



Talking TRANSFORMATION Podcast

TTPod COVID Diary Entry Number 8:

“Deciphering De-densification”

*Spatial and socio-economic
implications of urban density and
accelerated informal settlement
relocations*

Global Conversations on the
COVID 19 Pandemic

Recorded 30th April 2020



Since the advent of COVID-19 here in SA our post-apartheid housing themed episodes have taken a back seat to the conversations locally and around the world with our COVID dairies. This episode bridges directly and indirectly the built environment, housing and COVID within one in-depth discussion.

Almost immediately COVID became a reality in South Africa, the recognition that our most vulnerable of communities – those living in our densely populated informal settlements with rudimentary sanitation and water - would be MOST at risk from a virus that thrives on such infrastructure challenges. The National Department of Humans Settlements had been swift to issue directives requiring cities to de-densify hot-spot settlements they had identified.

Despite laudable intentions and a recognition of the scale and severity of the challenge at hand, there are numerous and complex challenges and implications of this “accelerated” de-densification approach. The challenge of relocating families at a time of lockdown and crisis have been increasingly reported on and the positions of NGOs presented. Many have been against the approach.

Today we talk to [Suzette van der Walt](#) from *1-1 Agency of Engagement* and [Aditya Kumar](#) from the Development Action Group - DAG: both are architects by trade. They provide their insights and perspective on the issues of density and the de-densification of informal settlements and reflect on their contributions made in response to COVID-19.

DAG were co-signatories to a NGO response the opposed the National Ministry’s plans. We ask why they took that angle, what the authorities SHOULD be focusing on and what lessons can we learn looking towards the future?

We ask Suzette about *1-1 Agency of Engagement’s* recent publications looking at these issues of density and de-densification and the spatial implication of COVID and profiling risk in urban areas [“Deciphering De-Densification”](#) and [“Boundary of Home”](#).