

The Office of the First Lady of the Republic of Namibia, the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning, Polytechnic of Namibia, the City of Windhoek, the Namibia Urban Design Institute and the Namibia Institute of Architects have partnered to convene a:

MASTERCLASS

EFFECTIVE CITY DESIGN FOR NAMIBIA – THEORY AND PRACTICE

10 - 13 AUGUST 2015

BACKGROUND As many have remarked, Namibian settlement planning and design has tended to follow the practices in place in South Africa over the past many decades, as well as currently. However, an internationally respected October 2008 United Nations report rated South African cities as the most inequitable in the world (UN Habitat, 'State of the World's Cities 2008/2009'). Moreover, on the evidence of their existing structure, form and poor performance, they are not simply unjust: they are also inefficient, unsustainable and virtually unlivable for many, particularly the poor majority. Despite some exceptions and not for lack of trying, it is unfortunately inescapable that, overall, the built environment professions and human settlement government policies are not working effectively towards a prosperous and just future for the growing Southern African urban population. Currently, Namibia has a chance to 'break with the past' and formulate appropriate urban settlement and design policies, which seem to be eluding Southern Africa.

A major contributing cause of this situation that prevails in both Namibia and South Africa is that there appears to be no shared agreement amongst professionals concerned with the built environment about the nature of the urban problem or about a vision of what it is they should be seeking to achieve collectively. Moreover, the gap between government and professional rhetoric on the matter of settlement-making, on the one hand, and the actual practice, on the other, appears to be growing rather than narrowing. Arguably, neither urban policy nor professional practice in Southern Africa is sufficiently grounded on ways of approaching settlement design in contexts where poverty and inequality are endemic, where post-apartheid cities need to be restructured and where there are significant resource and capacity constraints. Contemporary settlement-making practice continues to be based largely on the concepts, formulations and general mindset of the 'Brave New World' of so-called 'Modern Town Planning', now about a century old, with origins in Europe and the United States of America, not in a developing-country, post-colonial and post-apartheid context. Yet, settlements have been made for over 5,000 years in many parts of the world, often by and for poor people.

OBJECTIVES It is time to pause, take stock and chart an appropriate way forward. This short, four-day City Design Masterclass, spans history/theory and interventive practice, in the belief that we as professionals and policy framers can do better than is currently the norm. As the title of the course suggests, one component is focused on the evolution of international theory and the history of ideas concerned with city design, while the second focuses on a hands-on set of exercises focused on the development of improved practice of city design for Namibia. The Masterclass will culminate in a Public Forum where an outline of an appropriate way forward for Namibia's urban development will be articulated and discussed with government officials whose duty it is to properly frame policy and practice in settlement-making.

On the basis of a strategic yet longer-term view, the course seeks to provide a forum for the articulation of an appropriate settlement-making approach for Namibia at the current time. It is aimed at all built environment and other professionals — engineers, urban planners, urban designers, architects, landscape architects and environmental and heritage practitioners, as well as policy-makers concerned with wider socio-economic, welfare and educational concerns.

This course has been specifically prepared as a stand-alone, four day course aimed at bringing together a wide array of built-environment professionals from the public and the private sectors in Namibia. It can inform the wider debates about settlement-making in the country at the current time.

The course convener successfully delivered a slightly longer version of this course to urban planning, landscape architecture, architecture and urban design participants at a leading university in China last year. He has also given such a course at the invitation of ArchAsia (the professional umbrella body covering 19 Asian countries) in Islamabad, Pakistan, in April of this year. The issues are universal rather than just parochial and national and we can benefit from international discussions.

COURSE STRUCTURE The lead-in 3 day-theory/history component presents an overview of pre-industrial, modernist and post-modernist settlement-making theory and practice internationally, so as to better project the major current issues in contemporary Southern African settlement-making. The 4th day local case study practical work will directly address urban restructuring and the need for a 'mind-shift' in settlement planning, spanning transportation, housing, the making of public space, the accommodation of informal economies and many other arenas. The theory and practice components of the course strongly inter-relate and inform each other.

COURSE CONTENT The course is an exploration into the physical structure and form of cities and how these affect settlement performance for people. Its general purpose is to develop awareness and understanding about the making of cities by rich and poor, as well as by public and private actions and investments. It is aimed at expanding our awareness of the nature of urbanity in difficult times as well as our sense of the possibilities in urban form. We need to get beyond the current impasse and think outside the box. The role and responsibility of the many urbanists, and the public at large, in the making of settlement will be explored. More detailed course content includes:

- A rapid, introductory survey of urban developments of our time, attempting to come to an understanding of the major forces which have shaped recent settlements. The dimensions of change and growth. The ruling notions which order growth;
- In contrast to modern cities, some lost qualities of cities of the past;
- Discovering vital relationships as informants to the achievement of meaningful, relevant and, therefore, efficient living environments;
- A more in depth survey of the ruling ideas in settlement-making that emerged as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Exploring intentions and the interpretations of intentions. A critical review of the ways of thinking. The dreams explored;
- Postulating fundamental and supportive settlement-making ideas through the organized use of precedent, both local and overseas;
 - Understanding Order, Structure and Process and their relation to Form;
 - Exploring the questions: What orders? What structures?
 - Seeing process as part of context;
- Some observations on the nature and process of design;
- Some fundamental, performance-based Ideas; Balance, Freedom, Community, Diversity, Interdependence, Equity;
- Context: that which gives reality to idea. The concept of warp. Time and Place: the continuum of people and land;
- Return to the problem of number and scale. The nature of an appropriate plan that harnesses energies top-down and bottom-up.

COURSE LECTURER The convener and lecturer of the course, Prof. Fabio Todeschini, is an architect, city planner and urban designer, an academic and a practitioner. On the fourth day of the Masterclass he will be joined by Prof. David Dewar and a number of other professionals and academics, including local experts, so as to take matters forward relative to settlement-making in Namibia. The intention is to make the course as interactive as possible.

Who should attend?

The course will benefit all who are involved in the built environment, whether in the public or private sectors. This includes engineers, land surveyors, architects, landscape architects, urban planners, urban designers, heritage and environmental practitioners. The course is widely applicable and designed to satisfy the multi-disciplinary nature of urban development and urban growth management.

Course Format

The course is fairly intensive and will comprise three consecutive days with contact from 08:00 to 12:00 and again from 13:00 to 17:00 from 10-12 August 2015. 13 August will comprise fieldwork and a collective workshop, with design proposals emanating therefrom. The Masterclass will culminate with the Public Forum on Namibia's Urban Future on 14 August from 09:00-12:30.

Applications and cancellations

In order to ensure placement, applicants should request a registration form from, and return it completed and signed to the course administrator by 3 August 2015:
Phillip Lühl, pluhl@polytechnic.edu.na
Confirmation of acceptance will be sent on receipt of the registration form. Cancellations must be received one week before the start of the course in order to allow others to participate.
Venue: Architecture and Spatial Planning Building, Cnr. Beethoven/Wagner Street, Windhoek
Cost: The course will be free of charge, subject to acceptance by the organizing committee.
Certificates: A certificate of attendance will be awarded to all course members who attend a minimum of 80% of the classes.

