

Planning as a field in Brazil and South Africa: some preliminary findings and lessons for planning education

Garth Klein

School of Architecture and Planning

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

garth.klein@wits.ac.za

Urban and Regional Planning education In Brazil and South Africa has developed in different ways both in content and in structure. A simplistic distinction made between *urbanismo* and *town planning* by Piccinato (1987) is that “Town planning is Anglo-Saxon, urbanism is Latin”. This assumes that both Brazil and South Africa have, in one form or another, been influenced by their particular spatial, socio-historical contexts. These observations point to the possibility that a range of different forces or ‘struggles’ have culminated in these different approaches to the ‘field’ of planning and the current state of Planning Curricula.

A Bourdieusian theoretical concept of ‘fields’, where fields are seen as arenas in which ‘actors and institutions struggle for something they have in common’ (Edman 2001), provides a useful framework in which to begin to interrogate what different ‘arenas, axis, actors and institutional struggles’ have taken place in order to produce these variations or similarities between Brazilian and South African approaches to planning and planning curricula in what may be considered peculiar circumstances. By extending this idea further the question that may be posed is ‘how, why and in what forms has urban and regional planning education and the bodies or ‘corps’ of people practicing planning been constituted in South Africa and Brazil in the period 1960 to 2012?’ In other words, what are the set of beliefs or rules which have been established as a result of ‘struggles’, what were these ‘struggles’ and what social, political, historical and economic forces framed the field of planning in these two different contexts. A signifier of both similarities and differences between the two countries may lie in the ‘official’ form of planning as a ‘profession’ in South Africa but a distinct situation in Brazil; yet close similarities in approaches to urban problems including a strong

emphasis in the recent democratic decades in each, on participatory planning processes.

This paper outlines some early findings and possible lessons in an attempt to understand, in two seemingly different contexts, the justification for planning and to understand the ‘pervasiveness, dispersion, intricacy, contingency, and layering of our social practices’ of planning within two Global South contexts (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983). Central to this thesis is that particular political, social, cultural and economic moments have resulted in the formation of the ‘field’ of planning. It is argued that these forms of planning which have taken both similar and different turns in the two contexts have led to a particular set of rules and standards and a planning curriculum which may or may not address current priorities.

The paper begins to point to some of the current priorities in Planning Education and how this is being informed (or not) in the two contexts of Brazil and South Africa.