

Practice Notes

Spatial Transformation

Compiled: July 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

A key role of Cities post 1994 in South Africa is on Spatial Transformation, to stitch Cities (spatially, economically, socially and culturally) together to ensure more equitable access to resources and opportunities and racial and economic integration. It aligns with the global initiatives in the Right to the City and the Just City, but also must in its conceptual framing, decision-making, resourcing, implementation and communication to all residents that deliberate collective efforts are required to dismantle spatially segregated Cities and the right to access opportunities for better life outcomes. This deliberate work is of racial equality and the role spatial segregation played and continues to play in enforcing inequality in South African Cities.

Since 1994 and more so since the establishment of post-apartheid municipal structures and systems (2001), South African Cities have instituted key programmes and projects to address this spatial inequality through mass transit initiatives to close the physical and economic gaps between places of residence and places of employment; through support of National Treasury Township investments (NDPG) to ensure more economically active and viable nodes of employment close to where people live; to density bonuses in more well-located nodes to encourage more housing opportunities. South African Cities have transformed as per the changes in Urban Growth illustrated in the 2016 report (see images below).

In addition, residents use effective and efficient transit systems at low cost through the Bus Rapid Transit Programme, Inner Cities (especially Johannesburg and eThekweni) have transitioned to spaces where through compaction and sub-letting affordable housing has become available and townships are also densifying through innovations in backyard dwellings. Cities have developed mega-projects (largely supported by National Treasury) such as pedestrian bridges, large scale public spaces, social and community facilities, mixed use housing and commercial precincts.

Yet despite all of these efforts, reports indicate that Spatial Transformation has been slow (David et al. 2018) and that many of South African Cities poorest residents still live far from opportunities. This leads to pertinent questions how do we measure Spatial Transformation? Is it one data point? In a 2016 paper, the SACN looks extensively at changes in built form and density as a critical measure of spatial transformation . While very informative and illustrative of changes in the built environment, does this accurately present Spatial Transformation in all of its complexity?

Therefore one can ask is Spatial Transformations a set of indicators? Is how a City functions, what it looks like or what it feels like? What do the existing legislative reporting requirements for Cities highlight in terms of key indicators? What other innovative systems, recommendations and approaches exist within the Spatial Transformation indicators landscape? With the limitation of

resources, data collection and analysis, what is the ability for data to represent the story the qualitative aspects of the improvement of the everyday lives of City residents.

The purpose of this report is to provide a landscape of key spatial transformation indicators which Cities are expected to report against in terms of Urban Policy, compliance with National Treasury, recommended for all local government and data systems working to collect data and reflect for all Cities and assess where there is misalignment to reflect on the reporting burdens for local municipalities on one area of focus.

In order to ensure that the research was framed in a manner consistent to the experiences of city practitioners, one Practitioner Learning Exchanges was held. It took place at the start of the project to develop the research question with city practitioners and experts in the field. The session was facilitated by Rehana Moosajee of the Barefoot Facilitator along with Nicolette Pingo, Inclusive Cities Programme Manager with support from project manager, Kayla Brown. The sessions were recorded and captured on Mural.

This Practice Note captures and reflects on the Learning Exchange.

2. RESEARCH REPORT

What the report outlines is, everyone knows that spatial transformation is needed and over the years different organisations have developed sets of indicators in accordance with national and international policy developments. However, the problem is that there are no agreed-upon indicators for all the different aspects of spatial transformation.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR PRACTICE

This report highlights that an agreed upon set of indicators to track Spatial Transformation with the alignment across policy documents from National, to Provincial to local level may enable an integration. For Cities, it may alleviate the need to report against a large number of indicators from a compliance perspective and allow for the cascading of indicators both upwards and downwards.

The complexity of ensuring neighbourhood level planning and implementation is making a contribution to these broader targets can be tackled in innovative ways making use of Geo-Spatial tracking. This would then require a further cascading down to departmental and individual level scorecards, taking into account the recommendations from the Rules of the Game Research.

The Functional Integration Platform looks to be the correct platform to take forward, but there is work to be done in terms of the integration of the platform into existing City systems, planning tools and monitoring and evaluation requirements.

It is intended that this exploration will open up a discussion of indicators alignment with a more extensive set of critical skills in Monitoring and Evaluation, Strategic and business planning skills towards further tackling Spatial Transformation in South African Cities. An agreed upon open set of indicators may also allow for opportunities for City residents to play their part in creating more Just Cities.

4. PRACTITIONER LEARNING EXCHANGE

The Learning Exchange was held on 29 September 2022 as part of the Built Environment Integration Task Team (BEITT) meetings. It was intended to be a first touchpoint with practitioners around the challenges of Spatial Transformation. The session included inputs as follows:

- Reflecting on the role of the SDF- Annemarie Loots
- The eThekweni Strategic Hub- Dr Sandile Mbatha
- Social inclusion through the urban lens- Ruth Nelson



The poster features the BEITT logo at the top left, which includes a globe icon and the text 'BUILT ENVIRONMENT INTEGRATION TASK TEAM' and 'www.builtenv.org.za'. The main title is 'BEITT QUARTERLY Measuring Spatial Transformation in South African Cities? Session 1'. Below this, it lists 'Key Inputs' with three bullet points: 'Reflecting on the role of the SDF- Annemarie Loots', 'The eThekweni Strategic Hub- Dr Sandile Mbatha', and 'Social inclusion through the urban lens- Ruth Nelson'. The date and time are 'Thursday 29 September 2022, 09:00- 11:30 MS Teams'. The background is yellow with a stylized city skyline graphic on the right side.

The Session began with requesting participants to define what Spatial Transformation means for them, some key responses are highlighted below. The session included over 47 participants, so not all responses are included below:



The image shows a Mentimeter poll titled 'How would you define spatial transformation?'. The poll results are displayed in a grid of colored boxes on a dark background. The Mentimeter logo is in the top right corner. The responses are:

- transportation and land use reform.
- demographic shifts
- Social integration of races and classes
- Changing the use of space from one land use to another.
- increased access for all
- Ensuring residents have access to same facilities and resources across cities as far as possible.
- Spatial transformation would be a positive impact in the daily lives of most people in terms of their daily commute - how easily they can commute, how safely it is done, how reliable the commuting is, how much it cost.
- Changes in urban structure and form to support pre-defined principles
- Changes to coordinate systems which provide a new or developed approach in areas. Also aids in the critical growth and development of cities / urban areas

How would you define spatial transformation?

Mentimeter

To promote spatial justice by improving services to marginalised neighbourhoods, and to integrate towns.

Changes spaces socially, economically, physically

A more efficient and effective urban form that enables inclusive economic growth.

Spatial transformation is about giving all equal opportunities in terms of work, live and play. Easily accessible amenities, job opportunities and education. Easily accessible public transport, versatility in use of spaces and safety.

Access to opportunities

reconfiguring of space from one form into another, that creates new social relations

Redressing spatial inequalities

Urban change towards better average quality of life for all residents.

Shifting from an artificially engineered urban structure towards something more organic/ logical.

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Excerpts from the Mural Board capturing the Practitioner Learning Exchange, 29 September 2022

The guests provided key inputs as highlighted in the excerpts below.

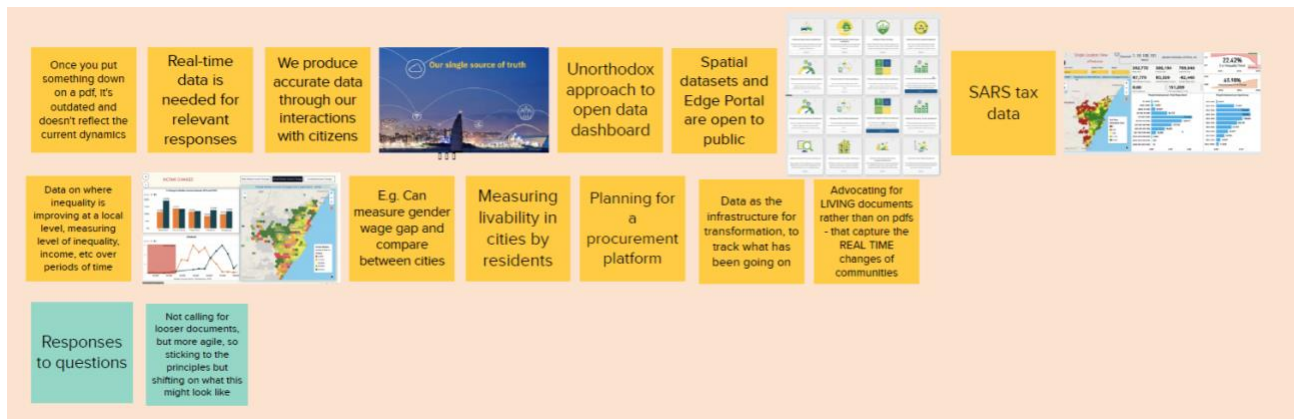
- **Prof Annemarie Loots** focused on the role SDFs could/ should play in Cities and key considerations for Spatial Transformation of South African Cities.

The collage contains several key points and diagrams:

- Role of SDF:** long term spatial structure that should guide all spatial decisions.
- Implementation to identify priorities:** where first?
- It must be easy to use, to guide space:** Not to duplicate the detail in other plans.
 - The SDF gives strategic guidance and forms the basis for:
 - IDP linked to budget
 - IDP plan
 - Housing Sector Plan
 - Services Infrastructure Master Plans
 - Transport plans
 - Housing Capital Expenditure Framework
 - Land Use Management Scheme or Local Area Plans
- Itself, the SDF is not technical, it's a simple tool that needs local area plans for implementation.**
- Different cities have different level of details:** e.g. conceptual high-level graphic plan with GIS information.
- To guide, the plan must be simple and easy to read on a map - not only when viewing in on a GIS platform.**
- Often, a mismatch between principles and proposals.**
- Nodal points must be mixed-use, walkable, etc. but the proposals don't reflect this, often single use, car-centric developer-driven.**
- Demographic data used for indicators - but how accurate is this data?** Perhaps better to work with pattern and trends than exact numbers. E.g. Mogalemele population increases around the mine.
- What do we do with this data? Do we interrogate it?**
- How to measure walkability and what to do about this - reducing walking distance with the right layout.**
- ICG, MCGs address a wide range of issues including increasing quality of the indicator.**
- The SDF is merely one component enabling measurement of changes in quality of life and services.**
- In job control releases through the SDF how many people have access to housing within in their income. It's not the role of the SDF.**
- Responses to questions:**
 - The principles are quite vague - e.g. measuring happiness, or spatial transformation.
 - Need to interrogate our principles.
 - Outdated tools that need to be relooked.
 - The SDF can't take responsibility for the failures, the local area plans need to do this, guided by the SDFs.

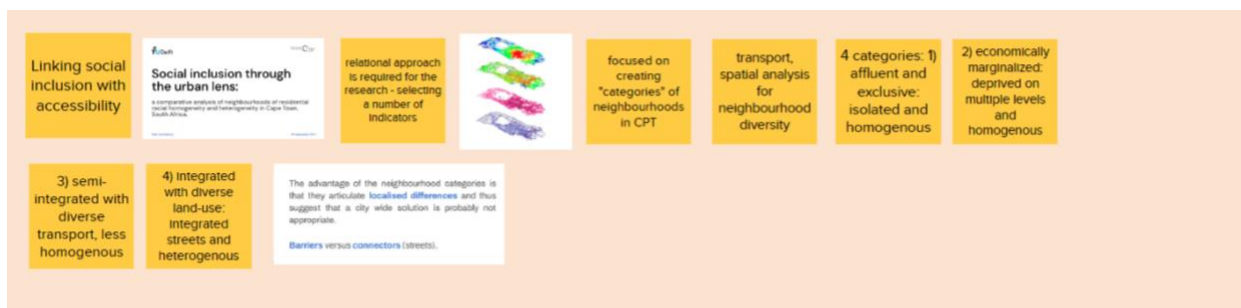
Excerpts from the Mural Board capturing the Practitioner Learning Exchange, 29 September 2022

- **Dr Sandile Mbatha** illustrated the role of data in driving Spatial Transformation, through the open platform, the eThekweni Strategic Hub. He highlighted that such open data systems could be considered to drive Spatial Transformation in contrast to more static instruments such as Spatial Development Frameworks in Cities.



Excerpts from the Mural Board capturing the Practitioner Learning Exchange, 29 September 2022

- Lastly, a presentation from author and academic **Ruth Nelson** on Social Inclusion in Cape Town and the development of such an index to measure inclusion highlighted some of the complexities of spatial structure in South African Cities.



The session then had an open discussion with some of the key points listed below:

- We have inappropriate tools. After 30 years in the game still haven't seen the changes. After exposed to international work, they don't speak to spatial plans as different to planning in general. Things are happening on the ground that our planning system ignores. Who are we trying to fool? Planners need a wake-up call.
- Most spatial transformation happens in historically better off areas. e.g. Westdene, Hillbrow, these areas have transformed the most. How do we fail these neighbourhoods that are transforming?
- Often data telling us what we already know, how then to get better at bottom-up data
- Innovation- reimagine the planning profession and our impact. Really exciting!
- The relationship between SDF and neighbourhood level planning in Cities needs more focus, as is illustrated between formal and informal human settlements provision in the City of Johannesburg.

The Learning Exchange provided an important departure point for the research project and help to identify key focus areas at the outset based on the actual experiences of city practitioners. It also helped to outline some of the kinds of solutions that city practitioners are exploring in relation to Spatial Transformation.

5. WAY FORWARD

The Session had a critical role in shaping the Spatial Transformation Indicators review research in unpacking Spatial Transformation and the role of data in unpinning the measurement and target setting in Cities. The session in and of itself also provided a key learning opportunity for perspectives on measuring Spatial Transformation, through offering an overall lens (Annemarie Loots), innovations in measuring using open data systems (Dr Sandile Mbatha) and indices of inclusion to understand Spatial Transformation (Ruth Nelson).

Further Learning Events on sharing the research report are planned in 2023/24 financial year under the broader BEITT programme.