Set out your ideas on how young planners in the Commonwealth can contribute to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, with examples of good practice

Introduction

You will never be as young again as you are now. The number of people over 60 is expected to rise from 962 million globally to 2.1 billion in 2050 reaching 3.1 billion in 2100[1]. With all signs indicating that the proportion of young people is shrinking worldwide, why should we place pressure on them to contribute more to our communities? In the wake of significant challenges can young people improve settlements inclusiveness, safety and resilience? This essay looks at how young people can add value to decision making, using an understanding of human behaviour and technology to resolve challenges.

Motivation and Behaviour

The planner at the barbeque is rarely lavished with praise for their work. In fact, more often than not, complaints are dropped at their feet and they find themselves responsible for all the ill in the world before they can finish their beer[2]. This is despite planners by profession seeking to improve society and build better more resilient communities[3]. Perhaps this decline in our professions standing is due to planners being seen as the naysayer. To a certain extent this may be justified, after all, part of building a community we want is rejecting things we don't, which seen from an individual experience may not make much sense. A common example, a 2 metre high front fence for one property is not a problem, a neighbourhood of 2 metre high fences facing a woman's dark walk home is. Too often as planners I consider we focus on the big picture without convincing our community of their individual contribution, we take a strategic view, far above the individual. Today, with significant challenges facing us and a fragile relationship with our communities, we must bring the problem back down to the individual. If planners focus on what motivates a person's decisions we can solve the most complex problems.

10 Cents to Save the Ocean

Delicate adjustments can change behaviour. For example, a 10 cent charge for a plastic bag can make people choose to carry their goods, even if that 10 cents goes to a charitable cause. In trials, The Warehouse Ltd was able to remove the plastic bags in circulation by 80 per cent[4] just by imposing a small fee. 10 cents helped avoid one of the greatest marine pollutants of our time. Here in Auckland, New Zealand, the electronic transport card (Hop Card) was adopted by customers across the network. The card got incentives and social expectations right, customers got a discounted rate and it was more convenient for passengers and drivers, in two years its adoption rose from 19 per cent to 86 per cent[5]. The 'Hop Card' is now the norm, if a person pays cash, delaying the system (particularly in the morning commute) an irritated frown from passengers and drivers encourages adoption. The two examples are very different, one involved relatively little investment, the other significant investment. Both were successful in influencing people's behaviour to be more sustainable, whilst not removing choices.

A Dash of Psychology

Several theories exist to explain motivation, in this essay we explore Maslow's theory[6] which defines motivations as a needs hierarchy. The base is physiological, food, shelter, rest and health. Above this sits

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[1] (United Nations, 2017)
[2] (Campbell, 2014)
[3] (Planning Institute Australia, 2018)
[4] (TVNZ, 2009)
[5] (Auckland Transport , 2016)
[6] (McLeod, 2018)

security, safety and shelter. Social is third, the need to be loved, to belong and be included, fourth is esteem or ego, obtaining status and recognition. Self-actualization or personal development sits at the top and is last to be satisfied. Whilst this theory may seem too elemental for planning, it can be applied to everyday situations. For example, if ego was not a factor, we would all drive the same cars, and live in simple homes. If we didn't desire social inclusion we would not be afraid of public speaking and potential ostracism. The benefit of planners understanding human motivation is that no matter where we live or what system we work in, ultimately we all have the same major needs.

Shared Challenges
The Commonwealth is composed of 53 countries, many of which were previously held within the British colonial empire[7]. It has a population of over 2 billion people, and despite the global elderly trend, 60 per cent of the Commonwealth are under 30 years old[8]. This could be due to the contributions of developing nations such as India, and parts of Africa. Cities are attractants for youth, and city populations have the largest challenges in respects to suitable housing access, safety of citizens and being resilient to system shocks. Cities also have a significant effect on the environment, occupying just 2 per cent of the Earth's terrestrial surface they consume over 75 per cent of its natural resources[9]. Because of these challenges, cities are in fact our greatest opportunity to create change. With 55 per cent of the world's population residing in cities[10] and this figure projected to increase, sustainable development increasingly depends on getting our urban areas right. This is particularly true in low to middle income countries where rapid growth is predicted.

All for One, One for All
Wealthier Commonwealth nations such as New Zealand, Australia and Canada have a responsibility to not deny developing nations the wealth and success urbanisation brings. Rather we must help manage the negative environmental impacts, in particular addressing the use of fossil fuels which historically has powered industrialisation[11]. Young planners across the Commonwealth must recognise the role their countries have had historically and the future role they can have, as both distinct nations and as a collective.

The Tech Toolkit
Our technology seems conventional, speaking to somebody on the other side of the planet is an ordinary part of life. We forget, it was only in 1876 that the first patent for the telephone was granted[12], not an iPhone, a really old school dial one. The World Wide Web was only created in 1991[13], and yet today it is a fundamental part of modern life, functioning without it, inconceivable. Cities that harness and develop ideas are hubs in sustainability and new exports. By acting like a knowledge network planners can collect data, determine trends and trial new ideas or build on others.

Shared Experiences
A 2014 Deloitte report[14] identified African nations as "the next big market" for technology. The comparatively younger population of Africa is a significant driver in new tech adoption and innovation, allowing citizens to take control of their future and connect with the world. Knowledge cities like Silicon Valley increase productivity by concentrating experts and innovators to collaborate and build off other's success, planners in the Commonwealth can do this too. As stated, people's primary motivators are the

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[7] (The Commonwealth, 2018)
[8] (The Commonwealth, 2018)
[9] (United Nations Environment Programme, 2018)
[10] (United Nations, 2018)
[11] (Mathews, 2016)
[12] (Garraty, 1991)
[13] (History.com, 2010)
[14] (Deloitte, 2014)

same no matter where they live or what culture they are from. As planners we habitually share stories based on policy or project design, but these are not always reproducible under local regulations and settings. What we need to share is the triggers we used to motivate change. What's exciting is triggering behaviour change is not limited to individuals, technology enables us to place pressure on global firms to impact change. Being "named and shamed" can place social and economic pressure on businesses, forcing their behaviour to comply with the values of their community.   Examples recently include SeaWorld following the release of Black Fish, the documentary[15], or more successfully mitigated, Starbucks after the viral video of two African American customers being arrested[16]. As planners we must use the tools at our disposal to bring change. Many of the issues faced across the Commonwealth today are economically and politically connected. If we have a strategic view we can see that individual cities successes contribute to the group's success.

Young, But Not Dumb
Young people have always challenged the decisions of the generation before them. With lower commitments and a higher tolerance for risk, we can be selfish, taking personal or professional risks challenging the status quo because we have less to lose in doing so. As bold young planners, we need to consider how we can use policy to trigger behaviour change, whether that behaviour is done by powerful businesses or individuals. The advances in communication and clean energy shine a light on a superior way of existing with the planet and each other, but this sustainable existence must be accessible and desirable to all. The culmination of these advances has been termed the 'third industrial revolution' by economist Jeremy Rifkin[17] and gives hope that sustainability can outrace ice sheets. As millennials, we were born straddling two periods in time, that of fossil fuels and dial up, and the conscious sustainable future we need. Young planners must combine ambition with optimism and a sound education, the three things needed to plan for a better world.

Word Count: 1499 (excluding title and references)

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[15] (Chattoo, 2017)
[16] (Siegal & Horton, 2018)
[17] (VICE, 2018)

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