



# PLANNING DISRUPTED! WEBINAR



9 JUNE 2020 | REPORT



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# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ISOCARP	International Society of City and Regional Planners
MILE	Municipal Institute of Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUA	New Urban Agenda
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SA	South Africa
SACN	South African Cities Network
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAPI	South African Planning Institute
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
UPAT	Urban Planning Advisory Teams

# INTRODUCTION



The local, national and international planning fraternity, academics and developmental practitioners were given a platform to engage virtually during the Planning Disrupted Webinar which took place on 9 June 2020 using the Zoom Video Conferencing platform. Designed to officially launch the ISOCARP Inner City Revival Plan and share pertinent findings from the publication. However, eThekweni Municipality felt that this engagement should be broadened to delve deeper into planning related matters given the 'disruption' caused by the pandemic.

The event was a collaboration between eThekweni Municipality, International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), South African Cities Network (SACN), South African Planning Institute (SAPI), South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and

Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE).

Superbly facilitated by SACN, the Webinar created an accessible, interactive platform for conversations on cities, inner cities - spaces of opportunity and inclusion. It brought together about 280 planning and built environment professionals and interested organisations and people, worldwide to discuss critical thematic areas pertinent to planning and prevalent during this crucial time of the Covid-19 pandemic which has disrupted planning ... as we know it!



Map of Participants

# DURBAN INNER-CITY REVIVAL | ISOCARP

Milena Ivković, Director Urban Planning Advisory Teams and Member of the Board of Directors at ISOCARP

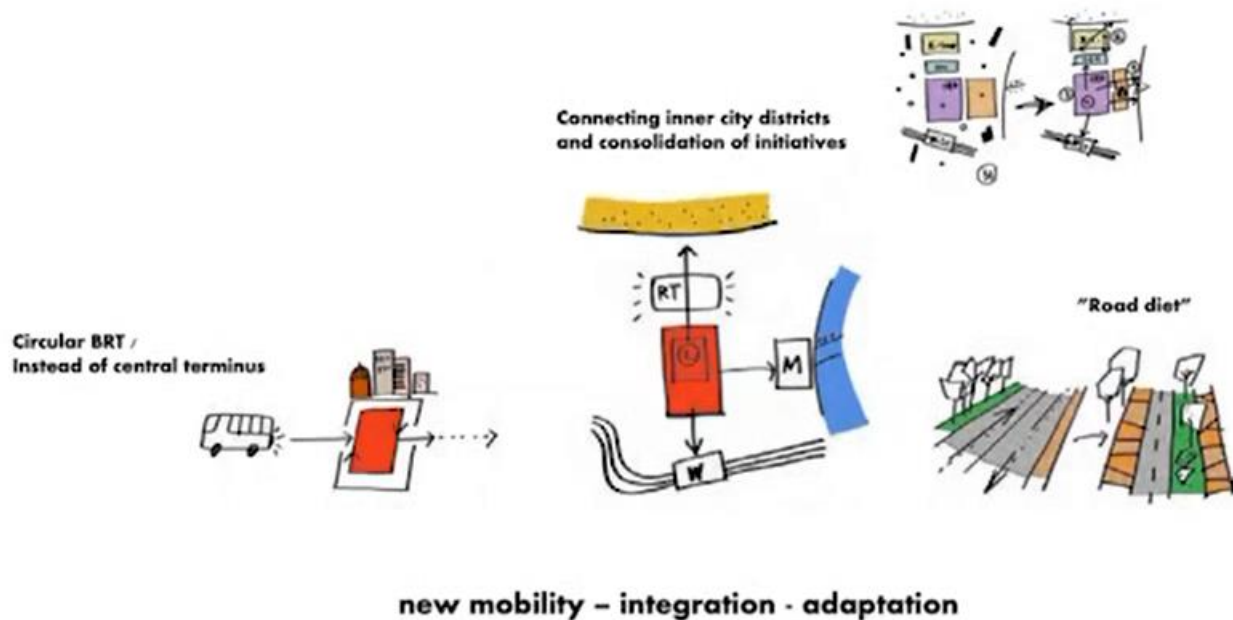


The Durban Inner-City Revival Project is an initiative produced in collaboration with eThekweni Municipality (City of Durban) and ISOCARP. The City has a longstanding relationship with ISOCARP which spans over ten years. Durban received the award of excellence from ISOCARP, in 2016 Durban hosted the World Planning Congress and in 2018 the Urban Planning Advisory Teams (UPAT) Workshop for ISOCARP on the Durban inner city revival project. UPAT organizes various design and planning consultancy workshops world-wide. A team of international experts met with the planning team from Durban to discuss the revival of the inner city. The methodology used was to embed a team of local and international multidisciplinary professionals over a period

of a week to research, analyse, engage and find solutions on inner city regeneration implementation challenges. It focused on the key precincts and areas including the Centrum and Old Drive-in Site and to further leverage development from the beachfront and the Point Development and Marina/Waterfront.

The main finding /observation was the domination of space and activities linked to the car-based inner city the City has, causing congestion, lost opportunity, safety and segregation of people and places. The introduction of a Bus Rapid Transit and an inner distribution system was regarded as essential but with two types of lines, an express line to limited stops and a regular line to major stops and coverage within the inner city. The second big finding was a lack of mixed incomes and uses in the inner-city. The team looked at the combination of bold new ideas and the need for social housing (and mixed income and missed uses) in the inner city. Issues of safety and security were highlighted. A disconnect and amazing opportunities were identified between core central business precinct and key and often forgotten assets of the inner city, including the beachfront, the sports precinct, the harbour, the waterfront, Rivertown and Centrum Site and the International Convention Centre and Durban Exhibition Centre. This would reinvent Durban as a happy, prosperous, walkable, and green city.

UPAT concluded that the Plans created by City planners were excellent but lacked integration and prioritisation to make a better inner-city. One of the crucial points were connecting the inner-city districts and consolidation of initiatives.



### Key points:

- Looking at new mobility and the system for the inner city and other regions of eThekweni
- How to integrate the existing plans with current daily inner-city struggles experienced by the poor, the informal traders, residents and small business together with bold and iconic plans and infrastructure
- How to move to a better adaptation of existing infrastructure and land holdings for a diverse and inclusive economy and citizenry
- The revival project was and need to be continually looked at from various perspectives
- The proposals need to be aligned with public spaces and public transport. The Durban planners were urged to rethink the main profiles in Durban and how to support this

### Recommendations

- Existing housing plans are too mono-functional, they need to integrate with multiple functions and uses
- Public space adaptation together with new commercial developments and upgrading the existing building stock is essential
- Variety of social housing typologies and integration of social housing with supporting commerce, services and educational and big job attraction magnets are important (e.g. call centres)
- Stimulate more public-private-community partnerships for diversity
- Embark on a City-wide campaign for the 'face of the revival'
- Identify and implement new investment incentives
- Improve stakeholder involvement in this process, not only in the planning phase but into implementation

The ISOCARP Plan Magazine contains all the project insights, recommendations and proposals for the inner-city. [Click here to view the magazine.](#) After the presentation by ISOCARP, a short-facilitated discussion was pursued.

## Q&A: Discussion

- Q: Similar issues are experienced in Lagos, Nigeria. How do you deal with people that occupy illegally?
- A: We came to Durban as an international group of experts with many different backgrounds and urban planning contexts. We dedicated a whole day to talk with different groups who are dealing with similar issues of informality. Through a dialogue with NGOs and civil society, we were surprised by the openness and dialogue from these groups to be part of the planning process. Try to organise the planning process to be inclusive as possible to bridge informal structures and formal processes in the city. These voices need to be heard. It is important to be part of the process and demand solutions.
- Q: Bangalore, India. When making a development plan for rejuvenation, we might want to look at public private participation. It is a challenge to get the private sector involved due to huge investment required and high risk. How do we incentivise this?
- A: PPP can allow social housing to strive as more than just housing. We needed to understand the social housing subsidies system in SA which is quite complicated and incorporate that into the housing development model. Combination of various factors such as markets, education and workplace in the vicinity, so that social housing can thrive. Private investors can be attracted with this mix.
- Q: The release of public land is it not always an advantage but rather a highly contested space resulting in land sterilization caused by legal and procurement/release/re-development delays.
- A: Highly contested space. Think about introducing the real estate component of the municipality itself to regulate property in the inner city.
- Q: What happens after ISOCARP leave? What does it mean for city practitioners?
- A: We had done a lot of work together as a multidisciplinary team before and still work together. It's not an easy context i.e. fluidity, local politics. Since ISOCARP was here, we concluded several projects (extended the promenade, Rivertown is in the throws of implementation, increased water availability for higher densities in the inner city and Point areas, also there are more small and international businesses coming into city to regenerate. It depends on what business is looking for political and administratively, economic value, underlying factors, the market etc. More attraction into SMME office space, e.g. legal fraternity, leisure, recreational, student housing etc. A mix in the inner city has emerged due to private investments. We also have an Urban Development Zone which is a national tax incentive, an Economic incentive and Regeneration incentive developed. Often, we think of the informal economy as unregulated, but many formal businesses also do as they please. We need to use our compliance and ensure regulation.

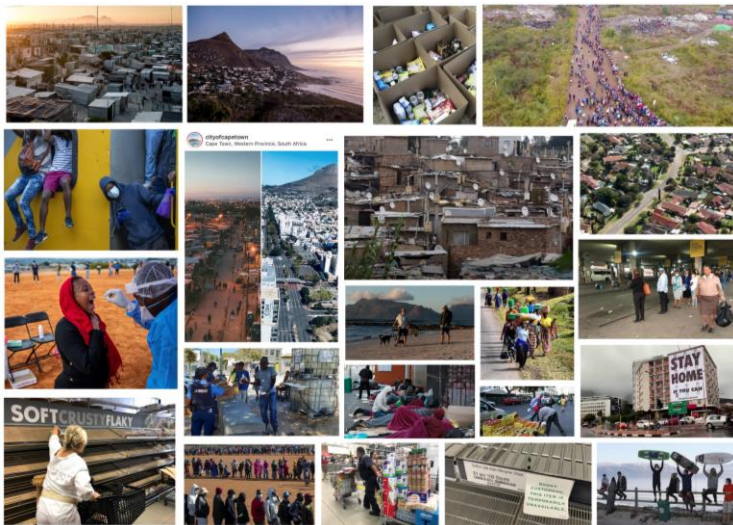
# BREAKAWAY SESSIONS

After the presentation by ISOCARP and the brief plenary discussion on regeneration and the UPAT findings and recommendations, participants were led to the virtual breakout rooms which focused on the following thematic areas:

- Planning Practice in Times of Flux
- Dark Side of Planning Disruption
- Reset Opportunity: Density and Land-Use Planning
- Public Spaces as Life Line for Cities
- Relevant and Supportive National Planning

## PLANNING PRACTICE IN TIMES OF FLUX

Prashina Mohangi, SALGA | Siwe Ntombela, SACN | Kayla Brown, SACN



The Covid-19 pandemic has affected lives in unprecedented ways. The planning practice and the planning profession is not immune to this wave of unlearning and relearning narrative. The one aspect that the pandemic has brought to light is the vast discrepancies in the built form, and the extreme polarities, that coexist in the built form; bringing into question relevance and equity in planning. This is not a new area of focus of planning, but now an urgent and desperate call for change.

Based on South African examples, the polarity in the height of lockdown was evident. The quiet streets of suburbs during the level 5 lockdown vs the dense overcrowded settlements where practicing social distancing was an unimaginable concept purely because of the layout/densities and lack of opportunities, public spaces and lacking infrastructure in the settlements (built in the apartheid and post-apartheid era). People queuing outside supermarkets and snaking lines of people waiting to receive food parcels. Vast amount of communities stranded without basic services and the plight of the homeless was a common visual. There is a new migration wave in motion, people going back home for lockdown, many people will suffer a loss of employment and have no choice but to move out of the city, into townships, and rural areas.

Some of these polarities reflect some of the decisions undertaken by built environment practitioners, government policy in the past 20 years as planners have constructed a post-apartheid-built form. How much or rather how little has changed? The media has covered extensively the plight of ordinary citizens showcasing the hardship and distress faced during this



pandemic and the dissatisfaction with the provisions of government and of course planning and built environment practices.

### Recommendations:

- Leadership that is conscious of the leadership decisions taken, leadership that incorporates all the facets of human existence and aims to bring about change that is deliberate for the well-being of all that occupy space and place
- The polarities depicted is indicative of a leadership style that is not in-tune with deliberate and progressive change
- Planners have imbued in their character a leadership DNA, and communities are asking for that leadership DNA to be activated and to be used to positively change the lives of people
- Planners must be activists for change in the practice of planning (private and public sector, land-use and planning) to (re)create liveable and just spaces

Through the work undertaken at SALGA and at the SACN, in particular 'The Chronicles of a Change Agent' and the work undertaken by the Built Environment Integration Task Team at the South African Cities Network, both of which looks at the work and daily lives of planners and politicians in the built environment, it confirms that planning activism is a concept that all must embrace. However, some might feel that by adopting this activist mindset in the built environment might be going against the tide and going against the tide is exactly what is demanded of planners.

## DARK SIDE OF PLANNING DISRUPTION

Ashraf Adam- Chief Executive Officer | Nelson Mandela Bay Development Agency

### The Complexities of Planning Creating Its Own Dark Side

There are complexities of planning world-wide and there are several complexities that need to be addressed at the same time. It could be heritage, economic, social or environmental, it can be a range of areas. When this arises, there are various people, interest groups and views that need to be engaged with, thus leading to the dark side of planning.

### Contestation and Elite Information

Power lies within the allocation of resources whether it is immediate or over time. It is people with power or contest for power that determine where the resources are allocated. In that context particularly the poorer countries, not only the rich, constitute the elite. In South Africa the state provides free housing, health etc. It's inability to this rapidly, in the right locations and extensively further enhances systems of informalities where citizens ignore the state; but take action to improve their own quality of life. These contestations led to the dark side of planning. It is common and professional practice to the protect the state and its policies and its inadequacies, which is increasingly evident in how planning and planners respond.

## The Impact of Ideology in Planning (A major dark side)

Planning is done without ideology, nowhere in the world where planning systems have been in place have, they existed successfully without ideology. South Africans know about the role of ideology in Apartheid in creating the systems. The last 25 and 30 years have really shown planning to be an ineffective instrument in improving people's lives, still based on a practice and hidden ideology that supports planning for the elite and well off. Planning with no ideology has led to planning being weak and a disservice to the poor and the environment. Planning and development policy has been the same everywhere and this has led to livelihoods being undermined, without understanding context but by just being technical.

The breakaway ended with a call for planning and planners to be leaders of disruption and challenge and change status quo.

# RESET OPPORTUNITY: DENSITY AND LAND-USE PLANNING

Nathan Iyer - CEO IYER, Planning | Urban Design | Architecture;

Lekha Allopi, Project Executive | Themba Masimula, Senior Planner - eThekweni Municipality



Soon 70% of the global population will live in cities. The design and health of cities have an incredible impact on people, the planet and future.

## Should there be a Reset? What Could a Post-Covid City Look Like?

An urgent reset is fundamental, and it is not an event - Covid -19 but must be seen in the context of a series of events and responses related to climate change. Cities are at an intersection of a global health crisis and urbanization crisis. There is a need now to ensure resiliency for various patterns related to urbanization and climate change. Similar events of public health crisis have occurred in the past and at every crisis there has always been a reset i.e. spatial and physical intervention in urbanization, cities and planning respond to the challenge. The main intervention has always been about public infrastructure. Public infrastructure is pertinent, investment in the public good is critical in how these cities have recovered and overcome these events, built flexibility and resilience.

## Is Density a bad & contributor?

Density is important, city centres and urban areas are the most socially diverse and integrated, from an economic point of view most critical in facilitating economic development. The opposite of density (sprawl, densification, a loss of natural habit, increasing travelling distances and more roads and cost to governments and individuals) is far worse than the current situation. This will have a major impact on the future of cities. Cities consistently remain the engine rooms of the economy, the epicentre of culture, exchange and creativity. All of this is only possible because of density. The current debates on densities must be taken into context and not be set aside as an outcome from Covid-19. There is good densification which goes together with good design, access to public transport and services and bad densification and planners should make this distinction. The reality is cities cannot move away from density and must acknowledge the current crisis. Planners need to seek a new form of urbanism that allows and supports density whilst enabling healthy living. It is important to note that it is an urban future. There is an opportunity to look at this from a reset point of view and reprioritise the needs within cities.

### Key points:

- Bring radical change to the public realm
- Repurpose and reprioritise the makeup of streets
- Pursue density but with the greening of cities, public spaces, public streets
- Inventive with building codes
- Innovate a new office model
- Move people differently
- Equity in the city for all its citizens
- A burning question that session did not grapple with and remains pertinent to cities in the south, is how informality, densification and reducing public health risks need to interface

## PUBLIC SPACES AS LIFE LINE FOR CITIES

Dr Greg Mews | ISOCARP



Source: <http://habitat3.org/>

### Shared Vision of the New Urban Agenda

**11: a vision of cities for all, to ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities**

<http://www.sdg3newurbanagenda.com/>

Everyone see's things in a different context and have different global experiences. There are always different ways and approaches that individuals undertake.

The NUA is a tale of what is to be expected in terms of the design of cities in the next 20 years.

**Biophilic Design** is the integration of open space and nature. Open spaces should be embedded in this vision. **Public transport and Eco-mobility** are about walking, active travel modes and incorporating good mobility choices. **Social cohesion** and inclusion of public spaces for interaction on all levels.

SDG Target 11.7: *By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces.*

Firstly, Public Spaces are defined as the public realm. It entails everything between buildings. For instance, the various typologies include: plaza and squares, laneways, bike lanes, footpath, playgrounds, national parks, beach etc.

“**Cities have the capability** of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they **are** created by everybody.” **Jane Jacobs** (1916-2006)

#### Key points:

- Contextualizing public space as a start, as public space is complex
- Created a manifesto in a separate document
- Inclusive and accessible public space for all. This is culturally specific so need to create public space that is accessible for all
- Need to consider temporary uses more carefully
- Political dimension of public space and the use of space for political expression
- Access to internet as another conception of access to public space - links to human rights to internet access

## RELEVANT AND SUPPORTIVE NATIONAL PLANNING

Mr Johann Mettler | City Manager, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality

Globally planners experience challenges and often take blame for policies not within their control. Planners need to mitigate instabilities arising from the pandemic and need to view this as an advantage to make a positive difference. The pandemic has paved the way to do things differently. National policies exist but planners encounter challenges in the implementation phase. Supportive local and national policies need to be owned by municipalities for it to be implemented at a local level.

#### Key points:

- How can planners make better national planning and what are the challenges?
- Mitigate political instability which influences planning processes; go beyond electoral promises
- There is a need to work on horizontal integration in planning (not just top-down/ bottom-up) but for more horizontal collaboration with other professions

- Bigger role for planners in the future!
- National planning / national plans need to embrace interests of all, not just certain groups
- The push form this embrace has come from cooperation of different sectors is charge of planning
- The integration of political objectives is needed, and planners need to engage the political as an important stakeholder

## CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Dr Soobs Moonsammy | Programme Manger Urban Renewal - eThekwini Municipality

Change is always uneasy, and to feel uneasy and have more questions than answers is good and expected. The disruption faced by planners can be perceived as positive or negative. Planners can move back to standardising planning and standardising for ultra-safety, but it is poor who find themselves living in marginalised spaces because not everyone can have access to spaces the way basic standards dictate. Flexibility is pertinent in this regard. Planners should use this crisis as an opportunity to better planning practice.

The webinar provided a platform to ask difficult questions and have provocative and honest conversations amongst participants. It is envisioned that through the partnership between ISOCARP), SACN, SAPI, SALGA and MILE more webinars under the 'planning disrupted' flagship will be hosted soon.

Prepared by the Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE)

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