



Power dynamics in a transforming local authority planning environment: The Tshwane experience

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This paper which is derived from a PhD study on the same topic unpacks the transformation of urban planning in the municipalities of the Greater Pretoria region (now Tshwane) during 1992 to 2002, specifically within the context of the government transformation in South Africa and contemporary planning theory.

In order to contextualise the transformation of urban planning in the City of Pretoria/Tshwane, this paper presents an overview of the international trends on urban planning and how these trends (during the 1990s) have informed, shaped and framed the transformation of urban planning in South Africa and in the City of Tshwane. These trends are associated with community participation, strategic planning, sustainable development; the merging social awareness amongst urban planners; and the new integrated relationship between urban planning and management.

The paper specifically unpacks and analyses the nature and impact of the transformed/transforming integrated, developmental and democratic planning system, the positive and negative impacts that this system had on planners, local authority managers and politicians. It also provides a perspective on the conflict and power dilemmas that arose between planners, between planners and managers and between planners and politicians. Within the context of the so-called web of power relations (as described by Foucault), the study specifically explores the impact which the transformation had on the power relations within the local authority planning environment - specifically within the context of the social nexus (as described by Habermas, Healey and others).

The paper provides a local South African example of the nature and dynamics of power relations within a transforming local authority, with specific emphasis of the planning function. Not only does this study challenge contemporary theories on power relations in planning, but it also provides valuable new insights on the complex and illusive power relations in local authorities. Largely based on the work of Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas, the study provides an intriguing reading of the many conflicts and power/rationality struggles and clashes that are being played out on a daily base in municipalities in South Africa.

Through the detailed unpacking of a decade of transformation of urban planning in one of South Africa's six metropolitan municipalities, Dr Coetzee contributes to improving the understanding of the current nature and focus of the urban planning function in the local government sphere. As such it provides invaluable insights to planning theorists and historians, not only in South Africa, but also in other societies experiencing rapid and far-ranging transformation.

KEY WORDS: Development planning, planning and politics, planning and power relations, local government planning, transformation of planning in South Africa, developmental role of planning, developmental state.