

# PLANNING AFRICA 2018

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C.A.P. YOUNG PLANNERS CONFERENCE GRANT

## CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Organizer: South Africa Planning Institute (SAPI)  
Theme: The Making of Modern African Cities  
Dates: October 14 to 17, 2018  
Location: Cape Town, South Africa

## SESSIONS ATTENDED

- » Opening Plenary, Keynote Speaker Zweli Mkhize
- » Africa's Second Revolution
- » Planning in African Cities: De-colonisation and New Discourses
- » Spatial Justice and the Making of Modern African Cities
- » Africa and the Commonwealth: The Achievement of the New Urban Agenda
- » The Realities and Experience: Voices from the Ground
- » Public Transport and Transit Oriented Development
- » Shelter and Meeting Basic Needs
- » The Planning Debate: Are Planners' able to Confront the Challenges of Making Modern African Cities?
- » Planning Practice in African Cities
- » Shaping the Future of the Planning Profession to Lead Spatial Transformation in South Africa

## SUMMARY

The Planning Africa 2018 Conference attendees grappled with modernizing cities and the challenges that arise from the evolving urbanization of African nations. Attending this conference challenged me to view the Canadian planning context from a new perspective by seeing how practitioners in African cities approach planning in the Urban Context. I have identified three key themes below that resonated with me because of their similarities and contrasts to planning within Canada.

## KEY THEMES

**Evolving Populations:** African nations as a whole are experiencing a shift in demographics with an increase in people migrating to urban centres and a growing young population. Planners in Africa are faced with changing their approaches at a pace that matches this evolution in demographics to address housing, transportation, and changes to the economy among others. In Canada, we are experiencing a different but equally urgent demographic shift, one in which the aging population is growing and the young population is shrinking. As planners, the onus is on us to pro-actively acknowledge and address these challenges within our professional capacity.

**Healing from the Past and Visions for the Future:** Planners in South Africa struggle with an Apartheid legacy that has manifested in socio-economic disparity, resulting in a spatially unjust land distribution and far reaching social impacts. The high property values of urban communities make it difficult for many to live in cities, with commutes that cost low income families an average of 40-60% of their income and two to four hours daily on transport to urban employment centres. Much of the discussion and debate at Planning Africa 2018 centered around spatial justice, affordable urban housing models, transportation options and other strategies to enable a more equitable approach to urban land use. While taking place in a vastly different context, there are many parallels between the socio-economic and spatial segregation within South Africa and that of First Nations communities in Canada. Learning about the ongoing debates and emerging models for a more equitable land distribution, transportation models, and community planning within South Africa shed light on potential approaches to our own issues.

**The Importance of Context:** Throughout the conference speakers and participants identified that imported European and North American planning models have often been applied to urban African settings with very little consideration for the local and regional context. Planning Africa 2018 challenged attendees to collaboratively work towards post-colonial Planning and educational frameworks that are guided by the cultural, social, environmental, and economic elements that shape place. This call to contextually appropriate planning approaches reinforced the importance of local engagement, and seeking to better understand place from multiple angles within my own practice.