

Contested histories of planning across continents

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Drawing on examples from city regions in Brasil, France and South Africa over the past century and a half, the intervention seeks to explore relationships between planners and publics, politicians and citizens, professionals and others. The central question is that of convergence and divergence in the understandings of the city and of place in the city, on the part of different groupings. Whilst the emphasis is on the present, ways in which understanding of the past shape and have bearing on contemporary discourses and plans, require construction of historical narratives and exploration of interactions over time. Sources for the work include archival and media materials, participant observation in contemporary events which bear burdens of the past, and examination of popular texts both printed and virtual. The conclusion is likely to be that divergence predominates over convergence in diverse professional as opposed to citizen social visions of the city past, present and future: and that such divergence bedevils contemporary urban planning, posing challenges for teaching and learning as well as for practice.