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# Research on Spatial Form in Durban

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# Research on Spatial Form in Durban

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- Research considered dynamics of urban spatial change in Durban as against urban policy compaction/integration ideas, and spatial frameworks reliant on these ideas and the use of nodes/corridors as a form of integration
- Planning ideas emerged in reaction to the apartheid city – seen as a way of integrating it, and arresting past trends towards sprawl
- Examined spatial change in economic activity (particularly retail and office) and in residential development (both low-cost housing and new higher income residential) and why these were largely contrary to planning intentions

# Research on Spatial Change in Durban

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- With some exceptions, low-cost housing was largely locating on the periphery, contrary to intentions
- Reflected housing subsidy system focused on detached units, with limited expenditure on land
- But also difficulties in accessing well-located land, and the conflicts that occurred around these
- And the lack of strong political support
- Diverse needs: for inner city housing, well-located housing, but also spaces offering potential to combine urban and rural livelihoods on the periphery
- Is compaction/integration just particular narrative of people's disadvantages in the city?

## Research on Spatial Change in Durban

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- Growth of decentralised offices, shopping malls, gated residential areas avoiding historically black areas – contrary to compaction/integration
- Follows international trends, but also reflects local property interests and reaction to crime
- Old land use planning discourse focused on amenity and property values, coupled with new discourses on competitiveness

## Research on Spatial Form in Durban

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- Main findings concerned the limits of spatial concepts in understanding and addressing the way spatial change was being shaped by a broader set of dynamics outside of the spatial framework
- The research also debated the validity of standard compaction/integration policy ideas given diverse livelihood strategies, and variations in needs for space.

# Research on Spatial Form in Durban: Speaking to Debates

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- Focus on abstract spatial concepts – nodes/corridors/integration/compaction – draws attention away from how livelihoods are constructed spatially, how people experience space in different parts of the city, how they access places in the city, and what transforming cities might mean for them
- It also draws attention away from understanding the forces and dynamics underlying particular types of spatial change and how they might be addressed - design logic of spatial frameworks as naive

# Research on Spatial Form in Durban: Speaking to Debates

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- Lack of recognition of complexity and diversity in the city
- But policy (not just planning) more generally has difficulty in dealing with complexity: simple positions preferably supported by numbers?
- See also eg. in problems in operationalising gender, especially more diverse conceptions