

World Town Planning Day 2017 – 8 November 2017

World Town Planning Day (also referred to as World Urbanism Day) was initiated in 1949 by the late Professor Carlos Maria della Paolera of the University of Buenos Aires to advance public and professional interest in planning, both locally and abroad. In the meantime the World Town Planning Day is celebrated in 30 countries on four continents each November 8. It is a special day to give special recognition to the ideals of community planning which bring professional planners and the general public together. World Town Planning Day presents an opportunity to look at planning from a global perspective.

The core of urban and regional planning is a concern with people and how they use space:

- Where and under what conditions people live
- How people make their livelihoods
- How people move between their homes and other destinations
- How and under what conditions land is used.

These concerns are manifested as spatial systems and networks.

Planning is a strategic, rather than a comprehensive activity, which implies selectivity and a focus on what really makes a difference to the fortunes of an area over time. Planning is a field of expertise which involves initiating and managing change in the built and natural environment, across a spectrum of contexts, ranging from urban to rural; and delineated at different geographic scales (national, regional, sub-regional, city, town, village, neighbourhood), in order to further human development and environmental sustainability.

Planning operates specifically in the fields of:

- delimiting, regulating and managing land uses;
- organisation of service infrastructure, utilities, facilities and housing for sustainable human settlements; and
- co-ordination and integration of social, cultural, economic and physical components of settlements through synthesis and integration of information, for preparation of strategic, policy, statutory and other development plans.

The term 'planning' also implies a mode of governance driven by policies through a deliberative process and judgment 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. Planning itself is fundamentally concerned with making ethical judgements.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as "*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*", is a set of 17 "Global Goals" with 169 targets among them.

The SDGs were in large measure informed by the perspective reflected in the often quoted assertion by Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General from 2007 to 2016, that "we don't have plan B because there is no planet B".

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals included ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests.

SGD 11 specifically addresses the aspect to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Cities are hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social development and much more. At their best, cities have enabled people to advance socially and economically. Many challenges do however exist to maintaining cities in a way that continues to create jobs and prosperity while not straining land and resources.

The common urban challenges are well known and include such things as congestion, lack of funds to provide basic services, a shortage of adequate housing and declining infrastructure.

The New Urban Agenda (NUA) builds on SDG 11, but address a wider range of urbanisation and human settlement issues. It provides for a spatial or locational framework for the delivery of the SDGs in urban areas. It also focusses on local level implementation through local governments and other local actors.

It is for this reason that the celebration of World Town Planning Day provides an ideal opportunity to pause and reflect on how effective and efficient the various level of government and more specifically local governments, have through strategic spatial governance frameworks managed and started to manage the challenges set out in the NUA and the SDGs.

From the NUA there are three Transformative Commitments. These are Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty; Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; and environmentally resilient and sustainable urban development.

There is however a need to go beyond the urban to integrated, polycentric and balance territorial development, national urban policies, urban-rural linkages, food security and nutrition, and agriculture.

The South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN) as the statutory body responsible, for the planning profession in South Africa has always promoted the celebration of World Town Planning Day.

For the Sustainable Development Goals to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, the private sector, civil society and each individual person.

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