

# **United Kingdom - Planning as a “self-organised” profession**

**Dr Andrea I. Frank**

## ... some clarification

A regulated profession is one where national law restricts practise of the profession to people with particular qualification(s); usually professional regulation seeks to provide protection of the public.

Professional regulation is typically linked to nation states, meaning

- a) regulation changes from country to country
- b) qualifications are not transferable crossborder – and if someone wants to practise in another country in a regulated profession, qualifications need to be recognised first by the regulatory body (state or otherwise)

Depending on how the profession is regulated we have either bureaucratic/state regulation or “Self-regulation” meaning the task of monitoring standards/qualifications has been handed by the government to a professional body or other organisation independent of the state

## In the UK, restrictions exist for 100 occupations – **but not for (Town) Planners.**

- **Engineering**

- Aircraft Maintenance Engineer
- Mine Electrical Engineer
- Mine Mechanical Engineer

- **Finance**

- Actuary (England)
- Actuary (Scotland)
- Insolvency Practitioner

- **Law**

- Advocate (Scotland)
- Barrister
- Barrister (Northern Ireland)
- Notary Public (England & Wales)
- Patent Attorney
- Registered Trade Mark Attorney

- **Solicitor**

- **Maritime**

- Chief Engineer Class 1 - Fishing Vessels
- Chief Engineer Class 2 - Fishing Vessels
- Deck Officer Class 1 - Fishing Vessels
- Deck Officer Class 2 - Fishing Vessels
- Deck Officer Class 3 - Fishing Vessels

- **Other**

- Air Traffic Controller
- Airport Fire Officer
- Airport Firefighter
- Analytical Chemist
- Approved Driving Instructor (Great Britain)
- Approved Driving Instructor (Northern Ireland)
- Architect
- Cash and Valuables in Transit Operative (GB)
- Certified Instructor (Motor Cycles) (GB)
- Close Protection Operative (GB)
- DoT Approved Driving Instructor
- DoT Approved Motor Cycle Instructor (GB)
- Diver
- Door Supervisor (Great Britain)
- Farriers
- Harbour Pilots
- Inspector of Weights and Measures
- Inspector of Weights and Measures (NIRE)
- Licensed Cab Driver (London)
- Licensed Conveyancer
- Listed Veterinary Nurse
- Mine Deputy .... Etc.

# Model of professional regulation in the UK

- Largely by **self-regulation**
- This is a commonly used approach by governments to regulate the practice of professionals
- Government grants legal authority to professional body to:
  - Set standards for entry and practice
  - Set standards for removal of individuals from the register
- Regulatory framework that allows professions to have degree of independence in setting professional standards
- Self-regulation is considered as cost effective and efficient

- Moreover, many profession that do not fall under the statutory framework – still adopt similarly rigorous approaches to organising their profession and professional practice
  - **E.g. Town planning**



# Planning has characteristics of a “regulated” Profession



Professional status is typically characterised by

1. Expertise
2. Autonomy
3. Commitment
4. Identification
5. Ethics
6. Standards

*“Individuals whose choice of work requires at least a college education giving them specific knowledge and skills, to be applied under supervision for a period of time at the end of which they are entitled to a label which carries credentials for independent activity.”*

(Sarason, 1977)



## Regulated professional titles and designatory letters

- Title of “Chartered Town Planner” **is** regulated
- Title is awarded by the professional body of town planners in the UK – Royal Town Planning Institute
- **Only** members of the RTPI are allowed to carry the designatory letters MRTPI
- While not necessary (at present) to practise planning - many employers expect applicants for professional and managerial posts to hold membership of RTPI or at least to be eligible for it
- Letters signify professional quality/competence, which is reassuring and practically essential for private practice

# Planning as a Self-organised Profession (1)

(R)TPI is a successful professional body

- Founded as Town Planning Institute in 1914; Royal Charter (legal right to award titles) in 1959
- Acts as advocate for and defender of interests of members/the profession
  - Promoting good planning;
  - Developing and shaping policy affecting the built environment;
  - Consistently raising the standards of the planning profession;
  - Supporting our members through continued professional development; and
  - Education and training for future planners.
- Considerable pre-eminence, stability, permanence
- Currently over 22,000 members (ca. 5000 planners working in UK are not members)
- Members commit
  - to ethical code of conduct/practise
  - Continued professional development
- Self-policing of members (I.e. disciplinary action is taken for members that behave unacceptable)

# Planning as a Self-organised Profession (2)

## (R)TPI

controls members' qualifications, education curricula, learning outcomes and access (i.e. standards)

- Progressive adaptation over time
  - Degree course + Professional examination
  - Accreditation of initial planning education courses (from 1930s) + period of supervised practice (2 years) with period re-accreditation of course curricula by RTPI panel
  - Now annual partnership boards to accredit courses + licentiate (min. two years of practice with mentors) culminating in Assessment of Professional competence + existing members are required to do regular CPD and maintain a professional development plan





# How to become a member?

- **Assessment of professional competence route**
  - RTPI accred. Bachelor in Planning (3 yrs\* = 180 ECTS) + RTPI accred. specialist Masters of (12 months = 90 ECTS) + min. of 2 years experience in planning practice (APC report)
  - Bachelor (any!, 3 yrs) + RTPI accred. Spatial Planning Master (12 months) + min 2 years experience in planning practice (APC report)
- **Special entry route**
  - Some related university degree + 10 yrs experience
- **Reciprocity with PIA, CIP, NZIP**
  - Full membership + Certificate in planning Law and Practice (distance learning module)
- **Special assessment for EU nationals**
  - who are members of their equivalent national organisations

# Membership classes

Recently the RTPI has restructured its membership categories

- Student Members
- Licentiate members
- Full (Chartered) Members
- **Associate Members (new category)** – *“Associate Membership is designed to offer a membership for those who do not hold an accredited planning degree, ....”*
  - UK planners who do not hold an accredited qualification;
  - Planners whose initial professional education was conducted overseas;
  - Teachers and researchers in planning and its related fields;
  - Members of other allied built environment professional Institutes engaged with spatial planning



# Planning as a Self-organised Profession (3)

## (R)TPI

Governed by royal charter and bye-laws, Executive board & General assembly (Charity, financed by member subscriptions)

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Provides numerous services:

- Lobbies government/responds to planning policy consultations
- Runs publications/journal/newsletter
- Regional subgroups
- Job directory
- Networks/special interest groups for members
- CPD and events
- Awards and prizes
- Monitors education and qualifications (APC)
- Research
- Provides “planning aid” (empower the public to understand planning processes)



# Internationalisation

- International committee, division and officer
- Ca. 5% of all members live/work outside British Isles
- Liaises with other planning associations/professional associations – e.g. is member of
  - European council of spatial planners
  - Commonwealth Association of planners
- RTPI is also founder of GPN (global planner's network)
- In response to demand.... RTPI has started to accredit planning courses from other countries (e.g. South Africa, Hong Kong)
- Provision and routes for entry for professionals with non-RTPI accredited planning qualifications
  - New membership category

# Professional Self-organisation as Model

## Strength

- Cost effective manner to uphold standards
- Professional self-governance/direct influence on standards etc.
- Strong Focus on Practice, dominated by practitioners
- Flexible, performance orientated – members demand services

## Weakness

- Market dependency may lead to lower standards to attract more members
- Requires good leadership
- Change may be difficult (little external input)

- Can expand internationally (see RICS)
- Can adapt standards relatively quickly

## Opportunities

- Change may be a threat to identity
- Expansion
- Non-members practising the profession
- Change may be a threat to identity
- Key focus on practice creates division to academia and tension in who decides on learning outcomes/curricula

## Threats



## Some final thoughts....

- Within a globalising world – professional monopolies developed within nation states will be inadequate
- Different models of professional organisation/regulation and re-regulation at EU or international levels are needed
- Loose coupling (e.g. UK model) may work better than state regulation
- Sociologically professional associations have a key role in the development of civil morals, assumptions on professional behaviour, codification, value judgements and rules
- National bodies are lobbying Brussels
- It is unclear how national professional registration can be scaled up and what the consequences are if this role is decoupled from the nation state
  - World-wide standards versus local flavours/needs/conditions
  - Fit with societies and expectations....
  - monitoring