

Un-Learning 'Community': Reflections on Socio-Technical Spatial Design Support with Slovo Park

Abstract: Theme 2: Applying technology in human settlements: case studies

ABSTRACT

The South African city we experience today did not simply manifest in a vacuum outside of the social injustice of the last 400+ years of colonial and Apartheid 'development'. The four-hour commute that the average Johannesburg city user experiences, the sense of fractured locality across the metropolises of Durban and Pretoria and the intact socio-economic segregation of townships to suburbs seen in Cape Town are all the tangible legacies of the Apartheid city design that we complicitly accept as our South African city on a daily basis.

The knee-jerk reaction by built environment practitioners to this observation is typically a technocratic response to suggest an addition of infrastructure and implementation and not a reform of the practice of city-making. The fact remains that among the large-scale projects our democratic government has implemented we sit with infrastructure deficits larger today than 1994.

The practice of 'making city' in South Africa requires some form of radical change, one that calls on all city makers to re-conceptualise how we see, make and manage our spaces. While technical skills and competencies are vital to this approach, the immediate challenge for built environment practitioners can be seen in the lack of skills or willingness of individuals and institutions to engage with the socio-political complexity of our cities. The misnomer that we are dealing with a homogenous technical challenge for a homogenous social demographic of people (or the 'community') that can be solved through a 'better house/shack/dwelling', a more efficient toilet system or solar panel array, is damaging and criminally myopic in its lack of imagination, creativity or recognition of the situation.

The paper offers a structured reflection on an eight-year case study conducted by the author and his colleagues. The argument of the paper is centered around a critique on the often-misused terms of 'informality', 'community', 'participation' and 'development' in the built environment sector of spatial development. The case study unpacks the approach and methods used within the Socio-Technical Spatial Design practice of 'Neighbourhood Making' and offers a reflection on critical skills and lessons gathered from the experience. The intent of this reflexive study is to offer a working reference for private-sector practitioners, government officials and grassroots practitioners who are looking to engage informal neighbourhood upgrading in South Africa.

Keywords: informality, community, grassroots, neighbourhood, city-making, Socio-technical, development, participation

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Apartheid, South African cities have seen a large growth in urbanisation and spatial development. This condition, combined with over 400 years of colonial and apartheid socio-spatial inequality has resulted in over 2700 recognized informal settlements across South Africa of which, according to the Housing Development Agency (HDA, 2018), around 2 million households are living in 'informal circumstances', while other statistics state that over 700 000 households of this number live in backyard dwellings. In total, 1 in 5 South Africans lives in inadequate conditions (Isandla, 2013).

Latest statistics suggest that while government efforts have built over 3 million housing opportunities since 1994 (HDA, 2018), the country's current backlog of housing is still over 2.1 million (Isandla, 2016). This figure is larger today than since it was at the beginning of South Africa's democracy in April of 1994 - in other words by building houses we haven't solved the 'housing' challenge nor the issue of 'informality'. These numbers indicate that these patterns of city-making¹ will be with us for the foreseeable future and that as a city we should accept 'informality' as part of urban growth (Pieterse & Simone, 2013). Contemporary urban scholars guide us to rather work with these conditions to address issues of safety, health, livelihoods and access to economic and civic opportunities at what the Isandla (2013) suggests at a 'Neighbourhood level' - rather than trying to 'eradicate' it with formal houses or 'formality' - a term or phrase that is heavily critiqued and avoided

¹ City-making is a term drawn from Isandla's 2011 Right to the City document that outlines the principles of city making through a rights-based approach developed with a range of local stakeholder on 11 core principles of inclusive city making (Isandla, 2011).

While 'informality' is a broad and often unhelpful term in regards to place-making for people it is unfortunately a lens that users, makers and managers of the city understand their operational landscape through (AlSayyad, 2004; Roy, 2005) and is used in this paper as a means of articulating the content. The hesitation to use 'informal' stems from the author's work in the spatial development sector. The term alludes to a negative stigma being attached to people and systems that exist in 'informal' neighbourhoods and is often euphemism for other bigoted perceptions of people. In this respect, residents of informal neighbourhoods face the systemic effects of unequal spatial development (South African Cities Network, 2016) in terms of their physical access (in the form of four-hour commutes to work, education and civic amenities, service access (in the form of bad service delivery of electricity, water and sanitation from government) and social access (in the form of job opportunities and important social networks). On the average, those living in informal neighbourhoods pay more for basic services, transport and education than those living in more affluent areas owing to this lack of access to the well located city-based amenities (Pieterse, 2008; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs & Population Division, 2016; Cirolia et al., 2017b).

Despite these immense challenges, informal neighbourhoods are some of the most dynamic and entrepreneurial spaces in cities (Roy, 2005); with grassroots businesses, social groups and advocacy groups demonstrating ground-breaking processes to address livelihood creation, building practice and social cohesion that if supported and scaled up have the potential to change our South African city-making processes to be more equitable, grassroots and representative of a South African city. This observation is tempered with caution from Pieterse (2008), who warns of the danger within the binary perspectives on informal neighbourhoods as 'apocalyptic' or 'irresponsibly optimistic'. These perspectives and stigmas around informal neighbourhoods are powerful forces that in the author's experience often remain unchallenged and not addressed in the built environment practice space.



Figure 1: Socio-Spatial Mapping of 'informal Urbanism' conducted by the author demonstrating the dynamic of 'informality' (1to1, 2018)

These uncritical views on informal neighbourhoods are a key part of the challenge that government officials, NGO's and other grassroots practitioners in city making face when in working with this sector (Isandla, 2013). These city-making practitioners have very few best-case examples of successful neighbourhood making processes to draw from (NUSP, 2013; Cirolia et al., 2017b) which is compounded by a lack of skilled practitioners (both grassroots and 'professional') or as what Van Donk refers to as 'Design Activists' (Marjam Van Donk & Edgar Pieterse, 2014) and builders - who the author believes are a missing sector of practice in South African city-making.

2 SETTING THE CHALLENGE

2.1 CHALLENGING DEVELOPMENT

Interwoven in the fundamental views on South Africa's version of urbanisation lie deep (unanswered) questions of resource re-distribution or spatial justice as outlined by De Souza (2011). Spatial Justice is an often difficult concept to articulate in South African cities, and even De Souza writes about the difficulty in identifying what a spatially just city-making practice is, with the provocation: "What does spatial justice look like?". The National Planning Commission (NPC) (2010) offers the people of South Africa a vision for our future 'just' or 'developed' city:

By 2050, South Africa will no longer have: poverty traps in ... townships; workers isolated on the periphery of cities; inner cities controlled by slumlords and crime; sterile suburbs with

homes surrounded by high walls and electric fences; households spending 30 percent or more of their time, energy and money on daily commuting; decaying infrastructure with power blackouts, undrinkable water, potholes and blocked sewers; violent protests; gridlocked roads and unreliable public transport; new public housing in barren urban landscapes; new private investment creating exclusive enclaves for the rich; fearful immigrant communities living in confined spaces (National Planning Commission, 2010)

While this offering from the NPC sums up the ills of what many city users experience on a daily basis, there are many urban voices who would argue that these are not what makes South African cities difficult to thrive in (Charlton, 2009; Matsipa, 2014), but rather are symptoms of the larger injustices of our city's historically unequal development. These hidden interpersonal intricacies around what is meant by development² or upgrading (Abbott, 2002) in South Africa lies at the heart of many disagreements' between practitioners, government and the academy on the topic of city-making.



Figure 2: Explorations of 'development practice' as suggestion of De Souza's provocation - by the author (1to1, 2018)

Development itself is a heavily challenged term, as Hamdi (2004) anecdotally critiques in his description of an exercise that he employs with Development Studies students at Oxford Brookes. In the exercise he allows students to use the Robertson Lexicon to create a list of development terms. From this list he makes students re-organise the terms in to different sentences in different columns to randomly generate statements for development – that all make sense as statements of intent. The point of Hamdi's 'jargon generator' demonstrates his argument: "...Development is whatever you want it to be depending on your politics and ideology: economic growth, rights, freedom, livelihoods, good governance, knowledge, power..." (Hamdi, 2004: xv).

This preludes an important observation that the concepts around development are so interchangeable in the minds of those it affects that to agree on what a 're-developed' city, just city-making or 'spatially equal' process is, becomes an impossible and sometimes quite violent task. This observation belies the point that if the understanding of development is contested and abstract, what does the practice of technical or social support towards 'development' look like?

Hand in hand with contestation around 'development' comes an established history in the use and practice of 'participation', a term employed in contemporary development practice since the 1970's (Cooke & Kothari, 2001) that has seen volumes of critique and exploration amongst scholars and practitioners. The use of participatory practice in South Africa around spatial development and the built environment efforts remains difficult to articulate (Ballard, 2008) as what encompasses the practice seems to conflate consultation, discussion, capacitation, empowerment and other nuances of engagement that the term conflates. Arnstein's ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969) offers a global perspective on a structuring of this term, but in the practice of city-making in South Africa the author has more often witnessed the only rungs 1-5 of Arnstein's ladder. (Osman & Bennett, 2013).

² Or 're-development' a term employed by the author to recognise the uneven development of South African cities since the geo-political formation of South Africa in 1652.

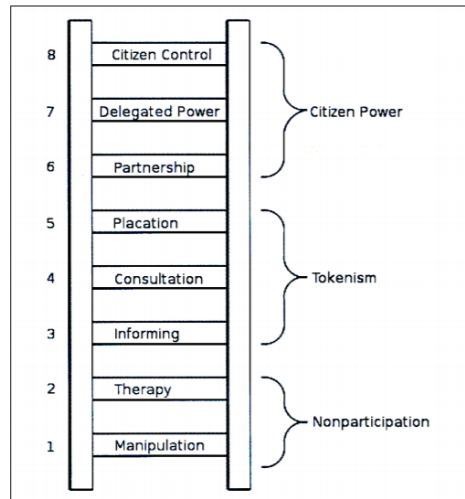


Figure 3: Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969: 217)

The absence of the citizen power elements of the ladder is an observation is echoed by practice bodies such as DAG and Planact (Isandla, 2013) in their annual roundtables and scholars such as Ballard (2008) who describes how; even though government tenders call for participation in the project structuring of the upgrading of informal neighbourhoods, and even under the UISP has a fiscal allocation of 3% (NUSP, 2013) of project budget to this role, this role in the sector still remains fundamentally missing from built environment projects as a whole.

“Participation does not necessarily imply self-help home building by undernourished and over-worked people without credit, with inadequate tools and poor materials . . . The central issue is that of control and power to decide”. (Turner & Ward, 1991)

Turner offers a critical observation on the underlying reasons for participation, but locally these practices of participation in the built environment and upgrading space require nuanced local critique in the South African context. Isandla (2013) offers 3 important framing questions on the various forms of citizen participation:

- Who participates?
- How do they communicate and make decisions?
- What is the connection between their conclusions and opinions, on one hand, and public policy and action, on the other?

In other words, participation does not mean much if there is not a space for the actions be implemented or if there is no meaningful feedback structures to those in power or the actions are understood.

2.2 CHALLENGING COMMUNITY

The following critique of the term ‘community’ does not exclude the valid existence of organised groups of people who share vision and the author offers Nick Wates’s definition of the term ‘community’ from *The Community Planning Handbook* as ‘...a group of people sharing common interests and living within a geographically defined area.’ (Wates, 2000: 184)

While it often supports a personal (or naïve) optimistic view on dire circumstance, the romantic notions of ‘community’ only being a well organised, self-propelled cohesive social entity, are not ‘fair’ to the groups of people who make up the social and spatial networks of informal neighbourhoods. This unbalanced view is clearly seen when projects ‘fail’ or are halted these groups of people who are held to blame – often against this idealistic view (Winkler, 2013). Again, Hamdi offers a counter perspective and in his written work often describes how ‘communities’ are not necessarily always organized and cohesive and sometimes lack the ‘sense of community’ and ‘social identity’ (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997: 67). He qualifies this by explaining that for participatory processes to work, it is not a requirement to have an already well-organized community from the start of a project. But that a sense of community can be achieved during the course of the work - which he states “...can also be one of the objectives of including community participation in development projects...” (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997).

The term 'community' is particularly unhelpful to practitioners in the spatial development sector around housing delivery and urban upgrading as it is often code for 'poor non-white South Africans' and limits the scope of what development projects allow for. The use of the term often implicitly excludes non-qualifiers for support and ignores cultural, gender, nationality and religious dynamics of South African informal neighbourhoods as described in the images below.



Figure 4: An example of complex 'community'⁴ engagement in Killarney Neighbourhood, Johannesburg (1to1, 2018)

The use of the term by built environment practitioners often results in myopic perspectives on the needs of complex groups of people who share space into simplistic interventions such as 'community centres' or 'skills centres' that offer generic and often reductive support as pointed out by Hamdi (2010) in his reflection to site visits of similar centres "We have learnt that belonging is not just about location but about meaning and association – the kinds that offer a multiplicity of opportunity for social exchange..." (Hamdi, 2010) and witnessed by the author his in own teaching and praxis in this sector.

These reductive views on people and place have the unaccounted cost of limiting creativity and innovation for strategies of development and reducing the inherent agency that often exists at grassroots level in South African informal neighbourhoods (Bidwell et al., 2010; Marjam Van Donk & Edgar Pieterse, 2014). The critique offered here does not deny that communities exist in South African neighbourhoods, but rather that the use of the term is often not questioned or challenged – more often than not there are many 'communities' that make up neighbourhood structures.

Hidden in the immensity of the challenge faced by built environment practitioners in the housing delivery sector, but mentioned often in the rhetoric around South African Development processes, is the description of people and place as *Neighbourhood*. The Western Cape Human Settlements' *Living Cape* framework for Human Settlements makes specific mention of developing 'resilient neighbourhoods' and 'neighbourhood typologies' and has already begun working with groups of people through this scale of engagement as was demonstrated in earlier work by the author in the figure below.

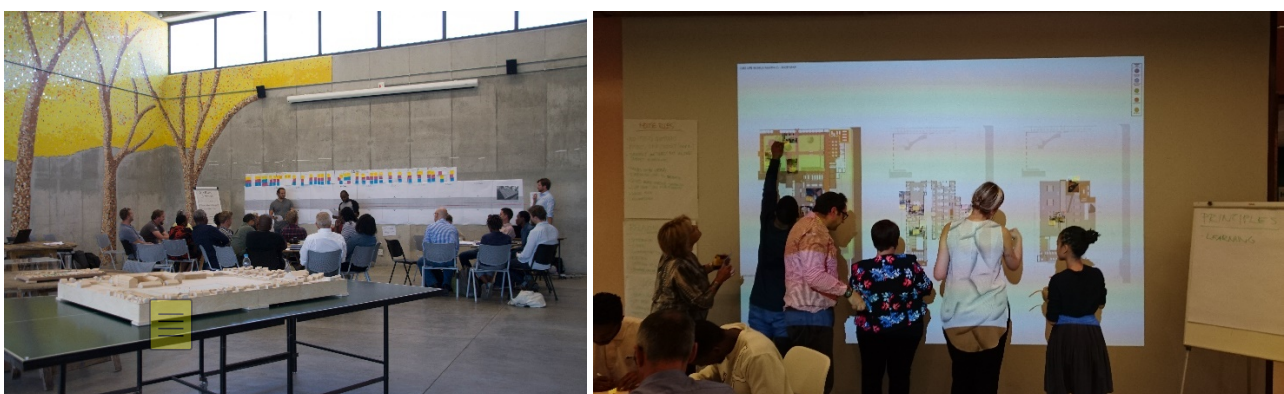


Figure 5: Alternative means of Digital Tools for Neighborhood level Socio-Technical Support (1to1, 2018)

The right to the city is the right to be 'messy' as stated by Simone (Simone, 2013), and the author's offered term of 'Neighbourhood' as a scale of engagement is not intended to be a clinical definition, but rather a more

4 These are students 1to1 who have worked with working on a process of socio-spatial mapping.

nuanced and flexible understanding of place and the relationship the people who see, manage and make such place have to it.

A 'neighbourhood view' on the larger issues of 're-development' removes the specialisation of informal settlement development which should be seen as city development and has the potential to normalise the processes of in-situ development for any form of marginalised area in South Africa. The technocratic approach to these challenges in both the physical and digital space has already shifted away from the sciences (Sambuli, 2016; Berridge, 2017) and is looking to incorporate the humanities and embody the principles of social sciences and development studies in the technical approach. The missing piece remains models, examples and a skilled individuals who can take up the call.

"A proactive approach to community involvement is not common amongst local councils, yet the reforms to the planning system and to local government generally increasingly require necessitate, both proactivity and systematisation of involvement as well as an implied need to build and sustain a widened network of stakeholder interests in local governance." (Masiko-Kambala, Görgens & van Donk, 2012)

The term *Neighbourhood* in South Africa has the potential to realistically humanise the complexity of the challenges and offers a spatial delineation to describe a set shareable values and markers for at least a nationally agreed set of 'development' standards and ethos in practice.

The following case study unpacks a narrative of what such a role would look like. The case study has been structured to describe lessons, skill sets discovered along the way. The case study reflects on eight years of socio-technical spatial design support for the Slovo Park Development Forum (SPCDF) and offers a reflective case study for practitioners, students and government officials to learn from and critique.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 SLOVO PARK: SOCIO-TECHNICAL SPATIAL DESIGN SUPPORT, ADVISORY AND BUILDING

3.1.1 Student Phase: 2010 - 2011

In July 2010 the FIFA 2010 World Cup took place in South Africa. The global event brought with it hundreds of thousands of visitors to South Africa and generated a public space through the fan-parks that have never been seen in South Africa since. Charged with this spirit of connectivity and a recent university field trip to Maputo, a small group of students from the University of Pretoria's Masters programme accepted the third quarter elective of working in Slovo Park ⁵ (Slovo Park Support Team, 2010). The project was structured under Carin Combrinck who at the time had begun her own doctoral inquiry into informal settlement upgrading in South Africa and after establishing a connection with Max Rambau at a departmental conference had arranged for a small student group to conduct an architectural research project with the Slovo Park Development Forum (SPCDF).

The students arrived in Slovo and were introduced to the SPCDF through the Chairman at the time, Mohau Melani, who over the eight-week period of research and design the university offered, worked with the students and the various groups who made up the Slovo Park 'community'. These included the Policing Forum, the Water Forum, the Electricity Forum, the Business Forum, the Church groups, Stokvel's, block committees and sports teams who made up the 4000 people neighbourhood of Slovo Park as indicated below.

⁵ Slovo Park is an informal settlement comprising about 5000 households, totaling about 25,000 people. Slovo Park is situated in a politically and socially sensitive stretch of land south of Soweto. The community has been known by national government as Nancefield, by local council as Olifantsvlei and in the last five years as Slovo Park – named in honour of South Africa's first minister of housing and former Umkhonto we Sizwe General, Joe Slovo. The forced changing of identity reflects an on-going struggle faced by the leadership of Slovo Park to gain recognition as a legitimate settlement to access governmental support. This battle has been fought through constant shifts in governmental policy, power and promises for the community of Slovo Park. Their only tactics comprising of service delivery protest, painstaking formal requests for upgrade and currently a lawsuit against the City of Johannesburg. (Yolande Hendler, 2012)

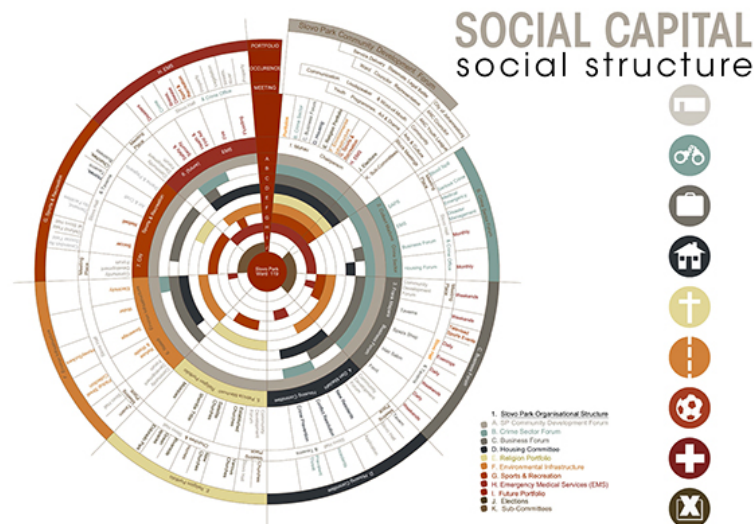


Figure 6: Slovo Park Social Structures that explain the complexity of the term 'community' (Omar Horzook [1to1 student league]; 2012)

The students realised quickly that the issues at hand were not around the technical design of a house or a shack, but rather the issues were tied into much more complex political, socioeconomic and cultural issues that were halting the development of Slovo Park. The SPCDF had been working towards this goal since 1986 (Tissington, 2012) when the original founders of Slovo Park, Baba Mthembu worked with various elders to block out the settlement (based on the grid of El Derado Park adjacent to Slovo Park) and was now being managed by the SPCDF established in the 1990's (Royston, n.d.). The SPCDF had at this point been working with various institutes and universities including the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) (Tissington, 2012). The proposal by the students, based on this understanding, sought to break away from traditional architectural responses and incorporated ideas of incrementalism, livelihoods and cultural infrastructure as a means of working off the inherent energies in Slovo Park (Bennett et al., 2010). These included a housing clinic, a funeral pathway and infrastructure, a public park and a rental housing scheme that employed open-building principles.

Upon presenting this work to the leadership and the community after the academic portion, the students attempted to share the ideas through the drawings in architectural form. This presentation took place in the intersection of the streets in Slovo Park and was later revealed to be a tactical move by the SPCDF to bring on board the local ward councillors and various grassroots groups. The event was an important moment for the students because they dismally failed in communicating their ideas (due to language and visual format) but after the work was discussed intimately with residents in a 1-on-1, or 1to1, manner did the ideas proposed by the students find traction and the students were able to get useful critique on their proposals (Combrinck, Carin, 2015).



Figure 7: Slovo Park Students speaking with Slovo Park residents in a 1to1 manner (Slovo Park Support Team, 2010)

At this moment, the lecturer (Combrinck) in charge offered the students an opportunity to build part of their design idea as part of the final quarter's technical submission. At this point, the students undertook the building

of a portion of the design idea as the output for a technical module in their course. The students spoke with the SPCDF who agreed to the idea and after several discussions agreed that a meeting hall (adjacent to the original meeting at the intersection) would be a valuable resource for the leadership. The students then worked with the Business Forum and designed an incremental, multi-use space (Bennett et al., 2010) that could be built in eight weeks with minimal resources and become a larger project later on.

This period of co-design, co-build and co-manage was a challenging period as there was no budget for the project and the team worked with locally sourced recycled bricks, reeds, tyres, steel donated from nearby factories, lunches sponsored by residents and local businesses and eventually a small donation of bricks from an NGO in the final week of the project. The project exceeded the initial proposal and merged into phase 2 as residents gathered resources from employers to propel the build.

Upon the completion of the initial hall, the students realised they had stumbled upon *another* way of practising architecture (1to1, 2018: 1) and sought to take these lessons further in their studies and practice. The university responded by dissuading the students from this work as they were 'emotionally compromised' and 'did not feel the social aspects of this work were vital for architectural training.'

3.1.2 Key Lessons from being students:

The student phase of the Slovo Park project revealed a key set of lessons:

1. The disciplinary boundaries set by the Universities and Institutional bodies are one of the many hindrances holding back the holistic training of practitioners in training and implementation spaces.
2. Residents and stakeholders should always be placed at the center of development processes, with practitioners and supporters trusting and following the decisions of local leadership.
3. There are many ways to support from a technical space, and many ways to negotiate and barter what that support means and how it is remunerated. It is vital to be upfront and open to be 'turned away' from projects if these are not accepted.
4. Expectation management is an important part of this work, but not a factor to stop projects – these expectations must just be negotiated and managed.

3.1.3 Skill Sets for students:

The skill sets identified in the Student Phase of the Slovo Park Project were:

- a) Co-productive means of conceptualising, understanding and developing ideas and strategies for spatial development
- b) Collaborative or Participatory means of practice, work sharing and resource procurement
- c) Visual Translation and Spatial Literacy towards tactical spatial development.

3.2 TEACHING AND TRAINING PHASE: 2012 – 2015

The student group stepped away from the Slovo Park Project in 2012 in order to complete their post-graduate studies. They each engaged with the same topic of architectural response to 'informality' but chose to explore it elsewhere while the lecturer in charge continued an engagement with the SPCDF alongside her doctoral research (Combrinck, Carin, 2015). During this stepping-back period the students gathered their perspectives and decided to form a student group named 1to1. This name emerged in response to the moment the drawings made sense to residents in Slovo Park in 2010 (1to1, 2018: 1). The group intended to carry the questions and actions of making socially engaged architectural work accessible to more students and lobbying the academy to allow this work to be considered part of the training.

On completion of their masters course the original student group returned as studio assistants and took another group of students through the same project in 2012 (Combrinck, Carin, 2015), but this time in response to a new set of challenges that a two-year period of reflection had revealed. This included the management of the hall, maintenance issues, internal conflicts between local groups and safety. The 2012 student group worked closely with the Youth Forum in Slovo and completed a new version of the hall in July of that year. This project outlined the need for a formal vehicle to carry the costs, indemnity and support structures of this work and the 1to1 - Agency of Engagement was legally registered.

The need to register the NPC came from the lack of professional opportunities for this type of work and almost no built environment definition for the role that the students had developed with the SPCDF. At the same time,

there were almost no precedents in how to structure professional offering for this work and no means of articulating the scope of work or accountability.



Figure 8: 2012 students working in Slovo Park on the first 1to1 project (1to1, 2018)

1to1 now managed several tactical neighbourhood interventions in Slovo Park that responded to the needs of the SPCDF and the various groups in Slovo Park (Business forum and Youth Forum in particular) while also creating a mutually beneficial learning relationship between universities and the groups. The intervention built in this period included the playgrounds, hall upgrades, Mandela Day projects, hosted school visits and other tactical interventions.

During this period 1to1 also assisted the leadership in their ongoing court case (Royston, n.d.) against the city of Johannesburg while assisting the local NGO, Shack Dwellers International (Yolande Hendler, 2012) with the socio-technical support across Gauteng which Slovo Park leadership played a crucial role in building network of social mobilisation support around their learnings in the project .

The organisation developed several tools and methods (The Blue file, Tools of Engagement) and employed them in the projects they managed (1to1, 2018: 1). The group also sought to build network of engaged students, the 1to1 student league, through this and grow the field of practitioners. 1to1 directors also worked in other professional disciplines (planning, engineering and other related disciplines) to embed themselves and bring in other disciplines in this work.

3.2.1 Lesson from Teaching and Training:

1. The lack of definition of Socio-Technical Spatial Design allows for existing professional bodies to absorb the work and continue 'business as usual'.
2. Saleability of this type of work was difficult to conceive while developing the practice – an entrepreneurial mindset was crucial to balance research, impact and value translation.
3. Sustainability of energies, expectations, resources of all stakeholders (technical and social) is a crucial and often forgotten aspect of this work.
4. Maintenance of infrastructures and strategies is a vital aspect of Socio-Technical Spatial Design.

3.2.2 Skill Set for Teaching and Training:

- a) Due to the long-time frames of engagement and stakeholder management, the skills developed around Teaching and Training were a useful skill set to mitigate the role of the university and other outside practitioners involvement as a translation of this time into research and data gathering.
- b) Learning as a means of generating support from educational facilitates and grant bodies was an effective approach to securing support for indeterminate project outcomes.
- c) Network and Collaboration building were employed around tactical engagements between government, university and grassroots entities. This proved invaluable in the early stages of this practice.

3.3 PRACTITIONERS PHASE: 2016 - ONWARDS

The SPCDF won a landmark case in 2016 (Royston, n.d.; SERI, 2016), when the City of Johannesburg was ordered by the high court to deliver development promised to Slovo Park through the Upgrading Informal

Settlement Programme (UISP). The city had a limited time to deliver this judgement and forced them to work closely with the SPCDF through the pro-bono entity SERI.



Figure 9: Johannesburg Mayor, Herman Mashaba, breaking ground in Slovo; SPCDF member after victory (SABC Digital News, 2016; The Star, 2018)

In the early stages of this process the SPCDF worked with the city processes who followed traditional processes of upgrading, which effectively ignored the requirements of participation outlined in the UISP process. 1to1 alongside representative from the University of the Witwatersrand's (Wit's) Center for Urban Built Environment (CUBES) who were asked to assist, and a technical support team was developed. This role outlined the spatial and technical translation of the city's plans into an cross-visual (Rose, 2016) understandable form. This role also was crucial to support the SPCDF in attending various stakeholder meetings and workshops with departments from the city as seen below.

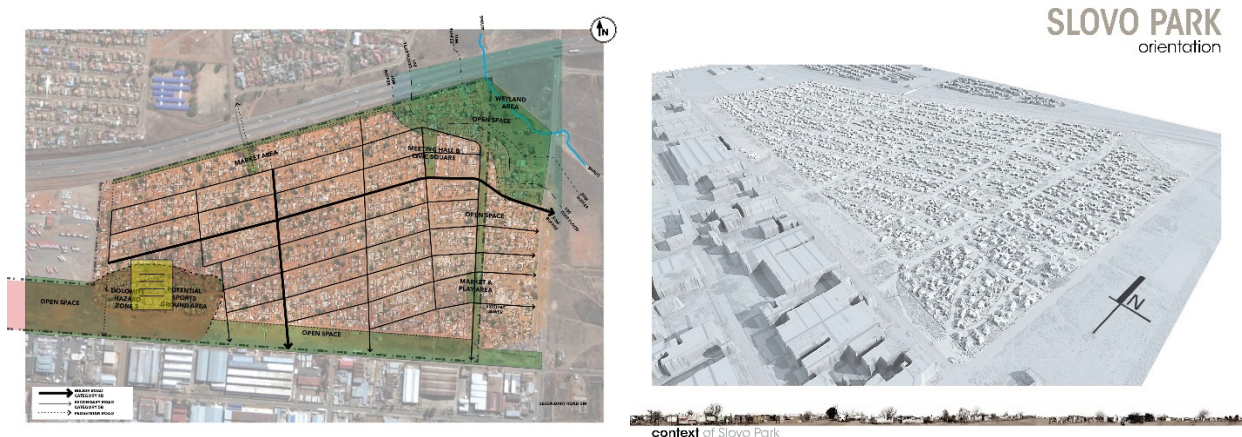


Figure 10: Translated Neighbourhood Diagrams and Models (2012 Students) used in key city departmental meetings with the SPCDF and 1to1 (1to1, 2017)

This role saw 1to1 gearing up and attempting to expand the offering outside of Slovo Park and formalise an approach to Neighbourhood Making that exoriated cross-disciplinary means of supporting development. Eventually, this process broke down and 1to1 offered a tactical workshop to pilot a mini-UISP workshop that would have tested and prototyped the UISP process to demonstrate to all involved. Tragically, the chairperson of SPCDF (and co-founder of 1to1) passed away and the project was stopped during the mourning period and December holidays.

This shifted the nature of the prophecy as the city's mandate change with yet another round of position changes but was saved by the electrification of the settlement (The Star, 2018) but a crucial landmark of development promise for the SPCDF. Today, the role of Socio-technical Spatial Design Support and Advisory continues to be one of translation, ideation and support of visions of local people into action plans, but an additional role of 'strategic facilitator' has been introduced and attempted to fit into the offering.

3.3.1 Lesson from Practice:

1. Institutional knowledge of the sector was a difficult and hard-won experience set for the organisation. To watch several versions of government support shift and appear was a tricky and process to support within.
2. Trust-building and positioning the organisation to be supportive when and if the SPCDF needed socio-technical support was an important takeaway.
3. Capacity Building, both internally and externally of the organisation, is an important process that should take place. 1to1 had been working for five years at this point and drawing in much support from supporters to support the work.

3.3.2 Skill Sets for Practice:

- a) Visual translation across different education backgrounds and technical experience
- b) Spatial Design as means of place-making – not technical upgrading
- c) Facilitation between different actors, stakeholders and supporters.

4 CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

4.1 CHALLENGING PRACTICE

The National Upgrade Support Programme (NUSP) was tasked to support in building technical capacity and provide support to local governments across south Africa to meet Outcome 8 of the former NDP (NUSP, 2013) which aimed to develop 400 000 well located informal settlement houses in South Africa by 2014. The instrument of national government has worked across the country in this regard and worked towards the 2014 goal and now the their new targets with a substantial support from National Treasury (Cirolia et al., 2017b).

The position of NUSP in the housing and development sector indicates the nationwide need for socio-technical capacity in the built environment sector to address the issues of housing in South Africa. This need for practitioners is highlighted by Gorgens (2017), who describes this capacity in his call for 'intermediaries' between government, residents of informal neighbourhoods and other stakeholders in informal neighbourhood upgrading. The role of the intermediaries should be one of '...mediator and conflict resolver...' and need to combine technical knowledge with a sophisticated process that navigate the local context and negotiate communally acceptable options.' (Gorgens, Tristan, 2017)

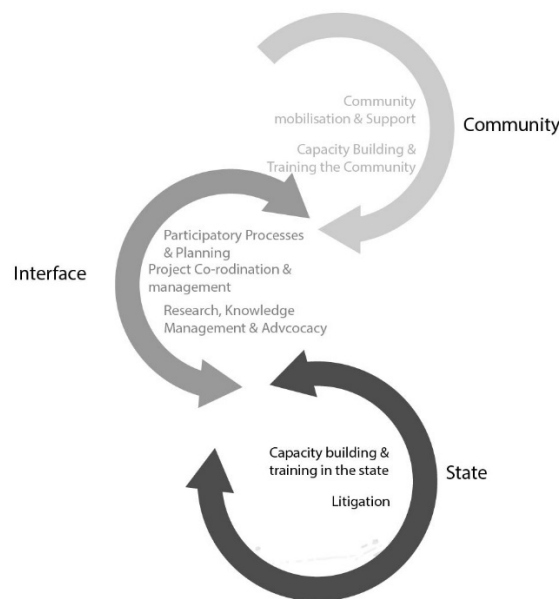


Figure 11: The role of intermediary function in establishing and maintaining state-community interface (Gorgens, Tristan, 2017)

Isandla's work through the GGLN has focussed on framing the issues around building capacity for participative and technical supporting through their project building capacity for the development and use of meaningful collaborative planning tools in South Africa. The project was initiated from the organisation's assessment of the current development approaches and methodologies in South Africa are '...flawed as they lack meaningful and real public participation...' (Van Donk, Mirjam & Tristan Gorgens, 2012). This work has been extensively documented and the concepts of supporting a 'community of practice' and practitioners are recurring themes at conference and network events on the informal neighbourhood upgrading.

The intimate nature of this work remains largely un-developed, with Van Donk and Pieterse's (2014) call for Design Activism describing this type of practice and the real need for creative and innovative solutions to address these issues with case studies from Latin America to showcase the role that innovation plays in systemic place making. This type of work should not only be 'social', but somehow blend aspects of the technical, creative and spatial into the scope while at the same time building capacity for those who are most affected by these conditions; the residents of these areas (Wilson, 2006). An example of such a practice is offered below.



Figure 12: A neighbourhood making exercise employing digital tools and socio-technical spatial facilitation (Backstory Collective, 2018)

The skills, approaches and embedded methods to meet the demand of practitioner capacity required to address the spatial inequality of cities, particularly in the area of informal settlement upgrading, are in need in the built environment (Cirolia et al., 2017a). The author believes that a difficult part of this individual capacity to articulate, but vital to the practice of equal city making, is set of institutionalised ethos and morals to guide this type of work. This set of moral and ethical guides should recognise the intersectional privileges inherent in the south African post-apartheid Spatial Development built environment (Oldfield, Parnell & Mabin, 2004; Watson, 2014). These skill sets are present, but currently are not seen as valuable in the discourse around addressing spatial inequality. Private practices are not willing to take the risks, government entities are trapped by their institutional arrangements, residents have too many other problems to worry about and universities do not see a reason to engage other than producing fodder for research. These two together are a vital piece missing in the 'development' sector in South Africa. (Combrinck, Carin & Bennett, 2017).

While this paper reflects on the case study of Slovo Park and 1to1 – Agency of Engagement, it aims to outline a scale of engagement: the Neighbourhood Scale and an institutional role for the built environment: Socio-Technical Spatial Design. The scale and approach should not be seen only around housing issues but address the systemic legacy of spatial inequality by being used as a means of spatial development that that co-produces equitable public and common spaces, a right articulate by Van Donk and Gorgens: '*...that is, it should be produced in such a way as to enable the "full and complete use" of urban space by inhabitants in their everyday lives. It therefore includes the "right to live in, play in, work in, represent, characterize and occupy urban space...*' (Van Donk, Mirjam & Tristan Gorgens, 2012).

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[TEXT REDACTED FOR REVIEW]

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