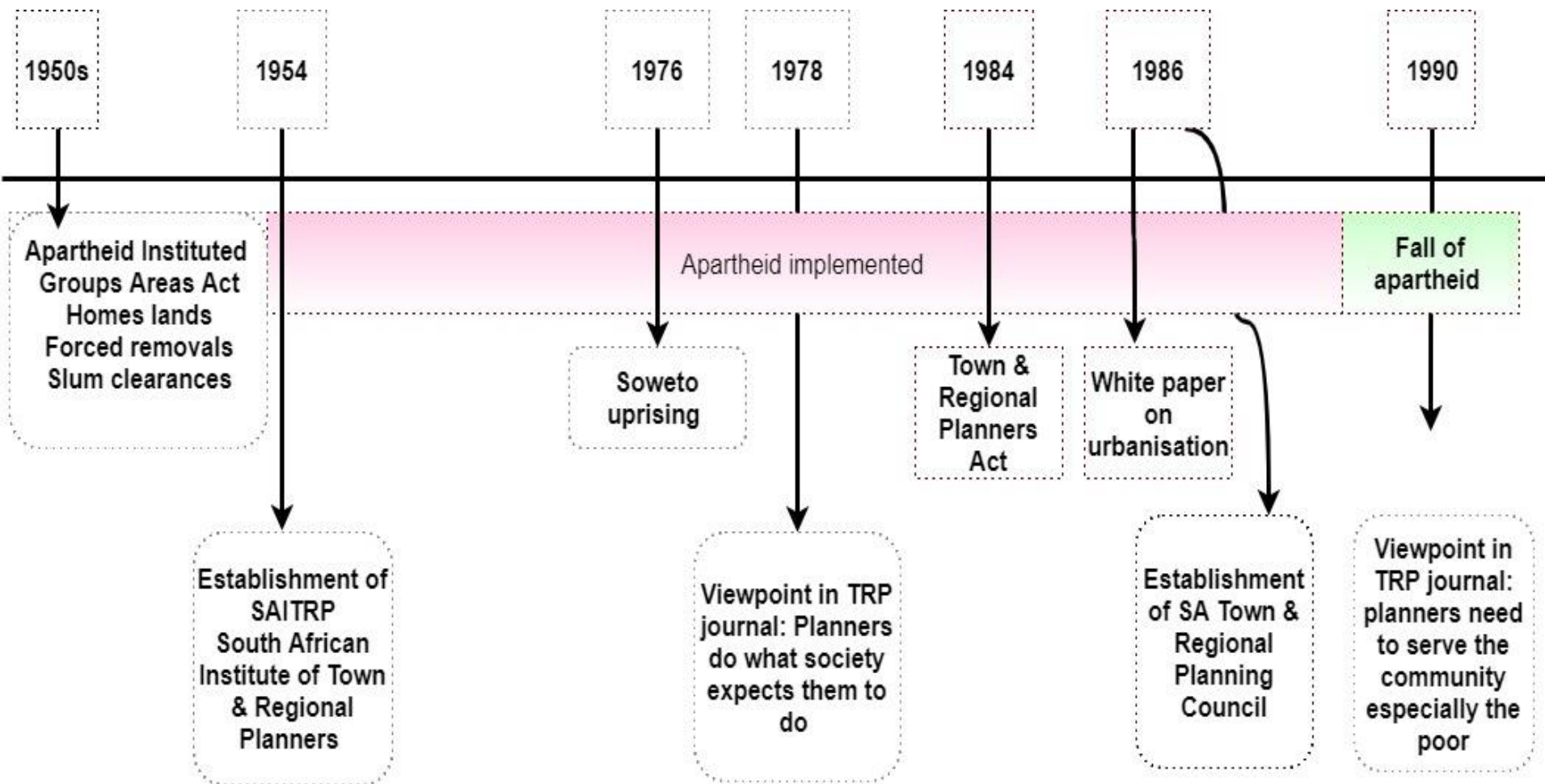
reorganization phase
- the destruction shows creative potential, all options open; previously suppressed pioneers or invaders show up; future up for grabs – or process of restoring
- novelty, invention, experimentation possible; released capital can regroup around new opportunities
- phase may (not) end with a new identity, a new basin of attraction (possibly through small chance events that shape the future)



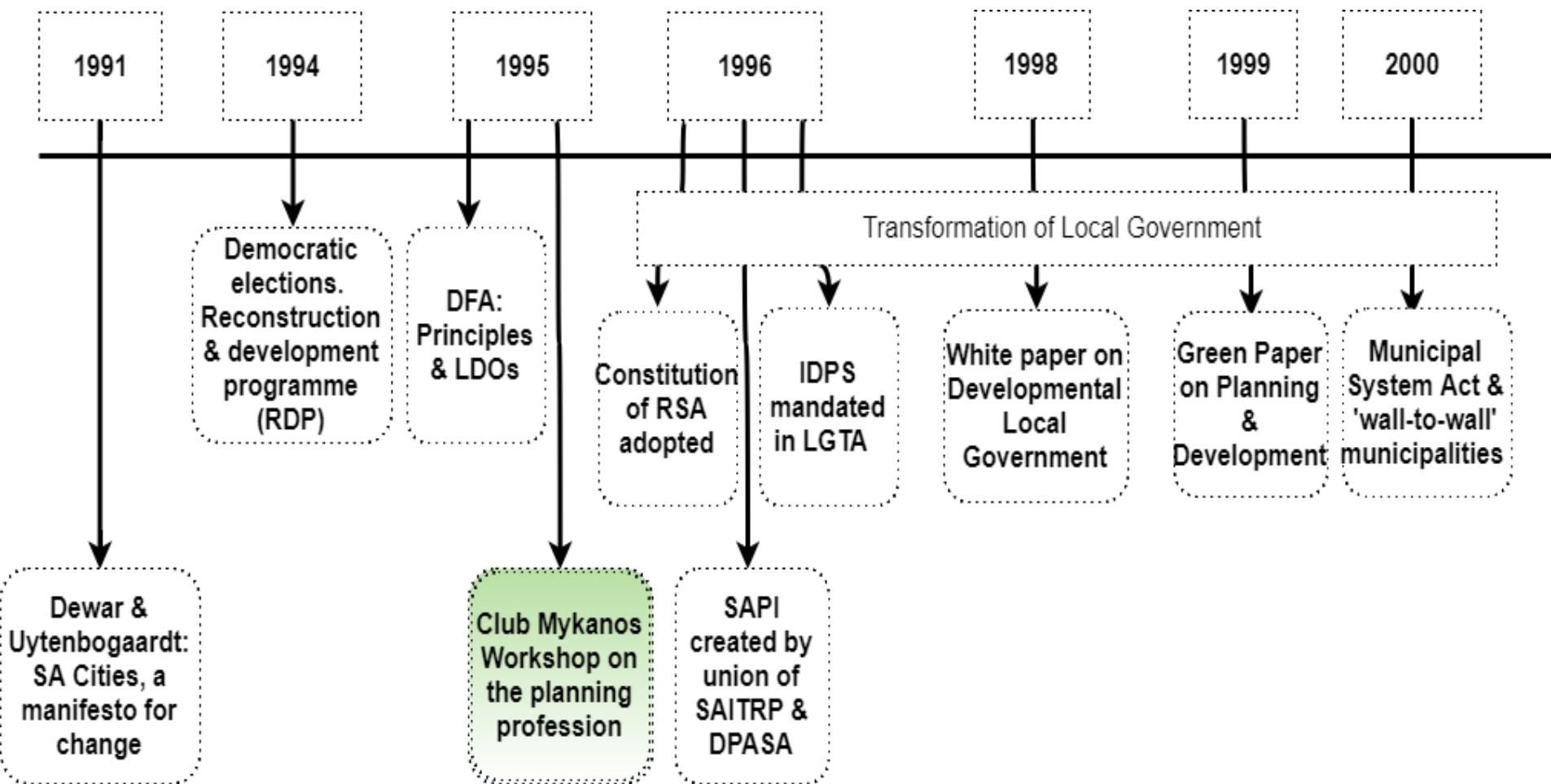


Efficiency & Resilience

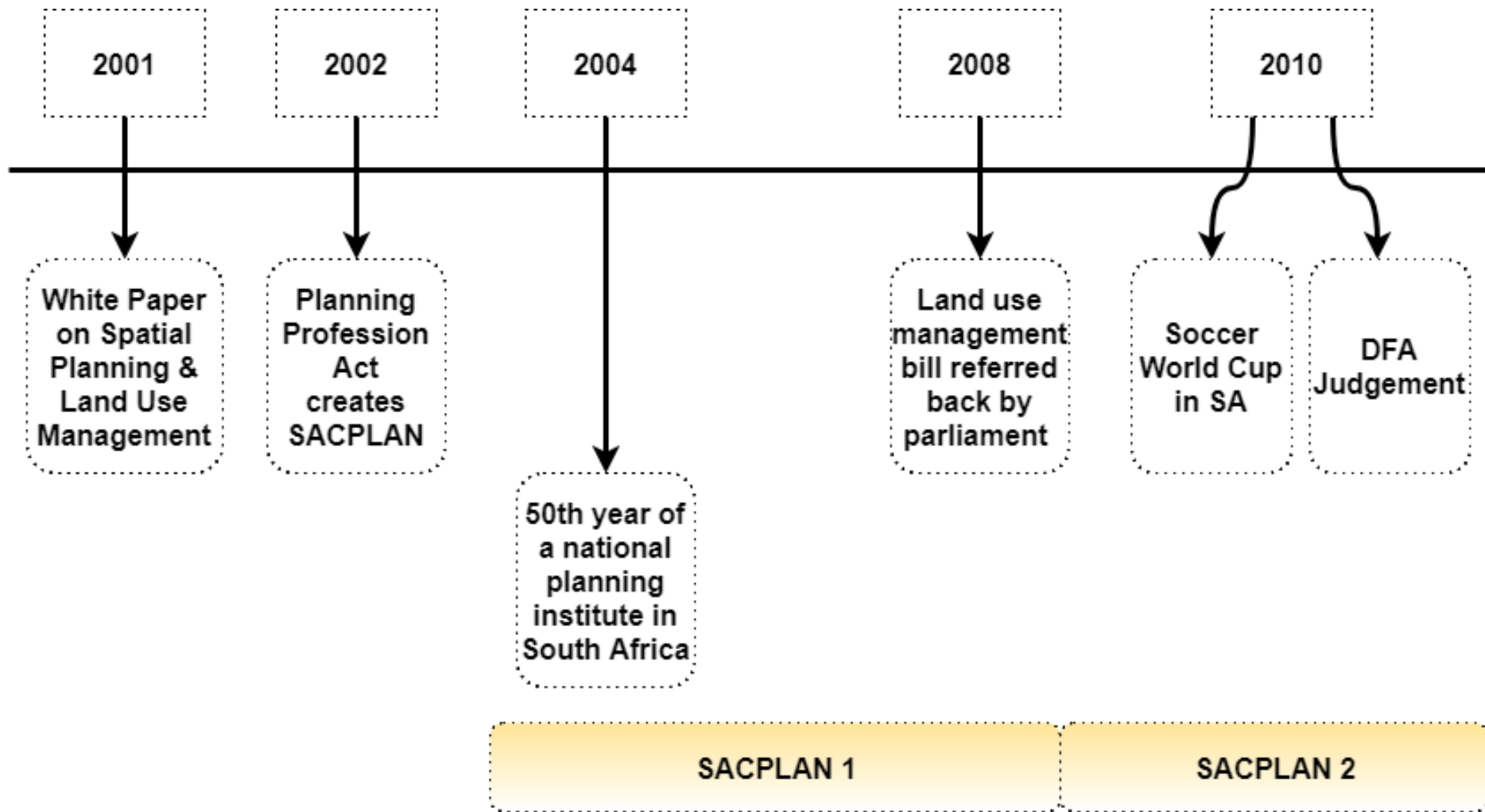




South African Planning Timeline



South African Planning Timeline

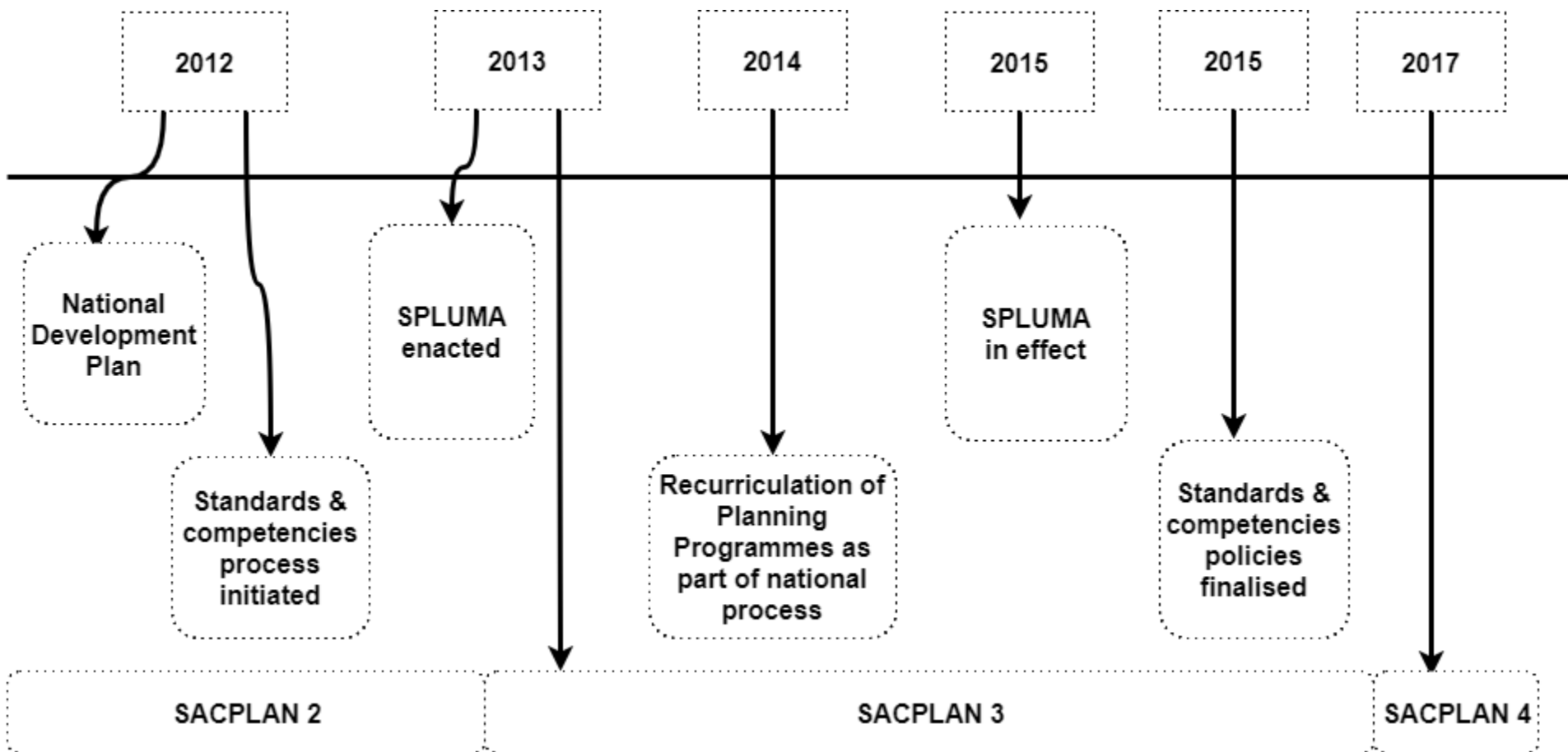


South African Planning Timeline



National
Research
Foundation





South African Planning Timeline

Application of the adaptive cycle

Post 1996

Re-organisation

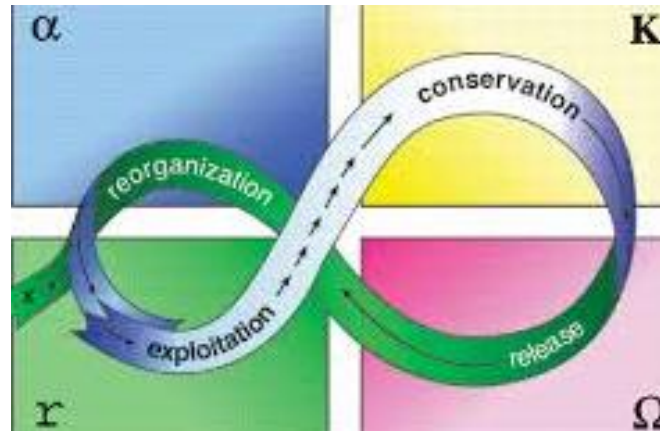
- Reorganisation of profession
- SPLUMA & principles
- Competencies & Standards

But: how deep is the change?

1920-1940s

Exploitation phase

- Growth
- Enthusiasm
- Energy



1950-1990s

Conservation phase

- Focus: technical
- Emphasis: control
- Support (or ignore) political ideology
- Rigidities in system and planning thought

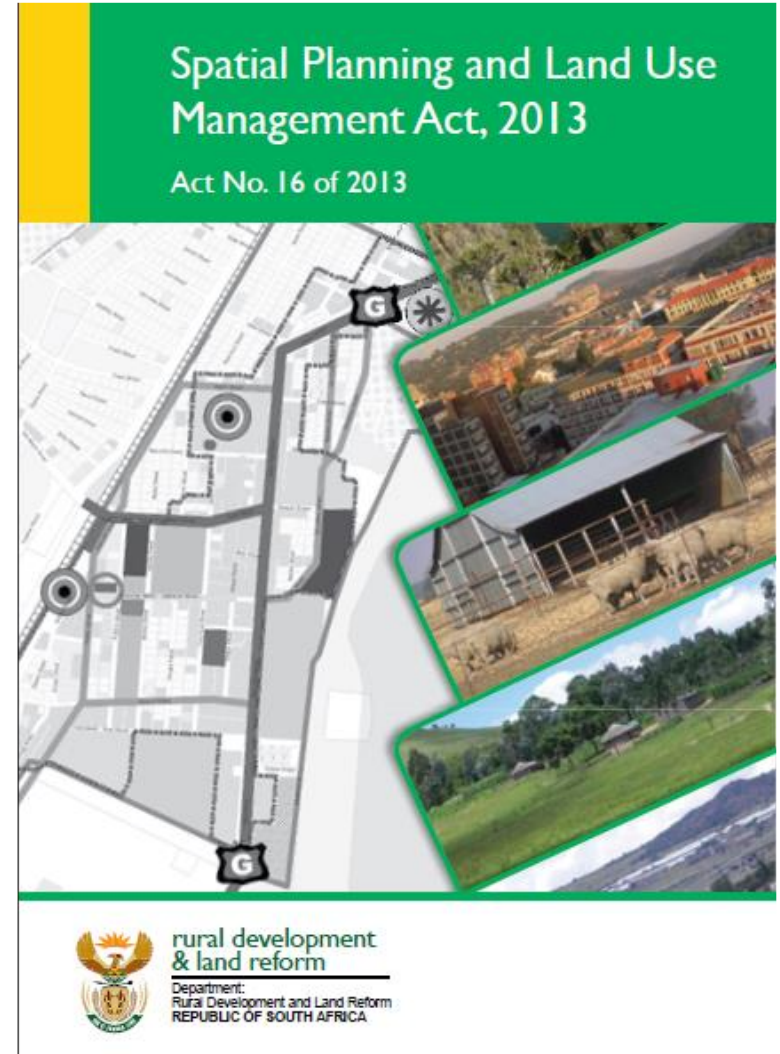
1990-1996

Release

- Breakdown of Apartheid
- New planning concepts
- DFA principles
- Demise of segregated planning institutions

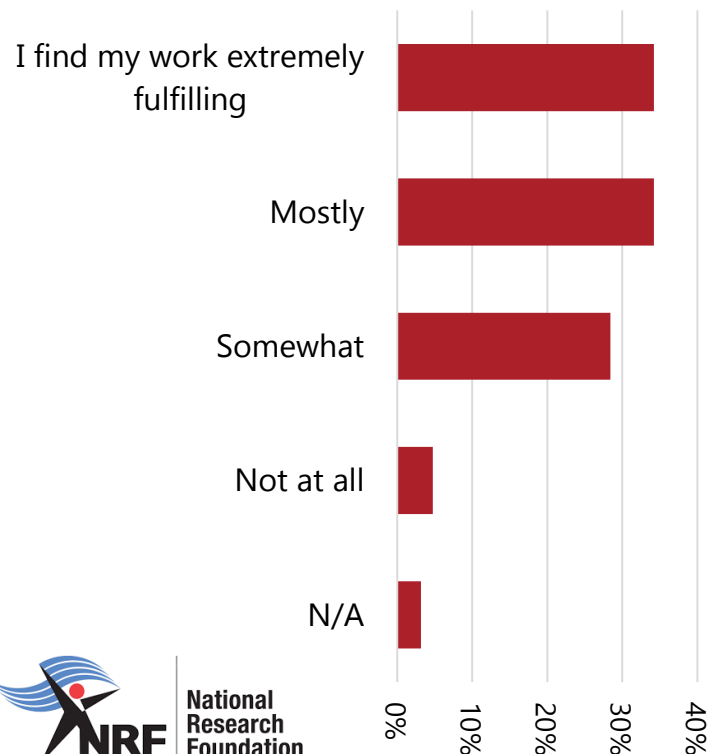
Resilience of SA Planning

- Legislation is finally in place
- Institutions (SAPI & SACPLAN) have changed
- Normative principles to guide planning
- Urban & regional spatial planning mandated in all spheres of government



Resilience of SA Planning

Do you find your work as a planner fulfilling?



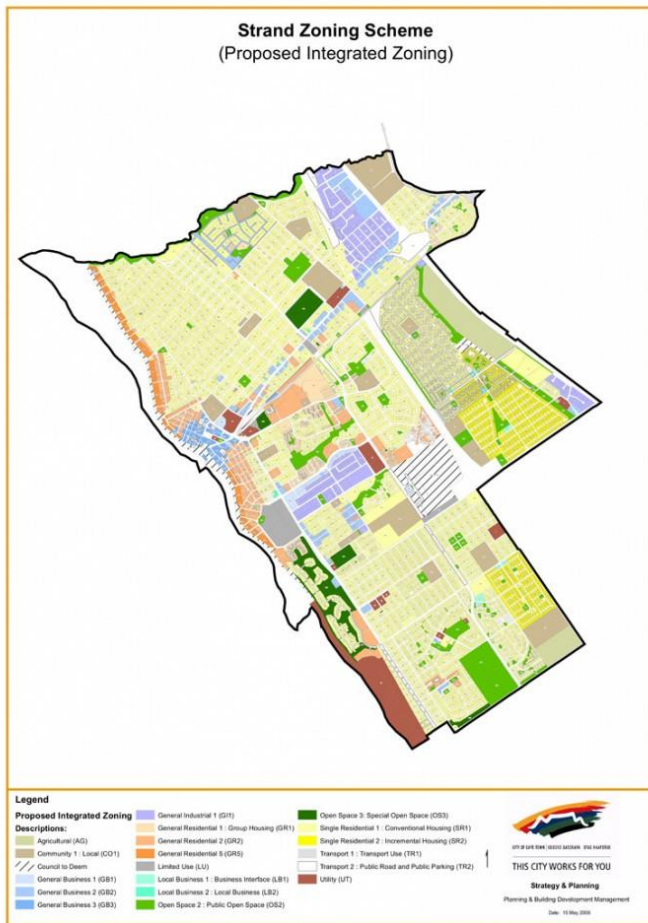
What was your main motivation for choosing a career in planning?

Reason	% (N=226)
Interest in the subject	38
Desire to change society	31
Advice of family & friends	13
Attracted by Course title	7
Other	13
	100

Research on SA applicability of SA curricula (SAPER) indicates that over 1/3 of planners want to make a difference

Work is fulfilling

Resilience of SA Planning



Yet planning not many student's first choice of career – unable to attract the best students and academic

‘Planning work’ done by land surveyors and lawyers

Control – eg implementation of zoning - still a strong focus of many planner's work and mindsets.

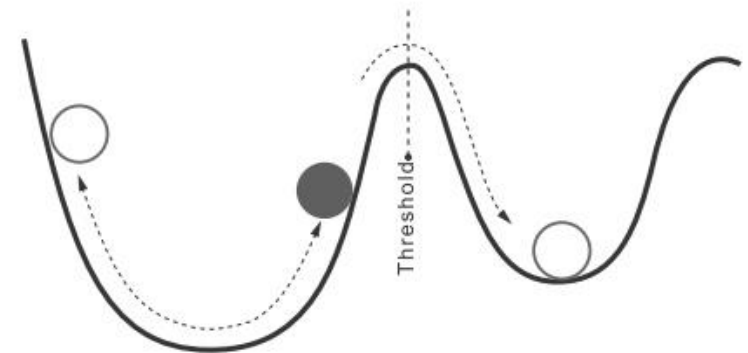
Resilience of SA Planning

- Some of the ingredients for change are there eg diversity of backgrounds and training and connections
- The profession has persisted, but has it transformed adaptively?

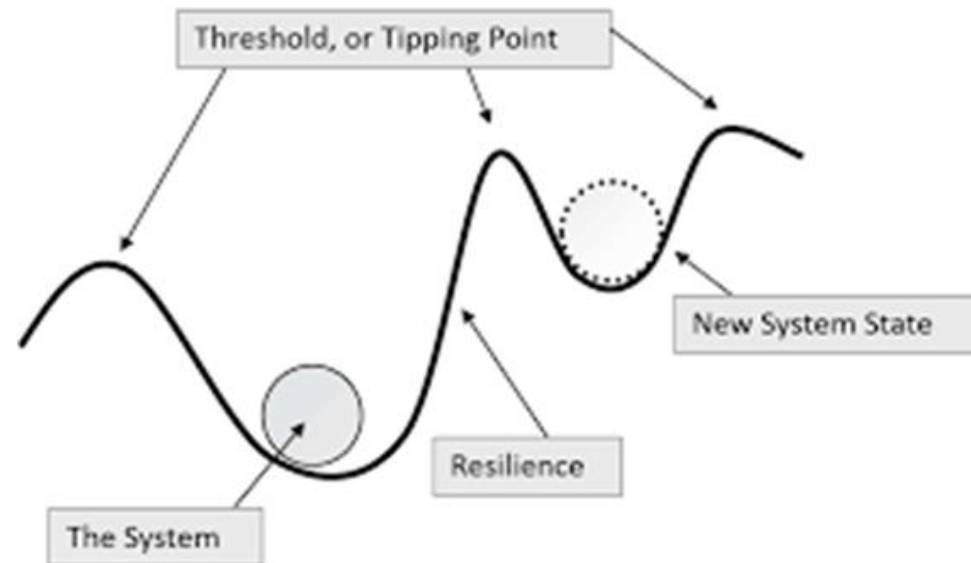


Resilience of SA Planning

- Bounced back to a new state
- But not necessarily an adaptive state
- Many old habits continue eg a control focus
- Spatial planning not changing the apartheid urban form



Ecological resilience concept



Conclusions

- The organisation of the profession has changed
- The legislation has changed
- Spatial planning and land use management elevated in national and municipal planning
- But has the profession changed?
 - Focus on control or enabling livelihoods, justice and renewal?
 - Status of the profession?

While some planners have not moved from conservation phase, the Profession is evolving, but at early stages of re-organisation - one of the most resilient phases

Thank you

Financial support from the South African National Research Foundation is acknowledged with gratitude

This presentation/paper is part of the South African Planning Education/ SAPER project

