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Reinventing Planning: Critical Reflections

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Abstract There is a growing acceptance in international development circles of the contribution a revitalised planning can make to addressing key urban challenges. Current expectations that planning can play roles in managing the growth of cities in ways that promote their sustainability, inclusiveness and liveability, contrasts with past perceptions of planning as an irrelevant discipline obsessed with spatial ordering and control. This paper considers whether the new forms of planning can address the challenges facing cities, with particular reference to the South African context. It does so through providing an overview of the shift in thinking about planning, and reflecting on the new agendas for planning as well as on some of their silences. It argues that the new approaches need to be understood in terms of contemporary urban and planning theories which are rethinking the nature of planning and its relationship to power and institutions, and which view cities as complex, dynamic places, embodying multiple interests and spatialities. These perspectives can help to enrich our understanding of the new approaches to planning, and to avoid ineffectiveness or a return to the negative elements of modernist planning of the past. The paper demonstrates the argument through focusing on some of the recent themes that have received attention in the contemporary international agendas for planning: the cross-cutting themes of sustainability and gender; the infrastructural turn in planning; and the ambiguities of the compact city. While these are quite particular concerns, they highlight the complexities of institutionalising the new approaches to planning, and ways of thinking about spatial planning.

Introduction

It is now common cause among international development agencies that cities and human settlements represent key points of focus for development intervention. Some 50% of the world's population already live in urban areas, and it is expected that this

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will rise to 70% by the middle of the century (UN-Habitat 2009). One billion people—32% of the global urban population—live in slums, and this figure could rise to 1.4 billion by 2025. By 2035, poverty will be a predominantly urban phenomenon (UN-Habitat 2006). It is not surprising then that some institutions talk of 'the century of the city' (Rockerfeller Foundation 2008). Coupled with broader social, economic and environmental trends, urban growth also brings challenges of rising levels of urban inequality, socio-spatial polarisation and divided, fragmented cities, in addition to the current and expected impacts of climate change and energy crises. Beyond images of urban apocalypse, there is increasing recognition of the key roles of cities as centres of economic growth, as places of creativity and innovation, where livelihoods are forged (e.g. see World Bank 2009; Landry 2000; Rakodi and Llyod-Jones 2002).

Planning—once seen in international development circles as an irrelevant discipline obsessed with spatial ordering and control—is being 'revisited' and 'reinvented' to play new roles in managing the growth of cities in ways that promote their sustainability, inclusiveness and liveability. New approaches to planning have of course been evolving for some time, including in South Africa, although in many parts of the world, traditional forms of planning and planning sensibilities still hold sway to a greater or lesser extent. The 2006 Vancouver Declaration developed for the World Planners Congress, 'Reinventing Planning: A New Governance Paradigm for Managing Human Settlements', talks of the importance of a 'new urban planning'. More recently, planning has been the subject of the Global Report on Human Settlements, entitled 'Planning Sustainable Cities' of the UN-Habitat (2009). The document provides a critical reflection on past and present concepts and practices of planning across the world, and suggests important directions for change.

This paper considers whether the new forms of planning can address the challenges facing cities, with particular reference to the South African context. It does so through providing an overview of the shift in thinking about planning, and reflecting on the new agendas for planning as well as on some of their silences. It argues that the new approaches need to be understood in terms of contemporary urban and planning theories which are rethinking the nature of planning and its relationship to power and institutions, and which view cities as complex, dynamic places, embodying multiple interests and spatialities. These perspectives can help to enrich our understanding of the new approaches to planning, and to avoid ineffectiveness or a return to the negative elements of modernist planning of the past. The paper demonstrates the argument through focusing on some of the themes which have received attention in the contemporary international agendas for planning: the cross-cutting themes of sustainability and gender; the infrastructural turn in planning; and the ambiguities of the compact city. These are areas of my own research, but they can also be used to highlight the complexities of institutionalising the new approaches to planning, and ways of thinking about spatial planning.

Evolving Approaches

Planning as a discipline has evolved from one focused largely on 'the creation of the physical framework of human life' (Mallows 1967, p.2) to a much broader set of

concerns in the contemporary era (Healey 2010). In the early years of 'modern town planning', two broad strands dominated: a functionalist stream, concerned with efficiency and order, and embedded in utilitarian philosophy, and a social reformist reaction to the 'city awful' of the industrial revolution, which produced new visions of the city and urban settlements. Patricios (1976) argued that it was largely the functionalist tradition which dominated after the First World War, and which was carried through into South Africa. Yet several strands within the social reform tradition—an uneasiness with the complexity and messiness of cities and their growth, an anti-urban sentiment, an emphasis on settlements designed in terms of principles of land use separation, low density development, traffic separation and the like—were carried through into planning in South Africa (Watson 2002).

By the late 1950s, while the modernist tradition was taking root in apartheid South Africa, an international critique of this type of planning began to emerge. Anthropologists Young and Wilmott (1957) showed how the displacement of slum communities in London into new designed environments fragmented families, and made daily life less convenient and convivial, even if basic services were improved. In several later studies, the negative effects of these designed environments on crime and safety, gender inequalities, amongst other aspects, were added to the critique (Coleman 1985; Mackenzie and Rose 1983; Pain 2001). In the USA, Jane Jacobs (1961) launched a fundamental attack on the anti-urbanism of planning ideas of the time, while studies of modernist planning in developing countries argued that it suppressed and marginalised the livelihoods of the poor (Madhu 1982; Peattie 1990). The association between forced removals, social engineering and planning, and the disjuncture between designed spaces and the everyday lives of diverse groups of people within cities, are important elements of what has been termed the 'dark side' of modern planning—its tendency towards ordering and control, the way it has been used in practice to exclude and divide cities socially, and to promote the interests of the powerful (Flyvbjerg 1998; Yiftachel 1995). A large body of South African scholarship has shown how planning was used in service of apartheid—although it also served other purposes—and has echoed and amplified many of these criticisms (e.g. Mabin and Smit 1997; Watson 2002; Smith 1992).

Internationally, critiques of modernist planning—and social movements which emerged in response to these and other urban problems—spawned a 'politicisation of planning' (Muller 1982, p.2), in which 'efficiency' was being 'supplanted by the tenets of social justice, resource redistribution, conflict acceptance, equity and equality' (Ibid.). A range of new approaches to planning emerged, seeking to respond to the pressing social issues of the day. Advocacy planning, radical planning and other forms of participatory community centred planning emerged. In South Africa, progressive 'service organisations' emerged, concerned with the supporting resistance to apartheid in the sphere of urban development. In organisations such as the Built Environment Support Group, Development Action Group and Planact, planners, architects and other urban activists worked with civics and unions and in the interaction developed new and localised forms of radical planning.

International critiques of modernist planning were not only based on questions of social justice. One function of town planning was to provide a projection of the spatial future of an area, and to indicate the location, density and intensity of land uses. This would enable engineers to project requirements for various services, as

well as allow planners to manage growth and change in accordance with the plan. In several contexts, plans were not based on strong social or economic analysis nor did they engage with the way markets and politics were shaping the city (Harris 1983). Many plans developed at the height of modernist planning in the 1960s for example failed to anticipate changing social patterns (for example in household size and structure), and the impact of the 1970s recession on economic activities, discrediting this form of planning (Healey et al. 1997).

Critics argued that the 'master planning' approach that dominated formal planning practice did not address the real conditions and dynamics of rapidly growing cities in developing countries, and the extent of poverty, inequality and informality (Devas 1993; UN-Habitat 2009). Plans were static instruments which took so long to produce that they were soon out of date, and paid little attention to implementation. In some countries, powerful agencies made decisions about infrastructure without reference to spatial plans (Sivaramakrishan and Green 1986). Provision of large-scale systems of infrastructure was frequently confined to limited areas of the city, as cities grew beyond their original boundaries. By 2006, for example, such infrastructural systems only covered some 10% of Lagos (Gandy 2006).

Although modernist planning has been severely criticised internationally, there is new interest in a revitalised planning, and the roles it might play in development. The 2009 Global Report on Human Settlements points to the importance of the contextual challenges of rapidly growing, sprawling cities, with high levels of poverty and inequality. Further, growing attention to the effects of disasters, climate change and questions of sustainability have also raised the profile of planning (UN-Habitat 2009). The links between planning, forms of urban development and sustainability—from the way cities are organised spatially and their use of energy (Newman and Kenworthy 2000), to how planning might work with—rather than against—natural systems in the city (Hough 1995), to the links between planning and disaster management—are increasingly recognised.

The 'good governance' agendas of international agencies such as the World Bank and the UN-Habitat, have also spawned new interest in forms of integrated development planning in the context of decentralisation to local government (Harrison 2006a).

New forms of strategic spatial planning are emerging internationally as cities and regions attempt to adapt to economic restructuring and to the need to collaborate across growing city regions (Healey et al. 1997; Healey 2007). In addition, they are gaining ground in response to what Graham and Marvin (2001) has termed 'splintering urbanism'. Their work shows how local fiscal constraints coupled with a neo-liberal turn in policy since the 1980s has enabled the growth of privatised and market led forms of urban development and urban infrastructure provision in many countries.[1] These have exacerbated trends towards sprawling, fragmented, divided cities. In several countries (Irazabel et al. 2008), including South Africa, the dominance of discourses of growth and a laissez faire approach to planning permission have facilitated development in ways that contradict formal spatial plans

[1] These patterns are not uniform and have occurred in different ways across contexts—see UN-Habitat (2009) for a general review, Hirt and Stanilov (2008) for East European contexts, Irazabel et al. (2008) on Latin America, Zerah (2008) on India and Kooy and Bakker(2008) on Jakarta.

(Breetzke 2008; Walker 2008). Large mega-projects—stadia, residential and mixed use enclaves, airports and the like have also driven the spatial form of urban development contrary to plans (Swyngedouw et al. 2002; Shatkin 2007).

In several countries, such as the UK (Ellis et al. 2008), Australia, New Zealand, South Africa (Todes 2009), and in parts of Africa,[2] the demand for planners rose on the back of some of these trends. The resurgence of planning was also the consequence of the property boom, and the way planning was used to promote urban competitiveness and the search for 'world class cities', for instance through urban regeneration and reimaging of places (Lovering 2009). For example in South Africa, by 2008, land use planning was a key focus for planning (Faling 2010), in contrast to around 2000, when these activities were declining. Internationally, several new master planned modernist towns and communities were developed or planned, particularly in the Middle East and Asia (Ansari 2008; Yuan 2008; Nassar 2008), and in some parts of Africa where planning is resurgent, it is on quite traditional lines. Thus, recent trends also appear to have revalorised traditional forms of planning, although these may not be sustained in the current economic crisis (Lovering 2009).

In contrast to the progressive views of the potential of planning, more conservative approaches often dominate in practice. Watson (2009) shows the persistence of traditional master planning in several African and Asian countries, and the way planning regulation has been used to justify the removal of informal settlements. For example, extensive removals were associated with the Abuja Master Plan in Nigeria (UN-Habitat 2009), as well as the development of several cities in China (Watson 2009). Reviews of the position of informal traders in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Skinner 2008; Bhowmik 2005; Roever 2006) suggest there this activity is suppressed in many countries, and there are few places where it is recognised and appropriately managed by planning.

Reinventing Planning

It is apparent that the scope and breadth of planning has widened. Although the discussion of the changing nature of planning has been quite generalised, planning traditions vary considerably. The contextuality of planning and the need to develop locally appropriate systems of planning is an important point of departure of the Global Report, in contrast to the way standardised planning concepts and 'best practices' have travelled in the past. The Report reflects emerging new approaches and thinking across the world, and it draws on the work of Healey (2004) to define planning as follows:

> 'a self-conscious collective (societal) effort to imagine or re-imagine a town, city, region or wider territory and to translate the result into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, new or upgraded areas of settlement, strategic infrastructure investments and principles of land use regulation...' (p.47)

[2] See several papers presented at the African Association of Planning Schools conference in 2008.

> Planning is seen as a strategic activity, focusing on interventions that 'really make a difference to the futures of an area over time.' (Ibid.)

It is a 'mode of governance...driven by the articulation of policies through some kind of deliberative process and the judgement of collective action in relation to these policies. Planning is not, therefore, a neutral technical exercise; it is shaped by values which must be made explicit, and planning itself is fundamentally concerned with making ethical judgements' (Ibid.)

Planners are seen as one set of actors in a broader planning system, and amongst a much larger number of players shaping urban development.

Although there are some differences between agendas, taken together, they broadly emphasise:

- Sustainability
- Social justice: participatory processes involving open dialogue; inclusive, pro-poor planning; gender sensitivity; responsiveness to diversity
- Responsiveness to markets, promotion of access to land for the poor, and an acceptance of the role of informality
- Integrated development, policy alignment, and the role of planning in the spatial coordination of policies
- seeing planning and implementation as linked processes

These are not entirely new for planning in South Africa—indeed, for the most part they chime with post-apartheid policies affecting planning, although there are some gaps in policy, and practice has been more problematic. For instance, traditional forms and discourses of land use management remain in place; participatory processes have been weak; policy is ambiguous about informality; and there has been little explicit attention to gender, diversity and poverty (see Harrison et al. 2008).

There are some obvious silences in the new international agendas. Perhaps most important is the lack of attention to urban economies, although the need to understand property markets and economic trends is noted (Farmer et al. 2006; UN-Habitat 2009). There is considerable focus on the significance of informal economies for livelihoods, and how planning might accommodate these needs. Similarly, there is much reference in the report and elsewhere to some of the new epiphenomena of the current era of globalisation and economic growth—to the emergence of cities as sites of spectacle, consumption, tourism and knowledge economies—and to the ways in which discourses associated with promoting these kinds of cities are shaping development in cities and processes of inclusion and exclusion (e.g. Robinson 2002; Shatkin 2007). These two points of focus however miss much of the real economy of the city, and the way in which globalisation and economic change are recomposing a large range of economic activities and their spatialities. For instance in Durban, the dramatic growth of port activity and changing ways in which goods are shipped, stored and transported, impact considerably on the areas close to the port, on transport routes, as well as the use of industrial space across the city.[3]

[3] I am grateful to Mike Kahn, emeritus professor of planning at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for a discussion of some of the dynamics at work.

These are potentially important areas of research for planning in South Africa. While local economic development has become an important field for planners, there has been too little focus on understanding economies in relation to spatial planning. In the South African context, spatial planning has relied on a set of concepts which make assumptions about relationships between spatial organisation and economic activity—such as the ubiquitous 'nodes' and 'corridors'—that turn attention away from looking at these issues (Harrison et al. 2008; Todes 2008a).

There are other silences—or perhaps barely audible whispers—is more accurate: around questions of planning's roles in shaping the quality of place and design, and around land use management. These tend to be seen as either luxuries of little use to the poor or as part of traditional planning's legacy of control. The Global Report does pay some attention to land use management, and suggests that it should not be simply dismissed, that it needs to be shaped contextually, and that it can only be established in places where it is meaningful and acceptable to people. These are reasonable gestures, but there are big conceptual questions about what might constitute appropriate forms of land use management and how equity and difference are taken up in these systems. These are areas for debate and exploration. Questions of land use management—its relevance, appropriate forms, and how it might address the diversity of needs in an equitable way—remain unresolved in South Africa. Here, traditional forms of land use management are integral to property values and are fiercely defended in parts of the city, but these exist in the context of remaining fragmented and differentiated systems inherited from the apartheid era. To date, attempts at legal reform at national level have failed. The larger conceptual issues remain to be fully addressed.

Beyond Utopian Planning

Despite the limitations of current agendas, they provide a useful starting point for thinking about planning and its future. They were informed by contemporary theoretical work in the field—as well as other intellectual influences. However, it is very easy for the new approaches to become another set of 'best practices' remedies, divorced from social and institutional contexts, carried through without a serious engagement with the different ways in which cities are being shaped—in short, a new form of utopian planning. Instead, the new agendas and the approaches they suggest need to be seen through the lenses of contemporary urban and planning theories which enable a more complex view of cities and planning.

Harrison (2002) provides a useful reflection on the way in which post-positivist theory (see Allmendinger 2002) is changing the way planning is viewed. He points to the contemporary emphases on 'communication, language, interpretation, power, values and ethics' (p.3), all of which are evident in the Global Report, although he argues that these ways of 'knowing and doing' needed to be seen alongside more traditional scientific and instrumental reasoning, rather than displacing them entirely.

Planning as a communicative process relies on mobilising actors, developing arguments and discourses that will travel, rather than relying on plans on paper

(Healey 2005, 2007). It depends on an understanding of institutions,[4] the everyday ways in which discourses and practices shape the prospects for particular kinds of development, how power is exercised, and the way decisions are made. Healey (2005) argues that a key capacity for planners is to be able to read the dynamics of the contexts in which they find themselves, and to act in strategic ways. Strategic planning that attempts to reshape the long-term future of places is seen as a process of reframing ways in which these places are 'summoned up' and understood (Healey 2007)—the way meanings are attached, how problems and priorities are identified, and the spatial ideas that become valued as fixes or solutions. Several authors (e.g. Hillier 2008; Healey 2007) have emphasised that this kind of planning is a long-term, iterative and messy process involving argument, persuasion and inspiration, that is likely to have unintended and unpredictable outcomes.

Healey's work has been criticised for its neglect of the way power and inequality affect the outcomes of planning processes, as well as for its underlying assumptions of a liberal democratic society (Flyvbjerg 1998; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998; Watson 2006). Watson (2006) argues that these assumptions do not travel well, particularly to Southern contexts where 'deep differences'—structural inequalities and differences in ways of being and seeing—are more likely.[5] Rather than consensus building collaboration, several authors argue that planning episodes are likely to be characterised by struggle and conflict (see, e.g. Hillier 2002; Ploger 2004; Pieterse 2008).[6] Harrison (2006b), drawing on Watson's (2003) work, talks about planning as negotiating and mediating between conflicting rationalities. These arguments are very real in South Africa, where perhaps the most important recent strategic spatial intervention, the introduction of the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT) has resulted in violent conflict in Johannesburg. Thus planning of this sort is not an easy, straightforward or technocratic process as conceived in traditional planning, although technical skill is required.

Clearly, cities need to be understood in more complex ways. Harrison (2006b) encapsulated the way cities have come to be seen as embodying diverse and fluid identities and relationships, different ways of being and living in cities, varying livelihoods and the multiple ways in which people use and actively (re-)make space in cities. These emphases, deriving from the literature on everyday life (e.g. Rigg 2007), African cities (Simone 2004), and relational conceptions of space (Massey 2005; Healey 2007), amongst others, help to move beyond pre-given assumptions of how cities work spatially, what peoples' needs are, and how cities should be structured or restructured by planning. Recent literature on Johannesburg, for example by Bremner (2004) and Mbembe and Nuttall (2008) helps to destabilise the binaries associated with the usual conceptions of a divided and unequal city. They challenge for instance, assumptions of the peripherality and spatial marginality of townships. Nevertheless, these perspectives need to be seen alongside more standard evidence showing long travel times to work and poor public transport, and the deep spatial divides in income, employment and access to services across the city, and the

[4] See also the literature applying new institutionalism to planning, such as Vigar et al. (2000), and a special issue of *Planning Theory* 1(10), 2005, amongst others.

[5] See also Yiftachel (2006), Roy (2009) on seeing planning from south and eastern perspectives.

[6] The literature on agonism considers how conflict can be incorporated in planning (see Ploger 2004; Hillier 2002).

more recent evidence of the growing differentiation between and within former townships.

Thus, the recent scholarly literature on urban and planning theory is beginning to think about cities and planning in more complex ways. These theories, together with substantive literature on particular areas of focus, help to enrich understanding of some of the contemporary approaches to planning. The rest of the paper demonstrates this point by focusing on four of the recent themes that have received attention in the contemporary agendas: the cross-cutting themes of sustainability and gender, the infrastructural turn in planning, and the ambiguities of the compact city.

The Cross-Cutting Themes: Sustainability and Gender

Contemporary planning places much emphasis on the idea of 'integrated development', which includes 'mainstreaming' 'cross-cutting' issues such as sustainability and gender in planning. In practice, these ideas have been difficult to achieve.

While Patrick Geddes (1915), one of the founding fathers of planning put place, or land and its relationship to economic activity and population, at the centre of planning, by the 1960s, landscape architect McHarg (1969) could comment that the most basic environmental concerns were not routinely considered in planning. Although the promotion of sustainability is now being seen as one of the central tasks for a revitalised planning, and there have been many initiatives at an international scale to enable the mainstreaming of sustainability in planning, practice still falls short of intentions in many countries. While sustainability has come to define planning in a few countries such as Australia and New Zealand (2007; Dixon et al. 1997), Nadin (2003) and Jepson (2004) show that it is unevenly incorporated in Europe and the USA.

In South Africa, sustainability is poorly integrated into planning, despite policy pronouncements. Environmental management has emerged as a parallel legal and institutional system to planning. These divided systems are resulting in duplicated development application processes, notwithstanding capacity shortfalls on both sides (Todes et al. 2009). This division is not simply the consequence of parallel sets of legislation and institutions—although this is important in enabling the emergence of competing bureaucracies with their own institutional logics and values. It is also the result of the competing interests, agendas and traditions of agencies (Todes et al. 2009; Degeling 1995), as well as differences in professional training, discourses and practices. These are not necessarily static, and as research in KwaZulu-Natal showed (Todes et al. 2009), there are some common discourses and storylines that could be built on, however a bland reference to 'mainstreaming' and 'integration' is insufficient.

There is a similarly significant emphasis in the international planning agendas on including women and gender in planning through mainstreaming approaches. The review of Todes et al. (2008) on good practice in incorporating gender in planning in Commonwealth countries suggests that while there are many guidelines on how to incorporate gender in planning, and there are several exemplary cases of projects

which include gender in diverse ways,[7] the limited literature available suggests that guidelines are not generally being translated into practice. The review of Greed (2006) of the UK where a lobby for gender mainstreaming is long established, shows that while some local authorities are including gender in strategic planning, it is not evident in most cases. In contrast to expectations by international agencies (IULA 1998) that decentralisation to local government would improve women's access to power and resources, research on several African countries (Beall 2005; Ahikire 2004; Todes 2008b) shows that gender power relations and inequalities infuse local politics, marginalising women's voice. While gender mainstreaming was intended to occur in South Africa's integrated development planning (IDP) processes, it tended to be marginalised in both national training processes around IDPs and in the formulation of municipal plans (Todes et al. 2007). Nevertheless, there are interesting nuances in South Africa where women are being included in development projects since project managers see them as more interested and reliable (see Beall and Todes 2004), and as a consequence of national guidelines requiring their representation in infrastructural projects (Todes et al. 2007).

Although it might be argued that the idea of gender mainstreaming within planning is still in its inception, and that it is a long-term process, there is also cause for concern that standard approaches are not conceptually adequate to the task. In exploring the limits of the mainstreaming agenda in development and planning, several analysts have pointed to broader contextual and political processes shaping the prospects for this kind of focus. This context includes the influence of an independent women's movement and of organised civil society (Hassim 2006); and the ways in which broader political agendas shape processes of decentralisation and the promotion of gender equity. For instance, Heller (2008) argues that in the well-known cases of Porto Alegre in Brazil and Kerala in India where decentralisation was associated with widening democracy including gender equity, it was used as a form of political mobilisation by a marginal political party. Several authors (e.g. Mukhopadhayay 2007) have argued that the mainstreaming approach is essentially technocratic and has detracted from what is a political process. It may also be the case that gender mainstreaming is blocked by relatively conservative social forces. Yet beyond these influences, it is also important to explore what happens to feminist agendas within state bureaucracies, and how they are shaped by both formal and informal practices and processes of power, organisational cultures, norms and discourses within bureaucracies, and the way these relate to external pressures and agendas.[8]

Similar points could be made about the project of integration within planning. The promotion of new agendas and approaches within planning will not simply occur through exhortation, the production of manuals or training, or through the development of methodologies and organograms showing how mainstreaming or integration can occur in the planning process. Instead, integration involves bringing

[7] Such as the Plymouth gender audit conducted as part of the strategic plan (although recommendations were not subsequently implemented); the Integrated Built Environment Development Project in Thatta Pakistan where women were specifically included in participation processes and were targeted by the activities of the project; and the gender audits in the Safer Cities projects in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, for example.

[8] This kind of research is currently being undertaken by Amanda Williamson.

together institutions which may have competing institutional logics, agendas and discourses, or attempting to carry through ideas into organisations that might have very different ways of doing and understanding that make the translation of these ideas difficult. The political pressure to change these ideas may not be present, or may not translate in any automatic way into changes within the institution and its practices. Thus giving effect to integration requires dealing with discursive and political processes, involving argument and persuasion, but also an understanding of institutions and power within these contexts.

Linking Infrastructure and Spatial Planning

Internationally, there are growing arguments for linking spatial planning to infrastructure[9] (UN-Habitat 2009; Neuman 2009; Singh and Steinberg 1996). In contrast to master planning, the emphasis is on the role infrastructure plays in shaping the spatial form of cities at a local and a larger scale. Roads and transport infrastructure are most important here, since they influence accessibility and affect land values (Boarnet and Haughwout 2000), but other types of infrastructure—water, electricity, waste, open space, parks, pedestrian routes, community facilities such as schools, clinics, libraries etc. are also considered. Some analysts argue for the inclusion of the 'green infrastructure'—land for preservation for environmental purposes, agriculture, open space and so on (Low-Choy 2005). One can also think about infrastructure that promotes sustainability, and forms of spatial planning that support public transport would be critical here.

At a local scale, it implies the design or redevelopment of local areas of cities, such as around the development of informal markets, improving urban safety, informal settlement upgrading, housing for displaced people, etc. There is potential to embrace participatory approaches involving various groupings, and the emphasis on inclusion, diversity and liveability. At a larger scale, linking infrastructure planning to strategic spatial planning provides a way of giving effect to broad strategic directions.

Is this a return to a functionalist approach—is it a new form of utilitarianism? There are certainly dangers that need recognition. For instance in Australia, where there have been initiatives to link infrastructure to strategic spatial planning (SGS 2006), Dodson (2009) argues that infrastructure planning is displacing strategic spatial planning, resulting in the neglect of broader social and environmental concerns. However, putting infrastructure at the centre of strategic spatial planning does not imply that it is the only driver of the spatial organisation of cities, nor indeed that it results in fixed or final forms. City growth and urban spatial form is shaped in multiple ways—by changing technologies, economies, social life, politics and policies, for example. There are many debates over the relationship between infrastructure development and urban growth, for example over whether highway development drives suburbanisation (see Boarnet and Haughwout 2000, for a review). And in many countries, peripheral informal growth is occurring beyond urban infrastructure on land in low value unserviced and relatively inaccessible areas

[9] This section and the next reflect on and extends research undertaken for UN-Habitat (2009).

(Yuan 2008; Hirt and Stanilov 2008; Irazabel et al. 2008). Indeed, a key argument for the focus on infrastructure is to provide sufficient long-term trunk infrastructure in advance of urban growth, around which private and informal development can occur (Archer 1996). Angel (2008) for example argues for the development of a grid of arterial roads to accommodate urban growth, which over the long term could carry public transport and other major land uses.

There have been several initiatives to link strategic spatial planning and infrastructure planning internationally—for example, in the well-known case of Curitiba and its BRT system, and in the relationships between spatial planning and transport in Amsterdam (Bertolini 2007; Le Clercq and Bertolini 2003). A number of cities in South Africa are exploring links between spatial planning, infrastructure and budgets in response to concerns that their broad spatial frameworks—themselves a reaction against master planning—have been too loose to influence development. These initiatives also move beyond the tendency to divorce planning from implementation. Fiscal limitations and infrastructural crises are giving even more weight to these efforts. Johannesburg, with its growth management strategy (COJ 2008) that links directly to infrastructure is perhaps the most advanced of these initiatives, but is still relatively recent.

Linking infrastructure and spatial planning, however is not a simple modernist equation. A critical assessment of existing initiatives suggests the importance of a strong understanding of the forces shaping urban development, and the role of the markets, but also of collaborative processes of engagement with stakeholders (SGS 2006; Mattingly 2001). It requires an understanding of planning as a discursive and political process. There are very few examples of plans that are laid out on paper and simply followed over several decades: Curitiba is relatively unusual, and even there the picture is more complicated (Irazabel et al. 2008). Even in Amsterdam, a convenient spatial form and good transport-planning links have emerged through an evolving set of policies and influences (Bertolini 2007). In Asian contexts, initiatives to link spatial planning and infrastructure were marginalised by political decision making (Mattingly and Winarso 2000). Thus, linking planning to infrastructure may bring planners closer to engineers, but it also requires recognition of strategic spatial planning as a political process, and as part of governance. Planning here is not necessarily a plan on paper that is simply carried through—it may be an iterative process, an input into decision making, a longer-term process of building-up discursive power that shapes urban change. And outcomes may be other than those anticipated. This is different from planning as instrumentalism.

The Ambiguities of the Compact City

Another contemporary theme of importance for spatial planning is the idea of promoting compact cities as an alternative to much criticised design approaches associated with modern town planning. It is argued that the dense, mixed use and public transport oriented development proposed is more sustainable, efficient and inclusive. There has been extensive debate over these claims and over the key argument that higher density cities use less energy, since commuters can rely on public transport or walk. Evidence for the density energy relationship is however

fairly robust (see UN-Habitat 2009 for a summary of the debate), and over the longer term, with declining oil resources and rising prices, arguments for compaction are likely to gain greater weight. However, the ways in which higher densities are achieved needs attention: density has several components (Senior 1984) and the liveability and sustainability of higher density development depends very much on its physical form.[10]

Yet these relationships cannot simply be seen in abstract terms. Some argue that 'suburbanism' represents a predominant trend of the current era—rather than an aberration (Keil et al. 2009). Even if more compact forms are desirable, cities are path dependent and cannot easily change their spatial form (Bertaud 2002). In South Africa, current levels of urban violence and poor public transport result in people using cars for transport even at quite low income levels (DOT 1997). Although South African initiatives to improve public transport are important, they are also constrained by the low densities of large areas of cities.

In South Africa, the idea of compacting the city became tied to agendas to restructure cities away from apartheid divides, and has been embodied in legislation. These ideas are still important in planning, but they are constrained by an unsupportive macro-economic and political context, contradictory policies, contrary market trends, difficulties in accessing land, amongst others (see Todes 2006). A key question is whether this approach still has value in the South Africa context, and in others.

Both international and South African research (Brown and Lloyd-Jones 2002; Todes 2006) shows the importance of good access to economic opportunities, low travel times and costs for certain groups of the poor, and hence the significance of inner city location. Other studies show that location in more peripheral areas offers the benefit of more space and lower cost, and sometimes the possibility of other economic opportunities such as rental or urban agriculture (Cross et al. 1996; Schoonraad 2000). Biermann et al. (2004) argue that taken across several indicators, there are both costs and benefits of a range of types of location. Cities are increasingly polycentric, with many different locations of economic activity and employment, thus a simplistic core-periphery model is inadequate. This argument is consistent with much of the literature pointing to the complexities of spatial relationships discussed earlier.

From the perspective of planning, these debates suggest the need to understand the diverse ways in which people live in the city, and how the location of economic activity and employment is changing. While aspects of the compaction idea are useful—most importantly the significance of dense inner cities for survival, these ideas need to be considered in the context of large, complex urban regions, containing a variety of types of space and urban opportunities. Although selective densification proposed in South African planning may help to promote more

[10] For instance, in South Africa, one approach to densification has been through the use of small sites for low income housing, which are generally resented by communities. Larger sites however may result in higher population densities since the plot can be used to accommodate larger, extended households or to allow rental. Another approach is to establish townhouse complexes which are built to higher densities than suburban lots; however, these developments are usually oriented to the motor car and do little to reduce this dependence. There is also extensive debate in the literature on high rise development and its social impacts (see Coleman 1985).

sustainable settlements, trends towards lateral growth beyond existing city limits are likely to continue since many of the constraints on compaction still remain. Strategic spatial planning linked to infrastructure planning could play important roles in shaping future growth. The way existing areas with low levels of employment, poor facilities and services are addressed also seems critical. Yet there is also considerable uncertainty as to what city futures are likely to look like—in terms of population growth, the impact of energy crises, technology changes, amongst others. This necessitates a reflexive and iterative approach to planning—an attempt to look to the future—to 'foresight' in the words of Hillier (2008), but also to recognise that there is likely to be ongoing flux and change, and that outcomes are likely to be different from what is anticipated.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the new agendas for planning offer fruitful directions for addressing current and expected challenges facing cities—ways of managing urban growth and responding to rising poverty and informality; the emphases on sustainability, integrated development and social justice. Spatial planning in particular has important roles to play in managing growth and change in cities, and in doing so in ways that move towards inclusion, liveability and sustainability. There are undoubtedly gaps and silences in these new agendas as indicated—around the spaces of the economy and around questions of design and land use management—and perhaps others.

Planning perhaps has less hope of redressing social inequalities, and the spatial inequalities that go along with them, although they should try to do so. The new approaches offer ways of responding to poverty, but do not really challenge inequality.[11] South African planning post-apartheid has arguably been least effective here, reflecting the broader social, economic and political forces shaping cities. This also highlights the point that planners are amongst a number of actors, and that cities are made through many processes. Nevertheless, we need to rescue the positive from the modernist agenda (Mabin 2000)—the ambition to change cities in the directions of social justice and sustainability. We need to think creatively and imaginatively about city futures, but to do so on the basis of a strong understanding of urban social, economic and spatial dynamics, and a sense of what is strategically possible.

Planning of this sort is a discursive process of influencing ideas and thinking about the city. This is perhaps an area that we as South African planners have neglected—we have not spent much time communicating our ideas, trying to shape the way the city and its solutions are thought about. Nor, as a body of professionals have we spent sufficient time giving voice to many of the existing problems and inequalities in our cities, although there was a time when at least parts of the planning, architectural and urban development community did so. We may be at a junction where it is important to do so once again—not because policies are unjust as they were under apartheid, but to help to promote the implementation of

[11] Thanks to Alan Mabin for this point.

principles which were central to the development of a more appropriate form of planning in South Africa.

The prospects for adopting the new forms of planning internationally will vary across contexts, and is likely to be contingent on their political and institutional situations, which will also shape the way the new ideas are taken up. Where there is space for change, a strategic view needs to be adopted, and planning will need to go beyond the broad guidelines outlined in international agendas agencies to recognise the specificity of the local context and the way planning can respond to it. Contemporary urban and planning theories highlighting the complexity and diversity of cities and the way power, politics and institutions shape urban development and planning are potentially very useful in developing locally appropriate forms of planning. Without these emphases and sensibilities, planning may either risk ineffectiveness or could fall into the traps of its modernist past. These dangers are ever present, and remain tensions on the ground.

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