

GPN SELF DIAGNOSTIC TOOL ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS FOR PLANNING TRAINING & RESEARCH

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Introduction

This note reports the views of planners from around the world as to needs and priorities for the development of planning skills and research in their countries. It summarises and analyses responses to the Global Planners' Network's Self Diagnostic Tool which was launched in March 2008 and completed by around 1500 planners from over 100 different countries.

The Self Diagnostic Tool and information about it is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/2gbffk> Responses to it provide a wealth of unique information about the way that planners throughout the world perceive their task and the priorities that they face for increasing capacity to plan human settlements.

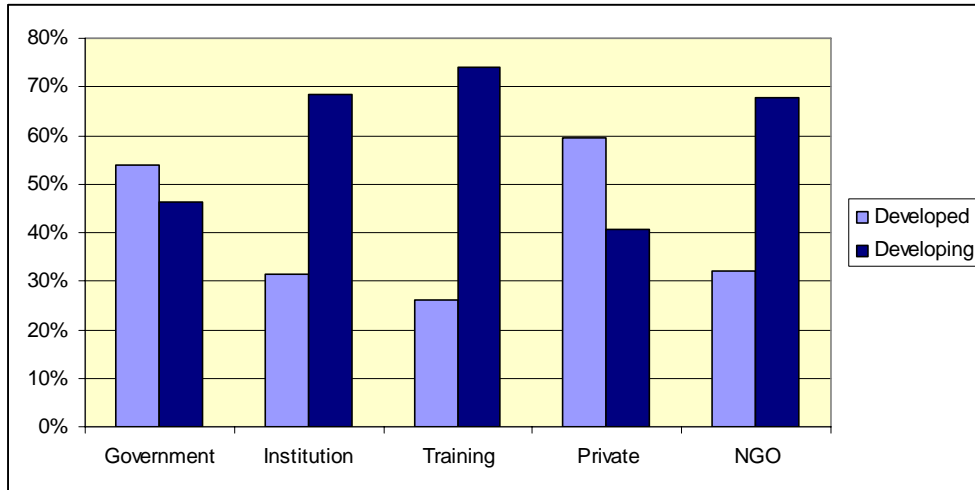
Here we describe information from practitioners & educators to get a handle on the range of priority training and research areas, focusing on the following areas:

- Priorities in general for planning
- Action items for international help
- Types of skills identified as priorities

To illustrate particular themes, the note includes some selected comments from individual respondents. These comments provide only an example of a far richer seam of evidence that the SDT has compiled.

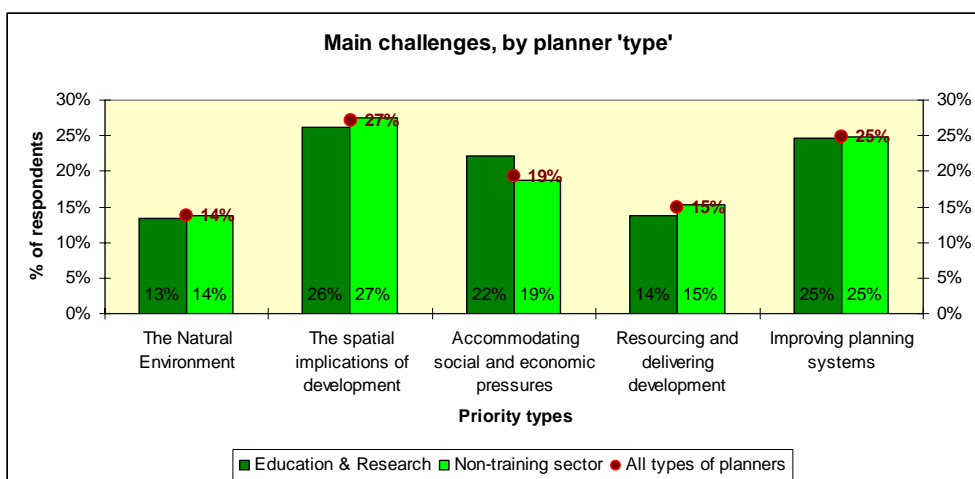
Responses from Training and Research Institutions

There was a strong response from Training & Research Institutions in Developing Countries compared, for example, with private sector planning practitioners. These responses examined how to use education to get strengthen planning capacity in these countries and this note focuses on these responses.



	Government	Institution	Training	Private	NGO	Total
Percent	39%	13%	19%	22%	7%	
Count	497	159	242	283	87	1268

Respondents representing Training Institutions shared the same broad concerns as 'planner practitioners'. One of the first questions asked "What are the main challenges for planners in your country". All answers were codified into broad categories which allow comparison of concerns. We note that planners who work in education or research identify the same range of issues as those in non-training sector.

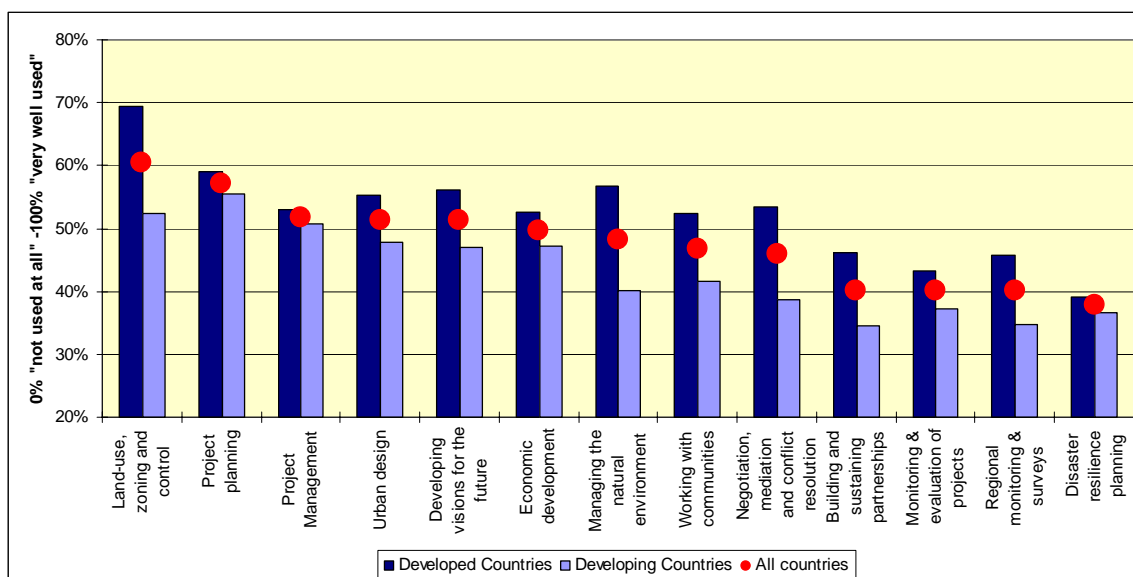


	Education & Research	Non-training sector	All types of planners
<i>The Natural Environment</i>	13%	14%	14%
<i>The spatial implications of development</i>	26%	27%	27%
<i>Accommodating social & economic pressures</i>	22%	19%	19%
<i>Resourcing & delivering development</i>	14%	15%	15%
<i>Improving planning systems</i>	25%	25%	25%
<i>Base</i>	276	1030	1306

SECTION2: PRIORITY AREAS FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Self Diagnostic Tool asked all respondents about the use of different Planning Skills in their countries.

“Are these skills well used?”



Scores are given on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is “not used at all well” and six is “very well used”. Scores for each skill have also been converted into a percentage for clarity; 100% is the best possible score and 0% the worst possible score for a skill. They are shown as grouped averages for developed and developing countries, using the UN convention.

Average scores for skill use, by UN categories (developed/developing)

	Developed Countries		Developing Countries		All countries	
	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%
Land-use, zoning and control	4.5	69%	3.6	52%	4.0	61%
Project planning	4.0	59%	3.8	55%	3.9	57%
Project Management	3.7	53%	3.5	51%	3.6	52%
Urban design	3.8	55%	3.4	48%	3.6	51%
Developing visions for the future	3.8	56%	3.3	47%	3.6	51%
Economic development	3.6	53%	3.4	47%	3.5	50%
Managing the natural environment	3.8	57%	3.0	40%	3.4	48%
Working with communities	3.6	52%	3.1	42%	3.3	47%
Negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution	3.7	53%	2.9	39%	3.3	46%
Building and sustaining partnerships	3.3	46%	2.7	35%	3.0	40%
Monitoring & evaluation of projects	3.2	43%	2.9	37%	3.0	40%
Regional monitoring & surveys	3.3	46%	2.7	35%	3.0	40%
Disaster resilience planning	3.0	39%	2.8	37%	2.9	38%
<i>Base</i>		210		231		441

Taking the midpoint of the scale at 4.5 or 50%, the figures given indicate:

- ⊙ High agreement between planners from developed and developing countries about the relative use of the various skills
- ⊙ Skills well used (over 50%) in developed and developing countries
 - Project planning
 - Land use and zoning
 - Project management
- ⊙ Skills not well used (under 50%) in developed and developing countries
 - Building and sustaining partnerships
 - Monitoring & evaluation of projects
 - Regional monitoring & surveys
 - Disaster resilience planning
- ⊙ Skills well used in developed countries
 - Urban design
 - Developing visions for the future
 - Economic development
 - Managing the natural environment
 - Working with communities
 - Negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution

Other skills suggested by planners

In addition to the listed skills, planners identified three distinct areas of 'other skills' that are not well used. These can be summarised as

- ⊙ Participatory planning, involving citizens in the processes
- ⊙ Monitoring science and technology (including maps/GIS), both for threats to and opportunities for development
- ⊙ Regional and general standard setting

Implications

The daunting variety of skills that planners need is influenced a great deal by the particular environment that they work in and the type of planning they do.

As they move through their career planners need constantly to be renewing their skill base. This represents a huge challenge for them.

Planners constantly require new skills that do not constitute part of their original training.

One way they can achieve this is by learning from one another through developing international networks.

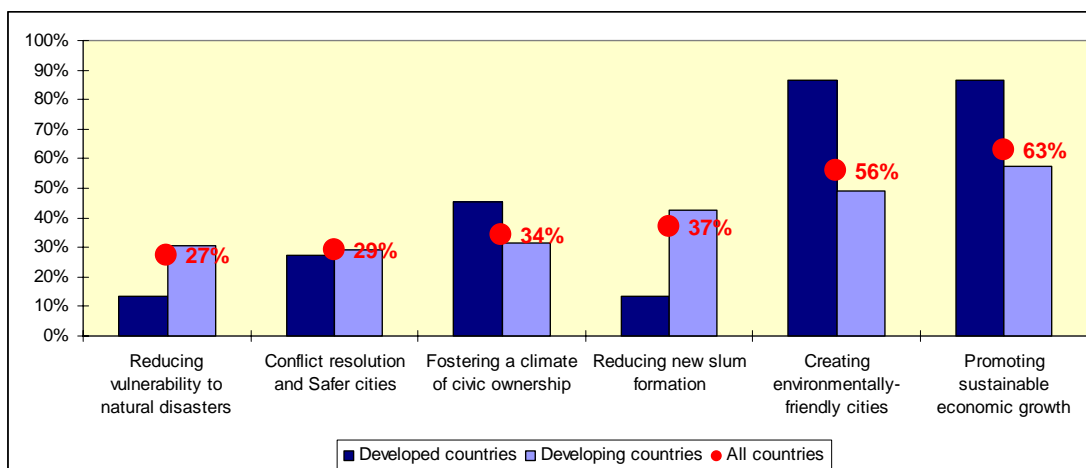
Training for priority areas

The Self Diagnostic Tool asked respondents about what the priority areas for training were in their countries.

Responses have been analysed according to the Global Planner Network agenda to enhance quality of life in human settlements, which structures the findings into these overarching priority areas:

- ⊙ Reducing vulnerability to natural disasters
- ⊙ Creating environmentally-friendly cities
- ⊙ Reducing new slum formation
- ⊙ Promoting sustainable economic growth
- ⊙ Conflict resolution and safer cities
- ⊙ Fostering a climate of civic ownership

To discover whether training for these priorities is available to planners, respondents who worked in planning education were asked to indicate the extent to which courses in their country covered these priorities. The following chart shows the extent to which this group of respondents believe these priority topic areas were covered “a lot” or “completely”.



Base 114 Planners in the Education Sector – topics covered “a lot” or “completely”.

In the view of these respondents, “promoting sustainable economic growth” and “creating environmentally-friendly cities” tends to be well covered everywhere, but there are some notable difference between the views of respondents from developing and developed countries as to the extent this applies as well as for some other priorities. Respondents from developing countries are more likely to believe that “reduction of slum formation” is well covered, while those from developed countries are more likely to think that “promoting sustainable economic growth” and “creating environmentally-friendly cities” were well covered .

Barriers

Respondents perceived various barriers to education for these priorities which can be summarised as barriers relating to human resources, information, culture of educators, finances, bureaucracy and politics.

“There are very few fully trained urban planners” **Malawi**
“Lack of a mechanism for collaboration of planning schools within and outside the region” **Tanzania**
“Lack of experts of above fields” **Sri Lanka**
“Lack of know-how and related personnel/experts/scientists” **Greece**

The theme of low training capacity acting as a barrier was very dominant. Planners from every continent talked about the lack of people with the appropriate experience and knowledge to teach the skills for these priorities.

Some areas were struggling to find enough planners at all and felt isolated. Others were unable to prioritise the 'priority areas' due to high work pressure or other pressing needs.

Low levels of information, teaching materials, books and media is problematic. Access to information is also a barrier, including language which 'blocks' some teaching materials. Out of date information also causes problems as these priorities particularly benefit from current innovations and techniques, for example real and current statistical data and forecasting methods.

Some respondents said the very nature of the planning education in their country acts as a barrier to skill development. By separating out the elements across disciplines, or by generalising the skills to a 'standard' format, or creating an educational 'elite' of specialists, they effectively cut off students from 'holistic' teaching which could cover areas that they themselves identify as priorities. The newness of many subjects means there is a natural hurdle to getting them onto the curricula. The problem is accentuated when establishments are dedicated to traditional subject matters, or are new themselves. Short courses can also be a barrier in that they discourage full exploration of some subjects.

Financing is a recurring issue throughout the responses. It relates to provision of education materials, payment for teaching staff, and funding for students. Other planning topics are given preference, especially physical planning aspects. Obsolete environmental courses are considered adequate substitutes.

The restrictive and entrenching forces of officialdom were repeatedly cited. Dominant academic bodies can withhold endorsement for courses, which discourages change or updating knowledge. Coordination and sharing of material across sectors is important to planning generally and particularly in these areas, but bureaucracy hinders sharing between professionals. Public agenda for these priorities helps get them on the curriculum. The necessary cooperation and consensus for these priorities is lacking in some areas. Weak social cohesion prevents consensus building.

"Access to relevant resources, information in these areas is limited...curricula is not reviewed frequently to take cognizance of changes in various fields/areas"

Nigeria

"Lack of availability of data"

India

"The big obstacle is the very general training."

Brazil

"As courses are somewhat short there is limited scope to include 'non-core'...material"

UK

"Emphasis on simply physical development e.g. roads network"

Indonesia

"Budget ...as much to implement the courses as scholarships ...and investigation"

Paraguay

"Urban planning is not recognized socially, thus, is difficult to introduce themes in the agenda"

Argentina

"Planning involves very many areas/fields, the coordination between these fields, the sharing of material is an existing hindrance"

China

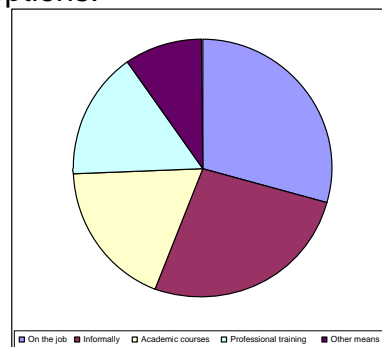
Skills for working with excluded people

A priority for the GPN is to address urban poverty and inequality.

The Self Diagnostic Tool asked respondents how skills for working with excluded people are acquired

Respondents described how skills for working with poor and marginalised people were learned in their country. Firstly they selected from a list of options:

skills are learned...	
...on the job	26%
...informally	25%
...academic courses	17%
...professional training	15%
...through other means	9%
<i>Base</i>	<i>102</i>



The most common way of learning these skills was on the job or informally.

Next they described the 'other means' of learning these skills. They said skills were learned through interaction either with other people who have experience of poverty and social exclusion, or with experienced professionals.

- ⊙ Activities organised by community groups
- ⊙ Networking with marginalised groups
- ⊙ Networking with social science professionals
- ⊙ Exchange with administrative bodies in excluded regions
- ⊙ Working in regions that are themselves 'excluded' or poor
- ⊙ Working abroad in less well off countries
- ⊙ Working with specialist organisations
- ⊙ Exchange with other planners who have professional experience

Barriers

Respondents answers suggest that two things are required:

1. Understanding of the importance of these skills
2. Opportunities to learn them

In some countries the lack of interest in the subject matter in the first place was a barrier. In others there was insufficient political will and leadership or deep fissures in society, and planners were not motivated to learn these skills, in part because of this. In others again, there was no popular backing or culture of acceptance of the

"Lack of leadership and incentives in the area"

Panama

"Ignorance and lack of vision"

India

"The persistent problems of violence and handling of the marginal zones on the part of armed groups."

Colombia

"As long as planning will be a part of architecture, it will always be technical house / city building school, as in the 1960s"

Poland

"The obstacle is that for a normal national professional, work with marginalized sectors looks bad because it does not represent a source of economic income or related to the official welfare or the political party, or the charity of the churches."

Mexico

core value of working with marginalised groups, which discouraged planners from gaining the appropriate skills. We note that these issues exist in both hemispheres.

Personnel with adequate experience or skills from which others might learn are lacking in some countries, and planning human resources are (as discussed throughout reporting on self-diagnostic assessments) precious – meaning that planners are in low supply and under a wide variety of pressures. Economic or financial support for teaching and studying these skills are also in low supply.

Even where teaching exists there are in some instances hurdles for planners who wish gain skills that they can really use. Sometimes the location of the courses is prohibitive. Sometimes courses do not allow time to go into enough depth. Sometimes the underlying local issues are not fully grasped or forgotten in an attempt to simply ‘transplant’ knowledge from other regions instead of (e.g.) using it as a learning example. In any case, the supply of opportunities worldwide appears to be patchy.

Implications

Working with excluded people is a skill area that is not well embedded and there are a number of reasons for this, that primarily surround an acceptance of it is a priority within the wider society.

Education does exist but barriers such as the status of the subject matter and the location of the courses need to be addressed.

A better understanding of the importance of planning for all groups in society is required and training materials for planners ought to cover the needs for specific marginalised groups.

“Works intensely, does not have the time”

China

“Planning education is still under development”

Ethiopia

“University of Prishtina in crisis; no/limited international networks”

Kosovo

“A packed curriculum already”

Australia

“Very much abstract and theoretical” Planner in South Africa
“Although these are taught they are not always given sufficient time to apply in depth”

UK

“Don't think this is a skill that a planner must possess...really there aren't any writings that will mention this.”

China

“Planning education recreates a vision borrowed from ‘developed countries’ to be applied to formal, high- income and medium-income settlements, and it fails to address issues of informality, poor communities, etc.”

Costa Rica

“The two planning schools in the Caribbean...both put emphasis on skills for dealing with poor and marginalised groups...most professional planners in Barbados have been trained in...[abroad]...but have gained experience on the job”

Barbados

SECTION 3 – PRIORITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The Self Diagnostic Tool asked respondents what priority areas international organizations and global planning networks should concentrate on to develop planning capacity in their country/territory.

Reflecting the unique insight into the priorities and constraints that each respondent provided a very wide range of answers was received from this question.

However, it is possible to classify responses under the following themes:

1. Promoting Skills
2. Information & Ideas Sharing
3. Acting as a Node/Creating Hubs
4. Acting as Political Advocate for the Profession
5. Direct Project Involvement

The first two areas refer to the acquisition and development of skills.

1. Promoting skills

A strong desire for help with development & provision of planning skills was seen throughout the responses.

Practical application of planning theory and practical thinking in relation to planning were often mentioned. Experience exchange abroad was seen as a useful channel to develop these skills.

A need for university planning training programmes was identified in a number of countries.

Some respondents are looking to the GPN as being well-positioned to provide supra-national skills.

Priority skill areas identified by respondents

The breadth of skills which planning requires was often fully described within individual answers, covering both the practical side (management/implementation) and the socially-oriented side (cultural, interpersonal, mediation) of the skill base.

“More opportunities for planners to be seconded and or exchange programs established that will allow planners to gain international exposure. This will help with establish the skills required to effectively plan and manage the global village.”

Australia

“More networking event, professional training, soft training (say movies or TV program etc) that advocates better planning.”

China

“More training sessions & provisions of manuals, study tours and funding”

Namibia

“Degree courses on planning”

Nepal

“Start a planning degree program to train new planners”

Singapore

“Planning practices are required from developed countries. Seminars and awareness programs are required for planners” & “Interactive planning skills-interactive planning skills at local-regional-national and global level must improve.”

Sri Lanka

“Regional/Transboundary Planning -e.g. city-city linkages, rural-urban linkages, sub-highways, etc.”

Tanzania

Respondents identified a need for both core planning skills – ie those traditionally taught in planning schools and newer skills sets that were listed by the GPN in the paper ‘Reinventing Planning’. Many people echoed the comment that “planning is about more than just land use” and examples were given of ‘non-core’ areas where skill development was mooted, those related to the economy were very prominent.

In summary respondents identify the following key areas for skill development.

1. ‘Core’ planning skills eg
 - Technical skills (GIS, IT)
 - Urban design
 - Transport Planning

... and how to apply them more effectively
2. Softer planning skills required for more effective implementation:
 - Communication
 - Responsiveness
 - Innovation/creativity/critical thinking
 - Cultural awareness
 - Community Development
 - Conflict / dispute resolution
 - Advocacy
3. Management Skills:
 - Political science
 - Decision making theory
 - Project Management
 - Financial Management
 - Legal systems

There was also some specification of skills that needed to be built into continuing professional development, such as policies (national and international strategies), and trends (especially demographic and environmental changes).

2. Facilitating Information & Ideas Sharing

For many planners, the main area where the GPN could help support them was the provision of information.

“knowledge and more intensive use of GIS and remote sensing tools for planning”

Mexico

“urban design skills, transport planning skills, disaster management skills, curriculum audit skills” Swaziland
“integrated spatial design skills”

China

“ability to translate policy and abstract thinking into drawings or graphical presentations”

HK

“Combination of analytical and creative thinking on a meta-level;” Bulgaria

“Emphasis on the need for planners to think in a wide perspective politically socio-economically participation, conflict resolution, mediation etc as opposed to emphasis on land use”

Malawi

“train planners to speak out” Hungary
“Skills at creating relationships to achieve better communities.” USA

“social communication skills is the key for the next generation planners” UK

“more business oriented with knowledge about market dynamics”

Mexico

“better and wider knowledge in law, better analytical and especially prognosis skills, wider knowledge in philosophy, sociology, psychology, better computer skills, language skills”

Bulgaria

Getting to know other urban planning practices that generated good results in other regions”

Mexico

“I think that there needs to be better sharing and integration of ideas across country borders. This is being done at the highest levels of the profession (e.g. the World Planners Congress), but it is not as available for professionals at lower levels. It may useful to have an international planning organisation that individual planners and national planning bodies can become members of so that ideas and information can be shared more widely.”

UK

There was a wealth of suggestions regarding topic areas in which international organisations could help develop ideas and information sources.

Many topics are 'global issues' and respondents indicated their how important it will be for planners around the world to debate the impacts of global changes over the next 20 years regarding, for instance, climate change, the post-oil based economy; population change; environmental and natural resource degradation.

There is a strong consensus about the need for a better understanding about how to plan to reduce consumption and make better use of resources were frequently cited, particularly regarding water & scarce / agricultural land.

Many respondents affirm that as well as provision of information, the GPN could organise information at the international / supra-regional level, and also develop understanding of the issues by its unique international position.

- Land Use
- Water
- Energy
- Waste
- Rural de-valuation
- Remote areas
- Climate change calculations

Integration of different issues is seen to be another priority. Climate change and environmental planning dominated many responses. "Population growth" and "urban growth" were often paired with the "need for balance" and "environmental considerations" in development. Concerns about natural resources were associated with many other areas, particularly social aspects.

"To give comparable statistical and geographical information about crucial indicators of urban structure in different countries and regions." **Finland**

"historical memory, knowledge of place and space, there was already a world before the times of cyberspace"

Germany

"Synthetic knowledge of previous experience and good practices; phrasing principles for defining corresponding regulations; and organisation of research on topics of regional interest, especially prospective."

Romania

"Quite apart from the core discipline of land use, acquisition of a better understanding of globalisation and international economic trends, including global climate change issues."

Trinidad

"Elevate the discussion of a need for effective land use management to the national and international stage - elevating it from only being only a "local government" issue."

USA

"Knowledge of the consequences and dynamic nature of climate change, such as the nationwide changes in water availability and its effects on agriculture versus development."

USA

SECTION4: CONCLUSION

WHAT OTHER ANALYSIS IS POSSIBLE FROM THE SELF-DIAGNOSTIC TOOL DATA

Priorities currently and in the future

In their self-diagnoses, planners considered the priority planning skills which are required right now and those that will be needed as a priority in the future. They offered a good overview of the breadth of skills that planners working throughout the world require, and patterns in priorities are discernible when responses are examined by region.

Unfortunately full analysis has as yet not been possible however some priority areas have already been identified:

Core planning skills demography design economics social development transport planning strategic city planning	Climate Change & Sustainability disaster management environmental management peak oil understanding of resources	Management & Implementation Skills decision making disaster management finance leadership monitoring and evaluation problem solving project management project planning impact assessment economic assessment	People skills communication skills conflict resolution consultation skills facilitation mediation team building partnership building
Attitudes and Outlook creativity ethics flexibility global outlook interdisciplinary approaches keeping up to date ways of thinking - interpreting legislation – keeping sustainability in mind		Technical competency drafting IT law mapmaking report writing	

Q23 & Q25 asked “*What new planning skills are most required by the planners who already work there?*” and “*What broad new skill areas will be required by the next generation of planners working there?*”.

In the same way that it was possible to tease out a lot of detail on the nature of the priorities for planning from questions about challenges & opportunities¹, it is also possible to examine Q23 & Q25 more closely. If there is interest to see such findings the range of responses could be illustrate, and for our sample information (e.g. higher priority identification for particular countries) could be elicited.

¹ <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/download/5076/GPN-Capacity-Study-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>