The changing nature of the job market for planning in South Africa: implications for planning educators

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Abstract

This article reports on the findings of a job market study conducted by South African planning schools in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal in 2001. The study explores several interrelated themes: the structure of the job market, and current trends within the public and private sectors; the growth of new fields of work linked to planning; the growth and decline of fields within planning, and market perceptions of skills and competencies that are needed. Findings are to some extent regional, and reflect economic and institutional dynamics in the three areas. Key findings include the reshaping of the private sector, and the public-private division of work; the diversification of planning work, including a shift towards developmental planning, both within planning departments, and outside of them. Generalist planners are still in demand but the nature of what constitutes generalist planners is much wider than before. The diffuse nature of planning holds both opportunities and challenges for planners and for planning educators.

DIE VERANDERENDE ARBEIDSMARK VIR BEPLANNERS IN SUID-AFRIKA: IMPLIKASIES VIR BEPLANNINGSOPVOEDERS

Hierdie artikel doen verslag oor 'n arbeidsmark studie wat in 2001 voltooi is deur Stads en Streeksbeplanningskole in Gauteng, die Weskaap en Kwazulu-Natal. Die studie ondersoek verskeie onderliggende temas: die samestelling van die arbeidsmark; huidige tendense in die publieke en privaat sektore; die ontwikkeling van nuwe tereinne in verband met beplanning; die groei en afname van velde binne beplanning; asook markspersepsies van benodigde bekwaamhede en vaardighede in die veld. Die bevindinge weerspieël tot 'n sekere mate streeksonderskydinge in terme van die ekonomie en instellings dinamika van elk van die drie provinsies. Die primere bevindinge sluit in the gedaantewisseling van die privaat sektor, die skeiding tussen die private en publieke sektore in terme van werk, die uiteenlopende aard van beplanningswerk, insluitende 'n tendens na ontwikkelingsbeplanning binne en buite beplanningsdepartemente. Veelsydige beplanners is nog steeds in aanvraag maar daar is 'n verbreding in terme van die veld wat algemene beplanners moet dek. Die diverse aard van beplanning bied heelwat geleenthede en uitdagings vir beplanners en beplanningsopvoeders.

HO FETOHA HWA MESEBETSI NTLHENG YA MERALO AFRIKA BORWA: LITLHAHISO TSA BARUPELLI BA TSA MERALO

Pampiri ena e fana ka ditlaleho tse ileng tsa etswa ke dikolo tsa meralo tsa Gauteng, Kapa Bophirima le Kwazulu-Natala ka 2001 ntlheng ya mesebetsi. Boithuto bona bo shebane le dintlha tse mmalwa tse nyalanang jwaloka boleng ba mesebesi, maemo a renang mafapheng a sechaba le a ikemetseng; ho hola hwa mesebetsi e mecha e amanang le meralo; kgolo le ho putlama hwa menyetla ya mesebetsi kahar'a makala a meralo; mekgwa ea ho bontsha ditalenta le boiphihlelo tse hlokahalang. Feela leha ho le jwalo, ditlaleho tsena di ama mabatoha mme di bontsha moruo, le maemo a fetohang tshebetsong, dibakeng tsena tse tharo tse bontshitsweng kahodimo.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade or so there have been significant changes in the practice and orientation of planning internationally. Planning in South Africa has been no exception to this, as is evident in debates over the definition of planning in the formulation of the Planning Professions Act, the Planning and Development Commission, and elsewhere.

It is tempting to view the current era as a particularly turbulent one for planning, and even as a watershed in the development of planning, but it is necessary to remember that planning has never been a settled profession and discipline. Planning has historically been a fluid and contextually specific practice and discipline. The socially constructed nature of planning leads to continued dispute over what constitutes its meaning, and its core (Sandercock 1998; Friedmann 1996). Internationally, the fluidity of planning, and its diffuse base, has led to lively debates over the appropriate focus of planning education (Friedmann 1996; Perloff 1957; Sandercock 1998; Oszawa & Selzer 1999; Kreukeberg 1985). In South Africa, there has been some debate in the past over directions for planning education (Muller 1985; Africa 1993; Harrison 1995; Oranje 1997), and several planning educators themselves have been instrumental in the changing focus of planning in South Africa. However, the shifting terrain, along with the changing nature of planning students (Harrison & Todes 2001), is presenting new and powerful challenges for planning educators (Diaw et al. 2001; Faling 2002).

In order to address these issues, several South African planning schools are undertaking research on the changing nature of planning and its implications for planning education in South Africa. This paper forms a part of this larger study. It examines the structure and dynamics of the job market for planning and its implications for planning education. It considers trends within the public and private sector, the growth and decline of

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particular fields of planning, and the relationship between planning and other disciplines. The impact of affirmative action is considered. The paper outlines the skills in demand, and draws implications for planning education. A particular focus of this discussion is the generalist-specialist debate, and the extent to which planning education should provide for specialisation.

The article draws on a job market study conducted by planning schools in Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal in 2001[1]. The methodology of the study is described below. A limitation of the study is that it occurred in a period of institutional restructuring where many posts were frozen – a situation that still pertains in some areas. The discussion of the job market thus needs to be seen as a reflection of conditions at that time, rather than as a set of fixed conditions.

Before dealing with the job market study however the article briefly sketches the changes in planning that has given rise to shifts in planning education, and the changes in the job market.

2. CHANGES IN PLANNING AND THE PLANNING PROFESSION

Planners across the world are pointing to significant shifts in the orientation and practice of planning. To a large extent these shifts are driven by a common discourse, and by common experiences of globalisation, but there are also changes that are contextually produced. This makes it difficult to provide a clear map of the current trends and directions in planning internationally. What is evident, however, is that trends in planning are significantly shaped by changes in the broader field of governance. Currently, planning internationally is responding to the pressures of what may broadly be defined as the neo-liberal agenda, which includes the rise of the so-called New Public Management (NPM). It does so however in a way that is quite complex – the discourse and practice of planning has both accommodated and challenged the precepts of neo-liberalism and the NPM.

The NPM is associated with concepts of performance management, competitive incentives, procedural efficiency, and accountability to citizens. To a very significant extent these concerns and concepts are replacing the traditional objectives and orientation of planning. The United Kingdom's new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, for example, has an almost overriding focus on performance management, but makes very little reference to the idea of planning. This legislation produced by the New Labour government poses a challenge to planning that is far more sophisticated and far-reaching than the crude challenge to planning presented by the Conservative government of the 1980s.

The other very significant shift in governance that has had an enormous impact on planning is the decentralisation process. Starting in the 1980s the idea of decentralisation has become the new dogma of public management, although the practice of decentralisation has been uneven and sometimes contradictory. With the devolution of powers to the local level, the focus has increasingly shifted to local planning. South Africa's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which followed the establishment of municipal government as a relatively autonomous sphere, is a case in point, but there are numerous other examples of the emergence of new forms of local planning, including for example in South Korea and New Zealand. As planning at local level has become increasingly implicated in the broader task of governance, so its focus has become more diffuse and its boundaries more porous. With more complex models of governance emerging at local level, including, for example, the Public Private Partnership (PPP), the practice of planning has become more challenging and intricate, as it involves mediating and negotiating complex and changing relational webs.

As indicated, the relationship between the neo-liberal agenda and the NPM, and planning, is not simply unidirectional. Planning has provided, to some extent, at least, a countervailing discourse. The growing emphasis on urban sustainability, for example, is a partial antidote to the short-termism of neo-liberal ideology, although sustainability still remains a rather vague precept. The growing emphasis on integration in planning is a response to the disintegrating effects of neo-liberalism, in relation to governance, urban development, and social structures, whilst there is also some evidence of a return to the longer-term time-horizons of strategic planning, possibly to provide greater stability and certainty for investors. The arrival of a new generation of spatial development frameworks prepared for a range of geographic scales (from the local to the continental) is indicative of this trend.

The trends and changes indicated above present both serious threats and stimulating opportunities for planning and planners. There are certain forms of planning that are in decline and will continue to be undermined by these shifts. However, there has also been a huge expansion in the territory occupied by planners and planning, although it is a territory that must increasingly be shared by a variety of other professionals (and laypersons). The future of planning depends on the ability of planners to respond intelligently and creatively to the changes. It is possible that within the next decade planning will lose its coherence and identity as a profession, and will surrender its space to a variety of new and established professions, but it is also possible that the planning profession will successfully navigate the pitfalls and will re-establish its identity and legitimacy in terms of re-negotiated professional and institutional relationships. Initiatives such as the RTPI's New Vision are hugely important in this regard. In South Africa a significant recent event that assisted in the redefinition of the planning project was the Planning Africa 2002 conference.

Shifts in the nature of planning are undoubtedly changing the configuration of the job market for planners in ways that are still poorly understood. The work of the RTPI Education Commission was an

[1] The Gauteng study was conducted by Caroline Richardson under the management of Phil Harrison and Alison Todes, and with reference to the planning schools at the University of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria. The Western Cape study was done by Cecil Madell under a management committee comprising the Universities of Stellenbosch, Cape Town and the Cape Technikon. The KwaZulu-Natal study was conducted by Veronica Pinto, Aarthi Maharaj and Sharmilla Gajan under the supervision of Alison Todes, and the management of the University of Natal and ML Sultan Technikon.

attempt to redefine planning education in relation to the changes in the nature of planning and the aspirations of the New Vision. It is interesting to note the assumptions made by the Education Commission on future trends in the profession and the job market:

- There will be an even greater diffusion of planning practices.
- There will be more international or global interaction of theory, practice and practitioners.
- Disciplinary boundaries will continue to become more porous.
- There will be greater fragmentation of careers.
- The educational market will be ever more market-driven.
- There will be less sympathy for the claims of professions (RTPI 2003:17).

Similar conclusions could be reached about planning in South Africa. They raise critical questions regarding the identity of planning, the idea of a profession, and the nature and content of planning education. The predicted volatility and uncertainty of planning, and its job market, suggests that planning educators and professional bodies should focus more on gathering intelligence, and tracking change. The job market survey described below is an initial attempt to begin the process of mapping changes in the job market within South Africa.

3. THE JOB MARKET STUDY: METHODOLOGY

The study was conceived as an attempt to gain an understanding of the broad trends and dynamics within the job market for planning and related sectors, and was based largely on qualitative methods. As the first study of the job market for planners in the field in South Africa, the intention was to develop a sense of the change, to understand the diversity and range of patterns occurring, rather than to establish and measure quantifiable trends.

In each region, a set of key respondent interviews was conducted in order to get a sense of the changes in planning, their implications for the job market, and the dynamics of the job market. These were long, open-ended sessions with senior people in the field: the local chairs of planning associations, senior people within the public sector and private sectors. A few key respondent interviews were also conducted in sectors close to or overlapping with planning, particularly housing, environment, local/regional economic development. In all cases, respondents were chosen for their knowledge of the field, and in order to ensure that the various areas of work within and close to planning were included. Key respondents were asked about their perceptions of the planning field, or the related sector, rather than their place of work. The extent to which key respondent interviews were used varied by region, with a greater emphasis on these interviews in KwaZulu-Natal. In the Western Cape, the focus was on surveys of 'knowledgeable people', while in Gauteng, key respondent interviews were confined to planning associations.

A second set of interviews was conducted with firms in the private sector, the public sector, non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and parastatals in planning and the linked sectors. A survey form was drawn up, and was sent out either electronically or by post, or was used in face-to-face or telephonic interviews. The survey probed conditions and dynamics in the interviewees' own establishment. Care was taken to ensure that there was a reasonable spread of interviewees, covering the range of work types and places of employment within planning. A parallel survey was developed for the 'linked' sectors, and sent to a more limited set of institutions. In all cases, senior officers within organizations were targeted. Surveys were initially sent out electronically or by post, but in all three regions, the response to the survey conducted in this way was extremely poor. For instance, in the Western Cape, the South African Planning Institution (SAPI) database of 450 people was used to identify 51 people to survey. After one month of very few responses, alternative respondents were identified, resulting in a target list of 21 people spread across the various sectors. Of these, only ten returned the survey form. The remainder was interviewed on a face-to-face basis. Similar patterns occurred in the other regions, with the result that the majority of interviews were conducted telephonically, or on a face-to-face basis. In these situations, the interviews tended to be qualitative, with the survey used as a guide, and all respondents answered not all questions systematically. The survey itself was quite open-ended, and again the emphasis was on understanding the range and nature of dynamics. Hard data such as remuneration levels and the qualifications of employees and their work type proved to be difficult to collect on a systematic basis, in part due to their sensitivity, and are not included in the paper.

In the discussion, which follows, information from the key respondent interviews and from the organization-oriented interviews are used together. This is because in most cases, interviews were qualitative and open-ended, shaped according to the person interviewed. In practice, there was much greater overlap between the different types of interviews than initially anticipated. Taken together, some 83 interviews were conducted in Gauteng, 22 on a face to face basis, 54 telephonically, and seven through written responses. In KwaZulu-Natal, 41 interviews were conducted, 30 on a face-to-face basis, and 11 through written questionnaires. The figures for the Western Cape are given above.

Table 1 gives an indication of the workplace or representation of interviewees. It should be noted that in some instances, more than one person was interviewed in large authorities in order to get an understanding of dynamics within different departments within an authority. For instance, interviews in the eThekwini municipality (Durban Metropolitan authority) were conducted in what was then the Urban Strategy Department, in the large Planning and Development department and in its Urban Design and Environment branches, in two of the planning departments of local authorities that had just been merged into the municipality, and in the Economic Development and Housing departments.

As *Table 1* shows, the distribution of interviews in each area varied. In Gauteng, it included a large number of interviews in national departments, parastatal organizations, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies, in addition to the provincial, local

Table 1: Work place/representation of interviewees by region

Region	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Westen Cape	Total
Associations (1)	3	2	1	6
National Government (2)	10	-	-	10
Provincial Government (3)	10	4	1	15
Local Government (4)	18	12	7	37
Parastatals (5)	7	-	-	7
Donor Agencies (6)	10	-	-	10
Non-governmental organisations (7)	6	2	1	9
Planning – private sector	11	16	5	30
Linking private sector (8)	8	5	6	21
Total	83	41	21	145

Notes:

1. Mainly planning associations, but the KwaZulu-Natal sample includes an interview with the Institute of Housing
2. Includes Departments of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Housing, Provincial and Local Government, Land Affairs, Public Works, Trade and Industry
3. Includes Gauteng Departments of Provincial and Local Government; Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs, Housing; KwaZulu-Natal Departments of Traditional and Local Government, Economic Development and Tourism, Housing; Western Cape Planning Department.
4. Mainly Planning Departments or departments which contains planning in combination with other functions. In Gauteng, one department was solely focused on Economic Development. Seven interviews in Gauteng were with municipal managers, human resource or related people, especially in smaller authorities where there was no planning department. In KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, mainly planning departments were interviewed, but interviews were also held in departments of Economic Development, Housing, and Environment in both cases, and in an Urban Design section of a planning department in KwaZulu-Natal.
5. Independent Development Trust, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Gauteng Economic Development Agency, National Development Agency, Development Bank of Southern Africa, Wesgro.
6. AusAid; Danish Commission for Environment and Development; European Commission for Development; International Union for Conservation and Nature; International Development Research Centre, Swedish International Development Agency; United Kingdom Department of International Development; United Nations Development Programme; United States Agency for International Development; World Bank.
7. Community Agency for Social Exchange; COPE Housing Association; Group for Environmental Monitoring; Urban Sector Network; National Land Commission; Planact; Built Environment Support Group; National Business Initiative; Development Action Group
8. Includes firms within the following fields: management consultants, property development, engineering, economic development, urban design, transport, organization development, housing, environment, development research.

government and private firms which were dominant in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal surveys.

Table 1, and the notes to it, gives a sense of the very wide range of interviews conducted. As a consequence of the range, the nature of interviews – most of which were not conducted through a survey format – were not standardized, and tended to reflect and explore the dynamics of the sector in question. For this reason, and due to the small numbers of interviews within particular groupings, it makes little sense to attempt to quantify them, or to present them as representative or statistically significant within a traditional scientific discourse. However, for the sake of clarity, where appropriate, an indication will be given of the strength of particular patterns identified. For the most part therefore, the paper is thus presented as a set of qualitative observations and findings.

4. REGIONAL DYNAMICS OF THE JOB MARKET

4.1 GAUTENG REGION

4.1.1 Structure of the job market

Gauteng is South Africa's economic heartland, and is also the seat of national government, and so predictably has the largest concentration of planners. Five hundred and twenty four or almost 42% of planners registered with the South African Council of Town and Regional Planners (SACTRP) have a Gauteng address compared with 27% for the Western Cape, 13% for KwaZulu-Natal, and 14% for the other six provinces combined. Gauteng accounts for 38% of the membership of the South African Planning Institution (SAPI) which is a smaller proportion than its share of registered planners, but this may be a result of a lower level of professional organisation than in the Western Cape, for example. However, 61% of all planning firms, which are members of the Association of Consulting Town and Regional Planners (ACTRP), are from Gauteng. There are 524 registered planners in Gauteng but, if Harrison and Kahn's estimate that 36.5% of planners in KwaZulu-Natal in 1999 were not registered,is also applicable to Gauteng, then there are about 820 planners in Gauteng.

Within the province there is a significant geographic differential between the Johannesburg area, and the Pretoria area. The SAPI database suggests that about 58% of planners are from Johannesburg and environs, and 42% from Pretoria. The same proportion holds for planning firms, which are members of the ACTRP. Although there is no accurate updated information, it can be assumed that the majority of planners with Afrikaans as a home language, and who have graduated from the University of Pretoria (and, to a lesser extent, from the University of Potchefstroom) are located in the Pretoria area, whilst English speaking planners who are graduates from the University of the Witwatersrand are located in the Johannesburg area. The traditional distinctions are however blurring, particularly as national government departments are employing an increasing number of black graduates who are likely to have graduated from Wits, and to a lesser extent from the Universities of Natal, Cape Town and Free State.

The public sector remains the major employer of planners in Gauteng. In spite of declining budgets, limited economic growth, privatisation of public sector functions, and restructuring processes, the overall picture for planners in the job market has remained relatively positive. At the time of the survey it was estimated that there was a demand for an additional 113 planners in the public sector, a figure that may even represent an undercount as information was not available from a few major local authorities. Of the 113, 29 of the required posts were in national government (mainly in the departments of Land Affairs, Provincial and Local Government, Public Works, and Housing), 30 in provincial government, and 40 in local government (although this is where the undercount may be greatest). It should be noted however that shortage of finances would most likely prevent the filling of many of these posts in the short to medium term. In the longer term prospects are good.

Capacity problems remain the worst within local government where, increasingly, non-planners are being used to undertake planning work. As is the case with other provinces, planners, with their broad education and their job flexibility, have entered other fields and are to be found in departments of government that are not directly related to planning (e.g. in economic development, and environmental affairs).

Compared with other provinces Gauteng has a relatively large concentration of parastatals (see *Table 1*) but employment opportunities for planners in these organizations are limited. Planners (and especially Development Planners) are regarded favourably compared with professionals in more specialist fields. However, decreasing state subsidisation for parastatals has forced these agencies to rely on 'self-starters' who are capable of marketing and attracting their own work. Gauteng has also a relatively high concentration of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) but here too opportunities for planners are limited, and funding problems within this sector has almost certainly led to a decline in employment opportunities.

The private or consultancy sector in Gauteng is large compared with other provinces, with at least 90 firms operating in the province (although a number of these are small). The greatest private development pressures in South Africa are focused around the Sandton – Midrand – Centurion corridor, and so there is a relatively large volume of work related to private development, whilst government is also a major source of opportunity for private consultants. However, despite the relatively better position of this sector when compared with other provinces, the private sector in Gauteng is under pressure and there is significant restructuring happening amongst the firms. Increasingly this sector is made up of very small firms, although most of the surviving larger firms are still concentrated in Gauteng. One advantage of Gauteng is its location relative to the rest of Africa, and some planning firms in the province have expanded operations northwards although security and economic problems in Africa have limited the potential for this area of expansion. The market for planners within the property sector remains small. A few large property firms do have in-house planners but the general trend is to outsource planning work.

A particular issue in Gauteng is the (somewhat blurred) distinction between Town and Regional Planners and Development Planners. Historically the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria have provided four-year undergraduate degrees in Town and Regional Planning but in the early 1980s the University of the Witwatersrand introduced a postgraduate degree in Development Planning. Whilst there has been some confusion in the market as to the relative skills of these two types of planners, the rise of integrated development planning as a particular field of activity has led to a stronger identity for development planning. The distinction between planners and planning technicians has been relatively clear in Gauteng. Increasingly however opportunities have emerged for planning technicians to move into the professional arena by either completing the Bachelor of Technology or by entering university programmes in planning. It should also be noted that 'planners' are being trained outside of the traditional planning schools. At Wits, for example, the School of Public and Development Management provides degrees that include modules that have a strong relationship to municipal planning.

4.1.2 Trends in the job market

In the Public Sector there is a growing demand for planners across all spheres of government (mentioned by all but two of the twenty-two institutions interviewed). As indicated, however, budgetary constraints (rather than lack of trained planners) is likely to prevent this demand from being properly met, particularly within local government. Respondents mentioned this point in ten of the 22 institutions interviewed. Capacity problems are arguably worsening in the Public Sector (and especially in local government) as planning functions increase without a concomitant improvement in capacity. One contributing factor is the high turnover of young professionals, which prevents an accumulation of experience and expertise. There is a growing emphasis on performance management and value for money in terms of projects and appointment of staff, but capacity problems make it difficult to make progress in this area. Similarly, although there is a growing sentiment against outsourcing and use of consultants, the realities in terms of public sector capacity ensure continued use of consultants. In general, specialist staff is considered to be a luxury in the Public Sector and most planners are considered to be generalist and multi-skilled – a point mentioned by seven of the public sector institutions.

In the Private Sector there has been substantial restructuring in response to market uncertainties, declining profitability of many forms of planning work, the decline of traditional forms of planning, the rise of new areas of work, and the need for affirmative action in competing for public sector tenders. Major responses have included:

- Downsizing of firms (which has happened almost across-the-board)
- Diversification of work as planning firms have moved increasingly into areas such as environmental management, property management, housing, local economic development, and geographic

information systems (GIS)

- In some instances, greater specialization as firms have found particular niches
- Increasing use of outsourcing to bring in specialist skills
- Increasing use of flexible Joint Venture arrangements.

In general, firms have found it very difficult to meet affirmative action requirements as young black professionals have found better career prospects in public, corporate (as opposed to consulting), and parastatal sectors. As planning firms have branched into other field so firms in fields such as engineering, architecture, management, and land surveying, have moved into territory that was traditionally delineated for planners. This has introduced the competition faced by planners and has contributed to the declining profitability of planning firms as tariffs have increased at less than the inflation rate over a number of years. The interpenetration of planning and other disciplines, and the related blurring of the identity of planning, is one of the major trends of the past few years. It is unlikely that reservation of work for planners, as included in the new Planning Act, is an appropriate response to this trend.

4.1.3 Skills in demand

The following growth areas in Gauteng have been identified:

- Environmental management
- Project management
- Strategic planning and integrated development planning
- GIS
- Public management
- Performance management
- Public participation/facilitation
- Local economic development
- Land restitution and rural planning.

At the same time there has been a decline in traditional forms of planning such as land-use management, and layout and design, although not to the same extent as in other provinces. Much of the growth in new areas has related to new legislative requirements, and the general shift towards development planning. Perceived skills gaps were identified as follows:

- Good writing skills
- Project management (highlighted in almost every response)
- Economic and financial skills
- Conflict resolution and communication
- Interpretation and application of law
- Computer Aided Design (CAD).

The survey included questions on renumeration levels, but returns on this were poor and of questionable accuracy. They are thus not included in the paper. Nevertheless it does seem quite apparent that salaries in both the public and private sectors are higher in Gauteng than in other regions of South Africa, and there is some indication of a migration of planners into Gauteng. It is not clear whether this compensates for the numbers of planners who are leaving Gauteng for other parts of the world, especially Europe, America, and Australia.

4.1.4 Summary

Many of the trends in Gauteng are similar to those elsewhere in the country. There are however certain distinguishing features:

- The relatively large size and dynamism of the Gauteng market
- The significant market divide between the Pretoria and Johannesburg area
- The location of national government departments within Gauteng
- The three metropolitan governments (Johannesburg, Tshwane, and Ekurhuleni)
- The continued demand for planners in the public sector
- The location relative to the rest of Africa
- The relatively higher salaries
- The distinction within educational programmes between town and regional planning, and development planning
- The relatively diverse and complex nature of planning in Gauteng with the persistence of traditional forms of planning, whilst new fields are emerging.

4.2 WESTERN CAPE REGION

4.2.1 Structure of the job market

There were 447 planners on the SAPI Western Cape database at the time of the survey, but not all planners (particularly recently qualified ones) were members of SAPI, and some members were retired. The Western Cape's share of the total number of planners in South Africa was approximately 27%, and it thus had the second largest concentration in the country. 114 (25%) of these were women. Only 47 (or 10%) on the database were located outside of the greater Cape Town area (which would include Stellenbosch, Paarl, Somerset West).

Planners have traditionally been employed in both forward planning and development control departments within the local and provincial authorities, in related departments within government, in private planning consulting firms, and to a lesser extent within NGOs and other related consultancies. The job market is still structured in this way, although the relative importance of these sectors has been changing in recent years (see trends, below).

The highest concentrations of university-qualified planning professionals are still to be found in government departments, although, as the survey indicated, this is starting to change. It is likely that a major reason for change has been the lack of black planning graduates produced in the past by the Universities of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch. With the pressure on government departments to increase their intake of black employees, it has been informally reported they have increasingly drawn on Technikon graduates (more often likely to be black) or have redefined posts as 'development planning' jobs, allowing them to take in (black) professionals from backgrounds other than planning In the case of UCT, informal feedback from past students indicates that the few black planning graduates have frequently secured better-paying and more high-profile jobs in Gauteng, and have been lost to the region.

The survey indicated that the planning consultancy sector is increasingly made up of small firms, one-person firms, or planning firms which specialise in a particular related area (economic development, environment, design etc). Where larger firms take on new professional staff, two of the five interviewed mentioned that they are increasingly likely to employ Technikon graduates (who have skills which can be immediately useful) or university graduates from a range of backgrounds who can be used for a variety of job types. The more experienced planners in the firm (all of firms interviewed) do the planning policy and spatial framework tasks, which demand planning skills.

Interviewees pointed to the fact that planners have also entered a range of professional areas other than planning. Within government they are to be found in departments of environment, housing, and economic development (and in the metropolitan authority, in top managerial positions in these departments). In planning consultancies, the survey showed that the nature of work is such that planners need to be able to deal with a range of different job types (five of the six interviewed), and they have moved into areas of environment, economy or project management, or in other consultancies specialising in these areas. Master of City Planning and Urban Design graduates (from UCT) appear to be particularly flexible across skill boundaries, as they can offer expertise in planning, design and architecture.

4.2.2 Trends in the job market

There was a general perception from those surveyed that jobs which specifically require urban planning qualifications have reduced in number or are not growing, but there is no quantifiable confirmation of this. In the metropolitan authority, planning posts have been frozen since the start of the last round of municipal restructuring. It is unlikely that all of these will be filled once the restructuring is complete, due to staffing budget cuts. Within the provincial administration, certain local planning functions have been devolved to the new municipalities outside of the metro, thus reducing the need for planners at this level.

While the freezing of staff in the public sector has meant that more work has to be outsourced, budget cuts and institutional turmoil could mean less work for planning consultancies. One large local authority reported that it had spent R 10 million in the previous two years on consultancy work, but only expected to spend R5 million in the next two years. The kind of work outsourced from this authority had been: the preparation of spatial development frameworks, policy frameworks, research and evaluation. Other public sector respondents surveyed mentioned: development plans, structure plans, transport plans, economic development plans, revision of zoning schemes, policy frameworks, environmental impact assessments (EIAs), subdivisions, rezoning and departure applications, township establishment, project management, facilitation, and policy work.

None of the firms surveyed planned to increase their professional staff and many had downsized, although some of the older large consultancies still exist. Apart from a reduced flow of work from the public authorities, traditional development application work has also been affected, as the cost of piloting development applications through authorities, given red tape, has become excessive and often beyond what clients are prepared to pay. Possibilities that consultants would gain extra work through the IDP PIMMS offices have not materialised, as the province is trying to build in-house IDP capacity, rather than set up PIMMS. Consultancies, it was reported, have responded by tendering for jobs elsewhere in Africa and in fields related to urban planning (project management, financial planning, information technology (IT) and participation).

Three individuals in the private sector reported that planners have gained specialised qualifications in the growth areas of local economic development (LED), project management, environmental management and EIAs, transport planning, and heritage impact assessments, so that they can be marketable in a wider range of areas. While some years ago there was also a growing demand for skills related to participation and facilitation, it is now only the NGOs who appear to feel the need for this kind of specialisation. There was some concern among planners surveyed about the way in which the environmental profession has expanded its scope to include impact assessment in relation to social and economic factors as well as biophysical ones, and is thus encroaching on planners' traditional territory.

Four of the five private sector planning firms interviewed showed little confidence that the planning job-market will expand in the immediate future, and suggested that in the private sector this would primarily take the form of short term contract work. One respondent felt that this was in part due to the fact that planners did not market themselves well or 'sell' the need for planning, and that the environmental profession had been far more successful at this.

4.2.3 Skills in demand

Generally there has been a blurring of professional boundaries, with those trained as planners moving into related areas (sometimes with additional qualifications and sometimes on the basis of experience) and people with training in other areas (environmentalists, engineers, urban designers, architects, project managers,

Table 2: Planning tasks and skills in planning practices in the Western Cape

Subdivisions	**Planner**
Rezoning	Technicans
Layout & applications	Technicians
Surveys	Technicians
Research	Planning graduates or undergraduates
Spatial framework	Planning graduates and technical support
Policy and strategy	Planning graduates
IDP work	Planning graduates
Urban design	Urban designers and architects

economists and land surveyors) moving into planning. 12 out of 21 people interviewed, and the latter mentioned the former by 13 of the 21. There has also been a blurring of boundaries between university and technikon-trained planners, with technikon graduates increasingly employed to undertake work previously reserved for professional planners (this was mentioned by all five private sector planning firms and by two of the local authority respondents). Technikon graduates have more immediately useful hard skills (particularly in GIS), although there was one complaint from an employer that a greater theoretical content in the Technikon curriculum was eroding this advantage.

Table 2 gives an indication of the kinds of tasks undertaken in private practice in the Western Cape, and the nature of the skills, which are used for them.

In reply to the question about the kinds of skills a planner needs, the list identified was very long, and far more than could ever be packed into a two-year post-graduate degree. Respondents identified: conceptual thinking, awareness of social and economic issues, analytical abilities, understanding of implementation and project management, IT and GIS skills, development oriented skills, human resource management, ability to work at a number of scales, knowledge of development control and forward planning, environmental knowledge, knowledge of legislation, writing and presentation skills, policy issues and understanding of community dynamics. Two sources expressed the opinion that the old divide between intellectual planners and technicians who had hard IT skills was no longer appropriate: with the growing use of IT and GIS in business and government, this was now an essential skill for everyone.

4.2.4 Summary

Although many of the trends in the Western Cape region were similar to those in the rest of the country there were some distinguishing features. These included:

- The concentration of planners in one main locality i.e. Cape Town
- The relatively small number of planners trained in the region who are black
- The blurring distinction between university trained and technikon trained planners
- The apparent lack of growth in jobs requiring general training in planning, and the growing demand for specialisations in addition to planning
- The concern with the expansion of the environmental profession into areas that have traditionally been the domain of planners.

4.3 KwaZulu-Natal region

4.3.1 Structure of the job market

Compared to Gauteng and the Western Cape, the job market in KwaZulu-Natal appears to be much smaller. There were 166 planners on the SAPI database in 2002, and only 13% of planners registered with the SACTRP came from KwaZulu-Natal. However, many individuals involved in the broad field of planning are not members of any professional organization, and so the planning 'profession' in the region may be larger than is evident at first glance. It is evident that the public sector is the main employer of planners, with the largest concentration in Durban, and to a lesser extent, Pietermaritzburg. The largest number of planners is employed in the now amalgamated eThekwini Unicity (Durban).

The planning section of Provincial Department of Traditional and Local Government Affairs in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and Ulundi is another significant employer. Smaller concentrations of public sector planners are employed in the more urbanised local and district municipalities in the rest of the province. In addition, the recently established PIMMS centres have provided another source of employment for planners, although planners do not always fill these jobs. There are few national departments employing planning staff in the province, and the NGO sector is small.

Whereas once KwaZulu-Natal was characterized by a number of medium sized firms, these have largely disappeared, and have been replaced by very small firms of 4 people or less, and by one-person bands that work in consortia with others. There are only two firms employing more than 7 people, and one of these operates as a form of network, drawing on associates as and when necessary, according to the skills needs of work coming in.

While traditional land use planning and strategic spatial planning activities have been a mainstay for planners in the public and private sector, the diversification of work towards developmental planning has been a relatively long standing trend in KwaZulu-Natal. This trend has been strengthened over the past decade (see trends below), but traditional forms of planning still remain important aspects of work. At the time of the study, the provincial planning department and municipalities was increasingly focused on development and strategic planning, but continued to carry out statutory planning functions. Despite the diversification of work, planning departments in the larger municipalities and in the province largely employed people trained as planners. Ethekwini's strategic planning department was an exception in drawing employees from a wide range of backgrounds, but even there most employees were planners. The private sector contains a mix of firms in land use and developmental planning, with some firms spanning both. In 2001, the few large firms, however, were mainly oriented to developmental planning, and employed professionals from a wide range of backgrounds linked to development.

Planners have also moved strongly into a range of related fields, particularly housing, economic development, rural development and environment. Planners were frequently employed in these departments in provincial and local government, sometimes at senior levels. Several private sector firms embraced these areas of work, and the few NGOs in the field cut across these areas, and employed planners as well as a range of other professionals. Here, skills rather than qualifications seemed to be important.

4.3.2 Trends in the job market

The most obvious trend has been a significant shift in fields of work within planning. As indicated above, there has been a move away from traditional forms of planning, such as land use management and layout, to development oriented work associated with integrated development planning, land reform, rural development, local economic

development and so on. This change in the nature of work was underscored in every interview in the planning sector. It was evident within both the public and private sector and was underpinned by policy changes and by KwaZulu-Natal's poor economic performance, explored more fully below. Due to the focus on policy, less was spent on capital development, affecting the demand for traditional forms of planning.

As in the Western Cape, however, there is no evidence to quantify the common perception (amongst almost all respondents in the private planning sector) that the overall demand for planning is in decline. Nevertheless, there does seem to be a decline relative to the sharp growth in demand that occurred to the mid-90s. The market has been extremely fluid, but could improve in future. As was the case in Gauteng, almost all respondents in local government planning departments pointed to an increasing workload as a consequence of the broadening of planning, but that the numbers of planning staff employed had not increased to match. Several factors underpin these conditions.

First, the process of local government reorganization has been a very extended one, and in the case of Durban, what is now the eThekwini Municipality has effectively frozen jobs for several years as a consequence. Successive councils have been unwilling to make appointments in the context of reorganisation, and recently, councilors have taken control of the appointment process, considerably slowing the process. It is estimated that some 45% of posts within the various planning directorates are unfilled – around 250 jobs, including other professionals, clerical workers and so on. It is however anticipated that this situation will be reversed in future as the amalgamation is now complete and a new Chief Executive Officer has been appointed.

Both the eThekwini Municipality and the provincial planning department have lost experienced planners as they move to the private sector, or to other places, including a strong movement overseas. In both cases, the processes of replacing these planners are slow (it can take 6 months for interviews to occur in eThekwini municipality), also affecting the market.

Second, the economies of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban have performed poorly relative to Gauteng and Cape Town (Todes, 2000). Property development was particularly affected by this trend, with consequent spin-offs in terms of a reduced number of planning applications, design work required and so on.

Third the housing sector has performed poorly due to bureaucratic and political problems. This emerged strongly in interviews with planners working in the housing sector, and is corroborated by unpublished research undertaken by a consortium of housing agencies in 2001. The number of grants awarded has declined, and much of the private sector in housing has collapsed. While the intention has been to shift towards public sector focused delivery, capacity remains weak outside of the eThekwini municipality. Housing is no longer the growth area for planners that it once was. There is a real danger of a loss of skills in this important field.

The private sector has been particularly affected by these trends. At the time of the study, work available to the private sector had become less certain and more intermittent. Almost all firms mentioned that profit margins and fees had been squeezed. In response to these trends, and to technological change that has reduced the necessity for large planning offices, the private sector has restructured and downsized as noted above. With one exception, amongst those interviewed, firms operating in predominantly traditional physical planning arenas were most affected. The downsizing of the private sector has meant that with some exceptions, it is unable to absorb new graduates or to play the mentoring role that it did once. New employees are required to be fully operational much more quickly than was the case in the past. Although jobs within the public sector are more secure, there are more demands on planners. This has also put pressure on the capacity of the public sector to mentor graduate planners, although some departments have well developed programmes. A level of contracting out of work is occurring in response to limited capacity, but the predominant trend seems to be to in-house work, and overall, the extent to which work is contracted out to the private sector seems to be less than was the case in the early 1990s.

The current emphasis on environment and sustainable development might have been expected to support the growth of planning work. Some planners, who are skilled in this area, have done well in this field (and our survey included two of these planners), but for the most part it is emerging as a parallel field, with its own (overlapping) application process, department and set of consultants.

While the job market has been tight, the emphasis on affirmative action has meant that the few African planning firms have done well (see also Harrison and Kahn, 2002), and that African planners experience a very open market. While the survey did not address this issue directly, it emerged in several interviews in the public sector. They are sought after, and move quickly between jobs, and across the country. As in the Western Cape, there is a strong movement to Gauteng, but many African planners remain in the province.

The job market for university trained planners and technicians is somewhat different. Almost all respondents amongst the larger employers in both the public and private sectors argued that the shift away from physical planning to a greater focus on developmental planning was reducing the demand for technicians. In these contexts, University trained planners, with more training in conceptual and policy skills are preferred. While technicians are more likely to be used in the realm of physical planning, the very small firms in our survey outsourced these functions. Seven of private planning firms interviewed employed technicians. In all of these practices, physical planning was an important, but not necessarily the sole element. Of the seven firms, three mentioned that they preferred employing technicians due to their immediately usable design and technology skills, and their lower cost. Others felt that the skills of university trained planners and technicians were different, and that both were needed. There is nevertheless, some blurring in the market place, with technicians increasingly being used in a broader range of roles in both the public and private sector.

4.3.3 Skills in demand

Fields experiencing growth across the public and private sector as mentioned by respondents include local economic development, strategic and performance management, environment, business and implementation plans, strategic planning and integrated development planning, institutional development and capacity building, public management, public participation and facilitation, GIS, and rural planning and land restitution. These are mainly linked to the more developmental aspects of planning, and are areas that are not the exclusive domain of urban and regional planners. Although the market is becoming more blurred, planners offer the ability to integrate and think holistically. Four respondents however felt that planners are weak in terms of their ability to translate ideas into implement able, realistic projects, and require 'harder' skills in the areas of project management, business, economic development and financial management.

While planners have moved into a broader set of areas, there is an ongoing demand for planners with physical planning and design skills. Although not picked up systematically in the survey, some planners feel that these aspects will become more important in the near future, as we move towards implementation. There is a concern that a broader education is coming at the expense of a loss of skills development in traditional areas of planning. Ten of the interviewees felt that design skills had been sacrificed to a broader policy oriented education at university. There is potentially a similar tension for the technikon-trained planners, since there is a pressure for them to move into a wider arena.

There is a clear tension for planning educators between focusing on skills related to physical planning, and on skills related to a broader arena of development planning that are more in demand at present. In both spheres, there is a need for the integrative, holistic and analytical skills that are seen as the strength of planners, and for 'hard' skills either or both design and development. This is a tall order for planning schools.

4.3.4 Summary

Although many of the trends in the KwaZulu-Natal region are similar to those in the rest of the country there are some distinguishing features. These include:

- The small size of the planning profession when compared with Gauteng and the Western Cape
- The relatively large number of black planners trained in the region, and the apparent success of black-owned firms
- The very small size of firms in the region
- The strong dependence on the public sector
- The relatively long tradition of development planning and strategic planning compared with other parts of the country
- An apparent decline in demand for jobs after the growth spurt from the mid-1980s to the mid 90s
- The poor performance of the economy (including the property sector) compared with Gauteng and the Western Cape
- Institutional problems which have delayed the creation of jobs in planning.

5. Implications of the survey for the degree of specialisation in planning education

An issue which is central to planning educators, and which was raised repeatedly by respondents to the job market questionnaires, is the value of a generalist planning education as opposed to one, which allows for significant degrees of specialisation. This is not a new debate. As far back as 1957 Perloff (1957:35) responded by arguing that "the need to cope with the problems of increasing specialised knowledge and techniques (is to train) not the narrow specialist but the 'generalist-with-a-speciality'" This subsequently set the tone for planning programmes in many parts of the world, but growing professional specialisation has continued to put pressure on planning programmes to make students more 'marketable' by providing them with specialist skills and knowledge.

In the South African job market survey, there appeared to be contradictory trends, at least within the private sector. On the one hand the tightening of the market in the planning field increases the demand for graduates who have immediately usable hard skills and abilities. On the other hand, the tightening market creates a demand for flexibility, that is, people who can work across a number of distinct areas. But private planning firms often choose to buy in specialised knowledge on a contract-by-contract basis, rather than offer employment to recent graduates with specialities. People with generalist abilities and with experience across a range of areas become particularly valuable in these circumstances.

In the public sector, where market pressure is less intense, specialists would be considered a luxury in a planning department. Here the demand is either for generalist planners with traditional skills in forward planning and land use management, or, increasingly in development planning, particularly integrated development planning. The demand for traditional areas is not growing very rapidly, and, while other fields are expanding, financial constraints are limiting expansion of employment in local government, the largest employer.

The range of what constitutes 'generalist' planning has also expanded enormously. The traditional realm of physical planning increasingly requires skills such as negotiation/mediation/facilitation, project management, and technical skills such as GIS. In addition, the broadening scope of planning to include areas such as integrated development planning and local economic development might build on traditional areas of teaching such as regional and strategic planning, but they also require a wider set of skills related to governance, management, and finance and a deeper understanding of economic development. Planning programmes in South Africa have tried to cope with these competing demands in various ways which include: extending the range of generalist education, introducing more hard skills (e.g. GIS), and electives which focus on specialised areas. But this has proved problematic, particularly for post-graduate programmes where time periods are short. It has

created the pressure to increase the intensity and complexity of post-graduate programmes in a context of greater diversity in student preparedness. It is also difficult in undergraduate programmes where students must be provided with a broad education in disciplines such as Sociology, Geography, and Economics, and where specialisation is often premature. There are indications that students sometimes choose electives in an *ad hoc* way and there may be little correspondence between electives chosen and later job choice. Graduates do not generally choose their areas of work, and may end up working in different fields to their specialism.

It is important, therefore, to understand what aspects of a generalist education are valuable in the immediate and long-term marketability of graduates. In response to questions on this, interviewees emphasised the importance of an ability to conceptually integrate knowledge from a range of specialised areas (economy, environment, transport etc), and to do this in relation to human settlement development and spatial understandings, in both an analytical and normative sense. This "core competency" was captured in a statement formulated by heads of planning schools in 2002 in Bloemfontein: those trained in the field of urban and regional development planning would be able to "plan, design, manage and implement the development of human settlement in an integrated and creative way, responding to the critical challenges facing South African society to promote equitable and sustainable development of people and places".

It is also important, however, to recognize the growing demand from the market for graduates to have 'hard' and immediately useable skills. This will make it increasingly necessary to build in exposure to aspects such as GIS, EIA processes, project management, finance and implementation, and human resource and facilitation skills. A number of the post-graduate planning schools are now offering these kinds of inputs as electives. For university-based programmes this begins to raise the issue of how their programmes differ from the more vocationally oriented Technikon programmes, and how they can maintain a balance between conceptual and theoretical knowledge and skills-based knowledge.

Finally planning education will have to recognize the shift in planning practice from a pre-occupation with development control, to forward planning and implementation. This is important in relation to spatial planning but also in terms of the way spatial planning intersects with other functional arenas such as economy, transport, environment and housing.

6. Conclusion

Compared to the period in the 1980s to the mid 1990s, the job market for planners is less buoyant, although there are regional variations, with a far stronger market in Gauteng than in the Western Cape or KwaZulu-Natal. While there is a demand for planning skills, there is less money to pay for them. Fees and profits in the private sector have been squeezed, and work for the private sector is less certain as the public sector has moved away from the privatization push evident in the late apartheid era. Less work seems to be contracted out than in the past, although the public sector is still forced to commission considerable parts of its work. The pressure for affirmative action has been difficult for the private sector to respond to under these conditions, as black planners are largely moving into the public sector, and they are highly mobile in this context. The few black firms do well, but the overall trend is towards a restructuring and downsizing of the private sector. The trend is weaker, but nevertheless evident in Gauteng, which has retained a larger number of the sizeable firms.

The public sector remains the largest employer of planners, but to a lesser extent in Gauteng. More is now expected of planners in the public sector, and it is clear that planning is proving to be important in this context, but fewer planners are employed to respond to the new demands. In some places this has to do with shortage of finance, while in others, the restructuring of local government has effectively frozen posts for some years. This situation is to some extent changing, and it can be expected that the demand for planners will increase in several areas in the short to medium term.

There is a clear trend towards a broadening and diversification of planning. Areas such as integrated development planning, local economic development, rural land reform, and more developmental aspects of physical planning have been growth areas, while traditional arenas of planning such as land use management have been less in demand. Planners themselves have moved into a wide array of areas within the public and private sector. Nevertheless, physical planning, both in some variant of its traditional form, and in its more developmental forms, remains an important mainstay in the job market.

Boundaries with other disciplines are blurring. The new areas of planning are not the sole preserve of planners, and as planners broaden what they do, other disciplines are moving into the more traditional arenas. This broadening definition of planning, the growth of new fields of study, and the pressure of affirmative action is contributing to the employment of non-planners in what were planning jobs in the public sector, and in contracts to the private sector. These trends pose particular difficulties for planning education. With more pressure on both the private and public sectors, there is less room for mentoring, and there is more demand for immediately usable skills and abilities.

There are contradictory pressures towards retaining generalist planning programmes, and towards allowing greater specialisation. At the same time, what now constitutes a generalist knowledge is far wider than before. A rather broad set of planning competencies has been defined as a base by planning educators. Willi Faling's (2002) study indicates that employers support this list of competencies, but it is questionable whether they can be achieved within the short space of planning degrees, particularly at a post-graduate entry level. Nevertheless, our study showed that the conceptual integrative abilities of planners continue to be important, and this must be a core focus for planning schools, or at least those at University. Clearly, the way planning schools respond to these trends will vary, and there is a need for both innovation within and between planning schools, and for greater engagement with planning practice around creative ways of

responding to the shifting terrain. There is also a need to move beyond a static conception of planning education as a once off degree towards forms of continuing professional development that allow response to a continually changing market.

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